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ISLAM AND JAVANESE ACCULTURATION: TEXTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE *SLAMETAN* RITUAL

A thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts

by

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ABSTRACT

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Title : Islam and Javanese Acculturation: Textual and Contextual Analysis of the *Slametan* Ritual

Department : Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University

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This Thesis deals with the cultural encounter between Islam and Javanese culture as represented by the *slametan* ritual. The major purposes of this thesis are threefold; (1) to give a brief account of the historical backdrop of the encounter between Islam and the Javanese tradition; (2) to discuss the ongoing dispute among scholars over whether the *slametan* is animistic, syncretistic or Islamic; and (3) to provide a new perspective on the *slametan* ritual based upon textual (religious) and contextual (socio-cultural) analysis.

The hypothesis underlying this work is that the *slametan* is a prototype of syncretistic ritual, the representative of Islamic elements –as its core—on the one hand, and local traditions –as its periphery—on the other. This work will argue against the theory of the *slametan* developed both by Geertz and Woodward. The first scholar sees the *slametan* from a socio-cultural perspective only, while the latter views it on an Islamic theological basis. The current writer argues that one should employ a holistic perspective to see the *slametan* comprehensively; both from "inside" (religious perspective) and "outside" (cultural perspective).

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

RÉSUMÉ

Auteur : Masdar Hilmy

Titre : Islam et acculturation javanaise: Une analyse textuelle et contextuell du rite du *Slametan*

Département : Institut des Études Islamiques, Université McGill

Diplôme : Maîtrise ès Arts

Ce mémoire porte sur la rencontre culturelle entre l'Islam et la culture javanais telle que représentée par le rituel du *slametan*. Les objectifs principaux de cette recherch se présentent en trois volets: Premièrement, en donnant un bref aperçu du context historique de la rencontre entre l'Islam et la tradition javanaise, deuxièmement, e: analysant le débat des spécialistes sur la question d'établir si le *slametan* est un rit animiste, syncrétiste ou islamique et, troisièmement, en proposant une nouvell perspective du rituel du *slametan,* fondée sur une analyse textuelle (religieuse) e contextuelle (socio-culturelle).

L'hypothèse sous-jacente de cette étude est que le *slametan* soit le prototype d'u rituel syncrétiste, étant d'une part, la représentation d'éléments islamiques (en son centre et, d'autre part, la représentation de traditions locales (à sa périphérie). Cette recherch critiquera la théorie du *slametan* développée à la fois par Geertz ainsi que Woodward. L premier chercheur perçoit le *slametan* uniquement d'après une perspective socio-culturell alors que le second considère ce rite selon une approche théologique islamique. L'auteu de ce présent mémoire insiste qu'une perspective holistique devrait plutôt être employé afin de parvenir à une vision d'ensemble, à la fois de "l'intérieur" (perspective religieus et de "l'extérieur" (perspective culturelle).

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

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Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

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Montreal, March 1999.

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NOTES

Throughout this thesis the sources of reference have been placed in footnotes at the bottom of every page. For example, Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 10. While each source has been referred to in full detail at its first occurrence in a particular chapter, from its second occurrence on, only the author, the title (in short form with quotation marks), and the (volume and) page number were recorded. Later references will use a shortened form of the work, such as Woodward, "Islam in Java," 100.

The system of transliteration of Arabic words and names applied in this thesis is that used by the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University. The table of transliteration is as follows:

b	= ب	dh	= ذ	ṭ	= ط	l	= ل
t	= ت	r	= ر	ẓ	= ظ	m	= م
th	= ث	z	= ز	‘	= ع	n	= ن
j	= ج	s	= س	gh	= غ	w	= و
ḥ	= ح	sh	= ش	f	= ف	h	= ه
kh	= خ	ṣ	= ص	q	= ق	y	= ي
d	= د	ḍ	= ض	k	= ك	'	= ء

Short : a = _ ; i = _ ; u = _

Long : ā = ا ; ī = ي ; ū = و

Diphthong : ay = اي ; aw = او

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ---------- i

Résumé ---------- ii

Acknowledgements ---------- iii

Notes ---------- v

Table of Contents ---------- vi

Introduction ---------- 1

CHAPTER ONE: ISLAM AND JAVANESE CULTURE ---------- 6

A. The Introduction of Islam to Java ---------- 6
B. The Islamization of Java ---------- 18
C. The Assimilation of Islam into Javanese Culture ---------- 28

CHAPTER TWO: THE *SLAMETAN* RITUAL IN THE STRUCTURE OF JAVANESE ISLAM ---------- 41

A. The Basic Conception of the *Slametan* ---------- 41
B. The *Slametan*: Its Patterns and Practical Implementation ---------- 49
C. Between Islamic Core and Syncretistic Periphery in the *Slametan* ---------- 59

CHAPTER THREE: TEXTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE *SLAMETAN* ---------- 72

A. Textual Analysis of the *Slametan* ---------- 73
B. Contextual Analysis of the *Slametan* ---------- 88
1. Functional Analysis of the *Slametan* ---------- 88
2. Structural Analysis of the *Slametan* ---------- 93
3. Local Interpretation of the *Slametan* ---------- 97

Conclusion ---------- 102

Glossary ---------- 105

Bibliography ---------- 110

INTRODUCTION

Javanese Islam has the reputation in some quarters of being an inferior variety of Islam, mainly because it differs from what people may consider to be "genuine Islam," or the so-called "Middle Eastern Islam."[1] In addition, the Javanese Muslim community is comprised mainly of nominal Muslims, with little knowledge of or interest in the formal demands of religious observance.[2] Javanese Islam is considered to be unique, because it incorporates Islam, regarded as a relative "newcomer" on the one hand, with pre-Islamic Hindu, Buddhist, and animist beliefs as a "local host," on the other. Despite the fact that Javanese Islam may be categorized as a syncretistic religion, the denunciation of the Javanese as "bad Muslims" is of no help in trying to understand the development of Islam in Java, where the process of acculturation[3] between Islam and the Javanese local tradition has been so extensive.

The *Slametan* ritual is perhaps the classic example of a cultural marriage of Islamic elements and local culture. Even though its theological position is still disputable,[4] the *slametan* remains a religio-cultural arbitrate which

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[1] Ricklefs, "Six Centuries of Islamization in Java," in Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York & London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), 100.

[2] L.Th. Mayer & J.F. van Moll, *De sedekahs en slametans in de desa* (Semarang: Van Dorp, 1909), 5; c.f. Ricklefs, "Six Centuries," 100.

[3] This word means (1) the process of adopting the cultural traits or social patterns of another group, esp. a dominant one, and/or (2) a restructuring or blending of cultures resulting from this. See, *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1991), 10.

[4] This debate can be traced in the historical accounts of the development of Indonesian, especially Javanese, Islam. The fact that the *slametan* has been, and still

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

accommodates basic Islamic values to the local culture. As a ceremony marking the most important passages in life, it tends to be a strong unifying factor in Javanese society, straddling the theological boundaries shared by the most devout Muslims (*santri*), nominal Muslims (*abangan*), Muslim traditionalists and, to some extent, Muslim modernists.

In a narrower sense, the *slametan* may be defined as a Javanese Muslim ritual conducted in order to gain certain blessings from God; in such areas as personal safety, well-being, prosperity, and others.[5] In some parts of Java, the *slametan* is also called *kenduri* or *kenduren* (J.) due to its close association with the ritual meal tradition known throughout the Muslim world (Indo-Persian,

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is, a point of dispute between the modernists (mainly represented by the Persatuan Islam [Persis] and the Muhammadiyah) and the traditionalists (represented by the Nahdlatul Ulama) does not diminish the importance of the *slametan* in the structure of Javanese religious culture. The first cam, comprised of members of Persis and the Muhammadiyah, in keeping with its modernist outlook, contends that the *slametan* is not Islamic and should, therefore, be eliminated from the structure of Islamic teachings. The *Slametan*, much to their dismay, is closely tied to the *abangan* (nominal) Muslim philosophy of life; which encourages a belief in "non-Islamic" spirits and other superstitions regarding propitious and unlucky days and numbers considered by modernists to be foreign to Islam. For their part, the traditionalist views the *slametan* as an integral part of Islamic ritual and a valid interpretation of Islamic Sufi doctrine. On this debate, see Howard M. Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1970), 71-74; cf. James L. Peacock, *Muslim Puritans: Reformist Psychology in Southeast Asian Islam* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1978), 44; cf. Ahmad Haris, "Innovation and Tradition in Islam: A Study on Bid'ah as an Interpretation of the Religion in the Indonesian experience," (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1998), 247-63.

[5] This is probably the most "accommodative" definition of the *slametan*, given the variety of opinions among scholars, both Indonesian and Western. For the various definitions of the *slametan*, see, for example, Howard M. Federspiel, *A Dictionary of Indonesian Islam* (Ohio: Center for International Studies Ohio University, 1995), 234-35; cf. Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), 11; cf. Robert W. Hefner, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985, 104; cf. Mark R. Woodward, "The *Slametan*: Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam," *History of Religion*, 28: 54; cf. L.Th Mayer & J.F. van Moll, *De sedekahs en slametans in de desa* (Semarang: Van Dorp, 1909), 6.

Acehnese, and Urdu *kanduri*, Malay *kenduri*).[6] The patterns of this ritual can be both elementary (restricted to individual and family) and communal or elaborate (village or mass celebration).[7] Most scholars characterize the *slametan* as a syncretistic ritual in the sense that various elements can be found there, whether Muslim, Hindu-Buddhist, or other local tradition.[8]

The development of the *slametan* as a "unique" ritual consisting of various elements can perhaps be understood as a function of the history of Islam in Java and the process of Muslim acculturation.[9] As the process got underway on a macro-level, the same acculturation occurred at a micro-level in the evolution of the *slametan*. Originally an ancient Javanese ritual, the *slametan* was adopted by Sunan Kalijaga, one of the most renowned Muslim saints in Java. Even before the latter's invention, the practice was recognized by the Demak government, the first Islamic state in Java.[10] Since then the *slametan* has been an integral part of the Islamic observance in Java.

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[6] John R. Bowen has published a detailed observation of the *kenduri* ritual held in Sumatra, especially among Gayo society, North Sumatra. See, John R. Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993). Cf. also his article, "On Scriptural Essentialism and Ritual Variation: Muslim Sacrifice in Sumatra and Morocco," *American Ethnologist* 19:4 (November 1992): 656-671.

[7] For the various patterns and forms of the *slametan*, see, section B of the second chapter of the current thesis.

[8] A discussion of which parts of the ritual are Islamic and which syncretistic, see section C of the second chapter of the current thesis.

[9] The process of the acculturation of Islam to Java will be discussed in the first chapter, especially section C.

[10] An Islamicized *slametan* is said to have been the invention of Kalijaga who combined the old *slametan* with Islamic elements. Some pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist elements considered unsuitable to Islamic teachings were thus removed and substituted with Islamic values. For further information about this, see Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate Yogyakarta* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 96; cf. Geertz, "The Religion of Java," 325.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

To gain a comprehensive picture of the *slametan*, one should employ an approach combining textual and contextual perspectives.[11] The textual approach allows one to trace the *slametan* on the basis of its religious foundations, while the contextual involves analyzing the institution from a socio-cultural perspective. This combination of the two will allow one to observe the *slametan* objectively since the process of acculturation is long, and the characteristics of the *slametan* is very complex. To see the *slametan* from a single perspective is academically naïve, if not in fact erroneous.

More importantly, this combination of the above two approaches is even more crucial given the fact that Geertz and Woodward, the leading scholars in the field, are far from being in consensus on the issue of the *slametan*. Geertz and Woodward represent as it were the two poles of scholarship on this issue. Geertz, basing himself on socio-anthropological fieldwork done in the 1950's, takes the position that, in accordance with his presupposition that Javanese Muslims are mostly not "true Muslims," the *slametan* was the type of animistic ritual.[12] For Woodward, on the other hand, the *slametan* is not what Geertz says it is; rather, it is an Islamic ritual --a product of *Sufi* adaptation into and interpretation of the local culture.[13]

The fact that there is no conclusive theory on the *slametan* in relation to the acculturation process between Islam and Javanese tradition points to the

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[11] The use of textual and contextual analysis is indeed based upon what Denny applies in his article on Islamic ritual. See, Frederick M. Denny, "Islamic Ritual, Perspectives and Theories," in Richard C. Martin (ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 63-77.

[12] Geertz, "The Religion of Java," 11; cf. also his *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 147.

[13] Woodward, "The Slametan," 54; cf. also his "Islam in Java," 52.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

need for further elaboration. The general objective of this study is to provide a new perspective from which to view this process by means of textual and contextual analysis of the *slametan*. The study will be based upon the assumption that within the *slametan* there are two main basic elements: core and periphery. These two elements therefore should be perceived within an integral and a comprehensive method of research. In other words, unless one uses a holistic approach in observing the acculturation process, one cannot obtain a comprehensive picture of Javanese Islam (as well as the *slametan*) which is in itself unique and complex.

The questions the writer wishes to examine are: to what extent are Islam and the Javanese tradition entangled with one another within the *slametan* ritual; is the *slametan* theologically animistic, syncretistic, or Islamic; and, what is the theoretical argument for both the textual and contextual analysis of the *slametan*.

The discussion will begin with a brief survey of Islam and Javanese culture, including the history of the coming of Islam to Java, the process of the Islamization of Java, and the process of Islam's acculturation to Java. The second chapter of this study will provide a description of the *slametan* and its role in Javanese Islam, focusing on the basic conception of the *slametan*, its pattern and practical implementation, and the ongoing controversy on core and periphery in the *slametan*. The last chapter will offer textual-religious and contextual-cultural analysis of the *slametan*.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

CHAPTER ONE

ISLAM AND JAVANESE CULTURE

A. The Introduction of Islam to Java: Early Encounters

It is generally assumed that Indonesian Islam was introduced from peninsular India; many scholars and historians in fact point specifically to Gujarat as the source.[1] In trying to determine exactly when Islam first came to Java in particular, however, most scholars generally rely on the paradigm of the coming of Islam to the archipelago as a whole (Nusantara). This paradigm seems to be quite plausible, since in the case of the region as a whole there exists a body of evidence explaining how this came about. Starting from this premise, the theory of the introduction of Islam to Java has to be understood with the help of a certain "confirming theory."[2]

This paradigm is used for instance by Robson in his article "Java at the Crossroads," where he attempts to draw a link between the coming of Islam to Java and the trade relationship which existed between Java and Pasai in the 14th and 15th centuries. Based on this theory, Robson assumes that the

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[1] This theory was originally developed by Dutch scholars, among them Snouck Hurgronje, who worked for the Dutch-Indies government, as an observer of Islam in the archipelago. This same theory, nevertheless, has been described by indigenous scholars such as Aboebakar Aceh as a "fine" needle introduced by Hurgronje in order to counter the Arab influence which he had found at the time of the Aceh war (see G.W.J. Drewes, "New Light on the Coming of Islam to Indonesia?" *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 122 (1966): 435, footnote 3). See also, Aboebakar Aceh, *Sekitar Masuknya Islam ke Indonesia* (Solo: Ramadhani, 1985).

[2] For a survey of theories about the coming of Islam to Java, predicated on the basis of the Islamization of the archipelago as a whole, see for instance Azyumardi Azra, "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian 'Ulama' in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1992), especially pp. 27-45.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

establishment of Islam in Java can be correlated to the same process in Malacca, largely on the grounds that, firstly, Malacca was a Muslim state, and secondly, that there was a close trade relationship between Java and Malacca, especially in the 14th and 15th centuries.[3]

Robson bases his theoretical argument for the most part on Pire's *Suma Oriental*, drawing upon it for his analytical synthesis of the coming of Islam to Java; this he develops in the light of cultural borrowing and influence of Islam in the Pasai kingdom, to which most scholars refer as the "cradle of Islam" in Indonesia. He states in his article that Sultan Muzaffar Syah, one of the most renowned kings of Pasai living in the 1450s, successfully induced a number of important people in the coastal regions of Java to become Muslim. Based on Pirés' work, Robson assumes that these Muslims had been there "for about seventy years" before they ever took power. This means that the interaction between Javanese converts and these Muslims must have occurred as early as the 1380s. Even though this date is approximate, it coincides with the date found on some Muslim gravestones at the site of Majapahit, in Tralaya. The dates on these have been determined by L.-C. Damais, a French epigraphist, who gives a range of dates for them extending from 1376 to 1611.[4]

In contrast to Robson, who sees the introduction and spread of Islam in Java as the outcome of a "Malacca-Java trade relationship," A.H. Johns insists

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[3] Robson, "Java at the Crossroads: Aspects of Javanese Cultural History in the 14th and 15th Centuries" *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 137 (1981): especially pp. 266-270.

[4] Robson, "Java," 271-272. See also, Damais' article, "Etudes Javanaises I. Les tombes musulmanes datées de Trålåyå," in *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, tome 48 (1956): pp. 353-415.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

that there is no single satisfactory explanation which can account for the spread of Islam in the island.[5] For him it is wrong to make such bold generalizations as "Java was converted from Malacca." In his eyes, rather, it is impossible to over-emphasize the discrete, idiosyncratic and diverse character of the port cities of the region which were the foci of Islamic settlement. The point in this context, according to Johns, is that "we must look for a variety of starting points in Islam, and numerous modalities for its diffusion, and above all realize that we are studying a process that waxed and waned, that took its strength from an irregular pattern of pulses over centuries."[6]

In light of Johns' theory, it is therefore important to recognize that there is no single pattern of the introduction and spread of Islam in Java that can provide all the answers. That a certain pattern may be observed in this process doesn't necessarily mean that the other patterns are not workable. We should simply understand it as being one among many ways to observe the process within a proper academic context. Thus Johns is correct in saying that it is pointless to look for a single answer. One can avoid the "fruitless exercise of reconciling or choosing between differing viewpoints or explanations," each of which may have some element of truth, and which may appear mutually exclusive only because they relate to different factors which may be present even in the same situation.[7]

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[5] A.H. Johns, "From Coastal Settlement to Islamic School and City: Islamization in Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula and Java," *Hamdard Islamicus* 4: 4 (1981): 5.

[6] Johns, "From Coastal Settlement," 5.

[7] Johns, "From Coastal Settlement," 5.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Particular attention though should be paid to the earliest Muslim inscriptions to be found in Java, and particularly the one inscribed on the celebrated gravestone of Leran, which according to Moquette can be dated to the year A.H. 496/A.D. 1102.[8] Marrison, however, reads the date of the tombstone as 1082 A.D. and suggests that it may commemorate a Muslim woman, presumably the wife of a Muslim merchant.[9] Compared to other Muslim inscriptions, this date is indeed one of the earliest dates for a Muslim gravestone not only in Java, but in the whole of Indonesia. But after careful consideration of the stone itself in which this inscription is carved, a soft type of stone which could never have held out against the damp of a tropical climate for so many centuries, Moquette expresses doubt whether the stone is originally Javanese. Rather, he suggests that it was brought to Java by a foreign Muslim from a more arid region such as Arabia or another part of the world.[10]

Other theories on the Islamization of Java are based on traditional or literary accounts. Despite the fact that many prominent historians have applied themselves to determining the exact time of the coming of Islam to Java, a

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[8] Moquette read the name on the stone as Fatima bint Maimūn. Ravaisse, however, read it (according to Drewes), as: "celle qui se garda du péché, qui fut à l'abri de la faute, la fille de Meimūn etc.," and the date as 7 Rajab 475=A.D. 1082. For more information, see, Drewes, "New Light," 454. See also, Paul Ravaisse, L'Inscription coufique de Léran à Java, T.B.G. Vol. LXV (1925): pp. 668-703; c.f. Ravaisse, "Deux inscriptions couphiques de Campa," *Journal Asiatique*, 11th series, Vol. 20 (1922): pp. 247-89.

[9] G.E. Marrison, "The Coming of Islam to the East Indies," *JMBRAS* 24 (1), 1951: 28.

[10] See, Drewes, "New Light," 454-5. Hoesein Djajadiningrat and Ricklefs mention that this tombstone was reserved in India. The tombstones of Malik Ibrahim and the royal family of Pasai for instance indicate Cambay (Gujerat) origin. See Hoesein Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten* (Jakarta: Penerbit Djambatan, 1983), 277; cf. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 11.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

definite answer still eludes us. Raffles, in his monumental book *The History of Java*, suggests that Islam was first brought to Java by an aristocrat called Haji Purwa,[11] the eldest son of Kuda Lalean, King of Pajajaran at the close of the twelfth century.[12] This is in fact Raffle's first reference to the presence of Muslims in Java. However, apart from whether or not this information is true, it does have at least two main weaknesses. The first is that Raffles does not in this case (as he seldom did) indicate the source on which he relied. This of course renders his data less than convincing as a source of information on this matter. The second weakness is that this theory can not be confirmed against any of the other current theories on the coming of Islam to Java. In other words, it lacks a sufficiently sound theoretical basis.

Raffles' theory, nevertheless, is an important one given the fact that he was one of the earliest foreign scholars to do any preliminary work on the history of Java. It inspired later researchers to look more closely at the phenomenon of early Javanese Islam, without which the discussion of the history of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago would have been incomplete. In the next development, this theory proved to be beneficial, for it provided a

[11] His name seems to have changed after he had converted to Islam by his colleagues among the Arab merchants. See, Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1830), 103-104.

[12] Raffles, "The History," pp. 103-4. In this account, we are told that Haji Purwa, having engaged in foreign commerce and resided in India, returned to his home country, Pajajaran, as a Muslim accompanied by an Arab from the country of *Kouje*, who was descended from *Sayed Abas*. They were unsuccessful in trying to convert Purwa's brother and family to the same faith. Haji Purwa thereupon gave up the attempt and is believed to have gone to live in Cirebon.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

starting point for scholars such as T.W. Arnold in their attempts at discovering the circumstances surrounding the coming of Islam to Java.[13]

As far as the history of Java is concerned, Tome Pirés is still one of the most reliable informants we have. In his famous *Suma Oriental* he relates how during his visit to Java in the early 16th century he encountered there Muslim *pates* (J., may be the same level as Prime Minister) who were especially powerful along the north coast of the island.[14] He further informs us that the introduction of Islam to Java was accomplished by Muslim traders coming from Persia, Arabia, Gujarat, Bengal, Malaya and other lands. Meeting with success in their trade, they settled there, built mosques and assimilated with the local culture through intermarriage. It was the traders for whom the "mollahs" (P., Islamic teachers) were brought from their native countries to propagate Islam among the still heathen Javanese.[15] The expansion of Islam seems to have been quite slow but persuasive enough that the numbers of converts grew steadily. At the same time these *mollahs* convincingly took possession of sites that were sacred to the heathen Javanese lords.[16]

In light of this early phenomenon of the spread of Islam, Robson indicates that he is not certain whether there was any hint of "preaching" to the indigenous population with the aim of converting them or any kind of

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[13] T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (Lahore, Pakistan: Kashmiri Bazar, 1979), 382.

[14] Tome Pirés, "Summa Oriental," vol. 2, 182.

[15] It is interesting that Pirés clearly differentiates between Moors (Muslim traders) and *mollahs* (Muslim teachers), in saying that Moors were the first Muslims who brought Islam to Java and paved the way for the *mollahs* to make further progress in the Islamization in Java. See, Pirés, "Summa Oriental," vol. 2, 182.

[16] Tome Pirés, "Summa Oriental," vol. 2, 182.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

missionary campaign whatsoever. He sees the process of the adoption of Islam by the Javanese in the port towns as "more a matter of expediency than of idealism," in the sense that the high economic position attained by Muslim merchants had an influence on the decision made by many Javanese to change their religious adherence and practice. Compared to the indigenous culture, which might be categorized as "low culture," Islam appears to have enjoyed the position of "high culture." As a result, there appears to have been a tendency among the indigenous population to imitate or to adopt the religious beliefs of their Muslim overlords. Islam thereby began to supplant Hinduism, at least outwardly. It is only in this sense that Muslim traders can be said to have been instrumental in introducing Islam to Java. Muslim teachers, on the other hand, furthered this process by putting Islamic observances that had already been laid down by the merchants into practice.[17]

Meanwhile the first attempt to introduce Islam to eastern Java seems to have been made at Gresik, in about the close of the thirteenth century of the Javanese era.[18] Koentjaraningrat, in a more detailed remark, writes about the coming of Islam to Java as follows:

> Islam came to Java from Malacca, a newly emerging state on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. When, in the course of the fourteenth century, the power of Majapahit as a commercial empire declined, control of the western part of the trade route through the Indonesian archipelago was taken over by that state. Its port was frequently visited by Muslim merchants from Gujerat, South India, and Persia. During the thirteenth century, they brought the Islamic religion first to the commercial towns on the east coast of present-day Aceh in North Sumatra, and subsequently to Malacca and the other main stations along the trade route to the spice islands of Maluku in East Indonesia, which were the

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[17] Robson, "Java at the Crossroads," 277.

[18] There is only a 74 year difference between the Javanese and Common (or Christian) eras. Both calendars are based on solar dating. For this, see Raffles, "The History," pp. 254-255.

port-towns of Java's north coast. Islam thus came form Malacca in the course of the fourteenth century, or perhaps even earlier.[19]

Koentjaraningrat is one of those scholars who see the "trade linkage between Java and Malacca" as key to understanding the pattern of the introduction of Islam into Java. Even though a number of other theories propose a different dimension, this is the one most widely held by historians as it is based on historical evidence found in the writings of travelers such as Ibn Baṭuṭah,[20] Marco Polo and Tome Pirés. The Java-Malacca-Gujarat (India) link was indeed, in its heyday (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries), an important international trade route through the region.[21]

A possible linkage between Islam in Java and Islam in China should also be considered here. Information that Islam had been in Java in the early part of the 15th century can be found in a well-known passage in Ma Huan's work entitled *Ying-yai Sheng-lan*, published in 1433.[22] In this book Ma Huan, himself a Chinese Muslim, states that among the foreigners in Java in his day were many Chinese, some of whom were Muslims. While the question to what extent the Chinese Muslims were an important factor in the Islamization of

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[19] Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 44-5.

[20] See his account during his travelling to Samudra Pasai, *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭuta A.D. 1325-1354*, Ed. H.A.R. Gibb, vol. 4, (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1994), especially pp. 874-87.

[21] An intensive study has been made by B. Schrieke and Van Leur on the Javanese trade and the Rise of Islam between 1300-1500. For a more detailed account, see Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Publishers Ltd., 1966), especially pp. 15-36; cf. Van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Publishers Ltd., 1967), 44-116.

[22] Ma Huan, *Ying-yai Sheng-lan: "The overall survey of the ocean's shores" (1433)*, ed. Feng Ch'eng-chün; transl. J.V.G. Mills, (Cambridge: The University Press for the Hakluyt Society), 1970.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Java is not broached by Ma Huan, he does confirm that Chinese resided in such key Muslim centers as Tuban and Gresik for some time.

The information given by Ma Huan is not convincing enough to establish a link between Chinese Muslims and the spread of Islam in Java. For in addition to the thin evidence for such a relationship, some consideration must be given to whether any of the basic characteristics of Chinese Islam can be detected in the Islam of Java. One of the reasons given by Robson for rejecting the suggestion that Muslim Chinese were instrumental in the establishment of Islam in Java is the fact that Islam in China follows the Hanafi school,[23] while Islam in Java favors the Shafi'ite.[24] Thus, further investigation needs to be undertaken into these two manifestations of Islam before any conclusion can be drawn as to the pattern of relationship between them.

The mainland state of Champa, located in what is today Cambodia, is also referred to in the sources as a possible springboard for the spread of Islam.[25] Raffles, for instance, states clearly that the embryo of Islam in Java was closely tied to the princess of Champa.[26] Even though the region had no direct contact with Java, it has been said that one of the oldest of the nine

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[23] For an earlier study of Islam in China, see, for example, Marshall Broomhall, *Islam in China, A Neglected Problem* (London: Darf Publishers Limited), 1987.

[24] Robson, "Java at the Crossroads," 276.

[25] Most scholars confirm this theory such as Berg ("Islamization of Java," 113), Drewes ("New Light," 455), and Raffles (The History," 125).

[26] According to Pigeaud's information, Cempa or Champa was located in India. See, Pigeaud, *Java in the 14th Century: A Study in Cultural History* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), 493. Meanwhile, Rouffaer designates Champa as having been neither in Cambodia nor India, but on the north coast of Aceh and identifies it with the modern "Djeumpa." See Rouffaer, *Encyclopaedie van N.-I.*, vol. 4, 206.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

saints, Raden Rakhmat or Sunan Ampel, was the son of the eldest daughter of the Raja of Champa, whose daughter had married an Arab.[27]

The legend of the princess of Champa is complex. Brandes mentions in his *Pararaton* that the she was the Muslim wife of a non-Muslim king of Majapahit.[28] H.J. de Graaf and Th. G. Th. Pigeaud, using information provided by J. Noorduyn,[29] maintain that the "Putri Champa," or Lady of Champa, is supposed to have been the person buried in an old Islamic grave in Trawulan, near the site of Majapahit, with the Çaka year 1370 (A.D. 1448) in old Javanese numerals engraved on the stone. It is nevertheless far from being the oldest Islamic grave in the region.[30] Pigeaud and de Graaf further maintain that the Putri Champa was the intermediary in bringing her nephew, the later Sunan Ampel, and other young Muslims from Champa to Java to propagate Islam.[31]

Robson however rejects this theory, insisting that the fact that relations existed between Java and Champa does not guarantee that Champa's ruler played any role in introducing Islam into Java. On the basis of Pires' *Summa Oriental* he maintains that, prior to the break-up of the kingdom of Champa,

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[27] Raffles, "The History," 125.

[28] Brandes (ed.), Pararaton (Ken Arok) of het boek der koningen van Tumapel en van Majapahit, 2nd ed.; ed. N.J. Krom, *Verhandelingen van het (Koninklijk) Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, Vol. 62, ('s Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff; Batavia: Albrecgt & Co., 1920), 226.

[29] J. Noorduyn, "Majapahit in the fifteenth century," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 134, Nos. 2-3 (1978): 207-74.

[30] H.J. de Graaf and Th. G. Th. Pigeaud, *Chinese Muslim in Java in the 15th and 16th centuries* (Monash University: Monash Papers on Southeast Asia No. 12, 1984), 142.

[31] H.J. de Graaf and Th. G. Th. Pigeaud, "Chinese Muslim," 143.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

the king was still heathen and there were no Islamic traders in the kingdom.[32] One could possibly argue that the connection between Javanese Islam and the princess of Champa may lie in the family lineage of the two main propagandists of Islam in the 15th century, i.e. Raden Rakhmat of Ampel and Raden Patah or Pate Rodim of Bintara or Demak, an arid area on the north coast of Java.[33] As a matter of fact, King Jaya Simhavarman III of Champa had married a Javanese princess called Tapasi at the beginning of the 14th century. In addition, Raffles reports that Angka Wijaya, one of the Majapahit kings, had demanded the hand of a Champa princess, even though he did not succeed in obtaining it due to the princess's refusal to be married.[34]

Confirmation that Gresik may have been the original site of Islam's arrival in Indonesia, and this as early as the 13th century, is furnished by the *Babad Tanah Jawi*.[35] In addition to Gresik, Schrieke mentions that the first port town known to have fully accepted Islam was Tuban (in 1597), while the interior of Java at that time was still heathen.[36] Basing himself on information provided by native sources, Raffles reports:

> *Mulana Ibrahim*, a celebrated *Pandita* from Arabia, descended from *Jenal Abidin*, and cousin to the Raja of *Chermen* (a country of *Sabrang*), had established himself with other Mahomedans at *Desa Leran* in *Jang'gala*, when the Raja of *Chermen* arrived at Java. This prince, who was a Mahomedan, perceiving with regret that the inhabitants of the large and populous island of Java were still heathens, resolved to attempt the conversion of the King of *Majapahit*, *Prabu Angka Wijaya*, and with this view to present to him his maiden daughter in marriage. Embarking with his daughter, and all his relatives and followers of every description, he reached *Jang'gala* in safety, and landing at the

[32] Robson, "Java at the Crossroads,' 276.

[33] For the scheme of this family's lineage, see Arnold, "The History," 385.

[34] Raffles, "The History," 125.

[35] *Babad Tanah Djawi in Proza: Javaansche Geschiedenis*, ed. W. L. Olthof, (Martinus Nijhoff: 's-Gravenhage, 1941), 20-21.

[36] B.J.O. Schrieke, *Het Boek van Bonang* (Utrect: P. Den Boer, 1916), pp. 20-28.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

> *Desa Leran* he immediately built a mosque there, and in a short time succeeded in obtaining many converts.[37]

This would seem to indicate that Raffles did not accept the theory of Islam's introduction into Java through Gresik. The fact remains, however, that there is physical proof of Islam's presence in Gresik in the form of a tombstone erected over the grave of Maulana Malik Ibrahim (said to have been a Muslim trader), dated to 1419. Drewes gives further confirmation based on Pires' testimony and the account of Ma Huan, both of whom visited Java at about the same time. Drewes argues that the Gujaratis were in contact with Gresik by around the beginning of the 15th century. What this means is that Islam did indeed flourish in Gresik, but there is no conclusive proof that it had made definite progress among the Javanese by that time. This is perceptible only in the late 15th century when there is mention of Champa's relations with the kingdom of Majapahit.[38]

Based on the above explanation, it is clear that in spite of the variety of theories surrounding the introduction of Islam into Java, there seems to be general agreement among scholars and historians that the first areas to have contact with Islam in its early period of encounter were the port towns of Java, like Gresik and Tuban. This sounds plausible because these towns were natural points of contact for foreign traders of all nations and faiths. Muslim merchants in particular were able to use them as a springboard for proselytization in the

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[37] Raffles, "The History," 122.

[38] Drewes, "New Light," 455.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

interior of Java.[39] The evidence also seems to show that it was Muslim traders from the southern portion of India, in particular Gujarat, who were involved in introducing Islam to the Javanese. This was simply due to the fact that Muslim traders were economically powerful and that there was a tendency among the Javanese to become their clients.

B. The Islamization of Java: A Perpetual Process

Accounts of the history of the Islamization of Java may be found in both native chronicles and foreign documents. The *Babad Tanah Jawi,*[40] the *Sejarah Banten*, the *Babad Cerbon* and the *Serat Kanda* are among the native chronicles that are the most informative on this topic even though Snouck Hurgronje felt obliged to insist that there was no such thing as reliable native sources where the history of the Islamization of Java was concerned. In Hurgronje's opinion, they were "childish and without chronology." Hurgronje's distrust of accounts of the Islamization of Java told by the Javanese themselves was based on a misunderstanding of the conditions faced by the authors of the Javanese chronicles, of whom Djajadiningrat, Hurgronje's pupil, remarks that they lacked a knowledge of their own early history.[41]

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[39] See A.H. Johns, "Islam in Southeast Asia: Problems of Perspective," in C.D. Cowan and O.W. Wolters (eds.), *Southeast Asian History and Historiography* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 304-20.

[40] A more detailed discussion on the questions of reliability of the Babad Tanah Jawi, see J.J. Ras, "The Babad Tanah Jawi and its Reliability: Questions of Content, Structure and Function," in C.D. Grijns and S.O. Robson (Eds.) *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation* (Dordrecht-Holland/Cinnaminson-U.S.A.: Foris Publications, 1986): 246-273.

[41] Berg, "The Islamization of Java," *Studia Islamica*, vol. 4 (1955): 116.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

The theory proposed by Berg in his 1955 article on the Islamization of Java provides an interesting point of view. Even though he acknowledged the theory that Islam must have come to Java by means of trade relations between Java and Malacca, he nevertheless, basing himself on Van Leur's theory, refused to accept that Muslim merchants played a key social role in introducing Islam to the Javanese. In relation to this concern, he also rejected the assumption that the Javanese converted to Islam in order to become part of an economic elite.[42] As Van Leur has indicated in his book, merchants involved in the international trade of south-east Asia before 1800 were not at all the sort of person who might have been expected to spread civilization to Java.[43] Berg, for his part, even though he was aware to some extent of the distinctions between Hinduism and Islam, accepted this theory as applicable to the situation of both faiths in Java.

According to the Javanese account recorded in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*,[44] the date of the complete conversion of Java to Islam was 1400 Çaka (1478 A.D.), and thus at the end of the 14th century of the Javanese era, which was marked by the disintegration of Majapahit power. This date, in Javanese history, is the line of demarcation which separates the ancient pre-Islamic realm of Singasari and Majapahit on the one hand from the Muslim realm of

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[42] Berg, "Islamization of Java," 113.

[43] Van Leur, "Indonesian Trade," pp. 113-14.

[44] This chronicle, one of the oldest chronicles of the Mataram court, was composed in the reign of Sultan Agung and his successor, and was written to justify syncretizing Islam with Hindu Javanese learning. A serious attempt has been made by Berg to examine the *Babad Tanah Jawi* in a historical perspective through his articles such as "Geschiedenis en de geschiedschrijving van Mataram," *Indonesiē* 8 (1955): 231-69; c.f. "De zin der tweede Babad Tanah Djawi," *Indonesiē* 8 (1955): 361-400.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Demak and Mataram, on the other. It was by that date that the period of the gradual evolution of social institutions began. Islam replaced the long lasting Hindu tradition which had characterized Javanese history for as long as a millenium.

The most common question posed regarding the process of Islamization in Java would likely be: Why was Islam so easily accepted by the Javanese? There are various possible answers to this. One could argue that Islam was successful because the Majapahit kingdom was at that time weak due to its inability to compete with its trading rival Malacca. One might also argue as a corollary to this that Majapahit had a fairly permissive attitude in terms of religious tolerance, especially towards Islam. It is said that Angka Wijaya, despite his disapproval of conversion to Islam, assigned to Rachmat, a prominent Muslim saint, three thousand families for the establishment of an Islamic teaching center at Ampel, an area located on the seashore near Surabaya. In so doing, Angka Wijaya recognized not only the freedom to exercise one's religious beliefs but also authorized the conversion of those who were inclined to do so.[45]

Another factor that made Islam more easily accepted by the Javanese was, according to Jay, the opportunity it provided less powerful people to escape the feudalistic Hindu way of life.[46] Jay, furthermore, asserts that during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the prosperity of coastal trading centers

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[45] Raffles, "The History," 127-8.

[46] See, Robert R. Jay, *Religion and Politics in Rural Central Java* (Ann Arbor: Yale University Press, 1963), 6. See also, W.F. Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition: A Study of Social Change* (The Hague, Bandung: W. van Hoeve Ltd., 1956), 193.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

caused them to increase greatly in size and power. In north Java, the regent of the Majapahit king drew most of their power as well as their living from trade. It was during the fifteenth century among the commercially oriented within local political leadership that the most important converts to Islam were "secured." In the hands of religious leaders Islam became a strong political and economic force that enabled converts to free themselves from the over-lordship of Majapahit.[47] As it is commonly accepted, Majapahit was a kingdom where feudalism prevailed and Hinduism formed one of its major attributes.[48] For this reason Islam appeared as a liberating force against feudalism and the Buddhism associated with it.

A further factor was that the propagation of Islam carried out by the nine saints[49] was completed in degrees –not all at once and certainly not by force, until the time of Demak, when "political repression" made conversion necessary.[50] It can be said that the Islamization process in Java was slow but quite convincing.[51] Once introduced by Muslim merchants, the next step was

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[47] Jay, "Religion and Politics," 6.

[48] For a brief discussion on Majapahit kingdom especially in its downfall, see J. Noorduyn, "Majapahit in the Fifteenth Century," "Bijdragen": 207-274.

[49] Drewes casts doubt on the reliability of the historical account of the nine saints, especially as to whether they were nine or eight in number. In addition, such questions as who believed what and what their personalities were like are still vague as there is no accurate information written in Javanese chronicles like the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, the *Serat Centini*, the *Serat Cebolek*, etc. Those chronicles generally designate the era of the nine saints as "*jaman kuwalen*," the "age of the saints." That is why there are some scholars who still consider that the account of nine saints is not more than fictitious fable. For more information, see, Drewes, "Indonesia: Mysticism and Activism," in, *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 297-8.

[50] See, Koentjaraningrat, "Javanese," 46-50.

[51] Theodore G. Th. Pigeaud, *Islamic States in Java 1500-1700* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 3.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

PERPUSTAKAAN PUSAT
UNIVERSITAS INDONESIA

for Muslim missionaries coming from Arab countries to propagate Islam along the north coast of the island, whence Islam was slowly able to penetrate the interior of Java by means of *sufi* mystics. Dr. A. H. Johns regards the *sufi* as key to any explanation of the Islamization process in Java, as well as in Sumatra and other parts of Indonesia.[52] According to him, the Sufi movement was almost identical with the Islamic world during a period of 500 years, from the 13th to the 18th centuries. Thus it is hardly an exaggeration to speak of the Islamization of Java as coinciding with the peak of Sufi influence in the rest of the Muslim community.[53]

Why it took so long for Islam to penetrate to the interior of Java must primarily be assigned to the "ideological contention" between Islamic values and the local Hindu-Buddhist Javanese tradition, which latter took a long time to dissolve.[54] Local mystical practices were also very significant in making Islam more palatable to the Javanese since pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist tradition also featured a strong mystical tradition.[55] Based on the evidence of local chronicles,

[52] A.H. Johns, "Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History," *Journal Southeast Asian History*, Vol. 2, No. 2. (July 1961): 10-23.

[53] It is interesting, in this context, to note that the Sufi orders, after the collapse of the Abbasid dynasty in Baghdad in 1258, gradually became disciplined foundations and developed affiliations with the trade and craft guilds or corporation. By the 18th century they increased to such an extent that membership in a mystical order was practically synonymous with the profession of Islam (A.H. Johns, "Sufism," 13).

[54] See, Arnold, "The History," 381.

[55] See G. W. J. Drewes, "Indonesia," p. 299-300. This assumption is also justified by Pigeaud (*Literature of Java: Catalogue Raisonné of Javanese Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and Other Public Collections in the Netherlands*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967-70, pp. 129-31) and Koentjaraningrat ("The Javanese," 48). The oldest mystical accounts ever found have been edited by Professor Drewes as *Een Javaanse primbon uit de zestiende eeuw* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1954) and *The Admonition of Sheh Bari* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969). According to Ricklefs, both manuscripts are probably from the North coast of Java and both are orthodox mysticism. The latter consists of warnings against various heresies which might

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

the Sufi teachers seem to have drawn support from the fact that during the propagation of Islam in the interior of Java, they faced the Shiva-Buddha mystics on equal terms, i.e. as mystics to mystics, teaching the supremacy of the new religion.[56]

That the Javanese were also able to adopt Islam without feeling any sense of conflict was due primarily to the fact that the old Javanese aristocracies were accustomed to the idiosyncretistic conditions of Java, and were used to the various religious ideas of Hindu-Buddhist cults. It has been suggested that religion, in the Javanese people's eyes, is a source of inner energy that evokes a supernatural force despite the fact that today Javanese Muslims do not feel comfortable with the idea of "syncretism."[57] This is not to say however that Javanese Muslims nowadays are theologically free from this phenomenon. Two or three religions, featuring remnants of their original forms, were perfectly capable of coexisting in a *modus vivendi* regardless of their very real theological differences. Hindu and Buddhist temples, as has been pointed out by Ricklefs, stood side-by-side, while Javanese kings could be called the "Siwa-Buddhist."[58] Indeed, it should not greatly surprise one to discover that some old Javanese Muslims, especially those forming part of the elite aristocracy, followed at the same time the various cults of Hindu, Buddhism and Islam. They did not see how following a new faith could endanger their

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suggest that practices and doctrines regarded as heresy in Sunni Islam were common among Javanese Muslims of the coastal region. See Ricklefs, "Six Centuries," 105.

[56] Pigeaud, *Java in the 14th Century: A Study in Cultural History* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), 491-93. See also, Johns, "Sufism," 17.

[57] Berdnard H. M. Vlekke, *Nusantara: A History of Indonesia* (The Hague and Bandung: W. Van Hoeve Ltd., 1960), 86.

[58] Ricklefs, "Six Centuries," 102.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

former one. This statement is explained by Ricklefs who says that: "the adoption of a new religion would have been no extraordinary matter for the Javanese elite, who had long been able to adopt various Hindu and Buddhist cults apparently without a sense of conflict."[59]

It is also important to emphasize here that, according to Robson, we have no convincing evidence that the Islamization process in Java was ever undertaken by way of conquest or pressure by a ruling elite, even though there might be a "political coercion" from early Islamic states in Java to the remnants of Hindu believers to convert to Islam.[60] Kings and princes were of course factors in the acceleration and deceleration of the process of Islamization. The case of Agung (1613-1645), Muslim king of Mataram, is one example, just as the evidence seems to suggest that the Javanese became Muslims because their lords were so. The pattern of the Islamization process appears to have followed both "top-down" and "bottom-up" courses. The possibility that political patronage on the part of a traditional ruling elite was a factor in the Islamization processes has already been alluded so. Not only did such patronage come from Muslim kings like Raden Patah of Demak, but it also came from so-called "heathen" kings as such as Angka Wijaya, the Hindu Majapahit ruler who gave permission to Sunan Ampel to spread this new faith. On the evidence of the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, it would seem that the latter ruler allowed a limited number to become Muslim.[61]

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[59] Ricklefs, "Six Centuries," 104.

[60] Robson, "Java at Crossroads," 277.

[61] See, for instance, Ricklefs, "A Consideration of Three Versions of the Babad Tanah Djawi, with Excerpts on the Fall of Majapahit," *BSOAS* 35, part 2 (1972): 296-297. See also, Jay, "Religion and Politics," 7.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Evidence that the Islamization process may have followed a "bottom up" path is scanty, the only plausible indication is that the activities of Muslim teachers --especially the nine saints-- in converting the people is a clear case in point. It is traditionally held that the nine saints were among the most effective agents in propagating Islam in Java. They have in fact been acknowledged as "the first hand" of Islam in Java, in that they paved the way for the progress of Islam throughout the island from the 14th to the 16th centuries.

Another significant observation concerning the rapid growth of Islam is made by Schrieke, who, according to Koentjaraningrat, states that "the increased attempts by Muslim traders to spread Islam through the archipelago in the fifteenth century were a consequence of the "race with Christianity," which started after the Spaniards expelled the Muslims from Spain and after the Portuguese gained a foothold on the north-west coast of Africa."[62] This rivalry, nevertheless, would have occurred much later than the formative period of Islam in Indonesia when Christianity was brought by the Dutch. To this point, there seems to be no need to elucidate it further in this context.

In considering the Islamization process in Java, the north coastal ports must have played an important role as Muslim merchants from Malacca, Arabia, China and Gujarat introduced and spread Islam to Javanese traders. Coastal port towns like Japara (now Jepara), Tuban, Demak, Cheribon (now Cirebon), Bantam (now Banten), and Grisee (now Gresik) were among the chief sites where commercial transactions took place between the Muslim traders and Javanese traders. It is said that as those Islamized towns began to become

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[62] Koentjaraningrat, "Javanese," 46. See also, Schrieke, "Indonesian Sociological Studies 2," pp. 232-41.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

politically unified, they tried on several occasions to threaten Majapahit, the primary political entity of the day, then in a final period of decline. It was Demak, after living in coexistence for such a long time with the Majapahit kingdom, which eventually caused the real downfall of the latter in A.D. 1478.

The indisputable Islamization process of Java begins with account of Raden Rakhmat[63] who, with the ruling Majapahit king's permission, established an important Islamic center at Ampel just to the north of Surabaya. He was the earliest of the nine saints and a zealous propagandist for Islam in that region. It was due in part, again, to the permissiveness of Angka Wijaya that he won over a lot of converts. Furthermore it was he who laid the theological foundations for the propagation of Islam in Java, where he received the title Sunan or Susuhunan[64] whose meaning is "messenger of God." In making the converts, Sunan Ampel was assisted by Maulana Ishak who was assigned the task of spreading Islam in the most eastern part of Java, Blambangan, which was at that time still under Hindu-Buddhist domination.

The wave of Islamization increased in intensity when the kingdom of Demak established itself alongside the Hindu-Majapahit kingdom. At this point,

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[63] He was later on, and ever has since been, renowned as Sunan Ampel. His name reflects the place where he, along with the other saints, first preached Islam to the native people. Before coming into Java, he is said to have lived for some time in Palembang and spread Islam in that region. The king of Palembang, Aria Damar, was nearly inclined to confess the new faith but was afraid of being accused by his people of being unfaithful to his ancestor's faith. (See, T.W. Arnold, "The Preaching, "375). See also, Raffles, "The History," 127. The other saints customarily recorded in most historical accounts of the Javanese Islam are Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Giri, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Muria, Sunan Gunung Jati, and Sunan Kalijaga (for a brief biography of the nine saints, see, Solichin Salam, "Wali Sanga," especially pp. 17-30 and 64-72).

[64] This word stems from Javanese which originally means the ridge pole of the roof. This title has ever since been borne by the Javanese kings especially those holding the title of Sultan Yogyakarta. See, J. Wilkinson, *A Malay-English Dictionary* (New York & London: Macmillan & Co Ltd., 1959), 1141.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

it has to be acknowledged that the process of Islamization seems to have been more "coercive" compared to the earlier times. The first ruler of Demak, Pateh Rodim or Raden Patah[65] was said to be the most persevering and courageous proselytizer of his time, in that he called for the conversion to the new faith of his "heathen" contemporary, the king of Majapahit. Raden Patah reigned from 1477 until his death in 1519, by which time Islam had begun penetrating the interior of Java.[66] Succeeded by Pangeran Sumangsang, Demak became a more confirmed center of Muslim faith. The latter's successor was Raden Trunojoyo, another unflagging king of Demak, who conquered a wide stretch of the west coast, including such towns as Banten, Tuban, Lamongan, and Surabaya. He also achieved significant victories over Hindu-Buddhist vassal states of Majapahit in central and east Java such as Gagelang (now Madiun), Memenang (now Kediri), Sengguruh (now Malang), Blitar, Pasuruan, and attempted to subdue Panarukan, in the easternmost part of Java. His last attempt to expand

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[65] He was supposedly a son of Aria Damar, an illegitimate son of Angka Wijaya. Aria Damar himself was another ruler of the "heathen" Palembang kingdom. He is said to have sent his sons, Raden Patah, at the age of twenty, and Husen, at the age of eighteen, to Java. These growing children, however, chose different destinations. Patah was inclined not to choose Majapahit, his ancestral land, due to his awareness of his heathen lineage. Rather, he remained, with Raden Rakhmat, one of the renowned saints of Ampel Denta, at Surabaya. His younger brother, Husen, however, preferred Majapahit, and was well received there, being appointed as the commander of the troops and administrative of the district of *Trong*. Raden Patah was reported to have married the grand daughter of Sunan Ampel before his departure westward to establish a Muslim state at Bintara, the old name for Demak (see, Raffles, "The History," 134). Another source mentions that Patah was not a native Javanese, but seemed to have been a Muslim immigrant of Chinese descendent. (Koentjaraningrat, "The Javanese," 50).

[66] Koentjaraningrat, "The Javanese," 125. See also, Armando Cortesão, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pirés, An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, written in Malacca and in India in 1512-1515*, vol. I (London: The Hakluyt Society, [illegible]), 184-5.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

theology is translated into social action in many projects such as popular education, advocacy, empowerment, etc. In this regard, the discussion is not on theology, but on praxis. The last step is reconstructing it into a system of theology. At this step a grand project is formulated, designed and implemented. This project would incorporate writings on other subjects such as gender analysis, globalization, capitalism, and so on.

Seen from the above perspective, it seems that the spirit of Islamic liberation theology is similar to that of liberation theology in Latin America.[46] Both tried to make theology a critical reflection on historical praxis. Their concern was not simply interpreting the world, they sought to become part of the struggle for a more humane, just and egalitarian order. However, they are of course not identical. The most fundamental difference between them is the source of inspiration. The moral foundation of Islamic liberation theology is composed from Islamic traditional sources such as the Qur'an, the ḥadīth, and example set by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. While liberation theology in Latin America finds its inspiration from the many sources of the Christian tradition.

B.1. Sources of Islamic Liberation Theology

Since the Islamic liberation theology which is formulated by Engineer finds its inspiration in the Qur'an and the struggle of all prophets, particularly the Prophet

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[46] See, Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and edit. by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, [illegible] edition (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), p. 12.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

years, from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries. It represents a perpetual assimilation between Islamic values and Javanese ones. This cultural assimilation has been widely studied by scholars who have drawn especially on Javanese writings such as the *suluk* literature,[69] the Javanese *primbon*,[70] and other old Javanese literary works. The *Babad Tanah Jawi* is itself a valuable local source on the process of cultural assimilation between Islam and Javanese culture: indeed it is no coincidence that it was written for the Mataram court under the reign of Sultan Agung.[71]

It has commonly been assumed that the history of Islam in Java is a continuum of the earlier Hindu-Buddhist tradition; this is no wonder, since Javanese Islam was so tightly commingled with the previous culture. It is therefore reasonable for Robson to ascribe Islam in Java –especially during the early period of its propagation-- as a religion that was "at the crossroads" in that it was situated in a theologically ambiguous position.[72] There must have been, on the one hand, overwhelming respect among the ancient Muslim Javanese kings for their Hindu-Buddhist predecessors, and especially for their supernatural and magical ability at ruling their kingdoms. But there was an

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[69] Early studies of the Javanese *suluk* literature were undertaken by G.W.J. Drewes (1927; 1930) and by R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka (1938), the latter especially in his work *Kepustakaan Djawa* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1957), pp. 95-148. An indispensable work for a detailed understanding of the *suluk* literature and the mystical thinking of the Muslim missionaries, preachers, teachers and students in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is P.J. Zoetmulder's *Pantheism and Monism in Javanese Suluk Literature: Islamic and Indian Mysticism in an Indonesian Setting*, trans. M.C. Ricklefs (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995).

[70] G.W.J. Drewes, "Een Javaanse Primbon."

[71] See Jay, "Religion and Politics," 7.

[72] See his article "Java at the Crossroads."

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

equally obvious desire to confess their new faith, Islam, on the other. This ambivalent phenomenon can clearly be seen in the self-portrayal of Sultan Agung, the king of Mataram. According to information provided by the author of the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, he was said to have been the descendant of Brawijaya II, the heathen king of Majapahit, and dreamt of being a Majapahit king although the same source is less explicit over whether or not he was a Muslim. In this monumental book, the genealogy of Agung, some of whose ancestors had been kings of Majapahit, is revealed. Agung was also forced to do battle with the Muslim coastal lords in order to subject them to the central government in Mataram. Nevertheless, he was undoubtedly a Muslim in the sense that he not only adapted but also adopted the trappings of the faith to a much larger extent than his predecessors did. Examples of this were his use of the Muslim calendar and even more importantly, his official declaration of Islam as the state religion in 1633. Berg asserts that continuity of royal power achieved by Agung was the fruit of the literary activity of Agung's court poet. To the question of why Agung should have dreamt of being a king of Majapahit, the answer according to Berg is because he was inspired or obsessed by the "myth of Greater Majapahit."[73]

It is undeniable that Javanese literary works were a significant factor in expressing the Javanese religious identity, in which Islamic and Hindu-Buddhist values were combined.[74] It was also through these Javanese literary

[73] Berg, "The Islamization," 130.

[74] A.H. Johns, "From Buddhism to Islam: An Interpretation of the Javanese Literature of the Transition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11 (1966/67): 40-50.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

works that the worldviews of syncretistic cults were developed. In this context, the concept of syncretism presupposes a harmonious combination between the mystical elements of Islam, first introduced and taught by the nine saints (*wali sanga*),[75] and the remnants of Hindu-Buddhist doctrines of the macrocosmos and microcosmos, which were well preserved by old Javanese literatures.

The importance of the Javanese literature of this early period –a time when Islam was just beginning to spread in Java—lay not so much in its Hindu doctrinal content but in its popularity as a genre. Introducing Islamic nuances into these works was one of the ways in which the process of Islamization was made more effective. The Islamization of this literature began on the north *pasisir* (J. coast area) according to both *Het Boek van Bonang*[76] and the *Admonition of Sheh Bari*.[77] The process of Islamizing the literature presumably followed a pattern similar to that of Islamizing the Javanese people, starting from the perimeter of the island and penetrating into the interior, since Hindu literature was probably centered around and sponsored by the courts there.[78]

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[75] The term *wali* is derived from Arabic, where it literally means "giving a power or an authority." Terminologically, it means "a person who is regarded holy, a saint, who is given power and a special gift by God." He is a person who is loved by God. The term "wali sanga" obviously describes the combination of the word "wali," meaning a holy person, and "sanga," coming from a Javanese word which means nine. It therefore means nine very religious personalities. The figure nine, according to Solichin Salam, has a symbolic meaning. For a more detailed information about the meaning and the history or the legend of the nine saints, see for example, Solichin Salam, *Walisanga dalam Perspektif Sejarah [The Nine Walis in the Perspective of History]* (Kuning Mas: Jakarta, 1989), pp. 9-13 and pp. 59-63.

[76] This book has been edited by B.J.O. Schrieke, *Het boek van Bonang* (Utrecht: P. Den Boer), 1916.

[77] Drewes, *The Admonitions of Sheh Bari: a 16th century Javanese Muslim text attributed to the Saint of Bonang* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

[78] Robson, "Java at the Crossroads," 282.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Robson says that Javanese versions of Islamic literature were likely influenced by or even imported from the Malay mainland. He assumes that Malay writings reached Java quite early, long before Malacca was conquered by the Portuguese in 1511, although this assumption cannot be demonstrated on the basis of any old manuscripts. The use of Mènak as title for Amir Hamzah in *Serat Mènak Amir Hamzah* can be compared with Mènak Jingga, king of Blambangan in the *Serat Damar Wulan*. The adventures of Amir Hamzah also form part of the repertoire of the Javanese *wayang golék*, further evidence of their importance. The word *mènak* also occurs in the Middle Javanese *kidungs*, simply with the meaning "noble, high-born, handsome," suggesting that the original translation from Malay into Javanese was probably made in the 15th or 16th century.[79]

The fact that most Javanese literature was written in the late 19th century for the purpose of combining Islamic values and pre-Islamic Hindu tradition can be seen from the *Book of Centini* (*Sérat Céntini*).[80] This manuscript was composed in Surakarta by a number of authors during the reign of Pakubuwana V (1820-3), among whom were Kyahi Yasadipura II (the son of the first Pujangga of Surakarta, R. Ng. Yasadipura I), Kyahi Ranggasutrasna, and Radén Ngabehi Sastradipura.[81] The nucleus of this book consists in the

[79] Robson, "Java at the Crossroads," 286.

[80] The original source of the *Serat Centini* cannot be ascertained, whether it derived either from the *Suluk Jatiswara* or a mystic poem called *Suluk Centini*. In either cases, there is no doubt that the *Serat Centini* originally belonged to the *Suluk* literature. This manuscript has been translated and edited by Soebardi in his article, "*Santri*-Religious Elements as Reflected in the Book of Tjéntini," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 128 (1971): 331-349.

[81] A more detailed discussion on the Sufi transformation into Javanese tradition, see for instance Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam ke Mistik Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Bentang, 1995), pp. 155-69.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

elucidation and inculcation of Javanese religious lessons aimed at the perfection of life, expressed largely by Islamic teachings stemming from Islamic law, theology and mysticism, and featuring lively depictions of Javanese customs and the Javanese way of life, especially with regard to the *pesantren* community.

It is commonly asserted that the type of Islam that came to Java was of the Sufi variety and that it was therefore easily accepted and embedded in Javanese syncretism. For virtually all the Javanese, mysticism and magical-mystical practices have long been a most powerful undercurrent of their culture.[82] The nine saints apparently employed mysticism as a means of penetrating the interior life of Javanese religion, which was still dominated by the mystical dimension of pre-Islamic-Hindu tradition. Notes taken down by the disciples of the *walis* were later on compiled into books during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which were subsequently developed into *suluk* books, a compilation of mystical songs in Mataram Javanese *macapat* metre. These *suluks* are today recited at mystical gatherings or at *slametan* performances of pious Muslims, where the songs are accompanied by drums and *gamelan* music, and sometimes by performances of female dancers.[83]

That mystical teachings were used by the nine saints in introducing and penetrating the inner religious life of Java has been supported by the research of Kraemer and Schrieke.[84] Their studies commence with general remarks

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[82] Niels Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life in Contemporary Java* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983), 1. See also, Peacock, *Indonesia: An Anthropological Perspective* (Pacific Palisades. Cal.: Goodyear Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), 23-28.

[83] Koentjaraningrat, "The Javanese Culture," 321.

[84] Roff, "Islam Obscured?" 23.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

observing the process and modalities of Islamization in Java, with particular reference to mystical traditions and some examination of the manner in which the mystical tradition of Islam, especially the practice of *wujūdiyya*, was employed and interpreted to fit the Javanese cultural system during the process of penetration. The presence of this Sufi thought, in Drewes' eyes, was heavily influenced by Nuruddin al-Raniri's mystical works, especially his *Tibyān fī ma'rifat al-adyān.*[85]

The manner and modus operandi of cultural assimilation between Javanized Hindu-Buddhist culture and the values of Islam have resulted in a unique style of religious inter-marriage. The history of this commingling goes back to the time of the nine saints, and especially to that of Sunan Kalijaga,[86] the only indigenous *wali* among them. It was he who succeeded in bridging "two high civilizations, two historical epochs, and two great religions."[87] Some scholarly works, written by both indigenous and western scholars, see in Sunan Kalijaga a representative of Javanese tradition, since he was of Javanese descent, and an agent in the Islamization of Java.

The most striking example of what Sunan Kalijaga accomplished in becoming a bridge between the two traditions can be seen in the shadow play (*wayang*) for which Java is renowned. He is supposed to have introduced and

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[85] Drewes, "Een Javaanse Primbon," 3.

[86] His real name was R.M. Syahid. He was the son of Ki Tumenggung Wilatikta, the Regent of Tuban, East Java. As a native Javanese, Sunan Kalijaga knew exactly the situation of his people and his region much better than the other *walis*. He was known as a prudent and wise *wali* and he was one among the most successful missionary-*walis* by virtue of his ability to adapt Islam to the local culture. It is Sunan Kalijaga who is said to have used the shadow puppet theatre as a medium for spreading Islam in Java (Solichin, "Wali Sanga," pp. 23-4 and 69-70.

[87] Geertz, "Islam Observed," 27.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

transplanted Islamic elements into the old *wayang* tradition which had been developed by the Hindu-Buddhist culture to the point where there emerged a harmonious cultural dialogue between these two religions and traditions. It was also through the *wayang* that the Javanese people used to draw moral and ethical lessons from the inner (*batin*, J.&I.) meaning contained in the main theme (*lakon*, J.). It has been suggested that the symbols and content of *wayang* plays were based on the Sufi doctrine of the concept of the perfection of man.[88]

The *wayang* tradition itself is clearly not the product of Islamic civilization.[89] It was imported from India and was propagated amongst the Javanese probably during the Hindu era. Before Islam became the main religion in Java, and even before Islam was born, *wayang* seems to have been widely used as a cultural medium through which the concept of kingship was articulated, particularly at the village level. Many Javanese Muslims today feel that it embodies the essence of philosophical truth and ethics and that it accurately conveys what it means to be Javanese, even though it is not of Javanese origin. But shadow plays are in any case not unique to Java. Woodward has shown that they are found in many Asian countries (such as

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[88] The Javanese interpretations of the *wayang* employ many of the images and metaphors used by Sufi poets. Javanese Muslims often assume that the world can be understood as a *wayang* performance. In this context, the performer (*dalang*, J.) is Allah, while a set of shadows cast on the screen is His "creation." See, Woodward, *Islam in Java, Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1989), 218.

[89] See, for instance, Bambang Sugito, *Dakwah Islam melalui Media Wayang Kulit* (Solo: C.V. Aneka, 1992), 31-32; Cf. Poedjosoebroto, *Wayang: Lambang Ajaran Islam* (Jakarta: Pradnya Paramita), 1978; Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Mythology and Tolerance of the Javanese* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University), 1996.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

India, Malaysia and China] [90] and have figured significantly in Sufi discourse regarding the relationship between humanity and divinity.[91]

The use of the shadow play, as Woodward explains (based on Von Grunebaum's observations), was pervasive in Middle Eastern Muslim societies in the thirteenth century and was one of the most common forms of entertainment. The analogy of the shadow plays was also used in terms of Sufi tradition by some Sufi masters to describe the soul's relationship to the body. Woodward furthermore quotes Nicholson's statement as an example of the metaphoric use of shadow plays on imagery most fully developed in the poetry of Ibn Fārid, a contemporary of Ibn al-'Arabi, who is regarded as having been among the leading Sufi poets. But Woodward cannot provide a convincing argument that the *wayang* tradition is partly Islamic, especially when at the same time he rejects the suggestion that it is a legacy of Hindu civilization. He also maintains that despite its general appeal, the *wayang* is a court tradition, and that the central Javanese *keraton* (J., palace) functions as a defender of "normative Islamic piety," as both a religious and a social ideal.[92] Nevertheless, he is yet again unable to prove his argument that the *wayang* is utilized by the royal court in defending Islamic piety. The *wayang* play serves as a medium for spreading Islamic values in the sense that it often influences the world-view

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[90] See, for example, Ministry of Education and Culture, *Puppet Theatre in India* (New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Culture, Govt. of India), 1982. For the information on shadow play in Malaysia, see Patricia Ann Matusky, *Malaysian Shadow Play and Music: Continuity of an Oral Tradition* (Kuala Lumpur and New York: Oxford University Press), 1993; Cf. Amin Sweeney, *The Ramayana and the Malay Shadow Play* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia), 1972. For a brief account on shadow puppet in China, see G.E. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festival* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1951), 74.

[91] Woodward, "Islam in Java," 218.

[92] Woodward, "Islam in Java," 219.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

and ethos of the Javanese community as a whole, but not in the sense that Woodward indicates. The Hindu elements are undoubtedly there, but to what extent these are surpassed by Islamic values is another matter.

It is true that the cultural encounter that occurred in Java brought about further complicated and unique consequences. Externally, this encounter has made of Islam in Java an inferior variety mainly in the mind of the purist Muslim because it incorporates syncretistic elements; it is thus culturally distinct from what people may consider to be "genuine Islam," or the so-called "Middle Eastern Islam."[93] Denunciation of the Javanese as "bad Muslims," however, does not help one to understand *in toto* Javanese Islam, which represents a form of acculturation between Islam and Javanese local culture.

As far as Javanese religious life is concerned, this encounter may be understood from various perspectives depending on whether we view it from a positive or a negative angle. If we look at it positively, then, cultural assimilation is one of the most obvious corollaries that led to the birth of syncretistic mainstream of the so-called "Javanese Islam," a new civilization derived from a cultural intermarriage between Islam and Javanese tradition. Looked at from a negative perspective, this encounter can also be seen as resulting in a cultural conflict in which the religious identity of each tradition becomes clear; these two traditions simply become divided by a precise and strict religious demarcation. This is what happened in the case of Islam, where the phenomenon of Javanese religious life later on came to be identified by some scholars as an irreconcilable division between the realms of *santri* and

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[93] Ricklefs, "Six Centuries," 100.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

abangan.[94] For this reason, it is understandable that the process of Islam's acculturation should seemingly have taken place over a long period of time because it was hindered by the internal cultural conflict between these two traditions, and in spite of the fact that several attempts were made by the royal court to reconcile them.

One way to recognize the two cultures is by using the pattern of regional distribution of the *santri* and *abangan* realms which characterizes the world-views and ethos of each camp, i.e., the pattern of coastal culture and interior culture. The process of cultural acculturation was therefore preceded by cultural contention between these two, based on geographical differences.[95] The contention between these two cultures was represented in some Javanese literary works such as the *Serat Dermagandul*[96] and the *Suluk Gatoloco*.[97] These

[94] The perspective of cultural polarization has been a significant tool for scholars in approaching Javanese Muslims, especially in classifying worldviews and ethos. Koentjaraningrat, for example, maintains that the Javanese religion can be divided into two types; *agama Jawi* (*abangan* religion) and *agama* Islam *santri* (*santri*, the most devout, Muslims). The *agama Jawi* is manifested in an extensive complex of mystically inclined Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and concepts, with some inclusion of Islamic matters. The *agama* Islam *santri* is considered to be a purer form of Islam, derived from Arabia (Koentjaraningrat, "Javanese Culture," pp. 316-23).

[95] Generally, the culture of Javanese Islam can be divided into two classifications: the Sufi-scriptural tradition, representing *pesisir* (coastal regions) culture; and the interior culture, characterized by a mystical and syncretistic Hindu-Buddhist tradition.

[96] A printed edition was published by Tan Khoen Swie at Kediri in 1921. Despite the fact that it had already been on the market for four years, no protest was ever voiced by Javanese Muslims. This is because Sunan Pakubuwono X of Surakarta (Sunan Wicaksana), in power during the twentieth century, is reported to have fostered a negative image of the nine saints, especially Sunan Bonang, who is cast therein in the part of a "villain" (Drewes, "The Struggle," 311).

[97] This book was published in Surabaya in 1889 and yet, according to Drewes, no voice was ever raised in protest against it. It was not until 1918, when Islamic consciousness had gained headway in Indonesia especially with the Sarekat Islam (SI), that Muslims did react to it. On behalf of the *santri* movement, the SI, with R. Umar Said Cakra-aminata, the president of the central SI, seized this opportunity to follow

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

two Javanese literary works seem to have been written with an animus against Islam in Java, claiming that it was a faith foreign to the island. In his article, Drewes provides a synopsis of the *Serat Dermagandul*, which portrays Islam as

> a religion which had come to power as a result of the utterly reprehensible conduct of the *walis*, the venerated saints of ancient Javanese Islam who conspired against Majapahit, and by the ignominious action taken by Raden Patah, the first king of Demak, against his father, the last Brawijaya of Majapait. The author has not a good word to say for the institutions and daily practices of Islam and scoffs at and derides the Holy Land of this religion and its inhabitants. He does not mince matters but declares outright that the conversion of the Javanese to the faith of the Arabs has changed them into half-hearted people. They will not recover strength of purpose until they have reinstated their ancestral religion (*agama luri*) and returned to the cult of *budi* (reason; right thinking), which word, of course, alludes to *agama buda*, the ancient faith that was superseded by Islam.[98]

This hostility did not in any case represent the religious attitudes of the Javanese towards Islam as a whole and it was short-lived,[99] particularly after the *santris* came forward to protest against the publication of the *Serat Dermagandul* in 1925. The *santris*, most of whom belonged to the modernist movement known as the Muhammadiyah, condemned this book and considered it to be an unjustified attack on Islam. After a series of mass-meetings involving both sides, the dispute was resolved in 1925 by the formation of a permanent committee –called *Komite Penengah Penghinaan* (I., Committee for the Repression of Revilement)-- which was able to reconcile both camps. No more

more religiously minded right wing of his organization to vent their feelings on the matter (Drewes, "The Struggle," 314-15).

[98] Drewes, "The Struggle Between Javanism and Islam as Illustrated by the Serat Dermagandul," *Bijdragen tot Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 122 (1966): 310-11.

[99] Ricklefs has noted that the self-consciously antagonistic relation between the *abangan* and *santri* really dates only from the nineteenth century, particularly when the rise of a revitalized Islam forced many Javanese to reconsider their identity as Muslims and Javanese. (Ricklefs, "Six Centuries," 115).

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

was heard about any activities of the committee in the following years so that one may assume that the contention had subsided.[100]

It is therefore no longer relevant to view today's Javanese Islam from this dualistic perspective since the earlier cultural polarization has melted away with the new consciousness among the Javanese that obstinacy will not solve the problem of cultural contention. This paradigm furthermore has been buttressed by a positive understanding that maintaining or preserving the Javanese legacy, which has been enriched by Islamic civilization in general, is a good thing as long as it does not contradict the soul of Islam itself or the Islamic teachings stemming from the Qur'ān and Sunna (Ḥadīth). Moreover, since ideological dominance of the *abangan* mainstream has gradually declined as a result of the continuing Islamization of Java over the course of more than six centuries, Islam is today at the centre-point of Javanese religiosity.[101]

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[100] Drewes, "The Struggle," 312-13.

[101] This conclusion is at least justified by Hefner on the basis of his ethnographic research in the mountainous area of Tengger, East Java, during nineteen months in 1978-90 and eight months of 1985. See his article, "Islamizing Java? Religion and Politics in Rural East Java," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (August 1987): 533-54; cf. Hefner, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985).

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

CHAPTER TWO

THE *SLAMETAN* RITUAL IN THE STRUCTURE OF JAVANESE ISLAM

A. The Basic Conception of the *Slametan*

It is generally accepted that the *slametan* plays a central role in the structure of Javanese Islamic rites. By definition, the *slametan* is a Javanese Muslim ritual conducted to gain certain blessings from God.[1] Federspiel sees the *slametan* as "a communal feast, popular among the nominal Muslim (*abangan*) population on Java, given to commemorate important events in an individual's life."[2] In his opinion, the ceremony attached to the ritual has an animistic and "shamanistic" flavor in the sense that it is tied with the superstitious beliefs, non-Islamic spirits and propitious and unfortunate days and numbers.

In more technical terms, Geertz describes the *slametan* as "the Javanese version of what is perhaps the world's most common religious ritual, the communal feast, and, as almost everywhere, it symbolizes the mystic and social

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[1] There are, of course, various definitions of the *slametan* made by scholars depending upon what aspect is emphasized more heavily. This definition, nevertheless, may be regarded as the most accommodative since it is built based upon the major characteristic of the *slametan*.

[2] Howard M. Federspiel, *A Dictionary of Indonesian Islam* (Ohio: Center for International Studies Ohio University, 1995), 234-35; Cf. his *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1969), 71-74.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

unity of those participating in it."[3] He views the *slametan* as the most essential ritual in Javanese religion and as a stereotypical animistic rite intended to strengthen social solidarity among the Javanese themselves. So, there are two inherent aspects that Geertz observes embodied in the *slametan* ritual, i.e. the spiritual notion and social integration that go hand in hand and support each other.

In an almost identical definition, Hefner agrees with Geertz's conception of *slametan*. According to him, a *slametan* can be defined as "a public religious ceremony involving priestly invocation and worship of deities, the witnessing of that event by lay persons, and, at least in most instances, some kind of meal communion or social festivity to celebrate the occasion."[4] Viewed from a religious perspective, the key moment or element manifested within a *slametan* ritual, Hefner argues further, is the priest's invocation of the deities without which there is no blessing, and thus, in theory, no reason for celebration.[5]

Taking a different approach from Geertz and Hefner, Woodward, in a more textual or "scriptural" sense, describes the *slametan* as "a ritual meal at which Arabic prayers are recited and food is offered to the Prophet Muhammad, saints, and ancestors, who are implored to shower blessings on the community."[6] The key points in the *slametan* are thus the Arabic prayers and

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[3] Clifford Geetz, *The Religion of Java* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), 11. See also his article, "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example," in *American Anthropologist*, vol. 59, number 1 (February 1957): 32-54; Cf. his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973), 142-169; Cf. His article, "Religious and Economic Behavior in a Central Javanese Town: Some Preliminary Considerations," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 4 (1956): 138-139.

[4] Hefner, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 104.

[5] Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 104.

[6] Mark R. Woodward, "The *Slametan*: Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam," *History of Religion*, 28: 54.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

meal offerings dedicated spiritually to the "Muslim" objects. It is also clear that, from this definition, Woodward assumes the "Islamicity" of the *slametan*; it is a part of the Islamic rites, stemming from the deeply rooted *Sufi* interpretation of the tradition of Islam. It is for this reason that he blatantly challenges Geertz's "animistic-Hindu" criteria as a misleading concept denoting the *slametan* ritual.[7]

Besides the aforementioned scholars, two Dutch scholars, Mayer and Moll did a specific study of the *slametan* ritual, in 1909,[8] long before other scholars did their research on the same subject matter. In the very beginning of their book, Mayer and Moll maintain that, in Javanese Islam, the *slametan* is categorized as a type of syncretistic rite. In this case, they further argue that,

> "Bij een volk als het Javaansche, dat in zijn synkretisme behalve Mohammedaansche, nog zoovele aan het Hindoeïsme en den Polynesischen eeredienst, voornamelijk het fetisisme en het spiritisme ontleende geloofsbegrippen huldigt, behoeft het niemand te verwonderen, wanneer het in zijne adat afwijkingen vertoont, die geheel of gedeeltelijk in strijd zijn met de voorschriften van den Islam, dien het thans heet – ook meent—te belijden."[9]

> "The people of Java, in their syncretism beside as Muslims, still believe in Hinduism and Polynesism, especially the fetishism and spiritualism. It is not a surprise to find in their manner, custom and institution, or precisely in their *adat* a deviation, which is partly contradictory to the Islamic teachings (religion) that they now believe."

In this study as well, they made a clear distinction between the *slametans* from the *sedekahs*, in that the first denotes a rite for the living, and the second, prayer meals for the dead.[10] This distinction is, however, not taken into account by subsequent researchers, arguing that both *of them* have the

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[7] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 28, 54.

[8] L.Th. Mayer & J.F. van Moll, *De sedekahs en slametans in de desa* (Semarang: Van Dorp), 1909.

[9] Mayer and Moll, "De Sedekahs en Slametans," 5.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

[10] Mayer and Moll, "De Sedekahs en Slametans," 5-6.

same spiritual and psychological intention, i.e. to gain godly blessings involving meal distribution or giving food to those in attendance as a part of the ritual. In supporting their definition of the *slametan*, Mayer and Moll describe it as follows: "onder de benaming slamētan valt feitelijk elk ander offermaal, dat gegeven wordt voor het welzijn van een persoon of familie, of zaak, op deze aarde" [11] ("The meaning behind the *slametan* is actually the offer of a meal (meal charity) which is given to create a state of the well-being of a person or a family or other earthly matters.") From this description, it can be argued that the main focus of the *slametan*, according to Mayer and Moll, is the "offermaal" or meal ceremony conducted by an individual or family, for some businesses and it is conducted to seek a state of well being or welfare.

In a teleological sense, it is intended to create, citing Beatty's formulation, "a state of well being, security and freedom from hindrances of both a practical and spiritual kind".[12] It is in accordance with this teleological perspective that the purpose of the *slametan* can be understood in light of the Javanese conception of *slamet* (J., being safe). Most scholars have defined the concept of *slamet* in a psychological and spiritual sense.[13] Koentjaraningrat, for instance, refers to it as "a state in which events will run their fixed course and nothing untoward will happen to anyone."[14] Meanwhile, Geertz defines it as

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[11] Mayer and Moll, "De Sedekahs en Slametans," 6.

[12] Andrew Beatty, "Adam and Eve and Vishnu: Syncretism in the Javanese *Slametan*," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 2, June 1996, 274. Beatty, however, tends to follow Hefner's theoretical arguments since his research was conducted in a region at the easternmost tip of East Java, Banyuwangi, in which the majority of Muslims are much influenced by Hindu tradition. As we know, Banyuwangi is geographically close to Bali, where Hinduism is the major religious presence.

[13] See, for example, Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 104.

[14] Koentjaraningrat, "The Javanese of South Central Java," in *Social Structure in Southeast Asia*, ed. G. Murdock (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960), pp. 88-115.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese... McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

"that peculiarly negative state of bodily and mental equanimity."[15] In another part of his article, he mentions that the *slametans* "are intended to be both offerings to the spirits and commensal mechanisms of social integration for the living."[16] During the performance of the rituals, the spirits are said to "draw their sustenance from the odor of the food, the incense which is burned, and the Moslem prayer; the human participants draw theirs from the material substance of the food and from their social interaction."[17] The result of this ritual, Geertz argues, is "two-fold; the spirits are appeased and neighborhood solidarity is strengthened."[18]

Basing himself on a purely socio-anthropological observation, Geertz indeed defines the *slametan* ritual rather in a more "*abangan*" or "*kejawen*" context since he observed the phenomenon of the *slametan* ritual in the anonymous small city of "Modjokuto," in which *abangan* worldviews were prevalent. Surveyed from the context of when and where his research was conducted, Geertz's findings were no doubt quite plausible. The *kejawen* Javanese were religiously aware of the spiritual patronage of their deities from any physical or psychological damages. Their religious conception of supernatural being was then not so well developed, simply because the religion they understood was still part of a syncretistic form of Javanese religions. Their conception of God was an ambiguous mix of *mBah Buda* (a God in Buddhist context) and other forms of spirit beliefs, such as *memedis* (frightening spirits), *lelembuts* (possessing spirits), demits (place spirits), and *danyangs* (guardian

[15] Geertz, "The Religion," 13.

[16] Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change," 35.

[17] Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change," 35.

[18] Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change," 35-6.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

spirits).[19] It is within the macrocosmos of *kejawen* that Geertz has placed the discussion of the *slametan* ritual; offerings of food, five color flowers, the burning of incense and other accessories provided in the ritual are dedicated as a part of the ritual sacrifice. After the *slametan* ritual is performed, whatever the concerned host of the *slametan* wishes for and requests is likely to be fulfilled by the gods addressed in this ritual.[20]

In an almost similar formulation, Woodward situates the concept of *slamet* within social and psychological discourse as both "mental states and social conditions."[21] Psychological peacefulness in both individual and social context is, he argues, the central key to the concept of *slamet*. The individual is said to be *slamet* when his mind is at rest, untroubled by worldly concerns or supernatural fears. Furthermore he argues that "the community (however defined) is *slamet* when there is an adequate level of material prosperity together with an absence of social or political conflict".[22] The interpretation of *slamet* in its Javanese conception results, in turn, in a more technical and processional rite, with the reciting of some Islamic prayers - largely taken from verses of the Qur'ān - and some other components, such as providing traditional Javanese food and so on.

The *slametan* ritual is also called *kenduri* (M.) or *kenduren* (J.) due to its close association with ritual meal traditions throughout the Muslim world

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[19] For a more detailed information, see Clifford Geertz, "The Religion," especially pp. 16-29.

[20] Geertz, "The Religion," 25.

[21] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 67.

[22] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 67.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

(Indo-Persian, Acehnese, and Urdu *kanduri*, Malay *kenduri*).[23] In this context, one should be aware of the practical difference between these two terms, for they may overlap each other. Viewed from the etymological sense, the term *kenduri* is itself complex. It is said to be a Persian term, the literal meaning of which is tablecloth, used in *Shafi'ite* legal texts to refer to feasts held in honor of the prophet Muhammad, Muslim saints, and souls of the dead.[24] In the Malay world, its literal meaning is a table for feasts and, by extension, the feast itself. It is derived from the Persian *kundur* (incense), which always accompanies food offerings.[25]

Since there is the possibility of an overlap, comparing the phenomena of the *slametan* and the *kenduren*, then, may not be proportional. Hefner makes a distinction between the two terms, holding that the term *slametan* denotes in some sense "just tradition" or *adat*, while *kenduren* has something to do with religious or primary means whereby the *slamet* blessing desired is achievable.[26] This view is less accurate, if not misleading to some extent, especially when it is contrasted to today's reality and the "blurred" use of both terms. This "misidentification" might be caused by the fact that the *kenduren*, characterizing the prayer meal, is a common phenomenon not only in Java, but

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[23] For more detailed information about *kenduri*, especially as held in Gayo society, North Sumatra, see John R. Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 229-50. Cf. "On Scriptural Essentialism and Ritual Variation: Muslim Sacrifice in Sumatra and Morocco." *American Ethnologist* 19:4 (November 1992): 656-671. For the information on *kenduri* among the Malay Muslims, see Zainal Kling, "Social Structure: The Practices of Malay Religiosity," in Mohd. Taib Osman (Ed.), *Islamic Civilization in the Malay World* (Kuala Lumpur and Istanbul: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and The Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, 1997), 51-80.

[24] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 64.

[25] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 64.

[26] Hefner, *Hindu Javanese*, 108.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

in the Muslim world in general, while the application of the terminology of the *slametan* can only be found within Javanese Islam. In Javanese, the two terms are in fact interchangeable, both referring to a prayer meal for obtaining God's blessings.

Nevertheless, both terms in fact refer to the idea of feast designed for a certain religious purpose. If viewed from whether the ritual is categorized as Islamic or customary *adat*, Hefner could be correct that "one can have a *slametan* without entertainment, customary processions, receptions, and dancing, but one cannot have a *slametan* without a *kenduren* prayer meal."[27] This statement is, of course, understandable because the main core of the *slametan* itself is *kenduren* or prayer meal, not the accompanying entertainment, dancing, and, sometimes, drinking (which is forbidden in Islam).[28]

On the basis of the above explanation, it can be concluded that conceptually speaking, the *slametan* is a peculiar Javanese ritual shared by largely Muslim segments which is conducted for the purpose of either physical or psychological safety, state of well being, and prosperity. Most scholars characterize the *slametan* as a syncretistic ritual in the sense that various elements can be found there; Muslim elements, Hindu-Buddhist elements, and some other elements. In sum, it can be argued that the basic conception of the *slametan* is derived from the spiritual interpretation of the Javanese Muslims about the macro cosmos of supernatural being.

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[27] Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 105.

[28] A more detailed explanation of "core and periphery" in the *slametan* will be elucidated in section C of this chapter.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

B. The *Slametan*: Its Pattern and Practical Implementation

In Geertz's opinion, the *slametans* can be categorized into four basic forms. The first encompasses those *slametans* which center around the crises of life, such as birth, circumcision, marriage and death. The second contains those associated with the Muslim ceremonial calendar or the so-called "calendrical *slametan*," like the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (*garebeg Malud/Mulud* in its massive form, or *Muludan* in a smaller form) and the ending of the fasting day (*'Īēd*, J.). The third form includes those *slametans* concerned with the social integration of the village - called *bersih desa* (J., literally "the cleansing of the village" from evil spirits). This type of *slametan* is accomplished by providing traditional foods like *apem*, yellow rice, etc. dedicated to the so-called *danyang desa* (J., guardian spirits of the village).[29] The fourth and last form of *slametan* contains the so-called "intermittent *slametans*" held by a particular family for certain purposes at irregular intervals and depending upon unusual occurrences.[30]

In an almost similar classification, Mayer and Moll categorize two main kinds of the *slametans*; the first category encompasses those *slametans* dealing with life crises such as birth, marriage, and death, while the second includes those *slametans* dealing with agricultural matters, such as plantation and

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[29] John Pemberton, in his book, *On the Subject of "Java,"* devotes a chapter for a discussion on the *bersih desa* ceremony. *Bersih desa* is sometimes also called *merdi desa* (J., to take care of the village) or *sedekah bumi* (J., to give alms to the earth). This event commonly occurs in such areas as south Central Java, especially Gunung Kidul, a region adjacent to Yogyakarta which is located on the coast of the southern sea (*Laut Kidul*, J.). For more detailed information, see Pemberton, *On The Subject of "Java"* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 236-268.

[30] Geertz, "The Religion," 30.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

harvest ceremonies. The former category is further subdivided into five subcategories of *slametans*; the first is called periodical *slametans* (*periodiek terugkeerende*); the second is *slametans* conducted for the purpose of marriage (*bij huwelijken*); the third is *slametans* conducted during the period of pregnancy (*bij zwangerschap*); the fourth is those *slametans* concerned with the birth of children and childhood (*bij geboorten en gedurende den kinderleeftijd*); and the fifth is those *slametans* conducted in the course of death (*bij sterfgevallen*).[31] With special reference to the last type of *slametan* mentioned above, Mayer and Moll ascribe to it the term *sedekah*, not *slametan* in its most basic conception. It is within this framework that Mayer and Moll employ the term *slametan* differently from the term *sedekah*, even though both are designed for a similar purpose and conducted within the continuous period which is a lifetime.[32]

If it is viewed from the social perspective, the *slametan* has been, and still is, a strong institutional ritual within the wider structure of Javanese rituals. As a preserved ritual within Javanese society, the *slametan* can function as a "theological bridge" between the *abangan* Muslims and the *santri* Muslims. The *abangan* --very often combined with *priyayi*-- and the *santri* Muslims are thereby able to share a theological paradigm based on, citing Geertz's words, "contextual relativism" and "relativistic tolerance".[33] In this respect, the *slametan* has a pivotal role in preserving the theological paradigm of what has insofar been called "Javanese Islam." For example, when an

[31] Mayer and Moll, "De sedekahs en slametans," 21-61.

[32] For the difference between the *slametan* and *sedekah* in their basic conception, see the section A of the current chapter.

[33] Geertz, "The Religion," 366-67.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

abangan - or *priyayi* - family holds a *slametan* ceremony, they always entrust the *santri* to lead the ceremony and the Islamic prayers. The *santri*, on other occasions, will invite all of their neighbors, including the *abangan* into their *slametan*. In other words, the *slametan* is one of the most important social rituals in Java, functioning as a reconciling factor among the ideological elements of Javanese Muslims.

In the context of the position of the *slametan* as an institutionalized ritual, it is important to note that Javanese Muslims tend to refer to the *slametan* when they face certain hindrances in their daily life. In this position, the *slametan* ceremony becomes an informally institutionalized solution to certain ills which afflict some communities.[34] This position is also clear when we observe certain periodical or, quoting Geertz, "calendrical" *slametan* conducted on special occasions, such as the commemoration of birthday of the

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[34] An example is given by Mulder concerning the misadventure faced by one member of a Javanese family. In his research, Mulder witnessed how Pak Amat, a graduate of Gadjah Mada University and an important leader of his *kampung* (quarter town), as a leader of a *kebatinan* group, became a leading lottery predictor in Central Java. Although his "career" as a lottery predictor was a matter of controversy among *kebatinan* leaders in Yogyakarta, he began to give predictions anyway. His first predictions were sure numbers, which meant that if he said that the outcome would be 15, he believed that this prediction would be true. But on another occasion, he failed to predict the right number, so a lot of Javanese and, to some extent Chinese, lost more than they could afford to lose. His failing prediction resulted in a massive crisis in his *kampung* and somebody in one of the Javanese families fell ill; but there was no money left to buy medicine. Finally, they believed that the only solution was the *slametan* intended to re-establish order and unity in the house of the family that had been most hurt by the gambling. The *slametan* ceremony began at 9 p.m. and Pak Amat was late, arriving at 11 p.m. In this ritual ceremony, Pak Amat sincerely confessed to be a sinner; he repented and condemned himself in front of the audience. By giving such an example, Mulder actually has come to the position that the *slametan* has a massive and important role in Javanese society, although he does not state it explicitly. The *slametan* functions as an institutionalized ritual ceremony when individuals or the Javanese society have serious problems. (Niels Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life in Contemporary Java* (Singapore, Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore University Press, 1983), 52-53. See also his article, "*Abangan* Javanese Religious Thought and Practice," *Bijdragen*, No. 139, 261).

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Prophet Muhammad (*garebeg Mulud*, J.),[35] which is officially held by the palace family (*keluarga keraton*, J.) in Surakarta and Yogyakarta.

The *Garebeg Mulud* (or *Malud*) held by the Yogyakarta *keraton* (J., palace) is one of the biggest *slametan* ceremonies in Central Java. This ritual ceremony is accompanied by a pair of royal *gamelan*, the traditional Javanese orchestra, named *Kiai Sekati, and* is performed at the central mosque of the court from the 6th of Mulud (the lunar month in which the Prophet was born) for 6 consecutive days and nights. The Javanese people usually call the *garebeg* ceremony *Sekaten*, a Javanese word derived from the Arabic *shahadatayn* (two testimonial phrases). Since the 1920s, the annual fair of the Yogyakarta principality has been held during the same period at *Alun-alun Lor* (J., the main public square to the north of the royal palace).[36] This massive ritual festival has since become the largest of its kind, and today attracts the attention of both domestic and foreign tourists.

In addition to the *garebeg slametan* held in an official manner by the royal palaces of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, *bersih desa* is another form of a culturally institutionalized *slametan* in most villages, especially in Central Java.

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[35] The literal meaning of *garebeg* is "royal audience". This ritual ceremony has been institutionalized by both the Surakarta and Yogyakarta palaces to commemorate some "official holidays" based on the Muslim calendar. The three major Islamic holidays are the most common ones: *'Īd al-Fitr*, at the end of the fasting month of *Ramadan* (*garebeg sawal*, J.), *'Īd al-Adḥa*, the feast of sacrifice held in connection to the *hajj* (*garebeg besar*, J.), and the *Mawlid al-Nabi* (A.), the birthday of the prophet Muhammad (*garebeg maulud*, J.). These three ritual ceremonies are commonly conducted at the northern segment of the palace (*keraton*, J.). On these occasions, the enthroned sultan is believed to attain spiritual union with his God and with his assembled subjects, assuming the mediating role of a *Sufi* master. For a more detailed account of this, see Woodward, "Islam," 205-214. Cf. his article, Woodward, "The *Garbeg Malud* in Yogyakarta: Veneration of the Prophet as Imperial Ritual," *Journal of Ritual studies*: 5:1 (Winter, 1991): 109-132. See also, Mitsuo Nakamura, *The Crescent Arises over the Banyan Tree: A Study of the Muhammadijah Movement in a Central Javanese Town*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ithaca: Cornell University, 1976, 42-46.

[36] Nakamura, "The Crescent," 43.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

The *bersih desa* is aimed at either appeasing the village's tutelary or guardian spirit (*dhanyang*, J.) or celebrating post-harvest events as a result of prosperity granted by the gods.[37] So, essentially the *bersih desa* serves a twofold purpose: maintaining agricultural production and preserving hospitable relations with the world of local spirits.

In addition to contributing money for the cost of sponsoring a *wayang* (J., shadow puppet) performance, each village household also contributes a pair of *ambengan* or *tumpeng* (J., trays of prepared food) containing cooked rice surrounded by discrete portions of accompaniments and other *jajan pasar* (J., market snacks) as offerings. After a certain number of trays have been collected at the *lurah's* (J., village headman) house, around 11 a.m. a number of men acting as household representatives assemble for the *slametan* proper, which focuses on the distribution of prepared food after a formal speech (*ujub*, J.) delivered by the *lurah* and prayers led by an official religious representative, devoted both to general well-being and the effectual execution of the event at hand.[38]

The principal aspect that can be drawn from the massive festivals of the *slametan* mentioned above is the phenomenon of social gathering through

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[37] In the past, of course, it was a village's tutelary spirit(s) and gods who were believed to provide a sense of well-being and give fertility to the soil so that the Javanese could harvest their crops well. The *Bersih desa* ritual ceremony is usually performed at the center of places believed to be sites of the village's tutelary spirit, such as an oddly endowed well, spring, or banyan tree. This ritual ceremony is usually accompanied by the performance of *wayang kulit* (J., shadow puppet) portraying the story of Dewi Sri, one of the most common deities believed to provide fertility for their farming fields. The performance of a Sri story, some villagers noted, acknowledged the completion of the harvest and promised prosperity in the next agricultural season. See, Pamberton, "On the Subject," 243.

[38] Pamberton, "On the Subject," 243-44.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

which spiritual needs can be massively achieved. This phenomenon can be understood only in light of the "anti-individual" perspective which is the predominant characteristic of Javanese life as a whole; not only can social interaction be strengthened but more spiritual virtue can be obtained from the rituals. In connection to this assumption, Geertz's emphasis on the social aspect embodied within the Javanese *slametans* can probably be justified.

Practically speaking, a *slametan* or *kenduren* ceremony is usually held by a family in need of special prayers from its neighbors and nearby acquaintances for a specific purpose. With the exception of certain birth *slametans* – which sometimes include women - and the occasional children's *slametan*, the prayer portion of the ritual is primarily a male affair. Only the male members of the household attend this ritual ceremony; relatives who live in the same village or town, and a number of invited guests also attend.[39] Customarily, all guests are invited orally by a chosen messenger shortly before the sunset prayer. Women are usually involved in food preparation for guests, and remain in the kitchen or elsewhere in the back part of the house.

The process of *slametan* is usually accompanied by traditional Javanese meals. Ritual meals are traditionally acknowledged as central to every *slametan* event in Java, as are the Arabic prayers (*do'ā*, A.).[40] The most common food

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[39] Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (Singapore, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 347.

[40] There are two main interpretations concerning to whom the meals are dedicated. Among the *abangan* belief, the food provided in the *slametan* is dedicated to deities, spirits, and other spiritual guardians. Through the dedicated meals, the *abangans* believe that the deities and spirits guarantee their safety, nothing will happen to them, and the circumvention of catastrophes due to the deities' anger (Geertz, "The Religion," 14; cf. Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 110; cf. Beatty, "Adam and Eve," 274). In most *santri's* eyes, the food, however, simply reflects giving charity or feeding the people who are economically "the have not" (*ṣadaqah*, A.). From the *santri* point of view, the distribution of food to the poor, neighbors, and relatives is among the examples of charity inspired by the Qur'ān and Hadīth. Woodward, in this respect, uses this

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

provided during the *slametan* is yellow rice (*sega kuning*, J.) and *apam* or *apem* (J., popular snacks offered to the dead). In many regions, including Central Java, *apem* is closely associated with death, and is thus considered taboo to eat.[41]

The ceremony is usually held in the front room of the house. In an average peasant house, mats are laid out on the floor, and two or three bamboo trays (*tampah*, J.), on which food is provided, are placed on the mats in the center of the room. The food consists of rice cones - sometimes of yellow rice - decorated with side dishes of fish, eggs, meat, vegetables, and fruits, presenting a wide variety of colors and shapes of side dishes (*tumpeng*, J.), usually covered with banana leaves.[42] Typically, there are also one or two kettles containing tea and a number of glasses for the guests, along with bowls containing fresh water for hand washing; empty plates are also provided for the guests to serve themselves.

Once the leaf-covered dishes (*tumpeng*, J.) are placed in the center of the room, the invited guests all sit cross-legged around the mat(s), or *sila* (J.). Before the *slametan* ritual begins, the guests typically engage in small talk among themselves. Enjoying cigarettes provided by the host, the early arrivals wait for those who have not yet arrived. The room slowly fills with the odor of

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perspective in viewing the *slametan* phenomena in central Java, especially Yogyakarta (Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 63).

[41] This taboo, in turn, makes an image that *apem* is a sacred food despite the fact that it is a common snack in South and Southeast Asian countries' traditions (Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 73).

[42] The kind of food provided by the host, however, varies from one region to another, depending on what type of *slametan* is being held. This is very much determined by the influence of local tradition on the given culture. If the *slametan* is designed as a prayer for the dead, the food is usually this *tumpeng* (J., side dishes food decorated with fish, meat, etc.) and supplemented with some other snacks like *apem* or *apam*. In East Java, especially in the Banyuwangi region, porridge of different colors is one of the most favorite food during the *slametan*. (Beatty, "Adam and Eve," 274).

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

burning Javanese incense (*menyan* or *dupa*, J.).[43] Once all the guests have arrived, the ceremony begins with a brief address by the host, usually delivered in a highly formal Javanese style (*kromo inggil*, J.).

The opening speech by the host is called *ujub* (J., statement of intent). The purpose of *ujub* is, firstly, to welcome the invited guests and to express gratitude for their attendance. Secondly, it is to explain the specific reason for the *slametan*, e.g. the circumcision of his son, the naming of his child, the marriage of his daughter, the seven-month period of his daughter or wife's pregnancy, or the death of a member of his family. The third purpose is to mention the general reason for the rite, such as safety or avoiding bad luck, for example. The final utterance of the *ujub* is to apologize for the lack of eloquence in the speech and the inadequacy of the food.[44]

In more orthodox Muslim families - especially those influenced by reformist Islam's call for a return to the Qur'ān and the abolition of syncretistic rites not explicitly authorized in Islam - the *ujub* speech in their *kenduren* or *slametan* concludes with a simple expression of thanks for attendance and a repeated appeal for forgiveness for any unintentional inadequacies. The *ujub* is not regarded as the ritual part of their *kenduren*, but merely as a secular protocol or secular welcoming speech. The ritual part of the *kenduren* is Arabic

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[43] Since the *slametan* is more "Islamized" now, some *santri* families consider the burning of Javanese incense (*menyan* or *dupa*, J.) to be part of the Hindu tradition and, therefore, reject it. Some Javanese Muslims, however, continue this tradition, saying that the burning of the *dupa* is free of Hindu symbolism, and is intended simply to make the room fragrant. They argue that making a room fragrant is not contradictory to the *sharī'ah* (Islamic Law) and is not forbidden by Islam.

[44] Geertz, "The Religion," 13; cf. Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 74; cf. Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 106.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

prayer or *do'a* - sometimes called *donga* or *ndonga* (J.) -[45] led by a special religious person such as *modin* (J., an official religious specialist) or *kiyayi* (J., an Islamic teacher) after the host has finished his *ujub* speech.

The *donga* is largely drawn from the verses of the Qur'ān. The most common passage chanted in the *slametan* is the opening passage of the Qur'ān, the *fātiḥah*. The *fātiḥah* is the first chapter of the Qur'ān and the most common prayer in the Muslim world. On other occasions, other passages of the Qur'ān may be chanted, being better suited to the specific purpose of the ceremony. The *fātiḥah* is followed by one or more further selections from the Qur'ān. *Surah Yā Sīn* (chapter 35) is always recited at the death *slametan*, while *al-Ikhlāṣ* (chapter 112) or *Qāf* (chapter 50) are often recited at exorcisms, when the *slametan* is intended to restore peacefulness.[46]

To terminate the *slametan*, the *modin* recites the last part of the *donga* while the guests and host hold their palms facing upward, greeting each pause with a loud "*amin*" (amen). This posture is used as a gesture not only in the *slametan* ceremony but also in most *donga* prayers in Muslim ritual activities, such as the five daily prayers (*ṣalāt*, A.) and at the tombs of saints. When the *modin* finishes his *donga*, those in attendance rub their faces with their palms, symbolizing that they have absorbed the blessings descending from heaven (God).[47]

[45] *Donga* is a Javanese word for the Arabic term *du'ā'*. It is a prayer of supplication that may be included in the five daily prayers (*ṣalāt*). Many *kejawen* Muslims use Javanese *donga* when they are visiting tombs, but on many occasions the Arabic *donga* is preferable. For this account, see Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 121-22.

[46] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 79.

[47] Geertz, "The Religion," 13.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

When the *donga* is finished, the *modin* is invited by the host to begin the meal, and is followed in turn by the other guests. With the plates or banana leaves provided by the host, each guest serves himself and returns to his seat to eat. The food is usually picked up with the fingertips of the right hand (*muluk*, J.), although forks and spoons are also provided. Typically, guests eat only part of the food they have taken, wrapping the remainder in the banana leaf to take home after having thanked the host. Sometimes, the host distributes food packages in containers of plaited bamboo (*besek*, J.) for the guests to take home. The food that the guests take from the bamboo trays is eaten at the *slametan*, while the food taken home is called *berkat* (J.).[48]

In some regions of Central Java, the *slametan* or *kenduren* is also identified with ritual activities called *tahlilan*[49] through the repeated recitation of the phrase *lā ilāha illa Allāh* in chorus by all those in attendance. The *tahlilan* itself may last for more than one hour at a stretch, although in some parts of the region – and especially in the homes of *priyayi* (aristocrat) families – the duration is usually limited to a quarter or half an hour (with the exception of the mortuary *slametan).*[50] The guests are invited to eat after the *tahlilan* is finished, and activities such as those described earlier follow.

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[48] Derived from *barakah* (A.), *berkat* denotes blessings from God. Woodward maintains that *berkat* is one of the ways in the *slametan* of attaining the blessings from God. See, Woodward, "Islam in Java," 145.

[49] Originally stemmed from the Arabic word *tahlīl* whose literal meaning is chanting the Arabic phrase *lā ilāha illa Allāh* (there is no god except God). Later on, this ceremony was institutionalized as the *tahlilan* ritual and is still one of the most integral parts of the *slametan* ceremony in Java. The *tahlilan* ritual can also be undertaken outside of the room, as when visiting the tombs of saints. See, Koentjaraningrat, "Javanese," 348.

[50] Koentjaraningrat, "The Javanese," 349-50. The *slametan*, thus, may form a part of an individual's ritual life, such as the mortuary rites on the seventh, fortieth, one hundredth, and one thousandth day after a death (*mitung dinteni*, *nyekawan ndasani, nyatus, nyewu*, J.).

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

To conclude, the pattern of the *slametan* can be classified into two basic forms; elementary *slametan* that is conducted by certain individuals or families, and elaborate *slametan* which is conducted collectively by a group of people and is authorized culturally by certain local institutions such as the Yogyakarta and Surakarta *keraton*. In the first type of the *slametan*, a simple, basic but devoted ritual process is employed. Meanwhile in the second one, a more colossal and extensive ritual is held.

C. Between Islamic Core and Syncretistic Periphery in the *Slametan*: An Ongoing Controversy

As the *slametan* rituals are often considered as one of the religio-cultural pillars in Java, they are therefore observably found in the heart of "Javanese religion." They are the main windows for entering the religious life of Java, dominated by two theological mainstreams: *santri* (I.&J., the most devout Muslims) and *abangan* (I.&J., the nominal, syncretistic Muslims).[51] That is to say, the Javanese *slametan* is commonly an integral part of both *abangan* and *santri* cultures. Among the *abangan* in some parts of Java, the *slametan* is

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[51] We can compare Geertz's division of the Javanese Muslims to three major segments; the first is the *santri*, the second is *abangan*, and the third is *priyayi* (aristocrats). This type of division is, however, opposed by some later scholars in particular domestic ones like Harsja W. Bachtiar, Zamakhsyari Dhofier and Zaini Muchtarom. These scholars maintain that the trilogy of the Javanese Muslim made by Geertz applies more to social and privileged status rather than ideological and religious trend. Due to this reason, a Muslim – either socially a layman or an aristocrat – can be both *santri* and *abangan*. The *abangan-santri* polarization does not hinder a vertical mobilization among the Javanese Muslims themselves. The high culture of *priyayi* and the native peasant tradition of *abangan* can be subsumed under a single term *kejawen*, meaning "Javanism." For this discussion, see Harsja W. Bachtiar, "The Religion of Java: Commentary," *Madjalah Ilmu-ilmu Sastra Indonesia* 1, vol. 5 (January 1973): 85-118; cf. Zamakhsyari Dhofier, "Santri-Abangan dalam Kehidupan Orang Jawa: Teropong dari Pesantren," *Prisma* 7, no. 5 (1978): 48-63; Zaini Muchtarom, *Santri and Abangan in Java*, unpublished M.A. Thesis (McGill University), 1975.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

practiced for the events of pregnancy, birth, early childhood, marriage, death, and other moments of life passage. For the *santri*, the *slametan* is used to celebrate important dates in Islamic history, such as the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, the prophet's ascension into heaven, and the beginning and ending of the Muslim month of fasting. Even though the *slametan* has no explicit sanction in Qur'anic tradition, it plays a pivotal role in Javanese Islam.

In addition to the roles performed by the *slametan* in both *santri* (especially orthodox Muslim) and *abangan* (syncretistic) communities, the ritual also unites them, being shared by both. Although the *slametan* ritual is shared by both communities, Geertz tends to see this ritual as a product of the *abangan* rather than the *santri* belief system since it is comprised of mixed Indian, Islamic, and indigenous Javanese elements.[52] It is this syncretistic quality that makes up the "peasant culture" and, in turn, forges the firm religious identity of the so-called "Javanese religion." It is also from within this religious camp that Geertz denotes the *slametan* rituals to which they belong.

Woodward, in response to Geertz's claim above, argues that the *slametan*, at least in Central Java, is not especially, or even primarily, a village ritual, but is modeled on the imperial cult of the court of Yogyakarta, which he sees as Sufi in inspiration.[53] This scripturalist perspective views the *slametan* as rooted in the textual sources of Islam, not in the peasant animist tradition, as Geertz indicates. The implementation of the *slametan* in Java is merely a matter of practical adaptation of the "normative piety" of Islam to the local culture, which Woodward finds not contradictory to each other at all.

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[52] Geertz, "Ritual and Social," 32-54.

[53] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 85.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Viewed from the context of when and where such scholars as Geertz, Hefner and Beatty conducted their research, the conclusion that the Javanese *slametan* is syncretistic and foreign to Islam may be reasonable. The *kejawen* world-view, at the time Geertz did his research, was relatively dominant. The pattern of the *slametan* in the 1950s and 60s might be identified as still *abangan* oriented, due partly to Javanese dominance over religious and cultural life in Java. Geertz found *slametan* elements to be syncretistic and animistic; thus, it is no wonder that he places his discussion on *slametan* in the chapter on *abangan* variants.[54]

The ideological dominance of the *abangan*, notwithstanding, has gradually been declining over the course of time, due primarily to the strong endurance of Islamic scholarship in Java, in addition to the more active participation of the *santri* in the level of elite politics.[55] To say that the *slametan*

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[54] This is quite surprising because the *slametan* phenomenon in Javanese Islam seems not to be in accord anymore to what Geertz described in his book, *The Religion of Java*. As part of the Javanese culture, the *slametan* ceremony has been so Islamized that it no longer belongs to the *abangan* Muslims; *santris* – both traditionalist and modernist – in Java have acknowledged the *slametan* as part of their ritual ceremony. In this regard, Geertz's description that the *slametan* ritual is a village ritual that loses its force in urban environments is completely contradictory to the factual religious phenomena nowadays. As Woodward observed, "the *slametan* is not exclusively, or even primarily, a village ritual, nor is it confined to the *kejawen* community. *Slametan* are performed in mosques, at *pesantren*, at the graves of saints, and in the homes of traditional *santri*." See, Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 66.

[55] Especially in the late 1980s and 1990s when the government applied a more accommodative policy towards Islam. This new paradigm of approaching Islam, in turn, allows Muslims to be actively involved in both political arena and socio-religious life. They can express their Islamic identity without any political pressure from the government. The establishment of ICMI (the Union of Indonesian Islamic Intellectuals), the first Islamic Bank (BMI=Bank Mu'amalat Indonesia), and some other political roles played by Muslims are among the most obvious case in point. For a more detailed information on this, see, Mark R. Woodward, "Talking Across Paradigms: Indonesia, Islam, and Orientalism," in Woodward (ed.), *Toward a New Paradigm* (Arizona: Arizona State University, 1996), 1-46. See, also, Robert W. Hefner, "Islamizing Capitalism: On the Founding of Indonesia's First Islamic bank," in "Toward a New Paradigm," 291-322; Cf. Howard M. Federspiel, "The Endurance of the Writings of the Indonesian Scholar Siradjuddin Abbas," in "Towards a New Paradigm," 193-220.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

is purely syncretistic or animistic in today's context may no longer be empirically valid. This argument was only solid in the historical context in which Geertz's research was conducted. It is this fact that makes Woodward, about three decades later, challenge Geertz's theory of the *slametan*. This theoretical antithesis indicates that Geertz's theory was not adaptable to the *slametan* phenomena prevalent when Woodward conducted his research.

Woodward, in this regard, contends that "*slametan* are performed on the occasion of, and often replace, rites required by the *sharī'ah* (A., Islamic Law)"[56] He also believes that

> "In many respects the meanings of the *slametan* parallel those of liturgical prayer. Differences are based on a distinction between *sharī'ah*-centric and mystical notions of community. While they share the Islamic concern with community, *santri* and *kejawen* Muslims define it in different ways, which influences their interpretations of the *slametan* and the *sharī'ah*. For *santri*, the public rituals required by the *sharī'ah* define a community --be it a village or an urban mosque, a *pesantren*, or, in an extended sense, all those who participate in the *hajj*, in the feast of sacrifice, and so on. Participation in the public 'id services is of great importance because it constitutes a supralocal Muslim community."[57]

Woodward, therefore, viewed through the quotation above, can be seen as an obvious proponent of the Islamic *slametan*. On the basis of both scriptural foundation – the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth – and geographical grounds, he opposes the earlier theory of the *slametan* established by such ethnographers as Geertz and Hefner.

Even though Woodward's textual knowledge of the *slametan* is academically remarkable, he, nevertheless, seems to err in identifying the historical acculturation of Islam into the Javanese segments.[58] In supporting

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[56] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 81.

[57] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 81.

[58] He simply argues that the Javanese Muslim can be categorized as "local Islam" which might be different from the so-called "Middle Eastern Islam." (Woodward,

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

his arguments, Woodward simply shows that the *slametan* ritual stems geographically from ritual meals practiced throughout the Muslim world in such places as South India, Persia, Bangladesh, and other places. On the other hand, he ignores the potentialities of cultural association between Islam and Javanese culture. The *slametan* ritual form practiced by the Javanese Muslims nowadays is, in the current writer's opinion, a reflection of the theological integration of Islamic world-view into the local culture of Java. The *slametan* is, therefore, a product of cultural accommodation between Islamic values and Javanese culture.

Another glaring laxity of the theoretical arguments developed by Woodward is that, in justifying the *slametan* ritual, he equates the *slametan* as practiced by Javanese Muslims with the *kenduri* practiced in some Muslim countries.[59] Using the perspective of the *kenduri* tradition practiced in South India to understand the Javanese *slametan* is argumentatively weak. In this respect, he, again, does not fully comprehend the nature of the *slametan* in the context of Javanese cultural identity, which is itself theologically complex and consists of various elements. The Javanese *slametan* is, no doubt, somewhat different when compared to that of other parts of the Muslim world. If Woodward considers the Javanese *slametan* ceremony as an actualization of the "ideal" Islamic *Sufi* doctrines, he thus fails to see the historical fact that Javanese Islam is a result of an intra-cultural marriage between local culture and Islam itself.[60]

"The *Slametan*," 88.

[59] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 64.

[60] Concerning the process of acculturation between Islam and Javanese cultural history, see section C of the first chapter of the current thesis; Cf. William R. Roff, "Islam Obscured? Some Reflections on Studies of Islam and Society in Southeast Asia," in *Archipel* 29, no. 1 (1985): 7-34.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

One further point developed by Woodward to support his justification of the *slametan* as being Islamic, is that the significance of the *slametan* is found in the result of ritual distribution of blessed-food, which, in Islam, is in line with the giving of alms (*ṣadaqah*, A.) to the people who need it. He says that "feeding the poor is charity (*ṣadaqah*, A.) and yields blessing for both donor and recipient."[61] To try to understand the Javanese *slametan* from this perspective alone is simplistic since, for one thing, the family holding the *slametan* in the case of mortuary ritual for example, is itself the first to receive any charity before anybody else. Once the bereaved family has no problem feeding itself, feeding the others is encouraged.

The fact that Islam was propagated in Java by *Sufi* saints by means of Sufi teachings is historically true.[62] But the nature of Javanese *Sufi*, later on, distanced itself from the *Sufi* tradition as practiced in other Muslim countries, in the sense of a more practical adjustment to local culture. Even though the substance of the Sufi movement in Java is similar to that of the rest of the Muslim world, the symbolic interpretation may be different. This argument is justified by Ricklefs as follows:

> "Javanese mysticism has an antiquity and a fundamental place among the masses of Javanese society outweighing that of Islam..... Islam's initial growth in Java was probably due in large part to its own mystical nature. Islamic mysticism still exists in Java. But as *santri* revivalists and modernists have

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[61] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 81.

[62] See, A. H. Johns, "From Coastal Settlement to Islamic School and City: Islamization in Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula and Java." *Hamdard Islamicus* 4:4 (1981): 3-28; Cf. Johns, "Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History." *Journal Southeast Asian History*, vol. 2, no. 2 (July 1961): 10-23; Cf. Johns, "Islam in Southeast Asia: problems of Perspective." in C.D. Cowan and O.W. Wolters (eds.), *Southeast Asian History and Historiography*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976, 304-20.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

sought to purify Javanese Islam of its mystical practices and doctrines, they have driven some mystics away from their nominal adherence to Islam."[63]

Woodward should have not, therefore, placed the theological position of the Javanese *slametan* on the same level as the South Indian *kenduri*. A number of Javanese ingredients are unique, such as five-color porridge, Javanese incense burning, typical Javanese orchestra (*gamelan*, J.) accompaniment, and many other cultural values which are very much influenced by the *kejawen* cultural tradition. We should not, however, neglect the contribution of the local Javanese elements in shaping the pattern of Javanese *slametan* today. Two major elements, hence, seem to have contributed to forge the *slametan*: local Javanese values and Islamic elements.

The reason why the Javanese *slametan* is more Islamic today than it used to be can possibly be understood from the perspective of the Islamization of Javanese culture by the *santri*. The Islamization of the *slametan* occurred because the *abangan* began to rely too heavily on the *santri* when they performed ritual ceremonies such as the *slametan*. This great dependence is, without doubt, admitted by Hefner: "In most *kenduren*, the men invited to lead the guests in Islamic prayer is a local elder or Islamic leader, adept in the recitation of Arabic-language prayers."[64] In a more optimistic way, Hefner even claims that the Javanese *slametan* has been in an "ongoing process of Islamization."[65]

Rather different from Geertz, who blatantly observes that the *slametan* ritual belongs purely to the *kejawen* or *abangan* cultural heritage, and

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[63] Ricklefs, "Six Centuries of Islamization in Java," in Nehemia Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York & London: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 124.

[64] Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 108.

[65] Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 108.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Woodward who contends that it belongs to *santri*, Hefner and Beatty take a more moderate position by saying that these two different communities share the ritual for their common spiritual needs. Although they do not explicitly confront Geertz's claim about the syncretistic founding on the *slametan* ritual, nor do they negate the reality that within the body of the ritual there exist both Islamic and *kejawen* elements.[66] For the participants in this ritual – often all peasants – there can be found all three of Geertz's variants and combinations thereof present in the same event. It is as if the pious Muslim, the animist farmer, and the mystic were seated together at the same meal and obliged to talk about the very thing that divides them.

Given the range of orthodoxy in Javanese Islam, it is striking that the *slametan* displays the uniformity that it does. Only those at the two "extremes" of the Javanese Muslim spectrum – reform Muslims who reject any ritual form not explicitly sanctioned in Islam, and those few *kejawen* Javanese who avoid even the most basic Islamic practices – refuse to use this elementary ritual form. As the variation of the *slametan* itself demonstrates, however, there is a tension here between Javanese tradition and Javanese notions of Islam, a tension in which a cultural struggle over religious matters is apparent. Evidence of a similar dispute over the form of the *slametan* is also seen in other aspects of the rite. Incense is an obvious case in point of variation here: *kejawen* Javanese tend to use it; reform Muslims do not. Food is also often subject to similar variation. *Kejawen* set it prominently at the center of the prayer room so that, in the course of the ritual, the spirits invited may enjoy its essence. Modernist Muslims, by contrast, often insist that food be kept in the back

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[66] Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 107; Cf. Beatty, "Adam and eve," 274.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

kitchen until the completion of all prayers, thereby avoiding any suggestion that the *slametan* foods are offerings for the spirits.[67]

In spite of cultural tension between the *santri* and *kejawen* communities, in most cases the Javanese tend to uphold the state of harmony (*rukun*, J.). The dependency of the *abangan* community on the *santri* for holding the *slametan* rituals is the most apparent case in point. The *abangan* Muslims always surrender the session of reciting the prayers to the Islamic prayer leader (*modin*, J.) [68], especially after the host delivers the invocation in any *slametan* ritual. The *modins* are always entrusted to lead the group in the *slametans* because the recitation of the Islamic prayers requires a long and deeply Islamic intoned recitation. What is interesting about the situation, from a religious perspective, is that the *kejawen* Muslims, in fact, recognize the importance of this Islamic prayer and, thus, recognize their dependency on the *modins*. In this context, it can be said that there can be no *slametan* without Islamic prayers. The *kejawen* communities, thus, justly acknowledge their respect for and dependence on Islamic forms of learning and worship, and also acknowledge the reality that they lack education in those same forms.[69]

In light of this religious dependency, Hefner makes an apt notice that it looks very much like an inevitable cultural compromise between Islamic religion and an earlier tradition, where the *santri* community show their important role

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[67] Hefner, Hindu Javanese," 108.

[68] *Modins* are in some cases only the formal part of the *slametan*. Their position can sometimes be replaced by other persons who can perform Arabic recitation fluently, such as *'Ulama* (*kyahi*, J. = Islamic teachers) who are mostly graduates from Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*). The point here is that, whatever the religious dimension of the *slametan*, the *kejawen* community still very much appreciates their *santri* counterparts for leading the ritual. For this, see Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 108.

[69] Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 107.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

in any social ritual event in Java.[70] In his opinion, the growth of rural centers of Islamic education in the form of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), especially during the nineteenth century, played a crucial role in the redefinition process of Islamic learning. This progress has also contributed to the continuing process of Islamization in Java, where religious study in Islamic schools has become the duty of all, rather than the privilege of a special few.[71] More importantly, this continuing process of Islamization has paved the way for Islamic leaders to take as many religious elements and as much interpretation as possible into the body of the *slametan* rituals and render it more Islamic than it was several decades ago.

If the *slametan* rituals are examined from a critical perspective, some ambiguous dimensions may emerge. This ambiguity largely arises from the theological position of some elements that are considered to be derived from Islam and others which are purely derived from the local or customary tradition (*adat*, J.). In traditional wedding ceremonies, for example, there is a "bridal specialist" (*dukun temanten*, J.) who helps prepare the bride and who also, at least in some communities, recites spells over the bride and groom when they meet. Only few would dare call such spells part of the religious dimension of the *slametan*; rather, many would insist these "rituals" are purely "Javanist" or customary *adat*. Some people might wish to insist that the *adat* rituals are profoundly spiritual, and for those people they therefore are. Nonetheless, only the explicitly Islamic portion of a *slametan* is widely considered to be "religion."

Thus, there is a striking cultural vision to the *slametan* rituals. It expresses an interpretive tension between what people may call "customary"

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[70] Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," 109.

[71] Hefner, "Islamizing Java? Religion and Politics in Rural East Java," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3 (August 1987): 533-554.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

and what they may call "Islamic" or "religious." The vision, no doubt, varies according to region and social group throughout Java. But the most obvious gesture testifies, again, a profound and ongoing process of Islamization in Java. It is this tension between "custom" and "Islam" that most clearly distinguishes the *santri slametans* and the syncretistic-minded *slametans* in most *abangan* communities in Java.

There is another important aspect to notice regarding the problem of core and periphery in the *slametan* rituals: i.e. the spiritual focus established in both *santri slametans* and *kejawen* ones. It is commonly assumed that the *slametan* in *santri* communities is established in the Islamic prayer meal (*kenduren*), while the *kejawen slametan* focuses more on the system of ritual elements, such as the prayers of a priest's invocation and worship, presentation of offerings and communion meal. The priest's invocation and worship is the one indispensable requirement without which no deity would be present and neither blessing nor a state of *slamet* would exist.

This more ritualistic vision of the *slametans* brings about the manner in which the festivities that accompany the priestly rite are viewed. Within the more syncretistic community, the festivities in the course of the *slametans* are even more apparent than those of the major *santri* community. The most obvious example of festivities employed, especially during the larger scale *slametan* (marriage, circumcision, and others) is feasting, which is sometimes accompanied by drinking (alcoholic drink), dancing, and theatre performance (one-night shadow-puppet show). With each serving of meals for guests, ancestral spirits are believed to share in the fine foods. With the presentation of

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

the foods and other offerings, ancestral spirits are believed to be pleased and give some spiritual blessings to the host and to the village as a whole.[72]

In a more *santri*-oriented community, the festivities do not usually coincide with the Islamic prayer session. It would be considered improper to hold a *slametan* in which the Islamic prayer is chanted in one portion of a house while outside and elsewhere guests are drinking, feasting, dancing, or enjoying the shadow puppet show. The Islamic prayers, considered the core element of the *slametan*, must therefore be respected by not doing anything to disturb the humility of the ritual itself before God. This is why it is not until the Islamic prayer is completed that the festivities --except for drinking-- dancing, and sometimes the shadow puppet show may commence.

The important aspect to notice is that the festivities conducted in the course of the *slametan* rituals are not identified as secular custom apart from the more properly religious elements like the Islamic prayers. Any session of festivities surrounding the ritual always has its own theological interpretation according to which the purpose of *slamet* can be achieved. The point would be the more *santri*-oriented the community is, the more Islamic the manner in which the *slametan* is held. The question of how far that which is considered "Islam" and that which is called "customary *adat*" interconnect and influence each other would depend on the level of religious and ideological dominance prevalent in a certain community. Nevertheless, no Javanese Muslims will argue against the common assumption that the ritual aspect of the *slametan* (Islamic prayers) is considered the core and that the festivities that accompany the ritual are regarded as peripheral, if not secular.

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[72] Hefner, "Hindu Javanese," p. 111.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

On the basis of the explanation above, all we can say is that the Javanese *slametan* is a unique ritual that has a certain local typicality, developed through close association with the Javanese tradition and culture. It is said to be unique because no other rituals outside the island of Java can be exactly equated to the Javanese *slametan*. Scholars who argue that the *slametan* is purely animistic are, thus, absolutely incorrect if we understand the issue in the context of Javanese life today. Nor are other scholars completely right when they say that the Javanese *slametan* is, on the other hand, Islamic, for the *slametan* has undergone a long course of Islamization by the *santri*. What we can safely conclude is that the *slametan* consists of two major elements: the core and the periphery. The core of the *slametan* lies with Islamic prayers established for the first time by Javanese Muslim teachers/leaders and *santris* who replaced *kejawen* spells and prayers (*mantera*, J.) with Islamic ones. Meanwhile the periphery of the *slametan* is made up of local Javanese symbols preserved by the *santri* for the reason of not Islamicizing the Javanese "accessories" in an abrupt way, thus preserving certain local elements.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

CHAPTER THREE

TEXTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE *SLAMETAN* RITUAL

In the second chapter, we went through a brief discussion of the controversy over whether the *slametan* is derived from the main sources of Islam --the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth-- or it is more of a syncretistic ritual. We concluded, however, that to see the *slametan* from a single perspective is academically simplistic, if not misleading. Instead, in this case, one should observe it from a more comprehensive perspective, a reciprocal combination between textual --normative Islam-- and contextual --socio-cultural-- analysis.[1]

The use of textual and contextual analysis, according to Denny, will allow one to understand an Islamic ritual comprehensively based on a certain balance, since rituals in Islam can be very complex.[2] As a manifestation of the unique characteristics of Javanese Islam which is very often said to be distinct from the "genuine Islam" of the Middle East, the *slametan* has its uniqueness in that it is a product of a long lasting cultural marriage between Islam and Javanese tradition. To see the *slametan* from a single or one-sided perspective, therefore, does not help one to understand it fully. The following chapter, a

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[1] The use of the terms "textual" and "contextual" is inspired by Denny's approach of observing rituals in the world of Islam. He argues that through a thorough analysis of both perspectives, a comprehensive and appropriate understanding of rituals in Islam can be achieved. While, the first approach is used to trace the religious basis or scriptural grounds of the *slametan*, the second one is used to examine the ritual on the basis of cultural context. For a more detailed account, see Frederick M. Denny, "Islamic Ritual, Perspectives and Theories," in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, Ed. Richard C. Martin (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985): 63-77.

[2] Denny, "Islamic Ritual," 67-8.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

balanced analysis of the *slametan* --from textual and contextual perspective-- will be further elucidated.

A. Textual Analysis: The Religious Grounds of the *Slametan*

> "Translations of and commentaries on non-local texts are a vital component of religious discourse in modern Java. It is difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend this discourse if one is not familiar with the textual tradition in question. One can not even begin to study the history of local traditions outside of their textual context. This has been one of the most significant problems with the anthropological study of great religious traditions. It is too often assumed that local customs have strictly local origins. More often than not, such judgements are made in the absence of a careful examination of the textual tradition in question."[3]

It is widely accepted that the Islamic scriptures, both the Qur'ān and the prophetic tradition (Ḥadīth), authorize what Muslims should do concerning their ritual activities (*'ibāda*, A.). The formal duties of Muslims as explicitly spelled out in these Islamic scriptures and legalized by the *sharī'a* (A., Islamic Law) are called *arkān al-Islām* (A., the five pillars of Islam): daily five-time prayers (*ṣalāt*, A.), alms (*zakāt*, A.), fasting (*ṣawm*, A.), and pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥajj*, A.).[4] Nevertheless, there might be a crucial problem if those rituals are confronted with other Islamic ritual practices unprescribed in the *sharī'a* but painstakingly observed in local practices, such as the *slametan*.

To answer the above question, one does not need to denounce the Islamic local rituals over the more "scriptural" ones, judging that one of them is right or wrong according to the *sharī'a*. In addition to the "formal Islam" which is characterized by the ordinance of five pillars mentioned above, "popular

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[3] Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1989), 52.

[4] See, Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 1979. See also, Richard Martin, *Islam* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1982), 14-16; Cf. Frederick M. Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994), 118-37.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Islam" is an alternate term denoting world-wide Islamic ritual festivals or ceremonies.[5] If the first mentioned ritual can be referred to as the principal ritual revealed by God through the Prophet Muhammad, then the latter ones are considered to be the product of the encounter between normative Islam and local Muslim civilizations which are influenced by local folk practices and cultures. Among these popular rituals are commemorating the *maulid* (A., the birthday of the Prophet),[6] the *slametan* or *kenduri*, and other local "Islamic" rituals.[7]

It is commonly known that the type of Islam prevalent in Indonesia as a whole, with particular reference to Java, follows the Shafi'ite Sunni tradition.[8] This school of thought appreciates very much not only the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as its main theological basis but also the customary law (*'urf* or *'adāt*, A.) as another theological source of certain religious rituals.[9] In Javanese Islam,

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[5] See J. D. J. Waardenburg, "Official and Popular Religion as a Problem in Islamic Studies," *Official and Popular Religion as a Theme in the Study of Religion*, ed. Vryhof and J. Wardenburg (The Hague: Mouton, 1979): 340-86.

[6] The commemoration of the prophet is intended to celebrate the veneration of the Prophet on his birthday, 12 *Rabī' al-awwal*, the third month of the lunar year of Muslim calendar. This holiday seems to have begun in the late eleventh century, and generally from the twelve century. From the eastern to western ends of Muslim world the *maulid* is a wonderful occasion for pious Muslims to show their warm love of the Prophet in songs, poems, and prayers. See, Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 216; Cf. Her book, *Muhammad is His Messenger* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), especially pp. 144-158.

[7] For a discussion on Islamic rituals influenced by local tradition, see Michael Lambek, *Knowledge and Practice: Local Discourses of Islam, Sorcery, and Spirit Possession* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 1993. In Palestine, for example, it has become customary to connect a purely private ceremony such as circumcision with a visit to a saint, especially Nebī Musa. See, G.E. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festival* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1951), 83.

[8] P. A. Hoesein Djajadiningrat, "Islam in Indonesia," in *Islam-The Straight Path*, Ed. Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1958), 375-402.

[9] According to Nurcholish Madjid, the theological foundation of the Shafi'i school rooted in both the Qur'ān and the Sunna or Hadīth (the Prophetic tradition), and in analogical reasoning as a rational method to the understanding and developing of legal

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese ... McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

especially orthodox Muslims, the use of *adat* law must have been practiced extensively to integrate it with normative Islam. The adherence to the local *adat* seems to have been instituted in the very beginning of the propagation of Islam by Sufi saints. The *slametan* is the most obvious case of a "syncretistic" ritual that was said to have been invented by Sunan Kalijaga, one of the most renowned saints of Java.[10]

As a product of ancient Javanese religious ritual but clothed with Muslim garb, the *slametan* links scriptural or normative Islam as an idealized reference, on the one hand, with its local interpretation and practical implementation, on the other. Despite the fact that the *slametan* is a pre-Islamic Hindu tradition, it is nevertheless culturally preserved and it is often considered to be an unsophisticated religious performance which was adopted by the Muslims. The elements of scriptural Islam contained in the *slametan* have been substantiated as such to fit the cultural fabrics of local tradition for it is thought of as one the best ways to teach Islam to local Javanese.

Observing the *slametan* from a religious perspective requires tracing the Islamic elements used by the *santri* as a religious basis for this ritual. In talking about the *slametan* from the Islamic perspective one should also mention, among others, Woodward, one of the most consistent proponents of the Islamic

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thought. An agreed consensus among the Muslim community mostly based upon local traditions or customary law (*'adāt* or *'urf*, A.), is another important method in establishing certain tenets of Islamic law. For more information, see *Nurcholish Madjid, Islam, Doktrin dan Peradaban* (Jakarta: Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 1992), 240-41; Cf. His article, "Reorientasi Wawasan Pemikiran Keislaman: Usaha Mencari kemungkinan Bentuk Peran Tepat Umat Islam Indonesia di Abad XXI," *Muhammadiyah dan NU: Reorientasi Wawasan Keislaman*, Ed. Yunahar Ilyas (et. Al.) (Yogyakarta: Kerjasama LPPI UMY, LKPSM NU dan PP Al-Muhsin Yogyakarta, 1993), 193-214.

[10] Woodward, "Islam in Java," 96; Cf. Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), 325.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

slametan.[11] Except for Woodward, most researchers employ a socio-cultural or contextual approach in viewing the *slametan*. As it has clearly been stated in the previous chapter, Woodward basically has come to a conclusion that Javanese Islam, in both its popular and mystical forms, is a result of an adaptation of Islamic Sufism. Likewise, he found nothing syncretistic in the *slametan* and instead concludes that it is a product of a practical adaptation of Sufi teachings into the religious life of Java.[12]

If the history of the *slametan* is understood from the perspective that it was produced by the *santris* and not by the *kejawen*, and if it is regarded as a state ceremony preserved by the royal palace in Java, the process of Islamization can be understood as one in which Islamic states strove to redefine an "existing-village axis" in Islamic terms. Being consistent with the textual notion of the *slametan* as Woodward proposed, it is important to note that Islamic texts and modes or, in Rahman's words, normative Islam, served as a model for the formulation of the imperial Sufi cults in Java which, in turn, served as a model for popular piety and rituals.

Although we have to acknowledge that Woodward is categorized as the most enthusiastic proponent of the textual analysis of the *slametan*, his discussion seems to focus more on the textual justification of such peripheral aspects as the semantic analysis of the word *salām* itself, without at the same

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[11] In supporting his theoretical basis of the *slametan*, Woodward uses the worldwide textual analysis commonly used in Indonesia, and Java in particular. He says that the use of Ḥadīth texts, one of the two bases of Islam, serves not only ritual dimensions, but also social and political ones as well. One of the most common Ḥadīth texts used in Java is, *inter alia*, Imam Nawawi's *Riyādh al-Ṣāliḥīn*. See, Woodward, "Textual Exegesis as Social Commentary: Religious, Social, and Political Meanings of Indonesian Translations of Arabic Hadīth Texts," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 3 (August 1993): 565-583.

[12] See, the chapter two of the current thesis, section C.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

time giving a proportional analysis of the socio-legal dimension of Javanese Islam.[13] His research seems to be mostly devoted to the normative dimension of Islam such as what the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth say or about the basic concept of *salām*. The scriptural grounds used by Woodward in justifying the *slametan* nevertheless sound reasonable if the purpose of his discussion is merely to support the notion that "the elements of the *slametan* is derived from Islam." However, it becomes inappropriate when his arguments are used to confront other scholars' theories but with the emphasis on other dimensions such as cultural perspective. This is because textual analysis is only appropriate when it is employed to justify the *slametan* from "inside," not from "outside." What Geertz,[14] Hefner[15] and Beatty[16] have done in their research is based purely on their theoretical foundations of their particular field such as sociology and anthropology. In other words, they are the pure "outsiders."

Given the importance of ritual in all varieties of Islam, the relationship between text-based normative/essentialist and local/popular Islam can be refined by a more complex typology that includes written and oral texts and ritual. In what follows is a tentative schema intended to capture not only the complexity of the essentialist tradition but also the variety of factors influencing the formulation of local Islam. In this regard, Woodward must have been in the

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[13] Socio-legal dimension means the Islamic legal or juridical basis (*uṣūl al-fiqh*, A.) used by the Javanese Muslims to justify the existence of local ritual practices. Woodward, to large extent, tends not to take this into his account.

[14] He undertook an ethnographic research in a small town in East Java called Pare, a sub district of Kediri during the 1950s.

[15] He did his research in a mountainous area of Tengger, one of the *abangan* regions in East Java, in the 1980s.

[16] He completed his research in a syncretistic community, Banyuwangi, in the eastern tip of East Java in the middle of the 1990s.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese... McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

right track in understanding the characteristic of Javanese Islam, even though his conclusion of the *slametan* has to be reexamined. According to Woodward, this schema comprises four categories: universalist, essentialist, received, and local all but the first one are subject to change and development in the course of history.[17]

Woodward asserts that universalist Islam is made up of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth with rituals including the *ṣalāt*, *ḥājj*, the fasting of *Ramaḍān*, the *'Īed* celebrations and other rites which are endorsed by "universalist texts." Woodward's use of "essentialist" derives from Richard Martin's term,[18] with the addition of those modes of ritual practice that, while not mandated by universalist texts, are widely distributed in the Muslim world. This would include popular Muslim rituals such as the *mawlid al-nabī* (A., commemorating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad), the *ḥalāl biḥalāl* (A., the annual Indonesian tradition of strengthening kin relationships among Muslims after conducting *ṣalāt 'Īed al-Fiṭri*), the *dhikr* (A., religious prayer) rites of Sufi orders, as well as modes of ritual action commonly employed in the veneration of saints, local pilgrimage rites, and in association with ritual meals of the *slametan*.[19]

"Received Islam" refers to "that portion of the universalist and essentialist categories present in specific local contexts."[20] This religious

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[17] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 87.

[18] Richard Martin, "Islam and Religious Studies, An Introductory Essay," in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, Ed. Richard C. Martin, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 1-18.

[19] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 87-88.

[20] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 88.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

mainstream is positioned in between the universalist and the essentialist groups whose variation can of be tremendous and who advocate the distinctive identity of local Islam as it constitutes the textual dimensions, i.e. the object of local interpretations. The fact that local Javanese Islam is mainly featured by the textual Sufi influence can perhaps be answered by the mystical similarities between the two.[21] It is plausible to suggest that the form of Islam that came to Indonesia, with particular reference to Java, was integrated with pre-Islamic Hindu and animistic beliefs that promoted the inner dimension of spiritual exercise.

"Local Islam" can be defined as "that of oral, written, and ritual texts that are unknown outside of their area of origin."[22] The genus of Islam found in this context can be said to be that of "solitary" and thus might be either totally different from or similar to, even possibly the same as, the local Javanese tradition in the level of its inner-substantial core. It is under this framework that Woodward situates the *slametan* in a congruent position since it constitutes the representation of Islamic textual interpretation on the one hand, and the rich corpus of *kejawen* mystical texts, on the other.[23] The *slametan*

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[21] For detailed information on mystical dimension in Islam, see, for instance, Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (chapel Hill, U.S.A.: The University of North Carolina Press), 1975; cf. R. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1980. For an account of Javanese mysticism, see, for example, H. Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism* (Baarn: Bosch and Keuning), 1967.

[22] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 88.

[23] As it has been shown in the first chapter of the thesis (especially section C), Javanese (local) texts are among the most important apparatus of formulating Javanese religious modes in which the mystical and immaterial dimensions are dominant. The position of these texts becomes more crucial when their function is understood as an effective means of disseminating the royal religious and ideological formula to the "grass root" people. Most Javanese texts are facetted by the royal ideology signifying the dynamics of self-interpretation on the mystical codes. See, Woodward, "Islam in Java,"

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese... McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

thus signifies the axial locus that incorporates the "received Islam" and local culture.[24] The importance of Ḥadīth as one of the textual basis of any ritual in Java, including the *slametan*, suggest the evolutionary encounter between essentialist and universalist Islam on the one hand, with the local culture on the other.[25]

The textual perspective in observing the *slametan* seems to be more comprehensive if it is supported by a semantic approach. Semantically speaking, the word *slametan* is derived from the word *slamet* (J., I.=*selamat*) with suffix an which indicates a certain performance undertaken to achieve a state of *slamet* (well-being). The word *slamet* itself is taken from Arabic word *salām* (masculine) or *salāmat* (feminine).[26] In the Islamic scriptures, *salām* generally refers to a condition of tranquillity in both this life and the hereafter. In the context of religious traditions, *salām* is also used as a salutation for both humans and non-humans such as spiritual beings and angels.[27] The phrase *al-*

49-51; Cf. C.D. Grijns and S.O. Robson, "Introduction," in C.D. Grijns and S.O. Robson (Eds.) *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation* (Dordrecht-Holland/Cinnaminson-U.S.A.: Foris Publications, 1986): 1-7; Cf. P.E. de Jossin de Jong, "Textual Anthropology and History: The Sick King," in C.D. Grijns and S.O. Robson (Eds.) *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation* (Dordrecht-Holland/Cinnaminson-U.S.A.: Foris Publications, 1986): 219-32.

[24] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 88-89; Cf. his "Islam in Java," 52.

[25] For a more comprehensive account on the usage of Ḥadīth in contemporary Indonesian --including Javanese-- Islam, see Howard M. Federspiel, *The Usage of Traditions of the Prophet in Contemporary Indonesia* (Tucson: Arizona State University, Program for Southeast Asian Studies), 1993.

[26] See, for example, Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, (Beirut: Maktabah Lebanon, 1974), 425.

[27] The use of *salām* as a salutation and its virtues is derived from the Qur'ān Surah An-Nūr, verses 28 and 61, Surah Al-Nisā', 86, and Surah al-Dzāriyāt, 24 and 25. A Ḥadīth book commonly used in Java, especially among the traditionalist Muslims, as a religious basis for the use of *salām* is taken from Imam Nawawi's *Riyādh al-Ṣāliḥīn*, especially in the book of salutation. See, Imam Nawawi, *Riyādh al-Ṣālihīn: Arabic-English* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1987), 448-64.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

salām 'alaykum (A., peace be upon you) is an obvious use of the word *salām* in Islam as a request to God that He will bless the person addressed in either a ritual or a social context. The persons to whom the *salām* is addressed are strongly recommended to answer by saying "*wa 'alaykum al-salām*" (peace be upon you too). Sometimes the more complete response is used: "*wa 'alaykum al-salām wa rahmat Allāh wa barakātuh*" (On you be the peace, blessing and mercy of Allah).[28]

In Islamic texts and religious discourse, *salām* is bestowed at every mention of a prophet and frequently in the case of angels, saints, and other esteemed religious figures. As van Arendock mentions that the Prophet Muhammad is said to have used the *salām* as a salutation for the prophets who preceded him and for martyrs and other deceased Muslims.[29] The Ḥadīth concerning the Prophet Muhammad's salutation of the dead is among the sources of Islamic eschatology which provoke such customs as visiting graves and offering prayers for the dead.[30]

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[28] In discussing these theological foundations, Woodward quotes a number of Qur'ānic verses: "When ye are greeted with a greeting, greet ye with a better one than it return it. Lo! Allah taketh count of all things" (4:86); "But when ye enter houses, salute one another with a greeting from Allah, blessed and sweet [the *salām* greeting]" (24:61); "When those who believe in Our revelations come unto thee say: Peace be unto you!" (6:54). In addition the Qur'ānic injunction, Woodward also quotes Ḥadīth as the religious basis of the *slametan* as follows: "Barā'a ibn 'Azib relates: The Holy Prophet enjoined the following seven on us: Visiting the sick, following a funeral, calling down the mercy of Allah on one who sneezes, supporting the weak, helping the oppressed, multiplying the greeting of peace, and fulfilling vows." Also, "Abdullah ibn Salām relates that he heard the Holy Prophet say: O ye people, multiply the greeting of peace, feed people, strengthen ties of kinship and be in prayer when others are asleep, you will enter Paradise in peace." Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 67.

[29] C. van Anderock, "Salam," in *The Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb and J. Kraemers (Leiden, 1953), 490.

[30] To support his argument, Woodward cites the Ḥadīth: "Buraidah relates that the Holy Prophet taught that any of them visiting a cemetery should say: Peace be on you dwellers of this home of believers and Muslims, and we, if Allah so wills, shall join you. I supplicate for peace for you and ourselves." Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 68.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

In Java, Muslim funeral rites usually include seven-day-ceremonies held consecutively at night in which Islamic prayers are recited for the deceased.[31] Even in *kejawen slametan* ceremonies, the prayers include the *dhikr* (A., religious recitation) led by a *modin*, which may last several hours. Some Javanese explain that the purpose of the mortuary *slametan* is to ease the transition between life and death and to ensure the tranquillity of the deceased in the realm of the dead. Javanese Muslim customs require family members to visit their relative's graves at the beginning and end of *Ramaḍān*, at which times the graves are cleansed, and the *slametan* can be held at home.[32]

If it is viewed from the perspective of *'ibādah* (A., ritual) sanctioned by verses of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, charity or alms giving (*zakāt* or *ṣadaqah*, A.) is perhaps the most equitable key concept to the understanding of the essence of the *slametan*, with the exception of mortuary *slametan*.[33] It is this perspective that Woodward uses to understand Javanese *slametans*. He sees that feeding the poor is charity and can yield blessing for both donor and recipient.[34] The distribution of food not only to the one who needs but also to fellow humans is considered as an *'ibādah* sanctioned both in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

According to the endorsement of Ḥadīth, feeding the poor –as a reflection of *ṣadaqah*-- can be considered to be praiseworthy before God. Even though it is not dealing with obligation (*wajib*, A.) and prohibition (*haram*, A.) injunctions,

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[31] Geertz, "The Religion of Java," 68-76.

[32] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 68.

[33] See the current writer's counter-argument against Woodward in Chapter II, section C concerning the application of alms giving concept (*sedekah*, J.) in Islam to the *slametan*.

[34] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 63.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

the type of commendable conduct (*faḍā'il al-a'māl*, A.) in Islam is meritorious. It includes almost any act of benevolence towards one's fellow humans, and even towards animals.[35] By doing something for the sake of virtue, this virtuousness will return to that individual in both this world and the world to come. The charity in Islam therefore has a two-fold religious dimension; as a humanly charity and an act of godly devotion.

The charity in the form of ritual meal as contained in the *slametan* may also be analogous to the religious sacrifice in the eyes of some scholars like Bowen.[36] This religious sacrifice (*qurbān*, A.) has a special position in the structure of the Javanese *slametan*, for it is part of the annual Islamic festival conducted in the tenth to thirteenth of Ẓulqa'dah (the tenth month of Muslim calendar) which is called *'Ied al-Aḍhā* (A., the day of Islamic feast). Not only is the *slametan* held during this festival, but also other forms of the *slametan* are conducted during other Muslim festivals, such as marriage, circumcision, *'aqīqah* (A., haircutting sacrifice), and many others. The food provided in the *slametan* can be regarded as a form of ritual sacrifice in order to obtain blessings from it. The charity and sacrifice thus have almost the same ritual intention: the descending of divine blessings onto living humans.

As it has been emphasized in the previous chapter, the theological significance behind the distribution of food depends upon those who give the *slametan*. For *santri* communities, the significance of food provided in any

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[35] See, M. Ali, *The Religion of Islam* (Lahore: The Aḥmadiyya Anjuman Ishā'at Islām, 1944), 458-60.

[36] John R. Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 229-50; see also his article, "On Scriptural Essentialism and Ritual Variation: Muslim Sacrifice in Sumatra and Morocco," *American Ethnologist*, vol. 17, no. 4 (November 1990): 656-671.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Javanese *slametan* seems to be enforced in order to be in line with the Islamic law (*sharī'ah*). For the *abangan* communities, the food may be considered to be one form of ritual sacrifice dedicated to their deities or spirits. The intention of the food dedication accordingly will depend mostly upon what kind of the *slametan* is being held by the host. Generally, both the *santris* and *abangans* believe that through the distribution of food during the *slametan* they will obtain blessings, safety, and be free from supernatural fears from whomever they may consider being more superior.

In addition to food distribution, the other religious part of the *slametans* is the invocation of the host (*'ujūb*, A. or *ujub*, J.).[37] Woodward views the *ujub* as not simply a polite speech. In his opinion, the *ujub* has at least five theological significances. The first is to link an elaborate feast with the simple ritual meals at which Muhammad officiated. The second is to define the community to whom blessings will be imparted. The third is to specify saints and other beings to whom food and prayers are dedicated. The fourth is to establish the good intentions of the host. The fifth is to establish the host's humility.[38] Thus the definitive speech in the *ujub* is necessarily required in order to make the

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[37] In some sense, the *ujub* can be overlapped with Metcalf's definition of prayer as "an invocation or supplication which is directly and unambiguously addressed to a spiritual agency." (Peter Metcalf, *Where Are You Spirits* [Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1989], 10). But what is meant by the invocation here is rather "the utterance's appellative force as invocation or supplication" (*panyuwun*, J.) addressed in front of the participants of the *slametan*. See, Stephen C. Headley, "Introduction aux approaches analytiques des actes de prière en général et à l'éthno-linguistique des invocations en Asie du sud-est," *Towards an Anthropology of Prayer: Javanese Ethnolinguistic Studies*, ed. Stephen C. Headley, (n.p.: Université de Provence, 1996), 5-45. See also, Joseph Errington, "Lifting up the Prayer-beam: a Javanese House-building Ceremony," "Towards an Anthropology of Prayer," 171-93. Cf.

[38] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 74-5.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

dedicated food and prayers fruitful both for the living witnesses and the invited spirits of the deceased.

After the *ujub* is conveyed, the appointed leader of the *slametan* (*modin*, J.) recites the prayers (*do'ā*, A.) in Arabic. As the quintessence of the *slametan*, *do'a* must be recited at the end of the ritual. Fragments from the Qur'ān, most often the opening verse (*Surah Al-Fātiḥah*), are recited at most *slametans*.[39] In Islam, *do'a* is prayer of supplication, the purpose of which is to ask boons from God or to secure His blessing and protection. The Qur'ān promises that Allah will respond to the requests of believers who offer supplication.[40] Unlike the five daily prayers, the precise form of *do'a* is not regulated by the *sharī'ah*. It may be recited in Arabic or the vernacular. Given that the use of the vernacular *do'a* is permitted by the *sharī'ah*, Javanese custom requires that those in the *slametan* be said only in Arabic.[41]

An examination of the *slametan* from the religious angle will probably be more comprehensive if it is also seen from the Sufi approach. This approach deals mainly with the Sufi teachings as theological basis of the *slametan*, particularly the normative piety which Woodward has developed through his observations in Central Java. This Sufi approach can be understood in the illustration of human-God dependency. Prayers (*do'a*, A.) that constitute the Islamic mysticism may be considered the bulk of the *slametan*. The significance of prayers in Islam indicates that human beings are dependant on God, whatever their condition is. The concept of human-God dependency might be

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[39] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 78-9.

[40] The Qur'ān 2:187, 7:56, 27:63, 40:61.

[41] Woodward, "Islam in Java," 121-22.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese ... McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

best described in light of God's supremacy over all His creatures, including human beings. Humans are in every condition subject to God, and God can do whatever He wants to them. Even in an extreme form of Sufism, humans are "the slaves of God": they have no importance before God Almighty and are nothing but an instrument of eternal fate.[42]

In addition to the "implicit" endorsements mentioned in both the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth supporting the holding of the *slametan*, Javanese Muslims believe that the *slametan* is a part of *adat* that has been incorporated into Islam. As long as the tradition is not contradictory to Islamic Law, it can then be justified as a part of a Muslim's achievement in civilization. Moreover, this tradition in Islam is legalized by a juridical principle of Islamic law: "*al-'ādah sharī'ah muḥakkamah*," meaning "a tradition as which is not contradictory to the *sharī'ah* can be justified by *sharī'ah*."[43] Despite the fact that the *slametan* is not sanctioned explicitly in such Islamic texts as the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, the ritual itself is not contradictory to them. Therefore, it can be one of the recommendable rituals (*'ibādah*) of Islam.

The widespread practice of the *slametan* throughout Java and the association of the distribution of food with saint veneration and blessing, and in the case of institutional (royal) ritual, indicates that while the *slametan* is a local Muslim ritual, it is also, according to Woodward, an example of a larger,

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[42] See, Schimmel, "Mystical Dimensions," 187.

[43] This is one of the most popular Islamic juridical principles among traditionalist Muslims for justifying local "Islamic" rituals such as the *slametan*. For a discussion on the theological basis of the customary principles among the traditionalist Muslims, see Abdurrahman Wahid, "Pribumisasi Islam," in *Islam Indonesia Menatap Masa Depan*, Eds. Muntaha Azhari & Abdul Mun'im Saleh (Jakarta: P3M, 1989). See also, M. B. Hooker, *A Concise Legal History of South-East Asia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 111-12.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

transcultural tradition that parallels that of the normative Islam (the *sharī'ah*).[44] This suggests that other forms of local Islam, as well as Muslim texts, contributed to the development of Islam in Java. These ritual continuities also require us to rethink the distinction between universalist, text-based Islam and its local interpretations as they are employed in recent studies of Islam in non-Arab countries.

In this context, to conclude that the *slametan* is a product of scriptural interpretation from Islamic texts doesn't seem to be exaggerated. As Eickelman points out, the attempts to understand the *slametan* as a local tradition of Islam, on the one hand, require an understanding of local knowledge of Islam, on the other.[45] The knowledge of Islam among the Javanese *santris* played a pivotal role in transforming Islamic values from the very basic foundations of Islam --the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Viewed from this perspective, Geertz's description that the *santris* were "not actually the most Islamic Javanese Moslems but the least" may need to be reconsidered.[46] It is important to notice that the Javanese Muslim scholars (*'ulama*, A.), according to Woodward and Indonesian scholar, Zamakhsyari Dhofier, is qualitatively the equal of any in the Muslim world.[47]

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[44] Woodward, "The *Slametan*," 65.

[45] D. Eickelman, "The Study of Islam in Local Contexts," *Contributions to Asian Studies* 17 (1982), 1-16.

[46] Geertz, "The Religion," 129.

[47] Woodward, "Islam in Java," 82; Cf. Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1980), 5-6.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

B. Contextual Analysis: Socio-Cultural Grounds of The *Slametan*

1. Functional Analysis of the *Slametan*

Understood generally, the purpose of rituals may vary greatly depending upon the context of where and when they are conducted. At times rituals are often directed towards supernatural beings, towards what Rudolf Otto calls a "powerful Other."[48] The participant in a ritual may see its efficacy as soteriological in the sense that it may improve the participant's spiritual relationship with God.

If it is viewed according to functionalist theory, every ritual is considered to have its own theological significance, in light of a common sensical dimension with, for example, psychological and social dimensions.[49] The teleological aspects of a ritual sometimes have to be drawn from the symbols it contains through which its meanings can be unveiled. The meaning of the symbols depends upon the quality and the direction of the performance and upon the internal state of participants. In this case, the purpose of the ritual needs to be articulated on the basis of the holder's or participant's choices, whether it is intended to appease the supernatural beings or for the sake of his or her own spiritual needs.

For functionalists, the purpose of ritual is to smooth over contradictions and to elevate acts into the realm of moral sanctity, to render them as ends not

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[48] Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 25.

[49] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion* (New York: Anchor Book, 1954), 87.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

subject to evaluation.[50] Geertz is among scholars who think that ritual can generate conflict and can be disruptive. Through his close observation of a Javanese ritual ceremony (funeral ritual), Geertz contends that the disparity between cultural beliefs and social organization among the Javanese could be the most potential cause of their cultural strains.[51] Despite the fact that ritual can sometimes generate conflict, Durkheim argues that it is by nature intended to be positive.[52] Indeed ritual can be disruptive, but that is its effect, not its *raison d'être*.

In the perspective of functional theory as well, the Javanese *slametans*, in which various conceptual and behavioral elements from Hindu-Buddhism, Islam, and animism are intermingled, the close functional adjustment of the conditions of Javanese tradition and the ritual pattern of the *slametans* are even more readily apparent. One may understand these rituals as a spiritual tool for the people's expression of dealing with their needs in daily life;

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[50] Stanley R. Barret, *The Rebirth of Anthropological Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 180.

[51] Geertz's analysis of an eastern Javanese funeral provides a vision of hov conflict in conducting the *slametan* for the dead occurred. He asserts that conflict onl took place because all the funeral participants, members of urban community, shared common, highly integrated, cultural tradition concerning funerals. Thus, when a your boy died, a funeral *slametan* was immediately organized. (But because the ideologic domain in the society was divided –one group, including the deceased boy's close k were supporters of a secular, vaguely socialist party; the other group supported Muslim party—the local government prevented religious officials from conduct rituals for the secular group). After some political compromising, the funeral eventu took place. But, as Geertz commented, the funeral participants were not sure whet they were engaged in a sacralized consideration of first and last things, or in a sec struggle for power. (For a more detailed story, see Geertz, "Ritual and Social Char 165.

[52] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Press, 1995), 33-39.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

appearing the local spirits, escaping from life crises, obtaining blessings from God, and other purposes.[53]

At other times rituals may manifest their efficacy in the Durkheimian perspective as that they may engender a feeling of group solidarity through acts of corporate devotion.[54] This aspect of ritual performance has been recognized by many scholars who have been influenced by functionalism and they focus their attention on how the rituals can build group solidarity. On the basis of social functionalism, the *slametan* can be observed as an important integrating tool for society; one of its emphases is social equilibrium or social homeostasis, i.e. achieving a state of *rukun* (J., harmony).[55] It symbolizes the idea of mutual dependence of neighbors, enacting an interdependence in which the goal is to preserve the *rukun* tradition. As Koentjaraningrat has pointed out, the *slametan* represents an expression of *gotong royong* (J., the tradition of helping each other) ethics.[56] In this perspective, Geertz maintains that the state of *rukun* in the Javanese *slametan* is important not only as a good tradition but also

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[53] See, the chapter two of the current thesis, section A.

[54] Emile Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms," 27-33.

[55] Mary Hawkins, "Is *Rukun* Dead? Ethnographic Interpretations of Social Change and Javanese Culture," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 7:3 (December 1996): 218-34. Javanese communalism is primarily based upon the concept of *rukun*. Jay describes *rukun* as both an ideal state of communal being and a mode of action; a process of sharing through communal action. (Robert R. Jay, *Javanese Villagers: Social Relations in Rural Modjokuto* [Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute Technology Press, 1969], 66). For Hildred Geertz, *rukun* is considered one of the most deeply felt values of the Javanese. Hildred Geertz, "Indonesian Cultures and communities," in Ruth M. Vey (ed.), *Indonesia* (New Haven, South East Asian Studies: Yale University, by arrangement with Human Resources Area Files Press, 1967), 44.

[56] Koentjaraningrat, "Javanese Culture," 146.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

because it, in its correct meaning, refers to specific and concrete practices of labor and capital exchange.[57]

As a tool for maintaining a state of social harmony, the *slametan* has an especially strong hold in Javanese village society.[58] Geertz and Peacock argue that the *slametan* is particularly suited to small traditional and homogenous communities, and hence could not long survive in urban areas.[59] This is of course not entirely true, and is misleading. One can rightfully assume that the *rukun* phenomenon is the most obvious characteristic of the rural areas in Java, but that it does not mean that the *slametan* belongs only to rural society. As Woodward and Dewey have observed, the *slametan* ritual is also a part of urban culture. For some urban societies, it is indeed used as a mechanism for social integration in urbanizing situations.[60]

Rituals may also be seen as a "*rite de passage*"[61] through which a person is transformed and made better, either through a change in social status or

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[57] For a more detailed information, see Geertz, "Religion of Java," 61.

[58] Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985), 147.

[59] Geertz has characterized the *slametan* ritual as a cultural remnant of a rural tradition (Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change," 164). Meanwhile Peacock has ascribed it as ritual that Surabayans no longer need (James Peacock, *Rites and Modernization: Symbolic and Social Aspects of Indonesian Proletarian Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 226.

[60] Woodward, The *Slametan*," 66. See also, Alice G. Dewey, "Ritual as Mechanism for Urban Adaptation," *Man* 5:3 (September 1970): 438-48.

[61] *Rite de passage* is a French expression originally coined by Arnold van Gennep in his seminal work published in 1909 (Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960). Terminologically, it denotes (1) a ceremony to facilitate or mark a person's change of status on a significant occasion, as at the onset of puberty or upon entry into a select group; (2) any act or event marking a passage from one stage to another. See, John R. Hinnells (Ed.), *A New Dictionary of Religions* (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 1995), 426-27; Cf. *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1991), 1162.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

through a transformation in spiritual station, or both. Following van Gennep, rituals are considered in some sense or other to be rites of passage because their purpose is to produce some sort of change in the person who engages in them.[62] A *rite de passage* may involve both an external change of status, and an internal, invisible change of state, or even a reconfirmation of a condition that is expected but has not yet been experienced or articulated.

In accordance with the *rite de passage* developed by van Gennep, the Javanese *slametan* is held to celebrate one's shift into several stages of life. Important rites of passage accompanied with the *slametan* among the Javanese Muslims include, *inter alia*, birth, *'aqīqa* (A., haircutting sacrifice), circumcision, marriage, death rites, and others.[63] Each stage in Muslim life signifies the individual change and social status from one role to another. For example, the circumcision ritual signifies the change of (Muslim) status from childhood to adolescence, a significance that the participant is ready to undertake all religious duties in Islam; the marriage ceremony signifies the change of a Muslim's role, both individually and socially, from single to married status and thus has different status in society, and so on.

In conclusion, functional theory views the *slametan* in how it functions within a broader context --in the context of both spiritual being and for the sake of human existence. It can be understood as an answer to the question of why the *slametan* exists in the structure of Javanese religious tradition, and the answer is because Javanese Muslims need it as a spiritual apparatus through which divine blessings can be obtained.

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[62] van Gennep, "The Rites of Passage," 26-40.

[63] Geertz, "The Religion of Java," 30-85. See also, R. Martin, "Islam," 152-55.

Masdar Hilmy, "Islam and Javanese"... McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

2. Structural Analysis of the *Slametan*

In the eyes of structuralists, including Lévi-Strauss, rituals are assumed to have a structural relationship with myths. Regardless of whether the myth or the ritual is the original, this approach sees both of them as reciprocal; the myth exists on the conceptual level and the ritual on the level of action (a homology, according to Lévi-Strauss). The relationship between myth and ritual can be seen in two ways: dialectical and mechanically causal, both of which presuppose a structural relationship.[64] Structuralism thus sees the ritual phenomenon as a part of a "logical order" in the whole cultural system. In other words, it follows the formal structure of a "closed system."[65]

Viewed from the structuralist theory, the *slametan* presupposes a hypothesis that this ritual follows a set of rules hereditarily preserved by the structure of Javanese culture. It assumes that the *slametan* ritual is an integral part of Javanese culture which is conducted from generation to generation of Javanese Muslims. It has been established as such throughout Javanese history and claims its own structural position in the midst of Javanese culture based upon local myths and interpretation. In this case, the *slametan* is structurally linked with local myths preserved in society as popular knowledge.[66]

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[64] For a more detailed account, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 232-33. Cf. also his *Myth and Meaning* (New York: Schocken Books), 1978.

[65] See, also, A.C. Van Der Leeden, ""Empiricism" and "Logical Order" in Anthropological Structuralism," *Bijdragen tot de Taal,- Land- en Volkenkunde* 127 (1971): 15-38.

[66] See, Woodward, "The *Garbeg Malud* in Yogyakarta: Veneration of the Prophet as Imperial Ritual," *Journal of Ritual studies*: 5/1 (Winter, 1991): 109-132.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

On the basis of this structural analysis, Geertz's theory of model *for* and model *of* may be applicable to the *slametan*. If Strauss sees that myth and ritual can replicate to each other, Geertz's theory of myth can therefore be classified as a model *for* the *slametan*, and the *slametan* itself can be regarded as a model *of* myth.[67] But by simply comparing the functional analysis of the *slametan* with Geertz's model *for* and model *of* theory cannot capture the quintessence of this ritual as a whole, unless one should notice that this structural relationship is merely a historical link of the ritual to its local tradition.

Furthermore, it has been said that the invention of the *slametan* by Sunan Kalijaga has a connection with the Majapahit/Demak myth concerning the poor condition of agricultural fertility and prosperity at that time. According to Woodward, the Majapahit/Demak myth is as follows:

> The kings of Majapahit used to have rituals at which offerings of food were presented to the people. At the time of Demak this practice was discontinued and as a result crops were poor and many people went hungry. The Sultan of Demak asked Sunan Kalijaga what he should do about this. Sunan Kalijaga replied that even though he was a Muslim he had a duty to provide for the well-being of the people and to teach them Islam. He then instructed the Sultan on how to perform the *slametan* and told him to teach it to all his subjects.[68]

Woodward claims that this myth speaks about the importance of state ceremonies and the continuity of Demak, as an Islamic state, and Majapahit, as a Hindu state in Java. It emphasizes the social dimension of the "union of servant and lord" and more specifically, the interrelationships of the *slametan* ritual, prosperity and social harmony. It links Islam with agricultural fertility,

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[67] Clifford Geertz, "Religion As a Cultural System," in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 87-125.

[68] Woodward, "The *Garebeg Malud*," 115.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

gives an ancient Javanese religious theme a Muslim touch. It also signifies the process through which pre-Islamic customs may be brought into, and structurally dominated by Islam. Hindu kings are said to have used this ritual to provide for the well-being of the populace, while the Muslim kings regarded it as an important custom but with a ritual performance based on Islamic tradition.[69]

The local mythology and folklore inspiring the existence of the *slametan* ritual is derived largely from the reciprocal pattern of human-nature macrocosms prevalent in Java. It deals with such prototypical matters of an agricultural society as fertility, harvest, plantation, and so on. It also incorporates the issue of human crises as an integral part of human-nature relationships. Through a simple *slametan* ceremony, the physical and spiritual aspects of Javanese Islam come together in order to give some solutions to the human crisis. It provides an expression of religious piety that can be apprehended by all the senses. In the practice of the *slametan* ritual, visions, tastes, spells, smells and other physical performances all symbolize as religious vehicles for the gaining certain purposes.

In agreement with the above assumption, the structural relationship between myths and the *slametan* ritual can be found in some agricultural folklore such as the myth of fertility, planting and harvesting. Among Javanese Muslims, especially in a more syncretistic society, the myths vary depending upon the popular knowledge transferred both orally and literally in the society. Among the most popular myths concerning the agricultural matters is that of

[69] Woodward, "The *Garebeg Malud*," 116.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Dewi Sri who is believed to be the goddess who preserves the fertility of the soil, provides bountiful harvest, and protects the plants from harm and damage.[70]

In Tengger society of East Java, the myth of Dewa Kusuma, a founding guardian ancestor of the region residing in the mountain Bromo and a human turned deity, is believed to be the most important figure in their *slametan* ritual.[71] Each year, the *slametan* is conducted by the Tengger society in memory of Dewa Kusuma's self sacrifice for his family and community according to legend. In addition to Dewa Kusuma, some villagers in this area refer to other deities believed to patronize them in the *slametans*. On another occasion, one such deity known as Sang Hyang Widhi (S., "God-the-All-Determining") is

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[70] Even though the myth of Dewi Sri may not directly link to the practice of the *slametan* ritual, many villagers in Java still often make offerings in the corners of their field rice dedicated to this pre-Islamic Hindu deity. As an agricultural society, the Javanese still rely very much upon such mythological beliefs. And in the structure of their tradition they believe that economic cycles based on rice cultivation have a reciprocal relationship with the pattern of the *slametan*. For an account of the relationship between economic cycles and the *slametan* ritual, see Thomas Schweizer, "Economic Individualism and the Community Spirit: Divergent Orientation Patterns of Javanese Villagers in Rice Production and the Ritual Sphere," *Modern Asian Studies* 23, 2 (1989): 277-312. For a descriptive account on the narration of Dewi Sri, see Tim Penyusun Naskah Cerita Rakyat Daerah Jawa Tengah, *Dewi Sri: Cerita Rakyat dari Daerah Surakarta, Jawa Tengah* (Jakarta: proyek Pengembangan Media Kebudayaan, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI), n.d.

[71] This myth can be described as follows: "Seeking shelter from triumphant Muslim armies, the early inhabitants of the Tengger region were refugees from recently conquered Majapahit. Unable to produce a child, the leading husband and wife among these inhabitants promise to sacrifice a child to the mountain at the center of the Tengger territory in exchange for 25 children. The wish granted, the couple then failed to keep their promise, not wishing to lose any of their children. The mountain then exploded into flames, threatening to destroy the entire region and its people. Dewa Kusuma, the youngest of 25 children, volunteered to offer himself to the fiery mountain so that his siblings could live in peace. Although swallowed by the flames, Dewa Kusuma was believed not dead. His voice could be heard coming from the mountain's fire, conveying an injunction for Tengger tradition. His brothers and sisters should live in peace and return each year to the volcano. There, in memory of Dewa Kusuma, they should offer the fruits of their harvest and recall the events that established Tengger tradition and ensure its continual blessing. For a more detailed account, see, Robert W. Hefner, "Ritual and Cultural Reproduction in non-Islamic Java," *American Ethnologist*, vol. 10, no. 4 [November 1983]: 669-70; cf. Hefner, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 54-56.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

another important figure in their *slametan.*[72] In those aforementioned *slametans*, the hierarchy of the spiritual world corresponds to that of the living.

In Banyuwangi, a region in the eastern tip of East Java, the myth of Adam, Eve and Vishnu portrays the myth of the *slametan*. The myth of Adam and Eve is represented in the symbolic items of the *slametan*; white and red porridge that respectively represents the father's semen and the mother's procreative blood and our first parents. In more syncretistic areas of this region, Vishnu, a Hindu god, is another important figure represented in the *slametan* and is placed besides the two former figures.[73] The trinity of Adam-Eve-Vishnu in the *slametan* mythology prevalent in Banyuwangi indicates that the dualistic macrocosm of Islam and Hindu is very influential to the making the pattern of this ritual.

3. Local Interpretation of the *Slametan*

In the context of religious rituals, symbols are considered to be the component parts of a powerful metaphysical language which are used by persons in order to think about the world in ways that are beyond the range of ordinary language.[74] In agreement with Geertz's definition of religion as an

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[72] Sang Hyang Widhi is a monotheistic God worshipped by Hindu believers who regard him as playing an important role in the religious and spiritual life of Tengger society. He is thus a non-immanent deity, who is viewed as cause behind all causes. See, Hefner, "Ritual and Cultural Reproduction," 670-71. See also, his "Hindu Javanese," 72.

[73] Andrew Beatty, "Adam and Eve and Vishnu: Syncretism in the Javanese *Slametan*," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 2, no. 2 (June 1996): 278-9.

[74] Vernon James Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 1-2.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

entity of symbolic meaning,[75] the symbols embedded in the *slametan* also give a certain theological significance. It is through the *slametan* that persons most completely encounter the symbolic universe that underpins and gives shape to their most deeply held beliefs. The participants in the *slametan* ritual are assumed to believe that the encounter with powerful symbols in some way or other is efficacious.[76]

Although there are various types of the *slametans* conducted by the Javanese Muslims from one region to another, they have a similar pattern of symbolic interpretation. Among the most obvious elements of the *slametans* considered to contain symbolic meanings is the meal or food, the invocation by the host, and the Arabic prayers derived mostly from Islamic tradition and given by the leader of the rituals (*modin*, J.). In some regions of Java, the *slametans* have other additional symbolic elements such as the burning of incense, the five-color flower and porridge and other offerings.

The local elements seem to show that different accessories in certain *slametan* rituals probably depend on the culture in those regions in Java. It can

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[75] Geertz defines religion as "a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivation in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic." See, Clifford Geertz, "The Interpretation of Cultures," 90-91.

[76] Following Turner's definition, the symbol is "the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior; it is the ultimate unit of specific structure in a ritual context." The structures and properties of ritual symbols, according to him, may be inferred from three classes of data: (1) external form and observable characteristics; (2) interpretations offered by specialists and by laymen; (3) significant contexts largely worked out by the anthropologist. For a detailed discussion, see, Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1967), especially, pp. 1-47. Furthermore, he maintains that the ritual process consists of three stages: (1) separation in which the initiate is separated from his or her normal role in the social structure; (2) liminality, where the social status of the initiate is ambiguous; and (3) reaggregation, in which the initiate reenters society with a new identity. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company), 1969.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese... McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

be said that the more dominant the *abangan* culture is, the more associated the *slametans* are to local "non-Islamic" culture. In connection to this, one of the most interesting features of the *slametan* from a theoretical point of view, according to Beatty, is its shared symbolism.[77] Viewed from this perspective, the local accessories themselves may represent a symbolic meaning where a certain theological value is embedded, and it is polysemic in that the value itself is commonly shared by a larger community.

It is within the context of this symbolism that the principle of cultural diversity represented in the *slametans* prevails. Geographical boundaries sometimes become a factor in determining the different elements of the rituals that leads to further theological interpretations. Therefore, the problem between different forms of *slametan* rituals from one region to one another becomes understandable. It is enough to state that these different attempts of symbolization result in the different interpretations and different elements that appear in the Javanese *slametans*.

Some of local accessories commonly found in the *slametans* are the red and white porridge, and the dish of five-colored porridge. In the context of the Javanese *slametans*, these elements are, again, not simply a complement to the rituals, but they contain certain symbolic meanings. Theologically, red and white are among the primary symbols in Javanese thought. For the Javanese, especially those who live in a syncretistic area, white and red porridge represent the father's semen and the mother's procreative blood, and through them Adam and Eve are believed to have been born. A minimal *slametan*, with specific

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[77] Beatty, "Adam and Eve," 279.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Javanese tradition. It is within this sense that the *slametan* can be characterized as a syncretistic ritual, regardless of its Islamic traits. The syncretistic notions of the *slametan* seem to have been engendered from a long cultural encounter between "normative Islam" as an idealized reference, and local traditions and cultures as the "host." This can be seen from its abundant and various local accessories embodied in the *slametan*; even its variety shows the tendency of a rich heterogeneity from one region to the other.

In agreement with the analysis employed in the current chapter, a conclusion can also be drawn that it is best to observe the *slametan* from a comprehensive perspective, which uses a reciprocal combination between a textual approach based on Islamic texts and contextual approach based on socio-cultural variables. To examine the *slametan* from both perspectives not only help one to achieve a more complete picture of the ritual but will also lead one to be less biased due to one-sidedness.

CONCLUSION

For some, Java is the land of syncretism par excellence. Its indigenous tradition provided fertile ground for the Hindu and Buddhist faiths which were introduced to the island as much as a millennium ago. It was into this mix of traditions that Islam came, a comparative newcomer. It was able to gain a foothold thanks to the accommodative approach taken by Muslim propagandists towards local beliefs. This pattern of adaptation to existing beliefs has culminated in Javanese Islam.

The denunciation of Javanese Islam on these grounds, alone as a form of "bad Islam," is of no use to anyone wanting to understand the essence of the phenomenon. It is only through a comprehensive and holistic scholarly approach, based on textual and contextual analysis, that one can understand fully why Javanese Islam clings so steadfastly to syncretism. Textual analysis provides us with a model of "normative Islam," the original blueprint revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Contextual analysis on the other hand is a tool that allows us to observe the historicity of Islam within the framework of Javanese culture.

The *slametan* ritual is perhaps the most tangible example of the syncretistic spirit in Javanese Islam. No matter how much one insists that the *slametan* is a product of a certain interpretation of Sufi teaching introduced into the praxis of Java, it ultimately represents the result of a dialectical encounter between the two civilizations: Islam and Hindu-Buddhist tradition. Despite the fact that some of the more obvious non-Islamic accessories have

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

mostly been removed from the *slametan* practice, this does not reduce the essential syncreticity of Javanese Islam or its ritual. It is a matter of record that the *slametan* pattern was adopted by the earlier Muslim propagandists as an effective vehicle to introduce Islam to the Javanese. It served a purpose at the outset, and continues to do so today. It is a historical reality to which no blame can be attached.

Thus to define *slametan* as either Islamic or syncretistic or even animistic is not the focus of the current study. Instead, what is attempted is to trace its deepest theological roots based on the two above-mentioned approaches. This study shows that the core of the *slametan* is essentially Islamic, but that some of its accessory elements are as various as the abundance of Javanese cultural idiosyncrasy. To Javanese Muslims, the *slametan* is the most popular ritual for presenting their petition to their God, and is seen as the most effective way of accomplishing this. The *slametan* is also an effective, though unsophisticated, tool for maintaining social equilibrium and harmony. It is one of the few occasions in which all Javanese Muslims --*abangan*, *priyayi* and *santri*-- can share, demonstrating, as Geertz puts it, a "relativistic tolerance."[1]

From the standpoint of Islamic textual sources, the existence of the *slametan* is not without religious justification at all. Although it is not referred to explicitly either in the Qur'ān or the Ḥadīth, the spirit of the *slametan* is present in some verses of the Qur'ān and in the Ḥadīth because the core of the *slametan* is prayers (*du'ā*, A.), which can be articulated in any language, anywhere and at anytime. Besides, some would say that the *slametan* appealed

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Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese ... McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

[1] Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), 366-67.

to the Javanese because, as Woodward has pointed out, of its interpretation of Islamic piety according to the Sufi tradition.[2]

Viewed from both textual and contextual perspectives, the *slametan* has a firm cultural foundation of Java. It also presupposes the historical link between two great epochs: the Islamic and Hindu-Buddhist civilizations. The heterogeneity of local elements in the *slametan* shows the flexibility of Islam in accepting "non-Islamic" accretion judged to be not theologically contradictory to the substance of doctrinal Islam. It is from this perspective that the nature of Islamic cosmopolitanism is readily observable.

In closing, it may safely be argued that to see Javanese Islam, and thus the *slametan* ritual as its hybrid, one should employ a comprehensive and holistic approach. To say that the *slametan* is animistic ritual is to deny the reality that it is completely Islamized. On the other hand, to argue that the *slametan* is purely Islamic amounts to a negation of the historicity of Javanese Islam. The most realistic statement is probably that the *slametan* is neither purely animistic nor purely Islamic, but that both elements are present (syncretistic).

[2] Mark R. Woodward, "The *Slametan*: Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam," *History of Religion*, 28: 54-89. Cf. his book, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press), 1989.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

GLOSSARY

A. Arabic Terms

Al-'ādah sharī'ah Muḥakkamah: a tradition --as long as not contradictory to the *sharī'ah*-- can be justified by the *sharī'ah.*

'Aqīqah: haircutting ceremony for children.

'Ibādah: Muslim ritual activities.

'Ied al-Aḍḥā: Muslim holiday to commemorate Abraham's sacrifice of his son, Ismael; the day of Islamic feast.

'Ied al-Fithr: Muslim holiday at the end of fasting Ramadhān.

'Ulamā: Muslim teachers/intellectual.

'Urf or *'Ādah*: tradition or customary law.

Al-Fatiḥah: the first chapter of the Qur'ān.

Amīn: amen.

Arkān al-Islām: the (five) pillars of Islam.

Dhikr: portions of the Qur'ān, other sacred texts, or words used in Sufi meditation exercises.

Faḍā'il al-A'māl: the praiseworthy conducts.

Ḥajj: the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Ḥalāl bihalāl: the annual Indonesian tradition of strengthening kin relationships among Muslims after *'Ied al-Fithr* prayer.

Ḥalāl: legally permitted.

Ḥarām: 1. Legally prohibited; 2. Sacred.

Mawlid al-Nabī: the festival commemorating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad.

Qurbān: sacrifice.

Ramadhān: fasting month in Muslim calendar.

Ṣadaqah: commendable alms.

Salām: refers to condition of tranquility in both this life and the hereafter; Muslim salutation.

Al-Salām 'alaikum: peace be upon you.

Ṣalāt: liturgical prayer performed five times per day.

Ṣawm: fasting.

Shahadatayn: two testimonial phrases in Islam.

Sharī'ah: Islamic Law.

Wa 'alaykum al-salām wa rahmat Allah wa barakātuh: on you be the peace, blessing and mercy of Allah.

Wujūdiyya: A system of worship and mystical practice followed at the Acehnese royal court by Hamzah Fansuri (d. 1625) drawn largely from the influence of Ibn 'Arabi.

Zakāt: legally required alms.

Zulqa'dah: the tenth month of Muslim calendar.

B. Javanese, Indonesian, Malay, Persian and Sanskrit Terms

Abangan (J.): the nominal, syncretistic Muslims of Java.

Adat (I. & J.): customary tradition/law.

Agama Jawi (J.): Javanese religion.

Alun-alun (J.): the main public square of the royal palace.

Alus (J.): refined, spiritual realm.

Ambengan or *tumpeng* (J.): trays of prepared food containing cooked rice and other accompaniments.

Apam (M.) or *apem* (J.): popular snack in a death *slametan*.

Batin (I. & J.): the inner life of person.

Berkah or *barakah* (J.): blessing.

Bersih desa (I.) or *merdi desa* (J.): cleansing the village ceremony.

Bésék (J.): container of plaited bamboo.

Budi (J.): reason, right thinking.

Çaka (J.): The Javanese Year.

Dalang (J.): *wayang* performer.

Danyang (J.): guardian spirit.

Demit (J.): place spirit.

Dewa Kusuma (J.): the legendary figure in the myth of *slametan* in Tengger.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Dewi Sri (J.): the goddess believed by the Javanese to preserve the fertility of the soil, provide bountiful harvest and protect the plants from harm and damage.

Donga (J.) or *do'a* (I. & J.): prayers.

Dukun temanten (J.): a bridal specialist.

Gamelan (J.): the Javanese orchestra.

Garebeg (J.): royal audience.

Garebeg Mulud (J.): an elaborate *slametan* ceremony held by the palace Yogyakarta to commemorate the Prophet's birthday.

Gotong royong (J.): the tradition of helping each other.

Jajan pasar (J.): market snacks.

Kampung (I. & J.): quarter town.

Kasar (I. & J.): coarse, material world.

Kebatinan (I. & J.): title given to a group of people mostly in Central Java, who practice mystical rights based on a mixture of religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and animism.

Kejawen (J.): literally that which is associated with Java; used to refer to elements of Javanese local Islam.

Keluarga keraton J.): royal or palace family.

Kenduri (M. & J.): meal ritual ceremony among Malay Muslims and in some parts of Java.

Kiai sekati (J.): the name of a pair of royal *gamelan* in the Sultanate Yogyakarta used for royal ceremony such as *Garebeg*.

Kidung (J.): Javanese traditional song.

Kiyayi or *kiai* (J.): Muslim teachers/intellectuals.

Komite penengah penghinaan (I.): committee for the repression of revilement.

Kraton or *keraton* (J.): palace.

Kromo inggil (J.): highly formal Javanese language.

Kundur (P.): incense.

Lakon (J.): the main theme in a shadow play story.

Laut kidul (J.): the southern sea of Java.

Lurah (J.): village headman.

Macapat (J.): the form of Javanese traditional poem whose rhyme is similar.

Masdar Hilmy, Islam and Javanese..., McGILL UNIVERSITY, Canada, 1999

Mantra or *mantera* (J.): *kejawen* spells and prayers.

Mbah Budha (J.): a God in Buddhist context.

Memedi (J.): possessing spirit.

Mènak (J.): those of noble birth; aristocrats.

Menyan or *dupa* (J.): incense.

Mitung dinteni (J.): the mortuary *slametan* of the seventh.

Modin (J.): an official religious specialist in a village.

Mollah or *Mullah* (P.): Muslim teachers.

Muludan (J.): the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday.

Muluk (J.): eating using the fingertips of the right hand.

Nyatus (J.): the mortuary *slametan* of the hundredth.

Nyekawan dasani (J.): the mortuary *slametan* of the fortieth.

Nyewu (J.): the mortuary *slametan* of the thousandth.

Pandita (J.): a wise or religious man

Pate or *patih* (J. & I.): a bureaucratic position in the same level as Prime Minister.

Pesantren (I. & J.): Islamic boarding schools.

Primbon (J.): Book published by early religious scholars on Java for teaching Islamic matters.

Priyayi (J.): aristocrat Muslims of Java.

Rukun (J.): a state of harmony.

Sang Hyang Widhi (S.): its literal meaning is "God-the-All-Determining"; God in Hindu context.

Sedekah (J.): alms giving.

Sega kuning (J.): yellow rice.

Sekul suci (J.): holy rice.

Sila (J.): the way one sits with his/her legs crossed.

Slamet (J.): a psycho-mystical state of tranquility in which hierarchical distinctions are temporarily abrogated and in which a social group or individual receives the blessing of Allah and the saints.

Slametan (J.): a ritual meal the purpose of which is to induce the state of *slamet*.

Suluk (J.): Name of Javanese literary forms.

Sunan (J.): a title for the (nine) saints of Java.

Susuhunan (J.): a Surakarta and Yogyakarta royal title.

Suwun or *panyuwun* (J.): invocation or supplication.

Tahlilan (J.): reciting the phrase *lā ilāha illa Allāh*, which is usually conducted in chorus during the *slametan* or *kenduri*.

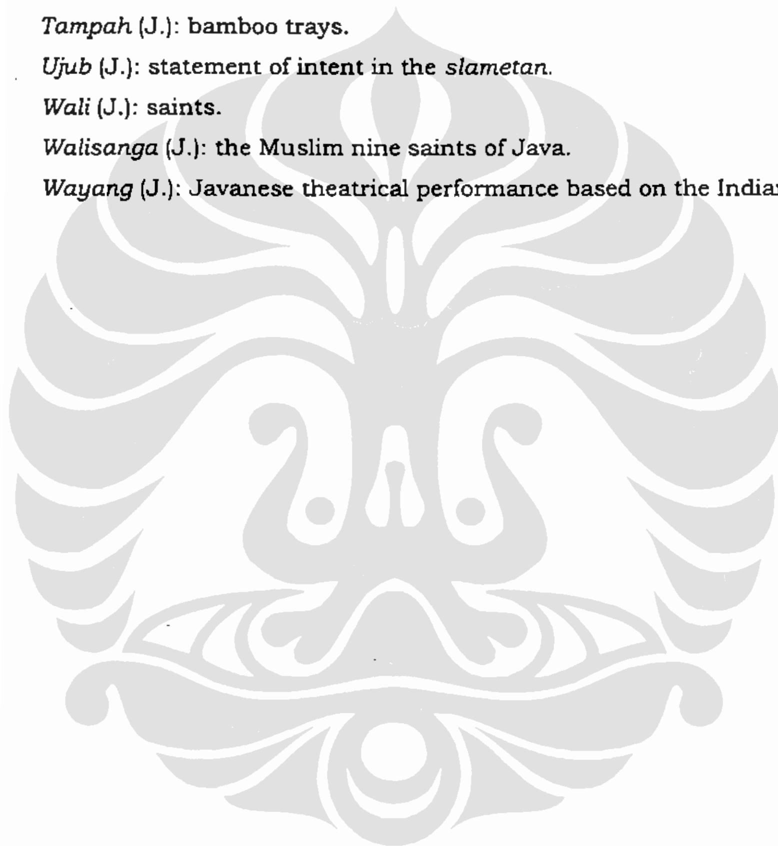
Tampah (J.): bamboo trays.

Ujub (J.): statement of intent in the *slametan*.

Wali (J.): saints.

Walisanga (J.): the Muslim nine saints of Java.

Wayang (J.): Javanese theatrical performance based on the Indian epics.



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