

Chapter 2: Belief System

THE IDEA OF GOD

*asyhadu al-la ilaha illallah,
wa asyhadu anna Muhammadar-Rasulullah.*

*isun anakseni kelawan atinisun,
setuhune oranana Pengeran anging Allah.
lan isun anakseni kelawan atinisun,
setuhune Nabi Muhammad iku utusane Allah.
tegeše kang aran Pengeran, iku dzat kang agawe,*

*langit kelawanMbumi, sarta isine kabeh.
Isun anakseni setuhune Kanjeng Nabi Muhammad,
iku utusane Gusti Allah kanggo wong alam kabeh.*

*asyhadu an la ilaha illa Allah,
wa asyhadu anna Muhammadan Rasul Allah.*

*I bear witness in my heart,
that there is no Lord but Allah.
and I bear witness in my heart,
that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.*

*He who is called Lord is the Being who creates
heaven and earth and the contents thereof.
I bear witness that the most Excellent Prophet Muhammad
is the Apostle of Allah, for mankind throughout the whole world.*

This poem is one sample of *puji-pujian* (praising God) I frequently heard from a *tajug* (prayer house) at Blok Kedawung, a village in Desa Kaliwadas of Weru District, about twelve kilometres south-west of the city of Cirebon.¹ The poem is in Cirebonese dialect, but somewhat surprisingly, on some occasions I heard the same poem chanted at a prayer house in the Sundanese village of Desa Brujul-Kulon, District of Jatiwangi in Majalengka Regency about 30 kilometres west of Cirebon. This would suggest that the poem is not only known by Javanese speaking people in Cirebon living in the plain close to the coastal area, but also by the inland Sundanese as well. The chanters were groups of people (*jama'ah*) consisting of children and adults, males and females, who were about to undertake the prescribed prayer. They usually do this chanting soon after one of them has sounded the *adzan* (call for prayer). During chanting, they recite

¹ *Puji-pujian* is a local term referring to chants in praise of God or the prophet Muhammad. It is a common practice among traditional Muslims in Java to chant *puji-pujian* after *adzan* or the call to prayer has sounded.

the verses repeatedly until the *imam* comes and prayer begins. The poem is not the only one recited in pre-prayer chanting; there are many others. I chose this particular poem because I think it is relevant to a discussion of the Cirebonese idea of God, the subject dealt with in this section.

Chanting *puji-pujian* at prayer time is a common practice among traditional Muslims, especially in Cirebon. Usually, the chanting goes on during the time between the call to prayer and the prayer itself, that is, during the time while people wait for their *imam* who will lead the prescribed daily prayer. The main idea of the chanting is that, in accordance with standards of piety, no time within the prayer session is without spiritual significance. All activities within this session are directed solely towards *ibadah* or *ibadat* (devotion to God);² and before the main *ibadah* (the prescribed prayer) begins, *puji-pujian* serves as a kind of warming up. In this context, the chanting, usually of verses that glorify God or that respect the Prophet Muhammad, or other similar verses, is considered a meritorious religious act. In addition, if the chanted verses are the **syahadah** (testimony of faith), they in fact, have at least a double function: for adults, the function is renewal and re-affirmation of the creed; for children, it is a kind of preparatory drill ensuring that they are conversant with pronouncing the words when the time comes to recite the creed formally.

The first couplet of the poem I have selected includes the Arabic words of the **syahadah** which the Cirebonese call *syahadat*.³ Literally, *syahadat* means testimony. In religious use the term *syahadat* refers to the Muslim profession of faith stating that there is no God but God and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. The second couplet is the translation of the *syahadat* in rather archaic Cirebonese Javanese dialect. In English it translates "I bear witness (in my heart) that there is no Lord but Allah, and I bear witness (in my heart that the most Excellent Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." The third couplet contains a short description of the two main "characters" depicted in the *syahadat*: the first, explains the use of the term *Pengeran* (Lord) for God, a key point for me in determining the poem's relevance; the second, explains the function of Muhammad, whose prophethood is universal. The basic idea of Deity that prevails among most Cirebonese seems to conform to the message conveyed by this verse. It says that what is really meant by God is the Being who created heaven, and earth together with their contents. There is no doubt however, that the word *Pangeran* refers to Allah, the proper name of God among Muslims.

For Cirebonese, as well as for other Muslims, pronouncement of the Islamic creed, the *syahadat*, is a supreme religious act whose mere recitation suffices for entry into the community of believers.⁴ The important position of *syahadat*

² In local usage, *ibadah* and *ibadat* make no difference, both are frequently used and interchangeable.

³ Subsequently I shall use the Cirebonese word, the "*syahadat*."

⁴ See also: "God in Islam", *Encyclopedia of Religion*.

among Cirebonese is manifest in the fact that almost without exception, all native Cirebonese are Muslim in the sense that everyone, recites the *syahadat* at least once during his/her lifetime. Interestingly, the formal recitation of the *syahadat* takes place at particularly crucial moments of the life cycle, that is, at the time of circumcision and marriage. Circumcision for a boy and marriage for a girl are of fundamental importance among Javanese.⁵

“Formally, in Islam, the obligation to recite *syahadat* is required only once during a lifetime”, said Pak Shofie, my informant. He explained that when people finished reciting *syahadat*, they automatically become Muslim, whatever intention they might have in their hearts and whatever they will do after the recital. “We do not know what is in one's heart, we only know what one says.” In Islam, Pak Shofie added, that to do good or bad, right or wrong is solely an individual's right; for that reason a person bears responsibility to God. But when a person falls into trouble or gets sick, other Muslims are obliged to help, and when a person dies it is the duty of other Muslims to care for the corpse, to pray at the burial and to bury the person at a Muslim burial complex. This statement does confirm that a mere recitation of *syahadat* suffices for entry into the *ummah*, the community of believers whose social bonds are based on the pronouncement of that very creed. Of course this is not to say that a mere oral pronouncement is enough to become a good Muslim. Deeper awareness in the heart of the reciter is also required; again, Pak Shofie explained:

One who would truly recite *syahadat* is required to incorporate two things: the first is to pronounce it by the tongue and to fill the heart with earnestness while witnessing that there is no god that can be rightfully worshipped but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. He must be sure that Muhammad's prophethood is to teach jinn and humankind about the divine message written in the Holy Qur'an. Secondly, real recital of *syahadat* should be accompanied by *tasdiq*, *ta'dhim*, *khurmah* and *khilwah*. *Tasdiq* means affirming that Allah is the sole God; *ta'dhim* means glorifying God; *khurmah* means exalting God; and *khilwah* means being generous in accepting Allah as the sole God; that is the real *syahadat*. Ignoring those elements is to mar the recital of *syahadat* and one's becoming a Muslim is only superficial.⁶

⁵ This is clearly illustrated by Geertz (1976), in *The Religion of Java*, Phoenix ed, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press pp. 51–67.

⁶ In-depth interview, 28-2-1992: “Wong kang maca syahadate bener-bener iku kudu nyumponi rong perkara: siji, ngucapaken karo lesan lan nekadaken ning jero ati. Nakseni yen langka Pengeran maning kang wajib disembah sejene Gusti Allah, lan nakseni yen Nabi Muhammad iku dadi utusane Gusti Allah. Diutuse kanjeng Nabi Muhammad iku perlu kanggo nggawa prentah-prentahe Gusti Allah ta'ala kang ana ning Qur'an kanggo para jinn lan menusa. Keloro, wong kang syahadate bener-bener iku kudu dibarengi karo tasdik, ta'dzim, khurmat lan khilwat. Tasdik artine negesaken yen kang dadi pengeran iku mung Gusti Allah siji; ta'dzim yaiku ngagungkaken Gusti Allah; khurmat artine mulyaaken Gusti Allah; khilwat yaiku ngrasa tenang lan nikmat atine merga duwe pengeran

Referring back to the poem that begins this section, God is firstly enunciated as *Kang gawe*, the creator of the universe: heaven, earth, and all the contents within them. This indicates that, in the first place, the Cirebonese idea of God is closely related to the concept of creation; professing that as creator, God creates what He likes and by His own will without interference from any other. Secondly, God is only one and the oneness of God is importantly emphasised: he has no companion, and has no equality. “*Gusti Allah iku Siji, oranana kang madani*” (the sovereign Lord Allah is One, none is equal to Him), Saefullah (37 years), a toy peddler, said. He affirmed the oneness of God by pointing out that it is in fact, depicted in the Holy Qur'an in *surat Qulhu* (QS: 112;1–4).⁷ He recited the verses and then gave their meaning in *Bahasa Indonesia*, which translates as: “Say, He, Allah is One, the Eternal God. He begot none, nor was He begotten. None is equal to Him”.

Some Cirebonese do recognise a variety of other deities: *dewa* (*deva*, male) and *dewi* (*devi*, female), *Betara* (*Bhatara*, male) and *Betari* (*Bhatari*, female), and also *Sang Hyang*. In general these terms are usually thought to have a relation to terms for Hindu deities.⁸

However, in Cirebon, the meaning of these words or the subjects referred to by such terms are vague. These terms are mainly heard in *wayang* (shadow-puppet) stories. Some *wayang* enthusiasts explain that *dewa-dewi*, *batara-betari* and *sang hyang* are the same things which refer to the earlier ancestors' deities predating Islam, but they do not believe that these divine beings now exist or ever existed. Some others say that these terms refer to superhuman beings, a mixture between jinn (genie) and man, each having a certain spiritual or magical power that enables them to become master of a certain element of the universe, such as wind, water, earth, or sky—and that some of our ancestors took them as deities. Some believe, and some do not believe, they existed at some time in history. Still others consider that they are only fictitious figures from *wayang* stories, created and inherited by an earlier generation to teach people about morality. The last view seems to be held most commonly.

The Cirebonese word for God is *Pa-ngeran* or *Pe-ngeran*.⁹ This word is derived from Javanese and has two meanings: God, and lord referring to person of

siji yaiku Gusti Allah. Lamun maca syahadat bli karo mengkonon mangka dadi muslime bli pati temenan.”

⁷ This is so named because the surah starts with “Qul huwa’ llah”, yet to Cirebonese it is closer to “Qulhu-w’ Allah”. Moreover, they are used to noting the initial word of the Qur'an to refer to a particular surah, such as: Alamtara for Al-Fil (QS 105), Tabbat for Al-Lahab or Al-Masad (QS 111), and Inna a'thaina for Al-Kawthar (QS 108).

⁸ The word *sembahyang* (to pray) which the Cirebonese use to translate the Arabic word *salat* is probably derived from *sembah-hyang* (to worship *hyang* or spirit). I explored this possibility with Pak Shofie and others but their answers were inconclusive. They insisted that the word *sembahyang* is another word from *solat*. The latter is derived from Arabic *salat* and that for them, *hyang* and *sembahyang* have no relation.

⁹ Either *Pa* or *Pe* may be used without implying any different meaning.

nobility or of high rank. The Cirebonese use the word in distinct ways to mean either of these. *Pangeran* meaning lord, is used only as a title of the court families and is put before the person's name, for example, "Pangeran Diponegoro", "Pangeran Mangkurat Trusmi", "Pangeran Panjunan", and "Pangeran Jayakelana". For the common noun meaning lord they do not use *pangeran* but *pinangeran* (by inserting an infix 'in'); e.g: Pangeran Ardiningrat is a *pinangeran*, not a *pangeran*; there are many *pinangeran* (not *pangeran*) in a court ceremony. *Pangeran* to mean God, on the other hand, is used independently but not as a title preceding any name, not even God's name. Thus, the expression as "*Pangeran Allah*" is never found.

In Cirebonese vernacular, asking about a person's God can be phrased as: "*Sapa Pengeranira?*" ("Who is your God?"). The answer is "*Pengeranisun Gusti Allah*" ("My God is the Lord Allah"). The word *gusti* also comes from Javanese and can also be translated as "lord"; it is akin to, or sometimes used interchangeably with, the word "*kanjeng*" (excellency) to refer to nobility such as prophets, saints, kings or others. A reference using *gusti* however implies a patron-client or a master-slave relationship in which the referee is the patron or the master. *Kanjeng* and *gusti* are used for example in such references as: *Gusti Nabi* or *Kanjeng Nabi*, or *Kanjeng Gusti Nabi Muhammad*, *Gusti* or *Kanjeng* or *Kanjeng Gusti Sinuhun Sultan Sepuh*. *Kanjeng* is therefore, used only in reference to a person and never to God; hence there can be no expression such as: "*Kanjeng Pengeran*" or "*Kanjeng Allah*".

Along with regarding God as *Kang gawe* (the Creator), the Cirebonese also regard God as *Kang Kuasa* (the Sovereign) whose sovereignty is absolute and omnipotent, and *Kang ngatur* (the ruler). The notions of God as sovereign and ruler seem to be more frequently mentioned in daily life than the notion of God as creator. I did not further explore the reason for this, but it is probably for practical reasons; the matter of life after creation is of more concern than are matters before creation. As God is omnipotent everything is totally under His control and nothing in the universe is unseen to Him. The three-fold ideas of God as the Creator, the Sovereign and the Ruler are consistent with the ideas of God's absolute omnipotence over men on the one hand, and men's total dependence on Him on the other. The dependency relation of Creator-created is deeply imprinted; it manifests itself for example in oral traditions, and more apparently, in exclamations. When one begins to do something, especially something important, it is traditional to recite *Basmalah*, the pronouncement of *Bismillahir rahmanir rahim* (Bism Allah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim), in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. On the other hand, when facing something undesirable or unwanted or when frightened, one will spontaneously respond: "*ya Allah!*" ("oh God!"); or "*la ilaha illa'llah!*", even sometimes, "*Muhammad rasulu' llah*", with the full recital of the *syahadat* added; or "*masya Allah*" (ma sya-a Allah, meaning "Allah does not will that"); or "*Astaghfirullahal'adzim!*" (astaghfir Allah al-'azhim

meaning I beg pardon of Allah the Greatest); or “*la hawla walaquwwata illa billahil ‘aliyyil ‘adzim*” (**la hawl wa la quwwah illa bi Allah al’aly al’azhim**, meaning “there is no power and strength except from Allah the Greatest”). Similarly, these expressions are used when shocked by something or by some accident. In a more precarious situation, when hearing that someone has died one will exclaim: “*Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi roji’un*”, (**Inna li Allah wa inna ilaih raji’un** meaning, “lo, we belong to Allah and lo, unto Him we return”). But in contrast, that is, when facing desirable things or results, the response is: “*alhamdulillah*” (**al-hamd li Allah**, meaning “praise be to Allah”). These expressions are commonly enunciated not only by devout individuals and *santri*, but also by ignorant laymen. The only difference is in pronunciation. As one might expect, learned individuals will produce perfect or nearly perfect utterances of Arabic compared with laymen; for example, less learned laymen may pronounce “*la ilaha ill’Allah*” as “*la ilaha ilelloh*” instead of as “**la ilaha illa Allah**”; “*masya Allah*” as “*masya olloh*” rather than as “**ma sya-a Allah**”; “*Astaghfirullahal ‘adzim*” as “*astagpirulloh-al azhim*” or even “*astagailah*”, or just “*astaga*” instead of as “**astaghfir Allah al-’azhim**”; or “*la hawla walaquwwata illa billahil’aliyyil ‘adzim*” as “*la kaola wala kuwata ila billah*” instead of as “**la hawl wa la quwwah illa bi Allah**”.

Although these expressions do not necessarily reflect religiosity, in the sense that users need not necessarily be devout, these oral traditions are indications that Islam has indeed penetrated deeply into the traditions of Cirebonese social life.

Islam prohibits its followers from thinking about the substance of God or imagining His essence. Such questions as: “what does God look like” are strictly discouraged as they are beyond the reach of human understanding.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, among the Cirebonese too, attempts to describe God end up with the identification of His names in terms of attributes called *sifat-sifate Gusti Allah* (Allah's attributes) which incorporate *sifat wajib* (the “must”- attributes), *sifat mustahil* (the “must not”-attributes) and *sifat jaiz* (the “may” attribute). The *sifat wajib* correspond to an affirmation of divine perfection, qualities that must be ascribed to God. There are twenty of these and hence they are known as *sifat rong puluh* (the twenty attributes). Thirteen of the attributes are said to be unanimously agreed on by theologians, while the other seven were added later by others.¹¹ The thirteen attributes are: *wujud* (existence); *qidam* (eternal);

¹⁰ There is a hadith urging people to think only about creation and not about the Creator, because they will never be able to know God's Essence. It says: ‘Ponder the creation of God, but do not take your meditation into the Divine essence, or you will perish’ (See for example, Abduh, S.M. (1966), *Theology of Unity*, translated from Arabic into English by Ishak Musa'ad and K. Cragg, London George Allen & Unwin, p. 53. See also its Indonesian translation, *Risaiah Ilmu Tauhid*, by Firdaus, H. (1976), 6th edition, Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, especially p. 79–83.

¹¹ Ngah, Mohammad Nor Bin (1983), *Kitab Jawi: Islamic Thought of the Malay Muslim Scholars*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 10.

baqa' (permanence); *mukhalafatu lilhawaditsi* (dissimilarity with the created); *qiyamuhu binafsihi* (self-subsistence); *wahdaniyat* (oneness); *qudrat* (power); *iradat* (will); *'ilmu* ('knowledge), *hayat* (life); *sama'* (hearing); *bashar* (vision); *kalam* (speech). The other attributes do not intrinsically describe God's essence; they designate what God can do and usually does, they are *kaunuhu* (He is in a state of being: *qadiran* (powerful); *muridan* (willing); *'aliman* (knowing); *hayyan* (alive); *sami'an* (hearing); *bashiran* (seeing); *mutakalliman* (speaking). To assist memorisation, the Cirebonese put the list of twenty attributes into a poem chanted as follows:¹²

allah
Wujud, qidam, baqa,
mukhalafatu lilhawaditsi
qiyamuhu binafsihi,
wahdaniyat, qudrat, iradat, 'ilmu, hayat,
sama', bashar, kalam,
qadiran, muridan,
'aliman, hayyan, sami'an,
bashiran, mutakalliman.

The popularity of the poem is helped thanks to the modern recording technology and the current trend of people's religious commitment in Indonesia. Now the poem is beautifully chanted by some pop-singers and is available on records and cassettes, and can even be heard on some commercial radio stations.

The *sifat mustahil* (the "must not"-attributes), correspond to the negation of any defective qualities and, therefore, must not be ascribed to God. Standing in contrast with *sifat wajib*, there are also twenty *sifat mustahil*: *'adam* (non-existence); *huduts* (recency); *fana'* (perishability); *mumatsalatu lilhawaditsi* (similarity with the created); *ikhtiyaju bighairihi* (non-self-sufficiency); *ta'addud* (plurality); *'ajzu* (weakness); *karahah* (unwillingness); *jahlu* (ignorance); *mawtu* (inanimate); *ashommu* (deafness); *a'ma* (blindness); *bukmun* (speechlessness); He, who or that which could be in a state of being: *'ajizan* (powerless); *karihan* (unwilling); *jahilan* (ignorant); *mayyitan* (dead); *ashomman* (deaf); *a'man* (blind), *abkaman* (non-speaking).

There is, however, only one *sifat jaiz* (the "may"-attribute): God's prerogative to do or not to do something.

As well as describing God in terms of these attributes, He can also be described in terms of Beautiful Names which are called *aran baguse Gusti Allah* or *asma'ul husna* (God's Beautiful Names). But this knowledge is prevalent only among

¹² All these attributes are taken directly from Arabic.

relatively learned individuals and is usually enunciated in Arabic terms. There are ninety-nine Names in total.¹³

In theological discourse, especially between the traditional Asy'arite schools on the one hand, and the rationalist Mu'tazilites on the other, there is disagreement about the appropriateness of describing God in terms of attributes. The Asy'arite proponents, including Al-Ghazali, argue in favour of attribution; while the Mu'tazilites stand against it. The Cirebonese clearly stand within the Asy'arite line. In accepting this doctrine, the Cirebonese however, in one way or another, also develop the necessary logical thinking they need to defend their faith. Mas'ud (26 years), a batik factory worker, used the existence of the universe as the basis for his argument on the existence of God:

...everything that exists must have come about because it has been created by its creator. The existence of clothes that we wear indicates that there is someone who makes them, that is, the tailor; the existence of chairs, tables and furniture indicates the existence of the maker, the carpenter; so too, the existence of plants, trees, animal, seas, earth, heaven, stars, moon, sun and all the things within the universe together with the well established structure and order would clearly indicate the existence of the Great Creator and Sustainer which we, Muslims, call Allah, the true God.¹⁴

When I further asked him, given that the universe exists because it was created by the Great Creator, and that this becomes the proof that God exists, who then, is the Creator of God?". Appearing slightly offended, he explained:

You must realise that every rule in the world has an exception. You can see for example, in some offices there is a notice on the door saying: "NO ENTRANCE!" But why does the director go in and out of the room freely and carelessly despite the "no entrance" notice? It is because the "no entrance" notice does not apply to him; he is exempted from the rule because he is in fact, the master of the office and it is he who put up the notice. The same token also applies to God. Because God, the prime Creator, is not a thing and is not created, he is exempted from the rule stating that "everything is created." Above all, it will be evident when

¹³ For list of the God's Beautiful Names, see for example, Brown, K. and Palmer, M. (1990), *The Essential Teachings of Islam*, Arrow Books: London, pp. 9–11.

¹⁴ Indepth interview, 24-2-1992: "...apa bae kang ana iki bisa maujud krana digawe deng kang gawe. Anae anggoan kang isun kabeh ngenggo nuduhaken anane wong kang gawe, yaiku tukang jahit; anae korsi, meja karo sejene nuduhaken anae kang gawe, yaiku tukang kayu; semono uga dadie tanduran, anae wiwitan, satoan, segara, bumi, langit, lintang, wulan, srengenge lan segala rupa ning jagat kelawan wujud lan aturane kang tapis lan beres nuduhaken anae Kang Maha Agung Kang gawe lan Kang ngatur, kang munggu wong Islam diarani Gusti Allah, Pengeran kang estu."

you also realise that the next two other attributes of Allah are *qidam* which means without beginning, and *baqa*, that is without ending.¹⁵

Mas'ud's explanation represents a layman's style. But considering that he is only a primary school graduate and has never been to a *pesantren*, that he has learned religion only from *ngaji* at the nearby *tajug*, where chanting *puji-pujian* is one of its media as well as its methods, his argument is remarkable. He accepts religious doctrine not in the form of dead dogma which must be accepted without question. He, instead, develops his creed with an enriched body of theological thinking. Not all people are of course like Mas'ud, but there are certainly many others like him, who may be taken as interesting examples showing that there are some cases in which assimilation of Islam amongst traditional people has produced a sort of 'popular rationalism.' The existence of God cannot be satisfactorily proven by any empirical enquiries, laboratory experiments or sophisticated logical manipulation, let alone by Mas'ud's explanation. Ghazali (in Au Zed 1974) warned that even the prophets were not sent to prove the existence of God and the origin of the world; they were only sent to teach His unity. Arguments for God's existence are permissible only if they are derived and sustained by the Qur'an.¹⁶

The description I have presented would suggest that the Cirebonese do not seem to have a unique concept of God. Their ideas of God derive entirely from Islam wherein the concept of deity is recorded in the Holy Scripture, the Qur'an. The Scripture preaches that basic to the Islamic faith is the acceptance of the principle of absolute monotheism, the rejection of polytheism, and destruction of idols by bearing witness that Allah is the only one and unique God, and the Creator of all that exists. The Qur'an expresses and emphasises these basic tenets. This faith is the renewal of what the earlier prophets, Adam to Muhammad, recalled; it has also been validated and ratified by the pre-Islamic monotheistic believers where Abraham *khalil Allah*, or the friend of God, is notably described in the Qur'an as being: just and a prophet, a true believer (*hanif*), having surrendered himself (Muslim) to God without compromise with the *musyrikun* or polytheists, those who associate others with God.¹⁷

¹⁵ Interview, 25-2-1992: "La sampean kudu ngerti ari aturan iku ana kalane bli kanggo. Contone ning kantor-kantor ana lawang kang ditempli plang: "DILARANG MASUK!" Tapi dengapa ari kepala kantore manjing metu ora ya ora embuh bae bli perduli karo plang mau? Sebabe ya krana plang "dilarang masuk" iku munggu deweke bli kanggo; deweke bli dinisbataken karo aturan kang ning plang, krana deweke kang nguasani kantor lan ya deweke kang nempeli plang. Semono uga karo Pengeran. Pengeran iku suwijining zat kang gawe, dudu barang lan dudu gawean, dadi bli dinisbataken deng aturan kang munie "segala apa bae ana kang gawe." Tamba jelas maning, lamun sampean ngerti yen sifate Gusti Allah kang loro sawise wujud iku *qidam* kang tegese langka kawitane, lan *baqa*, kang tegese langka pungkasane."

¹⁶ Abu Zayd, A.R. (1974), *Al Ghazali on Divine Predicates and Their Properties*, Lahore: SH. Muhammad Ashraf, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

¹⁷ See: "God in Islam", in *Encyclopedia of Religion*.

BELIEF IN SPIRITUAL BEINGS

There is general agreement among Cirebonese on the existence of spiritual beings, although the details of these beings are perceived differently from individual to individual. The existence of spiritual beings is seen as a corollary of the existence of physical beings. If physical beings exist, why shouldn't non-physical or spiritual beings? Man Misna (52 yrs), an egg peddler, put the existence of physical vis a vis spiritual beings in a duality conceptual framework; he said:

It is natural that everything be of two matching pairs; night-day, male-female, east-west, north-east, bad-good, physical-spiritual and so on. The physical beings like human beings, animals, trees and others do exist as they are clearly visible; the spiritual beings do also exist, but they are not visible due to their name, as spiritual ones. Men who deny the existence of spiritual beings are the silliest ones.¹⁸

The commonly known spiritual beings are: *malekat* (angels), Iblis (devils), *setan* (satans) and jinn (genies). However, detailed information about these beings is incomplete and speculative. Their nature, essence and actions are described differently by different people. A fairly coherent explanation was given by Fathoni, preferably called Toni (46 years), a hen-and-cock trader. His explanation seems to represent, more or less, the general Cirebonese conception of these beings. He claimed that what he said comes from what he could understand when he heard his *Kyai*, in *Pesantren* Benda, explain the subject on one occasion.¹⁹ Firstly, he said that he did not know which spiritual beings were created first, but he felt certain that they already existed when Adam was created. *Malekat*, Iblis, *setan* and jinn were, in fact, of similar matter in that they are created from a kind of smokeless fire. Some people said that the *malekat* were created from *sorot* (light), while the rest (Iblis, *setan* and jinn) were created from fire.

Another kind of spiritual being, *mrekayangan* (ghost), was unclearly defined except that it was a type of *setan*. A *mrekayangan* scares people when it appears although it really does not intend to appear nor to scare. Some say that a *mrekayangan* is not really a *setan* because its origin is different from the real *setan*; rather, a *mrekayangan* is the bad spirit of a human being who has died improperly, for example, by suicide, by murder, or by accident while committing a sinful deed. Still others say that a *mrekayangan* is a type of jinn.

¹⁸ In-depth interview, 21-3-1992: "Wis adate segala apa bae iku werna loro, pasang-pasangan; ana awan, ana bengi, ana lanang ana wadon, ana wetan ana kulon, ana lor ana kidul ana blesak ana bagus, sampe sateruse. Ari barang kasar kayadene menusa, satoan, wiiwitan, karo sejen-sejene jelas ana merga katon, barang alus keding gan ana, mung bae bli katon, krana arane bae gan alus; boko wong kang bli percaya ning anae barang alus iku ya saking goblog-gobloge wong."

¹⁹ Toni had not finished primary school but had been to *pesantren* for around two years.

Malekat

In Islam, the belief in angels constitutes the second Decrees of Creed (*Rukun Iman*).²⁰ It comes after the belief in the oneness of God, Allah. The other four are belief in His Messengers, the Holy Scriptures, the Day of Final Judgement or Resurrection, and God's Decree for Humanity. The Cirebonese certainly believe in these, but many people do not know that they constitute the Decrees of Creed. The last two decrees are mostly referred to as, respectively, *Kiyamat* (calamity) and *Kresane Pangeran* (the Will of God). In relation to the fourth and fifth decrees, Pak Shofie said that Muslims should believe that there are a large number of Messengers of God but every Muslim needs to know only twenty-five of them.²¹ Most Cirebonese also know the names of the twenty-five prophets and frequently use them in naming their children. Nevertheless, few can list them perfectly, let alone in precise chronological order. Some put the list into a chant; hence, they can more easily list the names in the proper order. In contrast, there are only four Holy Scriptures: the *Zabur* (Psalms) revealed to *Nabi Dawud* (David), *Taurat* (Old Testament) revealed to *Nabi Musa* (Moses), *Injil* (Bible or New Testament) revealed to *Nabi Isa* (Jesus), and Qur'an revealed to the last apostle, Muhammad. Because there will not be any apostles after Muhammad, the Qur'an, which was revealed to him, is believed to perfect the three preceding Scriptures, covering therefore, the main things contained in them.

... the Scriptures revealed by God are four in number. First is the Psalm, revealed to his excellency Prophet David, second is the Old Testament revealed to his excellency Prophet Moses, third is the Bible revealed to his excellency Prophet Jesus, fourth is the Qur'an revealed to his excellency Prophet Muhammad, God exalts him and peace be upon him, the seal of the apostles, which concludes all the Scriptures revealed before. The prudence contained in those Scriptures are covered by the Qur'an.²²

The word *malekat* known by Cirebonese comes from **malaika**, the Arabic plural form of **malak**, meaning angel. The term refers to the heavenly creatures, the servants of God who stand as intermediaries between the divine world and the

²⁰ The word '*rukun*' here is derived from Arabic '**rukn**' (pl. **arkan**) meaning 'pillar' It is used in such reference as '*rukun iman*' (the pillars of faith), *rukun Islam* (the five pillars of Islam), *rukun sembahyang* (the pillars of prayers) and *rukun wudlu* (the pillars of ablution). It is therefore, different from the Javanese word '*rukun*' meaning (to live) in harmony.

²¹ See for example: Mahsun, K.T. (1958), *Qishashul Anbiya'*, Surabaya: Ahmad Nabhan.

²² An address given by Pak Ubeid (49 years) at a routinely held *pengajian* (public speaking) at Kalitengah desa mosque. This quotation is from the 12-4-1992 occasion, saying: "... ari kitab-kitab kang diturunaken deng Gusti Allah iku ana papat. Siji kitab Zabur kang diturunaken ning Kanjeng Nabi Dawud, loro kitab Taurat kang diturunaken ning Kanjeng Nabi Musa, telu kitab Injil kang diturunaken ning Kanjeng Nabi 'Isa, papat kitab Qur'an kang diturunaken ning Kanjeng Nabi Muhammad sall' Allahu 'alaihi wa sallam, nabi akhirul zaman, kanggo nyampurnaaken kitab-kitab kang diturunaken sedurunge. Syare'at-syare'at kang ana ning kitab kaen kabeh sekiyen wis dicakup ning Qur'an."

human world. Toni, seemed to represent a view widely held by many other people when he said that *malekat* were made of light, never sleep, are not born nor do they give birth, are neither male nor female, can neither eat nor drink, and have no passion nor lust. They are able to assume any form, can move virtually instantly, from one place to another over unlimited distance, and are always loyal to God and do what He wishes. They never forget nor feel tired. "The number of *malekat* is countless, only God knows, but every Muslim should know at least ten of them. Four are Archangels, each has a specific duty with countless subordinates", said Man Muklas, a 64 year old tobacco peddler and the *imam* at the Kedawung prayer house, (adding to Toni's explanation). He then named and described the ten *malekat*. The first and described at greatest length, including his appearance on earth in the form of unrecognised human being such as a beggar and a good looking man, was Jibril or Jibra'il or Jabara'il (Gabriel), whose duty it is to convey revelation to the apostles (*rusul*) of Allah.²³

Man Muklas said that as far as he could remember from a *kitab* (book or written source of *santri* reference) he had read, Jibril had revealed God's words to Adam twelve times, to Idris four times, to Abraham forty times, to Jacob four times, to Moses four hundred times, to Ayyub three times and to Muhammad (peace be upon him), twenty-four thousand times. Jibril is a *malekat muqarrabun* [one of the angels who (is brought) close to God] and is the best known *malekat*.

Jibril is also known by names associated with *ruh* or spirit; *ar-ruh* (**al-ruh**, the spirit) who, with other angels, descends to the world to spread God's grace to the devotees who pray at *lailatul qadar* (**al-lail al-qadr**), the night of power (or blessing) during which a devotion is considered to be equal to or better than, continuous devotion for a thousand months, and is rewarded accordingly. The night of blessing occurs at the eve of *maleman* on odd-numbered nights after the twentieth day of Ramadhan (that is, the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, and 29th nights).

Jibril is also called *ruhuna*, (Our spirit, that is, the spirit of God), the nickname assigned when he was sent to Mary and breathed upon her womb, making her pregnant without her having been impregnated by a man. Still another name is *ruhul amin* (**al-ruh al-amin**, the faithful spirit), for his main duty is as the angel of revelations. He brought down revelations in clear Arabic, to the prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The first revelation was brought down at the cave of Hira near Mecca, signifying the start of Muhammad's prophethood. Jibril came in his original form with wings. This caused a crisis for Muhammad (peace be upon him), who thought that he was possessed by the *jinn* of the cave. Jibril assured him that he really was sent by God and then read the revelation comprising the first to fifth verses of *surat Iqra'* (al-'Alaq), saying: "Recite in

²³ Field notes from after prayer informal discussions at Kedwung prayer house (5,6,8 March, 1992).

the name of the Lord who created; created man from clots of blood. Recite! Your Lord the Most Bountiful One, who taught man with pen; taught man what he knew not."²⁴

Further it is said that prior to Jibril's full recitation of the five verses, there was a sort of short dialogue between him and Muhammad. Jibril instructed Muhammad to read, and Muhammad answered that he could not read. Jibril repeated the instruction once again but Muhammad repeated his answer; finally, Jibril read the verses for Muhammad. From that time on during Muhammad's prophethood, in response to the ongoing situation and demands, Jibril routinely came to Muhammad with revelations. Jibril also accompanied Muhammad on the night journey from Mecca to the mosque of *Al-Aqsa* in Palestine, and from Palestine to the seventh heaven up to *Sidratul Muntaha* (**Sidrah al-Muntaha**, the final destination). Here Muhammad received first hand-instruction from Allah to pray five times a day from whence comes the prescribed duty for all Muslims. Muhammad's night journey is known as *Isra'-Mi'raj*, which all Muslims commemorate annually on the 27th of Rajab, the third month of the Islamic calendar.²⁵

The other angels after Jibril are: Mikail, Israfil, Izrail, Raqib, Atid, Munkar, Nakir, Malik and Ridwan. Mikail (Michael), has the duty of controlling rain, and distributing *rejeki* (fortune) such as food, nourishment and knowledge to all living creatures, particularly to mankind, whether believers or unbelievers.

²⁴ Al 'Alaq means the Clots of Blood (QS 96:1–5); it is referred to by the Cirebonese as *Surat Iqra'*. Beside talking about the original form of Jibril Man Muklas also spoke about Jibril assuming in human forms such as a beggar and a stranger. He said, it is not allowed to mistreat or coarse upon a beggar, especially who comes to our house, because *malekat* may assume in this personage to test someone's generosity. "If you cannot give something, just say your sorrow for it." Whilst his illustration of Jibril as a stranger which he claimed: "*ana ning kitab*" (available in a religious book) seemed to accord the *hadith* narrated by Muslim (Au 'l-Husayn Muslim bin al-Hajjaj, c. 202/817–261/875) from Umar which recounts that Jibril came to Muhammad as a dark, black-haired, unknown man in white clothing. He came mysteriously when Umar and other disciples were gathered together with Muhammad, the Messenger of God. Umar reported that he saw clearly, the man sit face to face with Muhammad, place his knees by Muhammad's knee, put his hands on Muhammad's thighs and ask Muhammad to tell him about *islam* (submission), *iman* (faith), *ihsan* (deference) and the (day of) *Kiyamat* (universal destruction). In reply, the Prophet related to the man the five pillars of Islam, the six decrees of faith. Regarding the principles of deference, the Prophet said that deference is 'to worship God as if you see Him as even if you do not see Him He sees you.' Umar was very surprised when the man commented, after each of the prophet's answers, 'You are right.' Umar thought, 'how could the man ask the prophet something and then respond in the style of an examiner, as if he knew better than the prophet does.' The *hadith* continues by recounting the *Kiyamat*, according to which Muhammad said that the questioned (he, Muhammad) knew no better than the questioner (the man). Then the man asked about the symptoms of universal destruction. The Prophet described some of its symptoms which were: when a man enslaves his own mother; when poor shepherds usually wore only old torn clothing are competing for luxurious houses and glamour. After this, the man went away mysteriously, leaving the gathering astonished. The prophet asked Umar if he knew who the man really was. Umar said that only Allah and His Messenger knew. The Prophet said that the man was Jibril, who came to teach them about religion. (For the text of this *hadith*, see for example: Dahlan, A. (1988), *Hadits Arba'in Annawawiah*, Bandung: Al-Ma'arif, pp. 12–15.

²⁵ *Isra'* refers to the journey from Mecca to Palestine whereas, *Mi'raj* refers to the journey from Palestine to the *Sidratul Muntaha* in the seventh heaven.

Thus, everything in the seas, and everything on earth that is useful for sustaining life (such as trees, fruits, grains and livestock) is under the control of Mikail. Another *malekat* is Israfil, the angel who will blow his trumpet on the day of resurrection. Actually, Israfil will blow his trumpet on three occasions: firstly to signal the calamity; secondly, when the earthly world has vanished altogether; and finally, on the day when the dead are resurrected to receive the Final Judgement. Izrail, the angel of death, is responsible for taking the soul away from living beings. When the time comes, no one can escape from death, or postpone it even a second; Izrail does his job strictly. These four *malekat*, Jibril, Mikail, Israfil and Izrail, are the Archangels (*malekat mukorobun*).²⁶

Two further *malekat* often mentioned are Raqib and 'Atid, whose duty it is to record all human activities: words, actions and intentions, whether good or bad. Raqib records all the "good" ones while 'Atid records the "bad" ones. Everyone therefore has the two angels at guard at their sides. People with good intentions are credited with a minor "good" point; a full point is given when the intention materialises into action. By virtue of God's mercy, there are no minor points for bad intentions; a full "bad" point is given only when a bad deed is actually done. Still two more *malekat* are Munkar and Nakir, who come to examine the dead in their graves. The examination concerns God, the prophet and the path the dead followed while alive. The righteous and faithful will be able to answer all the questions, and Munkar and Nakir will release them in peace until the Day of Resurrection; the infidel however, will not be able to answer. Consequently they will experience severe suffering. Neither rationality nor intelligence works in answering Munkar and Nakir's question; indeed given the belief that the brain is where rationality and intelligence reside, these must also be dead when the body dies. In contrast, beliefs which are found in the soul, not in the body, will last forever.

The last two *malekat* are Malik and Ridwan. The former is the terrible angel responsible for controlling Hell which, generally, is kept by a large number of subordinate angels of hell called Zabaniyah. In contrast, Ridwan guards paradise and does his duty with thousands of subordinates called the angels of paradise.

Iblis, Setan and Mrekayangan

In Cirebon the term *setan* (satan) is used as a general term referring to any kind of bad spirit being who leads people to sin. When it appears to humans, it becomes a *weweden* or *memedi* (spook). But when the term is further elaborated upon, Cirebonese often classify *setan* into: Iblis, *setan*, and *mrekayangan*. The first two are species which can be vaguely distinguished from each other, but both were created, by God, from a kind of fire.

²⁶ Field notes (Arabic: *Al-Malak al-muqarrabun*).

Iblis and Setan

At a public speech (*pengajian*) routinely held every Sunday night at Kalitengah desa mosque, Pak Ubeid (49 years, engaged in construction) said that, early on during creation, Iblis lived in heaven with the *malekat*, but was then cursed and banished from heaven because of his arrogance, disobeying God's order to bow down before Adam when the latter had been completely created. The reasons for disobeying were firstly, Iblis thought that compared to Adam, he was the senior dweller of heaven, had been created and came earlier than Adam; secondly, Adam, who was created from the soil of earth must be lower in rank than Iblis, having been created from fire. Bowing down before Adam therefore, according to Iblis, was unfair, beneath his dignity and did not make any sense. Despite cursing and banishing Iblis, God still granted Iblis' request when he begged God to postpone his punishment until the Day of Resurrection, prior to which he would lead astray his rival Adam, and his descendants. God also deemed that those who stray and fall into Iblis' trap would become his followers, and after resurrection they would stay with him in Hell. Iblis did not waste any time and immediately started working. The first victims were Adam himself and his wife Eve, who were tempted when they were still in paradise.

In another *pengajian*, Kyai Fu'ad Hasyim from Buntet *Pesantren* interestingly dramatised the episode of how Adam and Eve fell into Iblis' trap. Coming in front of Adam and Eve, Iblis told Adam and Eve confidently that God's scenario of the universe put Adam and Eve in a bad position. Iblis told Adam and Eve that God did not really want them to stay in paradise forever; this was clearly evident when God prohibited their approaching a tree in paradise, the "eternity tree" (*syajarah al-khuld*), whose fruit, if eaten, entitled the eater to stay in paradise forever. God instead wished for them to leave paradise and to stay on earth where life would be hard. Adam, and particularly Eve, felt that Iblis' words were sensible and asked him if there was any way to stay in paradise forever and to avoid staying on earth.

Iblis was pleased that his deception had worked, but he did not show it. On the contrary, he pretended that he was very sad and deeply concerned about their problem. He then insisted that the only thing that might help would be to pick and to eat the prohibited fruit secretly, without God noticing. Tempted by his insistence, Eve and Adam approached the tree, picked its fruit, and then ate the fruit. But before they had fully swallowed the fruit, they found themselves already thrown onto the earth without clothing. One fruit eaten by Adam became stuck inside his throat; this turned into his "Adam's Apple", a sign of a mature male. The two fruits eaten and swallowed even earlier by Eve became stuck inside her at breast-level and they turned into breasts, a sign of a mature female. Adam was thrown to earth away from Eve. Only after a long search did they get together again. They repented to God who granted His forgiveness, but time

could not be turned back; Adam and Eve had to continue living a hard life on earth.

After being banished from heaven Iblis generated descendants. Iblis' descendants are called *setan*, whereas Adam and Eve's descendants are called *menusa* (human beings). In turn, both *setan* and *menusa*, also gave rise to descendants, but, unlike human beings, none of Iblis, *setan*, or their descendants are mortal. Both Iblis and *setan* still exist and their number has multiplied tremendously. It is unclear whether Iblis and *setan* are differentiated by gender; but they are generally conceived to be hermaphrodites and to lay eggs. From the time Iblis succeeded in tempting Adam and Eve to follow his advice, Iblis and *setan* have been more and more zealous, working together hand in hand using all their power, intelligence and experience to lead Adam's descendants (human beings) astray. They rarely harm or scare humans as their only business is to tempt and trap human beings and jinn (see the next section) to follow their path and finally to lead them into being their companions in hell.

As part of their efforts, Iblis and *setan* often try to force information from *laukh-makhfudz* by spying on the scenarios of the universe,²⁷ especially those relating to individual human's lives, and using them effectively to establish co-operation with *tukang cempad* (fortune tellers) to lead their clients astray. Against such efforts, the guardian angel may take harsh measures and beat Iblis and *setan* severely. As a result, Iblis or the *setan* concerned has become weirdly shaped and is called by some people as *mrekayangan*.

Mrekayangan

Of the spiritual beings in which the Cirebonese believe, *mrekayangan* is one of the most vaguely defined. Unlike the terms such as *malekat*, Iblis, *setan* and jinn, which come from Arabic, *mrekayangan* is a local term, but no one knows its precise meaning. Its root is probably *yang*, which in Javanese means spirit. *Mrekayangan* is therefore a constructed word, referring to spiritual beings other than *malekat*, Iblis, *setan* and jinn.²⁸ According to Ki Hanan, what *mrekayangan* do is only to scare people when they appear to humans in the form of *memedi* or *weweden*. Different opinions persist on the origin of *mrekayangan*. Some say that they are really the beaten *setan*, who spy on human life. Others say that *mrekayangan* are the spirits of the dead who, for one or another reason, have difficulty or have lost their way in reaching their proper place (*roh kesasar*).²⁹

²⁷ Field notes. This part and subsequent section on *mrekayangan* have been especially derived from a talk with Ki Hanan (67 years), an ex trader in Kaliwadas. *Laukh Makhfud* refers to the tablet where the record of the decisions of the divine are preserved (See: *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp. 287-288).

²⁸ Possibly, the word *mrekayangan* is derived from the word *yang* (spirit). *Mrekayangan* is therefore a construction of (*m*)reka-*yang*-an, transforming into spiritual being, a word to refer to spiritual being other than *malekat*, Iblis, *setan* and *jin*.

²⁹ In Austronesian: "spirit of bad dead."

Still others combine these opinions saying that *mrekayangan* are of either origin. Reasons for the *mrekayangan's* difficulties are by and large attributable to extremely bad conduct such as suicide, *nyupang* (profiting from contracts with *setan* or bad jinn), sudden death or being killed in an accident while committing the *ma-lima* (five sinful deeds: smoking opium, gambling, womanising, becoming intoxicated, stealing). In a state between consciousness and unconsciousness, a person may see *memedi* unintentionally, particularly when that person's mental condition is unstable. When consciousness returns the appearance of the *memedi* instantly disappears.

Memedi, be it *mrekayangan*, or jinn may take various forms. Some of the more widely acknowledged are: *setan gundul*, *wewe gombel*, *genderuwo*, *blegedeg treng*, *puntianak*, *jrangkong*, *kemangmang*, *wedon*, *kecik* and many others. *Setan gundul* is a spirit in human shape with all its hair shaved off. The *wewe gombel* or just *wewe* is a huge female spirit who hides children under her armpit, under her breasts or on huge trees). One way to release a child hidden by *wewe* is that a group of people must go around haunted places, bringing anything they can beat rhythmically in order to provoke the *wewe* to dance, thus freeing the hidden child from her control. The *Genderuwo* is a male *wewe*, whose name may be derived from *gandharva*, masculine embodiments of celestial light which, in Hindu belief, are musicians who accompany the dances of their female consorts.³⁰ *Blegedeg ireng* is a gigantic totally black figure; *puntianak* are female spirits, who eat babies' blood while they are being born by posing as a *dukun bayi* (a specialist who helps women giving birth). The *jrangkong* is a human skeleton; *kemangmang* is a fire haired figure, who walks on his hands (Central Java: *banaspati*); *wedon* is a ghost in white garments, wrapped like a corpse; *kecik* is a small spirit, who steals money for his master (Central Java: *tuyul*).

For some people, these spirits may cause some problem but for others, especially those who are acquainted with the Holy Qur'an, they may not. To avoid being scared ('*diwedeni*') is easy enough. By *memacaan*, literally meaning reciting anything (verses or Surah of the Holy Qur'an), the appearance of these spirits can be avoided and their power can be nullified. Ki Hanan, for example, said: "... for anyone who is willing to perform *memacaan*, there is no way for being scared nor possessed."³¹

Among the verses and Surah for *memacaan* which are considered most effective are: *Ayat Kursi* (the verse of the Throne, QS 2:55), *Qulhu* (Al-Ikhlâs, QS 112), *Qul a'udzu birabbil falaq* (Al-Falaq, QS 113), *Qul a'udzu birabbinnas* (Al-Nas, QS 114) and *Alhamdu* (Al-Fatihah, QS 1). For this practical purpose, it is advisable

³⁰ The name *genderuwo* is probably derived from *gandharva* (masculine embodiment of celestial light which, in Hindu divinity, are musicians who accompany the dances of their female consorts). See: "demons" in *Encyclopedia of Religion*.

³¹ Field notes from informal talk at Kedawung prayer house, 17-3-1992. His Javanese statement is: "... ari wong kang gelem memacaan sih bli bakal diwedeni atawa kesurupan."

that everyone have some acquaintance with some of these verses or Surah. Ricital of the “*Bismillah*” (in the name of God) before doing something or going somewhere is one way to avoid the possible interference of these spirits.³²

Jinn

The jinn are another species of spiritual being created from fire. They may be either male or female. They eat and drink, need a dwelling place, occupy space and can have children. Jinn also live in an established society and have a king. Azrak is referred to as the jinn's country although no one knows where Azrak is. On earth, jinn occupy haunted places, such as hills, caves, rivers, rocks, trees, certain lands, long unoccupied houses, certain bath houses, wells, bridges, lakes, mosques, ruins, cemeteries. When a person stays at a jinn-occupied place, especially if alone, the jinn may cause disturbances by producing unidentified sounds, making doors or windows close and open, moving articles or even a sleeping person from one place to another, making things disappear; causing strange incidents, etc. People who experience these kinds of incidents usually feel scared, and they call it *diwedeni* (being scared). In these cases the jinn probably does intend to frighten people so that they will leave and will not return to occupy that place again so that the jinn can claim the place for itself. Persuading jinn to leave an occupied place can be done by specialists, or indeed by non-specialists, through negotiation or by force. Intentionally or unintentionally disturbing or destroying the places occupied by jinn can be treated as serious offences to them. If so, they may lose their temper and take revenge; as a result the person concerned will suffer from some kind of illness (physical or mental). If appropriate measures are not taken to persuade the jinn to stop their action, the illness could end in death. Again, these measures can be taken by a specialist or by any one who can negotiate with, or force, the jinn to stop their action. Some informants told me about Man Makiyo who fought to exhaustion with jinns.³³

Like human beings, jinn are subject to the temptations of Iblis and *setan*. There are some jinns, therefore, who are good, pious and faithful (*jin Islam*), and some others who are bad, sinful and infidel (*jin kafir*). Bad jinn may be malevolent to human, whereas good jinn may be benevolent by helping people do some hard work, or produce magical acts. Jinn can also assume many forms including that of human beings; but most usually they assume the form of an animal, for

³² See for example the next section, especially on the merits of “*Ayat Kursi*.” Degrading efforts of the nature and power of spirits may be a reconciliation between older beliefs and Islam. Not to make the older beliefs variants of Islam, older spirits were taken as explanatory purposes for the existence of *setan* and jinn, which is part of the Islamic beliefs. Similar efforts also occur with regard to Hindu beliefs where Hindu deities were degraded into ancestors (see: Chapter Three).

³³ Man Makiyo was a *kemit* (mosque custodian) in Kalitengah. He was said as already died more than a year before I was in the field.

example, a snake, a lion, a donkey, a cat, or a dog.³⁴ A jinn who assumes the form of a cat may either have only one colour (totally white, brown or black) or have a combination of three colours (*belang telon*, meaning three stripes of different colours). Killing or beating such a pseudo-animal, (that is a transformed jinn) is risky because the jinn, its friends or its kin may take deadly revenge. The risk is more serious than when merely disturbing or destroying their places.³⁵

The original shape of a jinn however, is thought of as a human-like figure of gigantic size. Its fingers, to illustrate size, are as big as *gedang ambon* (a type of large banana). Some people suggest the possibility of co-operation between humans and jinn for special purposes such as making friends, even marrying jinn and taking jinn as servants, in the case of benevolent jinn. This is possible for anyone who masters the mystery of jinn and learns *ilmu ghaib* (knowledge of the mysterious world). Some *kyai* are certainly known to have that mastery. There are a number of ways to acquire this mastery, one of which is by doing an exercise (*riyadlah*), aiming to gain the marvel and secret merits of the Verse of Throne (*ayat Kursiy*) of the Holy Qur'an (QS 2:255) as elaborated by al-Syeikh al-Buny.³⁶ The procedure of the exercise is as follows:

1. Cleanse the body by bathing and ablution, and the heart by generosity.
2. Wear clean clothing and surrender totally to God.
3. Find a quiet place such as a room, a cave or a place in the bush or mountain for seclusion where contemplation can be well performed.
4. Stay there for a couple of days from Tuesday morning before dawn on until dawn on Thursday (Friday morning).
5. Burn incense, then perform a dawn prayer (*salat fajar*). The incense should be kept burning all the time during the stay.
6. Recite a *du'a* of the *ayat kursiy* repeatedly 72 times after doing the five prescribed daily prayers and recite it also during contemplation.³⁷

If everything is done well, according to al-Buny, on the first quiet night, around midnight, there will be a sound of a donkey. The performer must not worry, be scared, or nervous, as the sound will produce no harm. On the second quiet night, also around midnight, there will be a roar of a running horse. Again, the

³⁴ Lion and donkey are not found in Cirebon; probably the reference to these is the influence of Arabian beliefs. See also the next pages.

³⁵ It might be from this belief that drivers in Cirebon will avoid hitting a cat. Some drivers of city-passengers cars (suburban transportation) said that if a hitting does occur unavoidably, the driver will stop his vehicle, take the victim cat with sorrow and affection, and bury it properly; some may perform a simple *slametan* to prevent possible *na'as* (bad luck) or *blai* (accident).

³⁶ asy-Syeikh al-Buny, "... Riyadlah ayah al-Kursiy wa bayan da'swatih" in an-Narly, Al-Ustadz as-Sayyid Muhammad (?), *Khazinat al-Asrar*, Syarikat an-Nur Asia, pp. 150-151. This book, with the date and place of publication were no longer readable, was shown to me by Pak Shofie. He read the chapter and I recorded his translation in local vernacular.

³⁷ The *du'a* is made up of the verse of the Throne (*ayat Kursiy*), modified by insertion of incantations, as prescribed in the text (see: plates at the end of this chapter).

performer must not worry, be scared or nervous, as it also will produce no harm. On the third night, around midnight there will be three cats, brown, white and black in colour, coming from the entrance of the niche where the contemplation is done. They will disappear mysteriously but again, the performer must not worry, be scared, or nervous, as the virtue of the *du'a* protects the performer from probable harm caused by them. Keep the incense burning and steadily recite the *du'a* facing the *Qibla* (*Ka'ba* in Mecca). On the fourth night, around midnight, there will be a smell of something. Soon there will come a servant made of light. Again the performer must not be scared, nervous or worried; but must make sure that the incense keeps burning, until a voice of greeting is heard. It says: "*Assalamu 'alaikum ya wali-Allah*" (Peace be upon you oh the friend of God) to which the performer has to answer with: "*Wa 'alaikum Salam Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*" (Peace be upon you, and upon you the mercy of God and His blessing). Eventually, the servant will say: "What would you like to have from me oh the friend of God?" The performer should answer him by saying: "I do not expect anything from you, except that I hope you would like to be my servant during my life-time." Then the servant will give a gold ring carved with God's great names (*al-ism al-a'zham*). Probably he will also say: "Take this ring and wear it on your right hand finger as a sign of a pact between you and me. If you want my presence, recite the *du'a* three times, then say, oh king *Kandiyas*, I need your presence." The servant will come and can be asked to do what one wants.³⁸

This procedure is said to be the way for a devout person to make a lawful pact with a good (Muslim) jinn. This pact must only be used for righteous and non-commercial purposes. Another pact, a condemned and unlawful one made

³⁸ Pak Shofie was reluctant to explain the probable efficacy of the *riyadhah*. He however, copied the text in hand writing and gave it to me while saying: "Just try and prove it by yourself."

with a bad jinn, is also said to exist. It is said that this pact is made by sinners through mediation by a *dukun* for unlawful and commercial purposes.

(فصل في رياضة اية الكرسي وبيان دخولها) -

وربما صحتها صحيحة بحرية فاما مستحباته فمن يدعوها ولكن لم يبلغ بالزيادة الا بالرأى
قال الشيخ المولى قدس سره اذا اردت العبد بها فتوكل على الله وطمس قلبك ومكانك وثباتك
وخلص نيتك وتدعوا الخلوه يوم الثلاثاء عند صلاة الفجر ويكون كثير من الخجور عندك
وانت تتلو الدعوة وترك صلاة مكتوبة اثنين وسبعين مرة والخجور عمال -

احلم يا بني وفقني الله واياك انك تسمع في الليل الاول في ركن الخلوه صوتا كتميق الحمار
فلا تخف ولا تفرح فانهم لا يقدرون عليك فاذا كانت الليل الثاني فانك تسمع نصف الليل
توق الخلوه صوتا كجرى الحمار فلا تخف ولا تفرح فاذا كانت الليلة الثالثة نصف الليل يدخلون
عليك ثلاث قطاط احمر وابيض واسود ويدخلون من الباب ويخرجون من صدر الخلوه فلا تخف
ولا تفرح فانهم لا يقدرون عليك فان الدعوة صحاب فاذا كانت الليلة الرابعة نصف الليل
اطبق النجور وانت مستقبل القبلة تدعو دعاء فان الحمار ينشق ويدخل عليك ويأخذهم
من النور فلا تخف ولا تقطع الخجور حتى يقول السلام عليك يا ولي الله فقل له وعليك
السلام ورحمة الله وبركاته فيقول ما تريد منا يا ولي الله فقل له ما اريد منك الوضوء ما
يخضع ما بقي من عمري فيقول لك خذ هذا الحاتم الذهب منقوش فيه اسم الله الراضع
هذا ميثاق بيني وبينك فاذا اردت حضورى اجعل الحاتم في يدك اليمنى واقرأ
الدعوة ثلاثا ثم تقول يا مالك كندياس اجسر بحضورك فكل ما تريد من طي المصالح
والمشى على الماء وغيرهما من انواع الكرامات هذا مع التوكل - غرنية الوضوء ص ١٥٠

ارتقى في رواية الشيخ المولى قدس سره - لون سيرا ارف عرجا ان برعمالكن رياضة
اية الكرسي (دعاء اية كرسي) سبع اسرارى لمن خواصه ان عزيمت) ملك برتوكل شيخ كوسى الله
برسيبانا لوسجى نا اى نيا تحفت ايوان فكاين ايرا . ان اخلا صائبة ايرا
ساديس ايكو كايه بيريس . نول سيرا متخفا شيخ تحفت كم سنى سادوروشى
ضرد يانلا تاو . نول سيرا فاكيما كن غويوم ميان / او كوف لى تروس صلاة الفجر
لرسان ؟ تس صلاة فخرن مجا دعاء (دعاء اية كرسي) فيح ٧٢ - ان تروس او كوف ؟
كتمدى له حاجه انك ؟ كو - موكا ؟ كوسى الله متوكل شيخ ايسون ان شيخ سيرا
سأتمن سيرا معكو كروغو اعدالم بقى كغ قرنام فدا وقتو كلا وان سنى - كروغو شيخ
سوارا كيا برشقى حمار - نللا ايكو سيرا ابا ودى ان ابا كليس - سبب بل ارف
كفكو شيخ سيرا - فدا مال كغ كغندويكى سيرا كروغو شيخ سوارا - كيا سوارق فلا يوق
ميران - فدا وقتو كلا ان سنى شيخ نعه مالم سيرا شذ لسا ودى ان ابا كليس - ان فدا
مالم كغ كغيع تلو اناغ نعه بى - انا تلغ ايكو كوجيغ (كوجيغ اباغ - فوق - ان ايرم) -
متخج شيخ كامرا ايرا - متخج شيخ لاوع ان متو شيخ (دى تلان كسعين) ملك ندا
وقتو ايكو سيرا ابا ودى ان ابا كليس - سب كوجيغ ؛ ايكو بل كجكو شيخ سيرا - سب

