

# Chapter 3: Mythology and Cosmology of Cirebonese Traditions

## INTRODUCTION

My son, Harlan, once decided to go to Jakarta via Puncak (Bogor). Because it was on an important business trip I told him to go on Wednesday Pahing. For certain reasons he firmly insisted on going the day before and I could do nothing but let him go and told him to be extra careful. Upon his leaving I tried not to think about him but I could not stop. Three days later I got a telegram from his office in Tangerang suggesting that I should see my son. Without knowing what had happened I set off immediately to Tangerang and found him lying in hospital after a not-so-serious injury in a bus crash ...<sup>1</sup>

One feature of Cirebon is its richness in myths and legends. Seldom is the name of a single place, locality or object such as a site, river, mountain and lake free from mythical or legendary tales. Each name bears its own folk-story of origin. It is a common knowledge that the name "Cirebon", meaning the water of tiny shrimps, is derived primarily from *Ci* or *Cai* meaning 'water' and *rebon* meaning 'tiny shrimps' and is associated with the development of the fishing industry pioneered by its first *Kuwu*, Ki Cakrabumi. Similar to this are the names of Kuningan, Indramayu and Majalengka, the other three regencies in the residency of Cirebon. They are also associated with mythical derivation and origin.

The name Kuningan, for example, refers to the legend of Pangeran Kuningan and Aria Kemuning. According to the local legend, Pangeran Kuningan was the son of 'Putri Cina' (Chinese Princess), daughter of a Chinese emperor.<sup>2</sup> When still in China she became pregnant not because of being impregnated by a man, but because of a brass bowl (*bokor kuningan*) attached to her belly to deceive Sunan Gunung Jati when he was invited to China. To judge Sunan Gunung Jati's sainthood the emperor summoned his daughter, and asked the Sunan to guess how advanced the *putri's* pregnancy was. Sunan Gunung Jati said that she was several months pregnant. Startled by this false statement the emperor became angry, accusing Sunan Gunung Jati as being a fraud rather than a saint, and instantly drove him out of his palace. When the *putri* went back to her room and took off her clothes to detach the brass bowl, she was frightened when she observed she was indeed pregnant. She cried from fear and called together her parents and other family members. Seeing his daughter's condition and deeply embarrassed by what had happened, the emperor was bewildered and, he decided

<sup>1</sup> Field notes: A statement given by Mang Atmo, a resident in Kalitengah, See the end this Chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Putri Cina probably refers to Nio Ong Tin, one of Sunan Gunung Jati's wives. See also Chapter Six.

to send his daughter to Java with a convoy of ships conveying a message acknowledging Sunan Gunung Jati's sainthood and with the request to take the *putri* as his wife. When the consort arrived at Cirebon, Sunan Gunung Jati was in Luragung, 20 kilometres east of the town of Kuningan, preaching the Islamic faith. Soon afterwards the *putri* bore a male child. Sunan Gunung Jati asked the local Ki Gedeng to care for the baby as a foster son. Meanwhile, about the same time the Ki Gedeng's wife also bore a male baby. Thus, Ki Gedeng had two newly born male children, one, his own and the other, a foster son, which gave the impression that they were twins. With Sunan Gunung Jati's permission Putri Cina's baby was named Pangeran Kuningan (the prince of brass) while his own son was named Aria Kemuning (from *kuning*, meaning 'yellow'). Later, when they had grown up, Pangeran Kuningan became Adipati Kuningan, ruler of Kuningan, whereas Aria Kemuning became his assistant.<sup>3</sup>

According to another tale, the name Indramayu is associated with the legend of Indang Darma Ayu and prince Wiralodra. Majalengka, whose name is derived from the expression *maja-e (wis) langka* ('the maja fruits have already disappeared'), is associated with the story of Aria Salingsingan, a local legendary figure. All myths and the figures in them are rooted in the process of Islamization and are directly or indirectly associated with Sunan Gunung Jati and his disciples. Even places like 'Pesalaran' and 'Weru', the district where I stayed, have their own distinct folk-tales. Pesalaran, which is now the centre of the small town of Plered, seven kilometres west of Cirebon, occupies only a small area in Kecamatan Weru. The name Pesalaran is associated with the word *nyalar* ('to ask'); while the name Weru comes from *weru(h)* meaning 'to know'. Both names are combined as in the expression, *weru sawise nyalar* (to know after having asked). The folk-tale tells of a small group of people, envoys of Talaga on behalf of the Galuh-Pajajaran Hindu Kingdom, who were sent to Cirebon to ask 'Kanjeng Sinuhun' to submit and render tribute to Galuh.<sup>4</sup> Half way to Cirebon they became confused and found themselves going around and around at one site for several days. After being frustrated in finding the right way, they saw a wood cutter with whom they started to ask a series of questions (*nyalar*). When the envoys asked the wood cutter, he did not give conclusive answers and referred them to another person who might be able to give further information. This person did the same thing; giving only an inconclusive answer and referring them to another one and so on. At last however, after a series of exhausting efforts they found someone, a wise man, who gave them advice and taught them wisdom as well as giving them the information about Cirebon and the right way to proceed. The man was Kanjeng Sinuhun himself from whom they finally embraced Islam and became his disciples. They did not go back to Talaga but

<sup>3</sup> Field notes which relied on a story told by Pak Sairoji (54 years), unclear occupation. He is a Kalitengah resident who travelled a lot.

<sup>4</sup> 'Kanjeng Sinuhun' is local reference to Sunan Gunung Jati.

stayed there. Since then, the site where they asked their questions is called Pesalaran meaning 'the place of *nyalar*' (asking), while the surrounding area where they finally gained knowledge is called Weru (knowing); the leader of the group then became Ki Gede Weru.<sup>5</sup>

## THE MYTH OF CREATION

Among the legends and myths, however, none is more interesting than the myths of creation. These myths of creation, I think, have wide scope and bear philosophical significance. In this chapter I wish to consider three myths of creation: namely, the creation and origin of the universe, the creation of mankind, and the origin of Javanese inhabitants and their religion. Along with these myths I also include in this chapter the prevailing eschatological views especially those relating to the idea of calamity, life after death, the problem of human destiny, and attempts to resolve the mystery of life through the numerological system. I start with the first myth.<sup>6</sup>

### Creation and Origin of The Universe

It is among the Cirebonese Court circle, particularly within the circle of *Pengguron Krapyak* led by Pangeran Sulaeman Sulendraningrat, that this myth of the creation of the universe prevails. It relates that once upon a time there was an *alam awang-uwung (ghoibul-ghuyub)*, a world of nothingness: no limit, no edge, no line, no boundary, no light, no sound. There was absolute quietness, nothing existed except God, the One, the Living, the Powerful and the Willing; at this stage His power and will were *la ta'yun*, not manifested. This is the earliest stage of the universe, the stage before creation, called *Martabat Ahadlah*, the stage when only One existed, only God. After an immeasurable duration came the second stage called *Martabat Wahdah*, the stage where the One God began to show His power and will in the form of bright light called *Nur-Allah*, the light of God which shone far brighter than a thousand suns. This stage is *ta'yun awal*, the first reality, in the sense that His intention to create was expressed in reality. The next stage occurred after another immeasurable duration, when a golden bright light called *Nur Muhammad*, the light of the praiseworthy, sprang up within the still shining brighter light, like an egg yolk within an egg white. The presence of *Nur Muhammad*, also called *Ruh al-A'zhom*, the greatest soul, constituted the *ta'yun-tsani* the second reality in which the intention of creation turned into a master design or master seed. It was the embryo of the complex

<sup>5</sup> Field notes. The story of Pesalaran was especially told by Man Sapi'i (62 years), an ex farmer at Trusmi.

<sup>6</sup> I owe Martin van Bruinessen, lecturer at IAIN Sunan Kalijaga (Yogyakarta), who had allowed me to copy from his disposal, five volumes type written manuscripts of Sulendraningrat's writing (Rama Guru at Pengguron Krapyak, Cirebon). This section relies a great deal on these manuscripts.

universe from which everything emerged. This latter stage is called *Martabat Wahidiyah*, the stage of the Greatest Union.<sup>7</sup>

The light of the praiseworthy (Nur Muhammad) was motionless for about 60,000 years until finally the light of the praiseworthy claimed to be God: "I am the God". Immediately Allah responded: "No, you are not God, you are the embryo of the whole universe I have created". Hearing God's decree *Nur Muhammad* trembled with fright and his whole body was covered with sweat; this event led to the next stage, the presence of the *Ruh Idhoft*, when the *Nur Muhammad's* sweat became *Durratul Baidla*, white pearl gems, the source of all souls of the universe. The sweat in his nose turned into the souls of angels; the sweat of his face turned into the souls of 'Arsy, *Laukh Mahfud*, *Qalam*, and other heavenly creatures; the sweat of his chest turned into the souls of prophets, messengers, saints, scholars, and other selected individuals; the sweat of his back turned into the souls of Bait al-Ma'mur, Bait Allah, Bait al-Mukaddas and other prayer houses all over the world; the sweat of his eyebrows turned into the souls of faithful males and females; the sweat of his ears turned into the souls of infidels; the sweats of his legs turned into the souls of the whole universe. This is the stage when *Nur Muhammad*, the abstract design of creation, turned into a real one, *Ruh idhoft*, just as a developing photograph turns from a blur into a clear image. It is at this stage that the creation of every being became *mungkin*, or possible, depending on whether or not God Will it.<sup>8</sup>

The next stage was the period of physical creation, that is the stage when God constructed the whole universe and its contents. The overall construction was completed within six divine days,<sup>9</sup> from Sunday through to the dawn on Friday. As each divine day is equal to 50,000 years, the six-day process was thus equal to 300,000 years. Within the first two days the globe of bare and bald earth was constructed; Over the next two days the earth was perfected giving it its finished structure and form furnished with continents, hills, mountains, rivers, lakes, seas, oceans, flora and fauna. The last two days was the completion of the galaxies; of the sun, moon, stars, other planets; of heaven and other heavenly things. In this stage God had created, among other things, 70,000 planets, each planet being 70 times the size of the earth. On each planet there were 70,000 inhabitants who were not angels, jinns, or humans. They worshipped God, but then they rebelled and God wiped them out. God created another 80,000 more planets, but these were smaller than the first 70,000 being only about ten times the size of earth. There were some kinds of birds living on the planets, but they finally vanished. After that, God created 20,000 human-like creatures out of

<sup>7</sup> Sulendraningrat, P.S. (1982), *Ghaib*, type written manuscript, Cirebon: Pengguron Caruban Krapyak, pp. 1–8; Sulendraningrat, P.S. (n.d.), *Babarnya Jimat Kalimasada Prabu Yudistira Amartapura*, type written manuscript, Cirebon: Pengguron Caruban Krapyak, Kaprabon, pp. 63–65, 80–86.

<sup>8</sup> Sulendraningrat, P.S. (n.d.), *Babarnya ...* pp.2–4.

<sup>9</sup> (QS 32:4); The Holy Qur'an: English Translation and its Commentary, p.1226.

light, but finally, they also vanished. After a pause of about 70,000 years, God created *Qalam*, *Laukh Mahfud*, 'Arsy, angels and finally, paradise and Hell. Thus, the creation of the whole universe was complete.<sup>10</sup>

Seventy thousand years after completing the universe, God created a human being called Adam, but not the Adam of our ancestors. He was the first Adam who lived on the earthly world long before the Adam of our ancestors was born. This earlier Adam gave rise to descendants but all were vanished; the last descendant died 10,000 years after the first Adam was born. God then created another Adam, but, again, he and his descendants vanished after 10,000 years. This was repeated again and again until 10,000 Adams had been created (the last one, the ten thousandth, was the Adam of our ancestors). It is unclear whether they lived here on our earth, or somewhere else. Supposing they really did live on this earth, it follows that since there had been 10,000 Adams (each Adam and his descendants lasting ten thousand years), our earth, according to this myth, has already been in existence for about 100,000 million years; whereas, the history of mankind since (our) Adam has been less than 10,000 years.<sup>11</sup>

## Creation of mankind

The notion that the microcosm is a reflection of the macrocosm appears in Cirebonese myths of human creation. Within the court circle, the seven stages (*martabat pitu*) in the creation of the universe are used to describe the creation of human beings.<sup>12</sup> According to this tradition, long before people are born, they are in *Alam Ahadiyah*, the first stage. At this stage the existence of a person is still unthinkable because person is physically nonexistent. The second stage *Alam Wahdah* is reached when impregnation occurs, that is, at the moment when an ovum is fertilised by sperm. The third stage *Alam Wahidiyah* is then entered; at this stage the fertilised ovum multiplies and turns successively into a clot of thick liquid, then into a clot of blood, and then into a clot of flesh. The fourth stage, *Alam Arwah*, comes when the flesh-clot shows signs of movement, signifying that God has breathed life into the soul making it alive.<sup>13</sup> The fifth stage, *Alam Mitsal*, is when the flesh-clot becomes an embryo containing potential parts that will develop into specialised body parts. Then comes *Alam Ajsam*, the sixth stage when the embryo develops a complete physical structure with specialised body parts and organs: head, hair, body, hands, legs, finger and toe nails. On the whole it is still weak, until finally, at the seventh stage it reaches its final form and enters *Alam Insan Kamil*, the stage of a perfectly formed

<sup>10</sup> Sulendraningrat, P.S. (n.d.), *Babarnya* ... pp.4–6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>12</sup> Kartapraja, K. (1978), "Ngelmu Sejati Cirebon", *Dialog*, Dep. Agama: Jakarta, Edisi Khusus, March 1973, pp.91–107.

<sup>13</sup> Cf: A hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim, from Ibn Mas'ud. See: Dahlan, A. (1988), *Hadits Arba'in Amawawiyah*, Bandung: Al Ma'arif, pp. 16–17.

human being. At this last stage the new human is ready to emerge from the womb and the mother is ready to give birth.<sup>14</sup>

Our species, humankind, is said as to be descended from Adam, who came to earth from heaven. Adam himself was created from clay and the process of his creation is another subject of mythology.<sup>15</sup> Mang Amin (54 years), a Batik factory worker said that the creation of Adam started when God ordered Gabriel to make a kind of seed by mixing the four elements (earth, fire, water and air) which he then planted in the soil of paradise. For a long time the seed grew steadily, just like an ordinary plant, but later it gradually turned into the human figure of Adam. When it reached about 30 metres high, God blew a spirit into it and Adam became animated. He moved and walked about, looking around the paradise as if surveying and recognising his environment. In the meantime God taught him the names of everything he found, and Adam mastered them well. Once, God introduced him to other heavenly creatures and ordered them to bow down to Adam. To show them Adam's worth, God ordered Adam to list the names and characteristics of a number of heavenly things which angels and other creatures knew nothing about. The angels were fascinated and respectfully bowed down to Adam. Iblis, another heavenly creature, was reluctant to do so; instead he looked down upon Adam, boastfully claiming himself to be superior to Adam. Due to this rebellion God pronounced His curse on Iblis and banished him to Hell forever. Nevertheless, God granted Iblis' plea for postponement of his punishment until the day of judgement; Iblis then swore to deceive Adam in order to lead him and his descendants astray.<sup>16</sup>

Adam had proved himself to be a clever being when God ordered him to name a number of heavenly things; the pity was, however, that he never talked because he had no one with whom he could talk. But when he was fast asleep in paradise, God ordered Gabriel to pull out one of Adam's left ribs, from which God created another being, Eve. After her creation was completed Adam woke up. He was surprised to see a lovely companion standing before him. He felt glad and thanked God for her presence. Adam and Eve then talked to each other, played together and started a new life until the time came when they had to leave paradise, and were thrown onto the earth because they had succumbed to Iblis' temptation. Adam was believed to be thrown down onto *Gunung* (Mount) Surandil (Adam's Peak in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka), while Eve was thrown down into Jeddah. After a long search for each other they finally met together at the Plain of Arafah in Saudi Arabia. With God's grace granted after their immediate repentance, Adam and Eve then started their earthly life, giving birth to descendants and becoming

<sup>14</sup> Field notes, derived from a talk with Pak Kusna, a personnel at *kraton* Kanoman (17-5-1992). For *Martabat Pitu*, see also: Kartapraja (1978), pp. 91-107; Sulendraningrat, S. (1980:78-84, 1982:80-86).

<sup>15</sup> See: (QS 4:1; 7:189).

<sup>16</sup> Field notes.

*Khalifa*, God's representatives on earth, to establish order, firstly among animals and later among both animals and their descendants.<sup>17</sup>

## Origin of Javanese Inhabitants and Religion

The notion that mankind is descended from Adam is recounted in another myth that relates the link between the present generation and their ancestors.<sup>18</sup> According to this myth, the first time Adam begot descendants was when he was about 130 years old; Eve bore twins, a male and a female named Kabil and Aklima. In total Eve gave birth forty-two times, each time producing twins (a male and a female), except for the sixth time when she bore only one male child, Syis, and the forty-first time, when she bore only a female, Hunun. In all then, Adam and Eve's direct descendants numbered eighty-two. When Eve gave birth to the fifth set of children, Adam set a rule of marriage that said that a good-looking son had to marry an unattractive girl whereas an unattractive son had to marry a good-looking girl. Since both twins of each set borne by Eve were either good-looking or unattractive this rule ensured that no one could marry his or her twin.<sup>19</sup>

At this stage, Iblis who had caused them to be thrown from paradise, was ready with a new plan. He tried again to intrude on Adam and Eve, but could not do it in the same way as he had done in paradise, because their natures had become so different. Adam and Eve were physical beings, whereas he himself was a spiritual one. Iblis then entered Eve's heart and whispered to her to rebel against Adam by disagreeing with Adam's rule of marriage and imposing a contrary rule; that is, a good-looking person should marry another good-looking one, and an unattractive one should marry another unattractive one. To support their respective assertions, both Adam and Eve claimed rights over their children and, therefore, also the right to set the marriage rule. Each insisted that the children really originated from his or her own body; in the case of Adam, from his semen and in the case of Eve from her eggs. To solve the problem they agreed, however, to pour these substances into two different pitchers and to pray for God's guidance. After praying several days, a strong wind arose blowing away Eve's pitchers. When Adam was about 160 years old, there grew from his pitcher a nice boy baby. They understood then, that all this had happened from God's will and gave the baby the name Syis. Since then, the marriage rule set out by Adam became effective. The entire human population of the world, therefore is descended from Adam through his children (except for Hunun, who did not

<sup>17</sup> Sulendraningrat, P.S.(1982), *Ghaib*, pp. 16–25.

<sup>18</sup> Sulendraningrat, P.S. (1978), *Beralihnya Pulau Jawa Dari Agama Sanghyang Kepada Agama Islam*, type written manuscript, Cirebon: Pengguron Caruban Krapyak Kaprabon.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, pp.2–5

marry because she was born without a twin, and Habil, who was killed before having children), including Syis, who got his wife in a different way.<sup>20</sup>

Failing with Eve, Iblis did not stop intruding; he moved on to her children. As a result of his efforts, out of the forty marriages between Adam's children, three couples were rebellious and married their good-looking twin partners. They were: the-first born, Kabil, to Aklima; the fifth-born, Harris, to Dayuna; and fifteenth-born, Lata, to Ujiah ('Uzza). Kabil married Aklima after killing her husband, Habil. To affirm their rebellion they left Adam's place; Kabil and Lata, with their partners, went separately south-westward to Africa, and Harris went eastward to China.<sup>21</sup>

Without specifying from which couple the Javanese population originated, the myth says that the first sea expedition to Java was made by the west Asian vizier of Alexander the Great. He intentionally sent as many as two thousand men and women to occupy Java. Unfortunately they encountered unfriendliness and most were killed by the native inhabitants, including several kinds of wild beasts, *lelembut* and *dedemit* (ghosts).<sup>22</sup> Fewer than one hundred people were left and these went back to west Asia. A second expedition was sent but with great caution, incorporating a number of wise elders and different ethnicities, particularly the people from south and south-east Asia (*Keling* and *Campa*). There were as many as 20,000 men and women, led by Syeikh Subakir who landed in Java. Soon Subakir went to Gunung Tidar where he met Semar and Togog,<sup>23</sup> the leaders of Javanese spiritual beings and negotiated with them. They finally reached an agreement allowing the newcomers to stay in Java on the condition that they should be aware that Java had, in fact, been inhabited by many spiritual beings so that both sides, especially the new settlers, had to make all possible efforts to sustain a peaceful coexistence (*rukun*) with each other. Since then Java has been inhabited by spirits as well as human beings.<sup>24</sup>

The position of Adam's descendant, Syis, is of specific significance. The myth says that Syis had been one of the most beloved children, and to him important legendary figures of later generations are attributed. He married Dewi Mulat, yet who she was, where she came from, and how Syis met her, are not described. Syis, on the other hand, is described as a nicely behaved child who later, after Adam had died at 960 years of age, inherited his prophecy. This provoked both admiration and jealousy of Idajil, king of jinns. Idajil wanted, and then attempted,

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, pp. 6–8

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 5–6.

<sup>22</sup> *Lelembut* and *dedemit* refer to spiritual beings which were supposedly jinn, occupying in certain places.

<sup>23</sup> *Semar* and *Togog* are *wayang* figures, referred to by this myth as coming from Eve's seed after her pitcher was blown by the wind. Idajil is said to have found the pitcher, and taken care of it (Sulendraningrat, Ibid p. 46).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, pp. 43–47.

to have descendants who could take over or, at least, bear honour both Adam and Syis. He wanted Syis to marry his daughter, Delajah. Unfortunately, Syis had already married Dewi Mulat. Idajil however, did not despair; instead, he made all possible efforts to manifest his firm will. He insinuated his daughter, Delajah, into Dewi Mulat and secretly put her beside Syis. At the same time he took Dewi Mulat away. After knowing with certainty that Delajah had been impregnated he released her and immediately replaced Dewi Mulat for fear of eventually being caught.<sup>25</sup>

From her marriage to Syis, Dewi Mulat gave birth to twin children. One was a perfect human being named Anwas, the other was a light image of a human figure, a spiritual baby who was really the son of Delajah and Syis, named Anwar (the Arabic plural form of *Nur* meaning 'light'). The two babies (one human being and the other one, in fact, a jinn), were cared for with love and affection even when Adam realised that Idajil had interfered in the affair. During their childhood, they respected their parents and grandparents very much, and were proud of them, but later Anwas and Anwar showed markedly different habits and preferences. Anwas who clearly followed the wisdom of his father and grandfather, grew into a devout believer, being fond of learning the true faith. Anwar, however, was fond of wandering to seek wisdom through contemplation in quiet and strange places such as on mountains, in jungles and, in caves. Prior to his death Adam told Syis to be careful as his sons Anwas and Anwar would take different paths. This prediction came true after Adam died. Anwar was grieved upon seeing that human beings would finally die, become motionless and be buried. Syis told him that it was quite natural and that it would happen to everyone without exception. But Anwar's grief was unbearable and he made up his mind to leave his parents and to take any action that would enable him to avoid illness and death. He wandered in search of something that would ensure his wish. Idajil instantly took advantage of the opportunity; he met Anwar, really his grandson, and told him that his decision was good and he promised to help him. He led Anwar northward to Dulmat.<sup>26</sup> Here Idajil performed a magical act, first by producing thick clouds wrapping their bodies together. As the cloud disappeared, a spring of water appeared in front of them. He asked Anwar to drink as much as he could, and to bathe in the water called *tirta marta kamandalu* (or *banyu penguripan*, in Cirebonese), the water of everlasting life. He also gave Anwar Eve's pitcher, called *cupu manik astagina*, the gem pitcher of eight virtues, which he had found after it had been blown away by a strong wind. He asked Anwar to fill it with the water, as it might

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, pp. 6–7

<sup>26</sup> *Dulmat* probably comes from the Arabic word *dzulumat* (pl. *dzulm*) meaning darkness. In this myth the word is used to refer to an extremely cold sunless country, where the land consists of nothing but ice. Sulendraningrat (1978:9) explicitly mentions *Negeri Laut Es* (the country of iced sea) as *Kutub Utara* (Antarctica).

have some use in the future. One virtue of the pitcher was that the water in it could never be used up. Idajil then led him out of this place and told him to take a dying rewan plant he would find on his way; its roots, called *latamansadi*, were a useful remedy for any disease. He then disappeared, leaving Anwar alone and undecided about where to go. But at last Anwar found the *rewan* plant and he cheerfully took some of the roots, *latamansadi*, with him.<sup>27</sup>

By then Anwar had already found the important things he really wished for: the avoidance of illness, by possessing *latamansadi*, and the avoidance of death by drinking and bathing with the water of everlasting life. He had even more: the gem pitcher of eight virtues and some spare water of everlasting life. However, he wished for still more. The myth continues with the story of how Anwar, under Idajil's guidance, moved toward becoming a super spiritual being. For example, he was led to further adventures: to the sea of Iraq, where he met the banned angels Harut and Marut, who taught him to use astrology to learn what would happen in the future.<sup>28</sup> In Africa he met Lata and Ujiah ('Uzza), the rebellious son and daughter of Adam who taught him how to obtain a safe living with abundance. At the Cauldron Mountain at the upper end of the Nile River, he again met Idajil but without recognising him. Idajil gave him the mystical experience of seeing heaven; taught him to move faster than the wind; gave him the precious gift, *ratnadumilah*, a lamp-like shining diamond which could lead him to brighter paths; taught him, and authorised him, to teach the doctrine of everlasting life achieved through 'reincarnation', and the means to reach heaven for those who did not want to be reincarnated. Idajil also asked him to pursue further advanced knowledge as well as enlightenment in *Maladewa*, an island in the Indian Ocean, south-west of India.<sup>29</sup>

After following all of these instructions, Anwar moved on to his highest achievement; in a short clash with Nuradi, the king of jinns on the island of Maladewa, Nuradi surrendered to him and confessed that he, Anwar, was much more powerful. Nuradi surrendered his throne to Anwar. He asked his people to worship Anwar and to regard him as the true god. The people called the new king god Anwar, Sang (H)yang Nur Cahya meaning The Spirit of Super Light. Since Anwar gained power, the 'religion of Sang (H)yang' was formally established with reincarnation as its main doctrine. He married Nuradi's daughter, Dewi Rini, with whom he produced descendants. This Sang (H)yang religion was then brought to Java by Batara Guru, the fourth descendant of Sang (H)yang Nur Cahya. Batara Guru came to Java from India, married a Javanese woman and produced a son. When he went back to India, his position was taken by his native Javanese son. When Bhagawan Abiyasa and Pandu Dewanata, the 13th

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pp. 7–10.

<sup>28</sup> For a short account on 'Harut-Marut,' see for example, *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pp. 10–16.

and 14th Javanese descendants of Nur Cahya from Bhatara Guru, took the leadership, this religion was spread more intensively. The religion was adopted by the Javanese until Islam came.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike Anwar, who was born as a spirit and who set up his own religion after long contemplation and a long search for wisdom under the guidance of Idajil, the jinn, Anwas was born as a real human being, who followed the prophetic religion of his father and grandfather. He produced descendants some of whom were also prophets, including Muhammad, the last prophet (peace be upon him). They passed on the religion of Allah to those willing to accept it.

According to the myth, Idajil's scenario did not end with Anwar, as his main concern was to have descendants who maintained Syis' honour among jinn or humans. From the intermarriage of Anwar's later generations with humans came the descendants who were either jinn, human, or half-jinn half-human. Some of them were honourable figures: among the jinn are the *Sang (H)yang*, among humans were the *Sang Prabu*, *Pandhita*, etc., and among the half-jinn half-human are the *Bhatara*, and *Bhagawan*. It was these descendants, with their religious tradition (religion of Sang Hyang), who occupied Java predating Islam.

In the Cirebonese court circle, the whole myth constitutes part of the literary tradition in which the link with their founding father, Sunan Gunung Jati, to Adam can be traced from both sides: Anwar's and Anwas'. Sunan Gunung Jati's mother, Rarasantang, was the daughter of Prabu Siliwangi, King of Pajajaran, the forty-first Javanese descendant of Batara Guru, and the forty-fifth descendant of Sang (H)yang Nurasa, son of Syis, son of Adam. Sunan Gunung Jati's father is Syarif Abdullah, vizier of the Turkish Empire in Egypt, the twenty-first descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, while the Prophet Muhammad himself is the thirty-seventh descendant of Anwas, son of Syis, son of Adam.

The message behind the myth is therefore clear: on the one hand, Sunan Gunung Jati and his descendants have a legitimate right to exercise leadership, both political and spiritual, over the Javanese population, be they Sang Hyang followers, Muslims, spirits, or human beings, as long as they are descendants of Adam or the jinns. Thus they all have to live in harmony (*rukun*) under his descendants' leadership. On the other hand, the myth implicitly asserts that Allah is the sole Supreme God. Other deities which are largely of Sang H(yang) type are nothing but our ancestors who deserve to be respected but not to be worshipped. They are powerless in the sense of having real and independent divine power. If they do have power, it is because God gives it to them. Their

<sup>30</sup> Along with Sang (H)yang Nur Cahya, Anwar is also accorded many other Javanese Sanskrit names, each of which is headed by the title Sang (H)Yang: Dewata, Dewa Pamungkas, Ngwatma Dewa, Sukma Kawekas, Sukma Wisesa, Amurbrengat, Manon, Warmana, Warmata, Mahawidi, Mahasidi, Mahasidem, Mahamulya, Mahatinggi, Mahaluhur, Kahanan Tunggal, Jagat Murtitaya, son of Sang Hyang Sita (Syis), son of Sang Hyang Athama (Adam).

power can be repealed any time God wills it. Moreover, just like us, they are only descendants of Syis, son of Adam. Adam himself was God's creation, who once had been punished. He survived after repenting and was granted a position as God's representative on earth, after being granted His grace. Still, he eventually died because he was only a creature.

Idajil, the powerful super jinn, who had contributed to the birth of Sang H(yang), was nothing but a creature, whose position was below Adam's, even below Syis'. Their common enemies are the devils, Iblis and *setan*, who always offer temptations to do evil and cause harm. Idajil however had fallen into this temptation.

## **ESCHATOLOGICAL IDEAS: THE CALAMITY AND THE END OF THE WORLD**

The prevalence of popular beliefs in the inevitable ending of the world is easily understandable when we recall the notion of micro and macrocosm relations, and consider the commonly accepted fact that everyone is mortal. Death, seen as one thing that everyone must encounter, is the universal and inescapable end against which any power becomes powerless. Applying this perspective, Mang Marjuki (57 years), a farmer said:

Just like everyone without exception will die, the whole world will also inevitably die; its death is its overall destruction and no one would know when, but certainly the time will come; that is what we call *kiyamat*.<sup>31</sup>

The local word *kiyamat* refers to the end of the world. This word comes from the Arabic **qiyamah**, which means "the arising". This term is used in religious discourse as a special reference to "the arising (of men at the Resurrection), a schematic statement of the order of events in Muslim eschatology", where all the dead are resurrected from their graves to receive the final judgment.<sup>32</sup> This event will take place after the universe is totally destroyed. Popular beliefs, however, put more emphasis on the total destruction of the world itself rather than on the resurrection. Commonly held ideas about *kiyamat* are: that it is the moment when tremendous floods appear everywhere, rising higher than the highest coconut trees and thereafter reaching all mountain peaks; all volcanoes will erupt; there will be terrible earthquakes; the earth will be rolled out like a carpet (*bumi digulung*) so that no one can live upon it; the stars, moon and sun will crash into each other; and the sky will break down and press upon the earth. In short, at *kiyamat* the world will be totally destroyed and no one will be saved.

<sup>31</sup> Indepth interview, 15-4-1992: "Apa binane kaya wong kang sapa bae pesti mati, kabeh jagat gan pesti mati; patine jagat iku ya rusake sing wong langka kang weruh kapan-kapane, tapi pesti ning rusake; kuwen iku kang diarani kiyamat."

<sup>32</sup> Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, p.263.

It is also locally believed that the *kiyamat* will not come suddenly without notice. A number of signs will precede it, so that true believers detecting the signs and realising that *kiyamat* is about to come will have time to seek repentance. The non-believers however, because they have never recited *syahadat*, will not understand what is going on and will not know what to do. Instead, they will fall into vulnerable desperation. In local common belief, among the signs for the coming of *kiyamat* include: the appearance of smoke everywhere; the appearance of Dajjal, followed by the descent of Imam Mahdi and Nabi Isa (Jesus); the coming of Ya'judj and Ma'judj (Gog and Magog). Sulendraningrat (n.d.) adds the signs with the appearance of three eclipses one in the west, one in the east, and one in Arabia; the rising of the sun in the west; the coming of *Dabbah* (the beast of the earth); the damage to the Ka'ba in Mecca; the prints of the Holy Qur'an disappear; and the spread of extreme cold air. Preceding these signs there will occur a long famine the world over, and civil war, which will break out in Turkey where two competing sides will fight to gain control over Istanbul.<sup>33</sup>

Local popular beliefs talk about catastrophic conditions preceded by various symptoms. Among the widely mentioned symptoms will be: when sons enslave their mothers; needy shepherds compete in unlawful luxuries (*bocah angon wis pada mabok ning barang kang bli karuan-karuan*),<sup>34</sup> time appears to be much shorter than ever; people no longer care whether they get things lawfully or unlawfully; there will be a general prevalence of arrogance and a craving for power; people will become careless with regard to their faith; adultery will seem natural, sinless, and be in common practice; the world will be caught in a long lasting darkness; the sun will rise in the west and Dajjal will appear. Imam Mahdi and then Jesus will descend to refresh the Islamic faith; monstrous beasts will appear; the whole universe will shake violently.

Among these signs, the legend of Dajjal is worth mentioning briefly. Dajjal, which means the super liar, is a name that refers to a satanic human figure who leads people astray. He is identified as a descendant of Medina Jews, born when the Prophet Muhammad was still alive. During his childhood his name was Ibnu Shayyad or Ibnu Shaid. He is believed to be still alive and chained somewhere. Now he is more than 1400 years old. His first appearance will be in Khurasan, a town in Persia. His body will be huge and corpulent with reddish, frizzy hair, and with a wide throat. One of his eyes will look like a floating grape, as if made of green glass. On his forehead and between his eyes (some others describe him as one-eyed), will be written three unconnected Arabic letters *kaf* [K], *fa* [F], and *ra* [R]. If they are combined it will read "*kufur*" (unbelieving) or "*kafir*" (unbeliever). He will appear bringing supplies of food, water and fire, conquering

<sup>33</sup> Fairly lengthy accounts on the signs of *kiyamat* also appear in Sulendraningrat (n.d.), *Babarnya Jimat Kalimasada ...*, pp. 87-123 and Sulendraningrat (1982), *Ghaib*, pp. 30-66.

<sup>34</sup> This accords with the hadith narrated by Abu'l Husayn Muslim bin al-Hajjaj (known as Muslim) cited earlier (see: Chapter One, which recounts the appearance of Jibril).

the whole world by both coercive and fascinating magical acts. Although he will succeed in seizing most parts of the world and gaining many followers, he will not be able to seize Mecca and Medina. He will exercise power causing unbearable chaos for some time (some say forty days, others say forty years).<sup>35</sup>

The legend also mentions that Imam Mahdi and Jesus will appear preceding *Kiyamat*. They are two figures who will refresh the Islamic faith. Imam Mahdi is said to be the descendant of Sayid Husein, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, born in Mecca on 15th of Sya'ban (the fourth month of Islamic calendar), AH 255/AD 834, that is, more than one thousand years ago. He disappeared miraculously and will reappear in Mecca sometime on the tenth of Dzulhijjah in an uneven year of the Muslim calendar, for approximately ten years, to fight against Dajjal and to establish order. At that time the Muslim army will not be strong enough, Imam Mahdi will probably be defeated and killed by Dajjal, but will have paved the way for Jesus to achieve a great victory. Jesus, however, will descend and work with Imam Mahdi, and upon Mahdi's death he will succeed to his leadership. Jesus will defeat Dajjal and the latter will perish in Syria or Palestine at Jesus' hand. After Jesus' time the situation will deteriorate. Most believers will pass away and finally only unbelievers will be left. At that time there will be no longer heard people pronouncing the words: "Allah, Allah". The day of ending will come even closer, the world will be caught in uncertainty, then Israfil will blow his trumpet; all living creatures will vanish.<sup>36</sup>

## LIFE AFTER DEATH

Akin to the ideas of the end of individual life and of the world is the idea of life after death. This belief is also embedded in the fifth decree of faith. It incorporates the process of questioning by Munkar and Nakir; preliminary reward and punishment at the grave until the Day of Resurrection, the Day of Resurrection for final judgment; the *syafa'at* or intercession for the believers; passing the *sirat* and, finally, the everlasting life of the hereafter (the reward of paradise or the punishment of hell). Mang Sutaro (57 years), a Batik factory worker who held a common perception concerning life after death, told me about it coherently. A part of his account is recorded here:

When the last men have left about three steps after burial, two angels, Munkar and Nakir, will visit the dead person in the grave and ask: Who is your God? Your Prophet? Your leader, and so on? If the dead is a good

<sup>35</sup> Sulendraningrat, P.S. (1982), *Ghoib*, pp. 33-46.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, pp 41-66. These are not written explicitly in the Scriptures although in principle, the belief in the end of the world is implied in the scriptural doctrine embedded in the fifth decree of the Islamic faith, belief in the Day of Resurrection or Judgement. The uncertainty and catastrophic situation at the moment of universal destruction, however, is clearly indicated in the Qur'an (see for example: QS 99, al-Zalzalah).

person he will certainly be able to answer quite easily, as the angels come in a fine appearance using polite words. But when the dead is a bad person, the angels come in scary appearance using harsh words causing the dead who is questioned to tremble, be bewildered and be unable to utter a word; in this situation the angels unhesitatingly beat him: bum, bum, bum, then leave him unaccompanied but later there come big snakes, centipedes, and scorpions to bite and bite him endlessly ...<sup>37</sup>

In the remainder of his narration Mang Sutaro described the first eschatological world of life after death that one will find while staying in *alam barzakh*.<sup>38</sup> It starts from the time of death until the Day of Resurrection. When Israfil has blown his trumpet and all the earthly world ends, all the dead will be resurrected, given a new body, and will be led to an assemblage at the *mahsyar* (vast plain) by their respective prophets, to receive absolutely fair judgment. Along with the two angels, Raqib's and 'Atid's detailed record of everything one has done in the world, one's body organs will become fair witnesses to everything. The hand for example, will say: "Yes, really, I have done or have been used to doing this and that at that place and time". The mouth will say: "Yes, I have said or have been used to say this and that or ate this and that at that place and time". Similarly, the other organs of the body such as eyes, ears, legs and brain will also give their confessions. In short, at that time nothing will be able to be hidden from God. In such a situation, therefore, everyone will anticipate either reward or punishment. At that time, absolute individualism will prevail; no one will have the time to care for others, not even children for parents nor vice-versa. Everyone's motto will be *Nafsi-nafsi* (literally meaning myself-myself) implying no one will be available for others because each person will be completely occupied in thinking about his/her own affairs. For sinners the only hope will be to beg for intercession by their own prophets, but none except the Prophet Muhammad, who has a special position at God's side, will be entitled to be an intercessor. It follows that only his followers will have the possibility of gaining beneficial weight in the *mizan* (or balance).<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Interview (3-7-1992): "Wong mati baka wis dikubur terus ditinggal kira-kira telung tindak deng wong kang terakhir ngateraken, bakal ditekani deng malekat loro, Munkar wa Nakir, terus ditakoni: manarobbuka, mannabiyyuka, waimammuka, sampe seteruse. Boko mayid iku wong bagus, deweke ya gampang bae njawabe; nekanane uga srese, ngomonge alus. Tapi lamun mayid iku wong blesak apa maning wong kafir malekat mau nekanane nyentak petekusan, toli mayid mau bli kejagan wedie, keder, boro-boro arep bisa njawab; ari wis konon ya terus bae diganden deng malekat mau: bleg, bleg bleg, terus ditinggal bature mung ula, klabang, kala jengking gede-gede, mbari nyokoti terus-terusan ...".

<sup>38</sup> Some informants explain *alam barzakh* simply as *alam kubur* or the world of grave. In eschatology *alam barzakh* refers to the boundary of the world of human beings which consists of heavens, the earth and the nether regions and its separation from the world of pure spirits and God (Cf: 'Barzakh,' in *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*)

<sup>39</sup> *Mizan* refers to the process of weighing the good and the bad deeds in the Day of Judgement.

When the judgment is over, everyone will be required to pass *wot sirotol mustakim*, the **Sirath** or the path, which leads to either *Suarga* (paradise) or to *Neraka* (Hell). The width of the path is believed to be one-seventh of a hair's thickness, but each individual will find it to be different. Eventually, no unbeliever will be able to pass down the path because they will find it to be its real size. For the believers, the size, and the apparent construction of the path, and, therefore, the convenience of passing down the path will be commensurate with the balance between the "good and bad" accounted for in the judgement. The more the balance favours "good" acts, the better, and the more convenient the path will be and, therefore, the greater the likelihood of reaching *Suarga*. In contrast, the more the balance is towards "bad" acts, the narrower the path will be and the less convenient it will be to pass down it and therefore the smaller the likelihood of reaching paradise. There are seven *suarga* and seven *neraka* to reward and punish in the *alam akherat*, the real hereafter. The *suarga* are: *Jannatul Ma'wa*, *Jannatun Na'im*, *Jannatul Firdaus*, *Jannatu 'Adnin*, *Jannatul Khuldi*, *Darul Qarar*, *Darul Bawar*. The seven *neraka* are: *Jahannam*, *Sa'ir*, *Huthamah*, *Hawiyah*, *Saqar*, *Jahim* and *Wail*.<sup>40</sup>

The Cirebonese describe *Suarga* and *Neraka* mostly in materialistic terms. The former is a place of absolute happiness and joy wherein faithful believers are rewarded, whereas the latter, on the contrary, is a place of absolute suffering and misery wherein unbelievers and sinners are punished. *Suarga* is illustrated as a beautifully ornamented building with nice gardens and untainted rivers; everything there constitutes an incomparably joyful place to live in. Delightful foods and drinks of various flavours, as well as all recreational means and objects with an everincreasing delight, are unceasingly served by exceedingly charming men and women. All negative conditions such as exhaustion, boredom, depression and the like are totally absent. The elect shall remain always at their best age, never getting old and men will become as handsome as Joseph while women will become even more beautiful than *widadari* (heavenly nymphs). The greatest joy in paradise, however, will be felt upon seeing God.

In contrast to *Suarga*, the conceptions of *Neraka* are extraordinarily unpleasant. In addition to excessive beatings by *Zabaniya*, the angel of hell, the fire wherein the punished dwell will be terribly hot; the ash from it would boil seven oceans. The foods one will be forced to eat will be the bitterest *kestuba* and *jakum* woods, while drink will be boiling bismuth. Each time the body is shattered from drinking or being beaten, its smithereens will instantly reform into a new one to be beaten or forced to drink again with ever increasing severity. Unbelievers will stay there forever, while sinful believers will stay there for a duration commensurate with their sins. The hereafter, therefore, consists of striking contrasts; that is, between reward and punishment, happiness and misery, joy

<sup>40</sup> These names are all derived from Arabic.

and suffering. These are nothing but results of what everyone does in this world. Wrong doers (to God, to humans, or to nature) may be able to escape from responsibility and to remain safe in this world but can never escape from punishment after death. Similarly, a generous and good person may obtain nothing in this world but will certainly be rewarded in the next. In short, death is regarded not as an end; rather, it is a rung on the eschatological ladder by which human beings move from their present abode, worldly life (*alam dunya*) to their last abode, the hereafter (*alam akhirat*). Above all, life after death is contingent on absolute justice.

## TAKDIR AND IKHTIAR: THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN DESTINY

Like most other Muslims, the Cirebonese conceive human destiny, good or bad, desirable or undesirable, as essentially determined by God. In other words, something happens because God wills it. This belief is, in fact, embedded in the sixth decree of the Islamic faith: belief in *Qadla*, or predetermination, and *Qadar*, or fixed human destiny. In more popular terms both *Qadla* and *Qadar* are referred to by a single term *Takdir*, meaning Divine decree or predestination. Classic examples used to argue for the existence of predestination, as Pak Shofie put it, are that we cannot decide where and when we are born; we cannot choose who shall become our mother and our father; we can neither choose nor decide to become male or female, tall or short, good-looking or bad-looking; we cannot choose or decide how, where, and when we shall die. Given these things, Pak Shofie said, we must just accept what we are. Someone may want to die because of a miserable life or because they cannot bear a long painful illness, but still they keep living. On the other hand, most people want to live longer and do many things to try to achieve that, but nevertheless might die suddenly. Because death is predestined, suicide is regarded as an act against predestination, which, therefore, is heavily condemned, promising severe punishment in Hell.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Due to the fact that Qur'anic verses put stress on predestination on the one hand and on the importance, even the obligation, of 'making effort' or free will on the other, the issue of the relative position of each has given rise to theological debates with contenders from different schools: Murji'ah, Jabariyah, Qadariyah, Mu'tazilah, Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jama'ah. The first two maintain the extreme dominance of predestination while negating the role of free will; the second two, on the contrary, invert this position and view free will as the sole determinant of human destiny while negating the importance of predestination; the last school occupies position between these two extremes, arguing that human destiny basically is predetermined, but there are some areas in which God bestows a role for free will. Indeed, the problem of free will and predestination has been one of the most controversial issues in Islamic theology from the earliest time. Ormsby implies that Al-Ghazali himself, at the possible risk of being rebuked, tended to see the problem of predestination as a divine mystery which for ordinary people is better not to be discussed as it would dazzle the weak, the ignorant and the unprepared. This subject, according Al-Ghazali, belongs to the 'ilm al-mukashafat (subject of illuminationists) which may not be treated in detail in a work for ordinary people. As cited by Ormsby, Al-Ghazali said that one should not lift the curtains which hide the sun from the gaze of the bats lest they perish. (See: Ormsby, E.L., 1984, *Theodicy of Islamic Thought: The Dispute Over Al-Ghazali's "Best of All Possible Worlds"*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, especially pp. 69–74.

Following from this principle of predestination is the view, held also by the Cirebonese, that insists that mankind's fortune or misfortune is the result of 'the will of God' (*Kresane Gusti Allah*). Sudika (38 years), a newspaper-agent, explains:

Principally, what happens in the world, whether it be good or bad, liked or disliked, is dependent on the Lord God's will. Man can only propose, but God disposes ...<sup>42</sup>

This view clearly reflects the uncompromising Cirebonese belief in the power and omnipotence of God, especially regarding human fate. Theoretically, this sense of dependency on God's will, according to Goldziher, tipped the scales in favour of denying the freedom of the will, so that virtue and vice, and reward and punishment are exclusively predestined by God; humans have no role to play.<sup>43</sup> In practice, however, further explanations enunciated by Sudika do not fully fit this standard because, beside predestination, there is also an obligation of *ikhtiar* (effort). Not only is *ikhtiar* necessary because God obliges mankind to do so, but it is also necessary for their own sake because *ikhtiar* is a precondition for the realisation of God's Mercy, Beneficence and Bounty. In this regard Sudika further explained:

Men should believe that the Lord God is Beneficent, Merciful and Bountiful, He will never let men be miserable. But His mercy and bounty will never fall automatically from heaven; His mercy and its bestowal must be acquired and their coming must be obtained by effort. Men are bestowed with a perfect body and mind to enable them to make an effort; those who do not use their bodies and minds to make an effort are thankless individuals, negating God's gift and kill themselves. Reluctance of making such efforts is, as the *santri* would call, a great sin ...<sup>44</sup>

Setting aside the theological arguments, Cirebonese ideas seem to conform to the common Javanese belief indicated by Suparlan that one's fate has really been determined from the time when the person was in the mother's womb.<sup>45</sup> According to this Cirebonese idea of human creation, the designation of one's fate (including one's livelihood, death, actions, fortune and misfortune), occurs

<sup>42</sup> Interview (11-6-1992): "Pokoke apa bae kang kedadian ning dunya, mbuh blesak mbuh bagus, disenengi atawa beli, iku kabeh kresane Gusti Allah siji. Memusa mung bisa ikhtiar, kasil belie apa jare Pengeran ..."

<sup>43</sup> Goldziher, I. (1981), *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. p.81.

<sup>44</sup> Interview (11-6-1992): "Wong iku kudu percaya, Gusti Allah iku luwih murah, luwih welas, luwih asih, bli bakal nyengsaraaken menusa. Mung bae welas asihe Gusti Allah iku bli bakal tigel dewek seng langit, tapi kudu digulati lan disababi kelawan usaha. Menusa diupai awak sampurna karo pikiran deng Pengeran, maksude supaya dienggo usaha; boko wong kang bli gelem ngenggo awak karo pikirane kanggo usaha lan lurus sabab, wong iku kena diarani nyingkur, lan bli gelem mulang trima ning peparingane Pengeran mbari mateni awake dewek; kang mengkonon iku jare wong santrie dosa gede ..."

<sup>45</sup> Suparlan, P. (1991), *The Javanese Dukun*, Jakarta: Peka Publication, p.7.

when the process of creation is at the stage of *alam arwah*; that is, when the foetus is about four months old and when God sends Gabriel to blow a soul into it, after which time the young foetus starts to become animated. This fate, according to Suparlan (1991:7) is influenced by the combination of the mother's and father's power which form the foetus, by the soul which animates the foetus, by the extent to which the soul fits the foetus, by the mother's power and activities; by the conditions of the womb, by the efforts and attainment of the foetus during its stay in the womb; and by the time and place of birth. In addition, Suparlan also claims that fate can still be changed, within certain limitations, through one's acts and relations with one's surroundings. A simple example is of someone who is fortunate, born to well-to-do parents and, thus, likely to grow well and healthy but who is then unfortunate because his parents do not realise it when he falls into his friend's temptations. Instead of becoming a good and successful man, he becomes a delinquent, and is sent to jail. Converse examples may be cited. The main point is that fate, to some extent, may change through an individual's "efforts" and through using certain powers and capacities bestowed by God. In this context Sudika added that since no one knows with certainty one's own fate, or what God will actually decide, the making of *ikhtiar* (efforts) is absolutely necessary". In other words, we only know something is predestined, *takdir*, either after our own "efforts" have been carried out or after being assured that the thing under consideration is beyond the capacity of humans to control. Sudika illustrates this with the following example:

... we have to call it a neglect, our fault, instead of *takdir* if we fail an exam which we are not prepared for; it may be a *takdir* if adequate preparation has been made, but at the time of examination a certain illness comes and obstructs our concentration; or, due to one or other reasons the marker intentionally or unintentionally gives an unfair mark and thus, makes us fail. In some cases you can protest and prove your ability, this is another form of *ikhtiar*, if it works it may improve your position but in other cases your protest does not work because any decision made is final. If the latter be the case, the best thing you can do is to realise it and thus accept it as *takdir*.<sup>46</sup>

Ordinary people of Cirebon seem to be wiser in treating the contradiction between "predestination" and "free will". Some intellectuals put the questions of free will and predestination at two poles that bear inherent tensions. By contrast, the ordinary people consider them simultaneously as tied up together in the sphere of *rukun*. Pak Shofie had this to say on the subject:

Predestination and personal effort [free will] need not be disputed, both exist, both come from the Holy Qur'an, both can be used simultaneously;

<sup>46</sup> Field notes from casual talk with Sudika 13-6-1992.

thus, predestination and [free will] can co-exist in harmony. What problem will arise, if you just take the true belief that God is omnipotent, He has the right to decide anything for His creatures? At the same time make maximum “efforts”, since doing so is ordered by God. In doing so, may God bestow on you safety and loftiness.<sup>47</sup>

## PITUNGAN AND PENASAN: JAVANESE NUMEROLOGY

*Pitungan* is a local term constructed from the word *itung* meaning to count. The prefix *pe-* and suffix *-an* are added to mean the way of calculating, or, simply the numerological system. Associated with the term *pitungan* is *penasan*, derived from the word *na'as* meaning bad luck; thus, *pitungan* and *penasan* mean calculating the value of the number in a numerological system to avoid bad luck. In practice the Cirebonese numerological system has two main objectives. The first is to determine the beginning of the new Javanese calendar year, and the second is to determine preferred dates and times to do important jobs. Both are done mainly by manipulating certain values attached to each calendar unit, for example: day, month, year.

The Cirebonese, as do other Javanese, use a traditional lunar calendar along with the official solar one. Unlike the months and the new years of the solar calendar whose beginning are easily ascertained, determining the new months and, therefore, the new year in the lunar calendar is rather problematic. The moon's orbit (and, therefore, the interval between new moons) is about 29.5 days. Hence, a month is calculated as either 29 or 30 days. Unfortunately, which month should take 29 and which should take 30 cannot be fixed precisely. Each individual month could have either. A certain month may take 29 days one year but the next year it may take 30. This gives rise to difficulty in determining the new months and in turn the new year. To reconcile the differences a certain calculation is employed. This reconciliation is important as most communal feasts are held on the basis of this calendar, and this calendar is the basis for *penasan* too.

<sup>47</sup> Personal interview 12-6-1992: “Takdir karo ikhtiar, bli perlu dadi perkara kanggo genceng-cewengan, karo-karone bener anane, karo-karone njukut seng Qur'an, loro-lorone bisa dienggo; dadi takdir karo ikhtiar bisa rukun. Apa angele, lamun percaya-a bae kang temenan setuhune Gusti Allah iku kuwasa, wenang nemtokaken segals apa bae karo makhlukke; ikhtiar-a kang temenan krana ikhtiar iku wis dadi prentabe Gusti Allah. Inaya Allah Gusti Allah maringi keslametan lan kamulyan.” Muslim Ibn Yasar (d. 100 or 101/718 or 720) never visited Cirebon nor preached there, and I doubt that Cirebonese like Sudika have read his work. But Ibu Yasar's attempt to find a compromise between strict predestinarians and advocates of free will meets with the spirit of *rukun* in Cirebon. Ormsby, cites Ibn Yasar from van Ess, as follows: “[Free will and pre destination] are two deep valleys where people stray without ever reaching bottom. Act therefore like someone who knows that only his own acts can still save him; and trust in God like someone who knows that only that will strike him which was meant for him.” See: Ormsby, E.L. (1984), *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, p. 71.

**Table 3.1: Months of the Javanese and Islamic Calendars**

Javanese	Islamic
Sura	Muharram
Sapar	Safar
Mulud	Rabi'al-Awwal
Sawal Mulud	Rabi'al-Akhir
Jumadilawal	Jumadi'l-Awwal
Jumadilakhir	Jumadi'l-Akhir
Rejep	Rajab
Ruwah	Sya'ban
Puasa	Ramadan
Syawal	Syawwal
Kapit	Dzu'l-Qa'idah
Raya Agung	Dzu'l-Hijjah

In Cirebon, as well as in most parts of Java, there are two ways of calculating weeks: one is the seven-day week, the other is the five-day *pasaran* (market-day) week. For each method, each day has its own *jejer*, or ordinal standing, and *naktu* (Central Java: *neptu*). *Naktu*, a specific value attached to the names of people and calendar units: days of the week, the *pasaran*, months, years, is a crucial element on which calculations are based. The *naktu* for the days of the ordinary week and the *pasaran* week are put in Table 3.2.

The Cirebonese consider Friday as the most important day of the week and, in relation to *pitungan*, it is put at the first *jejer* and, thus, the seven-day week goes from Friday to Thursday. In the *pasaran* week, on the other hand, Kliwon is considered to be the most important day and is put at the first *jejer* and, thus, the five-day *pasaran* week proceeds from Kliwon to Manis, Pahing, Pon and Wage. A most significant moment occurs once every thirty-five days; that is, on *Jemuah Kliwon* where the first *jejer* of the seven-day week (Friday) meets the first *jejer* of the five-day *pasaran* week (Kliwon). Friday's significance seems to come from the Islamic tradition that regards Friday as the master of the days (*Sayidul Ayyam*) for doing religious service. It is unclear, why *Kliwon* is considered significant although it must be of Javanese tradition. Local literary traditions mention that Friday-Kliwon was traditionally taken by Sunan Gunung Jati as a court assembly day because the day is good for detecting one's intention whether it is good or bad (*bisa niteni ala becike niyate wong*). It also happens that Sunan Gunung Jati died on "Friday-Kliwon."

**Table 3.2: *Naktu* and *Jejer* of the Days of the Days of the Ordinary and the *Pasaran* Weeks**

Week day	Naktu	Jejer	Pasaran	Naktu	Jejer
Jum'ah (Friday)	6	1	Kliwon	8	1
Septu (Saturday)	9	2	Manis	5	2
Akad (Sunday)	5	3	Pahing	9	3
Senen (Monday)	4	4	Pon	7	4
Selasa (Tuesday)	3	5	Wage	4	5
Rebo (Wednesday)	7	6			
Kemis (Thursday)	8	7			

Javanese numerological books (*primbon*), however, do not place any special importance on *Jemuah* or *Jum'ah Kliwon*, nor do they put it on any list of bad days. Friday appears often on lists of good days. It is the day of *kemresik* (cleansing), an auspicious time for weddings or other feasts during the months of Mulud, Bakdomulud (Cirebon: Sawal Mulud) and Jumadilawal. Friday appears as fair days during Sura and Sapar, whereas in Jumadilakir Friday is inauspicious. A woman born on Jemuah Kliwon is expected to have the characteristics of being ambitious, has the potential for acquiring abundance, and should be careful and frugal, faithful and considerate to her husband (*gedhe butarepane, sinung ing rejeki, setiti lan ngatiati, bekti mring wong lanang, waskita kareping wong lanang*).<sup>48</sup>

**Table 3.3: Months of the Year and Years of the *Windu* and their *Naktu***

Month	Naktu	Year	Naktu
Sura	2	Alif	3
Sapar	2	He	2
Mulud	1	Jimawal	2
Sawalmulud	1	Ze	1
Jumadilawal	5	Dal	5
Jumadilakir	5	Be	5
Rejep	4	Wawu	4
Ruwah	4	Jimakir	3
Puasa	3		
Syawal	3		
Kapit	2		
Raya Agung	2		

Although of less importance, *naktu* is also calculated for the months of the year and for the years of the *windu*.<sup>49</sup> By manipulating these *naktu*, calculations have been made. In order to establish that the first day of the month Sura of year Alif shall always fall on Rebo (Wednesday) Wage. This is known as the *ABOGE* system which stands for A-(lif), (Re)-bo, (Wa)-ge. The *Aboge* is then taken as a fixed point and is used as the basis for subsequent calculations for specific purposes.

<sup>48</sup> Ki Sura (n.d.), ed., *Buku Primbon Jawa Jangkep*, Solo: U.D. Mayasari

<sup>49</sup> See Table 3.3. A *windu* is eight years cycle, each name of the year within the *windu* has been selected from the Arabic alphabet.

Aside from *jejer* and *naktu* it is also believed that the position of astronomical objects brings about an ethereal influence on the characteristics of particular times (years, months, days, and even hours). The ethereal condition of certain times will, in turn, affect the result of work done on particular occasions. Certain times which are under the domination of certain astronomical objects will, therefore, be fitting and beneficial for particular jobs, but not necessarily for others. Finding the best time for doing particular jobs is the second main concern of Cirebonese *pitungan* and *pena'asan*.

**Table 3.4: Schedule of the Domination of Astronomical Objects**

	Hour	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
am	06-07	Sun	Moo	Mar	Mer	Jup	Ven	Sat
	07-08	Ven	Sat	Sun	Moo	Mar	Mer	Jup
	08-09	Mer	Jup	Ven	Sat	Sun	Moo	Mar
	09-10	Moo	Mars	Mer	Jup	Ven	Sat	Sun
	10-11	Sat	Sun	Moo	Mar	Mer	Jup	Ven
pm	11-12	Jup	Ven	Sat	Sun	Moo	Mar	Mer
	12-01	Mar	Mer	Jup	Ven	Sat	Sun	Moo
	01-02	Sun	Moo	Mar	Mer	Jup	Ven	Sat
	02-03	Ven	Sat	Sun	Moo	Mar	Mer	Jup
	03-04	Mer	Jup	Ven	Sat	Sun	Moo	Mar
	04-05	Moo	Mar	Mer	Jup	Ven	Sat	Sun
	05-06	Sat	Sun	Mo	Mar	Mer	Jup	Ven

Remarks on the names of astronomical objects:

Sun = Sun

Moo = Moon

Mar = Mars

Mer = Mercury

Jup = Jupiter

Ven = Venus

Sat = Saturn

There are seven astronomical objects that many Cirebonese think have an influence on the work of humans: *Syams* (Sun), *Qamar* (Moon), *Mirik* (Mars), *Athorid* (Mercury), *Musytari* (Jupiter), *Zuhro* (Venus), and *Zuhal* (Saturn).<sup>50</sup> The influence of these object are: the Sun, good for almost any work except going to war; Moon, good for any work; Mars, good mainly for making weapons or amulets; Jupiter, not good for any work, although it may be good for going to war; Mercury, like the Sun, good for any work except for going to war, for risky business, or for venturing the chance of large profits; Venus, especially good for religious services and Saturn, good only for making wells. Everyday of the week from six o'clock in the morning until six o'clock in the afternoon is under their astronomical influence. Each of these 'planets' come successively hour after

<sup>50</sup> These astronomical objects are referred to in Arabic; probably it is of Arabic influence.

hour to exert temporal dominance. So regularly are their comings that these can be put into an ordered schedule. By merely consulting the schedule one can decide the time at which an important job should be started on a particular day.

For important undertakings, particularly marriages and house building, the month is also of special importance. Of the twelve months, only three are good for marriage, and only four for house building. The months good for marriage are: Raya Agung, Ruwah and Jumadil Akhir. Raya Agung leads the couple to real happiness whereas Ruwah and Jumadil Akhir can bring God's bestowal of abundance. The other months may engender unwanted consequences such as: Sura, a broken marriage; Sapar, overt domination of lust, which may cause betrayal; Mulud, many obstacles; Sawal Mulud, easily being tempted by gossips; Jumadil Awal, frequent loss of belongings; Rejeb, repression; Puasa, betrayal; Syawal, serious debts and Kapit, frequent illness. The months good for building houses and the expected benefit are: Puasa, acquiring precious valuables; Raya Agung, bringing abundance; Kapit, good for farms and raising livestock and Jumadil Awwal, attracting many friends; Jumadil Akhir, facing no serious trouble. Fair months for building a house are: Rejeb, which causes a tendency of staying indoors and provokes laziness and a feeling of isolation; Ruwah, makes people hesitant to approach the occupants. Bad months are: Sura, and Sawal Mulud, which will cause the builder to encounter some trouble; Sapar and Mulud are even worse.

In some cases, one cannot wait until a good time comes, but one must avoid the dangerous day called *Raspati*.<sup>51</sup> In this case it may be preferable to choose a neutral time called a *dina lowong* (literally, meaning vacant day) when neither advantageous nor disadvantageous consequences may result. To this end, a person has to find out either the neutral day on which he could do a job or the *Raspati* on which he is to avoid doing a job. *Dina lowong* is basically any day of the month which does not coincide with *pasaran Kliwon*. Determining this day can be done by calculation, by memory, or by consulting written records of the first *pasaran* day of the month under consideration, then by counting from this *pasaran* day to Pahing. An example for the use of this method is: the first day of Sura year Alif must fall on Rebo (Wednesday) Wage; count the *pasaran* starting from the day after Wage. This makes three days, that is: Wage (uncounted), Kliwon, Manis and Pahing. Three days after Wednesday is Saturday (Pahing). However, if the first day of the month falls on Pahing, the next Pahing (the sixth day of the month) will be a neutral day, a day when one can do a job without a fear of bad consequences or a hope of good ones: *paduasal slamet bae* (just safe only).

<sup>51</sup> Probably the word *raspati* is a construction from an archaic local Javanese *rasa-pati* (containing death). It refers to bad days for doing important undertakings, contrary to the good days. It may cause bad luck (accidents, serious loss, illness, even death). See the next page for its occurrence.

Sometimes a person is very uneasy with *Raspati*, and he is eager to determine its occurrence in order to avoid it. The formula is simple: *Raspati* occurs when the value of *naktu* of the particular month combined with the *naktu* of the day is either twelve or five. Take twelve, for the first example. Subtract twelve by *naktu* of the month, the rest is equal to *naktu* of the day, that is the *raspati*. Thus, *naktu* of Syawal is seven. Twelve minus seven makes five; find out a day whose *naktu* is five (Sunday), which is the *raspati* for that month. One must therefore, avoid doing important jobs on the Sunday of Syawal. The *naktu* of Sapar is two; five minus two makes three which is the *naktu* of Tuesday; one must avoid doing important jobs on Tuesday of Sapar. After doing long and laborious calculations for a few years, Mang Atmo, who is not a *dukun*, produced a number of comprehensive *pena'asan* tables applicable for entire years. As one of the custodians of *Kramat Uma Gede* (The Great House) at Trusmi, he has many guests, some of whom consult him about *pena'asan*. Instead of doing laborious calculations he simply consults his ready made hand written tables to serve his clients. For the year Alif, for example, the expected first day of the months, the *lowong* (neutral) and the *raspati* (dangerous) days is put in following table.

**Table 3.5: First Day of the Months, the Lowong and the Raspatit (Year Alif)**

Month	First day	Lowong	Raspati
Sura	Wednesday-Wage	Saturday	Sunday
Sapar	Friday-Wage	Monday	Tuesday
Mulud	Saturday-Pon	Wednesday	Saturday
Syawal Mulud	Monday-Pon	Friday	Wednesday
Jumadilawal	Tuesday-Pahing	Sunday	Friday
Jumadilakhir	Thursday-Pahing	Tuesday	Monday
Rejep	Friday-Manis	Thursday	Tuesday
Ruwah	Sunday-Manis	Saturday	Thursday
Puasa	Sunday-Kliwon	Wednesday	Wednesday
Syawal	Wednesday-Kliwon	Friday	Sunday
Kapit	Thursday-Wage	Sunday	Monday
Raya Agung	Saturday-Wage	Tuesday	Saturday

In addition, by taking the influence of the astronomical objects into account (the items appear in table 3.5), Mang Atmo has also a long list which says about the recommended (good) days, the forbidden (bad) days, dates and *pasaran*, even hours, for doing important work throughout the entire *windu*. An example of this list appears in table 3.6.<sup>52</sup>

In relation to the current use of *pitungan*, Mang Atmo however claimed that the *pitungan* system is nothing more than man's *ikhtiar*, or efforts to follow where nature seems to go, and that we should therefore not try to go against it. It was invented by our ancestors when our life was so much more dependent on nature.

<sup>52</sup> In Mang Atmo's version, table 3.5 and 3.6 are mixed together. I necessitate to present it separately because I think, his version is rather difficult to catch, at least by a quick reading. A specimen for portions of his table see appendix.

Now our lives are different; people are knowledgeable and do not seem so dependent on nature. He says that when he was a child the harvest occurred only once a year because most *sawah* relied totally on rain. One had to be careful to catch the best time to start working a *sawah*, otherwise the work would be ruined; that is why the *pitungan* system was needed. Now, by virtue of irrigation, harvests occur twice a year and the starting times are far more flexible. In working *sawah* people no longer care about *mangsa* (seasons) for agricultural *pitungan*. However, there are still many aspects of our lives where people think that *pitungan* is still needed. He then warned that those who believe in *pitungan* should keep it in proper perspective because it is not the only factor determining good results. Along with individual characteristics including ability, resources and other influencing factors, there is still the final and unavoidable factor, that is, *kresane Gusti Allah* (God's will). Nevertheless, "*bli arep ndingini kresane pengeran*" ("without intending to preempt God's will"), he said that he himself still adheres to the *pitungan* system because sometimes it shows its worth.

To illustrate the worth of *pitungan* and *pena'asan* Mang Atmo told about his own son, Harlan, who got into trouble.<sup>53</sup> In this example Mang Atmo probably wished to imply that if his son had followed his advice based on the *pitungan* system his son probably would not have fallen into trouble. In other words he wanted to illustrate how *pitungan* could be a useful means of avoiding unexpected results. This, of course, does not necessarily imply that the *pitungan* is the only prerequisite for doing something safely. There are many other factors that contribute to failure or success, such as ability, tools, conditions and the atmosphere by which and in which the work is carried out. But if other variables are held constant, the *pitungan* system is an additional help. In other words, if two persons have to do something, each having about equal ability, using similar tools, working in the same conditions, facing similar difficulties, the one who takes account of the *pitungan* system is thought of as having a better chance of coming to a better end.

**Table 3.6: Sample of Lists of Good and Bad Days**

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*Sura, year Alif.*

Good:	Monday, 6 Wage and 27 Kliwon; 06.00, 08.00 a.m, 01.00, 03.00 p.m. Tuesday, 21 Wage; 10.00 a.m, 12.00 noon, 05.00 p.m. Wednesday, 29 Pahing; 07.00, 09.00 a.m, 02.00, 04.00 p.m. Thursday, 23 Manis and 9 Pahing; 06.00, 11.00 a.m, 01.00 p.m. Friday, 17 Kliwon and 24 Pahing; 08.00, 10.00 a.m, 03.00, 05.00 p.m.
Bad:	during the 11th, 14th, 15th; any date of Saturday and Sunday Manis <sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Hours for bad days are not specified.

<sup>53</sup> See the quotation at the beginning of this Chapter