

Chapter 5: The Ritual Practice: Adat

INTRODUCTION

*“Ma ra-a hul mu ‘minuna hasanan
Fa huwa ‘indallahi hasanun”*

“What the faithful believers find good,
is [presumably] good on the side of God.”

(Hadith transmitted by Ahmad).

This Chapter deals with the ritual practice of *adat* which is nearly the same thing as what Rippin called the “additional ritual”, the ritual outside the enactment of the Five-pillars, used by the Muslims to express their identity. It thus, lies outside the domain of *ibadat* in the narrower sense. Some of the *adat* activities are undeniably Muslim creations, some others have unclear origins but all of these practices have an Islamic flavour. Other activities refer to indigenous ceremonies which are likely to have a non-Islamic origin but are tolerated or retained because they have been Islamised in that they have undergone modification from their original form. Their existence in their present form is harmless to the Islamic faith or has even been incorporated into it and is used as an expression of particular local Muslim identity. Among *adat* rituals belonging to the first type are commemorations of the Islamic holy days; those belonging to the second are thanksgivings (*syukuran* or *tasyakuran*) and *slametan* related to the individual life cycle and the commemoration of the death of a person. Examples of those belonging to the third are the communal feasts related to the agricultural season.

THE NATURE OF ADAT

Before going further into a description of *adat* rituals in Cirebon, it is worthwhile to take a brief look at the nature of *adat* and how they relate to the Cirebonese context. This is important because the relation between *adat* and Islam is an interesting subject of analytical discourse.

The word *adat* is derived from Arabic ‘**adat** (plural form of ‘**adah**) meaning custom, or habit and is considered as synonymous with ‘**urf**, something which is commonly known or accepted. It generally refers to the result of long-standing convention, either deliberately adopted or the result of unconscious adaptation to circumstances, that has been followed where practical considerations have been uppermost.¹ By this definition, even an animal is said to have its own *adat*.² The early Sunni scholars considered some ‘**urf** as the roots of the *fiqh*, but in

¹ Levy, R. (1957), *The Social Structure of Islam*, London: Cambridge University Press, p. 248.

² See: “Adat Law” in *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

Wahhabi Arabia, 'urf, if contrary to the rigid code held by the rulers, is stigmatised as a *taghut*, the mistaken conduct of the ungodly *Jahiliya* way.³ Since the nineteenth century, especially due to the influence of Van Vollenhoven, ter Haar and Snouck Hurgronje *adat* has been used by colonial government in Indonesia as a legal term designating a prescriptive right, which was given currency as an independent legal entity apart from the canon law of Islam (*syari'ah*).⁴ Local *adat* was encoded into units of jural management, whereby legal pluralism in colonial Indonesia was introduced.⁵ Under this scheme, based on a classification of *adat* systems as cultural geographic units, the Dutch divided Indonesia into at least nineteen *adat* law areas.⁶ So called *adat law* rather than *syari'ah*, was then imposed wherever possible in an attempt to divorce the indigenous people from Islam. *Adat* law, however, was applied inconsistently as at the same time, under the 1854 Constitution (article 75, para 3), the application of *adat* rules which were in conflict with generally recognised principles of justice in European terms was strictly forbidden.⁷

Meanwhile, the ensuing discourse on South-East Asian Muslim societies concerning the relation between Islam and *adat* has become unclear. *Adat* is sometimes described as either mingling, suggesting an unstructured mixing, or as conflicting, suggesting the reification and existence of two separate bodies of knowledge and practice. Either view, according to Ellen, is a profoundly misleading over-simplification.⁸

In Cirebon, the word *adat* is generally used precisely to refer to custom, habit or any form of ordinary behaviour commonly adhered to by many people (*barang apa bae kang wis biasa dilakoni deng wong akeh*). To illustrate this meaning, the following expressions may be helpful:

Different places have different *adat* (customs); the *adat* of people here is like this, whereas the *adat* of people over there is like that.⁹

It is the people's *adat* (customs) here to wear *sarung* and *topong* at prayer.¹⁰

Commenting to someone who complains about the demanding and frequent crying child, one says:

³ Levy, R. (1957), pp. 248–249.

⁴ See: "Ada", in *The Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*.

⁵ Ellen, R.F. (1983), "Social Theory, Ethnography and the Understanding of Practical Islam in South-East Asia", in Hooker, M.B. (1983) ed, *Islam in South-East Asia*, Leiden: E.J. Brill. p. 52. ter Haar, B. (1948), *Adat Law in Indonesia*, New York: Institute of Pacific Relations.

⁶ Hooker, M.B. (1978), *Adat Law in Modern Indonesia*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, pp. 16, 30.

⁷ Ibid, p. 46.

⁸ Ellen, R.F. (1983), "Social Theory, Ethnography and the Understanding of Practical Islam in South-East Asia", p. 64.

⁹ "Sejen tempat ya sejen adat; wong kene adate mengkenen, wong kana adate mengkonon."

¹⁰ " *Adate* wong kene iku ari sembayang ya sarungan karo topongan."

It is its *adat* (nature) if a child likes crying (so do not complain nor be startled).¹¹

Many other examples can be put forward but the point is that *adat*, from the Cirebonese perspective, is no more than custom. While like in other parts of Java there is no such a thing as *desa adat*, neither is there an *adat* official, nor is there, at least in contemporary Cirebon, any jural implication of such so-called *adat*. Rather, *adat* is conceived as a natural phenomenon whose occurrence commonly and inherently contributes to human conduct, to the way of doing things such as religious duties or social behaviour. Some *adat* may be genuinely of local creation while other *adat* may be of foreign origin. Some is ritualised and other *adat* is loosely technical. Most people are hardly aware of when *adat* came into being or where it came from. From their religious view point, some *adat* is good and other *adat* is bad; some matches precisely with the *syari'ah* set forth in *fiqh*, other *adat* matches the ethical spirit emanating from Islam. Still other *adat* just parallels Islam, while some other *adat* may stand in opposition to Islam. The *sepikulan-segendongan* principle in the Javanese rules of inheritance whereby a male sibling gets twice that of a female is an example of *adat* belonging to the first.¹² Many forms of feasts may be the example of the second, the use of local clothing to cover '*awrat* at prayer is an example for the third, whereas such activities as cock-fighting, betting and gambling at the *lebaran* festival are examples of the fourth. Given that *adat* may either be good or bad, its treatment, whether one wishes to keep it or avoid it, is subject to an individual's own ethical consideration be they of Islamic, Christian, or any other origin.

The quotation from the *hadith* at the beginning of this Chapter comes from Pak Soleh (44 years), the thoughtful trader already acknowledged in the preceding chapter, the one who enunciated the broader and narrower meaning of *ibadat*.¹³ He claimed that the *hadith* is one of the scriptural bases that guides him whether to accept or reject certain *adat*. In relation to a number of ritual and ceremonial activities belonging to *adat*, it is the true believers, represented by *ulama* and pious figures, who attest to a practice's Islamic validity. He asserted, that such activities as the commemoration of Islamic holy days and many forms of *slametan* have gained support from, and have become part of the favourable work of many *ulama*, pious figures and *kyai*. It is enough to say that these activities, according to Pak Soleh, have become good Muslims' *adat* (*wis dadi adate wong Islam kang bagus*) and have a certain Islamic significance. It is thus, unnecessary and, sometimes even difficult, to set a clear boundary between *adat* and *syari'ah*.

¹¹ Its Javanese reads: "Ya adate ari bocah iku ya doyan nangis."

¹² Some informants said that the *sepikulan-segendongan* is *hukum* (Islamic law) which has become *adat*, and is commonly practiced even by ignorant people, although there are some who apply an equal division of inheritance.

¹³ The *hadith* can be found, for example in, Ad-Dairabi, Al-'Alim al-' Alama asy-Syeikh (n.d.), *Al-Mujarrabah ad-Dairabi al-Kabir*, Semarang: Al-Munawar, p. 74.

To clarify the relationship between the two, Pak Soleh gave the following illustration:

The case of *adat* and *syari'ah* is just like doing prayer and wearing *sarung* and *topong*. Prayer belongs to *syari'ah*, wearing *sarung* and *topong* belong to Javanese *adat*. How then, should they be separated? It is true that doing prayer is valid without wearing *sarung* and *topong* provided the *aurat* is covered. But clearly, doing prayer and wearing *sarung* and *topong* are united, they are not opposed to *syari'ah*; rather, in our taste, it even looks better as it indicates more humbleness to God.¹⁴

Pak Soleh's approach to *adat* vis-a-vis *syari'ah* undeniably represents the position of many traditionalist Muslim villagers. Unfortunately, this position stands against the main stream of *Indologie* scholarship put forward by Snouck Hurgronje and others who, under the guise of scholarship, exploited *adat* and Islam as a means to enable the colonial government to exercise easier political control. In dealing with Islam in South-East Asia, Hurgronje and others have successfully enjoyed esteem for arguing for the necessary separation and opposition between *adat* and *syari'ah* (Islam).¹⁵ Virtually, the reliability of this colonial scholarship is now under siege from the current trend of more objective research.

Based on a strong denial of the significance of Islam in Dutch colonial policy and in the interest of preventing the emergence of a national integrity in the colonial state, ethnic divisions were fostered. In the meantime, the European colonial cultures, especially British and Dutch, misunderstood and distorted Islam from the very start when they made systematic descriptions of it. Ironically, it is this confusion and distortion which provided the framework for the scholarship of Islam in South-East Asia that followed.¹⁶

Leaving aside this issue for a while, it might be useful to echo Hooker's assertion that Islam, being the youngest of the world's monotheistic religions, in its own view, is intended to complete the great Judeo-Christian traditions. Also in its own view, Islam prescribes a complete scheme for the temporal and spiritual worlds and thereby it does not separate religion from daily life, something that the secular West can hardly comprehend.¹⁷ Yet, to understand the local manifestations of great traditions such as Islam, it is not enough to simply focus

¹⁴ Interview 3-4-1992: "Ari antarane adat karo syare'at iku ya kayadene sembayang ngenggo sarung karo topong. Sembayang iku syare'at, sarungan karo topongan iku adate wong Jawa. La priben kudu misahe? Ya bener, wong sembayang sih, bli sarungan karo topongan maning gan, asal nutup 'aurat ya sah. Tapi, sembayang ngenggo sarung iku wis dadi siji, bli bertentangan karo syare'at; malah, munggu pengrasane wong kene, luwih bagus sabab nuduhaken luwih ta'dzim Ningi Gusti Allah."

¹⁵ Hooker, M.B. (1983) ed, *Islam in South East Asia*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, pp. 59–60.

¹⁶ Ellen, R.F. (1983), "Social Theory, Ethnography and the Understanding of Practical Islam in South-East Asia", pp. 52–53.

¹⁷ Hooker, M.B. (1983) ed, p. vii.

on ethnographic particularities alone, especially the ethnography of colonial vintage which, according to Ellen, has failed to make valuable contribution in analysing Muslim belief and practice other than as a part of a cultural assemblage.¹⁸ It is true, as Ellen holds, that an initial recognition of distinctive Muslim culture within the totality of Islamic tradition is a prerequisite before one starts to grapple with an understanding of the local expression of the Islamic faith. Muslims all over the world live within diverse cultural niches whose expressions of identity bear the colour of their diversity, one of which is in the form of various *adat*. With these convictions, I shall start my discussions of *adat* to include the following items.

THE COMMEMORATION OF ISLAMIC HOLY DAYS

The genuine Islamic nature of ritualised *adat* is probably best seen in the commemoration of either Islamic holy days or holy months. It is difficult to trace historically, when this type of ritual began. Rippin indicates that activities such as *mawlid* festivals for celebrating the birth of Prophet Muhammad were not fully established until about the thirteenth century A.D.¹⁹ But commemoration of other days have explicit scriptural roots in the Qur'an and the Hadith, suggesting that it was already being practiced when the Prophet was still alive.

In dealing with this subject, I am more concerned with how the commemorations are performed than with their historical origins, although the latter can not be ignored. There are at least four months in Islam which bear commemorative significance because they are claimed as sacred; they are: Dzu'l-Qa'idah (*Kapit*), Dzu'l-Hijjah (*Raya Agung*), Muharram (*Sura*) and Rajab (*Rejep*). These are respectively the eleventh, the twelfth, the first and the seventh month of the Islamic and Javanese lunar calendar.²⁰ During these months Muslims are forbidden to engage in warfare unless forced into it for reasons of self-defence. This reckoning is rooted in the Holy Qur'an, saying:

“The number of months (in a year) in the sight of Allah is twelve; so ordained by Him the day He created the heavens and the earth. Of them four are sacred; That is the right religion, so wrong not yourself therein ...”²¹

The Qur'an, in fact, does not mention these specific months, it is the commentators who instigated so.

Along with these sacred months there are other months in which certain day(s) are held by many Muslims as being holy and on which they make celebration.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 53.

¹⁹ Rippin, A. (1990), p. 98.

²⁰ *The Holy Qur'an, English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, p 510; Adnan, K.H.M. (1969),

Peringatan Hari-Hari Besar Islam, Sala: A.B. Siti Syamsijah, p. 6.

²¹ (QS 9:36).

They are: Safar (*Sapar*), Rabi' al-Awwal (*Mulud*), Sya'ban (*Ruwah*) and Ramadhan (*Puasa*), being respectively the second, the third, the eighth and the ninth months of the Javanese calendar. This makes eight out of the twelve months that have commemorative significance of one form or another. By means of commemoration or celebration, attachment to a Muslim identity is expressed. The significance, of these months can be traced in Islamic history rather than in any formal scriptural ordinance. The general pattern of commemoration and celebration of Islamic holy days consists of one, or a combination, of the following: invocation, fasting, non-obligatory prayer, recital of the Qur'an, recital of the biography of certain religious figures or of the related stories which sanctify that particular day or month, and offerings of food or other material. Although not necessarily, more often than not, celebration is accompanied by some form of feast. Currently, as a result of recent development, the commemoration of Islamic holy days focuses on *pengajian* (a public speech) given by an orator intentionally called for this purpose. *Pengajian* reduces the many different forms of commemoration to a uniformity in which variations and differences are apparent only in the references, content and messages of the speaker.

Suroan

Suroan means celebrating or commemorating *Suro* or *Sura*. Etymologically, the word *sura*, in old Javanese (*Kawi*), means giant; in Sanskrit it means god or goddess, powerful, brave, warrior, monkey.²² It is difficult to relate directly these meanings to this context. The most likely explanation is that it is local reference to the Arabic term '*Asyura* referring to the tenth (day) of Muharram. The first day of the month is, therefore, the new year and its celebration commemorates the new year of the Islamic lunar calendar. Its reckoning started on the day when the Prophet Muhammad and his companions fled from Mecca to seek refuge in Medina in AD 622. This refuge is referred to as *hijrah*, hence the calendar's name is derived and usually linked with the starting point for the rise of Islam and its historical upheaval.²³ A wise adaptation of the older Javanese calendrical system (*tahun Saka*) into the Islamic one was made in 1663 by Sultan Agung of Mataram with the Javanese starting point set at AD 78.²⁴ Under the new system the first month of the Javanese calendar coincided with the first month of the Islamic ones.

²² Dirdjosiswojo (1957), *Kawi-Djinarya*, Djilid 1, Klaten: Pertjetakan Republik Indonesia, p. 215.

²³ Citing *Wedyaprada*, Adnan claims that the Islamic calendar was firstly adopted in Java in AD 1443 when Raden Fatah, under the supervision of Sunan Giri, one of the nine Javanese *wali* who settled in Gresik, set up a settlement called Bintara. See: Adnan, K.H.M. (1969), *Peringatan Hari-Hari Besar Islam*, pp. 12–13.

²⁴ Simuh (1988), *Mistik Islam Kejawaen Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita*, Jakarta: University of Indonesia Press, pp 11–12. The reckoning of *Tahun Saka* refers to a legendary figure of Ajisaka, probably an Indian, who came to Java in AD 78 and created (or introduced) the Javanese alphabet. In Cirebonese literary tradition Ajisaka is referred to as Syeikh Subakir (see Chapter Three).

In Cirebon, *Suroan* refers to either the first or the tenth day of *Sura* or Muharram. Along with the New Year celebration of the Javanese Islamic calendar the first of *Sura* is also acclaimed as the *Hari Jadi* (the Founding Day) of the city of Cirebon. The story goes back to the legend of 15th century Cirebon when Walangsungsang, son of Prabu Siliwangi, King of Pajajaran, and his younger sister Rarasantang, left the Pajajaran palace. In his nine-month adventure Walangsungsang obtained a wife, Indang Geulis, daughter of Sang Hyang Danuwarsih, a Hermit at the mount of Maarapi. He, his wife and his sister reached Pasambangan where they studied the Islamic faith with Syeikh Datu Kahfi and Syeikh Nurjati, religious teachers of Arab origin. After two years of study, Walangsungsang established a settlement at Kebon Pesisir on the southern side of Amparan Jati hill near the shore, some 5 km east of Pasambangan. A calculation made by the Committee for the history of Cirebon determined that this establishment occurred on 1 *Sura* around AD 1445. Walangsungsang also built a place of worship named Tajug Jalagrahan, the oldest prayer house in Cirebon. Later, the settlement grew into a busy village and was visited and settled by people of various races, religions, languages, customs and means of livelihood. The village was then called Caruban which means the melting pot of various people.

The celebration of the New Year and the *Hari Jadi* of Cirebon is, however, significant only among the *kraton* (court) circle and, currently, the local Government. Among the *kraton* circle, as Siddique noted, the celebration is performed by the reading of *Babad Cirebon* (Cirebon Chronicle) at the *kraton* and a procession to the grave complex at Astana Gunung Sembung. For the local government, on the other hand, *Hari Jadi* is more like a civil festival than a religious one. Its celebration, which is officially organised by a committee specially set up for that purpose, takes a few weeks. Sports competitions and arts festivals, especially local arts such as *Tarling* opera, *wayang golek*, *topeng* dance and *serimpi*, are the most important parts of the program. It culminates at night when a ceremony and display is held for the competition and festival winners. On the same night there are also open stages in front of Kecamatan and other government offices where these entertainments are performed.

The sanctity of Muharram appears from the very name of the month in that, the Arabic word Muharram, exactly means "that which is made sacred" (derived from *haram*, meaning sacred). In addition, there is also a possibility that the name '*Asyura* is related to '*asyu-nura* (also Arabic) meaning those who have obtained divine light.²⁵ According to local belief, the day of '*Asyura*, which falls on the tenth of Muharram, recalls a number of important events. It traces the history of the great monotheistic traditions. On 10 Muharram the first apostle of God, Adam, was sent to earth; God gave His grace to Adam and Eve when

²⁵ Adnan, K.H.M. (1969), p. 12.

they sought repentance after being thrown out of paradise; Henoch (Idris) was endowed by God with a noble position; Noah and his disciples touched land safely with their ark; Abraham was saved without harm after being burned by the King Namrud of Babylon; Moses got revelation directly from God in the Sinai desert; Joseph was set free from jail and his name was cleared of the accusation of having raped Zulaikha, the then Egyptian King's wife. Yacob recovered from serious eye disease; Jonas came out safely from the belly of a sea monster (the giant *khut/nun* fish). The day of 'Asyura also coincides with the recovery of Job (Ayyub) from serious cholera; it is the reunion of Jacob and Joseph after separation for forty years; it is the birth day of Jesus and his Ascension to heaven; it is also the day when the Prophet Muhammad married Khadijah; it is the day of the creation of the heavens, the earth, the Pen (*Qalam*), and of Adam and Eve.²⁶

To commemorate so many important events the Cirebonese perform *slametan* or *sedekah*, which according to their belief is one form of *ibadat* (in the broader sense). They offer *bubur sura* or *bubur slabrak* to be distributed to neighbours and close kin. *Bubur sura* or *bubur slabrak* is a rice flour porridge with coconut milk containing various food-stuffs. The message behind this act is clear. The porridge (*bubur*) itself, which is white in colour, symbolises the day of 'Asyura, which is holy, whereas the various foodstuffs contained in the *bubur* symbolise the various events that occurred on the day they are celebrating. But who, when and where the *adat* of offering *bubur sura* in celebrating 'Asyura was began is unclear. Man Kasman (57 years), a batik maker, speculates that it was initiated by a *wali*.

While claiming that there is nothing wrong in having a *slametan* by offering *bubur sura*, even it is considered good because it is basically *sedekah*, and has become good *adat*, some fairly knowledgeable and devout individuals like Man Hawari (42 years) a thoughtful trader at Sumber Market, and others, suggested that the celebration of 'Asyura would be better if it were conducted by performing some devotional undertaking such as fasting, voluntary prayer, reciting special invocations (*du'a*) called *du'a* 'Asyura after sunset prayer, feeding orphans and giving other forms of *sedekah*. He said that according to his *Kyai* when he was in *Pesantren Leler* in Banyumas (Central Java), doing these things

²⁶ Cf: Asy-Syafi'i, Abdur-Rahman as-Safuri, (n.d.), *Nazhat al Majalis*, vol. 1, Beirut: Al-Maktaba as-Sa'baniya, p. 174. Among the Syi'ite-which seems to be less significant for people in Cirebon- the 'Asyura is the day for the commemoration of the death of Husein, son of 'Ali. The latter was the fourth Caliph, thus Husein was a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad). Husein was counted as the third *imam*. The first two *imams* are the Prophet Muhammad and Ali themselves. Husein was cruelly killed by Umayyad Caliph of Damascus at Karbela in A.H 61 (October 10, AD 680). The difference between the Sunni and Syi'ite tradition regarding 'Asyura is therefore, among the Sunni 'Asyura is joyous, whereas among the Syi'ite it is apprehensive.

on the day of 'Asyura is religiously meritorious.²⁷ *Slametan*, practiced by offering *bubur sura*, are still common in Trusmi. Pak Satira (38 years), a kerosene peddler, rarely does the prescribed prayers but he feels obliged to offer *bubur sura* to his neighbours and close kin because he thinks it is the easiest and most convenient way with which to express his obligation to remember God (*kanga isling Ningi Pyengana*).

Saparan

Saparan commemorates *Sapar* (**Safar**), the second month of the Javanese Islamic calendar. *Sapar* is locally known as the mating season for dogs, the locally considered unclean animal, and thus marriage is not recommended. Beside this, *Sapar* is believed to be the month in the year where frequent accidents, disasters and bad luck may occur (*wulan kang akeh blai*) especially on the last Wednesday of the month (*Rebo Wekasan*). It is not clear why or how this belief arose, but referring to the warning of some gnostics (**ahl al-Kashf**), Al-Dairaby declares that each year God reveals 350,000 accidents or disasters; most of which occur on the last Wednesday of *Sapar*. This makes the day the most precarious day of the year. A suggested attempt to avoid disaster is to perform a four-unit prayer, at each unit, after the *Fatiha*, the practice is to recite respectively Surah **al-Kautsar** (QS:108) 17 times at the first unit, **al-Ikhlās** (QS:112) five times at the second unit, **al-Falaq** (QS:113) once and **an-Nas** (QS:114) once respectively at the third and fourth unit and conclude with a special *du'a* of 'Asyura.²⁸

People take extra caution on this month by minimising long distant travel, dangerous work and sinful acts. Doing religiously good work such as helping others and giving *sedekah*, especially to orphans and widows, is highly recommended. In accordance with this, during the month of *Sapar* the Cirebonese have three peculiar popular traditions of commemoration: *Ngapem*, *Ngirab*, and *Rebo Wekasan*.

Ngapem refers to *apem*, baked or steamed cakes made of lightly fermented rice-flour. *Apem* are to be eaten with *kincah* (a dark brown liquid made of palm sugar and coconut milk). According to Man Syapi'i (62 years), an ex-farmer and trader, *ngapem*, a special feature for *slametan* on *Sapar*, is just like any other *slametan*. Along with its social function of maintaining brotherhood and community bonds, it has at least two other functions. The offering itself is religiously meritorious because it is one form of *sedekah*. The type of food, as in other *slametan*, contains a symbolic message. In this case, a pair of *apem* and *kincah* remind recipients, neighbours and close kin, to be cautious because it is *Sapar*, the month with many misfortunes. *Apem* symbolises the flesh or the

²⁷ For the scriptural bases (the hadith) and their explanations for the merits of doing these things, see: *Nazhat al Majalis*, vol. 1, pp. 173–175.

²⁸ Ad-Dairaby, S.A. (n.d.), p. 74.

body. When it is eaten it must be put into the *kincah* symbolising blood and thus reminds recipients of the possibility of the body falling into some misfortune.

Another informant said that *ngapem* is a relatively recent tradition initiated and spread from the court (*kraton*). Its root go back to the early decades of the 18th and 19th century Java when the Dutch attempted to suppress Islam and to spread Christianity. Muslims mostly failed in their resistance against the Dutch, the *kafir* (infidel). The failure of the Cirebonese revolt led by Bagus Serit and Bagus Rangin in 1818 is said to occur on Sapar. Because of military inferiority, the *kraton*, to keep functioning, had no choice but to use a double standard. While accepting negotiation and cooperation with the Dutch, it simultaneously spread enmity among the people to encourage them to oppose the Dutch. One means of doing this was to commemorate *Sapar*, the month of misery, by symbolising the Dutch as *apem* which must be crushed to bloodshed, *kincah*.

Because Sapar is a precarious month, a sudden death through accident or whatever is considered quite probable, especially on *Rebo Wekasan*. This is extremely unfortunate if it happens to someone who is in a sinful state. To anticipate this possibility and the coming of *Rebo Wekasan*, Sunan Kalijaga, who was believed to have stayed in Cirebon to learn Islam from Sunan Gunung Jati, carried out an extra bathing for purification with his disciples at the Drajat river in preparation for their religious devotion and repentance including *ratib* or *tahlil*.²⁹ This act was followed by others in subsequent years until finally it became *adat*. Until now, around *Rebo Wekasan* people go to Kalijaga to perform *ziarah* at the *petilasan* (a remnant of dwelling) of Sunan Kalijaga. After *ziarah*, those who wish can go up the river in decorated boats, which is a recent development, and bathe at the site where Sunan Kalijaga and his disciples were believed to have bathed. This *adat* is called *ngirab* meaning originally, 'shake something to remove the dirt on it.' In this case it probably means removal of one's sins, a symbolic act of repentance. Currently, there are some people who take this *adat* as having serious spiritual meaning, but for the majority it is just a cheerful picnic or a form of annual recreation to forget about the miserable month of *Sapar*.

The story of *Sapar* would be incomplete without touching upon the *Rebo Wekasan* which is its most crucial day. There is nothing special with the day except that, from the break up of night prayer (*Isya*) until dawn (*subuh*), youngsters, especially those who usually sleep in the *tajug* where they study the Qur'an (*ngaji*), split into groups of four to ten, and march from house to house chanting repeatedly in front of each door in chorus. Whenever they reach a house they chant: "*wur tawur nyi tawur, selamat dawa umur*", meaning "sow

²⁹ There is a *Desa* in Southern Cirebon called Kalijaga, where Sunan Kalijaga is believed to have stayed. The Drajat river passes this *desa*. Local people, until recently, relied heavily on this river for their water supply, especially for bathing and washing.

up Madam, may you be safe and have long life.”³⁰ The host then opens the door and, before giving them some money, asks: “Whose *santri* are you?” The group members answer by mentioning their Qur’anic teacher from whom they learn the Qur’an or, when they do not belong to any *tajug*, they answer: “Blok-an,” meaning “on a Block-basis,” and then mention the name of their hamlet. This means that the group is formed on a local basis, the hamlet where they live, rather than on a *tajug*. They do this mostly for fun taking advantage of the prevailing *adat*. The money they get is distributed among themselves and used for their own purposes, most of them say for “*jajan*” (buying snacks).

The story of the origin of this practice is probably more interesting than the *adat* itself. The practice is generally attributed to the legendary figure of Syeikh Siti Jenar also known as Syeikh Lemah Abang alias Syeikh Datuk Abdul Djalil alias Syeikh Jabaranta. Once, according to legend, he was a member of the council of *Wali Sanga* (Nine *Wali* or Saints). But later he was sentenced to death by the wali tribunal for being accused of teaching Sufi doctrine publicly, including to laymen who were really unprepared to receive it. This resulted in the laymen misunderstanding the real Sufi doctrine. They by-passed the *syare’at* (*syari’ah*), the prerequisite for taking a mystical path. His teaching therefore was thought by the wali council to be dangerous for the establishment of *syare’at* and the development of Islam as a whole. At a trial held at the Agung Mosque, it was said, Syeikh Lemah Abang could not deny this allegation, thence the death penalty was decreed and Sunan Kudus carried out the execution using Sunan Gunung Jati’s *keris* (dagger), *Kentanaga*. Syeikh was buried at Pemlaten, a grave complex in the southern city of Cirebon. After his death many of his followers, the *abangan* (followers of the teaching of Lemah Abang) felt a deep loss and emptiness.³¹ Sunan Kalijaga suggested and it was agreed by Sunan Gunung Jati that under the guise of miserable *Rebo Wekasan*, the *abangan* group were advised to wander from house to house praying for the safety and long life of the villagers; in return the villagers were also advised to provide them with alms. Year after year such a practice was performed not only by the followers of Lemah

³⁰ In Sundanese villages the word *nyai* (madam) is replaced by *ji*, which stands for *Haji*, a reference or title for those who have been to Mecca; it is used here as an honorary reference to the host(ess), irrespective of whether or not the host(ess) is *haji*.

³¹ One informant, who claimed that the term *abangan* refers to the followers of Syeikh Lemah Abang, explained that they (the *abangan*) do believe in one God and Muhammad as the apostle of God but are still reluctant to do religious duties for various reasons, mostly due to their ignorance about Islamic doctrine. They only do *slametan* because this is the easiest way to express their belief and sense of piety. Man Akmal (57 years) a trading commissioner (*palen*), a supposed *abangan*, did not deny such characterisation while advocating the principle of *padu bener bae* (just doing right). He said: “*Wong iku padu bener bae, rukun karo tangga, guru ratu wong tuwa karo kudu diormati; kanga apa sembayang jungkal-jungkel ari tindak lakune bli bener?*” (“The most important thing for an individual is committing good conduct, living in harmony with neighbours, respecting teachers, king (ruler) and one’s parents; what is daily prayer for, if the daily conduct is improper?”). In daily life, at least during my field-work, the term *abangan*, if known, was hardly heard. Man Akmal, identifies himself as a *wong bener* (rightful people), not as *abangan*.

Abang but also by the students at many *tajug* and other youngsters as well and, at last, became an *adat*.

The story of Syeikh Siti Jenar or Lemah Abang seems to be the most obscure of the many legends of Javanese *wali*. He is very popular but nothing is known about him except his heretical mysticism and his open spreading of it. An example of the mystical flavour of Lemah Abang's heresy is indicated in the episode of how the *wali* council called Lemah Abang to come to the *wali* court. This episode is fairly well known in Cirebon, and dominates the whole story. The following is a concise summary of the episode given by Siddique:

He was accused of publicly teaching a doctrine which could be summarised thusly: All that exists is a reflection of God, and because man exists, he is also a reflection of God. He was accused of heresy, and was invited to the *wali* council to explain his actions. He replied: "Syeikh Lemah Abang is not here, only God is here." The council sent another messenger to address himself to God, whereupon Syeikh Lemah Abang answered: "God is not here only Syeikh Lemah Abang is here." They then sent a messenger to ask for both God and Lemah Abang, and he had no choice but to follow them. At the meeting he failed to prove that his teachings had not led his pupils to false practices, like ignoring the five prayers, he was condemned to death and executed by Sunan Kudus

...³²

Beside these stories, it is interesting that along with the probable connection between his name (Lemah Abang) and the well known term *abangan*,³³ some other intriguing questions remain unresolved.

Based on *Pustaka Negara Kretabhumi*, one of the many Cirebonese Chronicles, T.D. Sudjana wrote an historical novelette about the political turmoil in Cirebon which happened preceding the execution of Lemah Abang. In his account, among other things, the army commander of the Kingdom of Cirebon, Adipati Carbon, son of Pangeran Cakrabuana (the founder of Cirebon), son of Prabu Siliwangi of Pajajaran, faced a serious dilemma having to choose between loyalty to his king and to his mystical teacher (*guru* or *Syeikh*) to whom he had performed *bai'at* (religious vow). While the king, his own cousin, Syarif Hidayatullah, had earnestly entrusted him with the security and welfare of the whole kingdom, the *Syeikh* (Lemah Abang), on the other hand, urged him to take power by overthrowing the ruler. To show that it was serious, Lemah Abang, on this

³² Siddique (1978), *Relics of the Past?* p.143. According to de Graaf and Pigeaud (1989), Sheik Lemah Abang was executed in the Demak Mosque. See their *Kerajaan-Kerajaan Islam di Jawa: Peralihan Dari Majapahit ke Mataram*, Jakarta: Grafiti Press, especially p. 262.

³³ The term *abangan* is established in literature by Clifford Geertz and became popular under his tri-cothomy thesis, "santri-priyayi-abangan". For detail, see: Geertz, C. (1976), *The Religion of Java*, Phoenix Edition: University of Chicago Press.

occasion, came to Cirebon Girang, where Adipati Carbon resided, with Kebo Kenanga, Lord of Pengging (Central Java), and his army. The reason advocated by Lemah Abang for overthrowing the ruler was appealing. Adipati Carbon's father, Pangeran Cakrabuana, who had established the Cirebon kingdom, had been at fault in giving the throne to Syarif, his nephew, rather than to his son, Adipati Carbon himself while, in fact, it was he who was the right heir of Cirebon and the great Pajajaran kingdom. In his puzzle, the Adipati performed a prayer and then **tawajuh** (meditation to recall his *Syeikh*). He saw, in his contemplation, the figure of his *Syeikh* smiling at him cynically, but then the figure grew smaller and smaller and finally, turned into a jasmine (*melati*) before the figure disappeared, leaving only the jasmine fragrance, which he could still smell even when he was completely awake. After meditation, he felt, his inclination to follow his *Syeikh's* instruction to rebel weaken. No sooner, had he decided what to do than his deputy, Ki Gedeng Cirebon Girang, brought him a message calling him to come immediately to the Agung Mosque where the *wali* council held an assembly. He went there immediately and found his *Syeikh* had already died. After burial he proposed a name for the site where his *Syeikh* was buried, "Pemlaten" or "Kemlaten", meaning the place of *melati* (jasmine), in commemoration of his sight of the *Syeikh* during his contemplation.³⁴

The reliability of this story as an historical fact, whose main source is *babad*, is open to question, but the story illustrates the possibilities of new interpretations of *Syeikh* Lemah Abang. It is widely believed that all *wali*, including *Syeikh* Lemah Abang, were Sufi but, unlike other *wali* who were Sunni, Lemah Abang was said to belong to the *Syi'ah Muntadzar* sect who hold 12 Imam as their legitimate leaders. He came to Java from Baghdad and held a doctrine that claims that the *Imam* should be the supreme political figure in the state. Beside, Lemah Abang is considered to have held the *wujudiyah* Sufi doctrine, the same doctrine held by Al-Hallaj.³⁵ In the *Babad Tanah Jawi* he is said to have won converts of a number of rulers and their subjects in Pengging, Tingkir, Ngerang and Butuh.³⁶

Muludan and Rajaban

M(a)uludan means celebrating *m(a)ulud* (from Arabic, **mawlid**, meaning birthday), the birth of the Prophet Muhammad on 12 **Rabi'al-Awwal** (*Mulud*), the third month of Javanese Islamic calendar. Although the Prophet is also

³⁴ See: Sudjana, T.D. (n.d.), *Kemelut di Bumi Pakungwati: Sebuah Novelette Sejarah Bersumber dari Naskah Negara Kretabhumi*, unpublished mimeograph, Cirebon: Seksi Kebudayaan, Kantor Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Kotamadya Cirebon.

³⁵ Al-Husayn b. Mansur Al-Hallaj (244/857-8-309/922) is a famous, indeed notorious, mystic whose utterances, actual or alleged, provoked much controversy both in his lifetime and later. He was cruelly executed in Baghdad for saying "I am the (Divine) Truth," although there must have been both religious and political motivations behind this execution (Netton, 1992, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam*, London: Curzon Press).

³⁶ See: *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff (1941), p.33.

believed to have died on the same date of his birth date, his death is not significant in this celebration. *Rajaban*, on the other hand, means celebrating the event which happened on *Rajab*, the *isra'-mi'raj* or the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad from the mosque of Al-Haram in Mecca to the mosque of Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, and then to seven heavens, which occurred when the Prophet was 51 years and 9 months old, on the night of 27 **Rajab** (*Rejep*), in the seventh month of Javanese Islamic calendar. Both months (*Mulud* and *Rejep*) are probably, the two most significant months in Cirebon after the Fasting month.

Like *Grebeg Mulud* or *Sekaten* at the courts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta in Central Java, Cirebon has its own *Grebeg*, called the *Panjang-Jimat* festival, held simultaneously at the three *kraton*, Kesepuhan, Kanoman and Keceribonan on the 12th of *Mulud* each year.³⁷ The festival, which attracts many people, from almost every stratum of Cirebonese society, has been described by Siddique who interprets it as a part of the machinery for the maintenance of the symbolic universe of Sunan Gunung Jati.³⁸

The festival consists of highly ritualised procedures pregnant with symbolic expressions. In the first place, it represents an expression of both solemnity and gaiety at the same time, due to the birth of the Apostle of God in this world. The focal point of the festival is a ceremony in the *Kraton*, followed by a carnival carrying the *panjang jimat* (long amulets), and other *pusaka* (heirlooms) from the Bangsal Agung Panembahan to the Langgar Agung at 9.00 p.m, and back to the Bangsal Agung Panembahan at 11.00 p.m. At the Langgar Agung, before returning to the Bangsal Agung, *aysraqalan* is held led by the *kraton* religious officials (*Penghulu Kraton*).³⁹ *Sega rasul* (literally means 'apostle rice,' a special rice cooked with turmeric and spices), is then served to those present. The crowd struggles eagerly to get a portion, even a small one, of this rice for its *barakah* (divine blessing).⁴⁰ The preparation for the whole procession begins on the 15th of Sura with the cleansing and painting of the *kraton* and the heirlooms (*pusaka*), done mainly by voluntary workers.⁴¹

The main item exposed at the carnival is the *panjang-jimat*, the main *pusaka*, large oval Chinese porcelain plates, with symmetrical decoration of *kalimat syahadat* (**Kalimah Syahadah**), written in ornate Arabic scripts, which are believed to have been brought by Sunan Gunung Jati himself. Concerning the festival, Pakuningrat S.H, the Sultan of Kesepuhan, in his speech on the ceremony

³⁷ The word *grebeg* is probably derived from Javanese *anggrubyug*, meaning to escort.

³⁸ See: Siddique (1978), especially pp. 108–148.

³⁹ *Asyraqalan* refers to the chanting of *asyraqal badr 'alaina*, the Arabic hymn exalting and praising the Prophet, written by Ahmad al-Barzanji, concluded by a *du'a*

⁴⁰ Some informants explained that the rice resembles *rahmat* (divine mercy). Islam was sent to mankind via Muhammad as divine mercy for the whole universe. Eagerness to get a portion of the rice thus resembles an eagerness on the part of the people to obtain divine mercy.

⁴¹ This cleansing itself, according to some informants, involves not only physical purification but also spiritual of the hearts of the *kraton* officials.

at the *kraton* main hall, Bangsal Prabayaksa, on September 10, 1992, explained among other things that the festival is nothing but a reminder to all. He said *panjang* means long or unceasing, *jimat* stands for *si (ji) kang diru (mat)*, the one that is solemnly preserved that is, the *Kalimat Syahadat* as it is written on the plates. The *Panjang-jimat* festival, thus, symbolises our concern for life-long and unceasing preservation of the *Kalimat Syahadat*, or the religion of Islam.

The carnival is basically an allegoric dramatisation of the momentous event when the Prophet was born. There are at least 19 important items at the carnival; one item follows the other and each is preceded by someone carrying lighted candles. The first is a man with a lit candle stick in his hand, who acts as a servant (*khadam*) walking to give light to the second item, two men who walk after him. One man carrying a spear, represents Abu Thalib, the Prophet's uncle, and the other, an older man, represents Abd al-Muthalib, the Prophet's grandfather. They are walking at night time to send for a midwife. Next comes a group of men bringing ornamental decorations called *manggaran*, *nagan*, and *jantungan* symbolising the honour of Abd al-Muthalib's personage. A woman with a brass bowl (*bokor*) containing coins comes next, symbolising the dignity of the midwife; after her is a woman, bringing a tray with a bottle of distilled rose fluid (*lenga mawar*) to symbolise amniotic fluid (*ketuban*). This fluid is placed preceding the dignified newly born baby who is represented by the Sultan himself.⁴² A tray containing *goyah* flower, paste and the powder of traditional herRebo Wekasan medicine held by a woman follows to symbolise the placenta. The *penghulu kraton* is seen acting as the one who cuts the umbilical cord. The core of the carnival is the exposition of *panjang jimat*, which comes to be the 12th item in the procession, like the 12 **Rabi'al-Awwal** or *Mulud*, the birth-day of the Prophet, whose mission is to propagate the *syahadah*. Each plate is cared for by two men with two escorts signifying a great concern with the *syahadah*; all of the carriers are *kaum* (care takers) of the Great Mosque, whose special duty is to be the guardians of the enactment of *syahadah*. The *panjang jimat* are seven in number signifying the *kalimah syahadah* is everyone's safe guide to pass the seven stages of the eschatological ladder (*martabat pitu*), one of the main doctrines of the Syattariyah order, the order traditionally maintained by the *kraton*.

After the *panjang jimat* come a succession of other items; two men carrying jars containing beer to resemble the after-birth blood, followed by another two, each carrying a tray with a bottle on it, containing another type of beer which symbolises phlegm. A *pendil* (rice-cooking pot) containing *sega-wuduk* (spiced rice cooked with coconut milk), is carried by a man to symbolise the suffering of the mother at giving birth. Next to the *pendil* comes a *tumpang* (rice-mount) with roasted chicken, called *sega jeneng* (the rice of naming) symbolising thanksgiving (*syukuran* or *slametan*) for the birth of the baby. This *slametan*, at

⁴² When unable, he authorises some one to take this position for him.

which the baby's name is given, is usually offered when the umbilical cord dries and is pulled off (*puput*).

The last three items at the carnival are first, eight *cepon* (huge bamboo baskets) signifying the eight attributes of the Prophet. Four of these attributes are *sidiq* (truthful), *amanah* (trustworthy), *tabligh* (conveying), *fathanah* (intelligent). All are the 'must attributes' (*sifat wajib*) attached to the Prophet. The other four are the negation of these attributes, the 'must not attributes' (*sifat mustahil*). They are *kidzib* (false hearted), *khianat* (betraying), *kitman* (corrupt), *baladah* (stupid). Each *cepon* is full of rice indicating prosperity and God's Grace for the whole world (*rahmatan lil-'alamin*). Next, come four *meron* or *tenong* (large round containers), representing mankind as created from the four elements, soil, water, air and fire. Another informant said they represent the four closest companions of the Prophets, the four Caliph, Abu Bakr, Omar, 'Utsman and 'Ali. Finally, there are four *dongdang*, also a type of large container, symbolising the spiritual elements of mankind consisting of Spirit (*ruh*), Words (*Kalam*), light (*Nur*) and witnesses (*Syuhud*) for the existence of God the greatest. Another informant said, they symbolise the four schools of Islam (*madzhab*): Maliki, Syafi'i, Hanafi and Hanbali.

Similar festive processions of smaller size and different style, mainly centred on the cleansing and exposition of *pusaka* to the public also occur at some *kramat* (shrines), such as Astana Gunung Jati on the 11th, at Panguragan on the 12th, at Tuk on the 17th and at Trusmi on the 25th of Mulud each year.

People in the villages also celebrate *mulud* in their own ways. The most common features are *marhabanan* (the recital of **marhaba** or 'welcome'), which is similar to *asyraqalan*, and *pengajian* (public speech). *Pengajian* range in intensity from the simplest and informal, involving only a small group and a local *kyai* sitting together at a *tajug* or a mosque, to a glaring festive and formal assembly, attracting thousands of spectators with a famous speaker.

Rajaban

Another important month after Mulud is Rajab, which is commemorated by means of *Rajaban*. In Cirebon, *Rajaban* mostly involves *pengajian* but unlike *muludan* whose main theme is the birth of the Prophet, the main theme of *rajaban* centres around the Ascension of the Prophet from Mecca to Jerusalem on which the Qur'an (S 17:1) says:

Glory to (Allah) who did take His servant for a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque (Masjid al-Haram, in Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (the mosque of al-Aqsa), whose precincts We did Bless, in order that We might show him some of Our signs: for He is the One Who hearth and seeth (all things).

Concerning the Ascension of Muhammad to heaven, Adnan mentions among other things a tradition transmitted by Al-Ghaiti as a scriptural basis, saying:

“And then he (the Prophet) was given (by God) means of Ascension to where the spirits of Adam's descendants go.”⁴³

While there is a disagreement among intellectuals on the nature of the Ascension, whether it involved physical or spiritual Ascension, the local belief definitely follows the traditionalist contention advocated in many *pengajian*, claiming that the Ascension involved the whole entity of Muhammad's human nature as a “servant” which therefore comprised both his spiritual and physical elements. They consider the phenomenon of Muhammad's Ascension as a catalytic test-case to determine whether or not a believer is sincere. An example of a sincere believer is Abu Bakr as-Shidq (the first Caliph) who accepted the story without reserve merely because the story came from the Prophet. Many others did not believe because it was technically impossible. What had happened during the prophesy, it is said, can also happen now. The phenomenon is, according to Pak Sa'id (53 years), an office clerk at Kecamatan Weru, unthinkable and thus, beyond human rationality. Sincere believers will accept it, whereas non-sincere may reject it. For those who believe in it regard the Ascension as the work of God, rather than the work of Muhammad. Nothing is impossible when God wishes it. Many proponents use the achievement of advanced space technology, which was unthinkable a few decades or centuries ago, yet has now become reality, as support for the acceptability of the Ascension. Traditional *pengajian*, on the other hand, taking the event for granted as a part of Islamic belief, recount a detailed story of the Ascension, including how the Prophet underwent a heart operation from Jibril prior to his Ascension, met with the previous prophets in the heavens during the journey and then went back to Mecca with a prescription from God for the Muslims to observe the five daily prayers. The name of the month *Rajab* (**Ra-Ja-B**) itself, which they claim as consisting of three Arabic letters *ra* [**R**], *jim* [**J**] and *ba* [**B**], substantiates the event. Each letter stands respectively for **R**-*asulullah* (the Messenger of Allah), **J**-*ibril* (Gabriel) and **B**-*uraq* (the vehicle for Ascension).

With respect to *asyraqalan* (the recital of *asyraqal badru 'alayna*) or *marhabanan* conducted mainly during the month of *Mulud* and *Rajab*, it may be requested by an individual who invites his neighbours to come to his house or *tajug* for that purpose, or by common agreement, it may be held at the *desa* mosque. In either case, the participants sit together on mats in rectangular formation. In their midst there is a jar containing pure water and a tray containing flowers and perfume. Some Arabic books, *Al-Barzanji* are placed on benches or pillows in neat cases. When they think that most expected participants are present, the

⁴³ Adnan, K.H.M. (1969), p. 27.

performance starts. There is a lack of formality in it although the solemnity is significant. Sometimes, men and women are simultaneously involved, but they are separated by a curtain. In most cases women have their own group and do it at different occasions. When it is about to start, incense is sometimes burned and the fragrance helps intensify the spiritual atmosphere.

A set of *Al-Fatiha* is recited whose merit is directed to the Prophet, his wives, his descendants, his companions, and his followers dead or alive. Then the leader, one who is well acquainted with *Al-Barzanji* and having a good chanting voice, takes the first recital of Arabic lyrics of twelve verses taken from *Al-Barzanji* or *Mawlid al-Diba 'i*. Each contains appeals to God to give the highest dignity to the Prophet, his ancestors and his descendants, and merit to his companions, his followers, participants in the gathering and all Muslims. The first verse reads as follows:

*Oh God [please] exalt Muhammad - oh God [please] exalt him and give him peace.*⁴⁴

This verse is repeated by others in chorus; the same verse is also chanted in response to the leader each time he finishes reciting each of the twelve verses. When this is over, they move to reciting the poetic narrative of the family background of the Prophet before he was born: of his parents, his ancestors, his clan and the situation of Mecca at that time. The recital is done by several people one after another in turn and when the recital comes to a verse which speaks of the eventual birth of the Prophet, all participants rise up, standing to show spontaneous respect, honour and joy, while chanting another verse in chorus:

*Allah exalts Muhammad, Allah exalts him and endowed him with peace.*⁴⁵

While standing solemnly, the leader chants the following verse and the others repeat:

*Welcome the light of the eyes, welcome grandfather of Husein,
Welcome and best regard, welcome the best propagator.*⁴⁶

This verse is repeated again and again by all participants in response to the leader each time he chants a verse. Sometimes a participant takes the initiative to change the melody, after shouting in Arabic: "O God, (please) exalt Muhammad," the other reply: "(Certainly) God exalts him and endows him with

⁴⁴ The text reads: 'Ya rabb salli 'ala Muhammad - Ya rabb salli 'alaih wa sallim.'

⁴⁵ The verse reads: *Salla-'llah 'ala Muhammad, salla'llah 'alaih wa sallam* (2x).

⁴⁶ It reads:

*Marhaba ya nur al-'ain, marhaba jadd Al-Husein,
Marhaba ahla wa sahla, marhaba ya khair al-da'i.*

peace.” Then he starts with further chants in a new melody. The first four verses of the lyrics translate as follow:

*O, Prophet peace be upon you, O, Apostle peace be upon you,
O, Beloved peace be upon you, Allah's exaltation be upon you.*

*Already arises the full moon upon us, thence [all other] lights are dimmed,
the most beautiful thing we have seen, is the sight of you oh the most cheerful
face⁴⁷*

No less than 22 verses are chanted in various melodies before they sit again to conclude the performance with a *du'a*. When the *du'a* is finished, some participants take some flowers and/or drink the water; foods are also served by the host. After eating and chatting they stand up asking permission to leave the house, and the host answers them with thanks. Some hosts provide *brekat* some others do not.⁴⁸

Ruwahan

Ruwahan commemorates *Ruwah*, the eighth month of Javanese calendar which coincides with Sya'ban, the eight month of the Islamic calendar. The Javanese *ruwah*, may be derived from Arabic *ruh* (pl. *arwah*), meaning spirit. According to popular belief, on the night of 15th, the mid of the *Ruwah* (*Nisfu Sya'ban*) the tree of life on whose leaves the names of the living are written is shaken. The names written on leaves that fall indicate the mortals who will die in the coming year.⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, a number of people use the day to commemorate the dead or to visit the graves.⁵⁰

Conforming to this tradition, a hadith transmitted by Tirmidzi states that on the night of *Nisfu* (mid of) *Sya'ban* God descends to the lowest heaven and calls the mortals in order to grant them forgiveness. An informant in Cirebon called this month *panen pangapura* (the harvest time of forgiveness) and thus, it is a good time for those who wish forgiveness. After sunset prayer of the 15th day of the month (*limalase ruwah*) or *Nisfu Sya'ban*, the devout will read the *Surat Yasin*

⁴⁷ The verses read:

*Ya Nabi salam 'alaik, ya Rasul salam 'alaik,
Ya Habib salam 'alaik, salawat Allah 'alaik.
Ashraq al-badr 'alaina, fakhtafat min-hu 'l budur, Mitsla husnik ma raayna, qatt ya wajh
al-surur.*

⁴⁸ The word *brekat* is derived from Arabic: *baraka* (pl. *barakat*); it refers to food given to the guests to be brought home).

⁴⁹ Cf: “Sya'ban”, in *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, and Ahmad Qodhi, A. (1992), *Nur Muhammad, Menyingkap Asal Usul Kejadian Makhluk (Tarjamah Daqooiqul Akhbar)*, Bandung: Al-Husaini, p. 33.

⁵⁰ Traditions to visit a grave is embedded in a *hadith* transmitted by Muslim, Abu Dawud and Tirmidzi from Abi Huraira, stating that the Prophet recommended visiting graves (not only on Sya'ban) as it may remind the visitor about life after death. See for example: Rasyid, S. (1988), *Fiqh Islam*, Bandung: Masa Baru, pp. 182–183.

(Sura 36 of the Holy Qur'an) three times and fast on the day. For most village people, *Ruwah* is known as the month for *dedonga* (to utter *du'a*) and *ngunjung* (literally meaning 'to visit'). Led by the *Kuwu* (Desa Chief) and elders, they visit the graves of their ancestors, especially the founder of the *desa* called the *Ki Gede* or *Ki Buyut* if the founder was a man or *Nyi Gede* or *Nyi Buyut* if the founder was a woman. Sometimes this procession turns into a carnival.

In Kalitengah, the villagers held *ngunjung* by making a marching visit. They took a six kilometre route from the *desa* to the Astana Gunung Jati grave complex, where the founder of the *desa*, Nyi Gede Kalitengah, is buried, just outside the east wall of Sunan Gunung Jati's shrine. The one-hour march was attended by approximately 300 people, men and women of various ages, led by the *kuwu* and local elders. The focal point is not the march itself but the *dedonga*. Some people carried foods partly to be offered to the key bearer (*jurukunci*) of the Astana grave complex, partly for their own consumption after the break up of *dedonga*. At Astana they first visited Sunan Gunung Jati's grave, sat on the floor in front of the third door of the nine-door shrine and prayed there by reciting *tahlil*. The door is normally closed but on this occasion, as a service to Kalitengah people, it is opened. No one is allowed to step beyond this limit, they only look at the ascending pathway to Sunan Gunung Jati's tomb.

After this, they went to Nyi Gede Kalitengah also to perform, *tahlil*, the same thing as they did in front of Sunan Gunung Jati's tomb. One of the elders, Pak Suganda (57 years), an army veteran, explained that the purpose of the *ngunjung* is to express thankfulness to Nyi Gede, who first came to Kalitengah and settled there. At this *ngunjung* ceremony they ask God to pardon all her sins and give her a good life in the hereafter. Beside this, they also believe that by carrying out this action, if God so wishes, it is not only Nyi Gede who will obtain merit but also those who pray for her and inhabit the *desa* because what they do is a good thing.

The reason for choosing *Ruwah* for carrying out this ritual, according Pak Suganda, is unclear except that it has become their *adat*, and they feel there is no reason to change or abolish it, as "there is nothing wrong with such an *adat*." I saw there were also groups from other *desa* who did the same thing and explained its purpose in about the same way. As an expression of their respect some groups even choose this event as a good moment to renovate their Ki/Nyi Gede's shrine. Another informant said that taking the middle of *Ruwah* to visit the graves has its root in various traditions of the Prophet. One of these traditions is based on a story telling that once, on *Nisfu Sya'ban*, the Prophet secretly went to Baqi' (a grave complex in Medina) and prayed there so intensely with his tears flowing. Ali, his companion and son-in-law, followed him secretly and watched from a distance what the Prophet did. Seeing that the Prophet cried, Ali came and asked why. The Prophet explained that it was the night of

forgiveness of sin (*lailat al-bara'ah*) and he (the Prophet) was praying for forgiveness from God for his ancestors and believers who might have sins. This indicates also that Islam, in its own way, has a form of ancestor cult.

Syawalan

Along with the traditions surrounding the fasting month (*Ramadhan*) and *riaya*, there is *Syawalan* or *Raya Syawal* for celebrating *Syawal* (**Syawwal**), the tenth month of Javanese Islamic calendar. For the pious, beginning on the day after the end of Ramadan, they fast for six more days. *Raya Syawal*, the 8th day of *Syawal* marks the end of the fast. The celebration is made by going to the Astana Grave complex for a *ziarah* (visit). On this occasion all the nine doors along the ascending pathway to Sunan Gunung Jati's tomb are opened to give way for the three Sultans of Kesepuhan, Kanoman and Kecirebonan and their families, who make a visit to Sunan Gunung Jati's tomb. The visit is made after attending a ceremony at each of the *kraton*. They come there still in their formal *kraton* clothing. Upon their return from *ziarah* to the *kraton*, a crowd struggle to shake hands with them. Sultan Kanoman and his family, in particular, hold a *slametan* attended by Astana custodians. Siddique (1978:136) claims that through this procession and visitation, the sultans' position at the apex of the religious hierarchy among the *kraton* milieu is reaffirmed.

Among the mass of the populace who come and go there on that occasion, flocking around the burial complexes, at the square, at the mosque, at *Gunung Jati*, on the street, numbering as many as 150,000 people, most people pay no attention to the Sultans and their consorts. Along with *dedonga*, they would rather take the occasion as a recreational opportunity to enjoy the gathering and to see the beautiful panorama toward the sea from the top of *Gunung Jati*. It is true that the presence of Sultans is a special attraction for many people, but more importantly the two *lawang pungkur* (back doors) at the left and right wings of the grave complex, leading to the graves of Ki or Nyi Gede of various *desa* are also opened and thus they can ascend and descend around the grave complex at the top of *Gunung Sembung* from one *lawang pungkur* at the east wing to another one at the west. They therefore come to Astana on *Raya Syawal* for *dedonga* at three tombs: at Sunan Gunung Jati's, at the Ki or Nyi Gede's who are buried at *Gunung Sembung*, and then across the main road up to the hill of *Gunung Jati*, at *Syeikh Datuk Kahfi*'s. *Syeikh Datuk Kahfi* is known as the first Islamic teacher who came from Arabia to Cirebon in the early 15th century and resided at *Gunung Jati* where *Rarasantang*, Sunan Gunung Jati's mother, and her elder brother *Walangsungsang*, learned Islam. Upon his death the *Syeikh* was also buried there. Another occasion like *Syawalan* also occurs on the 11th of *Mulud* and the 10th of *Raya Agung*.

CELEBRATION AND COMMEMORATION OF THE LIFE CYCLE: SLAMETAN

Another type of *adat* that prevails in Cirebon is the celebration or commemoration of the stages of the life cycle. Like other forms of celebration, most life-cycle celebrations transform their main feature into a *slametan*. As a part of *adat* among Muslims, *slametan* is a wide spread practice among both devout and non-devout, high ranked and common people, rich and poor. Its essence involves performing *sedekah* (**sadaqa**) and *Donga* or *do'a* (**du'a**) on certain important occasions. Thus it is essentially Islamic; its roots can be found directly or indirectly in the formal Scriptures, the Qur'an and the Hadith.⁵¹ In fact, Islam recommends continuous **sadaqa** and **du'a** to its followers even while facing or doing something of minor importance or even a technical activity. Removing an obstacle in, or while using, a path-way is a form of *sadaqa*. Doing anything, including going to the toilet, has its own *du'a*.

The nature and pattern of Slametan

It seems clear that the Cirebonese share with other societies in the belief that life evolves through stages: before birth, birth and after birth, death and after death; each stage also has sub-stages. Turner (1964), who worked on van Gennep's "The Rites of Passage", describes the importance of the liminal period because at that period the neophytes, in terms of social structure, are either removed or invisible.⁵² In Cirebon, the movement between stages is also considered important because it is either critical or precarious. People hope that moving from one stage to another goes safely and smoothly without trouble. Unfortunately, they can do very little, because in most parts, it is beyond the control of human endeavour. To hope something will go safely or to celebrate something that has already gone safely and peacefully, people perform *slametan*. The word *slametan* is borrowed from Arabic **salamah** (pl. **salamat**) meaning peace or safety. Other words akin to *slametan* and in many cases used interchangeably are *kajatan*, *syukuran* or *tasyakuran*, and *sedekahan*, each of which is also borrowed from Arabic, respectively, from the word **hajah** (pl. **hajjat**) meaning a need, **syukr** meaning thanking, **tasyakur** meaning to thank, and **sadaqah** meaning to give alms or something to others.

In Cirebon, the term *kajatan*, originally meaning to have *kajat* (a need, or an expectation) is used to refer to a performance similar to *slametan*, but it also has an important or cheerful connotation; more specifically it refers to the

⁵¹ An anthropologist who brought the *slametan* issue to the literature is Clifford Geertz (1960) in *The Religion of Java*. His strong preoccupation with Hindu-Buddhist-Animistic-syncretic thinking about Javanese Islam, however, together with his lack of essential knowledge of Islam, distorts the issue considerably. Along with claiming that *slametan* are the main business of *abangan*, he implies *slametan* are the reflection of a Hindu-Buddhist-Animistic syncretism of Javanese Islam.

⁵² Turner, V.W. (1964), "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites De Passage", in Lessa, W.A. and Vogt, E.Z. (1979), pp. 234–243.

expectation of well being after a ceremonial occasion such as a boy's circumcision or a marriage.⁵³ *Syukur* or *tasyakuran*, on the other hand, means a celebration, large or small, for expressing thankfulness (to God) or gratitude because something (not limited to stages of the life cycle) has gone through safely and peacefully, such as a release from a difficulty including recovery from a serious sickness, success in doing something important, having something beneficial happened, or obtaining good luck. Whereas *sedekahan* means to perform *sedekah*, it has about the same meaning and connotation as *slametan*. In many context the words *slametan*, *kajatan*, *syukuran* and *sedekahan* are interchangeable. Their focal point is expecting other people to pray (to God) for the well being of the individual concerned; in return the individual provides foods either to be eaten where the *slametan* is held, to be taken home by the people who prayed, or both. Thus, following Marcel Mauss, there is a sense of reciprocity in this performance.⁵⁴ That is, the gift (prayer or *du'a*) and the return gift, the food; or, it may also go in the opposite direction with the foods being the gift and the prayer being the return gift. The first occurs when a host, referred to as the lord (*majikan*), who expects safety (*sokibul kajat*) invites people of other households, mostly neighbours and kin, to come and sit together at his house to pray or to participate in invocations led by a leader, after which food is served, either with or without *brekat*. For those who can not attend the gathering for some acceptable reason, their food or *brekat* is sent to their homes.

The second occurs when a *sokibul kajat* makes no invitation; rather, he sends an assistant to bring the food (*sedekah* or alms) directly to the recipients (neighbours and kin), at their homes. The structure and arrangement of the food bears a symbolic message of the purpose implied and the type of *slametan* being requested and implicitly say what the sender means. If he is ignorant, the recipient will ask the carrier: "*Seng sapa?*" (Who sends this?) and/or "*Apa-apa-an kiyenkih?*" (What is he/she doing by this?), to which the carrier will give the necessary answer on the sender's behalf. To this, the recipient may or may not utter a prayer, but this is of less importance because the nature of sending the food is *sedekah*. The religious function of *sedekah*, for those who believe in it, is either to repel, drive away or prevent disaster and difficulty, or to express thankfulness to God. The scriptural basis for the first function is found in a hadith that states: "Giving alms repels disaster" (*as-shadaqah tadfa' al-bala'*).⁵⁵ Whereas the latter is implied in the Qur'an saying: "If you thank (for what I giveth), I (shall) give you more" (*la in syakartum la azidannakum*). Either

⁵³ The Cirebonese, as do other Javanese, pronounce k for h, such as kaji for haji, Imam Kambali for Imam Hambali.

⁵⁴ Mauss, M. (1980), *The Gift*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. In this work the importance of gift exchange and the structures of reciprocity in social organisation are stressed.

⁵⁵ My informant said that he certainly found the hadith in *Khazinat al-Asrar*, once when he was in pesantren, but he could not give further details of the book because he did not have it.

type of *slametan* therefore is essentially Islamic and has a significant scriptural basis.

The Occasions for Slametan

In reference to the stages of the life cycle people usually perform *slametan* (or *syukuran*, *kajatan*, *sedekahan*) on the following occasions:

Pregnancy

In Cirebon there are normally three occasions on which *slametan* in relation to pregnancy (*wetengan*) occurs: the fourth, the seventh and the ninth month. In Cirebon to be pregnant is called *meteng* or *ngandeg*. The *hadith* transmitted by Bukhari and Muslim from Abi 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Mas'ud states that the early process of pregnancy (*nyidam*) turns the ovum into a thick liquid, then into a clot of blood, then into a clot of flesh. Each stage, according to the *hadith*, takes 40 days for maturation. The time after the third of the 40 day periods, that is, after 120 days or four months is considered critical because at this stage, a very important event occurs. It is the time when God breaths a soul into the flesh and animates it, and designates its fate and death. The Cirebonese call this event, "entering the *alam arwah*, the fourth stage."⁵⁶ During these early stages of pregnancy the mother is often characterised as having a strong desire to eat sour things, especially young fruits; as showing strange behaviour, and having strange feelings, anxieties or wishes.⁵⁷ To commemorate this event, and at the same time for hoping the well being of both the pregnant mother and the potential child, a *slametan* called *ngupati* is performed. The *slametan* is usually signified by the presence of *kupat* at the *brekat*.⁵⁸ The *ku-pat* is said to resemble *papat* meaning four, signifying that the *slametan* is either because the fourth month of pregnancy has arrived or because the flesh in the womb has reached the fourth stage of creation.

The next *slametan* held during pregnancy is performed at the seventh month; it is called *ngrujaki*, *mitui* or *pepitu*, from the word *pitu* meaning seven (in Central Java: *tingkeban*). The number '7' is held to be very important so it is highly recommended that the start of a *mitui* ceremony be at 7.00 a.m. on the 7th or 17th or 27th day of the month. It is believed that at this stage the foetus in the

⁵⁶ The preceding three stages of the total seven stages conception of creation are called *alam ahadiyahat*, *alam wahdat* and *alam wahidiyat*. The other three stages are *alam mitsal*, *alam ajsam* and *alam insan kamil*. See: Chapter Three.

⁵⁷ One informant told me that when his wife was about three months pregnant, one night she told him that she wanted to eat/drink young coconut (*dugan*). She refused either to have it from a shop or delaying her desire for the next day and urged instead her husband to climb and pick one by himself from his neighbour's tree that very night. A quarrel occurred between him and his wife until finally, after being mediated by his neighbour, he climbs the coconut tree and picked one for his wife, a task which he had never done before.

⁵⁸ *Kupat* (Ind: *ketupat*) is boiled rice wrapped in a woven container of young coconut leaves in a square shape.

womb has already grown into a full human being, a young baby. The traditionalists describe it as entering the seventh stage, the world of the perfect human being (*alam insan kamil*), the world wherein the baby, as a human, as well as having a complete bodily structure, is also completely pure and, free from sin of any sort. This state of purity and sinlessness becomes an exemplary condition to which the pious direct their spiritual endeavours.

The *mitui* ceremony involves a more elaborate procedure than that of *ngupati*. Its central point, however, centres on bathing the pregnant mother to symbolise the intention of a complete purification. The water to bath with, which is taken from seven different wells, is put in a big jar or a large tank with seven species of flowers and other herbal substances in it. The mother sits on a chair, dressed only in a new batik garment (*tapi* or *kain panjang*) of the nicest kind which covers her from above her breasts down to her legs. During the bathing this garment is replaced seven times with other new ones. A young yellow hybrid coconut, carved with Qur'anic verses and sometimes also with favourite *wayang* figures along with some coins inserted here and there, is put on her lap just below her pregnant abdomen. The young coconut resembles the child who is hopefully to be either handsome or attractive, whose personage is idealised by the *wayang* figure, living happily with abundance signified by the inserted coins, and with certainty of being safe in the hereafter as the carved Qur'anic verses would imply. Placed on the ground beside her, is a special ceramic clay jar called *buyung* containing water and flower, including *manggar* (coconut flowers), and valuables, especially gold and jewellery, symbols of dignity and prosperity that await the birth of the child.

The bathing is initiated by an old woman known to be wise and pious who, by using a water dipper, pours the water from the tank onto the mother's head. Preferably the old woman should also have been successful in raising children who have become well to do. After this old woman, follows the husband of the pregnant woman, and then the others, mostly older men and women who pour the water for bath. This bathing ceremony ceases when all the elders have had their turn and the garment has been changed seven times. After the bathing, the gold and jewellery in the clay jar beside her are taken out; her husband takes the jar to a strategic place where many people usually pass and he smashes the jar on the ground. Seeing the jar broken to smithereens children and youngsters applaud with a yell: "hooray!" My informant explained that the breaking of the jar in such a place represents a wish for an easy delivery for the mother and wide social recognition for the child.

When her husband returns home, her mother or an appointed woman performs *curakan*, throwing coins mixed with rice and flowers towards a crowd of boys and girls each of whom eagerly struggles to get the sown money more than his/her fellows. The *curakan* expresses an expectation that the child should not

be stingy and should care for others, especially the needy. After *curakan* an ordinary *slametan* is held in the house, either by reciting *tahlil* or *marhabanan*. The *brekat* served in the *slametan* is signified mainly by the presence of *rujak* (fruits salad) among the dishes, from which *ngrujaki*, meaning to treat with *rujak*, the name of the ceremony, is derived. *Rujak*, my informant said, serves as a reminder to both the expectant parents and society. *Rujak* is composed of various fruits and spices, with a great variety of flavours: sour, sweet, hot, salty, bitter and many other tastes. If it is properly mixed, it becomes delicious. People who eat *rujak* will taste all these things. In its allegorical meaning, as soon as a woman bears a child and becomes a mother, and as soon as a man becomes a father, they are considered to be fully functional as social beings. They have various tasks and responsibilities to carry out for their own household and for the society; they are at the same time parents, guardians, teachers, feeders, protectors and members of the society. They will eventually experience a great variety of emotions and feelings as indicated by the *rujak*; sadness, gladness, happiness, grief, dissent, annoyance, cheerfulness, pleasure, displeasure. All have potential for causing problems; yet, if handled wisely and generously, they can entail real happiness. It is the hope for wisdom and generosity, delicacy and happiness which is implied in the *ngrujaki* ceremony.

Although a baby at the age of seven months in the womb has become a complete human being, it still needs a process of maturation which normally takes about two months and then, at nine months, it is born. Giving birth, especially for the first time, is a precarious event for a woman. Both her own and her child's safety are at stake. To expect an easy, smooth, less painful and safe birthing process, in the ninth month of pregnancy people pray to God by means of a *slametan* called *ngloloji*. *Ngoloji* involves offering *bubur lolos*, to be distributed among neighbours and kin.⁵⁹ *Ngoloji* belongs to the second type of *slametan* already described. There is no invitation, no gathering and no formal *du'a* in the house, only hope and desire in the heart accompanying the offering or *sedekah* in the form of *bubur lolos*.

Birth and after birth

Although more and more people prefer to give birth in hospital, or in a special clinic (*Klinik Bersalin*), or send for a trained nurse (*bidan*) for help, there are many others who do not do so for a certain reason or because they are unable to afford the cost. When pregnancy is around seven months, a midwife (*dukun bayi*) is contacted. After that she makes periodic visits to the pregnant woman, her new client, and makes the necessary diagnosis and treatment (mostly by

⁵⁹ *Bubur lolos* is sweetened rice-flour porridge, heavily oiled with boiled coconut milk, wrapped cylindrically in banana leaves with both ends are left open. When it is put vertically in standing position, the porridge is instantly loosened and fall down. This clearly symbolises an expectation of an easy and instant child bearing. The word *ngloloji* itself is derived from *lolos*, meaning to slip off easily.

massage) to set the baby into the proper position. Her crucial role comes when the birth takes place.⁶⁰ After this eventful occasion a small *slametan*, or more properly a thanksgiving called *bancakan* is offered.⁶¹ Rice and other foods are put together in flat containers (*cekedong*) made of banana leaves, to be distributed to young boys and girls from neighbouring households as if announcing that there is a new junior child among them. This is the first *slametan* offered on the occasion of a new born child. The second *slametan* is *puputan*, performed when the navel cord falls off (*puput*). This *slametan* involves offering *sega bugana* (tasty rice cooked together with coconut and chicken), to be distributed among the neighbours. The word *bugana*, derived from corrupted Arabic *bi-ghina* meaning with abundance, is said to represent the hope that God will nourish the child with abundance. For some, *puputan* is also used as an occasion for naming the child.

The next *slametan* is in relation to the "hair-shaving." The first "hair-shaving" is when the child is 40 days old; on this occasion, red and white rice porridge (*bubur abang-putih*) is offered in the morning (around 10.00 a.m) as *bancakan*. In the evening, especially for well to do parents, a formal *slametan* called *kekah* (from Arabic 'aqiqah), a purely Islamic offering explicitly established by the Prophet for naming and shaving, is performed. On this occasion one goat or sheep for a female and two for a male baby are slaughtered. The ceremony takes the form of *marhabanan*, with precisely the same things as performed in *muludan*, as are used to commemorate the birth of the Prophet. When the participants chant *marhaba* (while standing), the father takes the baby amidst the participants, followed by an assistant who brings a tray with flowers, perfume and a pair of scissors. First, the most distinguished participant performs a symbolic shaving by cutting some of the baby's hair, then the father moves with the baby slowly to the other participants one by one, each of whom takes a turn in the symbolic shaving. In the meantime his assistant gives a flower and sprays the perfume over the one who has just taken his/her turn to cut the hair. When everyone has taken his turn the baby is carried back to the bedroom. In practice the real "hair-shaving" is done the next morning. The hair is weighed, then its weight is equated with the weight of gold whose current price becomes an amount of money that the parents, on behalf of the baby, should offer to the needy.

Further "hair-shaving" occurs at intervals when needed. When the time comes, *bubur lemu*, *bubur kule* and *sega aking* is respectively offered as *bancakan* at the second, the third and the fourth of hair-shaving.⁶² Finally, a *slametan* called

⁶⁰ This is an event which goes nearly the same thing as Wessing describes in reference to the Sundanese. See: Wessing, R. (1978). *Cosmology and Social Behaviour in West Javanese Settlements*, Ohio University: Centre for International Studies, South East Asian Series No.47.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 127–130.

⁶² *Bubur lemu* is rice porridge mixed with palm sugar liquid (*kincah*) and coconut milk, *bubur kule* is sweetened rice porridge, and *sega aking* is second cooked rice. It comes from uneaten cooked rice. When

ngundun lemah is held to celebrate the child touching the ground for the first time. This is a fairly large *slametan*, carried out only by the well to do, usually in the morning. Its special features appears at the *brekat* where a ladder shaped stick with an artificial flower on the top is planted on piled rice. In addition, in the midst of the dishes there are a number of toys representing either womanly or manly work tools, such as an artificial bolo knife (*golok-golokan*), scissors, needle, comb, and mirror, depending on whether the child is female or male. These toy tools signify the hope that the child will grow into a diligent and handy worker and the mirror signifies the hope that the child will be an independent and introspective individual.

Circumcision

Although Shrieke, B. (1921, 1922), as quoted by Wessing (1978:132), speculate that circumcision in Java already existed before Islam came, on Java the practice of male circumcision, or the removal of the foreskin, is an indication of the triumph of Islam over the long established earlier religious traditions. Its current prevalence and the idea that circumcision is a sign of being a Muslim is clear evidence of this triumph. It is true that circumcision is not mentioned in the Qur'an and is observed not only by Muslims but also by other communities as well, especially Jewish and non-Muslim communities in eastern Indonesia, but the fact is that on Java and other Muslim worlds, circumcision has become a sign or hall-mark of Islamic practice. In Islam, its roots are embedded in the hadith that states that Abraham, the great prophet, was circumcised when he was 80 years old.⁶³ The Cirebonese literary traditions even say that circumcision was initially practiced by Adam as a sacrifice, to express gratitude as soon as God accepted his repentance. In addition, as the traditions imply, Adam did this as an outward expression that he would always keep his bodily organs clean. This outward expression is to show that his inward repentance was sincere and everlasting.

Almost everyone in Cirebon, as is the case in Java, considers circumcision (*sunat*) as a requirement since in this way a Javanese becomes a Muslim, regardless of whether or not he will later fulfil the standards of piety. Another refined Javanese word (*krama*) for circumcision is *nyelamaken* meaning to Islamise. Thus, for a Javanese, one could stay single or always be poor throughout life, but to stay uncircumcised is unthinkable.⁶⁴ A boy of circumcision age will be deeply embarrassed when his playmates tease him for being a Chinese because he has not been circumcised. It is a common expression in Cirebon that a boy who has

it is roasted or fried it is called *cengkaruk*, when it is recooked or steamed it becomes *sega aking* to be eaten with dishes, like ordinary rice. I was unable to discover the symbolic meaning of these *bancakan*, except that *bubur lemu*, meaning *ambir lemu*, expresses the hope that the child will grow healthily, whereas *sega aking* resembles the hope that the child will be nourished with abundance surplus.

⁶³ See: "Circumcision" in *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*.

⁶⁴ Wessing, R. (1978), p. 132.

no courage or is reluctant to be circumcised will later become a Chinese (*dadi Cina*). The notion of being a Chinese does not refer to being ethnically, racially or socially Chinese; rather, it is a form of mockery in that, to be a Chinese is to be a non-Muslim and this, in their religious terms, is quite an embarrassment despite the fact that materially most Chinese are rich.⁶⁵ As a result of this peer group pressure it is often the boy himself rather than the parents who proposes his circumcision. Parents may propose a circumcision but in most cases the decision is made when the boy himself shows willingness or even asks his parents. Usually, it comes when he is between seven and ten years old. The ceremony may range from a simple or just safe one (*padu slamet bae*), to a large and elaborate celebration, depending on the parents' material well being and social standing.

Once a decision is taken the necessary preparation is made. The first thing is to set the date, which is usually decided by discussion between the boy's parents, grandparents, or other elderly close kin. Consideration may be based on *pitungan*, common sense or convenience. Next, talks will be held concerning how elaborate the ceremony should be, the approximate costs, the number of people to be invited or involved, and other technical details. When everything is decided the house is cleaned, a practitioner either a physician, a paramedic, or a specialist (*dukun sunat*) is contacted. A few days before the due date, close kin and relatives come with contributions of raw materials such as rice, sugar, beans, coconuts and chickens. A festive atmosphere around the house begins to develop two days before the celebration while overall preparations continue.

One day before the circumcision, early in the afternoon, the child is bathed and dressed in either fancy aristocratic or *santri* clothes. If both are to be worn, one set is worn in the afternoon and the other in the evening. The boy is treated like a king or a groom called the *penganten sunat* (circumcision groom). Led by an elder, he is put on an ornamented horseback or a *becak* to visit and put flowers (*ngembang*) on the graves of his parents' closest deceased kin. On this occasion, on the way to and from the grave complex, he is publicly paraded with a festival manner, usually accompanied by drums (*genjring*) or other musical performance, *barong sae* dance or the like, to attract more on-lookers along the way. Participants are mostly boys and girls especially his playmates, peers, and kin.

Most circumcisions are held either in the evening after *ngembang* or in the morning around 7.00 a.m of the next day. At either time the boy is first bathed, ceremonially dressed and taken to the site for circumcision. Some people prefer going to a physician or a paramedic to circumcise their children, either for reliability or for prestige; others prefer a *dukun* for both reliability and cost. In

⁶⁵ Certainly there are many Chinese, now and in the past, who are Muslims. On Java however, most Chinese are non-Muslims. In Cirebon there are also a few of Chinese Muslims, including Yoe Keng, a conglomerate who has a large *Majelis Ta'lim* (Center for public learning). The Chinese Muslims are called *Cina selam* and considered as exceptions.

Kalitengah, Pak Surur's son was circumcised by a *dukun* who was paid Rp. 15,000.00 (approximately A\$. 12.00) for the operation. The process took just a few minutes, and within four days the wound healed and the boy was able to wear pants. Pak Jaelani's two sons were circumcised in hospital for Rp.25,000.00 each (about A\$ 20.00) plus the additional cost for a car rented to go to the hospital; the wound took two weeks to heal.

Traditionally, if the circumciser is a *dukun*, the operation is done in the yard of the house. The boy is put on his father's or an authorised individual's lap. The *dukun* squats down facing them, teaches the boy the proclamation of faith, utters a prayer and circumcises the boy. If the circumciser is a medical doctor or a paramedic, the boy is taken by car to the operation room, lies down on a mattress, is circumcised and taken back to the house. After being circumcised, the boy is laid down on a mattress in the front room. His friends and peers come to congratulate him with presents, so do the adults who come and give him some money while saying: "Congratulations, you are called a real male" (*Slamet ya, sira wis lanang bener*).

The evening after *ngembang* is the real celebration, the peak of the circumcision feast at which, for those who can afford it, there is some sort of entertainment such as an orchestra or *wayang* performance. Special guests, mostly men, come along that evening. They are welcomed and led to sit on chairs to enjoy the entertainment, if any, and are served with foods. When a guest asks permission to leave for home, while shaking hands for fare-well, he passes a named envelope containing some money as his contribution to the host who is holding the *kajatan*. Women guests, on the other hand, mostly come for *bebuwuh* or *kondangan* in the afternoon, pass their contributions to the hostess; in return, unlike their male counterparts, they are provided with a small *brekat*. An ordinary *brekat* is served at the *slametan* held the next morning to conclude the celebration. All guests at the *slametan* are men and are specially invited to recite prayers led by an *imam* who is usually the most prominent local *kyai*. After finishing reciting prayers, either *marhaba* or *tahlil*, they are served with food along with the *brekat* which is specially provided to be taken home. After the *slametan* the celebration of the circumcision is completed.

Marriage

Although a girl is also circumcised, usually as an infant, her circumcision does not have ceremonial significance, probably because it is largely symbolic. It is her marriage which is of important ceremonial significance. The intensity of the ceremony is at least comparable with a boy's circumcision.

There is no clear limitation on the age at which one is allowed to marry but there are certain restrictions concerning whom one can marry. Older people say that the minimum age of *akil-balig*, legal responsibility, is after a girl's first

menstruation (around twelve) and after a boy's first ejaculation during dreaming (around fifteen years old). Currently, a girl rarely marries before seventeen, whereas a boy will marry after being able to produce enough cash (*wis bisa menggawe*) and be potentially independent. A sign of this potency is when he stops bothering his parents for money for his own basic expenses, although he still lives and has meals with his parents. A clearer sign is when he occasionally gives his parents, especially his mother, a present of money.

As in other parts of Java, the first marriage in Cirebon is basically arranged by parents, although today, unless the parents have a very strong argument, the boy's voice is mostly heard. Parents usually, directly or indirectly, keep a close watch on whom their children fancy and they will show their agreement or disagreement. In accord with Islamic marriage law marriage among siblings, including half siblings and one's breast siblings (*sedulur sesusu*), and relatives across the generational lines, are prohibited.

The first step in a marriage arrangement is *nakokaken* or an inquiry about the current status of the girl. The boy's parents or their authorised agents come to the girl's parents asking formally whether the girl is available and whether there would be any objection if they take the girl to be their in-law. The degree of formality in the procedure depends on how acquainted the parties are; the more acquainted the less formal is the procedure. However, compared with other Javanese (Geertz, 1976:53–54) or Sundanese (Wessing, 1978:141–142) the Cirebonese seem to be more direct and to have less metaphorical expressions in dealing with this matter. In most cases a set of preliminary and informal talks is carried out by a mediator, usually a middle aged man or woman, called *jomblang* who goes to and fro on behalf of both sides.⁶⁶

When an agreement is reached the *nakokaken* process becomes more straightforward and it is only a sort of formality as the real decision is already known. This leads to the next step called *nglamar* (formal asking) which is taken a few days later. Although basically *nglamar* means to ask for, in practice, in Cirebon, its meaning has turned into a declaration that the boy and the girl are formally engaged (*bakalan*). *Lamaran* and engagement may be very simple involving only two or three people coming to the girl's parents, or it may be elaborate involving a large number of people, depending on the social standing of both sides. Its focal point is the presentation of a gift from the prospective groom to the prospective bride which ties them to a commitment to marry. The tying-gift (*penetep*) can either be jewellery, usually a ring, money, or both put in decorated boxes, accompanied by other things especially food; all are presented

⁶⁶ Rejection from the girl's parent is expressed rather directly but subtly; the words may be: "We are very glad to hear that proposal, but the girl is still too young" or "still wants to stay untied" or "refused to think about marriage." Whatever the answer the boy's parent will fully understand what it does really mean.

on trays. Except among some urban dwellers, in Cirebon, a ring is only provided for and worn by the girl and thus, the so called *tukar cincin* (exchange of rings) ceremony to signify the engagement rarely occurs because their *syari'ah* discourages men from wearing gold.⁶⁷

After the engagement, both sides must still meet to discuss the marriage date and other related matters, especially when these things have not been decided at the *nglamar*. When everything is agreed upon, the next step is the marriage contract (*kawinan*). To celebrate the completion of this contract, a wedding party or ceremony is held, first in the bride's family's house called *munggah* (in Central Java, *kepanggih* or *temon*) and, a few days later, in the groom's family's house called *ngundu mantu*. It is this celebration, whose intensity ranges from very simple (*padu slamet bae*) to the most elaborate (*gedean*, meaning a big feast). The simplest form involves inviting neighbours, close relatives and selected friends, to come and be served with food. The most elaborate procession is an enactment of court marriage traditions.

The current Indonesian Marriage Law (No. 1/1974 Part-I, article 2) states that a marriage contract is valid only when the couple has passed through the religious ceremony which, in fact, is a long established practice. The government records the occurrence and gives the necessary advice and service to ease the procedure. For Muslims, especially in Cirebon, the marriage contract is usually concluded at the girl's house; it can take a day or more before the wedding or be on the same day just a few hours before the wedding ceremony. From his household, the groom and his group leave for the bride's family house. They are welcomed and led to sit on carpets or mats on the floor at the front room of the bride's house or in a nearby *tajug* where the contract will be concluded and where elders and distinguished persons of the bride's family, usually local *kyai*, who will witness the contract or '*akad nikah*, are present.

Along with the marrying couple the Islamic law necessitates the presence of a *wali* (legally responsible guardian according to Islamic law) and two witnesses. At the due time, an official of the Ministry of Religion at the Kecamatan level (*naib*, literally meaning substitute) assisted by a Desa official called *PPN* (*Pegawai Pencatat Nikah*, the desa official who is in charge of recording marriages) comes and inspects the required documents for the marriage registry. When everything is correct he calls the groom to sit closely facing him. He also calls the bride and asks her whether the marriage accords with her own will; if so, she is required to say verbally that she will marry the groom, and pronounces the declaration of faith (*syahadat*). Then the *naib* asks the *wali* whether he (the *wali*) himself

⁶⁷ If, for one and other reasons, the engagement is ruined and the marriage is cancelled, especially when the cancellation comes from the bride's side, the gift (the jewellery or/and money, but not the food) are returned to the groom. Often to show or ensure her family's respectable standing the gift is also returned even though the cancellation comes from the groom.

would like to administer the procedures of the contract (*akad nikah*) or trust it to him (the *naib*). A distinguished *kyai* usually prefers to perform the ceremony by himself whereas most ordinary people prefers the *naib* to do it. The *akad nikah* consists of the *ijab* and *kabul*, shortened into *ijab-kabul*. *Ijab* is the utterance of the *wali*, or the *naib* on behalf of the *wali*, stating that he marries the bride to the groom; the words may be like this: "Brother so and so (he mentions the name of the groom), I marry the girl (or the woman) named so and so (he mentions the name of the bride) to you with the marriage gift (*mas kawin*) consisting of such and such (he mentions the amount, volume and value of the gift), paid in cash (or debt). *Kabul*, on the other hand, is the groom's response, either in Arabic or the local language to the *ijab*, saying that he accepts the marriage of the bride to him with the marriage gift as stated by the *wali*. In local Cirebonese language it may be: "*Trima kaula nikahe or kawine si Anu* (the name of the bride) *kalian mas kawin kang kesebat wau,*" (I accept marrying so and so with the marriage gift as stated). The witnesses observe the groom's utterance and proclaim it adequate, thus, making the marriage valid. After *ijab kabul*, the *ta'lik talak* (a vow entitling the wife to divorce from the husband in case of his mistreatment), is uttered by the *naib* and the groom repeats word by word. The procedure is concluded with a prayer for the well being of the new couple and their marriage. The prayer is led by someone, usually a *kyai* or the *naib*. Then the groom kisses the *wali's* hands, shakes the hands of those who are present and, finally, food is served. When the wedding party is not held immediately, the groom and his party go back to their home until the time when a group, sent by the bride's family, come to the groom's house to fetch (*mapag*) the groom and bring him and his group to the bride's house where the wedding ceremony is held. After that the groom stays in the bride's family until a group sent by his family come to fetch the new married couple (*penganten*), for another similar celebration (*ngundu mantu*). The couple stay with the groom's family for *ngundu mantu*, then they return to the bride's family and stay there for an undetermined period. It is common to find a new family with two or three children living with the bride's parent's household.

The purpose of the wedding ceremony is to express both joy and thankfulness as well as the expectation of well being. One purpose is the display of the newly married bride and groom to the public proclaiming that their relationship is lawful. After 4.00 p.m, dressed in either traditional court or European style wedding clothes prepared by *dukun paras* (wedding stylist), the couple are seated on a double seated chair in the fully decorated front room of the house. After giving their gifts, guests, mostly the bride's and groom's friends, come to offer congratulations. With a short break around sunset this exposition continues until late. On the evening of the wedding day, well to do parents sponsor an entertainment group such as an orchestra, *wayang*, *tarling opera* or *sandiwara* (theatric play). In this case, the guests, mostly the parent's guests, are seated on

chairs set under a decorated tent built in the front yard. While enjoying the performance they are served with food. Upon leaving, the guests pass an envelope containing money to the host while they are shaking hands (*salam tempel*), as occurs at a boy's circumcision. The money is their contribution to the host who is holding the ceremony. Each contribution is carefully recorded and will be repaid (as a returned gift) at least at the same value sometime later when the contributor holds a similar occasion.

A *slametan*, is held the next morning around 8.00 a.m., The invited guests consist of neighbouring household heads, relatives, elders and distinguished *kyai*. Wearing *sarung*, shirt and *topong* (cap), they sit on mats on the floor in a rectangular formation facing foods and dishes in the front room of the house where the bride and the groom were displayed the afternoon and evening before. Other guests sit on chairs, with one line facing the other, separated by tables, on which *brekat*, food and dishes are also laid. On several occasions I saw no less than 60 or 80 people at the gathering. When the time comes and there are no more guests to arrive, without any formal speech, the host or the authorised person requests the appointed *kyai* to begin the proceedings with either *tahlil* or *marhaba* concluding with a *du'a*. On one occasion, only the *du'a* was recited, after which the host requested the guests to eat by saying: "*Mangga dikresakaken mawon sawontene*" ("Please have what is provided"). The guests start eating, while talking together. When they have eaten they then ask permission from the host to leave the gathering. They shake the host's hand while bringing with them the *brekat*, that is the basket(s) containing the food specially provided to be taken home.

Variations occur in procedures before the bride and the groom are seated. There are rituals such as *siraman* (bathing), *kerikan* (shaving eyebrows or other parts of facial hair), *tuggak jati leluhur* (visits to ancestors' graves), *sungkem* (prostration on the parents' lap), *nugel lawe* (cutting threads), *ngidek endog* (breaking an egg with the foot) and *sawer* (chants of advice). These rituals, which are really enactments of royal traditions, may or may not be included in a wedding ceremony, depending on individual preference and social standing. The *akad nikah* or *ijab kabul*, the religious procedure which legitimates the relationship of the couple, the actual act of the marriage contract, is the core of the marriage process among Muslims, whether they are devout or only statistical Muslims. Without it there is no marriage; other sections of ritual, before and after *akad nikah* or *ijab kabul* such as *lamaran*, *ta'liq thalaq*, prayer, various forms of celebration and wedding party, elaborate or simple, including *slametan*, large or small, are secondary rituals which can be left out without jeopardising the validity of the marriage. All these belong to *adat*.⁶⁸ Islam recommends such a

⁶⁸ Some anthropologists dealing with Indonesian Muslims, especially on Java, fail to understand fully the function of each element in the marriage procedures. A clear example of this concerns the *ijab-kabul*,

celebration although the way of the celebration is not specified and thus, provides room for local *adat*.⁶⁹

It is interesting however, to ask, why most people, the Javanese Muslims in particular, tend to make the marriage celebration important, elaborate, and in fact, costly. One answer may be drawn from Pak Mardjuki:

For Muslims, the union of husband and wife is sacred or holy. Unlike eating and drinking which end up in producing dirty residue, the husband-wife relationship is to produce descendants. As a noble undertaking, generating descendants should not be done at any time and anywhere at will. A newly married couple are the ones who will start such a sacred and noble thing, producing descendants and, thus, the parents should make all possible efforts to create an atmosphere where the new couple feels honourable and happy. This is to signify an expectation of good, honourable and happy descendants. As the most honourable and happiest individuals known on earth are a king and queen who are just, wise and thankful to God, the bride and the groom are also supposed to be treated like such a queen and king.⁷⁰

Death Rituals

Eickelmann may be right in stating that deaths and funeral ceremonies in their essence show the most consistent features throughout the Muslim world, more so than the other rites of passage.⁷¹

the most essential element in Islamic marriage in any Muslim society. Bewildered by elaborate marriage procedures among the Sundanese, Wessing (1978:146), misunderstands and uses the term *ijab-kabul* to refer to a person -without even specifying who and what he/she (*ijab kabul*) really is- rather than to a part of the process. Geertz, on the other hand, does worse. He describes the so called "*idjab*" procedure (p. 56) but nothing in his descriptions belongs to *ijab*. Further, he falls into his own *abangan-santri-priyayi* trichotomy and imposes clear-cut religious differences among them; one of which is his exposition, as if *santri* do not think celebration important or *abangan* think celebration is much more important than *ijab kabul* itself. In other words, for the *abangan*, following Geertz, marriage is valid even without *akad nikah*, provided a party with elaborate ceremony is performed while in fact, be it among *abangan*, *santri* or *priyayi*, there is no marriage and there will be no wedding party of any kind without *akad nikah* or *ijab kabul*. Neither is there a marriage only by *ijab* (without *kabul*); the latter, *kabul*, is one thing that Geertz missed.

⁶⁹ In a *hadith*, narrated by Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet, addressing Abd al-Rahman, said: "Celebrate your wedding, even by having only a lamb." For those who are invited to a wedding are required, by another *hadith* narrated by the same persons (Bukhari and Muslim), to come. See for example, Rasyid, S. (1988), *Fiqh Islam*, Bandung: Sinar Baru, pp. 368-369.

⁷⁰ Interview (19-5-1992): "Munggu wong Islam, kumpule wong laki-rabi iku mulya lan suci, sabab bli kaya mangan lan nginum kang dadie kotoran, hubungan laki-rabi iku dadine nekakaken turunan. Krana nekakaken turunan iku barang mulya lan suci, dadi ya bli kena sembarangan, kapan bae lan Ningi endi bae nglakonane. Penganten anyar iku wong kang arep ngawiti barang mulya lan suci, yaiku nekakaken turunan; dadi ya kudu dibahagiaaken lan dimuliaaken sebisa-bisane wong tuwa, maksude kanga nglambangaken cita-cita yen turunan kang arep teka iku supaya bagus, mulya lan bahagiya. Krana wong kang dianggep paling mulya lan bahagiya Ningi dunya iku ratu lan raja kang adil wicaksana sarta gelem syukuran Ningi Pyengana, penganten anyar uga baguse kudu digawe cara ratu lan raja kang mengkonon."

⁷¹ See: "Rites of Passage: Muslim Rites," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*.

In Cirebon, as in other parts of Java, when someone is seriously ill, neighbours, friends and relatives feel obliged to see and cheer the ailing person (*tetilik*, meaning to have a visit), usually bringing something (*gegawan*) the ailing person likes to eat, especially fruit. When the illness is thought about to bring a death, the Testimony of Faith is whispered in the ailing person's ear and he is expected to repeat it (*nyebut*). His/her bed and lying position is adjusted so that the head is at the east and the feet at the west enabling the face to turn to Mecca. The Qur'an is also continuously recited especially Surah Yasin (QS. 36), to ensure that the person, if he dies, would die in a fully religious atmosphere. At the point of death the eyes are closed, the jaw is bound with the binding going over the top of the head so that the mouth is also closed. The arms are put over the lower chest, the right palm over the left in a position as in prayer and the whole body is covered with a sheet (*tapi* or *kain panjang*). The *lebe* (desa religious official) is sent for and the relatives and neighbours are informed.

When a Muslim dies the *syari'ah* requires the living to bathe the corpse, wrap it with white clothes in a certain manner, pray for it, bring it to and bury it in a Muslims burial complex. Not surprisingly, when someone hears that a person has died he feels that he should come to the dead person's house; women, in particular, bring a bowl or container covered with handkerchief. It is filled with rice and some money conveyed to the dead person's family as a contribution for the funeral. This visit is called *nglayat*. Along with *nglayat* people work together to care and bury the corpse; this working together is called *rerewang*. The funeral, if possible, is carried out quickly on the same day the death occurs. When the death occurs late in the afternoon the burial is postponed until the next day but the caring of the corpse is done early in the evening keeping the corpse over night ready for burial.

A divan for bathing the corpse is put near the well where a tankful of water containing herbs and flowers is ready. The corpse is laid on the divan, pillowed on three sections of a banana tree trunk at the nape, waist and legs. The bathing, during which the corpse's genitals are never let exposed, is led by a specialist or *lebe*, involving the dead person's close relatives, especially the older children. After the bathing is finished the corpse is taken and put on mats in the front room of the house, the head is at north and the feet south. All bodily orifices are closed with cotton and the whole body is perfumed, embalmed with herbs and wrapped in seamless clothes of white sheets and tied in around its feet, waist and top of the head. A litter is placed along the west-wall of the house onto which the corpse is placed. A long garment is spread to cover the litter; flowers in strings are put across on the litter to honour the dead, with the ends hanging loose on both sides. A funeral prayer (*salat jenazah*) is performed over the corpse together led by either the *lebe* or, most commonly, a local *kyai*, followed by a short speech on behalf of the dead person's family requesting people to forgive the deceased. If the deceased had some debt, the debtor is requested to contact

the family for repayment. Then, accompanied by people chanting the confession of faiths, the corpse, shaded with an umbrella, is carried to the grave yard where a grave has been dug and is ready for the burial. Three people jump into the grave, the corpse is lifted from the litter and passed on to the three people standing in the grave who, after the call for prayer (*adzan*) is recited, put the corpse on its right side in the smaller hole in the grave facing the west. The head is on the north and the feet on the south; the tie of the shroud is loosened and the face is exposed so that the cheek touches the ground. Planks are laid to cover and protect the dead body from the dirt that is pushed into the grave raising the grave mound about 30 centimetres above the ground. Two wooden poles as grave markers are erected, one in the north, about the chest, another one in the south about the knees of the buried body. When all is completed, *talkin* and *tahlil* are performed.⁷² Concluding with a *du'a* for the well being of the deceased and the survivor family, the burial comes to an end after which all the mourners return to their homes or jobs.

In the evening after burial people gather at the dead person's family's house (*ta'ziah*) to cheer the surviving family and pray for them and for the deceased's well being. They recite the Qur'an, especially Surah 36 (Yasin), and then *tahlil*. On the third day after the death (*nelung dina*), food is served in a *slametan*. The *ta'ziah* proceeds for seven nights and on the seventh night (*mitung dina*), food is again served along with *brekat*. This *slametan*, in which *tahlil* is performed, is again held on the 40th day (*matang puluh*), 100th day (*nyatus*), first anniversary (*mendak pisan*), second anniversary (*mendak pindo*) and finally, 1000th day (*nyewu* or *mendak ping telu*) or third anniversary, with the last *slametan*, marked by the erection of a brick tomb with grave stones over the grave.⁷³ Some informants relate the practice of the commemorative *slametan* to the decaying process of the dead body before it finally dissolves altogether into the soil. In normal conditions, it proceeds through seven stages; the first stage is three days after burial when the corpse is believed to swell. The second stage is at the seventh

⁷² *Talkin* is addressed to the deceased to explain what will be going on in the grave soon after the last mourner has left and what the deceased should do or say when the two angels come to examine him/her. *Tahlil* on the other hand, (literally means saying "there is no God but Allah), refers to a complex prayer formula. It starts from a set recital of the opening of the Qur'an (*Fatiha*), merits of which is conveyed to a wide range of deceased persons. The first *Fatiha* is conveyed to the Prophet, his companions, his wives, descendants and ancestors. The second is conveyed to all God's prophets and messengers, the angels, the martyrs, scholars, leaders, teachers and the distinguished figures especially 'Abd al Qadir al Jilani and other saints. The merit of the third *Fatiha* is conveyed to parents and ancestors, all deceased Muslims male and female, all believers, male and female especially the one for whom the present *tahlil* is performed. The *tahlil* itself consists of the recital of some selected surah or verses of the Holy Qur'an, exaltation of God and the Prophet, *dzikr* (recollection that there is no God but Allah), begging forgiveness, well-being and safety, concluding with a *du'a*.

⁷³ Geertz (1976:72) identifies this last *slametan* as *kekah*, which my numerous informants of Central and East Javanese natives denied. *Kekah* (from Arabic '*aqiqah*'), among the Javanese, is similar to *slapanan*, a *slametan* for shaving and naming the newly born baby. At *kekah* a goat or a sheep, rather than a fowl, as Geertz points out, is slaughtered when the baby is female; when it is male two goats or sheep are slaughtered. (See also: "Birth Ritual", earlier in this Chapter).

day when the swelling reaches its culmination and explodes. After that the flesh dissolves and begins to decay. After forty days (third stage) the decaying process of the flesh is accompanied by a slow but sure movement of the body. The head becomes erect, as do the knees while on the 100th day (fourth stage) the decaying body turns from a lying to sitting position. The process goes on until the feet move backward and the head forward. In one year's time (fifth stage), the head reaches the knees. In two years time (sixth stage), when the flesh has completely disappeared the feet reach under the bottom and the head comes to the knees until finally, in three years time or 1000 days (seventh stage), all the bones are gathered together before finally dissolving gradually into the soil. The gathering together of the bones in the dissolving process, especially the movement of the head, is believed to repeat, in the reverse direction, the growing process of a baby (also in seven stages) when it was in the mother's womb. According to local traditions of eschatology rooted in Sufi doctrine (Syattariyah), this dissolving process has mystical significance. Each stage deserves concern and it is for that reason the *slametan* are performed.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The mystical significance of this process, which is basically of the Sufi tradition, see: Simuh (1988), especially pp 255–269. In fact, “Wirid Hidayat Jati” is akin to “Ngelmu Sejati Cirebon” and “Tharekat Syatariyah” held by Cirebon Kraton circle. For details see: Sulendraningrat (1978, 1980, 1982), Simuh (1988), Kartapraja (1978). However, Kartapraja (himself is a Modernist), wrongly associates this “ngelmu” with Sheikh Lemah Abang and accused it as a deviation from Islam.

Plate 10: Pagersari-kraton on "Muludan" ceremony prior to the "Panjang Jimat" procession.



Plate 11: Kraton religious officials on "Muludan" ceremony prior to the "Panjang Jimat" procession.



Plate 12: A group of circumcision grooms.



Plate 13: A circumcision groom on becak returns from "ngembang" at his elders' graves.



Plate 14: A circumcision ceremony.



Plate 15: A circumcision groom on display.



Plate 16: A carnival to fetch the groom for "mungah" ("marriage ceremony").



Plate 17: Seated: The bride, the groom and the Penghulu at a marriage contract.



Plate 18: A seven month pregnant woman is bathed at "Ngrujaki" ceremony.



Plate 19: Water with flowers, and a young yellow hybrid coconut crafted with Qur'anic verses and coin inserted used at the "Ngrujaki" ceremony.



Plate 20: The bathed pregnant woman at "Ngrujaki" ceremony.



Plate 21: Chanting "Marhaba" to honour the pregnant woman.

