

# Chapter 6: Reformist Islam and Supernatural Beings

To the reformist villagers in Kolojonggo, attempts to confine Islamic teaching to religious life are not acceptable, since the division between the religious and non-religious is meaningless in Islam. Every facet of life should be directed at actualising what is commanded to human beings by Allah. In order to appreciate how this idea has been put into practice in Kolojonggo, the preceding chapters have examined the effort of the reformist villagers to Islamise every aspect of their life. In Chapter IV, their struggle to adopt Islamic teachings as working principles in everyday social and private life was discussed. In Chapter V, we have seen their endeavour to impose new contextual meanings on *kendhuri* and to incorporate new elements into life-cycle ritual to make a new Islamic tradition. In the same vein, this chapter will deal with belief in supernatural beings, a belief which was deeply embedded in life, constituting one of the core elements of the traditional syncretic worldview (Geertz, 1976; Koentjaraningrat, 1985a; Supatmo, 1943). The focus of this chapter will be put on the fate of traditional supernatural beings and their spokespersons, *dhukun*, in a situation where reformist Islam has gradually become a major religious tenet in village life, and on the emergence of new ways to use supernatural power as alternatives to the traditional ways. For this purpose, a brief summary of the previous situation connected to belief in supernatural beings will be presented first.

## 6.1. Previous Situation of Belief in Supernatural Beings<sup>1</sup>

Various kinds of supernatural beings were thought to live side by side with villagers in rural Java. These can be classified into three in terms of their origin: Allah and souls of the dead prophets and holy men from Islam, gods and goddesses from Hinduism; souls of the dead and spirits residing in various places, probably of local origin. Villagers' attitude to each category of supernatural beings seems to have been slightly different, as was reflected in the terminology

<sup>1</sup> Two points need to be mentioned about this section. First, of a variety of traditional beliefs and practices related to supernatural beings, only limited materials are presented here, which are pertinent to further discussion in the next sections. In this sense, the picture that I present is selective. Second, the materials on which this section is based were collected from villagers who were alive at the time of my field research. Although they were older than sixty and retained much of their previous mode of thought, it is not plausible to say that they have not been influenced at all by the changing society. However, as their ideas were in parallel with those described by other scholars in the 1950s (Geertz, 1976; Jay, 1969; Koentjaraningrat, 1985a; Supatmo, 1943), they were considered to be 'old fashioned' (*kuna*) by other villagers and they were the only group of villagers who were accessible for this research, the method of mine to adopt their ideas as a baseline to understand the previous situation might be justified, even if partially. The number of villagers that I interviewed for this section was eleven. All of them were male and they were regarded as *dhukun* (for more about this concept, see below) by others. Of these eleven, two were from Kolojonggo, seven were from other hamlets in Sumber and the remaining two were from neighbouring *kelurahan*.

used to designate them. The titles for kings or high officials, such as *gusti*, *kanjeng* and *sunan* were applied to Islamic supernatural beings while the kinship terms such as *eyang*, *kyai*, *nyai* or *mbah* were used for others (Koentjaraningrat, 1985b:289). However, this distinction was unlikely to mean that a superior status was bestowed on Islamic supernatural beings. They were not compared with each other and villagers never bothered to think about a power relation, for example, between Allah and *dhanyang* (guardian spirits) (Supatmo, 1943:4). In this respect, the supernatural world was a loosely connected confederation of supernatural beings, where a clearly defined hierarchy was not elaborated.

Sharing the same living space with villagers<sup>2</sup>, these supernatural beings were supposed to have partial responsibility for human affairs. They were thought to cause volcanic eruptions, floods, drought, eclipses, disease, poverty, fortune and other happenings (Supatmo, 1943:4-11). In this way, they provided part of a meaningful framework to interpret the world for those who believed in them. As Geertz says, they were 'the triumph of culture over nature, human and non human' (1976:28). However, this did not mean that Javanese villagers lacked a capability to analyse natural forces or were not careful to see the immediate cause and effect of certain events. Rather, the tendency of Javanese villagers to pursue deeper explanations lying beyond the perceivable relation between cause and effect allowed supernatural beings to be included as a part of an explanatory scheme. If one person's house was damaged by fire or by a falling tree while that of his neighbour was not, the difference should be accounted for. If one person's stall was full of customers whereas neighbouring stalls were not, if one person's rice field was attacked by mice whereas others were not, if one person was infected by a contagious disease while others in the same house were not, explanations should be sought in order to rationalise the uneven results of certain phenomena. The mode of explanation seeking after deeper meanings beyond the perceivable cause and effect is well expressed in a story told by a villager regarding his previous experience of a fire:

One of the tactics of the Dutch troops during the war of independence was to burn down all houses in order to sweep away the guerrillas and to destroy their infrastructure. .... It actually happened in this village. Since most of the houses were made from sugarcane leaves and wood, the fire spread rapidly. ... When the fire approached my house, however, it died down suddenly. As there were many trees in the yard, it was a real surprise to me. Another fire came, but it also disappeared, a situation which was repeated several times. ... It was only when I came of age that I understood the reason. My father told me this was due to the *pager*

<sup>2</sup> Trees, houses, wells, paddy fields, stones, rivers, swamps, forests, mountains, oceans and other natural objects were thought to be the places where supernatural beings resided.

*omah* (supernatural protection) which my grandfather had made surrounding the house and the *pusaka* (heirloom) which he possessed.

As this case shows, supernatural beings were available to give answers to the questions, which careful observation of certain phenomena could not provide. They transformed contingency into inevitability for those who were not satisfied with the explanation, 'by accident', alone.

As villagers had rules and tactics to live with their fellow human beings, they had knowledge and rules to deal with supernatural beings. This was called *ilmu* or *ngelmu*.<sup>3</sup> *Ilmu* was used to communicate with supernatural beings, to prevent their vicious intervention, if any, and to make use of their power. Every villager had some sort of *ilmu* which was passed on verbally. However, more powerful *ilmu* could be acquired either by accident<sup>4</sup>, by inheritance, by achievement or by all of these means. Among these, achievement was the most common way. Although a person had a biological tie with someone known for his<sup>5</sup> high standard of *ilmu*, he had to make his own efforts to develop what he inherited. Otherwise, the efficacy of inherited *ilmu* was thought to be lost.

The best and in some sense, the only, way to acquire *ilmu* by achievement was to practise asceticism (*tapa*) such as fasting, not sleeping, not speaking, avoiding specific foods, suppressing the desire to breathe, enduring physical pains and so on. These exercises were believed to make the ascetic's inner self clean, which was a necessary condition for *ilmu* to enter his body. Among these various methods of asceticism, the fast (*pasa*) was regarded as the most basic. Only when the ascetic was accustomed to the fast, would he add other methods to his repertoire, for example, he might keep walking or immersing himself in cold water while practising the fast. Due to its importance, complex rules and regulations of carrying out the fast were developed.<sup>6</sup>

Generally, the villagers who decided to pursue *ilmu* sought assistance from others known for their high standard of *ilmu*, although independent pursuit without a teacher (*guru*) was not unknown. They visited their *guru* on a regular

<sup>3</sup> The term *ngelmu* is the association of *ilmu* and *ng-* which acts as an active verbal prefix, emphasising the practical side of *ilmu* rather than the knowledge for the sake of knowledge (Weiss, 1977:264). Even if *ngelmu* is grammatically a verb, it was also used as a noun (Supatmo, 1943:14).

<sup>4</sup> The acquisition of *ilmu* by accident happened when certain spirit entered the body of human beings. Compared with *ilmu* obtained from asceticism, it was thought to be more powerful but temporary (Supatmo, 1943:17; Geertz, 1976:99-103). When the state of possession ceased, the possessed was thought to lose his or her *ilmu*. For a recent description about a possessed *dhukun*, see Keeler (1987:119-124).

<sup>5</sup> As almost all of those who pursued *ilmu* and all the interviewees whose explanation this section is dependent on were male, the pronoun 'his' or 'him' rather than 'her' will be used.

<sup>6</sup> Different rules of restricting foods and of fixing the places, the beginning and closing date and time, the length and magical spells make each fast different. Some of the examples of the fast are: *pasa ngebleng* (all kind of food are prohibited); *pasa mutih* (rice and pure water without salt and sugar are permitted); *pasa ngrowot* (only vegetables and cassava are permitted); *pasa ngasrep* (cold foods and drinks are permitted); *pasa ngluweng* (complete fasting under the ground); and *pasa patigeni* (complete fasting in a dark room).

basis and learned methods of ascetic practice (*lelakon*)<sup>7</sup>, taboos connected to *lelakon* (*pantangan*)<sup>8</sup>, magical spells (*mel*)<sup>9</sup> and a system of numerological divination (*petungan* or counting)<sup>10</sup>. Their visits decreased rapidly when they were dissatisfied with the *guru* or got tired of their slow progress. It was at this stage that they tried to find another *guru* who was likely to give a different dimension of *ilmu*. This process of seeking a *guru* went on and on until they finally met someone who suited them or they stopped the quest, satisfied with what they had already attained.

In this traditional way of learning, the *guru* did not show all his repertoire to his pupils at one time as the teachers in modern educational system do by giving out a curriculum at the outset of study. Nor did he have any systematic way of teaching what he knew to his pupils. As the pupils did not know exactly what their *guru* possessed, the *ilmu* that the pupils asked of their teacher was none other than that directly related to their interests. They did not and could not give priority to *ilmu* in which they had no interest.

According to village elders, when they were young, most male villagers pursued *ilmu* at some stage of their life. However, not all of them continued their quest to an advanced stage. Only a few could keep their interest and proceed further with it. One of the important factors in maintaining their interest was indirect support from others. As one person kept pursuing *ilmu*, his fame would spread little by little until it eventually attracted others who were in need of his assistance. They came to his place to learn *ilmu*, to recover from disease, to discover lost items, to track down a thief, to increase their wealth, to enhance

<sup>7</sup> *Lelakon* or *lakon* means every kind of exercise to which one resorts to acquire *ilmu*. Apart from the most popular mode of *lelakon*, namely, the fast, there are countless other ways, some of which are: not to sleep, not to speak and to restrict one's breath.

<sup>8</sup> Some of the examples of *pantangan* are not to have sexual relations, not to eat specific foods (before or after the commencement of *lelakon*), and not to select a certain day for practice.

<sup>9</sup> *Mel*, *rapal* or *mantra* is the communication code which a person utters when he wants to make contact with supernatural beings. In most cases, *mel* is composed of words from Arabic and Javanese. Below is an example of *mel*: *Bismillah Alaikum Allah Bilghaib, Kawula nyuwun ijin Narantaka dalem ngaturi manjing wonten badan kawula jabang bayi* [insert the name of someone who pursues this *ilmu*], *kangge latihan manjingaken, ingkang estu, ingkang leres, ingkang keras, kanthi wilujeng*. The first part of this spell, *Bismillah Alaikum Allah Bilghaib*, seems to be Arabic, even if its meaning was not known even to the practitioner who taught this *mel* to me. The next Javanese part can be translated as follows: I ask a permission to allow *Narantaka* (name of *ilmu*) to enter my body, the name of my *jabang bayi* is [the name], [I do it] for exercising the insertion [of *Narantaka* to my body], with sincerity, with accuracy and with ardour. May everything be well!

<sup>10</sup> In the *petungan* system, hours, days, months and years are given with specific characters (*watak*) and numbers (*neptu*). In the case of calculating days which is most frequently used, a day is the combination of two different sequences of day, one from the 7-day system, from Monday to Sunday and the other from the 5-day system of *Pon*, *Wage*, *Kliwon*, *Legi* and *Pahing*. Being combined, each day is the association of one from the 7-day system and the other from the 5-day system such as Monday-*Pon*, Tuesday-*Wage*, Wednesday-*Kliwon* and so on. As a result, a certain combination can only be repeated after 35 days, when all possible associations are exhausted. 12 different days in these two systems are given their own specific numbers (*neptu*) ranging from 3 to 9, so that the 35 possible combinations have specific numbers ranging from 7 (Tuesday-*Wage*) to 18 (Saturday-*Pahing*). For more about this system, see Geertz (1976:30-35).

their authority over others and so on. Whatever the reasons, their visits gave him an incentive to practise asceticism to obtain higher *ilmu* or to maintain what he had already attained. After gaining widespread fame, he started to be called '*dhukun*', '*wong pinter*' (clever man), '*tiang sepuh*' or '*wong tuwa*'<sup>11</sup> by his clients and *guru* by his pupils.

The ideational system of the *dhukun* had a lot in common with that of the *priyayi* as it is described by Geertz: emphasis on emotional calmness, centrality of feeling (*rasa*) and pursuit of spiritual power through withdrawal from worldly life (1976:312-326). However, compared with the *priyayi*, their ideas were more concrete and expressed in personalised forms. If the *priyayi*'s ultimate aim of mystical pursuit was described as a search for reality or for the reflection of God in one's self (Geertz, 1976:314), that of the *dhukun* was frequently explained as a search for the missing brothers called *kakang kawah* (amniotic fluid) and *adhi ari-ari* (umbilical cord)<sup>12</sup>, for *bapak guru sejati* (the true teacher) or for *simbah* (ancestor), who were thought to make all the wishes of a human being possible. As ascetic practice had a subjective nature, the experiences of those who reached this last stage were also dependent on their own subjectivity. Some saw the missing brothers, *bapak guru sejati* or *simbah* with their very eyes while others just heard their voices. A villager explained his experience as follows:

The *bapak guru* whom I met had exactly the same face as I have. Therefore, the situation in our encounter was just like when you stand in front of a mirror and see yourself. When I met him, I asked myself, 'this is myself and that is also myself, then, which one is the genuine one?' But the *bapak guru* kept silent, which made me realise that he was the one whom I had sought after for such a long time.

The philosophy of the concrete that the *dhukun* pursued was indifferent to doctrines. Their primary goal was not to make a metaphysical system but to deal with situations which concerned them, so that possible inner contradictions in their ideas did not bother them. This attitude was reflected in the ways they used their *ilmu*. There was no absolute way, for example, to cure a certain disease. If one method did not work, another should be tried, whose relation with the

<sup>11</sup> *Tiang sepuh* quoted by Geertz and *wong tuwa* reported by Keeler have the same meaning: old person. The difference is only the level of language. *Tiang sepuh* belongs to *krama* while *wong tuwa*, *ngoko* (Geertz, 1976:96; Keeler, 1987:114). In Kolojonggo, the most frequently used term is either *dhukun* or *wong pinter*. As the term *dhukun* has some derogatory meaning, the *dhukun* themselves as well as those who maintain close relations with them never use it. Only those who want to express their animosity use it.

<sup>12</sup> The *kakang kawah* and *adhi ari-ari* are thought to be twin brothers of every human being as their names imply: *kakang* means elder brother and *adhi*, younger brother. These three beings are said to exist together in the womb of a pregnant woman. After birth, they are separated. Some say that *kakang kawah* and *adhi ari-ari* live in the Southern Sea, waiting for the time of reunion after the death of their brother, while others are of the opinion that they are hovering over villages. Whatever their place of living, they are believed to have power to assist their visible brother when the latter successfully gets through the last stage of his ascetic exercise.

former might not be clear. These trials could continue until the most suitable one was discovered. For example, Pak Arjo had different ways of diagnosing and curing a disease, which he used in the following way:

When someone asks me to cure his or her disease, I diagnose it with this calculation: *jogan* (floor), *catur* (speech), *sawah* (paddy field), *kali* (river).<sup>13</sup> ... If he or she does not recover and returns to my place, I'll use the second way. I'll cut a branch of a tree and use the calculation of *mari* (recover), *mulya* (sublime), *seneng* (glad). After it, I'll ask *dhanyang* with a magical spell. ... Apart from *dhanyang*, assistance can also be sought from ancestors (*leluhur*). ... If these do not work, I'll make use of another one, namely, *Allah-Ngendiko* (says)-*Mundhut* (take)-*Nyawa* (soul) while asking Allah for the right method of treating that disease.

The existence of the *dhukun*, their continuous communication with villagers and the efficacy of their practice were conditions that allowed the reproduction of belief in supernatural beings. The popularity of ascetic exercise among ordinary male villagers assured the position of the *dhukun* and the maintenance of the system that he supported. In spite of individual variations, many ordinary villagers went to the river to immerse themselves in water, especially, every night of Friday-*Kliwon* and Tuesday-*Kliwon* when spirits were said to be the most active. They stayed awake at the tomb of their dead ancestors in the Javanese months of *Ruwah* and *Sura*. They began to restrict food intake when their day of birth (*neton*)<sup>14</sup> approached.

In sum, supernatural beings, with their influential grip over villagers, provided for those who believed in their existence a set of answers to the questions posed by vague and otherwise incomprehensible experiences (Geertz, 1976, 17&28). They also provided a reservoir from which villagers could draw appropriate measures to cope with difficulties and to satisfy their wishes. In this traditional system, the *dhukun* was the medium to connect villagers with supernatural beings and, in doing so, he played the role of an ideologue who supported, elaborated and perpetuated this system.

<sup>13</sup> In this calculation, he may use the *neton* of the patient, the *neptu* of the time and the date when the patient visits his place or of the time and the date when the first symptom of a disease appears. (see footnote no. 10 for *neptu* and no. 14, for *neton*) After he gets a certain number from this calculation, he divides this by 4. When the remaining number is 1, it signifies the disease is related to *jogan*, if it is 2, it is interpreted to be connected to *catur* and so forth. For example, if the patient comes to his place on Sunday-*Pahing* which has the *neptu* of 13, the calculation falls on *jogan* in that, after 13 is divided by 4, the remaining number is 1. It is almost impossible to make a generalisation about how he interprets different results from different ways of calculation. Intuition, context and mood of the moment when he meets the patient seem to influence his treatment of a disease a lot.

<sup>14</sup> When the Javanese are asked when they were born, the usual answer is not the date of their birthday but the day of their birth. As the Javanese day is a combination of the seven day and five day systems, one meets one's day of birth once every 35 days. When one was born, for example, on *Senin-Kliwon*, this day becomes one's *neton*.

## 6.2. Reformist Attack and Supernatural Beings<sup>15</sup>

In *kendhuri*, non-Islamic supernatural entities have lost their positions. It is only the name of Allah that is heard in its introductory speech. This gives the impression that supernatural beings have failed to retain their earlier privilege to intrude into village affairs. This impression is reinforced, when we look at the mundane life of villagers. In public, conversations about supernatural beings are not frequently heard and ascetic practices are seldom visible. If they happen to be the subjects of casual talking, conversations about them are usually done in a caricatured manner. When there was a lunar eclipse, for example, many villagers made comments on it as if they had once lived in a pre-enlightened era: 'at that time, we used to come outside, hitting the *kenthongan* (a drum made from a hollowed-out log) and yelling, 'the moon is eaten by the *Buta*' (a kind of supernatural being who has a giant body), so that it might return the moon to us.<sup>16</sup>

One of the factors which have brought this change is the development of reformist Islam which opposes traditional belief and practices connected to supernatural beings. As one villager put it, a shift has taken place from the situation in which '*syirik* was not known to villagers' to the state in which '*syirik* matters a lot'. *Syirik* is the same as *shirk* in Arabic. The word, *shirk*, has a literal meaning of 'sharing'; man is forbidden to share his or her worship of Allah with that of any other creatures, and to ascribe partners to Allah as sharers of His Divinity (Netton, 1992:231). According to the reformist villagers, *syirik* is the worst sin in Islam. It is the only one which cannot be forgiven by Allah whereas other great sins (*dosa besar*) such as killing, telling a lie, disobedience to one's parents and adultery can be forgiven on the condition that one's repentance is true and one does not repeat the sin. In the discourse of village Muslims, the commonly used definition of *syirik* was belief in and reliance on supernatural power of things and persons, as Pak Hardi put it:

<sup>15</sup> In the above section, Allah was included in the term 'supernatural beings', since villagers did not differentiate Allah clearly from other supernatural beings. However, the term 'supernatural beings' in the sections below does not include Allah. This is because the term 'supernatural beings', which is the English equivalent of an Indonesian term, *makhluk halus*, is now used by villagers as a concept separated from Allah. This semantic modification reflects the change that has taken place in the way villagers perceive Allah and supernatural beings, the proper topic of this and the next sections.

<sup>16</sup> Bräten gives a different way Central Javanese villagers dealt with the lunar eclipse: some of villagers at his research site celebrated a lunar eclipse *slametan* in a secret and disguised manner. It was secret since Bräten was not informed of it by his landlord who participated in it. It was disguised since he got an explanation, after he went to the place of the *slametan*, that it was given not for the lunar eclipse but for the initiation of a new house. He interpreted this experience as supporting his argument that Muslim villagers strive to make their own religious identity ambiguous (Bräten, 1989). This is different from the way villagers in Kolojonggo dealt with the lunar eclipse. What I observed was a special ritual prayer in the *masjid* after the regular *isaq* prayer. A short sermon on the meaning of the lunar eclipse and the way of praying at the time of eclipse was delivered to the villagers. Apart from this, I did not observe any special event that night, although this might not guarantee that the *slametan* was not given in a secret and disguised manner in Kolojonggo.

The most serious *syirik* is to think that Allah has a son and a wife or to make pictures or statues of Him. To follow a mystical teacher, to ask help from the *dhukun*, to make offerings and to possess amulets (*jimat*) also belong to this category. Some of the Islamic leaders (*kiyai*) outside the circle of Muhammadiyah still have an understanding that short [Arabic] passages wrapped in a white cloth (*mori*) or written on the surface of an agate (*akik*) or bracelet, will bring protection, invulnerability and fortune to its holder. This is a wrong understanding, which will make someone go astray. ... One day, a man visited my place with the Quran of a small size, called *Al-Quran Istanbul*, which he had bought in a market for Rp 1500. ... A story goes that the soldiers brought this book with them during the war of independence [against the Dutch], believing it would make them invulnerable to bullets. I will provide the correct interpretation of this story: it will bring us fortune, invulnerability and so on, not when we carry it in our pocket or under our *peci* but when we learn and practise it.

Even if Pak Hardi did not comment on supernatural beings, it is not so difficult to assume that belief in them may belong to the category of *syirik*. However, this is not the case. On the contrary, not to believe in them is what is categorised as non-Islamic. This paradox stems from the concept of *jinn* which is separated from satan in Islamic ontology.

According to the Quran<sup>17</sup>, God created a being called a *jinn*, apart from angels (*malaikat*), satan (*syaitan*) and human beings. Angels were created from light (*cahaya*), the *jinn* and satan from pure fire and human beings, from dried clay (xv: 26-7).<sup>18</sup> The purpose of Allah in creating the *jinn* and human beings was the same, that is, to let them worship Him (li:56). Although much remains vague, the nature of the *jinn* is described as parallel to that of human beings: the *jinn* were created to have the heart to understand, eyes to see and ears to hear (vii:179) and to have sexual desires (lv:72-4).<sup>19</sup> As is the case among human beings, the *jinn* are in two categories, those who have surrendered themselves to God and those who [did not and] are unjust (lxxii:14). With this freedom to choose their own way, the *jinn* are responsible for their own behaviour which will determine their future place either in Paradise or Hell (xi:119; lxxii:15). Despite these

<sup>17</sup> The following quotations from the Quran are selected with the help of several references: Ali Chasan, 1980; Bjorkman, 1953; Rahman, 1980; Umar Hasyim, 1980. However, interpretations of these quotations are my responsibility, unless the sources are cited.

<sup>18</sup> Roman numerals in the parenthesis indicate the Surah and the Arabic numerals, the verse(s) in the Quran. Most of the quotations from the Quran in this chapter use the translation of M. Pickthall (1930).

<sup>19</sup> That the *jinn* have sexual desire is based on the exegesis of several verses done by Umar Hasyim (1980:42): Wherein (are found) the good and beautiful. ... Fair ones, close-guarded in pavilions ... *Whom neither man nor jinn will have touched* before them (lv:72-4, italics mine). These passages, according to Umar Hasyim, make it possible for us to infer that the *jinn* also have sexual relations with their opposite sex.

similarities, the realm the *jinn* inhabit is separate from that of human beings, so that the world of the *jinn* is not directly perceivable to human senses. However, several verses in the Quran imply this separateness is incomplete. 'And indeed individuals of humankind used to invoke the protection of individuals of the *jinn*' (lxxii:6) or 'the *jinn* know well that they [human beings] will be brought before (Him)' (xxxvii,158). These verses make it possible for us to infer that human beings can perceive the existence of the *jinn* and the *jinn* know the situation in human society. Otherwise, there is no possibility that human beings could worship the *jinn* and the *jinn* could condemn the sinful behaviour of human beings.

The concept of the *jinn* that the reformist leaders possess does not deviate from the Quranic references, as is seen in this story told by a former junior high school teacher:

The *jinn* and human beings were created to live in different worlds, even if the boundary is liable to be transgressed. Among the *jinn*, there are those who believe in Islam and those who do not. ... In the *masjid* of my hamlet, it happened that the tap in the place for ablution opened by itself after all villagers finished their ablution and entered the *masjid*. While praying, they could feel that someone was following their movements, although they could not see who he or she was. This situation was repeated for several days, stirring up lots of rumours. However, the answer was quite simple. It was the *jinn* who prayed side by side with villagers. We don't know exactly why the *jinn* came to our place, but since they are also commanded to pray, it is not such a strange story at all.

The significance of the Islamic concept of the *jinn* is such that traditional supernatural beings do not need to give up their previous ontological position to acquire new Islamic identity, if they accept some modifications.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, they should admit that the term *jinn* is a name representing them. If previously the term *jinn* (or *jim*) was for a specific kind of supernatural being, it should now be the generic term to embrace all kinds of supernatural beings other than satan and angels. On the other hand, they must acknowledge their inferior position vis-à-vis the newly encountered Creator of them, Allah. If these changes are admitted, the ontological basis of traditional supernatural beings subsumed under the rubric of the term *jinn* becomes much stronger than before. If Muslim villagers were allowed to doubt the existence of supernatural beings, no space is now reserved for scepticism since the Quran reveals that Allah created the invisible *jinn* and the division between their world and human world is not

<sup>20</sup> The souls of the dead are an exception. It is because reformist Islam teaches that all relations between those who live in this world and those who have already died are severed. The dead souls, which were believed to visit this world frequently, are no longer able to do so.

absolute. Careful observation is enough to confirm the existence of supernatural beings as a villager said: 'it is possible that the experience of supernatural beings is hallucination but, if many people have seen them, they are certainly the *jinn*.' Acquisition of a stable position in the belief system of Muslim villagers, however, does not guarantee that supernatural beings retain their previous relationships with human beings. Rather, these relationships should also be redefined.

The reformist villagers suggested that one's attempt to make contact with the *jinn* does not belong to *syirik*, in that it is the duty of every Muslim to search for knowledge. There were even some who attached credit to this attempt since it would make one's belief in Allah strong, getting rid of any scepticism as to the truth of His words. However, most reformists reserved this attempt not for all Muslims but for a few, since it could bring negative effects, especially to those whose religious piety was not strong enough to resist the temptation of the *jinn*. The following conversation between Pak Wiknyo and me over this problem shows the concern of the reformist villagers about this issue. When Mas Kuri and his friends talked in the *masjid* about the experience of a man who had made contact with the *jinn*, Pak Wiknyo intervened, scolding me because I had asked Mas Kuri to take me to that man.

**Pak Wiknyo :** Do not ask others to take you to the place of someone who can contact the *jinn*! It is a sin (*dosa*) for you as well as those who introduce you to him since it is quite clear that he does not practise the right way of Islam. Even if you give me several million Rupiah, I definitely won't comply with your request.

**My question :** Is it forbidden by Allah to be in contact with the *jinn*?

**Pak Wiknyo :** In principle, no.

**My question :** Then, why is it a sin if one tries to make contact with them?

**Pak Wiknyo :** If there is a man who is simply satisfied with the mere act of meeting the *jinn*, it is not a problem at all. However, it is impossible in reality. When the *dhukun* begins his trial to know them, he may have the same idea, that is, to know is enough. However, after making contact with them, he cannot resist the temptation to use them. ... Do you know why Allah created satan? They were created to entice human beings and to cause them to commit what is forbidden by Allah.

**My question :** What I am talking about is not satan but the *jinn*. I've heard that there are *jinn* who are pious to Allah.

**Pak Wiknyo :** That is true, as is written in the Quran. However, the pious *jinn* never try to be in contact with human beings. It is only the heathen *jinn* (*jinn kafir*) who are happy to be summoned by us and are willing to make friends with us. As these beings are not on the side of

Allah, those who try to know them are also on the opposite side of Him. Why do we make efforts to know the *jinn*, the behaviour of which is not recommended by Allah? Our life is too short to realise what is ordered by Him.

As Pak Wiknyo unconsciously showed in his conversation, the term *jinn* is used almost synonymously with satan in the everyday language of the reformist villagers. It is because, they argue, the *jinn* who are ready to be friends with human beings are *kafir* (heathen) and bad-mannered (*kurang ajar*) rather than pious. As they are *kafir*, it is quite natural that their role is similar to that of satan.

The Quranic verses about the relation between the *jinn* and satan seem rather ambiguous. In some cases, they differentiate the *jinn* from satan while in others they do not. The Creation story in the Quran shows that Iblis originally belonged in the category of an angel: '... Fall ye [angels] prostrate before Adam! And they fell prostrate, all save Iblis, who was not of those who make prostration. ... (Iblis) said: I am better than him' (vii:11-12). This arrogance caused Iblis to be expelled from Heaven. He was cursed by Allah, even if the execution was postponed by Him until the Day of Judgement. 'He (Iblis) said [to Allah]: Now, because [Thou] hast sent me astray, verily I shall lurk in ambush for them on Thy Right Path' (vii:16). The role that Iblis begged of Allah was granted and Iblis was destined to lure human beings to deviate from the road which Allah commanded to them. Iblis acted in his role first to Adam and his wife. The Quran explains the scene of the first temptation in human history as follows: 'Then satan whispered to them that he might manifest unto them that which was hidden from them of their shame' (vii:20, emphasis mine). This verse shows that Iblis and satan are the same entity. It was Iblis, called satan, who whispered to Adam and his wife that Allah forbade them the tree, only lest they should become angels or immortals.

In contrast to this equation of Iblis with satan, another verse in the Quran informs us that Iblis belongs to the *jinn*: 'And when We said unto the angels: Fall prostrate before Adam, and they fell prostrate, all save Iblis. He was of the *jinn*, so he rebelled against his Lord's command' (xviii:51; emphasis mine). This equation of Iblis with the *jinn* seems inconsistent with that of Iblis with satan in the quotation above (viz. vii:20).

Apart from this vagueness in the Quran, personal experiences of the reformist villagers might be the reason why exact separation between the *jinn* and satan is not observed. Many of them were born and raised in a situation where villagers did not differentiate Allah clearly from supernatural beings, relied on them to achieve certain aims, made offerings to them and, sometimes, worshipped them, all of which could be directly classified as *syirik*. As a result, it may not be such a big mistake for them to equate supernatural beings, namely, *jinn*, with satan,

who is a declared enemy of human beings (xxxv:6) and who has the role of luring human beings to deviate from the path commanded by Allah.

When supernatural beings are subsumed under the term *jinn* which is frequently equated with *satan*, one of their characteristics cannot be retained. Formerly, the natures of supernatural beings were not defined in an absolute way: they could be both benevolent and malevolent, depending on the human side.<sup>21</sup> If one's wish was vicious, the supernatural beings whom he would be in contact with were thought to be malignant whereas, if one had a virtuous goal, for example, to cure disease, the beings who would assist this request were believed to be benevolent. In the same vein, *ilmu*, the weapon of human beings to deal with supernatural beings, was not divided into good and bad or white and black since its nature would be decided in accordance with the development of one's degree of dignity (*derajat*) as a villager put it: one's admission that his *ilmu* was white or he sought after only *ilmu putih* (white *ilmu*) could not be a sign that he actually practised *ilmu putih*. Instead, if someone reached a high degree of dignity, the *ilmu* that he practised would naturally be categorised as white.

In contrast to this relativistic attitude, the reformist villagers have urged an absolute evaluation of supernatural beings. In their thought, all supernatural beings are vicious in so far as they are ready to be in touch with human beings. The same evaluation also applies to the act of seeking assistance from supernatural beings. To ask something of supernatural beings is now considered to be sin. The reason is quite simple: the being with whom they make contact is vicious. *Ilmu* is also judged by this absolute yardstick. Irrespective of whether the practice of certain *ilmu* brings positive outcomes or not, for example, to cure illness, to find lost things and to help someone obtain a prestigious job, it is now categorised as black when it is done with the help of supernatural beings. There is no more 'white' left in *ilmu*.

To summarise, traditional supernatural beings can find their ontological position in Islam. They are fit for the category of the *jinn*, whose existence is fully approved of by Islamic ontology. However, their acceptance of this new position means that they have to give up one of the characteristics that the Javanese villagers had given to them, namely, benevolence. The reformist villagers have been at the forefront to eradicate the benevolent character from supernatural beings by equating them with *satan*. In their thought, mere contact with supernatural beings is supposed to be a sign that one's religiosity is not strong. If this effort of the reformist villagers had been successful, supernatural beings might have admitted their evil nature, abandoning their influential position and accepting a marginalised position in village life. Until now, however, this ideal

<sup>21</sup> There were a few exceptions such as *dhanyang* who was thought not to harm people and *thuyul* (a kind of supernatural being who steals others' wealth for the patron) who was believed to be always vicious.

of the reformist villagers has not yet been reached in Kolojonggo. Supernatural beings still imprint their presence upon villagers, resisting attacks from the reformist villagers.

### 6.3. The Position of Supernatural Beings

In spite of the bad reputation inflicted on them both by reformist Islam and by the coming of demystified society<sup>22</sup>, supernatural beings still constitute a part of village life. They have been able to imprint their existence on the villagers' belief system, expressing their willingness to assist them. The lack of public conversation about them makes it difficult for outsiders to appraise the present state of belief in supernatural beings in villagers' worldview. A rare chance to understand it, however, came from an unexpected quarter: a traditional art called *jathilan* or *jaranan*.

The *jathilan* is a collective group dance where the performers ride bamboo horses and experience a state of trance in the course of dancing. Formerly, it was mainly performed by a professional itinerant troupe (Geertz, 1976, 296-7; see also Koentjaraningrat, 1985a:211). However, the pendulum has swung from the professional to the amateur and from streets and markets to villages. It is now ordinary villagers living in rural areas who organise their own troupes and perform it sporadically whenever a request is made to them.

Several factors seem to be responsible for the recent popularity of the *jathilan* group amongst rural villagers. First, the government has encouraged villagers to participate in a program to preserve traditional art.<sup>23</sup> Second, as the general economic situation has improved, more villagers have tended to celebrate certain private occasions such as circumcision, entrance to university and getting a job, by sponsoring an art performance. This is not a new trend since *wayang* (shadow play) performances were held for the same purpose. However, the cost of *wayang*, which is about ten times higher than other folk arts such as a *gamelan orchestra*, *slawatan*, *kethoprak* and *jathilan*, makes its celebration difficult.<sup>24</sup> Third, the

<sup>22</sup> Demystification in the text means the surge of the positivist paradigm, science and technology which dominates modern Western society. This paradigm has eroded many of the domains where spiritual belief played its role as a legitimate factor of explanation, as the cases of disease and natural phenomena of earthquake, drought, volcanic eruption, flood, etc., indicate. It has also collided with the previous mode of explanation which sought a rationale beyond the phenomenological relatedness of observable cause and effect.

<sup>23</sup> The visits of the *camat* (head of the sub-district office), *kelurahan* officials and *lurah* to the first official performance of several *jathilan* groups in Sumber show government's commitment to the preservation of traditional art forms.

<sup>24</sup> Villagers said that it cost more than 1 million Rupiah to invite a group to perform *wayang*, while the cost could be reduced to as little as Rp 100,000 when they invited an art group of *gamelan* (Javanese traditional orchestra), *slawatan* (recitation of traditional Javanese poetry, whose story is connected to the life history of the Prophet Muhammad) or *jathilan*. In the case of *kethoprak* (the Javanese drama depicting historical or pseudo-historical events), the cost reached around Rp 300,000-400,000 in 1993. In contrast to *wayang*, whose performers should be invited from a different sub-district, villagers had easy access to other art groups since every hamlet had one or more of them. For example, Kolojonggo

*jathilan* is more dynamic than other traditional arts and appeals easily to youngsters who have much time to idle away, freed as they are from productive labor. Fourth, it is relatively easy and inexpensive to form a *jathilan* group. Three or four kinds of musical instruments, 8 bamboo horses, 2 *topeng* (wooden masks) and costumes for 8-12 performers are the minimum requisites to establish a new group. Whatever the exact reason, the popularity of *jathilan* has been extraordinary. In 1993-94, five hamlets among nineteen in Sumber founded their own *jathilan* groups.

Before the beginning of the performance, eight horses are placed at the center of an open ground, making two rows. Offerings to supernatural beings are placed near where *gamelan* musicians take their seats, facing the horses. When the music starts, eight performers come out of the house and kneel beside the horses. Each of them grips a wooden stick with their right hand and holds the neck of the horse with their left one. The changing rhythm of music signals the commencement of the performance. All the performers stand up and begin their dances, locating the bamboo horse between their thighs as if they were riding a horse. Different footsteps and diverse motions of hands and head bring variations to their dance. Within a few minutes, the riders are divided into two parties and enact a war scene.<sup>25</sup> They are drawn into a series of combats in which they strike one another with their bamboo sticks. This act reaches its end when one rider leads an abrupt assault on the opposite party, which is followed by all the other performers. Clashing together, they fall down on the ground. It is at this moment of chaos that supernatural beings are said to enter the performers' bodies. Possession is recognised by their paralysed bodies.

A massage makes the performers recover from their paralysis. After recovery, the movements of the performers are thought to be controlled by supernatural beings. Some show their extraordinary capacities by biting off the outer shell of a coconut with their teeth, by chewing pieces of glass, by holding a chicken in their mouths and sometimes by walking on coals with bare feet. Others behave in an uninhibited fashion, by chasing after girls, climbing a tree, making exaggerated facial and bodily expressions and so on. The more incredible their feats or passions are, the greater the applause they receive from the audience. As the play continues, some members of the audience who are grasped and pushed down on the ground by the riders are also possessed. They join the original performers and dance in a state of possession. The performance goes on

had *gamelan*, *jathilan* and *kethoprak* groups while its neighbouring hamlet had *slawatan* and *kethoprak* groups.

<sup>25</sup> According to the leader of the *jathilan* group in Kolojonggo, its story originated from the kingdom of Demak: a princess of Demak kingdom whose wedding was close at hand was kidnapped by its enemy. In order to get her back, the king organised a group of soldiers. While they did military drills, they became too much absorbed in them and forgot the fact that they were doing exercises. As a result, they fought one another as if they had met a real enemy.

until the last dancer is freed from possession by a *pawang*<sup>26</sup>, which normally takes around an hour and half. Therefore, a *jathilan* group can play four or five times a day, from 10 in the morning till 5 or 6 in the afternoon, attracting huge audiences.

It was Pak Silo who initiated a plea for establishing a *jathilan* group in Kolojonggo. At first, his move originated from his personal desire to strengthen his weak position among villagers. He and his wife were university graduates, a condition sufficient to give them high social status in village life. However, they were not born in this village, which caused them to be treated, according to their own evaluation, improperly for their high qualifications.<sup>27</sup> To compensate for this weakness, Pak Silo has attempted to organise art groups since he moved into this village. He established a *kethoprak* group and then, a *gamelan* group, over which he lost control after the groups got started. The *jathilan* was the next item that he relied on for the same purpose. As his personal motive implies, it was not his commitment to the traditional belief system and *ilmu* which lay behind his initiative in establishing a *jathilan* group. On the contrary, he was proud of his modernity stemming from his education and had never showed interest in supernatural beings before he set out to found the group.

When he announced his intention to launch a *jathilan* group, it was greeted enthusiastically by the younger generation, already acquainted with this art form. At the first preparatory meeting, villagers from their early teens to their early thirties were present *en masse*. From that time on, they collected donations from villagers, made costumes and *topeng* and practised *gamelan* music and the horse dance under a temporary *pawang* whom Pak Silo invited from the neighbouring *kecamatan*.

When the *jathilan* became a hot public issue before and shortly after its foundation, scepticism dominated discussion about the state of possession during the horse dance. Many villagers, especially those in their twenties and thirties, considered it to be a fake originating from collective hallucination or from the alcohol that the performers drank before the beginning of a performance, both of which made them brave enough to behave in an abnormal manner. Pak Sri enumerated several points which caused him to suspect possession was not supernatural:

<sup>26</sup> The *pawang* is the guide of the *jathilan*. During the performance, he monitors whether the whole situation is in order and, with his magical power, makes the possessed regain consciousness.

<sup>27</sup> Whether one was born in this village or not is not the sole factor determining one's status in village life. To understand the case of Pak Silo, his personality which was considered to be arrogant (*sombong*) by villagers should be taken into account. It is a custom in village life that one should not display what one is or has, if he or she does not want to be considered *sombong*. If one speaks frankly about what one is or has, he or she can be easily considered to be *sombong*. The personality of Pak Silo which makes him speak frankly of what he knows and show off his educational background has brought him a bad reputation.

The performers who were said to be possessed (*dadi*) knew exactly who the pretty girls were and they only chased after them. If they had been really possessed, how could they do so? ... Only a few among the performers were said to be possessed. If they were in the same situation while dancing, why were all of them not possessed? It is said that those who are in bodily contact with the possessed man and pushed down on the ground by him will also be possessed. However, I've never seen any of the assistants of the *jathilan* group <sup>28</sup> possessed, although they stumbled over the possessed performers accidentally. ... There are so many things which make me doubt the actuality of possession. Seeing the performers whom I know well, I get an impression that they pretend to be possessed with the help of alcohol which might lessen their feelings of shame in public.

After the *jathilan* group did their regular performance, more youngsters were involved in it, and their experiences of possession spread to other villagers, a side effect which was not anticipated by Pak Silo and other members began to appear among villagers, namely, the disappearance of sceptical or 'I-doubt-it' attitudes. Most villagers believed that possession during the performance was real and that it was triggered by supernatural beings, although no consensus was reached on the identity of the supernatural beings who were responsible for it.

The reformist villagers were certain that the responsibility lay in the heathen *jinn* or satan, whose duty was to entice human beings. As the performers did not use reason (*akal*), emptied their heads and followed their physical desires (*nafsu*), all of which were not recommended behaviour for Muslims, they argued that Muslims should distance themselves from the *jathilan*, as they fought against the temptation of satan. Others who were less active in Islamic activities used the neutral term, 'invisible being' (*makhluk halus*), to explain the possessing beings, while their specific names were not agreed upon. Even the main body of the *jathilan* group in Kolojonggo did not have any conclusive idea of them. Its members generally thought of them as supernatural beings residing in certain places such as a cemetery, river, tree, or the yard where they performed. This lack of consensus among the *jathilan* members arose from the fact that no one in its organising body had deep knowledge of supernatural beings and that they failed to incorporate someone who was famous for his *ilmu* as an ideologue of

<sup>28</sup> The *jathilan* group consists of two sub-groups. One group consists of the performers and the other, of those who control the performance. The major duty of the second group is to make a barrier around the playground to block the possessed performers when they suddenly dash into the audience. As they do this job with their bodies, it is quite usual for them to be in close contact with the possessed performers. It seldom happens, however, that these guards are possessed while dealing with the performers.

their group. Accordingly, they took their experience of possession for granted rather than tried to explain it systematically.

The same situation did not apply in the *jathilan* group in Pasekan, a hamlet on the southern side of Kolojonggo. Soon after its foundation, the *jathilan* group in Kolojonggo achieved remarkable popularity in this area, which naturally caused the youth in Pasekan to decide to have their own group. In this process, they were lucky enough to include Pak Atin, the famous *wong pinter* living in Pasekan, as a *pawang* of their group. As a result, the *jathilan* members in Pasekan shared a more systematic explanation for their own performance which originated with Pak Atin. Asked about supernatural beings in the *jathilan*, Pak Atin replied as follows:

Before the day of the performance, various supernatural beings visit my house, disclosing their wishes of me, such as for specific drinks, foods, flowers or something else. If they are satisfied with what is offered to them [the offering made by the host of the *jathilan*], no serious problem occurs during the performance. They observe the agreement made between me and themselves. If they are not satisfied, however, it takes longer for me to control the situation. As it is my side that breaks the agreement first, I have to fight with these beings who are angry at this maltreatment. ... Therefore, which supernatural beings are responsible for a specific performance can be decided only when they visit my place, registering themselves with me. They are sometimes those living in the area where the performance will be celebrated, while in other cases, they are the souls of the deceased.

Ordinary members of this group had the same ideas as Pak Atin. They knew more about the reasons and the process of possession, the methods for expelling invisible beings and other extraordinary things happening during the performance than their counterparts in Kolojonggo. A high school student had a clearer idea than Pak Silo about why the performers in the *jathilan* group of Kolojonggo did not speak when they were possessed:

It is because they [the *jathilan* group in Kolojonggo] made a permanent contract with a *dhemit*<sup>29</sup> who will safeguard the performance from possible interference from other supernatural beings. As a result, interferences from an unexpected *roh* (dead soul) who wishes to talk through the mouth of the possessed performers have not occurred unlike cases in our group. ... Until now, they are quite fortunate since *roh* who have higher *ilmu* than their guardian *dhemit* do not visit their performance place. If it happened, it would be a catastrophe for them.

<sup>29</sup> The term *dhemit* is sometimes used to refer all supernatural beings, while in others, it is considered as a kind of spirit which lives in a specific place such as a house, a tree, a well and so on.

The *ilmu* of the *pawang* [in Kolojonggo] is not strong enough to control this accident. What he did was just to make a pact with the *dhemit* and to keep that relation.

There is an interesting point to be made about the development of the *jathilan* group in Kolojonggo. Its initiator was not a man who had close relations with supernatural beings such as a *dhukun* but one who stood somewhat against it. His original intention was also far from that of reviving a traditional belief system. The youth reacted enthusiastically to it not because they were curious about supernatural beings and wanted explanations for the experiences beyond their reason, an attitude demonstrated by their lack of interest in understanding the rationale behind possession. Instead, they pursued it as fun and enjoyed the severance from daily life which emphasises refined ways of behaviour. However, despite this naiveté, the effect of the *jathilan* has been remarkable. It has reaffirmed the existence of supernatural beings. Moreover, the supernatural beings they support are not an abstract and moralistic image of supernatural beings as the reformist villagers hold, but concrete and vivid images which were common before the surge of reformist Islam.<sup>30</sup> In brief, the *jathilan* has strengthened the traditional identity of supernatural beings, helping them to resist an attack from reformist Islam which has tried to equate them with the *jinn* and *satan*.

I had another chance to look at the present position of supernatural beings when the *anak masjid* performed three dramas for children, commemorating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and the end of Fasting Month, and consolidating the brotherhood among Muslims. A brief summary of these three dramas is as follows:

[The first drama]

Parjo, the only child of a poor peasant, hated his life in the village and yearned for a new life in the city. In spite of the objection of his father, he left his house and headed for the city, making a promise that he would fetch his father when he became rich. In the city, he seduced the daughter of a rich businessman and succeeded in marrying her, hiding his village background from her family. One day, two street musicians from his village happened to visit his house to ask for money. Not recognising them, Parjo treated them harshly and expelled them from the door. They returned to their village and told this story to Parjo's father who had

<sup>30</sup> Traditional supernatural beings were concrete and vivid in the sense that their characters were thought to take after those of human beings. A few examples are: *gendruwo*, a giant with big red eyes; *peri*, a charming woman with a hole at her back and appearing only to those who frequently flirt with women; *thikthikan*, a male making a sound of *thikthik* while walking; *poongan*, a living corpse wrapped in white cloths with a tie over its head; *wewe*, a female who has an ability to make someone invisible when the latter steals something; *thuyul*, a child stealing money from others; and *dewi Sri*, a beautiful woman controlling paddy and *Niyai Lara Kidul*, a charming woman living in the Southern sea and inviting people to her palace.

been eager to meet his son. Hearing the news that his son had become rich, he headed for his son's house. However, Parjo pretended not to know his father. In front of his wife, he denied his father and drove him out of his house, cursing and beating him. It was not long before Parjo was seized with an unknown disease, which could not be cured by the doctor. As the last resort, his wife fetched the *dhukun*. Using his heirloom (*pusaka*) and uttering magical formula, the *dhukun* began to diagnose his disease.

*Dhukun*: If the situation is like this, I am not brave enough to treat it. My magical spell is not strong. Serious, really serious! This is not ordinary sickness. His disease originated from his inner self since he was disobedient (*berani*) to his parent.

Parjo's Wife: Oh, it is certain that the old man who came before is the father of Parjo.

*Dhukun*: Right, as is written in my *pusaka*.

Parjo: I don't believe in an obscene *dhukun* (*dhukun cabul*) like you. My sickness might be from sprain.

*Dhukun*: Listen to my words! If one is disobedient (*berani*) to his parents, his fate is like this. There is no way to cure this disease except for the help of the man whom you have hurt. In fact, you are cursed (*kualat*) due to your behaviour. Cursed!

Parjo: What? Being cursed! Please, help me, Pak *Dhukun*. I ask forgiveness.

The drama ended happily. The *dhukun* brought Parjo's father, who at last forgave his son.

[The second drama]

Murni was a daughter of a poor peasant who could not afford her education nor wanted to do so. She had to go to the house of Wanti whose father was rich to borrow books and other materials. There, Murni was mocked by Wanti. Although she returned home with a broken heart, her parents did not bother about it much. Then, there came the final exam. Murni was fortunate to pass it whereas Wanti was not. Hearing that his daughter failed the exam, Wanti's father became furious and swore at his wife and Wanti. This caused Wanti to become hysterical, which could not be treated by doctors. Then she was taken to the *dhukun* who could not cure it, either. At last, her family took Wanti to the *pesantren*. Hearing the story, the *kiyai* asked his pupil to bring the Quran and a glass of water. He recited some verses in front of the glass of water and ordered Wanti to drink it, which made it possible for her to recover

her consciousness. Then, the *kiyai* gave advice to Wanti and her family about the importance of educating children and of adopting the teaching of Allah in everyday life. After returning from the *pesantren*, Wanti visited Murni's house to apologise for her arrogant behaviour.

[The third drama]

Every day Harto gambled and spent money. One day, returning from gambling, he asked his father to sell the house and paddy field to pay his debt and for more gambling, arguing that the property would be his upon his parents' death. Being pressed by Harto, his father died from stress. Not regretting what he did to his father, Harto coaxed his mother and two sisters to give up their right of inheritance. As they rejected his proposal, he expelled them from their house and sold the paddy fields. As a result of his bad behaviour, he was cursed (*kualat*) by his dead father, which caused his two legs to be paralysed. When he begged money from the passers-by in the street, he met three girls whom he had known before. Seeing Harto's pitiful situation, they started to mock him. Filled with shame, Harto fled from them. His mother, returning home with two daughters, heard the story of Harto and tried to find him. When they met at last, Harto regretted truly what he had done before. The three girls who had ridiculed him also asked forgiveness of him for their wrong behaviour.

Originally, these stories were intended to convey several Islamic ideas on the duties of Muslims: obedience to their parents (drama 1); the importance of the right education and the danger of being arrogant (*sombong*) (drama 2); and prohibition against gambling, the importance of repentance of one's sins and readiness to forgive each other for wrong deeds (drama 3). However, the selections of the motifs which enabled the dramas to proceed to their conclusions, namely, *dhukun*, *kiyai* and *kualat* (cursing from the dead father) were not congruent with the messages that they were intended to convey. In other words, they resorted to non-Islamic elements to transmit Islamic teachings.<sup>31</sup>

This raises a question as to why non-Islamic motifs were used to express Islamic lessons in religious events. In considering this question, it should be emphasised that the non-Islamic motifs were inserted into the dramas extemporaneously rather than intentionally. The *anak masjid* who created these stories did not have any intention, for example, of displaying the efficacy of the *dhukun*'s

<sup>31</sup> In the case of the *dhukun* and *kualat* (cursing), their non-(reformist) Islamic identities are clear whereas the identity of the *kiyai* is not. *Kiyai* is a title for a learned scholar in Islam. However, the practice of the *kiyai* in the second drama, that is, the use of pure water to cure the disease, is not fully compatible with reformist ideology. Although not totally rejected by the reformist villagers, this practice is not considered to be recommended for reformist Muslims. In this sense, the motif of *kiyai* can be said to be non-(reformist) Islamic.

practice. In everyday life, they do not show any interest in supernatural beings nor do they want to follow *ilmu*. Rather, they attack the practice of the *dhukun* and villagers' dependence on them.

The inclusion of non-Islamic elements can be interpreted as an indicator that the Muslim youth are not wholly freed from the influence of the traditional worldview. As Islamic development in Kolojonggo is quite recent, they have grown up and spent much of their time in a social environment which was oriented less to reformist Islam but in which supernatural beings played an important part. As a result, their reformist orientation has been inculcated by exposure to education rather than acquired through their socialisation process. This has given birth to a state in which they can, at the conscious level, harmonise their thought and behaviour with reformist ideology, while the traditional worldview is still a part of their disposition as Durkheim puts it:

In each one of us, in differing degrees, is contained the person we were yesterday, and indeed, in the nature of things it is even true that our past *personae* predominate in us, since the present is necessarily insignificant when compared with the long period of the past because of which we have emerged in the form we have today. It is just that we don't directly feel the influence of these past selves precisely because they are so deeply rooted within us. They constitute the unconscious part of ourselves. ... .. with the most recent acquisitions of civilisation we are vividly aware of them just because they are recent and consequently have not had time to be assimilated into our collective unconscious.<sup>32</sup>

This does not mean that the *anak masjid* have the same syncretic religious outlook as many of their predecessors had, where Islamic and non-Islamic ideas were mixed together without conflict (Geertz, 1976:40). In the case of the *anak masjid*, the mixture is a rather stratified one: Islamic elements are dominant but other non-Islamic elements are not excluded as unthinkable. In brief, the cases of the *jathilan* and dramas show that supernatural beings have not been expelled from village life as a result of their encounter with reformist Islam. Although they have been placed in an unfavourable position, they have not lost their grip over villagers, at least, up to this point.

One crucial factor which has made it possible for supernatural beings to maintain their influence over villagers is that their efficacy has not been negated by most villagers. They are still believed to have the ability to assist villagers who desperately seek every means possible to solve their problems. There are many success stories about villagers who received assistance from supernatural beings

<sup>32</sup> Durkheim, E., *The Evolution of Educational Thought* (1977:11, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul). Cited in Bourdieu (1990:56).

and attained certain goals. Moreover, these praiseworthy services are done almost for nothing. Flowers, incense and small offerings of foods are enough to satisfy supernatural beings, supplemented by small gifts for the *dhukun*, if the assistance is sought by way of him. Within the limitless capabilities of supernatural beings, and in frequent demand by the villagers are: to find lost things, to cure sicknesses that cannot be treated properly in the hospital, to cause someone be selected for a vacant post, to increase wealth, to predict the number of the lottery<sup>33</sup>, and to attract the other sex. Below are two examples of villagers who sought the service of supernatural beings by way of the *dhukun*:

[case 1: position] Pak Bari, a person who has the largest *sawah* in Kolojonggo, decided to apply for a vacancy in the *kelurahan* office. It was his life's dream to be a government official, in that he wanted to convert his wealth into social status which can only be achieved by taking a position in government office. In the written test, he was ranked as the second among eight candidates. However, it was just the beginning. He had to compete with two others who also passed the same test. According to popular perceptions, success in the next selection process of interview is dependent on one's economic capability and one's connection with the interviewers. It was not so difficult for him to prepare 3 million Rupiah, guaranteed to be fully refundable. However, he was not so sure about his selection only with money since the other competitors were also capable of raising money. As the date for the interview approached, he came to be more and more anxious. With advice from his family, he at last made two long journeys to East and Central Java where, according to him, the most powerful (*sakti*) *dhukun* lived. There, he received an *ilmu* to attract the interviewers, consisting of a spell, a method of practising the fast and several prohibitions. He followed the ascetic exercise sincerely until the day of interview. However, he was not successful in being selected as a *kelurahan* official. Recounting this long story, Pak Bari briefly commented that his religiosity had not been strong at that time and, if an opportunity arose again, he would not follow the same course, but would only pray to God for the realisation of his dream.

[case 2: lost things] Pak Sodo lost his wallet in his work-place. At first, he thought that it had just fallen on the ground and would be returned to him the next day. Several days passed, but there was no news. He thought more about that day and at last recalled someone who might have stolen it. After this, he used several indirect measures to make the

<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately for some of the *dhukun* who specialised in guessing the four digits of the lottery, the national lottery was abolished in 1993 through mass protests initiated by Muslim university students. After this, the local newspaper carried several articles on the *dhukun* who had to change their specialties.

culprit return his wallet. A week passed but there was no sign that the culprit was impressed by his action. At last, he visited Pak Akir who was known as a *wong pinter*. Hearing what he said, Pak Akir raised his right hand and began to swing it over his head. After going round several times, his hand stopped at a certain point, indicating the direction of the thief's house. The direction pointed out by Pak Akir was the one where the house of the culprit was located. After this, it took a few more minutes for Pak Akir, waking from his silence, to begin to talk about the fate of his lost wallet: most of money was already spent but the thief intended to return it. As the thief was ashamed of his behaviour, it would take a few more days for him to return it. Listening to this advice, Pak Sodo decided to wait. It was not long before a note was delivered to him, on which was written the address of someone whom he did not know but who was said to have custody of his lost wallet.

As the above cases show, the efficacy of supernatural beings is not denied by villagers as an option for assistance. In this circumstance, the efforts of the reformist villagers focus on making an 'ethical person': one who, although admitting the power of supernatural beings, does not make use of them. The case of Pak Ibrahim, compared to Pak Sodo in case 2, exemplifies who the 'ethical person' is:

Pak Ibrahim's sister-in-law lost his bike at a street stall. As the theft happened in a street, it was quite difficult for him to track down the thief. A few days after this theft, he mentioned why he did not take any further action to find it: 'I thought a lot about this problem. Sometimes, I was eager to visit someone [*dhukun*] who would be able to help me to find my lost bike or I was almost ready to do some *lelakon* to disturb the thief and get my bike back. But soon, I changed my mind. I knew it was not the right way to do so. ... Instead, I just added additional prayers at the end of my regular ones, asking Allah that my bike would be brought back. If my prayers are accepted by Allah, the thief will return it to me. If not, it is the intention of Allah to let my bike be lost, which I cannot do anything about.'

The focus of this section was put on the position of supernatural beings in present village life. As the cases of *jathilan* and three dramas performed by the *anak masjid* demonstrate, supernatural beings still retain their grip over villagers and are not excluded as 'unthinkable'. One of the factors which help supernatural beings maintain a position in village life is their ability to intrude in human affairs, the efficacy of which is admitted by almost all villagers. In this situation, the emphasis of the reformist villagers is put on making an ethical person, whose religious piety is strong enough, to resist temptation to ask assistance of supernatural beings.

Recently in Kolojonggo, the efficacy of supernatural beings which reformist Islam has not been able to deny, has started to be challenged from an unexpected side: the rise of villagers who pursue *ilmu* in different ways from that of the *dhukun*.<sup>34</sup> Their presence may bring a more fatal result to belief in supernatural beings than the surge of reformist Islam since their basic tenet is to bypass supernatural beings in order to seek *ilmu*. In the section below, the diversification of those who seek *ilmu* and their specific ideational systems will be discussed.

#### 6.4. The Diversification of Villagers Seeking *Ilmu*

In the face of Islamic development which has imposed the concepts of *jinn* and *satan* on traditional supernatural beings and which has condemned villagers' contact with them, the *dhukun* have reacted in two different ways. Some have chosen not to adapt themselves to the new environment by emphasising their specific identity while others have endeavoured to blur their identity by accepting some of the basic dogmas of Islam. Below is the summary of a meeting with Pak Wiro who took the former position:

We were talking about the meaning of *wiwitan* (a traditional ritual celebrating the harvest), which he explained as a ritual dedicated to the *dewi Sri* who is believed to control rice. He proposed that this sort of belief did not belong to Islam but to 'the original Javanese' (*asli Jawa*), which meant to him anything which is not connected to 'things Arabic'. Then, he argued the superiority of 'things Javanese' over 'things Arabic': if one wanted to achieve something, he or she should resort to 'things Javanese'. His idea was expressed clearly when he heard that the Arabic prayer of *Basmillah* was used in my village. Hearing this, he commented, 'the request of the host cannot be reached with *Basmillah*. It is meaningless to celebrate the *kendhuri* with *Basmillah* and the host spends money for nothing.'

The attitude of Pak Wiro is somewhat extreme since he expressed his anti-Islamic view clearly. Others belonging to this non-compromising group choose a more refined way: not to refer to anything connected to Islam. It might not be an accident among the *dhukun* that the older one is and the less one's contact with the outside world, the greater the possibility is that one will take this position.

<sup>34</sup> In Yogyakarta city as well as in other parts of Java, different ways of pursuing *ilmu* from that of the *dhukun* have existed as a long tradition. In this respect, it may be wrong to say that these ways have not been known to villagers in Sumber. However, until recently, there was no villager who was attracted to these different ways of pursuing *ilmu* and who became the followers of these. The five villagers in Sumber who taught these different ways to others were all in their thirties and early forties, and, when asked where they had learned these ways, they identified Yogyakarta city or places outside Yogyakarta. In this sense, it may be said that the coexistence of diverse ways of pursuing *ilmu* is a recent phenomenon in Sumber, although not in other parts of Java. It seems that changing socio-religious situations have prompted some villagers to be attracted to these different ways of pursuing *ilmu*.

The changing social atmosphere does not matter a lot to them and in this sense, their influence over villagers has decreased dramatically.

Other *dhukun*, many of whom are in middle age, have confronted the changing world more directly. The strategy that they have employed is to affiliate themselves closely with Islam, which is achieved by imposing Islamic identity on supernatural beings and by giving supernatural beings a position of intermediary (*utusan* or *perantara*) between themselves and Allah. This implies that equal treatment of all supernatural beings is given up and Allah<sup>35</sup> is accorded the highest position. Pak Tin explained the changing atlas of supernatural beings as follows:

As human beings have different appearances, those of supernatural beings are different. The same is true of religion. Each supernatural being has a different religion. There are those who have the religion of Islam, Christianity, Hinduism or Buddhism. ... In former days, *Kanjeng Ratu Kidul* (same as *Niyai Lara Kidul*) did not have a religion. At the moment, however, *Kanjeng* has the religion of Islam. *Kanjeng* can read all kinds of Islamic Holy Books and write Arabic.

The influence of the national ideology of *Pancasila* is shown in Pak Tin's idea. As all citizens are required to believe in one of the five official religions recognised through *Pancasila*, so, too, are all supernatural beings. Consequently, Pak Tin as a Muslim is in contact with Islamic supernatural beings or the *jinn* which are pious to Allah, the fact signifying that he does not deviate from Islamic teaching.

Apart from this modification, most practices which were once employed by the *dhukun* in former days such as burning incense, making offerings, recitation of spells, emphasis on the fast and use of *petungan*, have not changed much. In some sense, it is almost impossible for the *dhukun* to abandon these practices in so far as they make contact with supernatural beings, since these are the media without which they cannot communicate with the latter and no alternatives have yet been invented. The mode that the *dhukun* use to rationalise the efficacy of their practices by way of supernatural beings has also maintained. They retain the optimistic vision that all kinds of good requests from the human side will be granted immediately by supernatural beings, who now subsume the role of messengers from Allah, if these are done in the proper manner and by way of the right persons. The right persons are those who have performed ascetic practices to purify their inner and outer self, a state which makes easy communication with Allah possible.

<sup>35</sup> The *dhukun* who belong to this category prefer the term *Tuhan yang Maha Esa, Kang Maha Kuwasa* and *Pangeran* to Allah when they have to refer to a monotheistic God.

The modifications that the *dhukun* have made do not seem to be effective enough to save them from open criticism. Irrespective of the changes that the *dhukun* have made, the reformist villagers still think of them as those who practise *syirik* and whose role is to cause villagers to go astray from the right path to Allah. At the heart of this criticism lies the continuing contact of the *dhukun* with supernatural beings who are equated with the heathen *jinn* or satan. Their use of incense, magical spells and offerings which are considered to be non-Islamic by most villagers, is another factor which makes it difficult for the *dhukun* to escape criticism.

The second group of those who pursue *ilmu* has not yet been given a proper name by villagers. Sometimes, a borrowed English term *mistik* (mystic), *wong kepercayaan* (literally, people having a belief) or *wong kebatinan* (literally, people pursuing spirituality) is used by some villagers but these terms have not yet been popularised.<sup>36</sup> It is not easy to make generalisations concerning the orientation of the *mistik* due to the internal variations amongst them but two aspects which they have in common as a group make them distinctive from the *dhukun*.

First, the *mistik* disapprove of connections with supernatural beings as a way to pursue *ilmu*. Instead, their ultimate goal is said to make direct contact with God without any intermediaries. The existence of supernatural beings is not denied but their role is thought to be negative, namely, to make the *mistik* go astray. This is because their degree of perfection (*derajat*) is lower than human beings and consequently, they cannot help the *mistik* reach a certain goal. The separation from supernatural beings allows the *mistik* to exclude the key symbols related to the *dhukun* from their practices: making offerings, burning incense and chanting spells. Despite these differences, however, several elements still connect the *dhukun* and the *mistik* together. Both of them emphasise the spiritual side of human religiosity, meditation is considered to be one of the best ways to reach their goal and, in the process of reaching their goal, they are thought to acquire an ability to feel and to do things that an ordinary person cannot do.<sup>37</sup>

The second feature which distinguishes the *mistik* from the *dhukun* is the religious relativism of the former. In contrast to the *dhukun* who identify themselves as Muslims and equate supernatural beings with Islamic ones, the *mistik* do not give priority to any of the five official religions in Indonesia. To them, what

<sup>36</sup> In the section below, the term *mistik* will be used to designate this group. Although this usage is somewhat misleading and villagers have different ideas to understand the term *mistik*, it is adopted for the sake of convenience.

<sup>37</sup> Although the main reason why ordinary villagers are attracted to the *mistik* is *ilmu*, the *mistik* deny the pursuit of *ilmu* as their major goal. Instead, they suggest that their goal is to approach God and, if possible, to achieve union with God. To most of them, *ilmu* are just side effects of their mystical pursuit, while, to some, these are rewards from God.

matters is not which God - for example, the God in Islam, Christianity or Hindu-Buddhism - created human beings but that 'God' created human beings and gave human beings a potential to unite with 'Him'. As a result, it is not uncommon that Muslim, Christian and Hindu-Buddhist students are guided by the same *mistik*. This is permissible since, whatever the religion of each follower, they have a commonality, namely, that they are the creatures of 'God' and given the same potential by 'God'.<sup>38</sup> In accordance with this religious relativism, the term Allah is seldom used by the *mistik*. Instead, they used the term *Tuhan* or in some cases, *Pangeran* (literally, prince or lord).

These two characteristics seem to originate with the efforts of the *mistik* to separate themselves from negative images imposed on the *dhukun*, namely, as heretic. By denying their association with supernatural beings, by refuting some of the practices upheld by the *dhukun* and by emphasising direct spiritual contact with 'God', the *mistik* try to show that they are compatible with the 'orthodox religion' defined in Indonesia as belief in one God. This characteristic of the *mistik* allows them to be less vulnerable to the criticism from the reformist villagers than the *dhukun*. The most probable source of attack from the reformist villagers is the religious relativism of the *mistik*, namely, to which 'God' their spiritual pursuit is directed and from which 'God' they acquire a certain spiritual strength: if followers of different religions can acquire the same result, this would imply that all religions and the God in every religion are the same, an argument which cannot be accepted by the reformist villagers. Facing this criticism, the *mistik* have a reliable weapon to protect themselves: *Pancasila*. As *Pancasila* guarantees freedom to believe in one of the five religions, they give their followers freedom to pursue 'God' in accordance with their own religious conviction. What they emphasise is that, as the state recommends her citizens to believe in One God, so they ask their followers not to forget the spiritual side of their religiosity and the connectedness between human beings and 'God' in whichever religion they believe. The incorporation of *Pancasila* as the basis of their ideology gives the *mistik* a certain immunity from criticism. In so far as *Pancasila* remains an ideology that cannot be refuted by the reformist villagers, so do the *mistik* escape criticism.

The third group of those who pursue *ilmu* is more 'Islamic' than the *dhukun* and the *mistik*. Supernatural beings are not included, ascetic exercise is not stressed while Islamic elements such as Arabic recitation, obligatory and optional prayers constitute an essential part of their practice. No specific term has been developed

<sup>38</sup> In one case, a *mistik* argued that one's affiliation to a certain religion was not at all important since we did not know which religion, for example, of the five official religions in Indonesia, was the right one. According to him, the more important point was that one truly believed in 'God' (*Tuhan*) as our Creator and tried to approach 'Him'. This attitude was extreme among the *mistik* who generally put religion in a higher place than their own practices and equated the latter as a way to make perfect one's devotion to a certain religion.

for them, implying that its introduction has been as recent as the *mistik*. Those who belong to this group will be called 'the seekers of *ilmu ghaib*'. I adopt this term since the young villagers call what is pursued by this group *ilmu ghaib*.

The starting point of the seekers of *ilmu ghaib* is similar to that of the *dhukun*: there exist phenomena categorised as *ghaib* (mysterious or invisible) which cannot be understood or proven by ordinary senses: for example, a thing or a person can be moved without any physical contact. After discovering the existence of the *ghaib*, their next step is to understand its significance for human beings: there is a Being lying beyond the *ghaib*. The rationale on which they rely to explain the identity of this Being separates them from the *dhukun*. The Being behind the *ghaib* is Allah. They are sure of this since they have the Quran, the revelation from Allah.<sup>39</sup>

The next step of the seekers of *ilmu ghaib* after appreciating the significance of the *ghaib* is not just to be satisfied with this understanding but to take advantage of it. They ask Allah to make something mysterious happen to themselves.<sup>40</sup> In order for this to happen, one has to maximise one's ritual prayers to Allah and the recitation of Arabic passages. In addition to these acts, physical exercises, meditations, *dzikir* and breath control are frequently emphasised, while the fast is not strongly recommended.<sup>41</sup> Although some of the methods that they adopt to pursue *ilmu ghaib* overlap with what is emphasised by the reformist villagers as duties of Muslims, the way these Islamic elements are used is different. They put extra emphasis on the selection of the Quranic passage, time and place for prayers and recitations. This is one reason why a *guru* is thought to be necessary in pursuing *ilmu ghaib*. Each *guru* has different ways to select these requirements which they obtained in their earlier career in pursuing *ilmu ghaib* and which provide the shortcut to learn it for the novices.

In a neighbouring hamlet of Kolojonggo lived a seeker of *ilmu ghaib* who had a wide reputation in this area. He was not only a *guru* of *ilmu ghaib* but one of the five speakers in the *Jumatan*. Considering that the *khatib* is reserved only for those who have higher religious knowledge than others, this selection signifies that his religious piety was recognised by others. As this case shows, those who are famous for their *ilmu ghaib* can easily be included in the category of religious leader, in that they have high religious knowledge, are fluent in reading Arabic, are diligent in their everyday prayers and teach their disciples to follow their

<sup>39</sup> Two verses which were frequently quoted to support their idea were: And with Him are the keys of the invisible (*ghaib*) (vi:59); And Allah's is the Invisible (*ghaib*) of the heavens and the earth and unto Him the whole matter will be returned (xi:123).

<sup>40</sup> The act of requesting something from Allah is categorised as a recommended behaviour. It is because those who do not ask something from Allah easily become arrogant (*sombong*), forgetting their dependence on Him.

<sup>41</sup> They do not emphasise the fast as heavily as the *dhukun* do, although it is considered to be one way to facilitate the process of seeking *ilmu ghaib*. The fast which is approved of by the seekers of *ilmu ghaib* is the non-compulsory (*sumah*) fast, which is also recommended to ordinary Muslims.

behaviour. The fact that their practices do not deviate directly from Islamic teaching makes the reformist villagers very cautious about commenting on them. When talking about *ilmu ghaib*, the reformist villagers frequently used the expression 'with the permission of Allah'. With the permission of Allah, everything may happen. However, this cautious attitude is unlikely to make them approve of pursuing *ilmu ghaib*. In contrast to their caution not to talk directly about a certain villager seeking *ilmu ghaib*, the reformist villagers enthusiastically enumerated the conditions under which the pursuit of *ilmu ghaib* could lead to *syirik*. The selection of certain passages for certain purposes and the arbitrary fixation of the occasions, places, and sequences of prayers and recitations were frequently cited examples. They argued that the Prophet Muhammad had not given any exegesis that, for example, recitation of a verse called *ayat Kursi* in the Quran five times is the fastest way to acquire high spiritual energy, *ayat Ibrahim* to strengthen physical power, *ayat Yusuf* to attract women, Surah of *Yasin* to make oneself invisible and so on.<sup>42</sup> The reluctance of the reformist villagers to involve themselves in *ilmu ghaib* also shows their partial disapproval of it. The teachings that they cited most frequently when asked to comment on *ilmu ghaib* were 'when there is something, the identity of which is ambiguous, it is better not to do it' and 'when the danger is greater than utility, it is better not to be entangled in it'. As the identity of the seekers of *ilmu ghaib* is ambiguous, it is better, according to them, not to involve themselves in it.

There are thus three different ways, or *aliran* (currents) as villagers call them, to seek *ilmu*, each of which has distinctive frameworks of viewing supernatural beings and of locating Islam in its ideational system. The introduction of the new *aliran* as alternatives to seek *ilmu* and to interpret supernatural phenomena has been related to the emergence of reformist Islam and *Pancasila*, two leading forces which have regulated the official side of villagers' religious life. As Islam and *Pancasila* locate a monotheistic God in an absolute position, so do the new *aliran*. In this respect, they are better adapted to the new socio-religious environment and are less vulnerable to the criticisms of the reformist villagers.

The new *aliran*, in whichever ways its relation with reformist Islam may be understood by villagers, challenges the efficacy of supernatural beings more directly than reformist Islam does. This is because all of those who pursue *ilmu* work in the same domain, entail similar results but resort to different frameworks to interpret them. It is said that all of those pursuing *ilmu* are able, applying their *ilmu*, to cure disease which cannot be treated by modern medical technology, to make one invulnerable to physical attack, to allow one to be attractive to others, to find lost things and so on. However, they explain these

<sup>42</sup> There is a rationale for selecting certain verses for certain purposes. For example, the ninth verse in the Surah of *Yasin* which goes, 'and we have set a bar before them and a bar behind them, and (thus) have covered them so that they see not' (xxxvi:9), is believed to make one invisible to others.

extraordinary powers in different terms. When finding a thief, for example, it is said that all of them can see the scene of theft in their mind. However, the *dhukun* ascribes it to assistance from supernatural beings, the *mistik*, to his developed spirituality, a potential given to human beings by 'God' in every religion, and the seekers of *ilmu ghaib*, to blessing from Allah. These different ways of explanation imply that the efficacy of *ilmu* which was ascribed to supernatural beings can now be attributed to a monotheistic 'God' or Allah. In this sense, the emergence of the new *aliran* in Kolojonggo opens a more effective way for spiritual power diffused to various supernatural beings to be monopolised by 'God' or Allah.

It is not certain whether this process of monopolisation will continue in the near future. What is certain, however, is that this process will be going on as reformist Islam and *Pancasila* remain two dominant ideological tenets in village life. As long as these two tenets urge villagers to show their allegiance to a monotheistic God and if they can get the same results from the new *aliran* as they obtain from the *dhukun*, it is unlikely that they will retain an interest in supernatural beings, the contact with whom is condemned as non-Islamic. If this happens, supernatural beings, even if not totally freed from their roles of explanation and assistance, will lose their previous identity and conform to Islamic concepts of the malignant *jinn* or *satan*.

## 6.5. Summary

The focus of this chapter has been on the position of supernatural beings and their spokesmen, *dhukun*, in village life. Supernatural beings have faced diverse challenges from different angles. The first of these is the positivist paradigm backed by science and technology. The positivist paradigm has discouraged villagers from searching for a deeper meaning beyond the observable cause and effect, while science and technology have shrunk the domains in which supernatural beings have privileges to be involved. This challenge, however, has not been successful in eroding the basis of belief in supernatural beings. First of all, science and technology cannot replace all of the roles that supernatural beings have played for villagers. For example, these cannot cure all diseases, cannot find lost things, cannot make one invulnerable to physical attack, cannot help one to be attractive to others and so on, all of which villagers still believe to be attainable with the help of supernatural beings. On the other hand, the surge of the positivist paradigm has not been able to create villagers who are brave enough to show their scepticism about the existence of supernatural beings and their power. This is related to the idiosyncrasy of Indonesia where the development of the positivist paradigm cannot proceed to its logical extreme, namely, denial of all supernatural phenomena including religion. *Pancasila* has effectively restrained the full development of the positivist paradigm and has urged it to show its allegiance to religion. As a result, its role has been confined

to shrinking the domains where supernatural beings work, not refuting their efficacy and ontological position.

The second challenge that belief in supernatural beings has faced is reformist Islam, which has tried to reformulate the position of supernatural beings in accordance with Islamic theology. In this framework, supernatural beings with whom villagers make contact are equated with the *jinn*, beings created by Allah separate both from human beings and from Satan. Although not all *jinn* are thought to be vicious, only the malevolent *jinn* are supposed to respond to requests from human beings. As a result, irrespective of whether their involvement in human affairs is benevolent or not, supernatural beings are supposed to be always malignant in so far as they are ready to make contact with human beings. This modification of the nature of supernatural beings by reformist Islam, however, does not challenge directly the efficacy of supernatural beings. They are still thought to have power to fulfil what is demanded by human beings. The difference is that the act of asking something of supernatural beings is now categorised as non-Islamic by reformist Islam.

The third challenge to belief in supernatural beings is related to how to define the being behind supernatural phenomena. In former days when the dominant position of the *dhukun* as agents to deal with the supernatural world was relatively well preserved in Kolojonggo, supernatural beings had the same degree of monopoly over supernatural power. With the emergence of the new *aliran*, however, the monopolistic position of supernatural beings has begun to be shaken. Villages are now given a different framework with which to interpret supernatural phenomena and to obtain supernatural power, namely, a monotheistic God. In this sense, the emergence of the competing *aliran* to the *dhukun* has much greater potential in eroding the efficacy of supernatural beings than the positivist paradigm and reformist Islam. If villagers can get the same result from a monotheistic God as they do from supernatural beings, there are no reasons why they should resort to the *dhukun* who are strongly criticised by reformist Islam.

In some parts of the world where traditional society is rapidly incorporated into capitalistic modern society, belief in supernatural beings has provided one of the mechanisms by which people interpret and conceptualise their new experiences (Nash, 1979; Ong, 1988; Taussig, 1980). It is also suggested that, in Indonesia and Malaysia where so-called 'world religions' backed by the state are expanding their influence over the population, belief in supernatural beings is not on the wane but flourishes (Boon, 1979; Peletz, 1988). Observing the revitalisation of rituals related to supernatural beings, Boon argues that the Balinese society is in the process of *reenchantment* of the world rather than demystification (1979:288). The position of supernatural beings in Kolojonggo is somewhat different from their counterparts in Bali. Although not forced out

of village life, they have not provided a framework with which villagers cope with the changing society. They are under attack both from reformist Islam and the new *aliran*, facing 'the process of religious rationalisation' in which the sense of sacredness is gathered up from the countless tree spirits and garden spells through which it was vaguely diffused, and is concentrated in a nucleate concept of the divine' (Geertz, 1973:173-4; see also Weber, 1963:22).

Compared with the rationalisation process suggested by Geertz, what makes this process in Kolojonggo distinctive is that it is not expedited by the replacement of traditional religion with world religion. Although reformist Islam reformulates the concept of supernatural beings, it has not been successful in depriving them of supernatural power and in concentrating it in a monotheistic God. Instead, what reformist Islam has done by imposing a moralistic dichotomy of good and bad on supernatural beings is to equate the power of supernatural beings with the bad. In comparison with that of reformist Islam, the role of the new *aliran* in the rationalisation process is more crucial in Kolojonggo. By working in the same domain as the *dhukun* but by using different paradigms to explain the same supernatural phenomenon, the new *aliran* opens a more effective way for supernatural power to be concentrated in a monotheistic God.

This distinctive rationalisation process seems to be one reason, among others, that the concept of God who is 'apart, above or outside of the concrete details of ordinary life' in a rationalised world religion as is suggested by Geertz (1973:171) is not the only nature that Allah has in Kolojonggo. In addition to this, Allah inherits part of the nature that supernatural beings have and remains a Being who involves Himself 'in an independent, segmental and immediate manner with almost any sort of actual event' (ibid.:172). This then makes it possible for villagers in Kolojonggo to ask the same questions of Allah as they did of supernatural beings, such as 'what should be done to gain more profit in the business?' as well as more abstract and more generally phrased questions such as 'who belongs to the category of the blessed?' In this way, the rationalisation process in Kolojonggo and subsequent concentration of supernatural power in Allah does not result in a widening distance between human beings and Allah. Allah is still thought to be a Being who is close to human beings and of whom villagers may ask the fulfilment of their wishes related to the odds and ends of everyday life.

Plate 11: Moment of chaos in a *jathilan* performance.

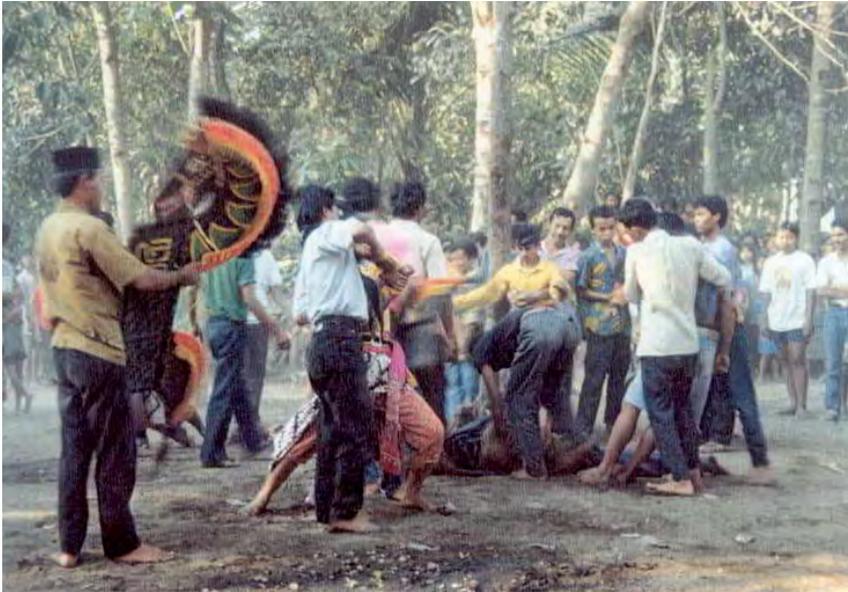


Plate 12: The last scene in the drama performed by Muslim youth (drama No. 1 in the text). From left to right: *dhukun*; Parjo's father; street musician from Parjo's village; Parjo; Parjo's wife.

