

Abstract

This work deals with the socio-religious traditions of the Javanese Muslims living in Cirebon, a region on the north coast in the eastern part of West Java. It examines a wide range of popular traditional religious beliefs and practices. The diverse manifestations of these traditions are considered in an analysis of the belief system, mythology, cosmology and ritual practices in Cirebon. In addition, particular attention is directed to the formal and informal institutionalised transmission of all these traditions.

Detailed analyses of these popular traditions suggest that the Javanese socio-religious traditions can be best understood by tracing their roots in terms of traditional Islamic orthopraxy rather than resorting to other traditions such as a Hindu/Buddhist and an animistic past. Many of Cirebon's principal popular traditions even find their roots and justification in the Islamic doctrines embedded in the Islamic Scriptures: the Qur'an, the Hadiths and in the work of the *ulama*. Although there are indeed remnants of pre-Islamic influence, these lie outside the core of basic religious tenets and do not account for the formation of fundamental religious components.

The principal of Cirebonese belief system is to have faith (*iman*) in which the unity of God is its core. God is enunciated as the sole creator, the sovereign and the governor of the whole universe and the contents thereof. The mysteries of how the universe was created, governed and destined have become the subject of various cosmological myths and eschatological views. This includes the myth about the origin of the universe and mankind including the Javanese, the end of the world and the afterlife. Some themes of these myths follow the lines of theosophic speculation of specific *sufi-tarekat*, especially the Shattariyah, one version of which has been traditionally adopted by the *kraton* circle.

Verbal expressions of Cirebonese beliefs are manifest in various religious practices. The core is twofold: submission (*islam*) and deference (*ihsan*), both are inseparably intertwined. Anything springs up from the spirit of submission and deference is termed *ibadat*. Yet the term *ibadat*, is also used more specifically to refer to the enactment of the five pillars, the main rituals of Islam. Outside this main rituals, there are many others termed as *adat*. An *adat* ritual refers to additional rituals which have been part of the popular traditions by which people express a sense of piety and muslim identity. As there are some form of *adat* in the way of performing *ibadat* and there is a sense of *ibadat* within the *adat*, the difference between *ibadat* and *adat* sometimes becomes elusive and difficult to explain. Yet the way in which *ibadat* and *adat* are intertwined constitutes a general feature of the whole spectrum of the Javanese socio-religious tradition.

It is evident that the Javanese socio-religious tradition is Sunni Islam, acclaimed by its proponents as the "*Faham Ahlu Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah*" (School for the

Followers of the Prophetic Traditions and Concensus). This represents the full heritage of a classical tradition whose roots can be traced back to Ahmad ibn Hanbal (circa AD 855). Bringing with it an Ash'arite theology, the four *mazahib* of jurisprudence and Ghazalian sufism, its presence in Java is as old as Islam is in Java. Through various ways and means this tradition has been formally and informally transmitted from generation to generation. *Pesantren* and *tarekat* (sufi orders), however, are two main institutions which account for a major part for this overall preservation and transmission process. Unless carefully observed the intricacy of this tradition and its transmission tends to provoke misunderstanding.