

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

Throughout the discussion presented in this volume I have attempted to demonstrate the nature and function of narrative in the context of the sacred site of Pamijahan.

I found that even though within the faculty of our minds there resides the possibility to produce an unending chain of 'semiosis', in fact a 'limit to interpretation' is present in 'the signifying order'. Culture regiments our interpretation of particular signs. To see this in the context of Pamijahan means to reveal the 'signs', the 'references' and the 'interpretant' or the possibilities of interpretation and negotiation related to the ancestral narratives performed by the villagers. A careful examination of various interrelated representations of the signs of the *wali* reveals that the pragmatics around these signs are dense in the society of Pamijahan.

It is evident that in Pamijahan the 'past' is towed into the present through *tali paranti*, the modalities of narrative. These are the 'signs of the past' containing the sayings of the ancestors, *saur sepuh*. Most written sacred narratives in the village, namely the historical *Babad Pamijahan*, the manual of pilgrimages, or *Adab Al-Jairin*, the guidances of Sufism, or the *Kitab Wali* and even some recent pamphlets and publications, all rely upon the key word of the *karuhun*, the ancestors' testimony and teaching. By inviting the testimony of the *karuhun* into the narratives, the past is 'broadcast'.

However, the narration of the past always leaves space for negotiation or contestation. Narrative is an open text which invites readers to execute their own signification. This reading process takes place in the contestation for precedence that is expressed in different narratives and symbolic acts within the village. Accordingly, the 'grand narrative' of Shaykh Abdul Muhyi is in fact fragmented into various smaller narratives or metaphors. Within a structuralist Saussurean or Levi-Strausseau paradigm these metaphors of the past could be seen as a rather rigid structure of the *langue*. Such unconscious phenomena, however, are balanced by the pragmatic, conscious narratives produced when the villagers deliberately bring into play various symbolic signs within their narratives: more than one door of metaphor can be opened to tap the signs of the *wali*.

The narratives of the ancestors, then, are not only retold but also translated into metaphors of space in which the four main lines of Abdul Muhyi's descent occupy the four sides, the *pongpok*, of the village.

There is also evidence enough to support the argument that the villagers assume that the *wali's* blessing, *barakah*, inheres in Pamijahan. Thus their main

responsibility is to make sure that the blessing stays in their hamlets through ritualized language and behaviour, as may be seen in the Sufi practice of the *khataman*, through the mediation, or *tawassul* of the *kuncen* on behalf of visiting pilgrims and through other kinds of service rendered to them. The management of this sacred 'business' is then institutionalised and distributed among the main families. Within the *pakuncenan*, all members of the descendants of Shaykh Abdul Muhyi enjoy a very fruitful access to the blessings that flow side by side with the coming of pilgrims, or *tamu*, from outside.