

Foreword

Signs of the Wali is a remarkable study. It focuses on a place of pilgrimage (*ziarah*) — Pamijahan in Tasikmalaya — that is of great historical significance for the foundations of Islam on Java. Pamijahan is the burial site of Shakyh Abdul Muhyi, the prominent exponent and noted teacher of Sufi Order, Shattiriyyah. Through its custodians, who oversee the places of visitation for an ever increasing number of pious visitors, Pamijahan retains its links to the past while endeavouring to propagate the message of Islam in a changing contemporary context.

In *Signs of the Wali*, Dr Tommy Christomy charts his personal intellectual journey. A study initially conceived of as a philological exploration of historical manuscripts was transformed into a study of 'living manuscripts' — the contemporary narratives of the custodians (*juru kunci* or *kuncen*) at Pamijahan. In a growing body literature on the study of *ziarah* in Indonesia and elsewhere in the Islamic world, this study is a milestone. It is a study of depth and nuance written with an understanding of the past but with an equal understanding of modern-day Sundanese language and culture. It is sophisticated in its approach to literary and semiotic analysis and incorporates anthropological acumen that provides an essential context.

Signs of the Wali also offers vital insights into the past and present role of Sufi orders (*tarekat*) in West Java. As elsewhere in the Islamic world, *tarekat* and *ziarah* intersect in popular practice at Pamijahan. Dr Christomy explores this intersecting world, explaining the steps of his own research investigations that enfold as a journey of discovery as he proceeds. This investigation involves the search for traces of *Tarekat* Shattiriyyah in Pamijahan, given the pervasive presence of *Tarekat* Qadirriyah-Nashabandiyyah throughout Tasikmalaya. That *Tarekat* Shattiriyyah survives to this day is itself evidence of the tenacity that its historical roots have established in a particular place.

Good research sets directions and opens avenues for more inquiries. Dr Christomy's work suggests a range of possibilities for further research on the sacred sites, oral history and the transmission of Islamic knowledge in specific social contexts in Indonesia generally and in Java in particular. One hopes that this study will prompt more critical investigations that continue these invaluable efforts.

With initial degrees from the Faculty of Letters at the University of Indonesia, Dr Chistomy took up a position as Associate Professor at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul shortly after submitting his doctoral dissertation in Southeast Asian Studies at The Australian National University. He has now returned to the University of Indonesia where he holds the position of Senior

Lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities. This appointment gives him an admirable vantage point for conducting further research along the lines he has set forth.

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