

# ETHNIC DIVERSITY OF BANTENESE SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstrak**

*Sebagai sebuah wilayah yang pernah berada dalam kekuasaan Kerajaan Sunda Padjajaran yang beragama Hindu dan pernah menjadi salah satu pusat perdagangan internasional dan pusat kajian Islam di Nusantara pada masa kesultanan Islam Banten di mana berbagai etnis manusia berdatangan dari berbagai negara baik dengan tujuan berdagang, dakwah maupun untuk mengkaji keislaman, Banten seolah menjadi magnet bagi orang-orang dari berbagai etnis untuk mencari penghidupan bahkan kemudian menetap secara permanen di Banten dan untuk selanjutnya mereka berasimilasi, berintegrasi dan melakukan interaksi sosial dengan masyarakat Banten.*

*Pada dasarnya, sebagian besar masyarakat Banten terdiri dari etnis Sunda dan etnis Jawa yang menjadi etnis dominan di Banten. Akan tetapi, salah jika menganggap etnis sunda yang ada di Banten sama dengan orang Sunda yang ada di Priangan Jawa Barat dan etnis Jawa di Banten sama dengan orang Jawa yang ada di Jawa Tengah dan Jawa Timur, karena secara bahasa dan budaya ada perbedaan antara Jawa Banten dan Sunda Banten dengan Jawa Tengah atau Timur dan Sunda Priangan.*

*Sebagaimana tertera dalam judul di atas, artikel ini membahas tentang keragaman etnis yang ada pada masyarakat Banten. Selanjutnya, artikel ini juga mencoba menjelaskan struktur social yang pernah dan masih ada di Banten. Penulis mencoba menjelaskan struktur social pada masa Kesultanan, pada Masa Kolonial dan masa setelah Kolonial hingga saat ini.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Banten, Etnik, keragaman, stratifikasi sosial*

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## **Abstract**

*As an area that had ever been under the authority of Hindu Kingdom of Padjajaran in which the majority of its society professed Hindu and it had ever become one of the International trading centres and one of the central spots of Islamic studies in the archipelago during The Islamic Sultanate of Banten period in which many people of various ethnics came into Banten not only for conducting trading activities, but also for conducting religious proselytizing (dakwah) and studying Islam, Banten looked like becoming a magnet for people from many ethnics to earn a living, even to live permanently in Banten. Furthermore, they assimilated, integrated and conducted social interaction with local community of Banten.*

*The majority of Bantenese society basically consisted of two dominant ethnics, 'Jawa Banten people' and 'Sunda Banten people. However, it is wrong to consider that Sundanese ethnic of Banten is the same as Sundanese people of Priangan, Jawa Barat and Javanese ethnic of Banten is similar to Javanese people in Central and East Java due to the difference of languages and cultures among them.*

*As stated on the title, this article discusses the ethnic diversity of Banten. Furthermore, this article also tries to explain the social structure of Bantenese society in the sultanate period, the pre-colonial period, and post-colonial period.*

**Key Words:** *Banten, Ethnic, Diversity, Social Stratification*

## **Introduction**

Based on historical records, Banten had been under the authority of Hindu Kingdom of Padjajaran before Sunan Gunung Djati and his son, Hasanuddin, the two Islamic preachers who came from Cirebon, established a new Islamic Kingdom of Banten in 1525. The subjugation of Padjajaran Kingdom, well-known a Sundanese Kingdom, by Bantenese Kingdom brought a great influence to the condition of Bantenese people. The acculturation process between Sundanese and Javanese cultures, as the two most dominant cultures in Banten, could not be avoided. Moreover, the existence of Banten as one of the

most important harbors in the international trading as well as the centre for Islamic Education in the archipelago had motivated many people from various ethnics to come into Banten. They came into Banten not only for trading and studying Islam but also for living in Banten permanently. The arrival of people from outside Banten with their own culture and characteristics had to willy-nilly acculturate and adapt with the culture of Banten. This assimilation, then, formed a new identity, Bantenese culture or the ethnic of Banten.

The inhabitants, the indigenous people of Banten basically consisted of two dominant ethnics, 'Jawa Banten people' and 'Sunda Banten people. In addition, there are other groups of people who have lived in Banten for centuries, even though their numbers are limited. They are a group of Bugis people who live in Pulau Panjang (Panjang Island). In this area, there are also Lampung people, who live together with Bugis people. Moreover, in Banten there was also a Chinese Muslim community that lived permanently in Pacinan. These facts show that Banten consist of many ethnics. Each ethnic has its own culture and language. Even though Banten consists of various ethnics and cultures, the diversity of ethnics and cultures in Banten, then, do not bring Banten into dissension. Indeed, this diversity has caused each ethnic appreciating each other, and has evoked a new identity, *wong Banten*. In this case, Banten has actually shown to outsiders that Banten has recognized and admitted the concept of multiculturalism since in the past.

In a social life, individuals and groups enjoy unequal access to rewards on the basis of their position within the stratification scheme. Thus, stratification can most simply be defined as *structured inequalities* among different groupings of people.<sup>2</sup> Banten, concerning on this case, recognize the social stratification since the Sultanate period, the Colonial period until present period. This article tries to explain the social stratification of Bantenese society in the Sultanate period, Colonial period and after Colonial period. This essay also discusses the ethnic diversity of Bantenese society.

### **Social Stratification**

People, naturally, need other people in their lives. They tend to possess the instinct to interact with others, and to make a social group to show their existence. This condition, then, creates social groups in the society.

The relationships created by individuals in a society by interacting with one another result in the standard norms and rules which prevail throughout the whole of society. The technique and the way in which the relationships actually

work, affecting the lives of individuals and the nature of society, may be called their social functions. In this regard, Firth interprets life in a society as the ‘organization of the interests of individuals, regulation of their behavior towards one another, and grouping of them together for common action. The relationships thus created between them can be seen to have some kind of plan or system, which may be called the *social structure*.’<sup>3</sup>

The social structure of a community comprises various groups which the people form and the institutions in which they take part. When we speak of an institution we mean certain sets of relationships arising from the activities of groups of people with a social end to accomplish. Dealing with this, Firth states that there are certain principles which become the bases of the social structure, both in regards to groups and to institutions. Among the most fundamental of these principles in all human societies, according to him, are sex, age, locality, and kinship.<sup>4</sup> Soekanto states that a social group is a unit of people who live together, who influence each other through mutual interaction and are willing to help each other. This interaction is influenced by many factors, such as a shared fate, a shared interest, a shared purpose, a shared ideology, etc.<sup>5</sup>

Society is naturally hierarchical.<sup>6</sup> *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* defines the term hierarchy as ‘a system in which people, grades, or classes of status or authority are ranked one above the other.’<sup>7</sup> It seems that in social life, people always want themselves to be higher than others. They want to obtain appreciation and privilege from others and they tend to dominate others. Therefore, we recognize the existence of social stratification.

In social life, the hierarchy, roles, priorities and responsibilities of people are shown by the creation of ranks and titles. About this, Boontharm remarks that ‘in South-East Asian states from their inception up to the present, rank and titles have never lost their function, and have formed crucial elements of all the royal courts in the region.’<sup>8</sup> They help maintain peace and order at the court and in the ranks of the bureaucracy and thus enable the state administration to continue to run smoothly.

### **Social Stratification of Bantenese Society in the Sultanate Period**

In the sultanate period, people were classified into certain categories. The categorization, according to Uka Tjandrasasmita, was divided into four groups: class, i.e. the sultans and their families, elite-groups, non-elite groups, and slaves.<sup>9</sup>

The first class, as the highest class, was formed by the sultan and his family.<sup>10</sup> The sultan was the supreme authority in the state. He had the right to appoint and dismiss court bureaucrats such as his prime minister (*mangkubumi* or *patih*) and fiscal manager, from members of the royal family or the elite, (*pongawa*). The sultan also granted them titles and lands (in reality the people living there) in recompense for their services and achievements, but took them back after their death, although the heredity rights of the influential *pongawa* were taken into consideration.<sup>11</sup>

The second class consisted of the officials of the sultanate such as *Mentri*, *mangkubumi*, *qadi*, *senopati*, *laksamana*, *syahbandar*, and the nobility. They were considered to be elite groups. Some of the religious leaders who were given legal authority were also included in this group.<sup>12</sup> Besides the indigenous people and the nobility (sultan's family) who were appointed to be officials, the sultan also appointed non-indigenous people, such as people from China, India and Gujarat, as *Syahbandar* to help the sultan in organizing the sultanate. Many people from the nobility who are actually the sultan's family were appointed to be officials by the sultan to strengthen the position and the power of the sultan politically, economically and culturally. Heriyanti O. Untoro states that it was common in the traditional community of Indonesia in the past to place one's relatives in certain positions to maintain and to strengthen one's position and one's power.<sup>13</sup> In the beginning, this group was chosen based on their abilities. However, in later periods, for several generations, these positions tended to be based on kinship relations and were used to improve prestige. Indeed, to maintain their positions, they sometimes married the nobility. Their position could be revoked by the sultan at any time without compensation being given.<sup>14</sup>

According to Van Breugel, as quoted by Boontharm, Banten officials could be classified into five types: *Mentri*, *Nayaka*, *Punggawa*, *Abdi Dalem* and *Suranegara*.<sup>15</sup> Even though Van Breugel classified *Abdi Dalem* and *Suranegara* as Banten officials, neither of them were included in the elite groups, because their duties played no role in the state administration. *Abdi Dalem* was even the lowest level in the social stratification in the sultanate period.

The number of people included in the first and second class was limited, while the largest number of people was in the non-elite group<sup>16</sup> as the third class. This group consisted of commoners who worked as peasants, traders, fishermen, etc. This group was also called *golongan mardika*.<sup>17</sup> The last class, the lowest class in this period, was that of slaves who had no personal freedom. Regarding the slavery, Giddens, Duneier and Appelbaum opine that 'slavery is

an extreme form of inequality, in which certain people are owned as property by others. The legal conditions of slave ownership have varied considerably among different societies. Sometimes slaves were deprived of almost all rights by law, and in other societies, their position was more akin to that of servants.<sup>18</sup>

Untoro remarked that the existence of slaves in the sultanate period was due to a number of factors. For instance, they were military internees or they couldn't pay their debts so that they had to work for a certain period of time without a salary until their debt was considered settled.<sup>19</sup> Their life relied completely on their employer and they usually lived in their employer's house.

Concerning slavery, Dinar Boontharm supported the idea that slaves were probably the most important property of the Banten elite. The manuscripts (MS) suggests that in Banten a free man or woman could find themselves in bondage and enslaved for four reasons, i.e.: inheriting the bondage from parents; being sold into bondage by the parents, husband or oneself; judicial punishment; and failure to pay debts or fines. He described three types of slavery distinguished in the MS. The first type was that of the royal slaves or *abdi dalem* or *wong bumi*. They were the slaves who belonged to the Sultan, and probably formed the largest group of slaves in kingdom. The second type was that of slaves who belonged to senior officials and performed both domestic services and military service for their lord. The third type was that of slaves who belonged to ordinary free men. It appears that the slaves of ordinary free men were normally debt-bondage slaves. The MS also indicates that Banten might have been one of the largest markets for the slave trade in South-East Asia since the early seventeenth century.<sup>20</sup>

From the explanation above, I infer that in the sultanate period the social stratification consisted of 3 classes: upper class, middle class and lower class. The first class consisted of two groups; the first one was the sultan and his family, under this group came the elite. The elite consisted of the officials of the sultan and religious leaders (*ulama*). The second class, the middle class, consisted of the non-elite who worked at various trades such as peasants, traders, fishermen, etc. The lower class was made up of slaves and servants. These slaves worked in several places. Some of them worked in the royal palace to serve the sultan and his family, some of them worked for the officials of the sultanate or other members of the elite, and other ones worked for ordinary free men.

### **Social Stratification of Bantenese Society in the Colonial Period**

In the colonial era when Banten became one of the regencies of West Java, the social system in Bantenese society also showed stratification. It - generally- shows the existence of the various positions and class of the members of the society.

According to Utja, social stratification in Banten regency was generally based on several factors such as the indigenous population, kinship, influence and power, wealth and position.<sup>21</sup> Based on these factors, she divided the Bantenese community into three classes.<sup>22</sup> The first class was the nobility. It was the highest class. This group consisted of the descendents of sultans and the regent and his descendents. To the sultan's descendents a nobility title was granted, which was given for generations. Concerning the nobility titles, there was a kind of kinship principle to be complied to by the nobilities. It was only the sons of the sultan's descendents who could keep using the nobility title for their offspring, while the daughters could not. It means that the nobility titles of Bantenese people were, as happened in Sundanese Priangan, passed on by the male-line only. The following were the kinds of titles given for Bantenese people: *Raden, tubagus, raden bagus, apun, uyang*, and *mas* were titles for males; *raden, ratu, apun, uyang*, and *mas* were for females. Moreover, the titles given by the nobility for several people because of their meritorious service were *raden, mas, entol* and *agus* for males, and *mas, ayu*, and *cilie* for females. Furthermore, *pangeran* (the highest title given to a regent), *adipati* (lower title than *pangeran*, given to a regent as well), *tumenggung* and *aria* (also given to a regent), *rangga, ngabei aria, ngabei, panji*, and *kanduruan* (a title given to a male-teacher) were the titles given as a gift because of the position. In addition, there were also titles specifically given to wives and daughters of regents. While *raden ayu* and *mas ajeng* were titles given to the first and second wives of a regent, *raden ajeng* was given to the daughters of a regent.<sup>23</sup>

The second class was *priyayi*. This group, generally, consisted of people who worked as government employees of Dutch colonials who were lower than the regent. Common people could also be called *priyayi*, if they had a high position in the community - the wealthy, for example. These people could be given the title '*mas*.' This title was given automatically by the community in social interaction or they themselves sometimes put this title before their own

names. This title could also be given to their descendents for as long as possible. It meant that as long as they maintained their position in the community, they were able to use this title.

The third class was *cacah*, *somah*, or *wong cilik*. It was the largest group, which consisted of common people who lived in villages. They were usually peasants. Besides not having a title, they were usually poor. To improve their position in the society, they sometimes tried to marry their family-members with people from a higher class, both from the nobility and the *priyayi*.

Besides the three classes mentioned above, there was another group with a high position in the community, namely the religious class (*ulama*). Utja divided this group into three categories.<sup>24</sup> The first was *Sayid*. It was the highest position among *ulama* or religious figures. Second was *kyai* (religious teacher), who usually gets Islamic knowledge from the Arab World. People often respected this group more than the position of *ambtenaar* (official or public worker). The third one was *santri*. This was the category of those who study the Qur'an and classical Islamic texts in *pesantren* headed by *kyai*.

In the colonial era, according to Suharto, the social structure of Banten consisted of a ruling group, namely the Regent, Dutch people, and several Dutch people who helped the regent.<sup>25</sup> This group occupied the highest position in the social structure. Alongside this group were the indigenous bureaucratic elite. In the early times of the Dutch colonial government, the aristocrats (the nobility or old bureaucratic elite) were appointed to be high functionaries to support the realization of the policies of the colonial government and to connect between the central government and the villagers. However, since the colonial government noticed that many of the nobilities of Banten often acted arbitrarily, were corrupt, and sabotaged the colonial government, they then changed their policy and appointed Sundanese people from Bogor and Priangan to occupy the positions of the colonial bureaucratic elite. This policy isolated the Bantenese nobility. Gradually, during the nineteenth century, the number of common people who became part of the colonial bureaucratic elite was greater than that of the Bantenese nobility.<sup>26</sup> This group was the new bureaucratic elite called *priyayi*. The third class was the non-elite group or '*wong cilik*' or '*jalma leutik*,' which consisted of common people, such as peasants, fishermen, traders, *kyai*, *haji* and etc. Even though *kyai* and *haji* were categorized as the third class, their positions in society were very high and well-respected. They were seen as the symbol of social prestige. The last group or the lowest group was made up of people who were poor; they had no house and no land. Their only asset was

their physical power and they usually worked as unskilled workers or as servants.<sup>27</sup> Besides the groups mentioned above, Suharto added another group: the *jawara*.<sup>28</sup>

F.G. Putman Craemer, the regent of Banten from 1926-1931, as quoted by Mulyana, divided the social structure in the regency of Banten into two classes; an upper class and a lower class. The upper class consisted of certain groups of people, i.e. the tenacious economic group such as rich men and businessmen, the religious group such as *kyai*, aristocrats, *priyayi*, *pangreh praja*, and *jawara*. However, the difference between the tenacious economic group and the religious group was often unclear because many religious people were also rich and many rich men also conducted *da'wah*, did the pilgrimage, established a mosque, etc. The lower class consisted of commoners or villagers, such as peasants, traders, etc.<sup>29</sup>

Based on the description above, I conclude that in the colonial era, after Banten became one of the regencies of West Java, the social stratification consisted of two types: upper class and lower class. The former comprised three groups; the descendents of the sultan, the regent and his descendents as the first group, the second one consisted of religious leaders, and the last group was made up of *priyayi* who worked as government employees. All of these people had respected positions in society. The lower class consisted of ordinary people who worked in various sectors – excluding government employees -, such as peasants, traders, fishermen, magicians (*dukun*), etc. *Jawara* who did not work in the governmental sector were also included in this group.

### **Social Stratification of Bantenese Society after Colonial Period until at Present**

Based on the observation and field work conducted by Bambang Soelaksono, the Bantenese villagers were generally classified into five groups.<sup>30</sup> The first group was *jawara*. This group consisted of the young men who became the leaders of the villagers and were followed by the youth. They were considered brave and ready for self-defense. Their actions tended to give priority to their physical power. The second group was *pamong desa* (village administrators). Even though this group consisted of people of various backgrounds from the community, they played an important role in social interactions as a formal institution which organized the community. The third group was made up of religious figures or *ulama*. This was a group of people whose Islamic knowledge was greater than that of the common people and who

practice it in their daily life. Traditionally, they had a duty to control the community, especially concerning religion. The fourth group consisted of *civil servants*. This was a group of educated people who held positions as government employees in the various fields, such as teachers, doctors, policemen and soldiers. They usually knew well how to interact with people outside their villages, and in social life they usually had more important roles and more influence than the common people. The last group was made up of common people. Members of this group could usually be identified based on their economical activities, such as peasants, merchants, fishermen, craftsmen, and the like.

In his report, Bambang unfortunately did not explain which group occupied the highest level and which group occupied the lowest level in society. He also did not mention a group of entrepreneurs who held important roles and are considered to have high positions in Banten society recently. He just classified the people based on their job or their role in society. To clarify this categorization, I compare Bambang's categorization with another source.

According to Tihami, generally speaking, social stratification in Banten nowadays divides society into three classes, namely upper class, middle class, and lower class.<sup>31</sup> Economically, bureaucrats, successful businessmen, and civil servants occupy the upper level. An indication that civil servants are considered to belong to the upper-level group is the fact that many people hope to become civil servants. Every time the government opens new opportunities to become a civil servant, more than ten thousand people register themselves, even though they have good jobs and good positions in factories. It indicates that this job is desired by many in society. For this reason, Tihami includes this profession in the upper-level group. Furthermore, the workers of BUMN (Badan Usaha Milik Negara/ state-owned corporation) are considered to be middle-class, and the lowest class is occupied by people who work as traders, fishermen, craftsmen, etc.

Tihami also remarks that in the social life of Banten, the descendents of the sultan, *kyai*, and *jawara* still occupy the high positions in society. Because of their close relationship with *kyai*, their magical power, and their success in business, *jawara groups* also occupy high positions in the social stratification. *Dukun* are included in this level as well, because *dukun* are considered to have the ability of healing to solve society's problems. Furthermore, the descendents of sultan are included in the upper class as well, because they are considered to still have the charisma of the sultan. An indication of this comes from the

governoral elections in 2006, when Rt. Atut Chosiyah was elected to be the governor of Banten for 2006-2011 because she was said to have the charisma of the sultan; her title '*ratu*' (queen) showed that she was a descendent of the sultan, and she is also the daughter of a *jawara* leader in Banten.<sup>32</sup>

To say that *jawara* and *dukun* occupy upper level positions is for me rather doubtful. Even though there are several *jawaras* and *dukuns* who have high positions in society, this is not because of their position as *jawara* and *dukun*, but due to other factors. For instance, a *jawara* or a *dukun* may be seen as belonging to the upper level group because he becomes leader of a community, head of a village, a village official, or he is a rich man and plays a certain role in society. So, this indicates that the upper-level positions in society are not determined by whether people are *jawara*, or *dukun* or not, but by their role in society or by their wealth.

Tihami, who conducted field research on the role of *kyai* and *jawara* in Pasanggrahan, a small village in north Banten, remarks that Sills' description of the seven aspects of social stratification<sup>33</sup> in a community may be used as guidance to depict the social stratification in the area he observed.

The first aspect is power. It means that people who play an official role in the village, such as the head of the village, his staff, and other village officials, occupy the upper level positions because they are considered to be the leaders of the community. Ordinary people, who are led by them, then, occupy the lower positions. The second aspect is occupational prestige. Tihami states that the villagers who become the civil servants (government employees) and soldiers belong to the upper class. In this group are private entrepreneurs such as those who work in the trade sector, in the area of services, and the contractors. The owners of the farmland make up the third level in this stratification. Below this class are the factory laborers, and the lowest class in this categorization is formed by the farmhands. Dealing with civil servants, he remarks that those who have duties in the religious sector, such as religious teachers and officials who provide religious elucidation, occupy higher positions than other civil servants. This is because the religious officials often take part in religious ceremonies in society; they may even replace the *kyai* when the latter is absent.<sup>34</sup>

Wealth and income become the third aspect to categorize social stratification. Concerning this aspect, Tihami categorizes social stratification into three types: upper class, middle class, and lower class. This classification is based on the physical performance of their property, such as house, land and vehicle. Furthermore, he also categorizes social stratification based on education

and knowledge. Those who possess knowledge, have experience in both religious and general education, and are able to practice their knowledge for teaching, are included in the upper class, while those who do not have these characteristics occupy the lower level. The former is called *jalma pinter* (the educated people) and the latter is called *jalma bodo* (uneducated people).<sup>35</sup>

Concerning religious obedience, Tihami categorizes social stratification into three types. *Kyai* occupies the upper class, after this group come the *ustadz* (religious teachers), and subsequently the common people. This characteristic may be identified by the frequency with which the people perform religious rituals. Furthermore, based on the ethnic aspect, he categorized people into two types, *urang dieu* (insiders, or those who were born and live in the village) and *urang luar* (outsiders, or those who were born outside the village, but live in that village). The former makes up the upper class and the latter is the lower class. This can be seen from the fact that the villagers give more appreciation to the community leaders who are insiders than those who are outsiders.<sup>36</sup>

The last aspect to determine the social stratification in Pasanggrahan in Banten is status in the local community. It deals with the involvement of the villagers in religious activities, such as *pengajian* (studying Qur'an or classical Islamic texts) and *majlis ta'lim* (a forum for studying religious knowledge). Those who take part actively in these activities, according to Tihami, occupy higher positions than those who do not. Indeed, the latter should show respect to the former.<sup>37</sup>

Even though Tihami's study is conducted in one small area in Banten, it may become a noticeable representative of the social stratification in Banten. This is because the aspects of social stratification quoted from Sills' book above can be applied to categorize people in other areas of Banten, and the result will probably not be much different from what Tihami found in his study.

However, if we analyze the social stratification in Banten nowadays, in which modernization by the development of industry, technology, economy and other aspects has required many changes in the social life, we see that the social structure in Banten has been changing. The appearance of new members of the elite such as lawyers, industrialists, businessmen, and activists with their skills, has to be accepted consciously or unconsciously, it is a reality which can not be ignored. The emergence of this new elite has changed the visage of Banten in which in the past, as depicted by William, only the three groups of religious teachers or *ulama*, village strongmen or *jawara*, and local notables dominated rural life in Banten.<sup>38</sup> Nowadays, this new elite occupies high positions in social

life as well. Hence, Banten society, these days, not only rests on the old social authority of *kyai* and *jawara*, but also of the new elite groups.

With a change of the social structure, when moral values and social order begin relying on the material aspect, it is natural that the base of social power which rests on the spiritual force and moral values related to it begins slipping away gradually. Indeed, the material aspects often affect the integrity of the elite group in the carrying out of their tasks. Many members of the elite pursue status and wealth by contravening moral values, sometimes even conflicting with the law.

In his research, Romly states that the role and the authority of *kyai* and *jawara* have changed. This is because of two factors, internal and external. The former is caused by their own attitude, which affected their authority in the eyes of society, such as their involvement in politics in which they sometimes only become the instrument of power, functioning as the justifier of the office holders or political leaders' deeds, as the prime mover of the office holders or political leaders' interest in the support and the legality of their hegemony, or they merely become the spiritual counselor of the political leaders who are not concerned with the problems of the community. The latter factor is the emergence of the new elite who better understand the needs of modern social life, while *kyai* and *jawara* are considered no longer fit at that time.<sup>39</sup>

However, Suparman Usman, as quoted by Romly, sees this change as something positive. He argues that the shift of authority to the new elite in Banten happened because the epoch and the challenge nowadays require a maximum effort of the elite. He remarks that it is reasonable that in the period of the Dutch colonial government, *ulama* played a significant role, because the colonization was against the domain of religion, and the *ulama* as the representatives of religion played an important role in this period. However, nowadays, the challenge faced by people is more pragmatic, therefore the office holders or political leaders play a bigger role in the social, economical and political sectors than the *ulama* do.<sup>40</sup>

In the social interactions of the villagers, people are divided into three categories: upper class, middle class and lower class. The upper class consists of *kyai* or *ulama*, the heads of villages, *sesepuh* (the respected elderly men), and the rich men. The middle class consists of the villagers who work as civil servants, such as teachers, doctors, etc. The lower class consists of the villagers who are mostly as peasants, fishermen, traders, etc. In addition, I would say that

most of the *jawara* and *dukun* are included in this group as well, except for those who play a certain role and have a specific position in society, such as head of the village, community leader, *seseputuh* (the respected elderly men), and the rich men. *Jawara* and *dukun* who have these roles and these positions could raise their position in society to become upper class.

### **Ethnic Diversity of Bantenese Society**

Historically, Banten was an Islamic sultanate established by Sultan Hasanuddin and his father, Sunan Gunung Djati, who was considered to be a saint who spread Islam in Banten. Sultan Hasanuddin was not only the first king who had established and expanded the Banten sultanate until South Sumatra, Lampung, Bengkulu and Selebar, together with his father he was also well known as the founder of Banten and the disseminator of Islam in Banten. As a result, this socio-religious relationship provided a basis for social life in the villages of Banten.

That the culture of Banten was depicted as having an Islamic character may have become a foundation to develop a religious society. The influence of Islam as professed by the majority of Bantenese people can strengthen the social behavior or social patterns that hold high moral values in social life. Helmy Faizi argues that the root of Bantenese culture is a blend of Islamic, Sundanese, Javanese and non-Javanese cultures which form a unique culture and have become the identity of the Bantenese people; it is a specific Banten culture.<sup>41</sup>

The inhabitants, the indigenous people of Banten, according to Utja, basically consist of two groups; 'Jawa Banten people' and 'Sunda Banten people.'<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, she describes that 'Jawa Banten people' are the descendents of Mataram's troops<sup>43</sup> who attacked Batavia. Since the attack on Batavia failed, some of them fled to Banten and lived there. Even though they were Javanese descendents, they did not want to be called *Javanese people*. They preferred to be called '*Jawa Banten people*' or '*orang Banten*' (Bantenese people) rather than Javanese people. Most of this group lived in the North of Banten, in Serang regency. Like the 'Jawa Banten people,' 'Sunda Banten people' also did not want to be called '*Sundanese people*' or be considered the same as *Sunda Priangan people*. They preferred to be called '*Sunda Banten people*' or '*orang Banten*' (Bantenese people) rather than '*Sundanese people*.' This group is also called '*urang gunung*' (mountain people) because they live in the mountain areas. Concerning these two groups of indigenous people in Banten, Williams writes:

“The area of the northern plains is inhabited by Javanese speakers, whereas the south is inhabited by Sundanese speakers often referred to as *orang gunung* (mountain people). Approximately one-third of Bantenese are Javanese speaking and two-thirds Sundanese speaking. Interestingly, there appears to be no history or record of friction between the two language groups, their regional identity as Bantenese being the stronger factor.”<sup>44</sup>

Besides both groups above making up the majority of the indigenous people, there is another indigenous people in Banten; ‘*suku Baduy*’ (Baduy ethnic).<sup>45</sup> *Suku Baduy* are basically a part of the *Sunda Kuno* (old Sunda) ethnicity. People usually call those who live in the village of Kanekes, in the Leuwidamar district of the Lebak regency, the *urang Baduy* (Baduy people). Moreover, they often introduce themselves as *urang Kanekes*, *urang Rawayan* or by mentioning the village where they live, such as *urang Cibeo*, *urang Tangtu*, *urang Panamping*, etc.

There are three versions concerning the origins of this ethnic group. Firstly, it is said that they originated from a group of court officials (*Punggawa*) in Padjajaran Kingdom (around the sixteenth century) who escaped from the kingdom, because of the penetration of Islam into Banten through the northern beach of Cirebon. They escaped from Padjajaran to the southern part of Banten, around the Kendeng Mountains. Before leaving Padjajaran, they at first lived at Tanah Sareal Bogor and were Hindu. Secondly, it is thought that they were a group of refugees who at first lived around Mount Pulosari in the Pandeglang regency, and also that they were Hindu. However, after the Banten sultanate had subjugated their village, some of them fled to the southern part of Banten and established a new settlement there. Thirdly, according to *Baduy* people themselves, they have been living there since eternity. They reject both views above that they should be originally from the refugees of Padjajaran kingdom.

Different from the social stratification of Banten in general, which often changes during certain periods depending on who becomes the ruler, the social stratification in the Baduy community, one of the ethnicities existing in Banten, has never changed from the past until now.

The Social structure of Baduy society is generally divided into two; *adat* structure (the structure of customs) and the structure of government administration. The former is led by *pu'un* consisting of three people<sup>46</sup> and concentrated in *Baduy Dalam*, while the latter is led by the head of a village that is called *Jaro Pamarentah*, which is concentrated in *Baduy Luar*, located in Kadu ketug III or Babakan Jaro.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, in their daily life, leaders in the *adat* structure had more roles in many aspects, especially in dealing with public policy. However, the head-villager in Baduy society is considered to be the lowest position in the social structure.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, there are other groups of people who have lived in Banten for centuries, even though their numbers are limited. They are a group of Bugis people who live in Pulau Panjang (Panjang Island). In this area, there are also Lampung people, who live together with Bugis people.<sup>49</sup> According to Utja, in the sultanate period, the Bugis people who lived there received special treatment from the king or the sultan, such as being dispensed from the head tax. This special treatment was given as a gift because of their obedience to the sultanate. Because of their reputation of bravery in fighting or war, Bugis people were obliged to help the Banten sultanate when it faced its enemies. Moreover, in Banten there was also a Chinese Muslim community that lived permanently in Pacinan.<sup>50</sup>

Moreover, both Sunda-Banten people and Java-Banten people have their own language. The first people uses the Javanese language which is different from the Javanese language used in Central Java, East Java and other areas. Javanese language used in Banten is called *bahasa jawa dialek Banten or Jawa Banten, or bahasa Jawa Serang* because it is different from the Javanese language used in Solo, Demak and other areas. Karia states that the dialect of Banten-Javanese language is different from Solo-Javanese language not because of its structure, but because of its tone, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Some informants argue that Banten-Javanese language does not derive directly from Demak and Solo. It comes through Cirebon because of some similarities between the Banten-Javanese language and the Cirebon-Javanese language especially in their tone and their pronunciation<sup>51</sup>. While the latter uses the Sundanese language which was also different from the Sundanese language practiced in Priangan. Sundanese Banten language derives from Sundanese Baduy. Both of them are distinctive features of Bantenese language.

## Conclusion

The ethnic diversity of Bantenese society has appeared since the sultanate period in which the acculturation between the Sundanese culture derived from the Padjajaran period and the Javanese culture brought by the founders of the Banten sultanate has formed a new identity for Bantenese society, the Bantenese ethnic or the Bantenese culture. Moreover, the existence of several other ethnics that at first aimed at trading and studying Islam in Banten and ,then, they lived permanently in Banten has added the diversity of Bantenese ethnic. However, of the all ethnics existed in Banten, Sundanese ethnic with its own language which is different from Sunda Priangan language and Javanese ethnic with its own language which is different from Javanese language of Solo or Javanese language in East Java are the most dominant ethnics of Bantenese society. It shows us that Banten has a culture diversity in which in its diversity, it forms a unity and a new identity, the culture of Banten or the ethnic of Banten or it is well known with the phrase '*urang Banten or wong Banten*'. both Sunda Banten People or Java Banten People do not want to be called '*urang Sunda*' as *Sunda Priangan people* or "*wong Jawa*" as *Java Solo or East Java people*. They confidently consider and introduce themselves "*wong Banten*".

In every era, Bantenese society recognize the existence of *social stratification*. The existence of the social classes in a society is a certainty as long as people still believe the existence of inequalities among individuals and groups within human societies. Concerning on this, in the Sultanate period, Bantenese society recognized the sultans and their families, elite-groups, non-elite groups, and slaves as the social classes in that period. The nobility, *priyayi*, and *wong cilik* , *cacah*, or *somah* are three social classes existed in the Colonial period. Moreover, the upper class, middle class and lower class are my classification of the social classes in Banten nowadays based on several experts' point of views.

## Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a part of my MA thesis *'the Phenomenon of Magic in Banten Society'*, Leiden University, 2009

<sup>2</sup> Giddens, 2006, 160

<sup>3</sup> Firth, 1958, 82

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Soekanto, 1977, 73-74.

<sup>6</sup> Reid, 1999, 186.

<sup>7</sup> Pearsall and Trumble (eds.), 1995, 664

<sup>8</sup> Boontharm, 2003, 184.

<sup>9</sup> See Untoro, 2006, 78-80

<sup>10</sup> The descendants of the sultan until the third generation were called *warga*. They got titles such as *pangeran*, *ratu* and *tubagus*. Descendants from the fourth generation onward were called *nayaka*. They only used the titles *ratu* and *tubagus*. All of the sultan's family had the right to land, the heirloom of the sultanate and also voluntary labor service and tribute paid by common people.

<sup>11</sup> Atsushi, 2006, 40-41

<sup>12</sup> Kartodirdjo, 1966, 50

<sup>13</sup> Untoro, *op.cit.*, 78-80

<sup>14</sup> Kartodirdjo, *op.cit.*, 52

<sup>15</sup> *Mantri* or *Mentri* are defined as senior Javanese officials born in the sultanate, who were posted in the capital city. Each of them was in charge of a section of the state administration. *Nayaka* or *Niaka* were terms for princes and senior officials whose duties were in the palace. The term *punggawa* represents a group of executive officials who served in the capital or were posted to the regions. The term *Abdi Dalem* or royal slaves covers all sorts of male and female servants in the royal palace. This group of officials played no role in the state administration. Their responsibilities were directly concerned with the sultan and members of the royal family. The *suranegara* were the native soldiers who were responsible for escorting the sultan as his bodyguard. See Boontharm, *op.cit.*, 184-185

<sup>16</sup> Non-elite group constituted of indigenous people who lived in Banten and also non-indigenous people who worked as traders in Banten and lived there as well. Since the city of Banten was a central area of the sultanate and its economy relied on trading and merchant shipping, many traders from other countries arrived and traded in Banten. Furthermore, many of them lived permanently in Banten so that there were some villages in Banten which were reserved for non-indigenous people, such as Pecinan, a village occupied by Chinese people; and Pekojan, a village occupied by people from Cambay, Gujarat, Egypt, Turkey, and Goa. Other people from Melayu, Benggala and Abyssinia occupied areas all along the sea-side, and people

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from Portugal lived in an area near Pecinan and Dutch people lived in a swampy area. See Untoro, *op.cit.*, 81-82

<sup>17</sup> Ota Atsushi defines *mardika* as free people, derived from a common stem *merdika* or *mardika* in Javanese, literally independent or free. See Atsushi, *op.cit.*, 42-43

<sup>18</sup> Giddens, *op.cit.*, 161

<sup>19</sup> Untoro, *op.cit.*, 83

<sup>20</sup> Boontharm, *op.cit.*, 243-244

<sup>21</sup> Utja, 1988, 37

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-40

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-46

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40

<sup>25</sup> There were some positions of bureaucracy in Banten regency usually occupied by Dutch people, namely regent, *aspirant-controleur*, assistant regent, and *commisaris van politie le klasse* and *inspecteur van politie*.

<sup>26</sup> Kartodirdjo, *op.cit.*, 86

<sup>27</sup> Suharto, *op.cit.*, 49-53

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 53

<sup>29</sup> Mulyana, 2001, 216

<sup>30</sup> Soelaksono, *op.cit.* 34

<sup>31</sup> Personal communication with Prof. Dr. H.M.A. Tihami, M.A., the rector of IAIN 'SMH' Banten (by phone, June 27<sup>th</sup> 2008).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Seven aspects to classify social stratification, quoted by Tihami from Sills' *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*, published in New York: The Macmillan Company and The Free Press in 1972, are: power, occupational prestige, income or wealth, education and knowledge, religious and ritual purity, family and ethnic group position, and local community status. See Tihami, 1992, 70

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 70-74

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-77

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-78

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 79

<sup>38</sup> Williams, *op.cit.*, 42

<sup>39</sup> Romly and Taftazani, 2006, 223-224

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 224

<sup>41</sup> Ulumi, 2004, 97

<sup>42</sup> Utja, *op.cit.*, 25

<sup>43</sup> In other sources, it is stated that the 'Jawa Banten people' derived from Demak and Cirebon. See Lili Romly and Taftazani, *Jawara dan Kekuasaan: Peranan Jawara dalam Politik pasca Pembentukan Provinsi Banten*, Jakarta: the Habibie Center, 2006, p. 17. See also Suharto, *Banten Masa revolusi 1945-1949, Proses Integrasi dalam Negara Kesatuan republic Indonesia*, MA Thesis, Unpublished, Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia, 2001, p.45

<sup>44</sup> Williams, 1990, 2

<sup>45</sup> See Suhada, *Masyarakat Baduy dalam Rentang Sejarah*, Banten: PT. Duta Aksara Offset, 2003. pp.47-48. see also Judistira Garna, *Masyarakat Traditional Banten dan Upaya*

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*Pelestarian Nilai-Nilai Budaya. Study Kasus masyarakat baduy, in Masyarakat dan Budaya Banten. Kumpulan Karangan dalam Ruang Lingkup Arkeologi, Sejarah, Sosial dan Budaya*, edited by Hasan Muarif Ambariy, (Jakarta:Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional, 1996), pp.242-260

<sup>46</sup> These *pu'un*s are often called *tri tunggal*. The first *pu'un* is *pu'un Sadi* in Cikeusik, the second one is *pu'un Janteu* in Cibeo, and the last one is *pu'un Kiteu* in Cikartawana.

<sup>47</sup> Suhada, *op.cit.*, 90

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Utja, *op.cit.*, 27

<sup>50</sup> Guillot, 1990, 40-41

<sup>51</sup> Iskandarwassid, 1985, 5

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