

JUM'ATAN IN THE GRAVEYARD

An Anthropological Study of Pilgrims in the Grave of Sunan Gunung Jati Cirebon, West Java

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Abstract: Pilgrimage to graves of saints is popular among traditionalist Muslims in Java. Pilgrims believe that the graves are sacred. Further, they are convinced that the spirits of those holy people still can facilitate them to get God's blessings. Such a case is also applied to the grave of Sunan Gunung Jati, one of the nine saints of Java, in Cirebon, West Java. In fact, the pilgrims acquire God's blessing with the facilitation of the spirit of Sunan Gunung Jati. They call this ritual *jum'atan*, a ritual of performing prayers and chanting holy words in Friday afternoon until midnight. A number of people with economic, family, and health problems flock into the grave of the Sunan seeking for an inspiration to get a solution. In this case, religion, orthodoxy, culture and their interplay in Java is a really complex issue. Moreover, the notion of orthodoxy has been challenged by the thick of myth surrounding Sunan Gunung Jati in particular.

Keywords: Pilgrims, *jum'atan*, traditionalist Muslims, ritual.

Introduction

When speaking about the manifestation of Islam in Java, a person cannot approach it with the stick of orthodoxy. The case of *jum'atan*¹

¹ The word *jum'atan* originally comes from an Arabic word, *jum'ah* or *jumu'ah*, a name of a day in the Islamic calendrical system. In this study, the *jum'atan* is used to indicate a ritual that is performed in the grave of Sunan Gunung Djati, Cirebon, West Java. In addition, the *jum'atan* is not the only official ritual, but there are three others and

(Friday prayer) further highlights this concept. This article describes how Javanese Muslims flock into the graveyard of Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon, East Java. The description of this phenomenon is conducted by telling what really happens in the graveyard. Therefore, an anthropological perspective is employed with interpreting several key issues using the analysis conducted by social scientists in other contexts elsewhere in different religious culture. As the pilgrims visit the grave of Sunan Gunung Jati, the traffic is not one way. Such situation should not be a surprise for socio-religious scientists. The Sunan was a member of *Walisongo*, the well-known Nine Saints of Java. He was also a king of Islamic Court of Cirebon. Pilgrims construct what they want to believe as ‘reality’ concerning the myth surrounding the Sunan in the hope that they will get ‘something’ in return. Several rituals and chanting are created to facilitate their goals. The Sunan now is a ‘demigod’ that is capable of granting the prayers of the pilgrims. He, although had been dead for centuries, can facilitate to ease economic burden, find a marriage partner, heal diseases, and even give children for barren women.

***Jum’atan*: Between Religion, Culture, and Ritual**

It would be best to look at a definition of culture before exploring the conceptions and the constructions of *jum’atan* because this research deals with a local religious ritual, which is also a phenomenon of culture.² The culture, according to Clifford Geertz, is a prototype of meaning, which is articulated or personified in symbolic forms and historically conveyed, a conceptual system that is passed on in symbolic forms, a set of knowledge that guides people regarding life, values, ideas, and beliefs, and involves symbolic aspects connecting

performed at different times and for different purposes. The other rituals are; *Kliwon(an)* which is performed every Kliwon Friday; it is part of the Javanese calendrical system. *Syawalan* and *Muludan* are both annual ritual ceremonies conducted at different times and for different reasons. The former is performed in the month of *Syawal* and the latter is celebrated in the month of *Mulud*.

² Talal Asad and Catherine Bell believe that ritual in the present time becomes an important aspect of cultural studies. In modern anthropological literatures, ritual study is made as an independent chapter and there are books that focused on religious ritual studies. See Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

humankind's system of knowledge and nature.³ Through culture, therefore, humankind can advance its knowledge and share its life. Their knowledge additionally according to J. Van Baal is often manifested in religious and ritual activities, which are symbolic systems through which people view the world.⁴

The regularity indicates and differentiates between the *jum'atan* and non-ritual activities. Tambiah suggests four characteristics—interpreted loosely rather than strictly—that distinguish ritual and non-ritual behaviors. He writes that:

Ritual is a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication. It is constituted of patterned and ordered sequences of words and acts, often expressed in multiple media, whose content and arrangement are characterized in varying degree by formality (conventionality), stereotypy (rigidity), condensation (fusion), and redundancy (repetition).⁵

This definition does not explicitly include belief in supernatural aspect that is a fundamental aspect of ritual. It seems flexible or broad and deals not only with religious, but also with non-religious matters. Belief in supernatural, the spirit of Sunan Gunung Jati is an important element of the *jum'atan*. Victor Turner offers a definition that gives more attention on supernatural aspect in ritual performance as a fundamental element of ritual. He describes that ritual as prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over the technical routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical (non-empirical) beings or powers regarded as the first and final causes of all effect.⁶ For Turner, ritual is considered as a regular act that is based on non-empirical belief, without belief in supernatural, the ritual will not exist or perform regularly.

Belief in the Sunan as a *wali>Allah*, which literally means “the friend of God” (those who love God and loved by God; saints) constructs

³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 89.

⁴ Irwan Abdullah, *Simbol, Makna, dan Pandangan Hidup Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, 2002), p. 2.

⁵ Stanley J. Tambiah, *A Performative Approach to Ritual* (London and Oxford: The British Academy and Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 119.

⁶ Victor Turner, *Sebuah Studi Kritik Tentang Weber dan Islam* (Jakarta: Proyek Perguruan Tinggi Agama/IAIN, Dirjen Binbaga Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia, 2000), p. 139.

the *jum'atan* ritual. As a *wali>Allah*, Cirebonese people believe that the Sunan has a privilege that is called *berkah* from God. In fact, before the *jum'atan* ceremony, the pilgrims always do *tawassul* or *wasikab*⁷ to *rub* (soul) of the Sunan. Some pilgrims have practiced more or less than twenty times and, however, they will not stop until they get 'a clue' of their reasons. In other words, the pilgrims believe that by doing the *jum'atan*, their life problem will be recovered by the Sunan's spirit.

Hundreds of people come to the grave of Sunan and practice the *jum'atan* with different reasons, purposes, and different ethnic backgrounds. In terms of their reasons, however, none of the pilgrims has religious reason, but all are about worldly (or secular) purposes: recovering from economic crisis, willing to have children, healing process, and even finding marriage partner. For people who live around the grave, however, the *jum'atan* has economic impacts they provide the pilgrims' necessities such as food, motel, or others.

A Meaningful Ritual

Contrary to popular perception that *jum'atan* is the weekly congregational prayers obliged toward male Muslims in every Friday, the *jum'atan* in grave complex of Sunan Gunung Jati is a ritual invented surrounding Sunan Gunung Jati as a *wali>Allah* or saint which believed to have supernatural power even after his death some century ago. Unlike other nine Java saints, Sunan Gunung Jati is both a saint and was king of Cirebon Court. As a result, the emergence of devotional rituals surrounding him is understandable as it also occurred in other Javanese Courts such as Jogjakarta and Surakarta. There are rituals associated with Sunan Gunung Jati and Islamic court of Cirebon, such as Maulid ritual, washing sacred weapons ritual and Ramadhan ritual. This article will only focus on discussing the *jum'atan* ritual and its meaning for those who do it.

Like other grave complex of nine saints of Java, the grave complex of Sunan Gunung Jati is never in vacuum of pilgrims. Every day, people flock into the complex of graveyard of the Sunan Gunung Jati, Cirebon. They come by buses, minivans, small cars, motorcycles, and public transportations. According to account of AG Muhaimin, Pilgrims to this place come with various purposes and from various

⁷ It is an Arabic word, *wa-sa-la*. It means to connect, to relate, or to tie. In this context this word indicates making spiritual relation with the Sunan by reciting the Qur'an. People always recite Surat al-Fatihah to connect with the Sunan's spirit.

background, ranging from ignorant laymen to famous scholars including ulama, from poor peasants to very rich Chinese businessman, and from jobless individuals to famous politicians like former President Sukarno and Gus Dur. Until now, there are around one thousand people coming and going to visit this place every day. This number increases to five thousand or more on an ordinary Thursday evening (*Malam Jum'at*), twenty thousand or more on Thursday evening Kliwon (*Malam Jum'at Kliwon*), and hundreds of thousand at the time of festivals.⁸

The *jum'atan* is a religious ritual performed in the grave of Sunan Gunung Djati, one of the nine saints of Java, at a certain time and carried out once a week on Thursday night (*malam Jum'at*) from sunset until midnight.⁹ During this ritual pilgrims recite certain chapter of the Qur'aṅ, usually the 36th chapter of the Qur'aṅ known as *Surat Yasin*, and devote it to the holy saint accompanied by chanting devotional holy words known as *tablil* and *shalawat*. Some pilgrims may also recite other parts of the Holy Qur'aṅ and chant special holy words as they are asked by their *kyai* based on their intention in visiting the saint's grave.¹⁰ While some pilgrims whose purpose in visiting the grave is to facilitate economic wellbeing would recite certain parts of Qur'aṅ and chant certain holy words, other pilgrims with the purpose of finding partner in live would recite another parts of Qur'aṅ. In doing so, that by performing the *jum'atan*, especially at least forty-one times regularly and repetitively, those pilgrims believe that the holy saint would facilitate their wishes with his *berkah* (supernatural power). This religious ritual suggests its link not only with religious belief, but also with religious experience. Religious symbols, expressed in beliefs and rituals, have real power, which can be experienced personally by the individual. Religions often emphasize the power of ritual words and

⁸ Muhaimin, AG, *The Islamic Tradition of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat among Javanese Muslims* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1995), p. 18.

⁹ This is usual the ritual performance, but some participants do the *jum'atan* more or less often.

¹⁰ In fact, beliefs surrounding the sacredness of Sunan Gunung Jati and the devotional ritual for the Sunan are most likely to originate from the *kyai*.

acts as exemplified by the seriousness surrounding the pronouncement of the words and actualization of the acts.¹¹

For the pilgrims, the *jum'atan* has a sacred meaning, is a medium of communication between them and the Sunan, and has mythological or non-empirical importance, namely, belief in the supernatural or in the spirit of Sunan. Mythological reasons, however, are always difficult to be accounted for by empirical argumentation. In addition, the Sunan's grave is a part of the Sunan's spirit; it is a sacred place. Reciting the Qur'an or other religious scriptures is assumed to be a spiritual communication between the pilgrims and the Sunan. The *jum'atan* ritual is a sacred ceremony that is surrounded the Sunan's *berkah*. Furthermore, all things found at the grave complex of the Sunan are believed to contain supernatural power of the Sunan. The most sacred thing is the main gate of the Sunan grave. The grave of Sunan Gunung Jati is inside of a mausoleum that is built to maintain the grave. The mausoleum has a main gate that is opened only at certain events. Most pilgrims want to touch it before and after performing their ritual. Touching the gate symbolizes their hope to obtain the Sunan's *berkah*. The pilgrims always surround the main gate during the ritual and look for seat directly in the front of the main gate. They believe that sitting in the front of the main gate build an intimacy between the pilgrims and the Sunan.

For Cirebonese people, the *jum'atan* ritual has some symbolic meanings. The Sunan is a symbol of religiosity and cannot be separated from the implicit meaning and only the pilgrims of the *jum'atan* can understand it. In African society where Louis S. Spindler did ritual field research, he concluded that none of the African people who have lived for a long time in rural sub-Saharan African can fail to be struck by the importance of the ritual in the lives of villagers and homesteaders. In fact, the rituals are composed of symbols and meanings. A ritual is a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence "preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actor's goals and interests."¹²

¹¹ Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The social Context* (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1981), p. 13.

¹² Louis S. Spindler, *Culture Change and Modernization* (Illinois: Waveland Press Inc., 1977), pp. 183-4.

A Historical Tradition

Tradition is a personal or social behavior that is culturally transmitted from generation to generation and repetitively performed. Belief in Sunan's *berkah* is the most important aspect in the *jum'atan* ritual even though the *berkah* is abstract and difficult to be defined, it is actually an intellectual expression of Cirebonese's belief. O'Dea explains that ritual contains high emotion, is complex and permanent, and has an important function in society. Intellectual expression is always related to with myth and rationality. For O'Dea, myth is a form of intellectual expression, which is a primordial part of religious belief.¹³ Ritual activities additionally directly drive society to particular belief and knowledge.

Tradition is a cognitive idea that supports or controls people's behaviors. Nevertheless, to understand Cirebonese people's behavior dealing with the *jum'atan* we have to consider the context of their actions. Max Weber' theory about human's action is valuable approach.¹⁴ In fact, they have different reasons and purposes for practicing the *jum'atan*. Some pilgrims strongly believed in Sunan's spirit and always came to full belief and practice of faith healing gradually and seek regularly in their individual or collective ritual. For Weber, the human's action is based on individual rationality that is supported by meaningful purposes and motives even though they understand the purposes and the motives subjectively. Therefore, it can be possible that they do the same social action, but the value of rationality is different.¹⁵ The way to understand the meaning of the individual or social actions we need to be empathize and take a position 'inside' the actor. We cannot get the meaning, when we are out of the actors. In case of the *jum'atan*, we cannot reach the meaning of it without exploring the reasons of the pilgrims of the *jum'atan*. Performing the *jum'atan* might be an irrational action according to some people, but not to other.

It is not only a medium of interrelation between social life elements, but also a social regulation that gives guardians of society's members. Social dynamic additionally is articulated as a

¹³ Thomas F. O'Dea, *Sosiologi Agama* (Jakarta: CV. Rajawali, 1966), pp. 77-9.

¹⁴ Marx Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1985), p 12.

¹⁵ Ibid.

communication process with other cultures that is actually to improve their social life. In a word, the tradition is a socio-cultural heritage that is always maintained or defended by society's member as their social identity.¹⁶ Of course, we cannot generalize the beliefs of the Cirebonese in term of interpreting or understanding its symbols. Laypeople's understanding is not as well or strong as the pilgrims of the *jum'atan*. Their understanding of the symbolism will disappear when they do not have any interests in the symbols. The pilgrims of the *jum'atan*, however, always face or deal with the symbolism regularly.¹⁷ Cirebonese people have their own meanings on the *jum'atan*. For the pilgrims of the *jum'atan*, it is a sacred ritual and a medium to communicate to 'holy people.' Of course, their reasons or purposes are different. To understand the sacredness of the *jum'atan*, people need a symbolic interaction approach.

Introduction to Pilgrims

There are five respondents of this research. They become pilgrims of *jum'atan* because of problems they are facing. The first is Rodiyah Ardani. She was born fifty-six years ago in a village, which is called Kertasinga and is well known as 'a religious village'. There are a number of *kiyais*, *langgars* (prayer house), two sufi brotherhoods (*Naqshabandiyah-Qadariyah* and *Syadziliyah*), and some religious gatherings (*jam'iyah*). Rodiyah was from in a middle class family and is the younger of two children. Her father was well known not only as a local businessperson, but also as a local Muslim scholar (*kiyai*). She studied mainly in traditional pesantren in which she was a bright student and oce memorize the Qur'an by heart. She spent about seven years in pesantren. He second respondent is Yayah Rizkiyah: She was born twenty-six years ago in a village, which is called Priangan Lor and was the youngest respondents. Yayah was born and grew up in a farmer family, the youngest of six siblings. Her father was a local *kiyai* and figure of Priangan Lor. As the children of *kiyai*, after graduating from primary school in Priangan Lor, Yayah continued hers study in a *pesantren*, which is called *Al 'Ulum* in Jombang, East Java. After

¹⁶ Jusdistira K. Garna, *Ilmu-ilmu Sosial, Dasar-Konsep-Posisi* (Bandung: Program Pascasarjana Universitas Padjadjaran, 1996), p. 38.

¹⁷ For further readings, see, Irwan Abdullah, *Simbol, Makna, dan Pandangan Hidup Jawa*, (Yogyakarta: Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, 2002), p. 12; CG. Jung (ed.), *Man and His Symbols* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), pp. 299-300.

spending a while to work in Jakarta, she got married which lasted less than a year.

The third pilgrim is Tarmudin Daimin. He was born thirty-three years ago in poor village, which is called Mertasinga about fifteen miles from Astana where the grave of Sunan Gunung Djati is located. His father was a member of DI/TII movement. After graduating from elementary school, Tarmudin spent nine years in *pesantren*, which is called *Kalinungu*, Central Java, and was the third *pesantren* that he lived in. He married to a daughter of abangan leader in his village. He is a farmer. With him, there is Anas Nasuha. He was born fifty-four years ago in Karangjati. Its population is diverse in terms of ethnics and religions. There are three major population of Karangjati: Javanese, Sundanese, and Chinese. Anas Nasuha was born and grew up in a trader family. Both his father and mother are traders and have their own shops in Karangjati market. Anas spent his educational degree in Karangjati: from primary school to high school. He went to Bandung to get a university degree in the Department of Engineering, Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). He made the decision to return home, to get married, and to continue parents' business. The last pilgrim is Munawir Anas. He was born forty-three years ago in Kertawinangun, which is well known as *kampung Arab* (the Arab village) in which Arab and Indian descents live. Munawir has face looked like Arab people because his grandparents were Indian. Munawir's parents also sent all their children to Muhammadiyah schools. After graduating from high school, Munawir studied at Department of Economic, at Muhammadiyah University in Jakarta. After his father died Munawir took over his family business. It was not a smooth transfer because his siblings also want to have their share in the business.

Meaning of *Jum'atan* For The Pilgrims

Health and Healing Process

Tarmudin and Munawir resorted pilgrimage to Sunan Gunung Jati grave complex to find healing for their health problems. Even so, they have different views of the primary sources of healing.¹⁸ The issue is about the role of the Sunan's *berkah* and God's authority in giving the

¹⁸ Some general resources of spiritual healing tradition include Meredith B. McGuire, *Ritual Healing in Suburban America* (New York: Rutgers, 1988); Jerome Frank, *Persuasion and Healing* (New York: Schocken, 1972); and Louis Rose, *Faith Healing* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1970).

healing. God is the source of all powers, but on the other hand, Sunan Gunung Jati is a *wali>Allah* who had been bestowed supernatural power by God and it is widely believed that his supernatural power remains intact up until today. Tarmudin emphasized that the Sunan is only ‘a liaison’ to get God’s blessing. God is the creator of the universe and the Sunan is one of His creations. The Sunan already died and could not do anything. Therefore, it is only God who must be asked for. Tarmudin differentiated between God and Sunan’s spirits that are different entities, but he considered the Sunan an important element of the healing process.

Munawir, however, took into account that the Sunan’s spirit is the central element of healing process. In other words, he unified both God and Sunan’s spirit that are actually interrelated. Munawir accounted that Sunan is a *wali>Allah*, whatever people do to, ask for something to, or believe in Sunan’s spirit, is accepted. The *walayah* is a status of spiritual privilege that directly comes from God. Therefore, Sunan is the ‘representation’ of God in the world. From this statement, Munawir did not differentiate between God’s authority and the Sunan’s supernatural power. Even in ‘traditional society’, according to Malinowski the differentiation between supernatural and other spirits is found.¹⁹ Malinowski’s conclusion is taken from his study about religion and magic. It, however, will not work to be applied in the case of the participant of the *jum’atan* that does not deal with magic.

The views of Tarmudin and Munawir views represent religious belief of Cirebonese people. Tarmudin symbolizes the camp of guardian of orthopraxis which the role of determining orthodoxy of Islamic teachings of society.²⁰ He grows up in an agrarian *abangan* village and is graduated from a *pesantren*. From the beginning, he was concerned with guarding the orthopraxis of his village which in his mind has deviated from Islamic orthodoxy. Instantly after his graduation from *pesantren* he preached for orthodoxy and discarded of local values which tend to mix local practices with Islamic teachings. The teaching of Islamic theology and jurisprudence in *pesantren* has

¹⁹ Roland Robertson (Ed.), *Agama: Dalam Analisa dan Interpretasi Sosiologis* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 1980), p. 53.

²⁰ Michel Chodkiewicz, “Konsep Kesucian dan Wali dalam Islam,” in Henri Lambert-Loir and Claude Guillot, *Ziarah dan Wali dalam Dunia Islam*, trans. by Jean Couteau et.al. (Jakarta: Serambi Ilmu, Ecole Francaise extreme-orient and Forum Jakarta-Paris, 2007), p. 34.

shaped Tarmudin's point of view on orthodoxy. In his village, most of the villagers are *abangan* who are not committed to any particular religion in which pre-Islamic ritual ceremonies such as *sedekah bumi* and *nadran* are regularly celebrated.

Contrary to Tarmudin, Munawir is not well-versed in Islamic knowledge. Munawir's knowledge arguably represents the knowledge of most pilgrims of the *jum'atan*. They tend to see God's blessing and Sunan's spirit as one entity. Their belief has been constructed or elaborated with local and religious belief, and they cyncretically blend local tradition and Islamic teaching. For Munawir, therefore, practicing the *jum'atan* seems to be both cultural and 'religious' rituals. Culture and religion, Clifford Geertz assumed, are intertwined; religion is a cultural system. The culture additionally is not only a set of knowledge that guides humankind regarding their lives, values, ideas, beliefs, and symbols, but also involves symbolic aspects connecting humankind's system of knowledge and nature.²¹

For Cirebonese society, Sunan Gunung Jati is a symbol of religiosity. He is a *wali>Allah*, which is the highest spiritual status of ordinary humankind, second only to the prophets. They also believe that *wali>Allah* is infallible and has privilege from God. By this position, Cirebonese believed that the Sunan is a mediator between the pilgrims and God. This belief roots in Islamic tradition that emphasizes that *wali>Allah* is the chosen one, God's representative in the material world, and has knowledge that directly comes from God.

In addition to the issue of the source of healing, the pilgrims also have different explanations on concepts of health. Certain pilgrims define health in the context of spiritual wellness. The spiritual wellness is important element for physical health. If people spiritually are well, their body will follow accordingly. Health is not a primary physical well-being; health refers to attitudes that are linked to spiritual sources. Tarmudin believed that health includes many personal attitudes and characters, such as sincerity, inner vision, tenderness, and even willingness to listen to people. Tarmudin stresses this aspect in the definition of health more than physical stability, but also psychological situation. Both are interrelated, if one of them is in an unstable condition, it must be unhealthy. In a word, the psychological aspect is

²¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 89.

the most important element in defining health more than the physical aspect.

A healthy person would be one that was whole in spirit, soul, mind, and body. People have to be healthy spiritually, come to know God in a personal way, come to accept Him as their source of life and salvation, and give their lives to Him. When people are spiritually healthy, everything else will follow. The key to health is a good relationship with God. People can be healthy, first, if they know God, because they have the life of God within them. Being born again is more than being recreated, but also the life of God comes within their body and they are permeated with His life. That is why they are not healed all the time; they stay healthy. They walk in divine health. The ultimate ideal is perfection and it was not possible to achieve in this life. This means that a healthy individual really does nothing but to focus on holiness, and if he/she does that all the time, he/she cannot help but become healthier day by day. Norms of health, for instance, are an important factor in the significance of spiritual healing. If all believers are so far from this spiritual health, then all require frequent, regular healing, until the “final healing”—death.

Some pilgrims, however, articulated health in the context of the physical wellness. Munawir, for instance, assumed that a healthy people are those who cope well with daily life. In other words, illness is centered in the body. However, an unhealthy person is a person who is physically unproductive. Physical condition is a fundamental aspect of productivity and, therefore, disabled people are not as productive as ‘normal people’. Munawir’s view might represent a material-capitalism perspective. This means that humankind is only considered as a material element. In fact, in religious tradition, humankind is created from two elements: material and non-material. The material element is the human body that is touchable, and, however, the non-material aspect is the soul and spirit. This is the point that makes Munawir’s view different with Tarmudin’s conception of the concept of health.

The pilgrims of the *jum’atan* agreed that illness is more than just a physical condition, but included illness in social, emotional, environmental, and, especially, spiritual causes. God gives illness to human as punishment for his or her sin. When God created Adam and Eve, and put them in the Eden, they were healthy. However, they were against God’s law; consequently, God drove them to the earth as their punishment and this was the first of humankind’s sin. Tarmudin was

inclined to say that heaven is a symbol of holiness and health. God drove Adam and Eve to the Earth which contains germs, diseases and the like. The fall of Adam was in the same time with the fall of Satan. In a word, Adam and Eve were contaminated with diseases and illness. Munawir, however, believed that illness did not come from God as punishment. He made an illustration of some people who suffered from particular illness since birth or childhood when they were remained sinless.

The healing power here is the notion of powers that have effects on people to become healthy. The pilgrims of the *jum'atan* believed that humankind has little or no natural power to effect health or healing. In fact, Men are mostly sinful, but lack God's blessing. People must get God's power to heal or be healed. God's power can be transferred to humankind and God always gives His power through human agents. This power can be obtain by reciting Qur'anic verses and chanting particular prayers. Therefore, some pilgrims recite the whole Qur'aan and some chant the divine attributes of God (*al-asma' al-husna*).

After those pilgrims perform their share, God would take several forms or ways to bestow His blessings. A pilgrim informed me that there were some pilgrims of the *jum'atan* who obtained cure they were asleep. They saw in their sleep a person wearing blue long dress, like Arab people, and gave a medical prescription to cure their illness. God's spirit enters directly to the body of the pilgrims and they gradually were cured. Forces of differing potency are seen as warring with each other; the outcome for the sick person depends upon allying with the right forces. Furthermore, one's sin is seen as a barrier between the sick person and the cure. The devil might even amplify the barrier, further hindering healing. Healing is accomplished by strengthening the sick person and/or by expelling evil power to cause the illness.

Economic Recovery

Rodiyah's reason for practicing the *jum'atan* is of economic problem. Her son is a *santri* (student of *pesantren*), who is memorizing (*tahfiz*) the whole Qur'aan. It is strongly believed that *santri* who memorizes the Qur'aan will get temptation because memorization the Qur'aan means moving from humankind milieu to God's domain and from profane to sacred. The temptation comes to *santri* or to her or his family and often occurs when *santri* having memorized two-third of the

Qur'ān and about to memorize the rest one-third. The common temptation is the offer to get married, the death of parents, or even family economic problem. Economic problem came to Rodiyah her son had memorized two-third of the Qur'ān as suddenly her family's income dramatically decreased. As a result, she could not support her children in *pesantren* or even daily family needs.

Like other Cirebonese families, Rodiyah tried to recover her economic situation by making special devotion to God. People who do this way often devote special rituals, fasting, all-night prayers in the grave of Sunan Gunung Jati or other grave complex of a *wali>Allah*. This is called *tirakatan*. On the hand, if a person wishes to ask for help from devil, he or she can do so. This is called *nyupang*. Consequently, collaboration with the devil is considered an apostasy in Islam. Certain Cirebonese people believe that devil can give them wealth in return of loyalty to devil. *Nyupang* has several forms: *tuyul*,²² *pocong* (shroud), *genderwo*,²³ and *babi ngepet*.²⁴

The *nyupang* performers often visit to certain places²⁵ and concur with some agreements and prerequisite, which are different among performers, depend on their requests. If they want instant economic recovery, the prerequisite is hard. In the *nyupang* tradition also the believers should provide number of *wadal* or *tumbal* (human sacrifice of offering)²⁶ that must be humankind who are usually family of the performers. Those *wadal* or *tumbal*, however, can be replaced with an agreement, which emphasizes that performers must be from the Prophet Muhammad's *ummah* (the followers and believers). Consequently, they would become an apostate if they do so. According to an informant, many performers choose the second method of its 'convenience'. The *jum'atan* ritual and the *nyupang* are different entities even though the reason is the same, namely, recovering from

²² In Cirebonese society, *tuyul* is described as an undressed and bald little boy.

²³ It is a malevolent (male) spirit.

²⁴ In Cirebonese tradition, *babi ngepet* is described as black pig, which goes out only in the night. When its tail touches in a home's wall, the money of the owner's home will adhere in its tail.

²⁵ In Cirebonese society, the popular places for performing *nyupang* are the grave of *kibuyut bakung*, *asem rungkad*, and *kibuyut trusmi*.

²⁶ These are Javanese terminologies, which indicate same meanings: an offering as a pacifying gift for the Satan's spirit.

economic problem. However, the pilgrims of the *jum'atan* rejected univocally when they are put at the same table with *nyupang* performers. A pilgrim argued that the *jum'atan* is the right way, deals with God's spirit, is not contradictory to Islamic teaching, and does not need human sacrifice. For the pilgrims of *jum'atan*, the spirit of Sunan is central to the recovery in an economic crisis. They believe that the Sunan's spirit will help their economic causes. However, this belief actually is not the only factor, but for local society, the Sunan also is well known as 'the forefather of Cirebonese people'. Therefore, the Sunan, for Cirebonese people, is not only a *wali>Allah*, but also the father of them. Without the Sunan Cirebon Court and culture would not exist politically or culturally.

Most Cirebonese visit the Sunan's grave when they have problems in their lives and they are convinced that the Sunan will help solving their life problems. They consider the Sunan as if he is their father for which they freely ask something freely to their father. For the Cirebonese, this relationship is more meaningful than belief in Sunan's spirit itself. A pilgrim illustrated this relation that when Sunan's children are in crisis or ask for economic recovery, for example, the Sunan, as a father, will not keep quiet on that, but he will help. This relation also can be seen in religious ceremony such as *tablil*, for example, the pilgrims always pray for the Sunan. In addition, the Cirebonese Muslims will pay a visit to the grave complex of Sunan Gunung Jati before they embark on pilgrimage journey to the graves of *walisanga* (Nine Saints of Java) or to haj pilgrimage to the holy land of Mecca.

The majority of pilgrims who visit the Sunan's grave is for economic reasons. They are also diverse in terms of religious and ethnic background. Many are Muslims, but there are also Christians, Buddhists and Hindus. Muslims are usually Javanese, whereas Non-Muslims are Chinese with small percentage of Indian origin. Practicing the *jum'atan*, for Chinese society especially, is based on belief in the spirit of the Sunan. Furthermore, as recorded in history one of Sunan's wives was a Chinese descent.²⁷

In Cirebonese tradition, in addition, the meaning of *hafiz* (a person who memorize whole of the Qur'an by heart) is broader but strict. It is

²⁷ Hadisutjipto SZ., *Babad Cirebon* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1979), p. xxii-iv.

defined not only by people who know the Qur'ān by heart, but also maintain or keep the memorization. However, it does not include people who memorize only some part of the Qur'ān or *Mufasssir* (interpreter of the Qur'ān) because although a *mufasssir* is an expert in interpreting the meaning of the Qur'ān, he or she may not memorize the whole of the Qur'ān. Rodiyah said that all people can learn the Qur'ān by heart, but the hardest thing is maintaining the memorization. Only a small number of people can do it because it needs continuity and time to do that.

The obsession of many pious Muslims to memorize the Qur'ān is because there is a hadith (the saying of Prophet Muhammad) stating that God has promised heaven to those who memorize the Qur'ān. The *huffaz* (sing. *hafiz*) or people who memorize the Qur'ān are the guardians of the authenticity of the Qur'ān. A pilgrim said that it is God's promise, which is explicitly mentioned in the *Hadith* (the Muhammad tradition). Likewise, most *huffaz* have their own *silsilah* (chain of teachers), which is given from *keiyai* after finishing *tahfiz*. This *silsilah* contains their immediate teacher up to the last teacher, the Prophet Muhammad himself. Thus, the *silsilah* always emphasizes the Qur'anic teaching method that the Prophet Muhammad used.²⁸ In addition, there is a kind of belief that even after death, the body of a *hafiz* would remain with flesh and blood even though it had been buried for years. The *hafiz* is drawn as the Qur'ān and their body perpetuity has the same with universality as the Qur'ān. Rodiyah told a story that justifies this belief. Beside guarantee of happiness hereafter, God also promises that *huffaz* will not face economic hardship in this world. Rodiyah truly believes this promise since see no *huffaz* who are troubled in making a living.

The origin of the belief that people who are in the process of memorizing the Qur'ān will have to deal with obstacles is not clear. In fact, this belief is strongly established in Cirebon, which is also set up in Rodiyah belief. However, as far as I know, there is no Muslim

²⁸ In the *silsilah*, there is always emphasis on the names of persons who teach the Qur'ān from the Prophet Muhammad to the *hafidz*. In addition, the name of persons is more than hundred names and the *silsilah* is often different among the *hafidz* in four outstanding *imams* who are "the second person" after the Prophet Muhammad and directly learnt from him. The four *imams* are Harits ibn Zaed, Ibn Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud, and Ibn Zubair.

scholar, or even one verse of the Qur'ān that justifies this belief. Too, there are also *santris* who face no obstacles during memorizing the whole Qur'ān. Rodiyah's belief setting on temptation and memorization the whole Qur'ān may be close to myth that comes from emotion that influences human action. Myth is the world of action and power that always in conflict and whatever people see or feel is always surrounded by particular situation: happy, sad, or depression. In other words, for Cirebonese people, although temptation during memorization the whole Qur'ān does not exist, their belief on that still lingers. By the myth, human being not only can explain their world, but also recall or articulate it. In addition, myth has its own way to explain or toward life, which is unification or elaboration between human's emotion and participation/actualization together. The myth is 'a statement' that contains emotion and important meaning of the position of human beings in the world. It takes them out of time and the empirical world. Its time is always 'recent', creates and recalls what the myth has described or actualized.

Traumatic Marriage

Yayah Rizkiyah had a bad marriage experience and this is the second major reason of performing the *jum'atan*. Most of them, twenty to forty years old and some of them have more than two children.²⁹ Yayah divorced from her husband because of domestic violence. She does the *jum'atan* in order to find a future husband and to make sure that a traumatic marriage will not be repeated.

People who wish to find a marriage partner choose to visit the grave of Sunan Gunung Jati because in Islam marriage is God's prerogative rights, beyond human's rationality, and no people can take over His decisions. Therefore, the *jum'atan* as a spiritual effort is performed to ensure the success of marriage. Yayah correctly cited a hadis saying that only God knows (and decides) about three aspects of human life; *jodoh* (marriage partner), *rejeki* (fortune), and *kematian* (death). Human, therefore, cannot define exactly when the death will

²⁹ Six of fourteen participants who I met and have married problems, wanted to separate from their husbands because their husbands are not responsible concerning family matters, five participants are single parents because of husbands' death, and the others are divorces. Concerning the number of the participants' children: some participants have five children—it is the highest number—and some of them have three, two, one, or no children.

come or who will be a future married partner. *Jodoh* here means a marriage couple who stays in marriage until death makes them apart.

Since it is God decision, human consideration within the marriage such as love or choice is not a fundamental element of marriage. *Yayah* understand this too. She believed that love is changes. Although many marriages in Islam are not started by knowing each other psychologically, couples can find and develop love in time of marriage. Human's choice additionally is not as well as God's choice and people are often trapped in physical elements to choose a marriage partner. In fact, there are a number of people who find her/his marriage partner only after a few days and the marriage is going well. The couple can get this lasting marriage when they put God at the top of marriage process. God's choice is better than people's preference. *Yayah* believes in Qur'anic verse, which says that '...it may be that you dislike something which is good for you and that you like another which is bad for you. God knows but you do not know.'

During the ritual performance, the marriage partner seekers took several ways to get Sunan's *berkah*. Most pilgrims performed *sholat istikharah*,³⁰ which is actually to involve God in choosing a marriage partner. After that they would sleep and somehow God will let them know whether or not to marry a certain person. *Istikharah* is often done or used when the pilgrims already had a choice, but they are not sure whether the person who will be married is good for their life. Before doing the *istikharah*, the pilgrims perform *sholat hajat* signifying that they truly ask for God's direction. They perform *sholat hajat* seven times during the *jum'atan* performance.

After doing *sholat hajat*, the pilgrims recite the Qur'an, especially, chapter 12 (Surat Yusuf) and chapter 56 (Surat Waqiah). Reciting chapter 12 of the Qur'an is believed to help finding a good looking marriage partner and reciting chapter 56 will facilitate a well-financed marriage. The pilgrims always recited them at least twenty five times which symbolizes the number of the Prophets in Islam: from Adam to Muhammad.

Yayah's view on marriage seems to ignore social aspect of marriage. However, she is actually careful in finding a marriage partner because of social and gender justice. She learnt from her own

³⁰ It is one pray in Islamic tradition, which is recommended to be done in critical situation that needs non-speculative decision.

experience that women are likely victims of bad marriages. In her family-and many Muslim family in Java-girls often marry a man chosen by her parents. She assumed that marriage is the powerful legal and cultural institution which poses obligations and duties upon husband and wife. Furthermore, culture often makes or defines the right and obligation of couple. Seeing this issue, Yayah did not agree with unregistered marriage (*kawin siri*) and temporary marriage (*mut'ah*) because those are problematic marriages and put women in weak position.³¹ Yayah commented that *kawin siri* and *mut'ah* are not real marriage, out of marriage purpose, and, therefore, should be forbidden.

Most pilgrims of the *jum'atan* who have marital problems have the same idea about the ideal marriage or ideal marriage partner even though they explained it in different ways. This is probably constructed by their marriage experience. Yayah Rizkiyah, for example is divorced from her husband because of physical and psychological violence. She assumed that the ideal marriage is a marriage that is based on equality of couples in context of life and marriage viewpoints, educational background, culture, and even 'religion'. Furthermore, she said that the ideal married partner is a person, who economically and spiritually responsible in the family not only in term of financial support but also in spiritual life as well.

The issue surrounding marriage starts with finding a marriage partner. The process of finding a marriage partner is unlimited or often unpredictable. The pilgrims of the *jum'atan* who visit the grave of the Sunan are not only women, but also men. As a result, it is unpredictably that their meeting in the grave complex occasionally becomes a medium to find marriage partner. Yayah acknowledged that a number of the pilgrims did find their marriage partner (*jodoh*) by the grave of the Sunan. However, that is only a part of the whole story, for many pilgrims find their soul mate 'outside' the grave. As Yayah put it; 'is is God's will, which is infinite and people cannot question on that or change God's decision.'

³¹ Unregistered marriage is constituted by a couple which did not register the marriage in official institution and, therefore, they do not have any legal document even though binding in term of Islamic jurisprudence. Temporary marriage, that is, a marriage for a particular time in which the couple will automatically separate when the contract is due.

After finding a marriage partner, the second is how to nurture a marriage. An eternal marriage is seen as a good marriage, whereas divorce is not desired. To realize the perpetuity of marriage people should be aware of several key points. Based on her experience, *Yayah* state that emotional maturity is heart is the most important aspect of marriage success. When her parents wanted her to marry with her parent's choice, she accepted it because of the physical appearance of his future husband. It turned out that her marriage had to end up in divorce. *Yayah* argued that both physical and psychological aspects are actually relative. Another important key success to maintain marriage is the willingness to accept others' characters and physical appearance. *Yayah* stated that expecting more than one's partner has is not good in a marriage. In other words, humankind is never satisfied with what they have.

Willing to have Children

Anas Nasuha visited the grave of Sunan Gunung Jati to have children. When laypeople directly supplicate to God, it might need more time to be heard because they are sinful people. In contrast, the Sunan is *wali>Allah* (a friend of God), so he had privileges in the side of God. Again, the pilgrims see the Sunan as a liaison between them and God. The Sunan would bring the wishes of the pilgrims to God directly. He will easily hear the Sunan because the Sunan is His friend. This makes the Anas Nasuha optimistic to have children by performing the *jum'atan*. Initially, he visited a *kiyai* in Banten to resolve his willingness to have children. The *kiyai* recommended him to visit the grave of Sunan Gunung Jati and perform the *jum'atan*. In the beginning, he was not really sure about the supernatural power of the Sunan. For Anas, it seemed to be irrational or a myth. When he performed *jum'atan* more than seven times, he started to feel changes in his mind and his spiritual condition improved as he became more patient and serene.

Regarding the willingness to have children, Anas believed that in his religious tradition, there are two kinds of God decisions; *qadh>* and *qadr*. The *qadh>* is changeable God's decision and there is mechanism for people so that God will to change His judgment. To be educated or uneducated people, to be bad or good people, or to be a healthy or unhealthy person, for instance, is a matter of choice. In case of having children, according to him is a part of *qadh>* and therefore subject to

change. The *qadr*, however, is unchangeable God's decision and nobody can argue about or replace it. For example, we were born as man or woman, as humankind, or in particular a family or country.

Anas Nasuha has been married more than fourteen years, but he has not had children yet. He and his wife really want to have children, which are not only personal, but also social needs. In addition, his oldest brother and youngest sister already have children. They have already taken several methods of having children; traditional, modern, and even alternative. The couple had seen doctors and the examination showed that there is nothing wrong with their reproduction health. Another method is adoption. Cirebonese society strongly believes that if couples who have not had child after a long marriage wish to have children, they should adopt a child to 'stimulate' the birth of children of their own. However, the child that would be adopted must be no more than one year old. Adopting a child, for Cirebonese, is believed can help the couple to have children soon, and stimulate the ova to become mature.

If the pilgrims of the *jum'atan* in the grave of Sunan Gunung Jati have aspiration to have Children, they usually recite the chapter 31 of the Qur'an (Surat Luqman) twenty five times without taking rest. A Hadith emphasizes the benefit of reciting Surat Luqman for those wishing to have children signifying the number of Prophets. Before reciting the *surah* the performer should do *tawassul* by reciting the first chapter of the Qur'an and devote it to each of those prophets.

The couples who come to the *jum'atan* to have children are actually socially under pressure. In fact, in Indonesian culture, for instance, having children seems compulsory for a married couple. The society stigmatizes married couple who have not had children. For Anas, having children has an important role for his social as well as religious life. In the context of Cirebonese' life setting, having children is a social identity that represents welfare and harmony of marriage and married couple. Children in Cirebon's social system are the most valuable asset of parents. Children have the obligation to take care of their parents when the parents grow old. In the context of religious perspective, children are God's mandate; parents should support them in terms of education, health, behavior, and morality. It is clear that having children has some consequences.

Since children is God's mandate for parents, the couple who have not had children yet means God has not given His mandate. This

might because they probably do not have ability to support God's mandate for religious reason. Thus, the issue is not just about medical issue. Performing *jum'atan* would improve their spiritual quality which in turn God willingly change their status to be a potential parent. Anas believed in God's grace and mercy to humankind and that he might not be an appropriate person to accept God's mandate.

Conclusion

Religion, orthodoxy, culture and their interplay in Java is a really complex issue. Furthermore, this issue is apt when speaking of pilgrimage to graveyards of *wali>Allah*, especially that of Walisongo. In this article, the situation of the grave of Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon as a member of Walisongo is analyzed. Like other similar studies, anthropological perspective has successfully uncovered the making of myth and ritual surrounding Sunan Gunung Jati. He is believed as being no longer an ordinary human, but a friend of God with all super natural power attributed to him. He is believed to be able to make people rich, match-make unmarried people, and heal sick people. Pilgrims from neighboring places visit the grave with their own intentions. Special recitation of the Qur'an and the chanting of holy words were devoted to the Sunan for gaining aspiration. Here, the notion of orthodoxy has been challenged by the thick of myth surrounding Sunan Gunung Jati.[]

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