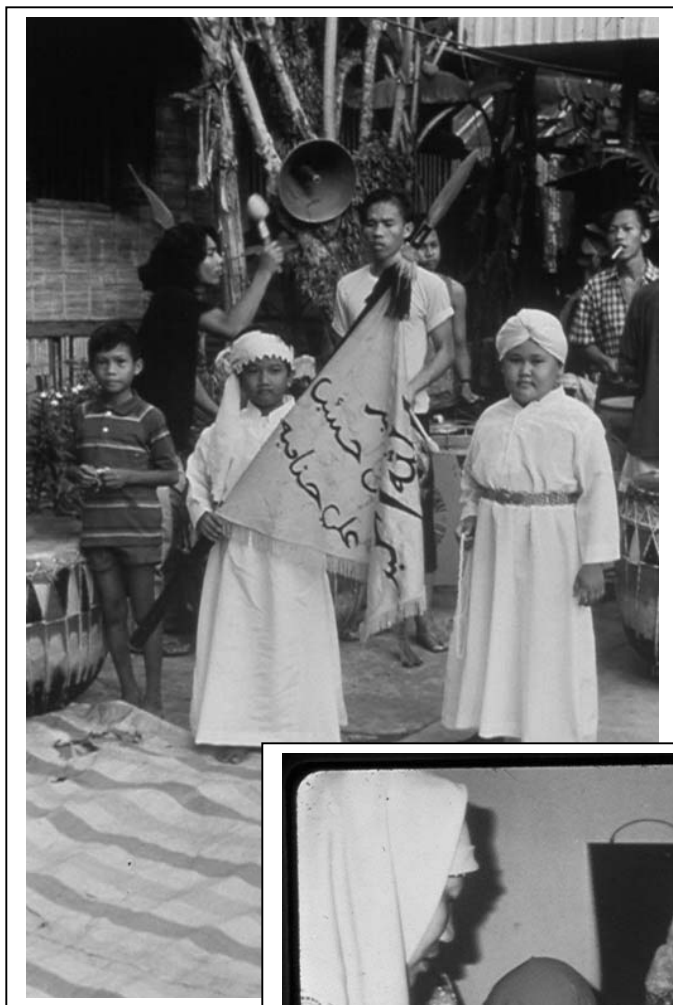


PATTERNS OF ISLAMIZATION IN INDONESIA:  
A CURRICULUM UNIT FOR POST-SECONDARY LEVEL EDUCATORS



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## Contents

List of Images 26

Note to Instructors

Section I: Dynamics of Islamization in the Early Period 1

Section II: Patterns of Islamicate Culture in Indonesia 9

Section III: Islamic Practices in Modern Context 19

Suggestions for Further Reading 28

Appendix I: 'A Visit to Sumatra by a Fourteenth Century Muslim Traveler 34

Appendix II: 'The Council of the Wali Songo 39

Appendix III: 'A Letter from Mecca by a Modern Sumatran Pilgrim 49

11  
III

## **Note to Instructors**

This project introduces patterns in the religious and cultural dimensions of the Islamic experience in Indonesia, a non-Arab Muslim society. Its goal is to foster an appreciation of the distinctiveness of Islam in Southeast Asia, as well as the significance of Southeast Asian Islam in the larger Muslim world. The unit is divided into three sections, which are loosely chronological and also thematically interrelated. These sections deploy illustrative examples of key concepts, such as that of 'Islamization.' Specific examples are drawn primarily from the fields of religious performance, narrative expression, or practices of piety. Each section includes study questions, a list of suggestions for further reading, and a supplementary reading from a primary source in translation. The entire curriculum unit is accompanied by a set of twenty slides, which bear direct connection to the main text, and slide images are referenced throughout the unit.

These materials are pedagogically flexible and may be integrated into a larger curriculum in any of several ways, based on the needs and interests of instructor and students. For example, the three written sections may be employed as a basis for class presentations, with the added option of working with the study questions provided in order to facilitate student discussion. Or, the slides may be presented on their own as illustrations of key ideas and themes which relate to the written materials. Any or all of the primary-text translations found in the appendices may be distributed to the class for further discussion or as the basis of short writing assignments.

The first section provides a short introduction to Islam while it also sketches an historical overview of the Islamization of Southeast Asia in the early period, focusing special attention on the dynamics of social, political, and cultural change. The second section treats the further expansion of Southeast Asian Muslim 'networks,' both locally and globally, as well as the related consolidation of key social institutions such as schools and legal systems, and associated developments religious expression and performance. The third section demonstrates the continuity of many of the practices and ideas described in previous sections, showing the ways in which Indonesian Muslims have continued to reinvigorate the faith they share with Muslims all over the world (such as with the reading of the Qur'an) with new interest.

The dating system used throughout this unit is Common Era. Technical diacritical marks have been omitted from words of non-English origin for better readability. Some abbreviations in the text are the following: Ar.: Arabic; Ind.: Indonesian; Jv.: Javanese. It is strongly recommended that the instructor have available a world map as well as a somewhat detailed map of insular Southeast Asia for his or her teaching reference.

## Section I. Dynamics of Islamization in the Early Period

Islam is the religion of over a billion people, nearly a fifth of the world's population. It is also - one of the three religious traditions that are sometimes collectively referred to as the 'Abrahamic' religions. Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam also acknowledges a spiritual lineage from Abraham (*Ar. Ibrahim*) and teaches that one God has communicated to humanity through a succession of prophets. The prophet of Islam is Muhammad (d. 632) who lived in the Arabian Peninsula, mostly in the two towns of Mecca and Medina. Religious history teaches that—like many prophets before him, such as Abraham, Noah, and Jesus—the Prophet Muhammad's message was not accepted at first by many in his own home. For this reason, in 622, he moved from Mecca to the agricultural oasis of Medina where he was welcomed as the new leader of the community. This move, called the *Hijra* in Arabic, is such an important event in the history of the Muslim community that the Islamic calendar starts from this point.

From his new position in Medina, Muhammad was able to spread his message of belief in one God and associated moral obligations to a religious community that spread quickly throughout the Middle East. (For a short summary of the basics of the message of Muhammad's prophecy, often referred to as the "Five Pillars" of Islam, please see the first paragraphs of Section III below.) Within ten years, until his death in 632, the Prophet Muhammad was able to unite almost the entire Arabian Peninsula under the banner of Islam. From this point, the new faith rapidly spread, so that before the end of the first century of the Muslim calendar it extended from the northwest frontier of India to the east across North Africa to what is today Spain and Portugal in the west. In some of these areas, the Arabic language spread with the acceptance of Islam, both having a profound effect on the cultural landscapes of these regions. In other regions, such as the Persian-speaking areas of Iran and its neighbors, Islam was often also interpreted in terms of the existing language and culture, establishing a pattern of religious and cultural synthesis that contributed richly to Islamicate civilization.

Over the centuries that followed, Islam continued to spread by various routes of trade and conquest to even further regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as to Central and Eastern Asia, with a sizable Muslim population establishing itself in China. Islam also came to the vast Malay Archipelago of Southeast Asia, where a majority of the inhabitants gradually converted and developed unique patterns of Muslim culture, just as other peoples had done in the diverse areas of the Muslim world. Southeast Asia is now home to one of the world's largest Muslim populations, yet it is nevertheless an area of the world which rarely comes to mind when many people think or speak about Islam. Indonesia alone, with nearly ninety percent of its two hundred million people identifying themselves as Muslim, has the greatest Muslim population of any nation on earth. In fact, today, the Muslim population of Indonesia is almost the same as the Muslim population of all of the Arabic-speaking countries combined. Gaining an appreciation of the rich history and culture of Islam in Southeast Asia not only enhances an understanding of Islam as a world religion, but it is also an important corrective to long-enduring stereotypes that tend to equate Islam with the Arab Middle East. One of the many things to be learned from studying Islam in Indonesia is how Muslims have interacted with people of amazingly varied cultures and religions, especially those represented by other major religions in modern Indonesia today, which include Buddhism, Hinduism, and

Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity. The historical processes that brought Islam to Indonesia are complex, and after more than a century of intense international scholarly effort, no real consensus has "been reached on exactly how and when the region was 'Islamicized', or, in other words, the processes through which Islam was accepted as a dominant religious tradition. Some scholars have focused on the role of Sufism (esoteric piety) and its institutional orders in Islamization, while others direct their attention to the local politics of military campaigns in several regions. Although the particulars are not always known, scholars agree on the general point that these developments took place within the larger context of Indian Ocean commercial trade in the later middle ages and what is known as the 'early modern period.'

Reconstructing the history of the coming of Islam to Southeast Asia has consumed the efforts of a number of gifted scholars who have drawn upon the evidence available from such disciplines as archaeology, sociology, philology, and the anthropological and historical study of written and oral documents composed in literally dozens of languages. Chinese court chronicles from the early centuries of the Muslim era (seventh to twelfth centuries) tell us of the presence of what is called 'western' (Arab and Persian) Muslims in the trading ports of the Southern Ocean. These sources also describe the role of these traders as intermediaries in bearing tribute from these small states to the 'Celestial Court' in China. Muslims seem to have played an even greater role in such transactions after the relocation of Muslim traders throughout Southeast Asia following a series of 'anti-foreign' revolts in China and the subsequent expulsion of Muslims from China in the ninth century.

After the Mongol conquest of Baghdad and other 'central lands' of Islam in the thirteenth century, Muslim trading networks in Southeast Asia continued to expand dramatically. Many individuals are known for their travels throughout the cosmopolitan system of Islamicate culture in this period, and a personal account of experiences in Southeast Asia, given by Ibn Batuta (a traveler some have called the 'Arab Marco Polo'), is included in Appendix I. (Ibn Batuta not only visited Southeast Asia, but he is famous for his travels throughout Africa, India, and China as well.) The networks traversed by 'Muslim travelers' like Ibn Batuta were consolidating during the same period that also saw wide-scale Islamization of the population of Southeast Asia. During this period, Islam became more deeply entrenched. in political, social, and cultural life, which meant more than simply the presence of Muslims at scattered trading stations and local courts in the region. In the later thirteenth century, there is documentation of the first conversions of local rulers, such as those of the North Sumatran state of Samudra/Pasai. Shortly after the official conversion of Samudra/Pasai, a number of other ports on the same coast, in addition to ports across the straits on the Malay Peninsula accepted Islam, creating a new local Muslim trading network. These developments also strengthened links among larger circles of Muslim commercial

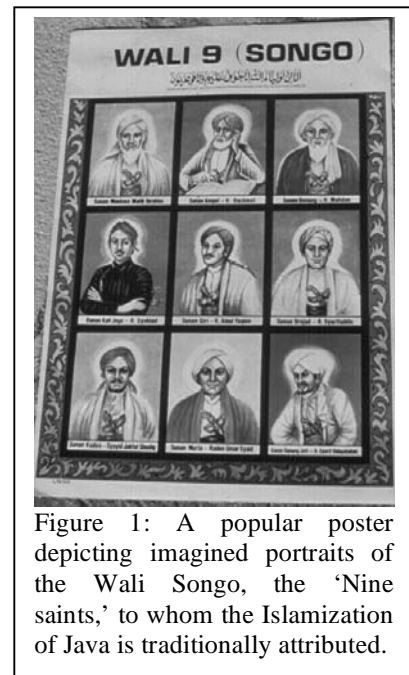


Figure 1: A popular poster depicting imagined portraits of the Wali Songo, the 'Nine saints,' to whom the Islamization of Java is traditionally attributed.



Figure 2: Men visiting the tomb of Sunang Sonang, one of the Wali Songo. The blue and white porcelain decorating the walls around the cemetery is a reminder of trade routes connecting China and Western Asia; this trade network was highly influential in the historical process of Indonesian Islamization.

activity that dominated the Indian Ocean at the time. One major center of this activity was the Malay city of Malacca (Melaka), whose rulers first accepted Islam during the fifteenth century.

Malacca was not only a thriving hub of global commerce, but it was also the cradle of a new Muslim Malay culture that was to spread throughout large areas of the Archipelago, unifying the nascent Islamic identity of the region. These emerging patterns fostered the formation of a language of communication, study, and trade (Malay), as well as an 'Islamicate' way of life that brought together the far-flung port cities of the Archipelago. A new religious and cultural superstratum tied such geographically distant and ethnically distinct areas as Aceh (Northern Sumatra), Pattani (now Southern Thailand), and Banjarmasin (South Borneo/Kalimantan) into a cosmopolitan network of trade, travel, and religious scholarship. At the same time, other areas of the Archipelago began to participate in this regional Muslim trading network, expanding to the east by establishing connections with states such as Champa (which is located in what is currently known as Southern Vietnam), and the

Southern Philippines. In the Islamic history of the island of Java, the early period of Islamization is often referred to as the time of the 'Wali Songo,' the 'Nine Saints' traditionally credited with the conversion of the island (figure 1). For the most part, information about these figures comes from the stories of sacred biography (hagiography) from which it is difficult, if not impossible, to extract concrete historical data. Nonetheless, such stories have long served as meaningful explanations of aspects of local religious and political experience, including the fall of the former 'Indianized' (Hindu-Buddhist) kingdom of Majapahit. The stories also explain and legitimize distinctive Javanese cultural expressions in terms of a more recently acquired Muslim identity. (See Appendix II for a well known story about events in the time of the Wali Songo.) The tombs of these figures remained centers of religious activity throughout the centuries, with people traveling for miles to visit them (figure 2).

Some narratives of the Wali Songo and their descendants (that is, followers in both the spiritual and genealogical senses) also tell of their influence on the subsequent Islamization of other parts of the Archipelago, including the island of Lombok, east of Bali (figure 3) and the outer 'Spice Islands' of the Moluccas, which enjoyed considerable commerce with the ports of the North



Figure 3: The Mosque of Bayan Beleq in Northern Lombok. This recently restored mosque has long been considered one of the primary seats of this island's indigenized interpretation of Islamic culture.

Java Coast. While Java exerted great influence in some parts of the Archipelago, some populations of the eastern islands were Islamicized by way of the powerful sultanate of Makassar in southern Sulawesi (Celebes). During the first decade of the seventeenth century, the rulers of Makassar converted to Islam; shortly thereafter they initiated a series of campaigns which resulted in the conversion of neighboring ethnic Bugis states, and, later, other small states such as Bima (on the eastern edge of the island of Sumbawa). People in this area are still proud of their Muslim seafaring heritage (figure 4).

As with the Wali Songo of Java, these wide-scale conversions are also attributed to the work of a group of 'saints' (Ar. *wali*). Many of these figures are widely believed to have origins in far away places and they are often described as '*sayyids*,' or direct descendants of the prophet Muhammad. An example of a story about this kind of figure is that of the conversion of the first Sultan of Buton, (Southeast Sulawesi) who had received instruction from Sayyid whose father, it is said, had come from Arabia and then had married a local princess in Johor, Malaysia. The ongoing process of Islamization in a region such as Buton incorporated the most fundamental institutions of society, and eventually Islamic mystical and theological ideas provided an idealized model of statecraft in Buton, as well as other areas of the Archipelago (figure 5). During this period, other factors came to have a significant effect on many of the societies of the Indonesian Archipelago. Over time, one particular set of interests became increasingly powerful in asserting their influence in the region; they were of non-Islamic origin. From the sixteenth century on, Europeans increasingly sailed the seas of the Archipelago in the service of their mercantile and colonial objectives. First the Portuguese, and then later the Dutch had a profound impact, not only on economics and politics, but even on social and religious developments in the region. For example, early on the Portuguese actively promoted their Roman Catholic faith among the peoples they encountered, especially in the eastern parts of the Archipelago. Arriving somewhat later, the Dutch invested relatively less effort in such missionary activity, but they were ultimately to exert a much more widespread impact on the region as a whole. The Dutch eventually became the colonial rulers of the entire Indonesian Archipelago, from Sumatra to Western New Guinea, in an empire that lasted until the Second World War. Dutch domination did-not stand unchallenged, however. From the seventeenth century until Indonesian independence in 1945, many Muslim leaders took up the struggle for freedom from foreign domination. Although resistance movements during these three hundred years of history arose out of local concerns and conditions, many of them shared some important aspects, including their



Figure 4: Float of a 'Bugis Schooner' representing the South Sulawesi team in the parade opening the MTQ National Contest for the Recitation of the Qur'an (Jambi, Sumatra, 1997). Inscribed on the boat in both Bugis and Roman script is a motto which translates as, "We pledge our unity."

reliance on Islamic tradition to provide powerful symbols which could motivate struggle. Leaders of these movements also drew on long-distance relationships with fellow Muslims from other islands, and even further beyond, for support. In cases such as such Shaykh Yusuf's resistance in seventeenth-century Banten (see also Section III), and the Padri movement in nineteenth-century Sumatra, for example, political and military struggles against the Dutch both inspired and were inspired by popular movements for the further Islamization of social attitudes and practices. In conclusion, the processes of Islamization described above involve numerous cross-currents of both external and internal origin, making any single model of conversion impossible to apply. As will be shown in the following sections, Islamization is also an ongoing process that continues to this day. Part of reaching a better understanding of the patterns of Islam in Muslim Indonesia today -- whether one is studying an old, 'traditional' practice like the *slametan* (see Section II below), or a 'modern' institution like a new Islamic university -- is to recognize the ongoing characteristics of long-term processes of Islamization.



Figure 5: Royal heirlooms held by descendants of the last Sultan at the Balai Kuning (Yellow Hall) in Sumbawa Sesar (central Indonesia). Many of these items demonstrate the kinds of luxury goods traded in the Archipelago in earlier centuries of maritime history; they also represent symbolic elements drawing upon a wide range of Sumbawan, Indic, and Islamicate conceptions of power and authority.



1. What are some of the 'internal' and 'external' influences that helped to shape the religious landscape of the Indonesian Archipelago?
2. Describe the roles of local rulers, 'saints,' and colonial interests in the Islamic religious landscape of the Indonesian Archipelago.
3. What role did international trade and commerce play in the Islamization of the Indonesian Archipelago? It may be helpful to consider the account in Appendix I for specific examples.
4. Compare what you know of the dynamics of the early Islamic community in Arabia in the seventh-century with those of the early Islamic states in the Indonesian Archipelago.
5. With a majority of the Muslims in the world today living in Asia, why do you think Islam in Asia is so seldom emphasized in the conversations of North Americans?

## Section II. Patterns of Islamicate Culture in Indonesia

One element shared by the Judaic, Christian, and Islamic religious traditions is the importance placed on texts as the means by which relationships to God is expressed and interpreted. The texts of Islamicate literature and Islamic scholarship, and the tradition of religious learning that produced and interpreted them, played an important role in the spread and development of Islamic civilization throughout the world, including Indonesia. As Islam was carried into new societies, 'Islamicate' literary activity resonated with local needs and conditions. In this way, many of the various local languages of the Indonesian Archipelago experienced remarkable literary development under the influence of Islam, as new genres, themes, and narrative elements were introduced. This occurred alongside the 'Islamicizing' transformation of a number of Indonesian languages, as a flood of Arabic and Persian loan-words came into use. A number of languages—from Acehese (Sumatra) to Ternatean (Moluccas) and Wolio (Sulawesi)—came to be written in the Arabic script, and, in so doing, many of these languages were being expressed in writing for the first time in history (figure 6).

During much of the early period of the Islamization of Indonesia, literacy was still limited; a number of popular texts came into circulation that were read aloud to large groups on special occasions. Many of these texts took the form of narratives about the Prophet Muhammad and other important figures in Islamic religious history. These stories helped people to learn more about their faith and also invited their audiences to consider the moral lessons contained in them. In some cases, famous Arabic poems about the life of Muhammad were adapted into languages like Malay, such as the *Burda* of the thirteenth century Egyptian poet al-Busiri, which was rendered early in Malay literary history. In addition to this, other texts were recited in their original Arabic language, although few in the audience were probably able to understand the meaning word-for-word. Both the *Burda* and a similar eighteenth century work, known locally as the *Barzanji*, are commonly recited in Arabic in some areas of the Indonesian Archipelago during celebrations such as the Prophet's birthday, weddings, and circumcisions. There are many other texts which relate to the Prophet, especially in the Malay genre known as *Hikayat* ('Stories'), which offers vivid and embellished accounts of episodes from Muhammad's life, ranging from the cutting of his hair to the delivery of his last words from his deathbed. In addition to texts treating the life of Muhammad, there are also recited narratives about other prophets that are common to all three Abrahamic faiths. One example is the story of Joseph (Ar. Yusuf), which was traditionally recited in Java and the nearby island of Madura for both entertainment and edification. There are also texts that recount the lives of other Muslim figures, including medieval 'saints' from the central Muslim lands. In Java, one important body of texts relates stories of the Wali Songo and the 'Nine Saints' (mentioned above in Section I). These include various episodes, the most popular of which may be that of the 'Council' at which the Wali Songo tried and punished the notorious heretic, Siti Jenar (A translation of a version of this narrative is in Appendix II.). These accounts use the frame story of the 'Council' to



Figure 6: Batik cloth from Jambi, Sumatra (nineteenth century?), decorated with bird motifs and the Name of God ('Allah') in Arabic.

accommodate a series of vignettes which are characterized by theological and mystical speculation; in these accounts, religious material is often expressed through the dialogue of the story. This literature offers much insight into the religious and intellectual world of Muslim Java in which they were composed. Another group of Indonesian Muslim texts recounts the stories of figures associated with the early history of Islam in seventh century Arabia. There are, for example, Minangkabau and Acehnese (Sumatra) works about the Prophet's grandsons, Hasan and Husayn, and also a major Malay hikayat on the heroic champion of the faith, Muhammad Hanafiyyah. The extensive cycle of tales revolving around Muhammad's uncle, Amir Hamzah, has been expounded in various versions in a number of languages, in addition to becoming a fundamental part of the repertoire for a form of rod-puppet theater from West Java known as wayang golek.

In Central and East Java, where the performing art of shadow puppetry (wayang kulit) has traditionally been popular, the very invention of the art form of the shadow puppet theater (as well as of other key aspects of 'classical' Javanese culture) has been ascribed to Sunan Kalijaga, one of the 'Nine Saints' (Wali Songo) referred to above in connection with the Islamization of Java. While the material performed in these settings is ultimately derived from older Hindu-Javanese tradition, Islamic attitudes and ideals have also permeated this art form. A short distance further to the east, on the island of Lombok, the shadow puppet theater has been even more markedly shaped by Islam; for example, the local performing art form of wayang sasak bases itself largely on the cycles of tales dealing with Muhammad's uncle, Amir Hamzah, much like the West Javanese example mentioned above. Through performances such as these, generations of Indonesian Muslims have come to learn about their faith in ways that entertain as well as instruct, while simultaneously maintaining vibrant and enjoyable elements of religion in everyday life.

Puppet shows and recitation of special texts have been traditionally performed on various occasions, including but not limited to major rites of passage, such as weddings and circumcisions (figure 7). Local custom has often had a great influence on observances conducted on such special days. Consider the practice known as the slametan, which is a special ritual meal performed by people in Central Java, the same area known for the music of the gamelan and the shadow-puppet theater. The slametan is held on a number of kinds of occasions, including the expression of thanks for good fortune received. The slametan was at first misunderstood by many foreign visitors to Indonesia, who did not recognize it as an 'Islamic' ritual because -- with its plates of heaping rice-- it probably did not fit expectations (and maybe even stereotypes) of characteristics of Islam in the Middle East. The more one looks carefully at the slametan, however, the more it seems to be a distinctly 'Islamic' practice. For example, the very word slametan is based on an important Arabic word from the Qur'an, and this kind of celebration is

found among Muslims all over Asia, where it is further associated with their practices of the earliest Muslims. The slametan, then, fits naturally with both global Islamic practices



Figure 7. A Muslim bride and groom at their wedding in East Java (1991).

as well as the local culture of Muslims who live in Java.

In addition to such local community or family-oriented activities, there are other collective practices which Indonesian Muslims observe together with their fellow believers all around the world. Like much of the rest of the Muslim world, Indonesians celebrate these observances in ways adapted to their own cultural setting. This is certainly the case with the two great feast days, the first the feast of the Pilgrimage (Ar. *Id al-Adha*; Ind. *Hari Raya Karban*), and the other that of the Breaking of the Fast (Ar. *Id al-Fitr*, Ind. *Lebaran*). The same is also true with the less explicitly canonical commemorations, such as the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid*) and the beginning of the Muslim New Year (*Muharram*). Because these two latter celebrations are not considered formal holidays with prescribed rituals (like those that are standardized for the two feast days), significantly more room is left for their extension and elaboration in terms of local tradition.

An example of a celebration of a Muslim holy day that has been integrated extensively with local culture is the *Tabot* observances in the Sumatran city of Bengkulu (figure 8). The *Tabot* takes the form of a ten-day festival each year to mark the period between the Muslim New Year and the day of 'Ashura' (the tenth day of the month of *Muharram*), on which Muhammad's nephew Husayn was martyred in Iraq in the year 680. This latter event is commemorated throughout many parts of the Muslim world, and is done so in differing ways in various places. In many regions, including Indonesia, a simple meal of porridge is taken communally after evening prayers. In Shi'ite Iran, large spectacles are held in the form of elaborate passion plays which re-enact Husayn's tragic death. In some parts of India and Pakistan, processions move through the streets with colorfully-decorated wooden and paper floats representing the coffin of Husayn being carried to its place of final rest. In some cases, these observances have been influenced by Hindu *Puja* celebrations, and in these settings, they can occasionally take on a carnival, as well as a mourning atmosphere. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the British East India Company established a fort at Bengkulu to help their peppertrading ventures on the Sumatran coast, and the British brought with them soldiers and laborers from India to work there. Many of these Indians never returned home, but instead married in'to local families from Bengkulu. As a result of this, over time an 'Indian style' celebration of this Muslim holiday -which was increasingly mixed with elements of local culture such as music and dance -- has become an essential part of what many people in Bengkulu think of as their 'culture' (figure 9).

It should be remembered that there is considerable diversity, even within Indonesia, as to how such commemorations are observed, varying not only according to geographic and cultural situation, but also along ideological lines. The *Tabot* is celebrated



Figure 8. The grand procession of the *Tabot* festival commemorating the tenth day of the Muslim Month of *Muharram* in Bengkulu, Sumatra (1992).

only in Bengkulu and one other small city in the area, whereas less elaborate observances are much more common in other parts of the Archipelago. In the case of the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, some Indonesian Muslims hold gatherings at which certain texts are read aloud, such as the Burda and Barzanji (mentioned above). Some more strongly reformist-minded believers may object to such public recitations altogether, not finding a precedent for them in the Qur'an or the practice of the Prophet himself. Nevertheless, in a place such as Central Java, many will go to the large park in front of the Sultan's palaces in the royal cities of Surakarta and Yogyakarta to celebrate Sekaten and Garebeg Mulud; this is a week-long period of public fairs and entertainment that link a symbolic day of the Muslim calendar with official state ceremonies. Here (as in the case of the polity of Buton mentioned above), an intricate pattern of Islamic ideas and local cultural tradition has evolved which seems to include almost all dimensions of social experience.

From the fourteenth century on, many societies in the Archipelago integrated Islam into their most basic institutions, including political, legal, and educational systems. Along with instances in which Islamic cosmological theories and popular celebrations were employed in ways consistent with local ideals of political power, an Islamicizing transformation also occurred in the area of law. The rulers of some Southeast Asian sultanates established courts in which Islamic law was locally interpreted and applied.

Such institutions differed from place to place where they were in effect, but it is certain that they established traditions of Islamic legal practice in a number of centers (such as Aceh, Banten, Buton, Java, Kalimantan / Borneo, and elsewhere), representing in these areas a further dimension of the ongoing process of the Islamization of social institutions in Indonesia.

Wherever they were put in place, Islamic courts drew their functionaries from the much larger circles of religious scholars (ulama). All religious scholars, are required to study law at least to a certain extent, but only a few qualified legal scholars actually chose to participate actively in the more formal institutions of the formal application of Islamic law. Many of these



Figure 9. Children dressed as key Islamic figures; part of a music and dance performance for the Tabot festival in Bengkulu (1992).



Figure 10. 'Masjid Goa' ('Katangka Mosque') in Makassar (Ujungpandang), South Sulawesi. It is said that this mosque stands on the site of the first to have been established the area, built in the sixteenth century.

religious scholars elected instead to remain independent scholars, sometimes teaching in mosques located in the busy ports or other urban centers (figure 10), or in independent rural centers of study known in Java as pondok pesantren. Although these institutions were occasionally located in remote areas of the countryside, they nonetheless maintained something of a 'cosmopolitan' outlook by way of extensive networks connecting them to similar institutions of Muslim learning around the Archipelago and abroad. For instance, many of the leading families of religious scholars in Java and Madura were related through an elaborate web of intermarriage. Beyond this, there was great emphasis placed on the highly-valued bond between students and their teachers, and these ties linked rural scholars with colleagues thousands of miles away.

Long-distance networks were also a result of the fact that a number of eager Indonesian students of religion had traveled to the Middle East in order to study with renowned teachers in centers such as Mecca, Medina, Cairo, and Damascus, as well as the scholarly towns of Yemen in southern Arabia. Such extensive travel in the quest for knowledge by Indonesian scholars is documented from the first part of the seventeenth century, if not earlier. In addition to this, Muslim scholars from India and the Middle East found their way to various parts of the Archipelago, where they attracted new students. Some of these individuals spent years as itinerant teachers, moving from one port to the next; others eventually settled in new homes, sometimes marrying into prominent families, which afforded them further influence among circles of the local political and mercantile elite.

Accompanying this movement of people was also a movement of ideas. The subjects studied from foreign teachers or in far-off centers of learning were selectively adopted and adapted to local needs, creating a unique Indonesian version of global Muslim traditions of education. A certain corpus of texts gained favor in circulation in the Archipelago, disseminating ideas not only in the field of legal studies, but also in Arabic grammar, religious mysticism, dogmatic theology, and Qur'an interpretation. Since the primary language of international Muslim scholarship was and remains Arabic, most subjects were taught in that language. However, over time a number of these works were translated, interpreted, or otherwise adapted into Malay or local languages in order to aid those less proficient in Arabic, such as beginning students. Later, some authors (Indonesians and also those who came originally from outside the Archipelago) composed original works of Muslim learning in such languages as Malay, Javanese, Sundanese, Buginese, and Makassarese, all of

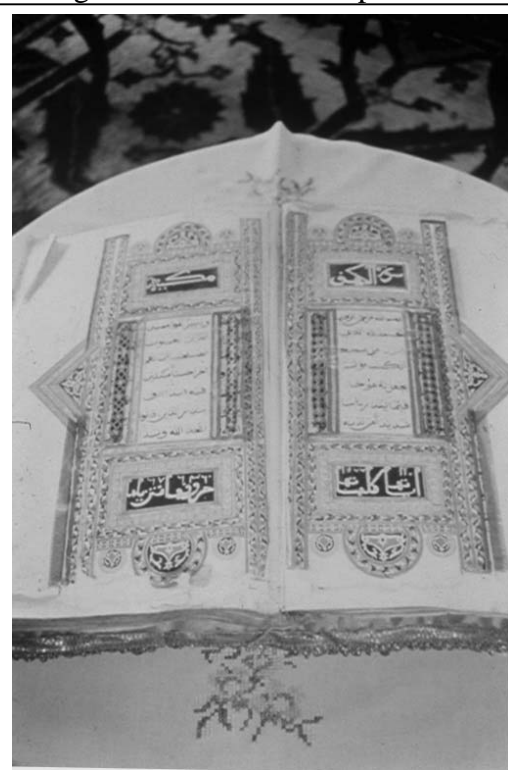


Figure 11. An illuminated Qur'an manuscript from the former Sultan's palace library in Sima, eastern Indonesia.

which written in the same Arabic script (just like European languages like English and Spanish are all written in the 'roman' script). Collectively, these writings came to be referred to as the 'Yellow Books' (Ind. kitab kuning) because of the yellowed paper on which they were printed. These works were the mainstay of pesantren (religious school) curriculum well into the twentieth century, and they have only recently been begun to be displaced by other works.

One text which remains a constant, undisputed object of attention in all circles is the Qur'an (figure 11). As Muslims believe it to be the actual Word of God delivered in Arabic, its position as the foundation of all Islamic learning and culture is absolute. In fact, learning to read and memorize the text of the Qur'an has always been the first step in a Muslim's education in Indonesia -- as is the case in all parts of the Muslim world. Many students from the pondok pesantren ('traditional.' religious schools) did not choose to pursue higher studies such as those in law mentioned above, but instead they chose to focus their entire careers around the text of the Qur'an, either as professional reciters or as local teachers who specialized in the instruction of the Qur'an for children. The continuities of institutions and practices under modern conditions -- not just religious education, but also the other aspects of Islamicate culture described in this section -- are the subject of Section III to follow.

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### Study Questions

1. What are some of the sources for Islamic narratives in Southeast Asia and how have they been adapted to local cultural conditions?
2. What kinds of institutions have contributed to the consolidation of Islamicate civilization in its Indonesian context?
3. How would you describe the development of educational networks in the Indonesian Archipelago and the larger Muslim world?
4. What is the role of the Arabic language and script in the development of Islamicate culture in Southeast Asia?
5. Describe the way in which Muslim life cycle rituals and calendrical observances have been transformed and adapted to the particular geographic and cultural situation of Indonesia.
6. Read the narrative of 'The Council of the Wali Songo' in Appendix II. What aspects of this account would you identify as moral instruction, religiously oriented entertainment, and/or the expression of a local Javanese Muslim identity?



### Section III. Islamic Practices in Modern Context

Previous sections have treated the historical and sociological contours of the coming of Islam to the Indonesian Archipelago. There has also been consideration of the related development of Muslim institutions and practices that have continued to respond to changes, such as the Dutch colonization of Indonesia. As many scholars have observed, however, the process of Islamization continues to this day, even though contemporary Muslims in Indonesia do not actively try to convert people of other religions. Indonesian Muslims do, however, try energetically to ‘invite’ people who share their faith to deepen their own understanding and commitment to a way of life that is spiritually fulfilling and which offers the satisfying sense of participating in religious community. The Arabic word for this kind of ‘invitation’ is *da’wah*, which can mean slightly different things in different parts of the Muslim world. In Indonesia, the idea of *da’wah* is often closely associated with learning more about Islam. These activities take place in new kinds of schools, through Islamic ‘cultural’ performances, or by way of the ‘Islamic arts,’ and they include practices that feature the Islamic Holy Book of the Qur’an, such as Arabic calligraphy or reading the Qur’an out loud with great technical artistry (Figure 12). Many Muslims in Indonesia think that by showing others that religion can be enriching, fun, and beautiful, more people will become interested in contributing to their own religious tradition. This way of thinking is being expressed in Indonesian Muslim culture through many different modes, from a musical form known as dangdut which is a favorite of young people to an explosion of popular literature about religious thought and practice.

Many Indonesian Muslims, like most religious people in general, want to apply what they understand to be the ideals of Islam to the realities of their own lives, communities, and nation. Naturally, the specific ways that these ideals are envisioned can vary among people, among communities, and among nations. In the history of Islam, there have always been people who have considered themselves to be ‘renewing’ (Ar., *tajdid*) Islamic ideals in their community, or ‘reforming’ (Ar., *islah*) their society in accord with these ideals, based on their own vision and as their own response to specific cultural and historical circumstances. Many of these ‘renewers’ in Islamic history have had a great impact on the development of Islam in Indonesia. For example, one ‘renewer’ was the great thinker, Abu Hamidal-Ghazzali (d. 1111), who wrote books that brought together ideas from philosophy, theology, law, and mysticism in a way that helped people up until the present day make sense of the role of Islam in their own experience. An example of a ‘reformer’ was Ibn Taimiyya (d. 1328), who was a member of a Sufi order, but who also wanted to counteract certain practices (like the veneration of ‘saints’ at their tombs) that he thought



Figure 12: Students working on Arabic calligraphy for a local competition in the northern Mandar region of South Sulawesi (1994).

confused people and distorted Islamic ideals. Both al-Ghazzali and Ibn Taimiyya have inspired many Indonesian ‘renewers’ and ‘reformers,’ as have more modern thinkers from the Middle East and elsewhere who want to reinvigorate Islam in the way they understand to be the best response to the challenges of modern life that people face all over the world.

Despite differences of opinion that add vitality to any religious or cultural tradition, there are many points on which modern Indonesians have a great deal of agreement. Among these is the idea of a shared project among Muslims of exploring potential relationships between Islamic ideas and practices to other personal and community values, so that people may feel that their social and religious lives are more meaningful. This takes place not only by way of talking about these possibilities in the abstract, but more directly by ‘re-Islamicizing’ actual religious practices in which, ideally, any Muslim can take part. In other words, continuing Islamization in the form of Islamic ‘resurgence’ is occurring in Indonesia by way of reinvigorating old practices under new conditions.

One kind of practice that is enjoying increasing popularity is the recitation of religious texts. There are many kinds of texts that Muslims read out loud, some in Arabic, and some in local or ‘vernacular’ languages. For example, at the tomb of Shaykh Yusuf in Ujungpandang (Shaykh Yusuf was also discussed in Section II), there is a person sitting beside the grave who helps visitors by reciting special prayers for them (Figure 13). This is the case with many tombs in Indonesia and elsewhere in this Muslim world, and relates to a very old tradition which is part of the patterns of piety that were discussed



Figure 13: Women making offerings of flowers and scented oil at the tomb of Shaykh Yusuf Makassar in Ujungpandang (1996). At the far end of the grave; specialists perform ritual acts to assist the visitors to the site, many of whom having come with children to venerate the ‘saint’ and to receive blessings. Shaykh Yusuf was active in the resistance against the Dutch and is credited with bringing Islam to South Africa during his exile there, among his other accomplishments.

in Sections I and II. There are other kinds of devotional recitations that Indonesians have been performing together for a long time, such as the reading of texts dedicated to the Prophet Muhammad, which is done on occasions such as the birthday of the Prophet, but these performances—like the slametan mentioned in Section II—also occur on other occasions when people want to assert the connection between their own lives and a Divine Reality.



Figure 14: ‘Dhikr Jum’at’ (reading of a Barzanji text) at the palace of the former kings of Goa, Makassar (Ujungpandang), South Sulawesi (1997) At one time, this reading was performed every Thursday night; now it is observed more infrequently.

The recitation of the Barzanji is one example of a religious practice that is observed by people in many parts of the Islamic world (including the Middle East), which some ‘reformers’ have seen as unhelpful to Muslims in adapting their piety to the moral and material challenges of modern life. On the other hand,

many ‘renewers’ in Indonesia see the Barzanji as a way to assert in the present their sense of continuity with the religious past of their local community, while they also express the meaning that the Prophet Muhammad holds for them as an exemplary human being. The Barzanji is performed today in a number of contexts; some of them seem very ‘traditional,’ like the ‘Royal Dhikr’ in an old palace in South Sulawesi (Figure 14), and some of them seem very ‘modern,’ as in the case of a big contest for children in reading the text out loud, sponsored by a large corporation and held on its grounds. Whether they seem ‘old’ or ‘new’ to us—or even to the people who perform them—it is important to keep in mind that today the same people are reading the same text on all kinds of occasions—both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’—and that this connection offers the depth of ‘tradition’ to what feels ‘new,’ while it lends a ‘modern’ relevance to what seems ‘old.’

Contests, like the competition in reading the Barzanji mentioned above, are popular formats for religious expression. In Indonesia, Muslims are finding that competitions in all kinds of ‘Islamic’ arts are effective and enjoyable ways to bring together individual practice and shared values in a context that is lively and which potentially offers everyone a turn on stage. There is a special kind of competition that began in Indonesia that is now quickly spreading throughout the Islamic world today as a form of *da’wah*, which are contests in Qur’an reading, memorization, calligraphy, and comprehension (Figure 15).

Qur’an reading is one of the most important ways Muslims express their religious piety, along with the



Figure 15: A young woman reciting the Qur’an at a regional competition in the northern town of Mamuju, South Sulawesi (1994).



Figure 16: Main ‘stage’ (minbar) at the MTQ National Qur’an Recitation Contest in Jambi, Sumatra (1997). The ‘stage’ is in the form of a combined ‘traditional’ house and fishing boat of the area. There is a young woman reciting the Qur’an in the glass booth. At night, the area in front of the stage is crowded with spectators.

basic duties known as the ‘Five Pillars’ of Islam (the testimony of faith, canonical prayer five times daily, fasting during the month of Ramadhan, pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime, and legal almsgiving). Muslims recite some of the Qur’an from memory every time they perform canonical prayer, and the reading of the Qur’an aloud at other times has always been strongly encouraged. The Qur’an is understood to have been revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad by way of the oral recitation of the Angel Gabriel, and the word ‘Qur’an’ itself is a form of the Arabic word for ‘reading.’ The Prophet and his Companions are understood to have transmitted the Qur’an orally to others even before the text of the Qur’an was ever written down for the first time. Learning to read the Qur’an out loud—whether or not the meaning of

the Arabic words can be understood—is often the first kind of formal religious instruction that Muslims receive. There are special guidelines Muslims follow when reciting the Qur’an, but no limits are fixed on making the ‘reading’ a beautiful one. Ideally” the development of technical artistry helps others to feel a connection between Revelation and their immediate experience, and it is reported that the Prophet himself once stated that the Qur’an ought to be vocalized in a beautiful way.

Since the earliest times, Muslims have reflected on the Qur’an’s power to captivate when it is read beautifully, and many Indonesians see contests in the recitation of the Qur’an as a way to ‘invite’ others to share in the moving experience of religious piety, whether they choose to continue their study of Qur’an reading beyond the beginning level or not. Today, contests for the recitation of the Qur’an are popular events, being held by many kinds of institutions and professional groups. For instance, every year there is one very large national recitation competition which features a great parade with elaborate floats, performances in Islamic ‘cultural arts,’ as well as competition in recitation, memorization, and calligraphy (Figure 16).



Figure 17: Decorated Qur’an pages with Indonesian design motifs on display at the Baitul Qur’an, Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, Jakarta (1997).

Arabic of the Qur’an in modern calligraphy, using indigenous motifs inspired by Indonesian flowers and textiles (Figure 17). Even the roof of the building is a model of a kind of stand on which the Qur’an is placed during its recitation. This gallery, like recitation contests, is a new expression of a crucial dimension of Islamic practice, based on the ‘fundamental’ experience of the revealed Qur’an; however, although it is scripture-based, it bears little resemblance to the stereotype of ‘fundamentalism’ that many people associate with religious resurgence among Muslims and other religious groups.

Techniques for teaching the ‘fundamentals’ of the Qur’an are, actually, being developed in Indonesia today as an activity that is especially appealing to young children. People are applying innovative ideas on how to ‘make learning fun’ to the tradition of teaching how to

The promotion of Islamic practice, and particularly Qur’an-centered practice, however, does not just happen on a large scale in the form of contests. There is, for example, an impressive new exhibit at a national amusement park outside Jakarta, Indonesia’s capital, called the ‘House of the Qur’an’ (‘Baitul Quran’). The ‘House’ features what is said to be the largest decorated Qur’an text in the world, as well as exhibits of old religious manuscripts from Indonesia’s Islamic past, and new artistic interpretations of the



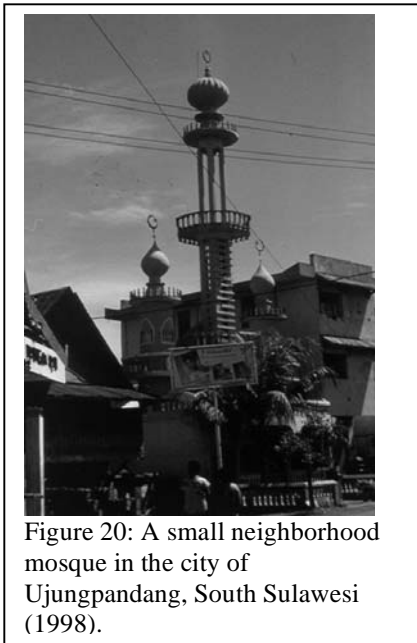
Figure 18: ‘Qur’an Kindergarten’ (TPA) practicing the reading of the Qur’an with an instructor (Yogyakarta, Java, 1997).



Figure 19: An informal women’s study group for Qur’an reading in a large mosque, Ujungpandang, South Sulawesi (1997). Notice that one of the participants has brought her grandchild along with her.

read the Qur'an, especially in new kinds of schools called 'Qur'an kindergartens' that feature varied activities such as songs that are sung in class and also disseminated on cassettes (Figure 18). Learning to read the Qur'an has become so popular, in fact, that many older people are also returning to study how to read better. For example, it is not unusual in Indonesia today to see a young child learning to read Arabic letters out loud right next to her grandmother (Figure 19).

Another practice that engages Muslims of all ages is that of the Hajj or pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca at least once during their lifetime. Indonesians are represented in great proportion in the annual pilgrimage, and even those who remain at home focus much attention on those who had the opportunity to travel to the Middle East that year.



Although Indonesia lies a great distance from Mecca, each year more and more Indonesians make the effort to fulfill this critical component of their piety. In this way, a religious activity based on the practice of the Prophet Muhammad continues to reinvigorate religious experience in the present. As they have for centuries, when Indonesians embark on Hajj today, they come into contact with other Muslims from all over the world, thus encountering the shared, global dimensions of Islamic religiosity from a distinctively Indonesian viewpoint. (For one individual's reflections on aspects of unity and diversity among Indonesian Muslims, inspired by his own Hajj experience, see Appendix III.) In a process not unlike what Ibn Batuta described centuries ago in his account of his travels (see Appendix I), contemporary Indonesian pilgrims, each with his or her own distinct perspective, return from Hajj to their local mosques and neighborhoods) with an enriched sense of their

participation in the world-wide Muslim community, as well as their own identity as Indonesian Muslims (Figure 20).

### Study Questions

1. How can projects of da'wah ('inviting') be seen as an extension of long-standing patterns of Islamization in Indonesia? What aspects of these practices seem distinctively contemporary?
2. What role do some think artistic expression has to play in the cultural elaboration of current religious practice in Indonesia?
3. Describe some continuities of 'traditional' Muslim observances under 'modern' conditions.
4. Discuss the prominence of the Qur'an in Indonesian Islam, past and present.
5. How is the Hajj pilgrimage an encounter between universal ideals and lived realities of Indonesian religious life? (You may wish to consider the perspective of the pilgrim in Appendix III for examples.)

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## Appendix I.

### A Visit to Sumatra by a 14th Century Muslim Traveler

From Abu 'Abdullah Ibn Battuta, *Rihlat Ibn Battuta: tuhfat al-nazar fi ghara'ib al-amsar wa aja'ib al-asfar*. (Beirut/Aleppo: Dar al-Sharq al-'Arabi, n.d.), pp. 478-483.

Translation by R. Michael Feener.

After twenty-five days we reached the island of al-Jawa (Sumatra)... that is the island from which the Jawi incense takes its name. We saw the island from the distance of half a day's sail away. Its trees are many, including: coconuts, palms, cloves, Indian aloes, the *shaki* and *barki*, papaya, *jamun* fruit, sweet oranges, and camphor. The people of this island buy and sell with pieces of tin and uncast, unrefined Chinese gold. Most of the best spices on the island are to be found in the country of the unbelievers, there are fewer from the country of the Muslims. When we reached the harbor, the people came out to us in little boats and with them they brought coconuts, bananas, papayas and fish. It is their custom to present these to the merchants, and then each merchant gives whatever recompense he is able to. The Assistant Harbor Master also came out, inspected the merchants who were with us, and permitted us to land. We landed at the port, a large settlement on the beach in which are houses called *sarha*. It is about four miles from the city. Then Buhruz, the Assistant Harbor Master, wrote to the Sultan informing him of my arrival. The Sultan then ordered Amir Daulasa to come along with the noble Qadi (Muslim judge) Amir Sayyid ai-Shirazi, Taj ai-Din al-Isfahani, and other scholars of law to meet me. They came out bringing one of the Sultan's horses along with some others. I rode together with my companions and we entered the Sultan's capitol, the city of Samudra, which is a large, beautiful city with wooden walls and towers.

The Sultan of al-Jawa, al-Malik al-Zahir, is one of the noblest and most generous of kings and belongs to the Shafi'i school of law. He is a patron of Muslim legal scholars who come to his sessions to read and study. He often struggles against and raids the unbelievers. He is humble and walks on foot to the Friday prayer. The people of his country also belong to the Shafi'i school of law. They are eager to fight infidels and enthusiastically accompany the Sultan on his campaigns. They overwhelm the unbelievers living near them, and the unbelievers must pay a tax in settlement. When we approached the Sultan's house, we found near it spears fixed in the ground on either side of the road. This is a sign for people to dismount, and that no one should ride any further. We dismounted and entered into court where we found the Sultan's Deputy, whose name is 'Umdat al-Mulk. He rose from his place and greeted us. The form of greeting in this country is shaking hands. We sat down with him and he wrote a message to the Sultan telling of our arrival. Then he sealed it and gave it to one of the young servants, who brought back the Sultan's response written on the reverse side of the same paper. Then the servant brought out a *buqsha*, which is a kind of bag. The Deputy took the bag, took me by the hand, and brought me to a little apartment they call a *fardekhaneh* (a word like a form of *zardkhaneh* except that the first letter is an *f*). This is his place of rest during the daytime, for it is the custom here that the Sultan's Deputy arrives at court just after the dawn prayer and does not leave until after the last prayers of the evening are said. The

same applies to the viziers and other higher officials. He took from the bag three sarongs: one made of pure silk, one silk and cotton, and one silk and linen. He also took out three garments which they call *al-tahtaniyat* (underwear), a kind of sarong, three other pieces of what they call *al-wustiniyat* ('middle-wear'), three robes, one of them white, and three head coverings. I put on a sarong, changing out of my trousers as is their custom, and then put on one of each of the other kinds of clothing from the bag. My companions then betook of the clothes that remained.

Then they brought food to us, most of which was rice, then some kind of frothy drink, and then betel-nut, which is used to signal that it is time to leave. We accepted it, and then rose from our seats along with the Sultan's Deputy. We left the court and rode out together with him until we were brought to a garden encircled by a wooden wall. In the middle of it was a house made of wood and furnished with cotton velvet carpets they call *mukhmalat*, some of which were dyed and others not.

In the house there were rattan couches on which were silk coverings, light coverlets and cushions called *al-bualisht*. We seated ourselves in the house together with the Sultan's Deputy. Then Amir Daulasa arrived bringing with him two male and two female servants. He said to me, "The Sultan says to you that these are gifts given in accordance with our means, and not those of Sultan Muhammad (of Delhi)." The Sultan's Deputy then left and Amir Daulasa remained with me. We had known each other since he had come to Delhi as a messenger to the Sultan. I said to him, "When will we be able to meet the Sultan?" He said, "It is our custom that a visitor does not greet the Sultan for three days after his arrival, so that by that time the fatigue of his journey has left him and his wits have returned to him." We stayed there for three days, and they brought us food three times each day, as well as fruit and treats in the mornings and evenings. On the fourth day, which was a Friday, Amir Daulasa came to me and said, "You will meet the Sultan in the royal compartment of the mosque after prayers. I went to the mosque and prayed the Friday prayer with the mosque's caretaker named Qayran. Then I went in to meet the Sultan, and there I found Qadi Amir Sayyid and the scholars on his right and left. The Sultan gave me his hand, I greeted him, and he seated me on his left. He asked me about Sultan Muhammad and my travels, and I answered him. He then resumed the lesson on Muslim jurisprudence according to the Shafi'i school of law. This continued until the mid-afternoon prayer. After praying the Sultan went inside to a place where he removed the clothes he was wearing, which were the robes of a jurist that he wears when he walks on foot to the mosque each Friday. He then put on his royal robes, which are made of silk and cotton.

When he left the mosque he found elephants and horses at the door. It is their tradition that when the Sultan rides an elephant, those who accompany him ride horses, and when he rides on a horse, they ride elephants. The men of learning are on his right. That day he rode an elephant, so we rode horses and went with him to court. We dismounted at the customary location. The Sultan rode in. There the viziers, the amirs, the secretaries, the officers of state and the leaders of the military were arranged in rows. The four viziers and the secretaries were in the first row. They greeted the Sultan and then returned to their places. Each group followed in doing this: the nobles and the legal scholars, then his associates, then judges and the poets, then the military leaders, and then the servants. The

Sultan remained on his elephant across from the audience pavilion. Raised above his head was an ornamented parasol. To his right side were fifty outfitted elephants, and there was an equal number of them on his left. There were a hundred *nauba* horses on his right and as many on the left. His special attendants stood before him. Then male entertainers came out and sang before him, followed by horses dressed in silk coverings with gold anklets and embroidered silk accouterments that performed a dance in front of the Sultan. I was pleased with their performance and had seen something similar performed before the king of India. When it approached sunset the Sultan went into his house and the people returned home.

## Appendix II. The Council of the Wali Songo

"Babad Jaka Tingkir," trans. Nancy K. Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java*, pp. 90-245. Copyright 1995, Duke University Press. Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved. Notes adapted by A. Gade.

*Tells of the design of the wali synod to enforce strict adherence to Islamic law. The indictment of Siti Jenar.*

Now with the elapse  
Of three days and three nights  
Allah's *wali* all  
In the palace did collect  
With the mighty pundits all  
The *mufti* [jurists] and the *khukama* [judges]  
None but the elder ones  
They'd come there to discuss  
Their with that the Faith be firmed

The strengthening of the *shari'a* [Law]  
Heeding the Holy Prophet's word  
Lord Muhammad the Chosen One:  
Hold fast to the *shari'a*  
The pillar of the foremost Faith.  
Whosoever impugns  
Verily impugns he God.<sup>1</sup>

Whosoever does God impugn  
Shall face the holy tribunal  
For trial and punishment  
There's no avoiding it  
Lord Susunan Kudus sweetly then did speak  
To the Lord Sunan Darajad  
Reporting the behavior of

His Highness Seh Siti Jenar:  
"Who so blatantly dares in disclosure rash  
The secret to unveil  
The End of Ends  
That on which all knowledge hangs, Being Absolute  
All too impudent of manner Eccentric are his ways'

"He dares transgress the bans  
Of the Prophet's holy *shari'a*

---

<sup>1</sup> The word for 'God' in the final line is the Hindu appellation 'Hyang Wid[dh]i.'

Oft scorning its commands  
He impugns the rule of *shari'a*  
No leading him is there to the way of righteousness  
He scorns the sacred pillars  
Forsakes *salat* in the mosque<sup>2</sup>  
"He scorns the Friday worship He scorns prayer and *zikir* too  
Plunged headlong to damnation's way  
He's arrogant, incorrigible  
When reproached he does reproach in turn  
Vanished all his dread  
Nothing holds he secret<sup>3</sup>

"If cornered, the tribunal he'd dare  
With nary a care for his death  
Unappeasable, he's adamant  
Exposing the secret with nary a veil  
Making light of the Prophet's hold *shari'a*  
Oft revealing the concealed Defiant, he'll not retreat."<sup>4</sup>

### **XIX. Durma**

[Melodic mood is very impassioned, angry, or violent. Appropriate for battle scenes.]

Now spoke the Lord Sunan Drajad  
"In that case, son  
This does agree  
With what I have heard tell  
And witnessed too myself  
Why, it differs not  
From everything you've said

"If 'tis true the ways of Ki Seh Siti Jenar  
Do indeed break rank  
And trouble do our course  
There'll be no shielding him  
He's truly subject to the justice then  
Laid down by Allah's law  
Unless he should reform"

---

<sup>2</sup> [*Salat*, which is canonical prayer five times daily, is one of the five basic duties of Islam collectively known as the 'Five Pillars. ']

<sup>3</sup> *Zikir* (Ar. *dhikr*) is an Islamic ritual activity characterized by chanting. ... [The term, literally, means 'remembrance' (of God).]

<sup>4</sup> The word *ngunduri* ('retreat'), in conjunction with the punctuation mark for a new canto directly following it, signals the reader/singer to change to the melody of Durma. This cue works from the conventionalized sound association of *durma* with words formed from the root *undur*.



Lord Sunan Drajad then canvassed  
All the senior *wali*  
And too the *khukama*  
The *fuqaha* [legal experts], the pundits  
Along with all the *mufti*  
Came to the decision  
That His Highness the Prince of Siti Jenar

Was subject to be punished by the tribunal  
Unless he did reform  
He would be put to death  
Lest he go too far  
Stirring up the realm  
Ruining the *shari'a*  
Straightaway summoned they  
His Highness Prince Siti Jenar from his encampment  
Conducted by the messenger arrived  
Inside the palace he  
Was seated properly  
Together with the *wali* there  
Then it was the Sunan  
Of Kudus who declared:

"Receive you now the sentence  
Of His Holy Reverence  
If you do refuse  
To redeem your ways  
Which so strangely new  
Do ruin the *shari'a*  
Blatantly with nary a screen

"Verily are you subject to the justice which  
Comes straight from the Qur'an and Hadith  
The *ijma'* and *qiyas*  
There's no escaping it  
Allah's punishment shall fall  
On you  
But if you should reform<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> The Hadith, or 'The Traditions,' are the collected body of tales detailing practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his early associates. The Arabic word *ijma* (consensus) is an Islamic legal term for the agreement of the community of Muslim (legal) scholars as a basis for juridical decision. *Qiyas* (rational argumentation) is an Islamic legal term indicating a process of coming to legal decisions for novel cases by way of analogy to 'traditional' cases (from the Hadith and Qur'an). Enumerated thus are the four bases of traditional Islamic legal decisions.

"Verily shall you be absolved  
And furthermore rewarded With all beneficence"

*Siti Jenar's defense. A lyric expression of rasa ecstasy.*

Then laughing in delight  
Seh Sunyata Jatimurti  
Did slap his thighs  
With beaming countenance<sup>6</sup>

Speaking sweetly and precisely, his words were impudent  
"So! I've reached the heights  
Now of fortune fair if  
I am to be rewarded with  
A world more beautiful  
The source of all beauty  
In this world and the next<sup>7</sup>

"As for the pronouncement of the Lord Susunan  
Drajad, His Reverence  
With all that deep concern  
For my person's body  
Such sensitivity for life  
It is received with thanks  
For His Reverence's loving kindness

"But I for one have not the least desire  
Now to betray my words  
Heretofore expressed  
For ever is it thus  
This my-creature's being  
Is merely then to move  
As authored by the Lord<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> The name, Seh Sunyata Jatimuri, is an alias of Siti Jenar. ... [Jatimurti' is a term derived from Sanskrit that, according to the translation, means 'a state, or form, of material-spiritual enlightenment, or perfection; Reality Incarnate; Body of Reality.]

<sup>7</sup> The terms for 'this world and the next' are Arabic/Islamic existential ones (*saghir*, 'empty' and *qabir* [sic], 'experienced/phenomenal' [or, alternatively, 'small' and great,' respectively]. Here they name the Javanese spatial/temporal categories, realms eternal and transient, that [are rendered here] 'this world and the next.' It is intriguing that in the poem there is no conjunction [such as the word, 'and'] separating *saghir* from *kabir*. Rather they regard it as a mere result of metric constrictions, [it is possible to read] this absence of conjunction as a device to reject the spatial/temporal duality -- qua simple duality. Unfortunately, the ambiguity does not translate into English.

"All my-creature's movements are without intent  
Seeing, hearing  
Gesture, voice  
Ways beyond compare  
Speech beyond limit  
Who holds authority?  
Why! The Being of the Lord

"Pervades my-creature's being  
As one, drawing-while-drawn  
Determining-while-determined  
Enamoring-while-enamored  
Being, exchanging-while exchanged  
Moving-while-being moved  
There the lovers do unite<sup>9</sup>

Uniting as lovers in the Being  
Encompassed by the Lord  
Vanish does the creature  
Dissolved, extinguished and destroyed  
Replaced by the Being of the Lord  
His life is  
Then the Life of the Lord

"*Lahir* and *batin*, his then is the Absolute's Being  
The one worshipped is the Lord  
The Lord it is Who worships  
Self worshipping-while-worshipped  
Self adoring-while-adored  
In reciprocity  
And so, in this life<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> The word *kawula*, rendered as 'my creature' [here], can and does refer to Siti Jenar's personal self (functions as a firstperson pronoun) -- while at the same time denoting her personal 'creatureness' as well as 'creatureness in general.

With this verse begins a poetic exposition of the well-known Javanese *kawula / gusti* doctrine, which espouses the unity of creature and Creator, servant and Master. ...

<sup>9</sup> The repetitive verbal form ... indicates reciprocity of action. In this case the reciprocity is presumably within One Actor who is (not) two. ... In the final line, the Kawi (poetic term) *pulangsih* refers more specifically to 'sexual intercourse.'

<sup>10</sup> The words *lahir* and *batin* [in the first line] are Arabic loan words which denote the dualistic opposition of exteriority vs. interiority; revealed vs. concealed; expressed (born) vs. reserved (hidden); material vs. immaterial. It is precisely this opposition which is collapsed by Siti Jenar's discourse. ... In the same line, 'the Absolute' renders the [Old Javanese] of *Suksma*, the non-manifest essence of God. In the [fourth and fifth lines], the

"Be ye aware of life in perfection  
Life restored to Reality  
The Reality of Life  
Subject not to death  
The very tremble of a hair  
Though but a single strand  
Is then indeed adoring prayer

"For then adoring prayer is perpetual  
When 'tis such indeed  
The being of man is  
Blithe though he be naked  
Untroubled though hungry  
Should he be insulted  
His joy then knows no bounds.

"When met with danger dread  
Or tried by disaster dire  
He merely laughs  
For his heart is without care  
And he knows no fear  
His is but strength serene  
From *lahir* [outward manifestation] straight through to *batin* [inner essence]

"He knows no joy when graced  
With pleasure consummate  
Or praise  
Desiring no reward  
Disaster, disease, and fortune fair  
To him are all the same  
Not his to pick and choose

"For all of these are too rewards  
Gifts divine; for the receiver  
There is but acceptance  
Eternal evermore  
Beyond the limits of life  
His life is beyond

---

words (*dhewe* and *pribadf*) are rendered as. 'self'; however, these words mean, at the same time, 'alone' or 'by oneself,' and hence denote here the autonomy of divine Agency. There is no single English word which can hold the tension of these two meanings.

The compass of the mind<sup>11</sup>  
"For he who has grasped the ultimate of *rasa*  
*Rasa* that is Reality  
The reality of *rasa*  
Is surely not *rerasan* voiced in speech  
Not the six *rasa* flavors  
Nor again the *rasa*  
Which is *rasa*-ed by the lips  
Nor the *rasa* which is *rasa*-ed by the heart  
Nor *rasa* fabricated  
Nor again the *rasa*  
Which is *rasa*-ed by the body  
Nor *rasa* which is *rasa*-ed by the voice  
Nor again the *rasa*  
Of pleasure and afflicting pain<sup>12</sup>

"The Reality of *Rasa* which authors *rasa*  
*Rasa* Real mastering *Rahsa-surasa*  
*Rasa* which is *rasa*'s navel  
The king of *rahsa* all  
*Rasa* exalted  
Is *Jatimurti* recuperate.<sup>13</sup>

*Found guilty of heresy, Siti Jenar is sentenced to death. Reports Siti Jenar's response to the sentence.*

The Lord Sunan Kudus did angrily retort:  
"Aha! In which case 'tis so  
You stand exposed  
As one who claims Godhood  
Though hiding behind a veil, still manifest  
As fallen to Jabariyah  
Baring blatant these pretentious claims<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> [The word translated as 'acceptance' (*panarima*) in the third line can also carry the meaning of 'resignation,' although the translator notes that this may not be the primary sense in this context.]

<sup>12</sup> A wonderfully polysemic word [a word with many connotations of meaning], *rasa* (and its cognates [or words closely related to it]) indicates 'feeling, taste, emotion, voice, speech, gossip, sense, meaning, mystery, essence.' In this and the following stanzas, the poet plays on this polysemy. In order to retain the play, [the translator has] left the *rasa* words in the original Javanese, sometimes with the addition of English *-ed* endings. ...

<sup>13</sup> The word *rahsa* (in lines 3 and 50 denotes 'Mystery.' The word *surasa* denotes 'meaning' and sometimes 'pleasure.' *Rahsa-surasa* (line 3), then, signifies 'the mystery of meaning' and 'the meaning of mystery,' as well as the reciprocal relationship between these two significations *and* the pleasure the reciprocity affords. ....

"Lost are you and wayward  
Fallen to the devil's way  
Without a doubt you shall  
Meet disaster in this world  
Felled by the wrath of the realm  
Transgressing thus the bans  
You bring trouble on the realm

"Making light of the Holy Prophet's *shari'a*  
Yea is punishable by death  
On the coming Friday  
There is no escaping it  
After we've done our *salat* [prayers]  
You shall be executed  
By a sword of potent might

His Highness Seh Siti Jenar ever more defiant  
Was not the least afraid  
Dauntless and unflinching  
His face shone brighter still  
With refulgent radiance keen  
And with sweet allure  
Smiling he answered triumphant:

"Hark ye well, my fellows all  
All ye *wali*  
And ye pundits too  
Are acting childishly  
Twice over do ye do the deed  
Why! You do explode  
With empty threats in this attempt

"In a waste of windy surfeit words  
You think to threaten  
A suckling babe  
Who might fall in a fit

---

<sup>14</sup> Siti Jenar stands 'exposed' (*kakandhangan*) in the sense of 'corralled' or 'exposed to public ridicule in a stockade.' Jabariyah names, for those who oppose it, a variant of Islamic thought characterized by radical determinism. [Here] to be called 'Jabariyah' is to be charged with heterodoxy [non-orthodoxy], if not heresy. Jabariyah is mentioned with concern in other nineteenth century [Javanese] texts. ... [One of the theological tensions associated with the doctrine is that the degree to which divine omnipotence is emphasized is the degree to which human beings' responsibility for their actions may seem to be diminished.]

To be rubbed with salves, as he trembles and cries  
With rolling eyes  
And horrible plaintive wails<sup>15</sup>

"'Twould be a shame were I afraid  
Either now or on the morn  
Never then shall flee  
This the man Siti Jenar  
'Twould be a shame that I  
Did take the name  
'Sunyata Jatimurti'<sup>16</sup>

"If lost I am and wayward  
Fallen to the devil's way  
Better had I died  
When still a suckling babe  
What sense is there to live  
Submitted to the devil  
Borne away to error?

"And now liable to justice  
I stand by all my speech  
Never to forswear.  
Though finished on the scaffold  
Were I to flee my speech  
Could never then be true  
True *lahir* straight through *batin*

"And true it is: true in the morning, in the evening true.  
True by day and night  
Beyond confines of season  
'Tis true, indeed the Truth  
In past, present, and future too  
For it is the Truth.  
Call it what you will"

---

<sup>15</sup> This [kind of] fit is [known as] *saw an*, a disease of infants characterized by convulsive seizures. The seizures are caused by the pernicious influence of spirits. A remedy... is to rub the infant's brow with certain medicinal preparations, especially turmeric and lime.

<sup>16</sup> This is an especially problematic stanza to translate. The sense of the lines diverges significantly depending on how the reader understands their syntactic [grammatical] divisions. Another plausible reading of the lines is: 'A pity it'd be were I afraid / Either now or in the morn / Never shall I turn heel/Should the man Siti Jenar / Pity this my person [body -trans.] / Then I take the name / Sunyati Jatimurti.' The Javanese original manages to hold both these meanings in tension with each other.

Now the Lord Sunan Darajad  
Astounded was to hear  
So staunch was the resolve of  
His Highness Prince Siti Jenar  
And all of them who heard  
All those assembled there  
Were amazed indeed aghast  
The Lord Susunan Darajad did order then  
That they be adjourned  
Till the coming Friday  
And so they did adjourn  
Each to his encampment

*The execution of Siti Jenar.*

'Twas on Friday they were  
assembled allAll the *wali*  
With his Majesty the King  
And all the pundits  
The *ulama* [religious scholars]both great and low  
The princes of ballad  
The princes-regent and courtiers  
Inside the Mosque when the hour had come  
They did their Friday *salat* all  
And after they were done  
With the Friday *saat*  
Then they went outside  
Sunan Darajad  
And His Majesty the king  
Sat in a pavilion which was newly built  
To the east of the Mosque's main gate  
The outer gate that is To the east of the courtyard

Encircling them were the *wali*"  
The pundits  
And the faithful *mukmin* [believers] all<sup>17</sup>  
Joined by the princes-regent and the nobility  
Arrayed were the high courtiers  
In a crowded crush  
The Alun-alun was brimming  
Seh Sunyata Jatimurti  
Was clearly manifest  
Seated rather to the fore

---

<sup>17</sup> [The translator notes that this would be the spot where executions were in fact held in the royal city of Surakarta in the nineteenth century.]



Sunan Kudus read the sentence  
Of His Holy Reverence  
Unto Seh Siti Jenar  
That executed then would be  
The punishment of Allah which was death  
Dauntless did retort  
His Highness Prince Siti Jenar  
With a smile, his radiance beaming:  
"Indeed, would you please  
Just get on with it  
Without further ado"  
And so Sunan Kudus  
Did bare his sword  
So very sharp  
Sunan Siti Jenar then was put to  
the sword  
His neck, severed  
Down his head did fall  
Onto a readied carpet  
Spread with white *genis* Writing on the ground  
His blood did gush forth hard<sup>18</sup>

*Described is the death of Siti Jenar. The testimony of the blood.*

## **xx. Mijil**

[Melodic mood is one of longing: erotic or mournful]

Red blood appeared glowing bright  
And all they who did see  
Spoke with words like these:  
"That's not a pretty sight to see  
I thought him powerful  
Potent, yea invulnerable

"Why! a weakling he --laid low by a single blow  
It didn't take a second strike  
So, that is all there was to him  
Crowing loud he claimed to truth  
At the top of his voice  
Pretending to sublimity

---

<sup>18</sup> By *genis* perhaps is meant *gendhis*, or 'sugar.' The word *mijil* ('to go [gush -trans.] forth') at verse's end, in conjunction with the punctuation mark for a new canto directly following it, signals the reader / singer to change to the melody to Mijil.

"And there, his blood is red  
Just common human blood  
I'd thought somehow that it'd look strange"  
At that His Highness Prince Siti Jenar  
From his body spewed  
Blood as black as pitch

Brilliant black like jet-black ink  
And all they who did see  
Said: "Why! That's nothing special  
Everybody's got black blood"  
With that flowed yellow  
The blood from the body

'Twas like fluid yellow powder flowing  
And all they who did see  
Said: "Still that's nothing special  
For each and everybody's got  
Blood of yellow hue"  
With that the august body

Then issued blood bright white  
A whiteness radiant with light  
And sweet of fragrance redolent  
And they who saw spoke yet again  
"This too is nothing special  
For each and everybody has  
"Got blood of colors four  
For God Almighty's creatures  
Are primally from these colors four  
Red, black, yellow, and white  
Indeed the origin of yore  
Is these fundamental four"

Now the blood of colors four  
Able to hold forth  
Did extol in joyous thanksgiving:  
"However many the joys of life  
By avail of death  
Those joys are had

"In death, a death perfected  
It's more than marvelous  
The True Man truly  
Of sacred knowledge consummate  
Never then does die

But lives forevermore

"To call it death is false  
For by the grave untouched  
He merely moves on to another place  
Bearing his *kraton* along with him  
The delights of death  
Are beyond number"<sup>19</sup>

Now then all they who witnessed  
Momentarily stunned  
Bewondered at the blood's discourse  
And then they all did speak again:  
This must be some sorcery  
That is, an act of conjuring

"Who's ever heard of talking blood  
Holding discourse thus?  
Was perhaps his knowledge but spiritism mere  
Was that the best then he could do  
This our 'Most Reverend'  
But fraternize with fiends?"<sup>20</sup>

"Damnably lost fallen deeper still to error  
Anxious dread results  
Making difficult his death  
Just like the knowledge of the coarse and low."<sup>21</sup>

*Herein depicted is the apotheosis and ascension of Siti Jenar*

With that the Honored Dead  
His head, that is  
Roared with laughter, while speaking oh so sweet:  
"Blood of my body all  
Return ye now in haste  
Lest ye be left behind  
And enter not into

---

<sup>19</sup> [In Javanese, *kraton* means 'palace,' or more literally 'the place of one who rules.']

<sup>20</sup> The art of the spirit medium is considered particularly apt for 'empty' persons, especially hysteric women. ....

<sup>21</sup> It is widely held on Java that one possessed of an excess of *magic* powers and especially of power objects, may experience great difficulty and pain in his or her death throes. Such a person may attain release only after ridding himself or herself of these powers. This is not an easy matter, since these powers, or charms, are usually 'stuck' to their owner.

There your paradise"

The blood then did return  
All of it, as if inhaled  
Vanished without a trace  
Then the head did circle  
Around its body  
Three times round

Speaking all the while: "My fellows all  
None of you believed in me  
Your skepticism most extreme  
You took it as ridiculous  
Union with the Lord  
Fused in Being One"

Thereat the head fixed on again  
Perfectly in place  
Healed was the wound leaving nary a trace  
His radiance brilliant beaming bright  
Gently hailed he them,  
"Peace!" In dulcet voice so sweet<sup>22</sup>

Answered was his greeting  
By all assembled there  
Thunderous did their voices sound  
Marvel did all who witnessed  
Dazed they were struck dumb  
In bewildered awe

Deathly still as if bewitched  
With speechless mouths agape  
They hadn't thought 'twould come to this  
'Twas true that subject not to death  
Death was his in life  
Life was his in death<sup>23</sup>

Life forever without death  
Returned unto the end  
Spirit body eternal evermore

---

<sup>22</sup> Hailing 'Peace!' Siti Jenar voiced the standard Islamic greeting: 'assai am 'alaikum,' which is answered 'alaikum salam.'

<sup>23</sup> The final two lines ... repeat a 'metaphysical cliché' that describes the stage of mystic perfection in which the mystic attains a durable state of subsistence under the aspect of the Absolute.

Then His Highness Prince Siti Jenar  
Drew night unto the presence of  
The Most-High Lord Bhikku<sup>24</sup>

Exchanging *salam* with his Reverence  
And with His Majesty  
And all the other *wali* too  
Every single person there *Salam* did exchange  
With He-Who-Is-Exalted<sup>25</sup>

After the exchange of *salam*  
With each and everyone  
He-Who-Is-Exalted softly did bespeak  
His Reverence the Lord Sunan  
"And now given that  
My punishment's been paid

"I beg your leave for I would move on  
To the realm of sublimity  
So fare thee well in days to come  
And thou, my Lord and King Fare thee well  
In future days to come

"And ye my fellow *wali* all  
And ye excellent pundits too  
Ye *ulama* and ye *mukmin* all  
Fare thee well in your tomorrows  
As well as all of ye  
Nobles great and mighty.

"Ye ministers, regents, and officers  
Courtiers to His Majesty  
Begging leave from all of you  
I bid ye all the best  
Fortune fair be with you  
In all your tomorrows"

Thundering they did answer

---

<sup>24</sup> 'Spirit body' in line 3 is [the translator's] rendering of *badan suksama*, words that signify a materialized spirituality. ...  
In the final line, 'The Most-High Lord Bhikku' (Sang aMaha Wiku), literally, Highest Buddhist Monk, refers to Sunan Drajad as 'patriarch' of the 'synod.'

<sup>25</sup> *Salam* are greetings of "peace."

'He-Who-Is-Exalted' is [the translator's] rendering of the appellation Sang Wus Linuhung (Siti Jenar is in the state of apotheosis).

"Yes! In the end may all  
Meet with fortune fair  
Both he who's moving on and those now left behind"  
Now he who was set to vanish  
Brought forth his radiance  
Radiant refulgent flaming flashing  
A lustrous lambent light  
Blazing brilliant striking  
Verily dimming the daystar's rays  
Blinded by the dazzle were  
All those who did see  
Seh Sunyata Jatimurti  
Softly then did say  
"I now have work to do"  
Then that radiance bright did ascend on high  
In no time vanishing into  
Mystery Was He-Who-Is-Exalted<sup>26</sup>  
Leaving in his wake a fragrance redolent  
Perfectly pervasive  
An eddied swirl of balmy musk  
Wide-eyed was the wonder of all those who did watch  
Each and every one of them  
Was plunged in awed regret  
Among them there were those who cried: "Oh! Oh!  
Oh! Alas! Alas!  
I never thought that thus 'twould be!  
Verily, he was in truth a truly excellent man  
His excellence exceeding  
All the rest"

No more said of him who was now Mystery

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<sup>26</sup> The 'Mystery' into which Siti Jenar vanished is *ghaib*, a technical term in Sufi literature. In this state of perfection, the seeker's soul, having attained fana, extinction which is absorption into the Divine, has its (non)existence in the *Alam al-Ghaib*, the uncreated world of God's Mystery .

### **Appendix III. A Letter from Mecca by a Modern Sumatran Pilgrim**

"Aneka Pakaian Muslim" ("On Muslim Clothing"). From A. A. Navis, *Surat dan Kenangan Haji* ("Letters and Memories from the Pilgrimage") (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1996), pp. 36-43. Translation by R. Michael Feener and Anna M. Gade. Used with permission.

Mecca, 30 April 1994

The Arabs have a distinctive manner of dress. This is especially the case for women, who wear clothes of all black which completely cover the body. Only their faces can be seen, and sometimes it is just their eyes. And, sometimes even the eyes are covered over with a thin veil of black gauze. Such a style of dress is worn in Indonesia today by those who belong to the *AI Arqam* movement. In the past, members of the Kadian branch of the Ahmadiyya wore similar costumes.

This distinctive Arab clothing is fitting for the dry desert, shielding one from the scorching sun and swirling dust. Although this clothing completely covers you up, you do not sweat because your sweat evaporates immediately in the hot desert air.

The Arabs are also known for their love of perfumes. The reason for this is that the custom of the inhabitants of this empty land is such that they are often unable to bathe or wash their clothes. When they pass by me, as I sit praying in the mosque, the powerful scent of their perfume attacks my nose. The scent is even stronger on women. So, it is not surprising that there are so many perfume stores and street stalls of various kinds in the cities of Saudi Arabia, selling everything from cheap Indian generic products to the most well-known name-brand fragrances from France. Even the Indonesian women who live here as guest-workers adopt Arab dress. This is not only to adapt culturally but also because of the climatic conditions here. And, even non-Muslim Arabs such as those from Lebanon and Palestine wear the same distinctive Arab dress. This shows that Arab-style clothing does not automatically mark one as a 'Muslim.'

I cannot understand why Indonesian women who live in a tropical, humid climate would want to wrap themselves up like Arab women do, covering their entire body completely. And there are even some women who cover their faces with the 'chador.' In the same way, I cannot understand why Indonesian men have to adopt the European style as their mode of formal dress because wearing all these many layers of clothes in the heat makes us need to use air conditioning at home, in the office, and even in our cars. Our forefathers used to dress in a way that was appropriate for our tropical climate. Those from Java or Bali went about bare-chested, whether it was in the rice fields or even at palace ceremonies. Malays wore loose shirts of thin cotton, which was appropriate for the humidity of the tropics. Wearing clothes that cover the whole body only causes one to sweat all the more. If one does not bathe or change clothes often, the whole body will start to give off an unpleasant odor.

It seems as if, when it comes to selecting clothes, we seem to pay more attention to appearances and group identity than we do to natural conditions. This may be seen in the

history of Indonesian fashion. From the beginning of this century until the Second World War, the religious scholars of West Sumatra wore various kinds of clothes. Scholars from the area wore a sarong and cap, whereas those who had studied in Mecca or who had already completed the pilgrimage wore a robe and turban. Those who had studied in Egypt wore trousers, a jacket, and a tie with a cap or sometimes a fez.

The same was also true of students of religious schools. Boys wore sarongs and caps, while girls wore long blouses and headscarves, but at colleges male students exchanged their sarongs for long pants. On the other hand, those with a western education or who worked in offices chose clothing in the Dutch style and would make fun of the clothes worn by traditionally-minded and religious people.

Since the Indonesian Declaration of Independence, even the clothes that had a sectarian or social function changed. The most popular form of dress among males from almost every group was that which came to be known as 'national dress,' which was in the European style, consisting of a jacket and tie but also not neglecting to add a black Muslim cap on one's head. Over time, however, caps came to be worn less and less, eventually used only during state and religious functions.

During the 1970s, when issues of 'Christianization' and government pressures on Muslim religious groups marked them as extreme 'right,' a movement arose to respond to such pressures by calling upon God's protection because they felt that there was no other place for them to seek shelter other than in God. Generally speaking, they were not from traditional religious schools. As a symbol of their identity, the women in these groups wore a style of dress that came to be known as the 'jilbab,' which is a different style of dress with a covering like that worn by Rasuna Said [a well-known religious activist from West Sumatra in the early twentieth century]. Many of these groups became quite exclusivistic...

It was also often the case that these exclusive groups energetically upheld these dress codes. I am reminded of a case from the Medical College in Padang [West Sumatra], demonstrating the strong adherence to these codes. The College requested that two female students in the clinic change their headscarves to a style of Muslim dress that had been approved by the Government Board of Education. Both, however, insistently refused. They said that if it was necessary, they were willing to cut little holes in their headscarves when they needed to use a stethoscope. The press had a media frenzy with this incident. One lawyer suggested that the College be brought before the High Court because he believed that it had infringed upon the freedom of religion. One well-known sociologist defended the girls' position by advancing the theory that the inclination to wear 'jilbab' was an act of resistance against psychological pressure from the secular system that dominated the social and political elite, adding that it is better that the 'jilbab' is not prohibited from being worn in any context. He cited the example of a Sikh [a member of a religious group from India] who maintained the right to wear his *tilban* [turban] on religious grounds, even while employed by the police or in military service. This sociologist, however, failed to keep in mind that Sikhs have no problem taking off the *tilban* when playing hockey or soccer.



In the end, both girls simply decided that they would rather continue their education and accept the College's regulation. However, in my opinion, such insistence on wearing the 'jilbab' usually ends once women like this get married. This is a different situation from those traditionally-schooled women who wear 'jilbab.' So what was going on with the insistence of these two Medical College students?

This movement influenced some older women in the city. These older women, especially those who had already gone on the pilgrimage, started to cover their heads with a kind of cap. The clothing which had before then served a social function thus became a symbol of group identity.

Looking at the women from various countries here on the Hajj, one sees that each nation has its own style of dress. In general, they cover almost their entire body except for their faces. When they don their special pilgrim's garb, the women cover their entire bodies except for their faces and the palms of their hands. However, even in this they do not all look the same. Some wear socks, and some do not. City girls, especially those from the chic Jakarta set, really pay attention to their looks. Their clothes are always something special, even when they are dressed as 'humble' pilgrims. They wear special gloves that cover their wrists, while the palms of their hands are bare, and these gloves can be lacy. Young women from other countries, even Arabs, just wear simple clothes, which are not lacy or fancily decorated. Turkish or Iranian women wear cream-colored blouses with long sleeves, and they also wear a triangular scarf as a form-fitting head-covering so that no hair can become exposed. Women from central Africa tend to wear colorful clothing. There is, in fact, no firm rule as to the color of a woman's clothes for pilgrimage. The stipulation of wearing all white clothes is merely a suggestion.

Various kinds of Muslim clothes are worn by Indonesian women, especially while they are on pilgrimage. What about their everyday dress? It serves its purpose. But what about when its function is a way of flouting a specific group identity?

Fashion, or styles of dress which differ between groups, is really a matter of individual preference, although there are some who would claim that this is a fundamental matter. If we remember the history of clothing, over sixty years ago the teaching and views of religious scholars were not the same as now. At that time, there was considerable criticism towards those women who wore dresses or men who wore ties. These two types of clothing were called 'the dress of infidels.' However, in less than one generation, such criticisms all but disappeared. In fact, those from the groups who formerly criticized came themselves to wear ties and their daughters dresses.

One time, twenty-five years ago, I was invited to speak with Col. Nazsir Asmara, regional commander at Bukittinggi (West Sumatra). This discussion was requested by Buya M. D. Datuk Palimokayo, who was later to become the head of the Council of Indonesia Religious Scholars for West Sumatra. Among others who were also present were Dr. Yaqub Isman, later rector of the Padang Teachers' College, Sunariyaman Mustafa, director of Bukittinggi High School, Baharuddin Sjarif, one of the deans of the

State Islamic College Imam Bonjol, and Col. A. M. Ridwan, who was to become a popular leader of a mystical order. The topic of discussion was children's clothing which consisted of narrow-leg trousers and tight jackets. This topic of discussion was extremely sensitive, especially when brought up among influential religious scholars.

During that discussion, all I did was to put forward the issue in the form of a question. I said that the people, especially those in the villages, were accustomed to bathing in the river or on the shore of a lake, and for all intents and purposes they placed no real distance between men and women. When crossing the river, the women would hike up their skirts very high, even if they were walking together with the men. In such situations, parts of the woman's body were uncovered. So, the young people may ask, if parts of the body are forbidden to look at, then why didn't the religious scholars of old ever order the Muslims to build bathrooms in their houses? Or, why didn't they order the Muslims to build a bridge for crossing? Is the essential teaching of the scholars of days past different from that of the scholars of today? What is our answer? This question is difficult to answer, and in the end the discussion turned the topic to the question of young people who did not have any productive occupation.

The tendency of Indonesian women to wear fashionable and lacy pilgrim's garb might be explained in terms of the concerns of city girls who don't want to be 'out of Style.' This extends even to the point that during the pilgrimage or other religious occasions, their clothes function as a mark of status. This makes me ask, is this really a rational aspect of Islam? Or, doesn't it reflect more base concerns? Aside from the validity of each group's understanding, I recognize that it is very important to maintain a tolerant attitude toward all points of view in religious matters. Let it not be that people go too far in defending their own group, all the more so if they also accuse other Muslim groups of impiety. On the other hand, clothing should not become the symbol of a group that tends toward exclusivism or intends to suppress those who do not agree with them. Whatever the case, groups that do not accept the strict Arab model of Muslim women's clothing must accept the reality that difference of opinion does not necessarily mean animosity.

## List of Images

(All photos by R. Michael Feener or Anna M. Gade)

Figure 1. A popular poster depicting imagined portraits of the *Wali Songo*, the 'Nine saints,' to whom the Islamization of Java is traditionally attributed.

Figure 2. Men visiting the tomb of Sunang Sonang, one of the *Wali Songo*. The blue and white porcelain decorating the walls around the cemetery is a reminder of trade routes connecting China and Western Asia; this trade network was highly influential in the historical process of Indonesian Islamization.

Figure 3. The Mosque of Bayan Beleg in Northern Lombok. This recently-restored mosque has long been considered one of the primary seats of this island's indigenized interpretation of Islamic culture.

Figure 4. Float of a 'Bugis Schooner' representing the South Sulawesi team in the parade opening the MTQ National Contest for the Recitation of the Qur'an (Jambi, Sumatra, 1997). Inscribed on the boat in both Bugis and Roman script is a motto which translates as, "We pledge our unity."

Figure 5. Royal heirlooms held by descendants of the last Sultan at the *Balai Kuning* (Yellow Hall) in Sumbawa Besar (central Indonesia). Many of these items demonstrate the kinds of luxury goods traded in the Archipelago in earlier centuries of maritime history; they also represent symbolic elements drawing upon a wide range of Sumbawan, Indic, and Islamicate conceptions of power and authority.

Figure 6. Batik cloth from Jambi, Sumatra (nineteenth century?), decorated with bird motifs and the Name of God ('Allah') in Arabic.

Figure 7. A Muslim bride and groom at their wedding in East Java (1991).

Figure 8. The grand procession of the *Tabot* festival commemorating the tenth day of the Muslim Month of Muharram in Bengkulu, Sumatra (1992).

Figure 9. Children dressed as key Islamic figures; part of a music and dance performance for the *Tabot* festival in Bengkulu (1992).

Figure 10. 'Masjid Goa' ('Katangka Mosque') in Makassar (Ujungpandang), South Sulawesi. It is said that this mosque stands on the site of the first to have been established in the area, built in the sixteenth century.

Figure 11. An illuminated Qur'an manuscript from the former Sultan's palace library in Sima, eastern Indonesia.

Figure 12. Students working on Arabic calligraphy for a local competition in the northern Mandar region of South Sulawesi (1994).

Figure 13. Women making offerings of flowers and scented oil at the tomb of Shaykh Yusuf Makassar in Ujungpandang (1996). At the far end of the grave; specialists perform ritual acts to assist the visitors to the site, many of whom having come with children to

venerate the 'saint' and to receive blessings. Shaykh Yusuf was active in the resistance against the Dutch and is credited with bringing Islam to South Africa during his exile there, among his other accomplishments.

Figure 14. 'Dhikr Jum'at' (reading of a *Barzanji* text) at the palace of the former kings of Goa, Makassar (Ujungpandang), South Sulawesi (1997) At one time, this reading was performed every Thursday night; now it is observed more infrequently.

Figure 15. A young woman reciting the Qur'an at a regional competition in the northern town of Mamuju, South Sulawesi (1994).

Figure 16. Main 'stage' (*minbar*) at the MTQ National Qur'an Recitation Contest in Jambi, Sumatra (1997). The 'stage' is in the form of a combined 'traditional' house and fishing boat of the area. There is a young woman reciting the Qur'an in the glass booth. At night, the area in front of the stage is crowded with spectators.

Figure 17. Decorated Qur'an pages with Indonesian design motifs on display at the Baitul Qur'an, Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, Jakarta (1997).

Figure 18. 'Qur'an Kindergarten' (TPA) practicing the reading of the Qur'an with an instructor (Yogyakarta, Java, 1997).

Figure 19. An informal women's study group for Qur'an reading in a large mosque, Ujungpandang, South Sulawesi (1997). Notice that one of the participants has brought her grandchild along with her.

Figure 20. A small neighborhood mosque in the city of Ujungpandang, South Sulawesi (1998).