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Sufferance within a Cultural Framework as the Preaching Strategy of Sunan Gunungjati in Forming a Civil Society

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Abstract

Syarif Hidayatullah, who held the title Sunan Gunungjati, was one of the most influential *wali* (holy people) on the island of Java. Syarif Hidayatullah also had other titles, such as the Central or Guardian Pole (“Quthb al-Awliya”). Sunan Gunungjati’s status is as *ulama umara* was based on him holding both worldly and hereafter affairs in his hands. With such a position of power, he could more freely demonstrate his wise attitudes through state policies. Sunan Gunungjati devoted his entire life to his religion and the state through a culturally framed Sufism-based approach. He helped propagate Islam, especially in western Java, Cirebon, and surrounding areas, something that was not easy at the time. The community’s cultural traditions, religious rituals, social systems, and insights were already strongly rooted in animism, and this presented a real barrier. Such beliefs had been reinforced by the previous Hindu and Buddhist religions. This prompted Sunan Gunungjati to find many ways to win over the hearts of people and encourage them to embrace Islam. Sunan Gunungjati successfully spread Islamic teachings by establishing a civil society. This was demonstrated by the many relics of that time in sociocultural, artistic, architectural, educational, moral, and even political aspects. Sunan Gunungjati approached almost all aspects of life as a means for spreading Islam, and Islam spread rapidly as a result. These Islamic teachings did not merely convey religious material and textual—they harmonized Islamic values with community life at the time. Sunan Gunungjati’s success in spreading Islam is therefore a benchmark for forming a civil society based on local wisdom.

Keywords: Sunan Gunungjati, Sufism, Culture, Civil Society

Introduction

Sufism never dies in the world, and ontologically and historically, Sufism has experienced extraordinary developments since its establishment. The Sufis have passed down their teachings and *tariqat* doctrines from one generation to the next in various parts of the Islamic world. Indeed, Sufism has spread not just in the Middle East but also in various Western regions, as well as Asia, Africa, and Indonesia. Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country, and historians have noted that Indonesia is the most prolific Muslim country in developing Sufism, both through natives of the archipelago and immigrants from the Middle East. Even the establishment of Islam in Indonesia can be equated with Sufism, because those early teachers were Sufis. Sufism arrived on the Indonesian archipelago with the teachings of al-Wahdtul Wujud brought by ‘Abdullah Arif (d.1214 AD) from Arabia after he arrived in Sumatra (Perulak, Pasai) in 1177 AD with his book *Bahr al-Lahut* (the Sea of God).

This book was influenced by two controversial Sufi figures named al-Hallaj and Ibn Arabi. Furthermore, Sheikh Muhammad Yaman—an expert in *fiqh*, *ushul fiqh*, *ulumul hadith*, *ulumul qur'an*—came to Aceh in 1582 AD to oppose Sheikh Abul Khair, who adhered to Wahdat al-Wujud's understanding. Islam and the Sufism teachings had first passed through many other parts of the world—such as Persia, India, and China—before reaching the archipelago (Asra, 2006).

Sufism entered Cirebon through early figures such as Sheikh Nurjati and Sheikh Sunan Gunungjati. These two figures played a major role in developing Islam and Sufism in Cirebon. It later spread to Kuningan, Majalengka, Indramayu, Kerawang Banten, Tegal, Brebes, and other areas. Cirebon Sufism, or Javanese Sufism in general, has its own style that differs from Sufism in other areas, such as West Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi. Cirebon Sufism is very close to the previous religion, namely Hindu Buddhism, and it reflects the Cirebon people, who are diverse in terms of culture, language, and ethnicity (Effendi, 1994).

An iconic Cirebon Sufism teaching developed by Sunan Gunungjati is the *Pepatah-Petitih*, which is full of positive educational value for strengthening local wisdom and meaningful philosophy. *Pepatah-Petitih*'s teachings act as a guide for family, community, and national life, and it is still studied and practiced by the people of Cirebon, at least in their culture of politeness and hospitality for fellow human beings. This is why Cirebon is known as the guardian city. The stewardship of Sheikh Sunan Gunungjati has acted as a magnet for the development of Islam and Cirebon culture to this day, but the aura of the city's religious and cultural attitudes seemed to diminish when the currents of modernization affected the Cirebon area. As a result, the notion of Cirebon as the guardian city has given way to the notion of a city with a thousand malls.

Sufistic values in Cirebon have diminished in society due to effects of modernization and metropolitanism. Sufism is no longer grounded in Cirebon's culture, and it continues only in Islamic boarding schools with the *murshids* passing on Sufistic teachings to their students. This contrasts with the early history of Cirebon's religious and cultural development, which had always been colored by Sufism. Various arts and cultural traditions of Cirebon are strongly influenced by the teachings of Sufism. For example art, masks, *wayang*, and *sintren* were used as a means for *da'wah* and the development of Sufism teachings. The packaging of Sufism in Cirebon differs from that of classical Sufism, which is more about sticking to the doctrines of Sufism without touching the culture and traditions of the community. Indeed, Sufism in Cirebon was primarily developed *through* the culture and traditions of its people (Muhaimin, 1997).

The development of Sufism movements and traditions in Cirebon had strong roots in the cultural need to preserve Cirebon traditions and culture based on the values of Sufism. The authors of this paper therefore became interested in scientifically revealing the movement and tradition of Sufism in Cirebon from the classical era to the present one. The researchers wanted to respond to the swift modernization that has affected the people of Cirebon and eroded Cirebon's ancestral heritage of Sufistic teachings. The emergence of radical religious movements, as embraced by some of Cirebon's Muslims, has further accelerated the elimination of Sufism movements and traditions in Cirebon.

Religious radicalism views that Islam is sufficient and final in the area of normative sharia, so the adherents of radicalism feel no need to synergize it with tradition, because this will dilute

sharia. Mixing religion with tradition is considered an aspect of acculturation, however, and if a religion is related only to the mystical realm, it will be considered a form of superstition. The two phenomena of religious attitudes with mystical values and traditional values based on local wisdom can oppose each other, so the continuity of local traditions and culture may be jeopardized.

The noble values of Cirebon's traditions and culture act as a medium for religious and social development. Local government therefore needs to pay serious attention to establishing programs to preserve the local culture and traditions and promote educational materials based on local wisdom for all educational settings. It should also tighten licensing restrictions for various business activities that undermine cultural values, traditions, and local wisdom.

The values of Sufism in Cirebon were the initial pillars for founding Islam as a social movement. Sufism was therefore the channel for developing Islam in Cirebon, with this "form" of Islam having a style that fitted with the thoughts of Cirebon's natives. Indeed, before Islam's arrival, Hinduism and Buddhism were popular in Cirebon, so Sufism could be more easily understood and accepted. The Sufis who delivered teachings that were adapted to the native minds of the archipelago's people include examples such as Hamzah Fansuri in Aceh, Sheikh Lemah Abang, and Sunan Panggung in Java, among others ([Tjandrasasmita, 2002](#)).

However, the values of Sufism in the modern era have become almost extinct and receive less serious attention from the government and Cirebon's people. Consequently, the people of Cirebon have experienced shifts in religious values, culture, and traditions. It is feared that Cirebon's authenticity will be lost and replaced by foreign cultural values. *Petata-petitih* is a form of value education that has been inherited from Sunan Gunungjati, but it is becoming increasingly unheard of in some Cirebon people, being generally only mentioned in research studies.

Petitih is deemed a legacy concept, an old story that is considered no longer relevant. This is very unfortunate, so the researcher set out to review the teachings of Sunan Gunungjati's Sufism, so that Cirebon's people may be inspired and motivated to consider the noble values of Sunan Gunungjati's Sufism in their daily religious and social life. It was therefore necessary to rediscover the role and contribution of Sunan Gunungjati's Sufism to religion, society, culture, politics, economics, law, and institutions, both in terms of Islamic boarding schools and government.

Methods

This study takes the form of historical research on Sufism in the contextual frame of the *da'wah* movement of Sunan Gunungjati in Cirebon, so historical theory is used as the theoretical framework. The history in question does not concern events but rather the movements and traditions related to Sufism in Cirebon, from the classical era to the present day. Several historical researchers have used such theories for historical research, such as Ira M. Lapidus with his work on the history of Islamic societies, Marshal Hodgson with his work *The Venture of Islam*, and Peter Holt for *The Cambridge History of Islam*. From these, this research adopted Hodgson's theory, which comprises the one-model theory and total history ([Buchori, 2005](#)). Hodgson positioned the history of Islam and Muslim society within the totality of human civilization. History, according to Hodgson, can only be understood within a broader framework, so the totality is not limited to Islam and the history of Muslim

societies but rather exists within the context of human history and civilization as a whole (Azra, 2002).

The historical theory of Marshal Hodgson can be used to explore the movements and traditions of Sufism in Cirebon. Indeed, Cirebon needs to be studied within the totality, because it holds a treasure trove of knowledge and occupies a strategic geographical location. Cirebon is quite diverse in several aspects: From a religious viewpoint, Cirebon is called the “City of Guardians,” while from an economic aspect, Cirebon is “a city of shrimp and trade.” From a historical aspect, Cirebon has traditionally had great influence. Cirebon is also a city of education, with formal education starting from early childhood and continuing to college level. Non-formal education also takes place through Islamic boarding schools with various kinds of knowledge.

Findings and Discussion

Sufism and the Pattern of Islamization: Before the Wali Songo

The history of Sufism in Indonesia is also the history of Islamization in the archipelago. The Sufism approach was neatly wrapped in a *da'wah* container that suited the local culture. People believe that the 6th century BC was the beginning of the world's civilizations, the century that saw the emergence of philosophy in Greece, Zoroastrianism in the Middle East, Buddhism in Hindustan, and the reformers Lao Tse and Confucius in the Far East. This century saw the meeting of two patterns of thought, two sources of truth, a mixing of revelation and reason. Alternatively, as Hossein Nasr put it, it saw two niches of truth: *Misykat al-Hikmah* and *Misykat al-Nubuwwah* (Nasr, 2006). Later on, the 15th 16th centuries saw religious conversion, as pointed out by Anthony Reid and quoted by Geoff Wade: “Between about 1400 and 1700, universalist faiths based on sacred scripture took hold throughout the region. Eventually, they created profound divisions in Islam in the south, a Confucian political orthodoxy in Vietnam, a Theravada Buddhist bastion in the rest of the mainland, and a Christian outrider in the Philippines” (Geoff, 2002). The people of Southeast Asia at the time witnessed a religious revolution in which more than half of people changed religions, especially to Islam and Christianity.

The atmosphere of that century was very lively with a sense of economic revival, especially in Western countries due to the industrial revolution. This affected all aspects of human civilization (Adam, 2011). In the 14th to 16th centuries, Southeast Asia was at its peak for international trade and prosperity before the arrival of the European colonials. The people of Southeast Asia, especially seafarers and traders, played a major role in the market dynamics and world trade with their highly-valued products, such as spices, textiles, and sandalwood. This made various regions in Southeast Asia prime destinations for international traders from around the world, especially China, Japan, India, Persia, Arabia, and even Europe (Adam, 2011).

For the people of Southeast Asia, including the Indonesian archipelago, the expansion of the international trade network not only made them more prosperous—it also brought significant changes in areas like politics, law, trade, religious ideology, technology (especially military technology), shipping, agriculture, historical writing traditions, and demography (Geoff, 2002).

Such was the general atmosphere of Southeast Asia and the archipelago before and after Islamization, which was perhaps one of the most prevalent phenomena for forming a new civilization in Southeast Asia. Prior to this, the Islamic world had suffered a setback with the

defeat of the Caliphate of Bani Abbas by the Mongols in 1258 AD. There was no longer a chain of command directing Islamic civilization, with various elements running independently. The incident had shattered the *da'wah* strategy, which had been pursued alongside the development of political power. Indeed, the spread of Islam was no longer commanded by the power of a state or dynasty but rather by an order or organization later referred to as *tariqa*. Hitti (1970) stated that the condition of the Muslim rulers began to waver from the 10th century AD. Indeed, both the west and the east experienced almost the same conditions due to protracted conflicts, both internally and externally. For example, the Umayyad Caliphate in the west was threatened by the emergence of the Idrisiah, Thulun, Iksidiah, and Hamdaniah dynasties, while in the east, the Abbasid dynasty was threatened by the rise of the Tahiriah, Saffariah, Samanian, and Ghaznawi dynasties. These small dynasties—which historians, including Hitti, call “Muluk al-Thawa’if” (The Petty States)—were one of the factors that led to the collapse of the hegemony of the Abbasid and Umayyad dynasties. Afterwards, in 1258, this culminated in the destruction of the Abbasid dynasty by Hulagu Khan following the fall of Baghdad (Hodgson, 1974).

Amid this backdrop, the spread of Islam to the east occurred in parallel with the emergence of preachers from the Sufi circles, followers of the *tariqa*. In the pre-Islamic period of the archipelago, including for the Aceh area, Hinduism was quite strongly rooted, especially in coastal areas (Said, 1981). Following the fall of Baghdad, the task of maintaining the unity of Islam and spreading it to distant places fell to the Sufis, including for Indonesia (Azra, 1999). As a continuation of previous Sufis’ activities, the 13th century saw the appearance of various *tariqa*, which connected its adherents with foundational Sufi figures of the time. Each *tariqa* has a sheikh (*shaikh*) or *kaifiyat dhikr* and ritual ceremonies. Usually the sheikh or *murshid* teaches his students in a dormitory for spiritual practice referred to as a *suluk* or *ribath* house. The first *tariqa* to appear was the Qadiriyyah Order, which was established by Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani in Tibristan, Central Asia. From Tibristan, it spread to Iraq, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India, and eventually to Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and China. Next came the Rifaiyyah Order of Morocco and Algeria followed by the Suhrawardiyyah Order of North and Central Africa. The orders developed rapidly as its students were appointed as *caliphs* or *badals* to spread their teachings to Islamic lands (Mulyati et.al, 2004).

When the Ottoman Empire was established, the Bakhtesyî Order played a very large role in both political and military fields. The same was true of the Sanusiyyah Order in North Africa, especially in Algeria and Tunisia, while the Syadziliyyah Order was the most influential in Sudan. As for Indonesia, the development of Islam in the 15th and 16th centuries and beyond was largely due to the efforts of Sufis, so it is unsurprising that the spiritual leaders of Islam in Indonesia at the time were not sharia experts but rather *tariqa* sheikhs (Ali, 1971).

When the natives of the archipelago began to embrace an Islam that was colored by Sufism, the thoughts of the great Sufis, such as Ibn al-’Arabi and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, were very influential on the practices of the early Muslims. However, it is precisely because of this Sufistic influence that the people of the archipelago so easily embraced Islam, especially since the first generation of *ulama* also followed one or more *tariqa*. The 13th century AD was indeed a revival for the *tariqa* in the sense that Islamic thought under the influence of Sufism later developed into a *tariqa* in itself. It was then that the people of the archipelago began to embrace Islam, and Islamic thought was at its peak with this *tariqa*’s glory (Mulyati et al., 2004).

The history of Islamization for the archipelago has many versions, and there is no agreement about when Islamization began, with there being versions from Western and non-Western scholars. Snouck Hurgronje and Clifford Geertz are considered representative of the first group, having researched the archipelago geographically and produced theories in the form of classifications and categorizations for the Indonesian people. Hurgronje divided aspects of Islam into three forms: private worship, public worship, and politics. Clifford Geertz, meanwhile, mixed the classification and socio-religious stratification of Javanese society into Islamic *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi*. Hurgronje clearly showed his feudal-imperialistic motives, while Geertz worked under the pretext of eidetic study (Arifin, 2013).

In the eyes of the West, Nusantara literature contained stories, fairy tales, chronicles, history, and so on, but it was not enough to explain the archipelago. Indeed, the majority of Nusantara historiography was deemed to contain more “myths” than actual history, so researchers usually preferred to refer to Western sources written by Europeans who came to the archipelago as travelers, journalists, missionaries, and imperialists, but these turned out to be biased. Such research in turn led to distortions and misconceptions in viewing Nusantara Islam. However, not all orientalists did this, with them researching more objectively by digging into local sources, as De Graff and Pigeaud did (Arifin, 2013).

The history of the archipelago can be traced earlier through the writings of other foreigners, including their quotes. The Chinese mention in detail the arrival of their envoys to pay tribute, as well as simple reports in Arabic stories about incidents. Archaeological and epigraphic discoveries have also changed perceptions and restored the objectivity of documentation. Because these documents are based on external testimonies, for a long time, Southeast Asia was considered a meeting place for colonization, resulting in the introduction of Islam to the archipelago being based on estimates only. There is even speculation that from the 7th and 8th centuries AD, there was contact with Arab traders in China through the Ceylon route (Arnold, 1935).

Van Leur seemed to adopt this opinion. According to him, in the 7th century AD, Arab traders were among other groups, such as Persian, Jewish, and Catholic traders (Van Leur, 1955). This opinion was corroborated by Kramers, who stated that at that time, the maritime trade of the Arabs was more advanced than that of the Western (European) people. The Arabs controlled the sea route through the Indian Ocean, which they called the Persian Ocean, because since pre-Islamic times, the Persian Gulf with its ports in Siraf and Basra was the center of trade between Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. On their way to the Far East and Japan, Arabs established trade relations with a country called Zabag or Srivijaya. The Middle East and the archipelago also had many diplomatic relations (Kramers, 1952). Azyumardi Azra supports this view, saying that since the time of the Umayyads (7th and 8th centuries), Muslim traders had traded as far as the Far East. This was the furthest regular shipping lane, as Hourani put it, before the European revival in the 16th century AD (Azra, 1999). Based on these opinions, it seems that Islamization in the Nusantara region could have been possible before the 13th century AD. In turn, coastal Muslim cities could have emerged, starting with Pasai, Aceh, Malacca, Demak, Banten, Cirebon, Ternate, Tidore, Tallo Cave, Banjar, Kutai, and Mataram (Azra, 1999).

For Islamization in the archipelago, historians, researchers, orientalists, and Indonesian scholars agree that Sufism was the most important factor in the widespread adoption of Islam in Southeast Asia. However, there was a difference of opinion regarding the arrival of the *tariqa*, specifically as to whether it coincided with the arrival of Islam or came later (Aceh,

1966). There are also differences of opinion about philosophical Sufism, which is assumed to be a source of inspiration for the *da'wah* method that was adopted by the Walisongo for the spread of Islam.

The period of Islamization for the archipelago can be divided in the pre-Walisongo, the Walisongo, and the post-Walisongo periods. With a cultural approach, it becomes possible to simulate a dialogue between one culture and the next, the old and new thoughts and religions. In such a dialogical approach, the transfer of ideas is based on the notion that such things touch everyday life, so people notice their existence. Everyday life therefore emphasizes the similarities rather than the differences. It can be compared to a bottle and its contents: The bottles were retained, but the contents were gradually replaced with fresh contents.

In this dialogical approach, a continuation of culture is prioritized in the experiences of religion. People want goodness, beauty, peace, and most importantly, the promise of something better in future. When something new seems better and more suitable, it is more likely to be adopted. Islamization can be likened to offering something new like this. The preachers of Islam therefore looked for the most suitable formula for their *da'wah*, and they came up with a cultural approach where the values of mysticism met with traditional ones. The people of the archipelago therefore did not feel it was something alien to them (Arifin, 2013).

The difference between the Islamization of the pre-Walisongo and Walisongo periods lay in that during the latter period, *da'wah* was carried out by individuals with no institutionalized direction. There were also some state institutions that supported it, especially following the formation of the Demak Sultanate, which acted as Indonesia's first center of Islamic *da'wah* in addition to being an Islamic government.

The propagators of Islam before the Walisongo included Syekh Nurjati, a teacher for the Cirebon and West Java regions and Syekh Quro for the Karawang and West Java regions. During the Walisongo period, religious cultural ties between the guardians spreading Islam were tied to the existence of the Demak Sultanate, but after this collapsed and the Sultanate moved from the coastal area to the interior, Pajang and then to Mataram, the Walisongo were no longer effective as an institution. It seems they disbanded, and the subsequent *da'wah* process returned to more individual guardians. Pajang himself slowly returned to the old traditions in Java, which related more to mysticism outside of Islam than Islamic mysticism or Sufism (Achmad, 2017). Here, Kejawan Islam began to develop its own color alongside the subsequent Islamization process that took place in other areas of Java, especially in the Cirebon area of West Java.

The Role of Sunan Gunungjati in the Spread of Islam in Java

When talking about Cirebon, we cannot overlook the “wali,” because Sunan Gunungjati was one of the prominent propagators of Islam in the archipelago and one of the Walisongo in Java. Some even call him the “Polar Guardian.” He was both a religious leader and a ruler as the first king of the Cirebon Sultanate. Under him, Cirebon became a center of Islamization in the archipelago, a place for guardians to gather and organize their plans, steps, strategies, and practical actions to solve the problems faced by both the ulama and umara. Even today, the city of Cirebon is referred to as the “City of the Guardians.”

Cirebon occupied a strategic location, and in the 15th and 16th centuries AD, it became an important stop for shipping lanes and inter-island trade. Cirebon also acted as a bridge

between Central Java and West Java, between the Javanese and Sundanese cultures and traditions. As a coastal city on the eastern end of West Java's north coast, Cirebon became a port city for trade traffic. Initially, though, this place was just a fishing village known as Lemah Wungkuk, and it was not even on the historical maps of the time. This area was then called Hamlet Pasambangan and located approximately five kilometers north of the modern city of Cirebon. Dukuh Lemah Wungkuk was built by Ki Gedheng Alang-alang as a residential area for Muslims (Wildan, 2002), and this small hamlet later became the forerunner of the center for the Islamic *da'wah* in the surrounding area.

Over time, Lemah Wungkuk developed into a bustling port city that was visited by foreign traders, both coming from the archipelago and places beyond it, such as China, Arabia, Persia, Egypt, and India. Its evolution as a port city was also supported by various facilities, especially the construction of a lighthouse to guide foreign ships wanting to dock. Several rivers from the hinterland also flowed in the area, making it easier to bring agricultural products like rice from the interior for export to destinations like Malacca (Zuhdi, 1996).

In pre-Islamic times, Lemah Wungkuk, which later became Nagari Caruban Larang and eventually Cirebon, was initially unknown. Its name gathered some recognition when Islam established itself there, especially through the reports made by Tome Pires, who described Cirebon as a port city led by a Muslim. In his report of 1513, he stated that Islam was present in the area around 1470–1475. Furthermore, according to HJ de Graaf, Cirebon was the first area in West Java where the population had embraced Islam (Ambariy, 1988).

The Cirebon Sultanate was the first Islamic kingdom in West Java, having been founded by Syarif Hidayatullah, who bore the title Sunan Gunungjati. He was a scholar (*wali*) who was agile and skilled in governmental affairs. His grave remains a popular destination for pilgrims wishing to gain the blessing of the guardian who contributed so much to the spread of Islam in Java. Initially, Cirebon was a small area under the rule of Pakuan Pajajaran, and the King of Pajajaran appointed a blood relative named Prince Wadirectsang as administrator for this region. When he succeeded in advancing Cirebon, he had already embraced Islam. As mentioned by Tome Pires, there were already Muslims in Cirebon at the time. However, the person who finally succeeded in developing Cirebon into a kingdom was Syarif Hidayatullah, who bore the title Sunan Gunungjati and was the nephew and successor of Prince Wadirectsang. Thus, he was the founder of the dynasty for Cirebon and later Banten (Khalil, 2008).

As the nephew of Prince Wadirectsang, Sunan Gunungjati was also a blood relation of Prabu Siliwangi, the Sundanese King of Pajajaran who was domiciled in Pakuan Pajajaran and married to Nyai Subang Larang since 1422. From this marriage three sons were born: Raden Wadirectsang, Nyai Lara Santang, and the future King of Sengara. Sunan Gunungjati was the son of Nyai Lara Santang from his marriage to Maulana Sultan Mahmud, also known as Syarif Abdullah of Bani Hasyim, during pilgrimage.

Sunan Gunungjati was born in 1448 AD, and he died in 1568 AD at the ripe age of 120. As one of the Walisongo, he received respect from the rulers of Java, such as those of Demak and Pajang. Once Cirebon was officially established as an Islamic kingdom free from Pajajaran rule, Sunan Gunungjati tried to overthrow the parts of the Pajajaran kingdom that had not yet embraced Islam. Once Pajajaran collapsed, the steps toward Islamization intensified, not just in West Java but further afield in collaboration with the *da'wah* activities of other guardians.

In West Java, from Cirebon Sunan Gunungjati began to develop Islamic da'wah to other areas: Majalengka, Kuningan, Kawali (Galuh), Sunda Kelapa, and Banten. The foundations for the development of Islam and the trade of the Muslims in Banten were laid by Sunan Gunungjati in 1524 or 1525 AD. When he returned to Cirebon, Banten was handed over to his son, Sultan Hasanuddin. It was this sultan who brought down the kings of Banten, finally completely conquering the kingdom of Pajajaran. On the initiative of Sunan Gunungjati, an attack on Sunda Kelapa was also launched (1527 AD). This attack went smoothly with the help of soldiers from the Kingdom of Demak (Khalil, 2008).

As a port city, Cirebon was very strategic at the time, supported by four *jujung* and approximately 10 *lancanas* that made Cirebon an accessible port from various regions. It could even be reached by river using a junk. In addition, there was a market as an economic center close to the palace. In the city, there were several powerful merchants, and one of them was Pate Quedir. He was a prominent nobleman in Malacca and had served as the head of a Javanese village in Malacca. However, due to his political stance in favor of Demak, he was expelled from Malacca by the Portuguese. This was most demonstrated when he conspired with Demak forces who came to expel the Portuguese from Malacca (Wildan, 2002).

According to Tome Pires' report, at that time, Cirebon was ruled by a Muslim named Lebe Uca. It is possible that he was really referring to Pate Quedir, who in Cirebon manuscripts is referred to as Syekh Datuk Kahfi or Syekh Nurjati, because he was the first to spread Islam there before moving to the hills of Amparan Jati, where he founded a boarding school known as Pondok Qura Amparan Jati. As previously explained, Raden Wadireksang and his younger brother were students of the sheikh (Atja, 1973).

As the center for the spread of Islam in West Java, Cirebon began to show its existence when Prince Cakrabuana (or Raden Wadireksang), who had returned from Mecca with the title of Haji Abdullah Iman, led Nagari Caruban Larang, which previously only functioned as Pangraksa Bumi. Even after returning from the Holy Land of Mecca, he was increasingly active in developing Islamic *da'wah* by building various public facilities, such as villages, ports, and roads (Sunardjo, 1983).

The Cirebon Sultanate reached the peak of its glory as a center for the spread of Islam in West Java when Prince Cakrabuana handed power over Nagari Caruban Larang to his nephew, Syarif Hidayatullah. This appointment received the blessing and support of the guardians in Java, as was marked by his inauguration as Panetap Panatagama. After assuming power, he made Nagari Caruban Larang an independent kingdom separate from Pajajaran. This was demonstrated by no longer sending tribute to Pajajaran, even though the ruler at the time was his own grandfather, Prabu Siliwangi (Sunardjo, 1983).

The succession and transformation of power was still linked to the lineage of its rulers with the previous kings in the land of Sunda, and this helped maintain the continuity of the previous power, namely the Hindu kingdom. This assumption is clearly evident in the Chronicle of Cirebon, which emphasizes the genealogy of the founder of the Cirebon kingdom as a direct descendant of Prabu Siliwangi. A similar thing happened to Raden Patah in Demak, because the Babad Tanah Jawa explains that he was a descendant of Majapahit (Ambary, 1988). The existence of such legitimacy is no small thing, because genealogy and lineage were very important in the Javanese tradition for legitimizing power.

Ambary (1988) explained that two styles of Islam developed in Cirebon, namely Sunni and Shia. Shia aspects can be seen in works of art and traditional religious ceremonies, although the Sunni nuances seem more intense. In addition, the first spreaders of Islam in Cirebon were traders, travelers, craftspeople, and artists, some of whom were *tariqa* students. This was marked by the emergence of various *tariqa* schools in Cirebon. One of the most prominent of these was the Syatariyah Order, which later gave birth to literary works that embodied the teachings of the Dignity of Seven. The influence of the Suluk tradition even spread beyond Cirebon to Surakarta.

With Islam present as a political force in the Cirebon Sultanate, a new civilization emerged, a contribution of Islamic civilization itself. This was demonstrated with the emergence of Cirebon's cultural diversity under the pattern of port city life. It had the nuances of a religious and egalitarian society in line with the concept of *ummah* in Islam, which regulates people's relationships with fellow people and the Creator. The Cirebon community's world view was theocentric with an emphasis on divinity. This differed from the Western world where an anthropocentric world view emphasized human existence, thus giving birth to existentialism, which removed God from human life. Islamic civilization in Cirebon and Banten turned two fishing villages into two metropolises. The atmosphere in Cirebon at that time, as reported by foreign observers, was one of a very busy city, with it even being described as busier than the city of Amsterdam (Ambary, 1988).

Like other regions in the archipelago, Cirebon developed in close connection with the long-distance international network of trade routes known as the "silk road," which included both land and sea. In addition, the growth of various settlements in the Cirebon area further accelerated the development of Cirebon into one of the main ports on Java's north coast, with Banten and Jayakarta (now Jakarta) to the west and Demak, Jepara, Tuban, Gresik, to the east. The geopolitical atmosphere in the archipelago also supported the important role of Cirebon, such as the fall of Malacca to the Portuguese, which directly affected trade routes around the Malacca Strait. Likewise, there was a waning of Hindu power in the archipelago and the emergence of port cities with independent economies. This development started in Tuban, which played a role in trade routes from the west (Malacca) to the east (Maluku).

The existence of Tuban, and later Gresik, as a port city at the time was supported by advances in shipbuilding technology centered around Lasem and Rembang. This triggered the emergence of new Islamic territories in the 16th century AD, such as Cirebon, Jepara, Sunda Kelapa, and Banten (Kartodirjo, 1975).

The Sultanate of Demak also played a very large role in accelerating the Islamization process of Cirebon and other regions. Although Demak's place in the history of Islam on the archipelago is often overlooked, this is where the hegemony, which would be later continued by Pajang and Mataram, began. In fact, Islamization efforts in the west cannot be separated from Demak. Sunan Gunungjati's efforts to expand the influence of his power to the Sunda Kelapa area and then to Banten were assisted by troops from Demak. The alliance between Demak and Cirebon ushered in the spread of Islam to touch the heart of Pajajaran's power, culminating in the fall of Pajajaran to Islam (Projokusumo, Ambary, & Abdullah, 1991). Cirebon's role as the center of Islamization in West Java not only helped destroy Pakuan Pajajaran but also broke the embryonic influence of the Portuguese, who were allied with Pakuan Pajajaran to control Sunda Kelapa. The influence of Cirebon's Islamic teachings on the west was also demonstrated by the inauguration of Prince/Sultan Hasanuddin, the son of Sunan Gunungjati, as the ruler of Banten (Kartodirjo, 1975).

A saying goes that life comes in pairs: There is day and night, there are rises and falls, there are triumphs and collapses, there are ups and downs, and so on. Over time, the Cirebon Sultanate played its role in Islamization, and when Sunan Gunungjati died, he was replaced by his great-grandson, who was famous for his title Panageran Ratu or Panembahan Ratu. Panembahan Ratu died in 1650 and was succeeded by his son, who took the title Panembahan Girilaya. The integrity of Cirebon as a single kingdom only lasted until the end of the reign of Prince Girilaya. Following the death of Girilaya, according to his own will, Cirebon was ruled by his two sons: Martawijaya or Panembahan Sepuh and Kartawijaya or Panembahan Anom. Panembahan Sepuh led the Kasepuhan Sultanate as its first king with the title Syamsuddin (Khalil, 2008).

The entry of Sufism into the Cirebon region cannot be separated from the entry of Sufism into the archipelago. Historians have various opinions about how Sufism came to the archipelago, and some posit that it happened at the same time as Islam's entry. However, there are three accounts for when Islam came to the archipelago: The first claims it arrived in the 7th century AD (Hamka) through Arab trade relations with the East. The second posits that it entered in the 10th century, while the third puts this in the 13th century from Gujarat and Persia.

According to Azra (2004), the debate about the process, time, origin, and perpetrators of Islamization of the archipelago is still ongoing alongside an increasing number of research studies being carried out (Azra, 2004). The number of studies carried out using different cases actually adds to the variety of conclusions that can be drawn, demonstrating how complex the Islamization process is. Rushing to conclusions can be not only misleading—it also makes us ahistorical. One of the many issues that have long been debated is the origin of the first Islamic preachers on the archipelago. Scholars have suggest various theses ranging from positing that Islam came directly from Arab lands to stating that Islam first passed through several other regions of the world—such as Persia, India, and China—before reaching the archipelago (Azra, 2004).

More specifically for Islamization on the island of Java, the most dominant theory posits that the *ulama* belonging to the Walisongo were the earliest preachers in the region, although some recent studies seriously dispute this thesis by stating that there had been an Islamization movement before the Walisongo (Mas'ud, 2014). Indeed, the saints are believed to have been around in the consolidation stage rather than the introduction stage of the Islamization process, which had been previously conducted by early preachers who had come gradually and separately from one group or another. Such figures include Fatimah bint Maimun, Sheikh Jamaludin Al-Kubra or Al-Kabir, Sheikh Hasanudin (Syekh Quro), and Sheikh Nurjati, among others (Rosidin, 2012).

Beyond this debate, of course, Islam entered the archipelago for the service of the Sufis, because it occurred through the Sufism channel. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to say that the spread of Islam through the archipelago was largely due to the work of the Sufis (Siregar, 2000). According to Tjandrasasmita, Islam developed in the archipelago through six routes, namely trade, marriage, Sufism, Islamic education, politics, and arts, such as *wayang*. It is said that Sunan Kali Jaga was very proficient at staging *wayang* theatrical performances. He never asked for a performance fee, only that the audience followed him in reciting the creed. Most of the *wayang* stories are still taken from the Mahabharata and Ramayana stories, but the teachings and names of Islamic heroes are inserted in the stories. Other arts were also

used as tools for Islamization, such as literature (e.g., sagas, chronicles, and so on), building art, and carvings.

Of the six abovementioned channels of development for Islam on the archipelago, Sufism stands out because Islam's journey to the archipelago was related to carriers of Islam with Sufism teachings. These Sufis originated in Aceh, and some (not all) Nusantara Sufis who had a major influence in spreading Sufism teachings to various part of the archipelago included Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin al-Sumartani, Abdur Rauf al-Sinkili, and Abdul Samad al-Palimbangi, among others. Some Sufis and their various Sufism doctrines originated in West Sumatra, especially Aceh, and these influenced the subsequent spread of Sufism to various other regions of the archipelago, such as Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Java.

Cirebon was quite a significant area for the influence and spread of Sufism from the Sumatra Sufis. Indeed, Cirebon was viewed as a regional center for the spread and development of Islam and Sufism because of Cirebon's strategic location, both geographically and as a maritime port. It could even be said that Cirebon was a global center for the spread and development of Islam and Sufism (Siddique, 2012).

The first Sufi scholar to be influential in the spread of Islam and Sufism was Sheikh Nurjati of Cirebon. In his research on Syekh Nurjati, Didin Nurul Rosidin explained that Syekh Nurjati was believed to have founded the first Islamic educational institution, a kind of *pesantren*, in Bukit Amparan Jati. One of the important arguments about this preacher is how he can help explain the process of early Islamization on the archipelago. Compared to other figures, such as Haji Purwa and Pangeran Cakrabuana, Syekh Nurjati represented the cosmopolitanism Islamic movement, which was very dominant in the Middle Ages in the context of the international trade economic movement. Sheikh Nurjati did not come from the West Java region, like the two figures name above, but rather Malacca. He travelled to Mecca and Baghdad before landing at Muara Jati harbor. A study of Sheikh Nurjati can help to trace back the origins of Islam, the time of its arrival, and the carriers of Islam that arrived, especially for the people of Cirebon and its surrounding area (Rosidin, 2012).

Another figure who introduced Islam to Cirebon and its surrounding areas is mentioned in Zaenal Masduki's research, namely the younger brother of Sheikh Nurjati himself, known as Sheikh Bayanullah or Sheikh Maulana Akbar. He spread Islam in the Kuningan area, south of Cirebon. According to Zaenal Masduki, it is of course very possible to surmise that Sunan Gunungjati played more of a consolidation role in the Islamization movement, which had been already established by his predecessors. However, he massively amplified this movement and founded the first Islamic Kingdom in Cirebon, one that was independent from Pajajaran Kingdom, which was then ruled by his grandfather, Sri Baduga Maharaja Prabu Siliwangi (Masduqi et al. 2012).

The next figure to develop Islam and Sufism in Cirebon was Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah or Sunan Gunungjati. Sunan Gunungjati was an Islamic propagator in West Java, and he traveled to preach Islam to the inhabitants of the western part of the island, starting with Cirebon and its surrounding area (Wildan, 2012).

Syarif Hidayatullah (Sunan Gunungjati) had a degree of guardianship, because he had reached the status of *maqam ma'rifah*, so the other guardians on Java confirmed him as Wali Qutb (the axis or center of the Walis). After achieving perfection at the *ma'rifah* stage, he gained the position of An-Nubuwat al-Warisah (Prophetic Inheritance of the Prophet). He

later succeeded Prince Cakrabuana and gained the title “Ingkang Sinuhun Kanjeng Susuhunan Jati Purba Panetep Panatagama Aulia Allah Kutubizaman Kholifatur Rosulullah Shallallahu Alaihi Wassalam.”

The Relationship between Sufism and Culture in the Da’wah Strategy of Sunan Gunungjati

Sunan Gunungjati was the founder of Javanese Sufism, which has its own unique style that differs from that of the Eastern Sufis. The Sufism teachings of Sunan Gunungjati involved the media of Javanese culture and traditions, and the entry of Sufism into Cirebon began with early Cirebon figures like Syek Nurjati and Sunan Gunungjati. Indeed, these two figures played a major role in developing Islam and Sufism in Cirebon. Cirebon Sufism was very in touch with the previously dominant religions, namely Hinduism and Buddhism, and the various cultures and languages of the Cirebon people (Van Bruinessen, 2003). The Islamization in Cirebon by Sheikh Nurjati and Sunan Gunungjati (a student of Sheikh Nurjati) was therefore adapted to the local cultures without directly introducing sentences or verses from the Qur’an or applying philosophical Sufism terms—it instead mostly used terms from the regional language of Cirebon. One of the methods applied by Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah was to use the Proverb–Petitih teaching approach.

Proverbs Pe is a reflection of Sunan Gunungjati’s Sufism teachings, which contain local wisdom that is full of philosophical meanings, and this can be used to guide daily life in the family, community, and nation, something that still persists in Cirebon society. From here on in, Cirebon was known as the “City of the Guardians,” and the guardianship of Sunan Gunungjati became a magnet for the development of Islamic and Cirebon culture. However, the aura and echoes of the City of the Wali have now become quiet and lost, because in Cirebon, religious and cultural attitudes have been overtaken by the swift currents of modernization. Consequently, Cirebon is now more like a “City with a Thousand Malls.”

Sufistic values in Cirebon have changed and faded due to modernization and metropolitanization, and some people are less in touch with the noble values put forward by Sunan Gunungjati. The researcher therefore felt it necessary to maintain and support these noble values by conducting a review of them. This study was intended, among other things, to add to the treasures of Sufism being researched by various groups, so this discussion could be used as material for further studies aimed at examining the role of art and culture in the spread of a religion. Indeed, it could make Sufism valuable as knowledge for forming spiritual, transcendental, and spiritual attitudes, as well as developing a noble character. Further studies could also examine how Sufism embodied in culture and traditions could contribute to strengthening local wisdom and resisting invasive cultures, which are sometimes more glamorous than educational (Suryaman, 2015).

Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah, better known as Sunan Gunungjati, is considered a figure who spread Islam in West Java and acted as the first Islamic ruler in Cirebon. He is a holy figure (i.e., a wali, a saint) and a role model for Muslims, who recognize him as having brought down the sultans of Cirebon and Banten. He is respected, and the pilgrims who visit his grave each day often pray for him, honor him, and even ask for his sacred blessing (Suryaman, 2015). As a member of the Walisongo, he was a very active preacher. According to Fox (1989), the Walisongo were a *da’wah* or missionary council of holy people (saints, walis) who taught and preached Islam in Java. Moreover, the word “Nine” referred to the coordinating function of the missionary council, with the stipulation that should one of the

guardians die, he would be replaced with another, so that there would always be nine (Ricklefs, 1991).

The *da'wah* model developed by Sunan Gunungjati combined Sufism teachings with local cultural frames that are still felt today. Likewise, during his leadership, Sunan Gunungjati combined structural (political) and cultural strategies. The main *da'wah* strategies developed by Sunan Gunungjati for forming a civil society are discussed below.

Preaching Methods

For preaching, Sunan Gunungjati followed the steps used by the Prophet Muhammad, such as through marriage, uniting influential leaders, political diplomacy, military strategy, and so on. He put emphasis on “Dakwah bil Hal,” which emphasizes direct practice together in the community and prioritizes *uswah hasanah* and good role models for the general public. One of his most famous expressions was that he aspired to create a program that is still being preserved. “I entrust the mosque, surau, and also the poor,” he said. The point is that as a leader, he did not inherit wealth and throne, but rather a *tajug* (i.e., mushalla, mosque, surau) and the poor. A *tajug* is a symbol of transcendence between the values of the world and the hereafter. There are vertical and horizontal relationships in transcending God’s self and establishing harmonious relationships with the fellow servants of God, including the welfare of the poor, because abandoning the poor means betraying God (Suryaman, 2015).

Islamic Boarding Schools

The pesantren were the earliest Islamic educational institution established by Islamic propagators in the archipelago. Their teaching systems were brought from Arabia, Persia, and Egypt. There are many explanations for the terms “pesantren” and “santri.” The Islamic boarding school, or *ma'had*, in Cirebon was first built by Sheikh Datuk Kahfi from Baghdad, who was better known as Sheikh Nurjati, a propagator of Islam who also taught Sunan Gunungjati. Responsibility for the pesantren was transferred to Sheikh Somadullah or Raden Wadirectsang when Sheikh Nurjati grew too old. It was later continued by his nephew, Sunan Gunungjati, after returning from study from various places, from Mecca to the last Ampel Denta Islamic boarding school, where he studied with Sunan Ampel. At the Amparan Jati Islamic Boarding School, Sunan Gunungjati became the kyai there. He taught religious sciences, namely the Quran, Hadith, *aqidah*, morality (sufism), and *fiqh*. The science of *fiqh* taught to students was that of the Shafi’i school, while the science of monotheism (*aqidah*) was based on the Ash’ari school of thought.

For several years, Syarif Hidayatullah taught at the pesantren before he returned to Palestine to pick up his mother, who still lived with his sister because he had left her a long time ago. He and his mother then returned to Cirebon, but his mother did not want to stay in the Pakungwati Palace, so she lived with Syarif Hidayatullah at the Amparan Jati Islamic Boarding School (Kertawibawa, n.d.).

Because nurturing students in Islamic boarding schools did not produce optimal results, on the advice of Prince Wadirectsang, Sunan Gunungjati preached from place to place, having left the Amparan Jati Islamic Boarding School, which he handed over to senior students. For two years, Sunan Gunungjati preached to various people and converted community leaders, with his methods yielding encouraging results (Khalil, 2008; Nor, 2017).

On returning from preaching, Sunan Gunungjati was crowned the first Sultan of the Islamic Kingdom of Cirebon. Sunan Gunungjati sat in the palace next to the Sang Cipta Rasa

Mosque, and the mosque and the palace both served as centers for the spread and study of Islam for Cirebon and the surrounding area. Following the death of Sunan Gunungjati, the sultanate was continued by his descendants until it was divided into two due to a family dispute. Then the Dutch colonialists arrived and interfered in the political affairs of the Cirebon Sultanate. Finally, in the 18th century, there was a royal mufti, Sheikh Muqayyim, who felt uncomfortable watching the behavior of the Dutch colonialists in the palace, so he left the palace and went to Sindang Laut to build a boarding school. This boarding school was located in the village of Bulak close to where the pesantren is now. Sheikh Muqayyim turned out to be a descendant of Sunan Gunungjati, and his Islamic boarding school, called the Buntet Pesantren, is currently located in two villages, namely Mertapada Kulon village and Bulak village. The Buntet Pesantren has developed into a reliable and advanced Islamic educational institution. Its education system combines the *salaf* (traditional) system and the *khalaf* (modern) system. The current caretaker of the school is actually a descendant of Sunan Gunungjati, starting with Sheikh Muqayyim and going through KH. Muta'ad, KH. Abdul Jamil, KH. Abbas, KH. Mustahdi Abbas, KH. Mustamid Abbas, KH. Abdullah Abbas, and KH. Nahduddin Abbas (until now) (Kertawibawa, n.d).

Another old Islamic boarding school in Cirebon is the Benda Kerep Islamic Boarding School, which is managed by Kyai Sholeh, a scholar who is qualified and knowledgeable in religion and “*sakti*.” He is the ninth descendant of Sunan Gunungjati, and he fosters the Benda Kerep pesantren by prioritizing noble moral values, namely through the values of Sufism. To this day, the Benda Kerep Islamic boarding school and the kyai descendants of Sheikh Sholeh still maintain their Sufi traditions, one of which being to not use a television or radio. The Benda Kerep Islamic Boarding School is located in approximately three hectares in the Argasunya area, a highland area under Harjamukti District, Cirebon City. Benda Kerep is located in the middle of the forest, which is the land of the Kanoman Palace.

Furthermore, *salaf* Islamic boarding schools have sprung up in various parts of Cirebon, with them following the steps passed down by Sunan Gunungjati. At the start of the 19th century AD, there were the Babakan Ciwaringin, Cirebon, Kempek, Gedongan, and Arjawinangun boarding schools, among others. The learning systems and methods applied in the pesantren are almost the same, and the books that are used as references are all the same. Nowadays, there are hundreds of Islamic boarding schools in Cirebon and the surrounding area.

Islamizing Javanese Cultural Traditions

Sunan Gunungjati tirelessly spread Islam in western Java. The success of his *da'wah* resulted in Islam flourishing in various areas of West Java, from the tip of the western part of the island of Java to the eastern border. More than 90% of the population of West Java is now Muslim. Islamization was not limited to the aspect of ritual (worship) alone, however—it also reached out to aspects of the existing local cultural traditions. In the economic system, he Islamized the problems of purchasing transactions, renting, profit-sharing (e.g., *mudharabah* and *musharaka*), and so on.

The *kendurian* custom for when someone dies was originally a legacy of the Hindu–Buddhist tradition, but it was Islamized by Sunan Gunungjati by reading dhikr, tahlil, tahmid, tasbih, the Quran, and shalawat to the Prophet Muhammad.

In the artistic aspect, shadow puppets, mask dances, plays, and so on were Islamized for their existence rather than as symbols. This was done, for example, when the opening began with greetings and *basmalah*, *shalawat* to the Prophet, while the contents of the story contained the history of human civilization and how it relates to the values of aqidah, worship, and

morals, so that people could easily accept Islamic teachings with joy without the need for coercion or war. Furthermore, Sunan Gunungjati applied Islamic traditions to the people of West Java by cultivating the celebration of the Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (Muludan), Nuzulul Qur'an, Isra Mi'raj (Rajaban), the Islamic New Year (One Suranan), and so on. These splendid practices of Islamic traditions did not just involve the people of Cirebon but also all levels of society in remote areas of the island.

The Art of Mosque Building and Layout

Following his coronation as Sultan, Sunan Gunungjati wanted to build the Great Mosque of Pakungwati. This desire was quickly realized, because his uncle had already collected building materials, such as bricks, wood, nails, and so on. Sunan Gunungjati then asked Sheikh Datuk Kahfi to write a letter to his brother Syarif Nurullah requesting that he send teak wood from Egypt. After donations were collected and other materials were procured, the construction of the mosque began with approximately one hundred workers (Amman, 2007). Other guardians also contributed. Sunan Bonang donated a mat, which was held in the north, while Syekh Benthong donated a mat from Medina, which was held in the mihrab in the north. Sunan Jati donated a mat from Majeti island and installed it in the middle of the mosque. Sunan Kalijaga donated another mat that was held to the north of Sunan Purba's mat (Amman, 2007).

The Great Mosque of Pakungwati still stands strong, and the architectural art of the building has been maintained since the mosque was built in Sunan Gunungjati's time. Sunan Gunungjati not only built mosques around the Cirebon area but also in the various places where he had spread Islam. He built the Al-Alam Cilincing Mosque of North Jakarta in 1662, which still stands, with the art of the building still maintaining its original authenticity (Amman, 2007).

Regarding the spatial layout of settlements, Sunan Gunungjati directed community leaders to arrange the spatial layout of each village such that it would have a golden triangle pattern that was interrelated. More specifically, when building the spatial layout, first there was the mosque and then the village's official buildings, followed by the market. The same applied for higher level officials. The development of a city or part of it, such as for a sub-district, had to go hand in hand with mosques and markets. Therefore, Sunan Gunungjati's contribution still looks sustainable, because even though the architecture and building arrangements have changed considerably, the spatial layout remains the same. Even the Indonesian government officials want to preserve the city's spatial layout, such as having a mosque beside the presidential palace (Amman, 2007). This has deep philosophical meaning, as described in the Qur'an surah al-Jumu'ah and applied by the Messenger of Allah in the construction of the Prophet's Mosque (Madinah al-Munawwarah).

Advancing the Economy

Cirebon has long been an important port on the north coast of Java, both for shipping and trading activities within the archipelago and with other parts of the world. From this, Islam slowly began to grow and develop in Cirebon. Meanwhile, farmers in the interior of Cirebon produced rice and other food items that were transported to the port by either river or road.

A policy decision was taken to build a connecting road to the interior, so the economy developed more rapidly. In addition, trading activities involving the interaction of many parties allowed the spread of Islam to take place more intensely and smoothly.

By ensuring the security and tranquility of the people of Cirebon and its surrounding area, the Sultanate of Cirebon became a trading center with an increasing level of income for Cirebon's people. In addition, the port of Cirebon was busy with foreign merchants from places like India, Persia, Arabia, China, and so on. Commercial transactions were carried out at the port through the barter system, so goods from India or China were exchanged for the products of the Cirebon people, such as shrimp paste, agricultural products, and so on. Thus, the economy of the Cirebon community became more advanced and the community grew more prosperous. In addition, the port of Cirebon welcomed merchants and traders from the port of Jepara (Amman, 1987).

Establishing Royal Politics

As the first sultan in the history of the Cirebon Sultanate, Sunan Gunungjati emerged as both a religious and political leader, someone who had shifted the system and state structure toward the notion of religious power. His leadership was characterized by greatness and wisdom. In running his government, he defended the integrity of the law, controlled the sources of power (heirlooms and sacred places), and fought wars to expand his territory and spread Islam.

The conquest of Sunda Kelapa, Rajagaluh, and Talaga occurred during the time of Sunan Gunungjati. This period of expansion for the Cirebon Sultanate was followed by a period of stabilization filled with mental-spiritual development efforts among the people of Cirebon. In addition, the evolution of the Duchy of Banten into the independent Banten Sultanate narrowed the scope of the Pakuan Pajajaran kingdom and increased the effectiveness of monitoring the wider kingdom's territory (Amman, 1987).

By grasping important aspects in the administration of his state, namely the economic, political, and religious institutions, the Cirebon Sultanate became stronger and more respected. Sunan Gunungjati used a centralized political strategy for his coastal kingdom, with the port playing an important role and the interior acting as a vital supporting element. According to Sunardjo (1983), within about three years of his coronation, there were various rapid changes in Cirebon, including:

- 1) The fulfillment of physical facilities and infrastructure, including the establishment of a palace as the official residence of the head of state (*susuhunan*) and the center of government, which was located not far from the Kriyan river estuary; the Great Mosque as a place of worship and somewhere to formulate programs for the development of Islamic symbols; the main port of Muarajati for economic improvement; a road that connected the government center with the trade and religious education centers; and the market as a trading center for the Pasambangan area.
- 2) Control over the hinterland areas, which were expected to supply food and sale, and these areas were vital for the income of the coastal sultanate.
- 3) A number of soldiers (*laskar*) were led by commanders (*tumenggung*) whose loyalty could be trusted.
- 4) There were a number of advisors for the field of government and loyal regional leaders (*gedeng*).
- 5) Very close inter-state relations were established between Cirebon and Demak, so at any time, they could help each other in defending themselves.

- 6) There was no indication of threat from the Pakuan Pajajaran kingdom (Kertawibawa, n.d).

The cooperation between the kingdoms of Cirebon and Demak was intended to accelerate the spread of Islam beyond the island of Java to the rest of the archipelago. Such cooperation was seen, for example, when the Cirebon kingdom was attacked by a small kingdom that was subordinate to the Pajajaran kingdom. Conversely, when the Demak kingdom expanded its territory and brought down the Majapahit kingdom, Syarif Hidayatullah helped it in its battle with Majapahit. In that battle, the guardians participated in helping the troops by issuing their various *karamahs*. In the siege of Majapahit, Sunan Gunungjati issued his *karomah*, namely from his crown, and out came thousands of rats that panicked Majapahit's royal troops (Kertawibawa, n.d).

Building a Sociocultural Society

Under the control of Sunan Gunungjati, Cirebon became one of the first centers for spreading Islamic teachings in Java while also becoming a center for political power and sociocultural development. On inheriting the potential of the Pajajaran kingdom, Sunan Gunungjati did not seek to erase the cultural heritage of the Pajajaran kingdom. Instead he preserved it and even adapted it for the teaching of Islam, thus making it more acceptable to the Pasundan people. This way, when the Pasundan community embraced Islam, they felt joyous about it, because it did not involve any coercion from Muslim leaders.

As the center for the spread of Islam in West Java, as well as a center of Islamic civilization, Cirebon has several distinctive characters that were very valuable assets, including:

- 1) The growth of life in the city was inspired by Islam with very complex patterns of community structure and social hierarchies.
- 2) Both sacred and profane architecture was developed, such as the Great Mosque of Cirebon (Masjid Sang Cipta Rasa) and palaces (Kertawibawa, n.d), including the Kasepuhan, Kanoman, Kacerbonan, Kaprabonan, and Sitinggil buildings, which adapted local designs and ornaments, including pre-Islamic ones.
- 3) The growth in glass painting and sculpture produced Islamic calligraphy works that were very typical of Cirebon, and among other things, these showed the presence of anthropomorphic elements that were not common in Islamic art.
- 4) Other artistic fields were developed, such as dance, batik, music, and various traditional performing arts with an Islamic flavor, as well as Cirebon's distinctive cloud decoration.
- 5) There was growth in the writing of religious texts and ideas, the remains of which are still stored in Cirebon's palaces and other places in West Java, such as the Prabu Geusan Ulun Sumedang Museum and the Cigugur Kuningan Museum, which until now have not been thoroughly studied.
- 6) The number of *tariqa* schools increased (Syatariyah, Tijaniyah, Syahadatain, etc.). The Syatariyah congregation later gave birth to literary works that embodied the Dignity of the Seven (*manunggaling kawula gusti*). This Suluk tradition greatly influenced the tradition of similar written literature in the Surakarta palace.
- 7) There was growth in Islamic education in the form of pesantren in parts of Cirebon, Indramayu, Karawang, Majalengka, and Kuningan (Ambary, 1988).

The Islamic civilization established by Sunan Gunungjati made a very large contribution to forming a world view that emphasized theocentric aspects (i.e., always relating things to

God), while Western civilizations emphasized anthropocentric aspects (i.e., always relating things to humans). The existence of Islamic civilization in Cirebon and Banten, as mentioned in the Cirebon traditional texts, transformed two fishing villages that were all but meaningless into two developed metropolises, with the main pioneer being Sunan Gunungjati.

By adopting Islamic *da'wah* into political policy, the Islamic Sultanate of Cirebon rapidly became a large empire. In 1530 AD, the Islamic Sultanate of Cirebon covered the entire western part of Java from Cirebon in the east to the lands of Pasundan and Banten. The population at the time is estimated to have been 600,000 people. Cirebon became the center for Islamic civilization and its spread in West Java. The Islamic kingdom of Cirebon experienced its heyday in those times, such that it was able to defeat the strength of the Portuguese army in Sunda Kelapa.

Conclusion

Islamization in Indonesia cannot be separated from the development of Sufism, because Sufism had a close relationship with the inner atmosphere of the people of the Indonesian archipelago, such that there was a contract between the propagators of Islam and the indigenous people. Familiarity facilitates the acceptance of a new religion like Islam, and the Walisongo applied this when preaching so that they would make an impression on the hearts of the people through Islam Nusantara, which is a model of Islam that is peaceful, tolerant, open, and accommodating of local culture. In short, the propagators of Islam kept the bottle and only replaced its contents.

Sunan Gunungjati was one of the Walisongo. His *da'wah* pattern had similarities with those of the other saints, but he was unique in that he was also a ruler in addition to being a religious figure, one deserving of the title of “ulama-umara.” He was even called “Qutb al-Awliya.” He became a reference for the *da'wah* strategies implemented by the Walisongo.

Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah’s Sufism teachings, which are framed in culture, succeeded in building a civil society in Java, especially in Cirebon and its surrounding area. For this reason, teaching Sufism through a cultural frame can still be considered important for responding to the dynamics of the world community, parts of which seem to have lost their identity due to advances in science and technology and the progressive development of sophisticated communication tools. Some have therefore forgotten the basic, essential things, like intuitive and metaphysical issues. In this situation, it may help to revive the Sufism teachings of Sunan Gunungjati, which have prophetic values and morals characterized by earnest obedience and devotion to Allah and His Messenger. The ways that Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah spread the teachings of Islam and Sufism went not just through normative doctrines—he was very respectful of cultural traditions, even though they were rooted in Buddhism and Hinduism. These traditions therefore continued to be maintained and preserved by the Cirebon people until modern times.

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E-ISSN: 1309-9108

Journal of Social Studies Education Research (JSSER)

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Subject: Letter of Acceptance

Dear **Dr. Hajam**:

I am pleased to write this Letter of Acceptance for your research entitled “*Sufferance within a Cultural Framework as the Preaching Strategy of Sunan Gunungjati in Forming a Civil Society*”. Your paper is scheduled to be published on the next regular issue (Vol. 12, Issue: 4) of Journal of Social Studies Education Research (December, 2021). The paper will be open access and available online at the website of the journal by the end of December, 2021.

Best regards,

15.12.2021

Assoc. Prof. Bulent Tarman

Editor-in-Chief,

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