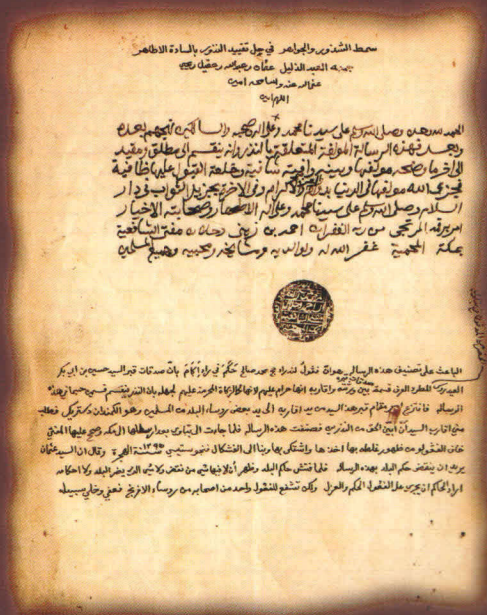




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THE GEGER BANTEN OF 1888: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF 19TH CENTURY MILLENARIANISM IN INDONESIA¹

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Abstract

This paper tries to analyse the millenarian response of the Bantenese to the Western colonization from an anthropological perspective. The history of Banten at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century was marked by various indigenous unrest, rebellion, and resistance against the colonial power. In 1888, several religious leaders of Sufi brotherhoods and community leaders in Cilegon, Banten led a revolt against the Dutch colonial government. This uprising was provoked by the Dutch's trade regulation, a new economic system, and was fuelled by enduring religious sentiments against the Dutch. While most scholars frame the event as a religious or social political movement, this study focuses on to what some of the Bantenese Muslims perceived as "unjust" social situations of the colonized world: poverty, inequality, religious restriction, social and political marginalization.

Keywords: 19th Century Banten, Indonesia, Sufism, Tarekat, Rebellion, Millenarianism

Abstrak

Tulisan ini mencoba menganalisis respon millenarian masyarakat Banten terhadap kolonisasi Barat dari perspektif antropologi. Sejarah Banten pada akhir 19 dan awal abad ke-20 ditandai oleh berbagai kerusuhan, pemberontakan, dan perlawanan terhadap kekuasaan kolonial Belanda. Pada 1888, beberapa pemimpin tarekat dan tokoh masyarakat di Cilegon, Banten memimpin pemberontakan melawan pemerintah kolonial Belanda. Pemberontakan ini dipicu oleh sistem ekonomi dan perdagangan kolonial dan didorong oleh sentimen agama yang terus muncul terhadap Belanda. Sementara beberapa sarjana membingkai peristiwa sebagai gerakan sosial atau politik keagamaan. Penelitian ini berfokus pada apa yang orang Islam di Banten anggap sebagai "ketidak-adilan" masyarakat dunia terjajah: kemiskinan, ketimpangan, pembatasan agama, marjinalisasi sosial dan politik.

Kata Kunci: *Banten Abad ke-19 M, Indonesia, Sufisme, Tarekat, Pemberontakan, Millenarianisme*

Introduction

This paper tries to analyse the millenarian response of the Bantenese to the Western colonization in the 19th century Indonesia from an anthropological perspective. Since the 16th century, many parts of the Indonesian archipelago had been colonized by the Dutch colonial power. The 19th century marked the increasing contacts between the Muslim groups and the Western world. Western domination during the colonial times was perceived by these groups to cause severe unrest, poverty, inequality, social, and political marginalization among these colonized Muslims.

In 1888, several community leaders and religious leaders of Sufi brotherhoods, known as *tarekat*, in Banten, led a revolt against the Dutch colonial government. The uprising was provoked by the Dutch's trade regulation, a new economic system, and previously, by the fall of the Banten sultanate as the Dutch protectorate in 1684.² The movement occurred relatively quickly, but its implications were far-reaching. It appears that the impact of the uprising was influential within the indigenous society as well as on the Dutch colonial government.

Banten, in particular, is a very interesting area to discuss in the context of an indigenous movement among Muslim societies. First, Banten was renowned for its long tradition of rebellion against Dutch colonial rule. Second, Banten can be a good example to enhance the

importance of developing a “local” perspective in understanding of Indonesian society.

In recent years, this local perspective has been widely used to oppose the “global” perspective, which mainly focuses on the historical events seen from the global context. Or, as in the case of nationalist historical narratives, the local perspective has been emphasized to uphold Indonesian history in accordance with the national interest, or serve certain circles of the elite. The local perspective also used to question the history of the 19th century Indonesia which for many years was seen through the lenses of the history of the Dutch colonial regime.

Thanks to other important findings by a number of great scholars in various disciplines, local perspectives of Banten history have been increasingly valued. Scholars working in the fields of archaeology and philology on Banten led by French scholar Claude Guillot, have significantly contributed to a better understanding of Banten prior to the coming of Islam to the region.³ Unlike previous studies which tend to depreciate local sources,⁴ studies by these scholars point to some interesting findings which likely to support arguments provided by local historical documents such as the *Sajarah Banten*. When Islam came to Banten, the region was even perceived to play a bigger role in trans-local maritime world in Southeast Asia with a developed, specific code of law.⁵

The “local” aspect above can be seen clearly in previous studies of the Banten uprising, primarily in Kartodirdjo’s work (Kartodirdjo, 1966; 1984). He successfully looked at the event from a different angle as part of his social history project, distancing Indonesian history from European-centred viewpoints. His tremendous project in 1966 to describe local actors in Indonesian history is far from complete, especially if it is seen from anthropological perspective to resolve large gaps in our understanding the event. In 2004, Engseng Ho elegantly brings to mind the importance of Eric Wolf’s project in 1982 (in his book *Europe and the People without History*) and appeals for an “anthropologically nuanced” understanding of an historical event (Ho, 2004; Wolf, 1982). This paper is not a historical study and it does not specifically look at archives about the event. However, it seeks to discover an anthropological viewpoint focused on the Banten event in

1888 that will offer a fresh socio-cultural understanding of the historical event both as a social and millenarian movement.

The *Geger* Banten of 1888

Since Kartodirdjo's publication of *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888* (Kartodirdjo, 1966), there has been a number of works trying to scrutinize a better understanding of the legendary Banten uprising. The book was translated into Indonesian language almost two decades after its English version (Kartodirdjo, 1984), and was hugely influential in shaping the discourse on Indonesian native struggles against colonialism. It received critical acclaim, and was followed by a series of publications on the same theme by different writers. For example, A. Hamid wrote a book in Indonesian entitled *Tragedi Berdarah di Banten 1888*. He called the event a "bloody tragic event," as the title of his book suggests, and mainly focuses on the role of one of the religious leaders involved in the uprising (Hamid, 1987).

A year later, historian Hasan Muarif Ambary and colleagues published another book reinvigorating the prominence of the anti-colonial resistance in Banten formally distributed by a Banten local government office (Ambary and Michrob, 1988). This book, entitled *Geger Cilegon 1888*, was an effort to retrieve the importance of Bantenese patriotism as its publication concurred with the 462nd anniversary of Serang, a Bantenese regency. Here the event was called *Geger Banten 1888*, adding to it a popular connotation of the event as a number of other social uprisings or resistance were also called a *geger*, meaning a commotion, uproar, unrest, turmoil, riot.

Sartono Kartodirdjo (1966), the most prominent Indonesian historian in the study of the Banten uprising, suggested that this revolt was a social movement, induced by the millenarian atmosphere in the 19th century Java.⁶ Many scholars link social uprisings in Muslim communities with the idea of *al-Mahdi*. The idea of *al-Mahdi* literally means 'the rightly guided one' in the sense of restorer of religion at the end of time to deliver their people from tyranny and oppression. In Banten, this concept of *al-Mahdi* was adopted to inspire the Bantenese to revolt against the Western colonizers.

The belief in *al-Mahdi* and the involvement of Sufi brotherhoods in political scenes are not unusual in the Islamic tradition. In 1881, following the fall of Egypt to the British troops, Muhammad Ahmad, a charismatic leader of the Sammaniyyah order in Sudan, acquired a large following of people depressed by the many aspects of their social and economic existence (Holt, 1980).⁷ He proclaimed himself the Mahdi who would bring Sudan to a more prosperous society. His Mahdism suggested a return to the golden age of the “pure” and “unblemished” Islam. This resulted in a social, political and religious movement, known as the “Mahdist” movement.

It appears that the Banten uprising was inherently anti-colonialist, and to some degree, they even opposed their own native counterparts in governmental positions who had Muslim background. This resulted from the deep belief of the Dutch colonials as “*kafir*” or “*kuffār*” [infidels] which was internalized among the Muslim groups. The crystallization of such ideas within the *umma*, in the religious community, was more profoundly persistent by the intensive religious gatherings in the *tarekat*. Several *tarekats* such as the Qadiriyyah, Naqsyabandiyyah and Syatariyyah, had a strong foothold in Banten.⁸ In this perspective, it is not an exaggeration to perceive that the *tarekat* contributed significantly to such millenarian uprisings.

An Anthropological Perspective

A selected number of both scholarly and historical books on social unrests in Indonesian language have used the word *geger* to portray the social and political turbulence in various regions in Indonesia (Daradjadi, 2013; Firdaus, 2004; Murti, 2004; Wasis, 2001). While Kartodirdjo (1996) focused on the event as a peasant phenomenon, the term of *geger* symbolizes what Shahid Amin (1995) perceived as a “popular memory” whose impact is bigger than one may think.

An anthropological perspective to the event may borrow this idea of Amin to underline the social and cultural importance of the Banten uprising in 1888 and how it is remembered and the way in which the meanings of the event were produced and reproduced in later years. Here we see the collective memory of the 19th century events represented in folk-tale and popular books such as the *Geger Cilegon* (Firdaus, 2004) and *Bunga Ceplok Ungu dari Banten: Pemberontakan*

Banten (Pratikto, 2003). Yanti Soeparmo, an Indonesian award-winning novelist, wrote an interesting love story set against the backdrop of Banten uprising. In this story, Soeparmo (2009: 9) refers the event as “Geger Cilegon” of 1888, a term popularly known by the natives in Banten.

A recent publication of the event emphasized the significance of Islamic teachings for arousing religious sentiments during the uprising (Isnaeni, 2012). Unlike Kartodirdjo who underscores the revolt in the context of Banten as a peasant community, Isnaeni provided a stronger emphasis on the religious aspects through his portrayal of Sheikh Abdul Karim al-Bantani, one of the religious leaders involved. Another study by Vakily (1994) also stressed the importance of *sufi-tarekat* group and its political aspirations in the Banten uprising (Vakily and Centre d'études sur les régions en développement 1994).

An anthropological perspective may also learn from these following approaches. For instance, we can look up to such theories developed in the study of revitalization movements, especially Barkun's (1974) colonial hypothesis (Barkun, 1974: 35-61) and Aberle's (1983) theory of “state of deprivation.” (Aberle, 1983: 315-333). This paper follows these theoretical approaches because of their engaging discussion on the relationships between millenarian movements and colonialism. One of the main issues addressed here is how colonialism produces “deprivation” and the desire among the colonized peoples to change the existing conditions. Barkun's “colonial hypothesis” suggested that, generally speaking, contacts between different cultures often result in social changes. From this point, the social changes in turn often give rise to millenarian movements. (Barkun, 1974: 34). According to Barkun's theory social outbursts, which use millenarian ideas, often result from situations of “decremental deprivation.” This deprivation happens when the groups' expectations to change the existing conditions remain persistent and they were unable to realize their expectations. (Barkun, 1974: 35). These characteristics are evident in the Banten uprising as presented in this paper. In addition, there was an apparent dual emphasis, which was typical in millenarian movements, in Banten. As Barkun asserted, the dual emphasis aspect of millenarianism was proven to help heal the feeling of powerlessness and anxiety (Barkun, 1974: 40). among the colonized Bantenese Muslims.

It is a common belief that Sufism and the Sufi orders played crucial roles in the process of islamization in Indonesia. (Martin Bruinessen, 1994: 3). A Dutch scholar Martin Bruinessen (1994) suggested that Islam as taught to the first Indonesian converts was probably strongly coloured by Sufi doctrines and practices. (Martin Bruinessen, 1994: 3). Many scholars believe that this was precisely what made Islam attractive to them and that the development of Sufism was one of the factors making the islamization of the archipelago possible. The concepts of sainthood (*wilayah*) and perfect man (*insan kamil*), offered local rulers a rich potential for mystical legitimisation such as they would not have found in earlier, more egalitarian Islam (Milner, 1983).⁹ In addition, the first centuries of the islamization of Southeast Asia coincided with the period of medieval Sufism and the flourishing growth of the Sufi orders (*tarekat*). (Martin Bruinessen, 1994: 3-5).

Further, there was also an indication that Sufism in Indonesia was closely related to economic trade. Anthony Johns (1961) asserted that islamization was due to active proselyzation by Sufi missionaries accompanying the Muslim traders.¹⁰ Johns also suggested that there was a close connection between trade guilds, Sufi orders and the Muslim preachers, which provided the moving force behind islamization.¹¹ This idea was criticized by Bruinessen (1994) saying that it is highly doubtful whether the foreign Muslims trading with Southeast Asia were organized in anything resembling guilds. (Martin Bruinessen, 1994: 4-5). However, in my view, the economic factor of the islamization of the Indonesian archipelago by the Sufi missionaries in turn gave a very affective feeling among Muslims towards economic trading system. In this respect, I would like to argue that many social uprisings in Java in the 19th century which involved the Muslim groups were related to this factor.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the economic system was perceived to be very important in Islamic teachings. Martin Bruinessen (1994) suggested that the prominent role of Sufi orders in the first wave of islamization can be found here: the oldest surviving Islamic manuscripts from Java and Sumatra consisted of not only mystical tracts and miraculous tales of Persian and Indian origins but also of Islamic law standard manuals, including the Islamic trading customs. (Martin Bruinessen, 1994: 5).

Pesantren or Islamic boarding schools were part of the development of *tarekat* among Indonesian Muslims. The Pesantren Buntet in Cirebon, for example, established in 1750 by Kiyai Muqayim, played an important role in the spread of first Shattariyyah and then Tijaniyyah in Java, especially West Java (Muhaimin, 1997). In Java, pesantren and *tarekat*, meaning mystical path, are the hall-marks of traditional Islam. The former is a place where Syari'a is transmitted to the next generation; the second, in the strictest sense, is an organization by which the esoteric dimension of Islam is established, especially among the aged. (Muhaimin, 1997:6). This phenomenon was also very obvious in Banten. (Kartodirdjo, 1984:170-173).

Pesantrens mainly prepare the young to cope with their immediate future in social life. It enables them to undertake active and acceptable participation in various societal roles without neglecting the more distant future, the hereafter. The *tarekat*, on the other hand, prepares the aged to cope with their immediate future. It attempts to secure the followers' safety and well-being in the hereafter, once they feel that their worldly life is close to its end. The *tarekat* also attempts to open the heavens to the public. It is a way to ensure equity of opportunity for entry to paradise between religiously knowledgeable individuals and the laymen, and between the rich and the poor. (Muhaimin, 1997:6). Tarekat, which derived from Arabic word "*tariqah*," can be defined as the contemplative path of Islam, in contrast with *syare'at* (*Syari'a*), which is concerned with the life of action. *Tarekat* is associated with and considered synonymous with Sufism and its cognates. In its more restrictive meaning and specialized sense it refers to Sufi orders.

Some people said that "our life is a journey to a common destination, the world of afterlife." Everyone who travels must take a certain way. The word *tarekat* bears this notion. (Muhaimin, 1997:25). This contrast implies that the former (*tarekat*) is smaller and the later (*syare'at*) is larger. Thus it is understandable that, as we will discuss, tarekat teachings can influence the very psychological and spiritual as well as political aspects of its followers.

We can see in Banten and probably elsewhere in Java the maintenance of scriptural and cultural traditions continuing within the Javanese Muslim society through the combination of *pesantren* and *tarekat*. Through the institutions, religious transmission never ceases

either with or without the support of the political power structure. This is probably one element that contributes to answering Marshall Hodgson's question "why the triumph of Islam in Java was so complete (Hodgson, 1974:551)."

A Millenarian Movement

The belief in a "deliverer" who will come at the end of the world to bring justice after it has become pervaded by injustice is not peculiar to Islamic tradition. Jewish and Christian messianic ideas deeply influenced Muslim communities to believe in the deliverer and the restorer, namely *al-Mahdi*, derived from the Arabic word *hada* which means to guide. Accordingly, the Mahdi is the one who is divinely or rightly-guided (Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim and Zein, 1997).

In Sunni tradition, Mahdism is a popular belief, particularly in times of crisis. However, Mahdism has never been fully integrated into the orthodox faith. This concept of *al-Mahdi*, which rather asserts the coming of "a man from the unseen," does not have a firm basis in Islam. Neither the word *mahdi* or *mahdiyya* is mentioned in the Qur'an. Holt (1980) suggested that it would be more accurate to see Mahdism as a "deposit of ideas and hopes" rather than an organized and coherent system of beliefs. (Holt, 1980:22).

The idea of *al-Mahdi* has assumed two main forms in the Muslim world. (Macdonald, 1948:111-115). In Shi'ite outburst tradition the mahdi is equated with the Hidden Imam, whose infallibility and whose return are significant elements of the faith. The concept of *al-Mahdi* has prevailed as a continual theme in Islamic history and was employed by both Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims to provoke different kinds of religious and socio-political tension into active opposition against the established political order. In the Islamic tradition, the role of *umma*, the religious community, is to establish a just society, as taught in the Mahdism, with full obedience to Allah' commands.

Millenarianism assumes the coming of a golden age when social injustices, unrest, conflicts and miseries will be restored. Almost in parallel, in the Javanese context, messianism expects the coming of a *ratu adil* [just king] or messiah, who will create a sound and prosperous society. (Kartodirdjo, 1984: 30). Some social movements in the 19th

century Java tended to be nativist in character reviving indigenous values and rejecting all foreign influences. During previous times, it was Islamic values against the Dutch colonial influences. Within the religious sphere such ideas were reflected in terms of revivalism which attempts to revive old values and religious piety within the present situation. To some extent, the idea of *Perang Sabil* [Holy War] flourished among the *tarekat* followers in Banten, and several prophecy and visions claimed by some *tarekat* leaders strengthened the affectivity of these ideologies. The resistance to the Dutch colonial government was not only construed as response to the economic deprivation, but also a religious calling to fight against the *kafir*.

It appears that many elements of the Mahdism suggest this belief is millenarian in nature. Many scholars have asserted that for their use of the concept of *al-Mahdi*, many social and religious movements in Islam can be regarded as millenarian. In this respect, I include the Banten revolt of 1888 was not only a social movement but also a millenarian movement in which Islamic teachings within the *tarekat* were a crucial factor.

Banten is the westernmost part of Java. Until the early part of the twentieth century, Banten was an overwhelmingly rural society. For the most part, Bantenese villages lacked the geographical and social coherence that seemed typical of villages elsewhere in Java. The poverty and infertility of land in the region added to the impression of shabbiness and neglect. In the early twentieth century the majority of Bantenese peasants were landholders. (Williams, 1990: 4). Approximately one-third of the Bantenese are Javanese speaking and two-third Sundanese speaking. Interestingly, there appears to be no history or record of lack of harmony between the two language groups. Their regional identity, as Bantenese and Muslims, seems to be the strongest factor.¹² In the eyes of colonizers, there was an impression that the Bantenese Muslims were uncouth, fanatical and outspoken. (Williams, 1990: 69).

Bantenese society had a particular system of social differentiation. Three groups in particular dominated rural life: religious teachers or *ulama*, village strongmen or *jawara*, and local nobility or *priyayi*. (Williams, 1990: 42). I need to stress this social differentiation because all three groups were significantly, involved in the Banten uprising.

Within the *ulama* group, several distinctions can be made. On the lower level, there were *hajjis*, persons who had carried out the pilgrimage to Mecca. Overall, they tended to be the better-off members of the society. On the higher level, there were *kiyai*, who had a wider base of influence extending outside the villages, and in some cases, outside of Banten. Since agriculture was the most important aspect of economic life in Banten, the three groups above also shared their economic development as and with peasants.

The influence of the religious elite was exceptionally strong in Bantenese society. Islam was brought to Banten in the 16th century by Javanese migrants and soon established a firm hold on the region. Moreover, unlike many other parts of Java, in Banten, there was no Hindu or Buddhist legacy to dilute Islam. Generally speaking, Islam was far more orthodox in West Java. This was especially the case in Banten where the Islamic trading state was established and thrived for almost two centuries until the establishment of a Dutch protectorate in 1684 (Williams, 1990: 54) when the sultanate of Banten was forced by the Dutch to accept the status of a protectorate. Two hundred years later, in 1832, the Dutch finally abolished the last vestiges of the sultanate and the last sultan was unceremoniously removed from the office. (Vlekke, 1965:321-323).

Despite the demise of the sultanate, it still survived as an important ideological and traditional center for the Bantenese, in opposition to the Dutch. The physical destruction of the former Bantenese royal *kraton* (palace) by the Dutch and the removal of the stones to the new administrative capital of Serang provided a humiliation for the Bantenese. Later, the stones of the old *kraton*, which provided a traditional symbol of power in the region, were used to build a new prison in Serang which in the future would count among its detainees many descendants of the sultan. This was the final insult to a region profoundly conscious of its own history and religious traditions.

The strong sense of Islamic and regional identity combined with radicalism and anti-colonialism, manifested itself in several periodic outbursts against the colonial rule. In a real sense, the history of Muslim peasant struggles in Banten was a history of opposition not between peasant and lord, but between peasants and agents of an outside government, i.e. some Bantenese who worked for the Dutch. This was

clearly indicated by the imposition of direct colonial rule from 1810 until 1870, when Banten witnessed no fewer than nineteen revolts.

Largely, throughout the 19th century the Dutch had sought to estrange the *priyayi*, the Javanese governing elite, from orthodox Islam and orthodox practitioners, both *ulama* and peasants for the Dutch benefit. They did so, because they thought that only this *priyayi* group would be loyal to them. I think this is a special problem in Banten, a region renowned for its Islamic orthodoxy. The Dutch attempted to move the *priyayi* away from Islam which paradoxically served to reinforce the image of Islam as defender of the people and the only force able to offer “serious” resistance to the Dutch. In addition, many descendants of the former Bantenese Sultanate were dispossessed and effectively reduced to peasant status. Together with local Islamic and *tarekat* leaders such as Haji Wasid and Haji Abdul Karim, they provided a “ready” source of dissident leadership during times of social and economic marginalization by the Dutch. (Williams, 1990: xxviii). Because of these relationships, Islam and political authority in Banten generally looked upon each other from entrenched and antagonistic positions. The hostility towards the colonial regimes crystallized in the Banten uprising in 1888, which was perhaps the most important uprising against the Dutch on Java since the Pangeran Dipenogoro rebellion of 1825.

The Banten uprising in 1888 occurred as a result of high tensions between the three prominent Bantenese elite groups and the Pangreh Praja and the Dutch. The three groups were the descendants of former Banten Sultans whose nobility were dispossessed, the religious leaders including the *hajjis* and the *kiyai*, and the local strongmen or *jawara*. After the demise of the Bantenese sultanate, more and more the Pangreh Praja, outsiders mostly with Javanese *priyayi* background working with the Dutch, were put in the Dutch government administration. Many Bantenese, mainly the dispossessed nobility, thought that to work within their region for the “infidel” Dutch was unsignifying to them. In addition, the Bantenese thought that the Dutch government was creating an economic hegemony beneficial only to the colonial regime.

Because the Dutch were aware of the growing anti-colonialism among the Bantenese, they planned to restore the educational system into a more Western-secularized one. This interfered with indigenous

Islamic education, which mostly comprised of *pesantren* and *tarekat* orders. The Dutch also applied some restrictions on religious practices (such as going to hajj) and Islamic teachings, which too many Bantenese *tarekat* leaders undermined Islam and their roles in society. This colonial act was seen particularly offensive because the Dutch interfered with religious matters.

Using the concept of building a just society in Islamic tradition, as it is largely found in the *al-Mahdi* concept, Haji Wasid, Haji Abdul Karim and Haji Tubagus Ismail, the religious leaders and prominent members of the *tarekat*, became the leaders of Banten revolt of 1888, and gained support from the Bantenese to revolt against the Dutch and their administrators. For instance, before leaving to Mecca for a religious pilgrimage, Haji Abdul Karim told the people that he would return to Banten about the time that the Mahdi was expected. On another occasion, he said that he would not return as long as Banten still suffered under the Dutch colonial domination. (Kartodirdjo, 1984:166-167).

In the following years, Haji Saleh declared his prophetic vision in 1894. His millenarian ideas, such as the notion that “the judgement day or *kiyamat* was at hand,” (Williams, 1990: 92-94) were widely spread. Many people believed that the Mahdi would rule the Islamic state. Related to the anti-colonial attitudes, Haji Jasin, another religious leader and a faithful follower of the rebellion, supported the *haram*-ization [meaning to prohibit and forbid] of using the Dutch language, Roman alphabet and trousers among the Bantenese. (Williams, 1990: 95). This act can be regarded as an extreme prohibition for many Bantenese Muslims who for years had used products of the colonial heritage. Moreover, the act suggested that the Banten uprising took on a religious shape because the Bantenese world-view was profoundly religious (Kartodirdjo, 1984: 322) and, in a strict sense, filled with *tarekat* teachings. Therefore, in the end, it is understandable that such a social protest invariably became defined in religious terms.

The Banten uprising itself occurred in July 1888 and lasted for about nine days. According to the official reports, 204 men were arrested, of whom 94 were later released; 89 were condemned to forced labour for between 15 and 20 years, and 11 were put to death. (Kartodirdjo, 1984: 264). There was an indication that several women

were also involved in the Banten uprising. Nyai Kamsidah, a wife of Haji Iskak, a follower of the rebellion, was charged with the murder of the wife of the Dutch representative in Banten, Gubbels, and was sentenced to death. (Kartodirdjo, 1984:207). Although there was no sufficient data on the further involvement of Nyai Kamsidah in the Banten uprising, the women's participation in such an uprising in Islamic tradition was unusual, especially in light of traditional view of women in Javanese Islam during the 19th century. This phenomenon, however, can be understood only within the rural and agricultural setting of Banten where women have often made a significant contribution to the economic life of society. In the peasant system in Java, it is not peculiar that women own land and independently cultivate the paddy fields.

After the Banten revolt of 1888, a total of 94 persons were exiled from Banten. Of this number, no fewer than 43 were hajji and 19 were *tarekat* teachers. (Kartodirdjo, 1984: 344-347). This indicates that the Muslim and *tarekat* leaders were significantly involved in this rebellion and thus it would not be inappropriate to define the Banten uprising as a religious uprising, in which Islamic and particularly *tarekat* teachings were fundamental elements.

It is often said that social movements as a process are extremely complex. The conditions mentioned earlier about the Banten uprising refer to various dimensions that reflect the complexity of such uprising. The Bantenese people had certainly suffered from colonization. From the Barkun's perspective of colonial hypothesis, the Banten uprising resulted from the "clash of dissimilar cultures." (Barkun, 1974: 34). In Banten, orthodox Islam became the only weapon to revolt against the "infidel" Dutch. It is possible to perceive the Dutch rule over the colonized Banten as a cause of the "decremental deprivation" (Barkun 1974:36) among the Bantenese where the new distribution of values brought them to social, economic and political marginalization. Various degrees of acculturation resulted in factionalism that later accelerated the disintegration and chronic situation in Banten.

The introduction and the force of the Western colonial economic system such as the uniform taxation, money and central trading administration on the Bantenese put them in an even more discouraged situation. The dispossessed nobility, the *tarekat* leaders and the peasants

in Banten became precisely the groups “whose expectations have frequently been frustrated.” (Barkun, 1974:36).

In Aberle’s terms, a “state of deprivation” occurred in Banten, where people saw and felt social displacement, political disorder, and cultural disinheritance. (Aberle, 1983:32-27). These deprivations were so acute in Banten that the Bantenese Muslims strongly reacted and used the concept of *al-Mahdi* to revolt against the Dutch colonial rule. Compared to the Mahdist movement in Sudan, which lasted for more than 20 years because of the role of more profound legacy of the Mahdi among his followers, I would think that the Banten uprising would have gotten further if one of its prominent leaders had such vision or prophecy.

Concluding Remarks

Banten at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century was very much coloured by various indigenous unrest, rebellions and resistance against the colonial power. Although some of these took the form of religious or political movements, almost all of them appeared to respond to what some of the Bantenese perceived as “unjust” social situations (Landsberger, 1973: 29-33). The Banten uprising, for example, was prompted largely by economic reason, but it surfaced in terms of religious conflict. Historical records show that, prior to the Banten uprising in 1888, similar uprisings had already taken place in West Java, such as in Ciomas in 1886 (Hajati, 1996). Many themes had been elaborated in these movements, including protest against government policies of high taxation, excessive levies and forced labour mobilization.

From an anthropological perspective, the wider context of the Banten uprising reveals the common socio-economic condition of the Muslim societies at the late of 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. The economic problems of the local people appeared to be an inseparable part of the similar problem faced by the Bantenese. It was evident that the problem regarding the basic demands of the people became a common denominator for the increase of social protests. Although protest movements might finally adopt various forms, social and economic principles were still the dominant motivation for the crystallization of such movements. Therefore, in the context of the

Banten uprising, the introduction of the new economic system such as the use of uniform taxation was only a trigger in a situation of deprivation that had been ongoing for some time.

The process of uprising in Banten shows it was not social movements with modern features such as nationalist movements, which also flourished during the 19th and 20th centuries in the colonized countries. Many scholars suggest that indigenous movements were often archaic and nativist in nature. This does not mean that their movements were unconscious attempts because the outburst was visible and often massive, but it is possibly correct that they were local and often disconnected. Often, as Kartodirdjo (1966, 1984) suggested, the Bantenese followers of the uprising did not know what they were fighting for; they certainly had a vague desire to overthrow the colonial government, but they did not feel consciously that they were taking part in a social revolutionary movement.

The foreign, unwanted influences on this traditional society undoubtedly caused certain degrees of frustration and deprivation. A more nuanced anthropological understanding of the Banten uprising in 1888 shows that in the regions where religion played an important role such as in Banten, religious and *tarekat* leaders could easily succeed in assuming leadership and gaining followers in popular movements by couching their millenarian messages in religious terms.

Endnotes

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² Among the Bantenese and Indonesians, this uprising is popularly known as “Geger Cilegon,” “Pemberontakan Petani Banten,” or “Geger Banten” of 1888.

³ See Guillot, C., Lukman Nurhakim, Sonny Wibisono, and Sumarah Adhyatman. *Banten Sebelum Zaman Islam: Kajian Arkeologi di Banten Girang, 932?-1526*. Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional, 1994.

- ⁴ See, for example, Djajadiningrat, Hoesein. 1983. *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*. Jakarta: Djambatan.
- ⁵ See Ayang Utriza Yakin. *Undhang-Undhang Bantĕn Étude Philologique de la Compilation des Lois du Sultanat de Bantĕn (à Java, Indonésie) aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*. Thèse de Doctorat: Histoire et Civilisations: Paris, EHESS: 2013.
- ⁶ See Sartono Kartodirdjo. *The Peasants' Revolts of Banten in 1888, Its Conditions, Course, and Sequels: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1966. For a valuable elaboration on the pre-existing and aftermath conditions of the Banten revolt, see Michael Charles Williams. *Communism, Religion, and Revolt in Banten*. Athens: Center for International Studies, Ohio University, 1990.
- ⁷ See P.M. Holt. "Islamic Millenarianism and the Fulfilment of Prophecy: A Case Study," in Ann Williams (ed.) *Prophecy and Millenarianism*. Essex, 1980. Also see his *The Mahdist State in Sudan 1881-1898: A Study of Its Origin and Overthrow*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958. Farwell Byron. *Prisoners of the Mahdi*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967.
- ⁸ For a detailed information of the history of *tarekat* in Indonesia, see Martin van Bruinessen. "The Origins and Development of Sufi Orders (Tarekat) in Southeast Asia." *Studia Islamika*, 1 (1), 1994, pp. 13-15.
- ⁹ A.C. Milner. "Islam and the Muslim State." In M.B. Hooker (ed). *Islam in Southeast Asia*. Leiden: Brill, 1983, pp. 23-49.
- ¹⁰ See A.H. Johns. "Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History." *JSEAH*, 2, II (1961).
- ¹¹ See A.H. Johns. "The Role of Sufism in the Spread of Islam to Malaya and Indonesia." *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 9 (1961), pp. 143-161; also see his "Islam in Southeast Asia: Reflections and New Directions." *Indonesia* 19 (1975), pp. 33-55.
- ¹² This opinion comes from Hasan Djajadiningrat as quoted by (Williams, 1990).

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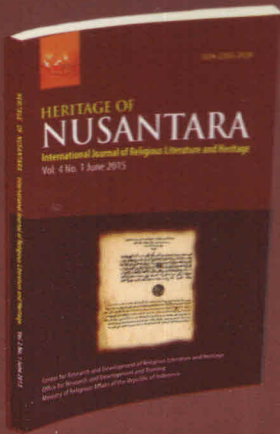
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