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SUNAN KALIJAGA: THE BIRTH OF A SELF-ACTUALIZED PILGRIMAGE CULTURE

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Abstract

Javanese Islam is incredibly unique in its style and practice. Despite boasting a Muslim population larger than the entire Middle East, Indonesia and its Islamic cultural practices are largely unknown in academic circles. This has made an introduction to Islam in the archipelago even more difficult for the rare interested Western reader. Frustratingly, what is lost on the rest of the world is basically second nature to 155 million Javanese Muslims, who learn from their families, schools, and pilgrimages about the *Wali Songo*, a group of nine semi-mythical figures credited with spreading Islam to Java. When we stop casting a value judgment on oral histories, we see they allow us into the ethos and nuance of Javanese society (even if their methods do not have the rigid fact-based approach that scholars are used to). In place of textbook history, the *Wali*, such as Sunan Kalijaga, offer a compromise: an origin story for the Muslims of Indonesia that aligns their faith with indigenous cultural values. It cannot be confirmed whether they lived at the same time or if they ever existed at all, but their social “footprints” validate the differences in Indonesian religious practice and fasten Java sturdily to the family of the Prophet Muhammad, recentering an ancient history into the fold of Islam. Much like the characters in his *wayang* puppet shows, the *wali* Sunan Kalijaga has achieved immortality in the retelling of his stories. This essay attempts to use personal travels around Central Java and interviews, visits to *makams* and mosques (masjids), and collected oral histories to formulate a basic narrative and historically contextualize the so-called Bandit saint, Sunan Kalijaga. Most importantly, it presents a depiction of the *Wali* not as he really was, but as Java remembers him today, and considers why he remains essential to a thorough understanding of Islam on the island.

Keywords: Islam, Sufism, Modernism, Salafism, Java, Demak, Wali Songo, Comparative Religion, Oral History, Sunan Kalijaga.

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□

I want to express my gratitude towards:

His Emanence, Duli Yang Maha Mulia Sri Sultan Surya Alam Joyokusuma, Sultan of Demak

Better known as Raden Sumito Joyokusumo. To Septnya Dayinta Atmojo

To Mas Akmal, to the Demak Boys, to Masjid At-Taqwa,

Nasrullah, Pak Etsar and Dr. George Quinn.

To Micah, to Mahmoud.

*

To Sunan Kalijaga.

“This visible world is a trace of that invisible one, and the former follows the latter like a shadow.” –Abu Hamid al-Ghazali

Sunan Kalijaga: The Birth of a Self-Actualized Pilgrimage Culture

In the main chamber of the Great Demak Mosque, four enormous pillars, the *saka guru*, hoist a shingled pyramid roof in the traditional Hindu architectural style towards the sky. Each one of these pillars (though the originals have been replaced¹) has a black and gold plaque engraved with the name of a Javanese Saint. In the southeast there is Sunan Ampel, and moving clockwise the next are Sunan Gunung Jati, Sunan Bonang, and finally Sunan Kalijaga. How the *saka guru* were first raised is the stuff of legend, and that legend has come to symbolize a deep truth as fundamental to Javanese Islam as these enormous columns are to the structure of the masjid. No retelling is exactly the same— details and plot points are ever-changing with the masses of pilgrims that come to the mosque and grave complex every day. This is a fundamental beauty of Java: contradiction is not a byproduct of human error, but is instead an essential aspect of history.

About a kilometer away from the masjid stands the holy tomb or *makam* of Raden Mas Said (or Syahid), better known as Sunan Kalijaga. In the past century or so, the grave complex that holds the body of this saint has become one of the most visited in all of Java (Jateng, 2018, Sunyoto, 2014). Little is known about Sunan Kalijaga's life for certain, though the general story goes something like this: born into the royal family of the Majapahit kingdom, a young Raden Mas Said was given everything he could ever want in life. His father was Tumenggung Wilatikta, a well-respected Duke of Tuban. Said was an intelligent boy and quickly mastered the *Gamelan*, traditional Javanese arts, *Silat* martial arts, and (for those who believe he was raised Muslim) the *tajwid* recitation of the Holy Qur'an. As he became older he had a desire to leave the palace more and more, and eventually encountered families badly affected by a famine

¹ The supposed original structures are on display in the nearby museum along with other original artifacts from the time the mosque was built, but are no longer fit to actually bear the load of the roof.

currently sweeping across the lands of the Empire. In a state of personal crisis, Raden Mas began to steal grain from his father's supply and distribute it to the poor, though some older manuscripts such as the *Babad Tanah Jawi* attribute his thievery to gambling losses. When his activities were discovered, his family was ashamed and asked him to stop immediately. Instead, Said set out on his own, robbing men on the highway and wandering across Java. At this time he was known as Lokajaya, a nickname used to protect his identity as a bandit.

This is where most stories begin to diverge, though not even the basic details of his childhood are uncontested. The most popular narrative contends that one day while attempting to rob an old man by the side of the road, he was tricked and beaten to submission. The aging sage that Raden Mas Said had chosen to rob was none other than Sunan Bonang, a powerful spiritual leader and proselytizer of Islam in Java. Amazed by his power and seeking forgiveness, the young bandit asked how he could achieve the power that Sunan Bonang wielded. The answer for the Javanese Muslim, of course, is through Islam. However, Sunan Bonang didn't admit this outright. Instead, he instructed the young man to take his staff, hold it upright, and meditate until his return. Three years later, Sunan Bonang would come back to find Said transformed into Sunan Kalijaga, covered in moss and roots, quite literally engulfed by the forest. He had a tight grip on the staff, which remained upright, almost like another tree in the jungle that had grown around him. The woods and forest in Javanese literature are often a symbol of the indigenous beliefs and culture of the Javanese (Quinn, 2019), and the upright teachings of Islam, embodied in the staff, had melded with them instead of destroying them. Sunan Kalijaga would go on to become a great teacher, using his knowledge of the traditional Javanese arts to garner interest in the newfangled ideas of Islam. Some say he lived to the age of one hundred, witnessing the downfall of the Majapahit Empire and the decline of the Demak Sultanate. His exploits are

recorded in manuscripts and the memories of millions of Javanese people, and his many debates, controversies, and successes have become means of better understanding the inner meaning of Islam for Muslims in the archipelago, including his construction of a column to hold up the Demak Grand Mosque².

In Islam, rigid structures already exist for the authentication of oral histories. Discrepancies and contradictions must be systematically weeded out by the use of an authentication method. The different tools used to decide which narrative is more true are specifically ordered from most to least reliable. First and foremost in all schools of jurisprudence or *fiqh* is the Qur'an, the word of God given by the Angel Gabriel and committed to memory by the Prophet Muhammad. Next is the *sunnah*, and then *hadith*. These are stories about what the Prophet did, said and suggested to his followers that are sorted by reliability in regards to their chain of transmission³. An edict that has fewer intermediaries between the writer and the Prophet is more trustworthy, and the character of the writer and all the recipients of the *hadith* are scrutinized. Different schools differ on what comes next, but usually somewhere after all the methods using historical evidence comes *ijtihad*, using the *'aql*, or intellect, to make a personal reasoning about the scripture, based on analogy. This work seeks to redefine and vindicate the contradictions in the story of Sunan Kalijaga as an intentional understanding as opposed to a degradation of more traditional Islamic Rationalist rigor. In the same way that the scripture and the *sunnah* are in place to help believers make sense of the confusing past, Sunan Kalijaga's nebulous existence fortifies a Javanese understanding of the universe and allows it to coexist

² See: Sharna, Sofyan. 1983. *Sunan Kalijaga.*, as well as the original account: Meinsma, J.J..1874 *Serat Babad Tanah Jawi*. Penerbit Garudhawaca. p. 30

³ An authentically Islamic account for why this system is in place will be found in the following Hadiths: Sunan al-Tirmidhī 1327 and al-Muwatta' 1661. Many such examples of jurisprudence exist. Both of these accounts are considered *Sahih* (authentic) according to Ibn Abdul Barr.

with the arrival of a new faith. Like the *wayang* shadow puppets that he used to spread his teachings, the myth-history of Sunan Kalijaga looms over the illuminated screen of Islam, and it is not only natural but expected that no performance will ever be exactly the same as another.

Kalijaga as the Pillar

The tomb of Sunan Kalijaga is adorned on all sides with wood carving in a style traditional to Java, with Qur'anic verses and floral designs wrapping around the entire square burial chamber. This chamber is surrounded by the graves of auspicious people— his wife, family, and *kiyai* who studied under him. The *makam* harbors an incredible amount of human energy, as thousands of Muslims come and go each day, sending prayers and desires into the woodwork and washing themselves with holy water. The fabric of perception feels oversaturated, stuffed to the seams with sights, sounds, and smells. Vendors surround the entrance and exit, selling *Wali Songo* paraphernalia and many unrelated trinkets and snacks. The *makam* runs alongside masjid Sunan Kalijaga, where we prayed before entering and paying respects to the teacher. Outside of the masjid is a large Javanese drum used to wake Muslims up for *suhoor*, the pre-dawn meal during the month of fasting, Ramadan. The architecture and the sense of Traditionalism contrast with the regular people and vendors dressed in casual clothing, making the whole complex feel paradoxically both ancient and modern. Constantly, there was the chanting of the *dhikr*. Words left lips nonstop. I could feel that there was something older than just a body here. Boys as young as five clung to the sarongs of men as old as ninety— they muttered, shouted, whispered and conversed in Arabic. “There is no god but God, there is no god but God,” “May God bless the family of Muhammad”, “Lord, I seek your forgiveness and turn towards you”, and many other supplications filled the sonic space up to the brim, and piercing through it came the occasional blast from the loudspeakers— the call to prayer.

Everything about the environment is Islamic, and before continuing with the argument of this paper I want to assure the reader that Javanese Islam is as authentic and legitimate as anywhere else in the Muslim world. However, the practices of those traditionally called *abangan* in Java seem very far removed from the iconoclastic, stoic Islam of the Arabian Gulf. One reason for this is most certainly the *wali* like Sunan Kalijaga. Islam did not arrive in Java “by the sword”, via Arab invasion or otherwise. Islam is a religion of trade, and always has been. Mecca was a city sitting on the route to many other important cities, in the middle of the caravan route that led from Damascus and Jerusalem down to the Yathrib and finally Sana’a in Yemen. What made it particularly special was the black box, the Kaaba, which housed the idols of each local tribe, originally built by the Prophet Ibrahim or the father of Judaism. When Muhammad began receiving revelations and finally conquered Mecca after his banishment by local authorities, he smashed the icons and revived the ancient glory of the Kaaba, using it for its proper purpose once again. In what is now modern-day Indonesia, Muslims found a remarkably similar situation to that described in the holy book of Islam, the Qur’an. Muslims had stepped into an archipelago teeming with trade and enterprise, full of various cultures and religions, many of them polytheistic. No one did sustained trading without first stopping on the thin island of Java, rich in natural resources and home to the largest number of people of any island in Indonesia. As such, Java had amassed wealth and political power, and the various kings and empires that controlled it became places of religious importance. Islam had a chance once again to upturn the course of history, remove idols and reorient another land towards the Holy City of God.

One thing that was very clear to me throughout my travels was the strength of Javanese culture and identity. After Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims came and introduced their own cultures, after the colonial presence of the Portuguese, English, and 350 years of the Dutch,

many Javanese still speak their own language, still practice their traditional art forms, and even mixed whatever religious beliefs they held with indigenous Javanese culture and religion.

Javanese culture is broad, and like other regions with a history of immigration and invasion, it has the power to subsume and accommodate foreign societies while still maintaining its own identity. If Islam were to find a foothold here, it would not be in the same manner as in other parts of the world. The *makam* and the stories I heard while I was visiting comprise an ingenious method for smoothing over the differences within Javanese society and ingratiating them within Islam. Although no one can agree on the details of the life and works of Sunan Kalijaga, all can agree on what he stood for. Sunan Kalijaga embodies Islam, and he embodies Java. Although credible evidence suggests that he did not invent *wayang* puppetry, it is popularly said that Sunan Kalijaga did. *Wayang* most likely came from India, where other forms of puppetry are common art forms, and the stories are almost always from the South Asian epic poems *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* (G. Quinn, personal communication, April 27, 2023). Details on how Sunan Kalijaga used Hindu stories and Indian art to teach the people of Java Islam varied from person to person. Sometimes it was merely his skill that enraptured people, allowing him to talk after. Other times I was informed that Sunan Kalijaga used his creative license during performances, so that names or subtle details were changed in order for Hindus in the audience to see Islam as a refinement of what already existed in their hearts and in their religion (A. Saifuddin, personal communication, April 23, 2023). Some denied the evidence I put forward and assured me that Sunan Kalijaga used traditional stories but invented the *wayang* and also used original material. Many had no answer, and were content to say the famous words: “God knows best.” Here, the spirit of brotherhood and tolerance has overcome the desire for detail. Sunan Kalijaga’s stories invite the listener to dispense with formality and brush up against the surface of Islam. This

bandit saint is the absolute fusion of Javanese culture⁴ and a religion that is foreign and at times hostile to its norms. Once I began to dispense with my intellectual banditry and meditate as the young Raden Mas Said did, a clearer picture of Java's mistiest saint emerged from the haze.

One of the most renowned stories of Sunan Kalijaga, confirmed by multiple books, interviews, conversations with strangers, and even a 1983 eponymous feature film, is how he helped to build Masjid Agung Demak. As referenced earlier, the mosque is built in the old Hindu-Buddhist style, with a shingled canopy held up by four pillars. As the story goes, all nine of the *Wali Songo* worked on its construction, although some *wali* were the children of others and did not all live at the same time as the construction of the mosque in Demak⁵. To create the main portion of the mosque and raise the canopy, Sunans Bonang, Ampel, and Gunungjati all hewed enormous trees for the pillars of the masjid. Most agree that the entire structure was built within one day, and as the 24-hour mark approached, Sunan Kalijaga had yet to return with a tree. Working quickly to create something that satisfied the dimensions of the column, Sunan Kalijaga took many small twigs and branches and fastened them together to create a column of equal proportion. It held just as well as the others, and has become a metaphor for the strength that Javanese find in diversity. With multiple renovations, the original pillars have long been phased out and replaced by varnished, sturdy wood beams. Their dimensions are exactly the same as the original ones, but they are mechanically refined and bear the plaques of the *wali* who raised their predecessor. What struck me as I entered the masjid to pray and tour the site was that many were touching the pillars and making *du'a* or reciting *dhikr*, classical methods of devotion.

⁴ An astute foreigner may notice that Sunan Kalijaga is the only *Wali* depicted wearing Javanese traditional clothes. The others all wear turbans and arab *thobes*, but he wears a *blangkon* headscarf, a *sorjen* shirt, and a mustache instead of a full beard.

⁵ To help explain this concept to me, some informed me that the older *wali* lived to be well over 100, meaning that they did all coexist and interact as a unit. Some others simply shrugged off my suggestion that the chronology was somehow inaccurate. For many the story may be a fable with a moral, and have no basis in reality. For others it is very real, but well outside of the comprehension of our Rationalist reality.

After this the devotees would press their foreheads or hands against the surface of the wood, and move to another pillar until they had circumnavigated the interior center of the mosque. Not only is this behavior unusual for a large mosque, it is also widely known that these columns are not the original ones supposedly erected by the *wali*. The mosque authorities even have the originals saved in a museum onsite, where photos can be taken of them. Why then, are these new structures important enough for faithful Javanese Muslims to venerate?

To answer this question requires knowledge of Javanese culture and enough objectivity and respect to hold it equal to the religion of Islam. From an anthropologist's or sociologist's viewpoint, these sites serve a very interesting societal function. Collective Effervescence (CE) is a popular sociological term first described by Emile Durkheim that may be of use here. At times, especially during shifts from a profane space to a sacred one, community members may coalesce and think or act in unison. Each member acts individually, but because of a situational or momentary stimulus, the power of choice is overridden to create a current that flows through the group as a whole. This current can be transferred to people, objects, or places. Famously, Durkheim asserted that "God and society are one of the same. The god of the clan...can be none other than the clan itself, but the clan transfigured and imagined in the physical form of a plant or animal that serves as a totem," (Durkheim, 1912, p. 208). Sustained CE can manifest as *charisma*, wherein a person, place, or object is endowed with a supernatural or superhuman authority. This may be a more palatable secular answer to the unanswerable questions sitting at the foot of *Makam Kadilangu*. It also implies that the otherworldly feeling of the *makam* space is inevitable— the prolonged presence of devotees and pilgrims fuels a sociological fire so strong that even the culturally uninitiated can feel its heat. Maybe paying respects to copies of sacred

objects is not typical in mosques, but it is typical in Java⁶. In contemporary Java, it is also common to create new *makam* for folk heroes and political figures who were Muslims but not necessarily related to Islam. Abdulrahman Wahid or Gus Dur was the first officially elected president of Indonesia and is well-respected by many Javanese people. Since his death, the place where his body is buried has become a hotspot for pilgrimage and is rapidly becoming the most visited burial ground in Java (Quinn 2019). In Blitar the grave of Sukarno, who was the first president of Indonesia and leader of its struggle for independence, is also still visited to this day.

All of the figures mentioned so far were Muslims. Islam often presents itself as a universal and pervading law that never bends to accommodate cultural quirks, but rather changes and purifies the places it occupies. It is my opinion that one cannot soundly hold this belief without either accepting that the most populous Muslim-majority nation on earth is a resilient exception, or rejecting the religion of Indonesia as un-Islamic. The first Muslim political power formed in Java in the 15th century in Demak, where the masjid was built and Sunan Kalijaga now rests. However by the 2nd century CE, Hinduism had already spread to Indonesia, and the great Hindu Empires of Mataram and Majapahit would sponsor a Hindu golden age from the 8th to 14th century, only falling to the first Sultanate in Demak. Before that, indigenous Javanese religion flourished throughout the island, and later mixed with Hindu-Buddhist religion and philosophy to create a religious institution entirely unique to Java and the surrounding islands. Still today, many Muslims in Java practice *kejawen* or *kebatinan*, a uniquely Javanese form of Islamic mysticism that unabashedly associates itself with indigenous Javanese religion.

⁶ It is also worth noting that at one point in time, *makams* and burial shrines were common in many areas with Muslim saints or family members of the Prophet ﷺ, and shrines and secondary pilgrimage sites still play a role in various sects of Islam, most notably Shi'ism.

As I entered the masjid, I felt myself being scanned by hundreds of eyes. There was a silent (but still perceived) collective relief when I began to pray and circumambulate the four pillars. At least I knew what to do. After I had finished, my friends from Demak began to quietly retell the story of the masjid's construction in mixed English and Indonesian. Though I had heard it many times before, I sat and let myself be absorbed into the moment, sitting amongst the wooden replicas filling the holes dug by holy men. Though the pillars are clever falsehoods, they still hold up the roof, and their foundations in history are very real. These narratives and these histories fulfill the same function. We can debate their details and their fine grains, but the wood is load-bearing: its foundation of truth is now connected to our constructions of the present and our aspirations for the future. It is no use to look at these stories as illegitimate, considering that our bodies cannot hold this burden individually. When religious infrastructure must be built to fulfill a societal function, the story will follow. Javanese Islam is, in this sense, embodied in the pillar, raising a canopy for protection and inspiring unity among a diverse population.

Kalijaga as the Sword

Before moving to discussions around Sunan Kalijaga in the present day, it is important to first contextualize the Javanese audience to which his story is catered. Clifford Geertz posited in his book *The Religion of Java* that three distinct classes of Muslims coexist throughout the island: the *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* (Geertz, 1964). Though many scholars including Cruikshank and Ricklefs have argued that this theory is only a modern truth, and has no correlation to how the Javanese have historically perceived themselves (Cruikshank, 1972 and Ricklefs, 2006), almost all subsequent scholarship on religion in Java has been in reaction or correspondence with Geertz's work. From the viewpoint of *The Religion of Java*, the *santri* are perceived as the purest of all Muslims. They are the most scripturally adept, and practice Islam

(theoretically) in total accordance with the Scripture and the Law. This class encompasses the great saints, teachers, and learned men from across Java, but represents a minority of the total population. The *santri* can be gentry but also commonly coexist with the *abangan* in the village sphere and peasantry class (Ricklefs, 2006), since any believing Muslim who keeps up the prayer and receives a formalized education in Islam would belong to this category. The *abangan*, coming from a low Javanese word for “brown” or “red”, are the group most contrasting with the *santri*. They are perceived to be largely uneducated or otherwise uninformed about the workings of religion, and as such their practice is far more lenient. The word has a derogatory slant to it, and therefore is not an endonym of any current community or group. The *priyayi* are a separate class, usually composed of Javanese royalty or bureaucrats unwilling to give up the cultural traditions of the cloth, born from Indic and indigenous Polytheism. Thus Geertz and contemporaries identified the *santri* as being oriented towards the mosque, the *abangan* towards the village, and the *priyayi* as oriented towards Javanese hierarchy (McDonald, 1980).

Particular attention should be paid to the class of the *abangan*. Ricklefs concludes in *The Birth of the Abangan* that the majority of Javanese Muslims being considered part of this group is a new phenomenon, but that the derogatory implication is also (Ricklefs, 2006). Since this time, the etymology and origins of *abangan* have been reimagined in response to an Arabization of religious education after widespread access to *hajj* in the 1880s. Ricklefs mentions that a folk etymology has arisen “which claims that *abangan* derived from the name of one of the semi-legendary *wali* of Islam, Seh Lēmah Abang, who was martyred for disclosing secret documents to the uninitiated” (Ricklefs, p. 35). However, this history’s claim to truth is dubious to the historian, and remains a reimagining of a term decidedly used to delineate those who were not deemed pious by the religious elite. “However unorthodox his methods, as a saint of Islam Seh

Lĕmah Abang would certainly have been considered a *putihan*⁷. To confirm the irrelevance of this etymology, we may note that in *krama* Javanese, his name is given as “Seh Siti Jenar” (Ricklefs p. 36).

For the *abangan* population, positioning themselves to be ideologically adjacent to Seh (Syekh) Siti Jenar, known also as Sunan Sitijena, would be a radical reversal of this traditional analysis. Syekh Siti Jenar is known by many as the “Tenth *Wali*”, implying that he was of equal status and merit to the *Wali Songo*. He lived contemporaneously with them, but was rejected from the group because his *dakwah* was more rigorous and less lenient than the others, culminating in an argument between him and Sunan Kalijaga (M. Syamsuddin, personal communication, April 29, 2023). For example, it is common knowledge among the Javanese that the *Wali* were in favor of a gradual mixing of Islam, which did not condemn the traditional practices of the common people. In the opinion of the *Wali* and the Sufis⁸ who follow them, such rash actions would lead to disorder among the people and reaction against Islam. Syekh Siti Jenar disagreed. According to one interview source, he was even an ideological precursor the Salafi movement, staunchly against the intermingling of pure Islam with any culture⁹. However, most sources associate Sitijena’s teaching with Ibn Arabi’s *Wahdatul Wujud* (“Unity of Being”) and Sufistic writings of Persia, implying he was of Arab or Persian origin, and was a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad (Hakim 2020). Practitioners of Sufism like Ibn ‘Arabi were often accused of blasphemy for calling themselves Allah, equating their existence with that of the

⁷ The word *putihan* here is analogous with *santri*— the more common, pre-Geertzian term used by the Javanese themselves. It refers to “pure” Muslims— those who were more influenced by the Arabs in their understanding of Islam and rejected its melding with indigenous practice. Consult the glossary appended at the end of this work for more definite explanations of all italicized terms.

⁸ For lack of a better word. It is safe to say that all nine of the *Wali Songo* practiced a sort of Sufism influenced by Persian, Gujarati and Arab orders, but the term has become very broad and perhaps too encompassing to be useful in this context.

⁹ Interview 4/29

Creator. However, because of *Wahdat al-Wujud*'s stance that all creation is an emanation of the Creator and adherence to Monism, to a Sufi this statement would not contradict the values of Islam set down in the Qur'an. The self is a creation, and as a vessel for the emanation of Allah it is also Allah, insofar as it exists as a creation of the Creator. In theory this stance isn't radically different from the teaching of the *Wali Songo*, but this line is a dangerous one to toe for many Muslims, since it borders on *shirk*, meaning idolatry or worshiping more than one God. What separates this brand of Sufism is that it requires a strict and rigid *dakwah* in the eyes of the Muslim, since it comes dangerously close to blasphemy. Those who even slightly incorrectly interpret the teaching of the Sufi Master are committing a great sin and not following the path of the Sufi, and usually it becomes common for this misinformation to create weak teachers and destroy sacred teachings within only a few generations. There is precedent for this line of thinking within the *Shafi'i* tradition that most Indonesian Muslims subscribe to. The famous *Shafi'i* jurist al-Ghazali wrote about the fake Sufis and blasphemers that he saw as souring the reputation of real mystics in 1105 in his master work *The Alchemy of Happiness*:

“...This is as if a person who was not an adept in alchemy were to go about saying, ‘Alchemy is better than gold,’ and were to refuse gold when it was offered to him. Alchemy is better than gold, but real alchemists are very rare, and so are real Sufis. He who has a mere smattering of Sufism is not superior to a learned man, any more than he who has tried a few experiments in alchemy has ground for despising a rich man.” (p. 4)

Although ideologically they may not have been so different, history saw to it that Sheyk Siti Jenar and Sunan Kalijaga found themselves in opposite camps, and posthumously they have become figureheads of movements whose modern iterations have almost nothing to do with them— Siti Jenar with Modernism or even Salafism and Kalijaga with Sufism. It might be clear

why those labeled as *abangan* desired proximity to the more Purist theologian associated with the *santri*. This sentiment is definitely not universal though, and pilgrimage to the grave of Sunan Kalijaga has actually increased in modern times with the rise of *Nahdlatul Ulama*, Indonesia's largest (and staunchly Traditionalist) Muslim organization. The main political force besides NU (as they are commonly known) in Indonesia is Muhammadiyah, a Modernist organization set on the purification of Muslim practice¹⁰. Muhammadiyah claims that their founder, KHA Dahlan, "...seeing a rigid, obstinate condition of Muslims at that moment full of mystical rituals... was touched to urge people to go back to real Islamic teachings based on Al Qur'an and Hadist" (*The History of Muhammadiyah*, 2022).

As this debate grows in importance as time goes on, a story has begun to circulate attempting to ground the NU-Muhammadiyah ideological schism in history. Multiple people referred to a legendary meeting between Sunan Kalijaga and Syekh Siti Jenar. As the story goes, Sunan Kalijaga married Syekh Siti Jenar's daughter, Sharifah Zainab. The ideological debate between the two had already started, but at a meeting after the marriage, Sunan Kalijaga and Sheyk Siti Jenar began to rigorously debate the topic of *dakwah* in Java with all nine *Wali*. Despite the fact that most Javanese people deeply respect and revere the character of Sunan Kalijaga, it seems that most agree during this meeting he was unable to convince the Sheyk of anything. The two were both of equal education and merit, but the *Wali Songo* considered the teachings of Siti Jenar too dangerous to be given to the average *abangan* Muslim. After this argument, he was asked to repent and recant his previous statements, and refused to do so, claiming that his teachings did not equate himself or any other human being with God. It was at this moment that a pivotal shift in the dichotomy occurred— Sheyk Siti Jenar, one of the most

¹⁰ This position (Islamic Modernism) is not to be confused with Islamic extremism or Wahhabism. Their official website has an English language version for those interested: <https://muhammadiyah.or.id>

prominent Sufi masters in Java at the time and descendent of the Prophet, was sentenced to death (Quinn, 2019). Some say there was a state execution, others that he was asked to step into a blazing fire and turned into a dog that would not burn, and still others that Sunan Kalijaga killed him in a fatal duel. However, where the body ended up is a mystery, and so there is not a well-established *makam* where pilgrims come to venerate Sheyk Siti Jenar (Hakim, 2020).

As previously discussed, the veracity of these details is unimportant to this retelling. Undoubtedly this story reveals a battle waged by two charismatic ideologies still being waged in the hearts of religious people. The existence of a Sheyk Siti Jenar character at all curbs the noble and flawless character of a post-conversion Sunan Kalijaga. The story is far more reminiscent of Hindu mythology and Javanese folklore, portraying a complicated character who reverts to the ways of the bandit, possibly murdering or at the very least sanctioning the death of a fellow Muslim who he recognized as being equal in knowledge and power. Sunan Kalijaga represents in the mind of the storyteller a Javanese culture unwilling to subject itself to death by total Islamization. Siti Jenar is, by contrast, a foreigner (or at least a person of non-Javanese heritage), wanting to remove the prayers for intercession and pilgrimage visits, replacing them with total devotion to the one and only God. Though in this story Sheyk Siti Jenar is not a radical Conservative by any means— in fact quite the opposite if he is taken to be a Persian Sufi— his religious teachings are fundamentally incompatible with the slow and accepting *dakwah* of the *Wali Songo*. It is not the ideas that are the enemy, it is the existence of the teacher himself. No matter how tolerant, unorthodox, or flexible Islamic thought may make itself, the embodiment of its teachings must be sentenced to death by the storyteller. The message of Sunan Kalijaga is clear— true religion, insofar as there is truth, already lives in Java, and the true history of Java, insofar as there is true history, will be decided by the Javanese. In this way, the story acts as a

sword—dividing, partitioning, and at times promising punishment to the reckless—just like the ceremonial *keris* dagger that the bandit saint carried (Kurniawan, 2023).

Kalijaga as the Staff

As legend goes, the great Majapahit Kingdom fell during the lifetime of Sunan Kalijaga. Brawijaya IV of Majapahit was the final Hindu-Buddhist King who held a remarkable amount of territory, comparable to the reaches of modern-day Indonesia. Supposedly his son was Raden Pateh of Demak, whose *makam* is attached to Masjid Agung Demak. Raden Pateh was a *mualaf*, a convert to Islam. One source mentioned that some believe that his father was secretly a Muslim and handed down the religion of Islam to his son, but in all public spheres King Brawijaya was ostensibly Hindu (Anonymous, personal communication 29 April 2023). Raden Pateh had close relations to all of the *Wali Songo* throughout his life, and after studying Islam in Demak he revolted against the political order of his father and defeated the mightiest Javanese empire in history at the time. The political dynasty he would create in the following years sprung from Demak and utilized the *Wali* as tools in amassing religious clout and justifying political power. Before conquering his father's kingdom, Raden Pateh had studied under Sunan Ampel as his guru, and by 1479 he had established a fully functioning government with its center at the newly constructed Masjid Agung Demak. To repay the favor to the *Wali* he made Sunan Kudus (who had led the army to liberate Demak from Majapahit control) *qadi* or grand judge, Sunan Giri as a *mufti*, and after building the grand mosque, assigned the young up-and-coming Sunan Kalijaga to be its imam and royal advisor (Abu Amar 1996).

At this point in his life, Sunan Kalijaga would have been Muslim for a few years already and seen great success in his *dakwah*. However, not long before his entry into the *Wali Songo* he

was still sitting patiently by the river with a staff in his hand. The retelling of Raden Mas Said's conversion in the introduction to this paper is the quintessential Kalijaga story. There are still men today who seek proximity to the great saints of Islam in Java. They often dress in black and carry a replica of Sunan Kalijaga's staff. Just as the grave complex has absorbed the spiritual authority of Sunan Kalijaga to become a self-sufficient resource, the staff has also been endowed with a supernatural amount of charisma. Because it was wielded and used by Sunan Kalijaga, it would be unfair to label the staff as a self-sufficient piece of religious history: it is subordinate to the figure of our hero. To understand why this particular object has been favored over others, let us look at the conversion story in closer detail. At this point in his life, Said was still known by his bandit name, Lokajaya. He was feared by many but respected because of his Robin Hood-esque distribution of what he plundered. Believing his father couldn't really help the starving people he governed, the young Sunan-to-be was disobeying the conventional order of Javanese society in order to preserve and protect it. This is a central theme to every story I have ever heard about Sunan Kalijaga, including all of the ones mentioned in this paper. One day, his target for a routine highway robbery was the great Sunan Bonang, although he did not know who that was at the time. As Sunan Kalijaga approached, all he could see was an old and slightly feeble-looking traveler, who carried with him a gnarled staff made from the branch of a tree¹¹. I was unable to find an answer to how Sunan Bonang acquired the staff, so he may have made it himself while walking in the forest or it may have had another origin. Either way, it was made from wood from Java, a small fraction of the wild and untamed forest that had been cut and fashioned to serve the master's purpose. Why Sunan Bonang gave it to the bandit is something only an initiate or a Sufi could understand. Lokajaya himself did not understand it, but out of respect for such a powerful

¹¹ Replicas are still sold today at the *makam* of Sunan Muria, and it is not uncommon to see laypeople and *Musafir* using them to walk down the steep mountain where he is buried.

man he sat with the staff upright until his return three years later. This story mimics the Qur'anic-Biblical stories of old, and even uses the same imagery. The Prophet Musa (Moses) for example held a staff when leading his Israelites out of Egypt from Pharaoh, eventually crossing the Red Sea and making water come from a stone as a sign from God. Though one wandered and the other stood still, both were searching, performing seemingly meaningless tasks while waiting for a divine sign. A connection is now formed from one world to another. Sunan Kalijaga is entirely Javanese— he encapsulates Java in everything he does. Yet his superhuman sagacity in this story is comparable to that of Moses, David, and Jesus, all figures in the Qur'an that Muslims are very familiar with. Sunan Kalijaga and the Hebrew Prophets (particularly Moses) share a symbolic link— a staff and a pilgrimage— even if the pilgrimage was inside the mind of Sunan Kalijaga and not across the desert. Both stories also involve crossing a body of water¹², leading a group of people who are constantly led astray, and getting rid of idol worship to rely on faith in God alone. Javanese Islam lends itself legitimacy through this story and also defends its refusal to give up cultural idiosyncrasies. Sunan Kalijaga never wanted to cut down the vast forest or make every tree into a staff, and yet the story tells us that the forest and its inhabitants soon accepted his message and began to bend naturally towards an Islamic future.

With Raden Pateh and the *Wali Songo* working together, a rapid Islamization began throughout Central and East Java, which would permanently alter the cultural landscape of Java and later all of Indonesia (Abu Amar, 1996). The period of his reign was a Golden Age for Demak and also for Javanese Islam, but this period of success was short-lived. Raden Pateh's son Trenggana moved the capital of the Demak Sultanate to Pajang, a smaller agrarian town

¹² Moses famously parted in the Red Sea in the book of Exodus to escape the wrath of the Pharaoh. Sunan Kalijaga regularly bathed in the river beside the bank where he meditated, supposedly achieving enlightenment while submerged one day. Again, the Javanese analogue is more of a mental crossing than a physical one.

(Anonymous, personal communication, April 29, 2023). It's unclear why he decided to do this, but the new Sultan may have been seeking a stronger support base among farmers or looking to move the capital more inland. Trenggana was also married to Sunan Kalijaga's daughter, and may have wanted to move away from his father-and-law's sphere of influence. The *Wali*, anticipating the advent of Colonialism from the Dutch, were against the move from Demak. Raden Pateh is still considered a national hero of Indonesia for fighting the Portuguese, who tried to create a colony in Java when they first arrived in the 16th century. By the time the Dutch East India company assumed control of the island, the stories of the *Wali Songo* and the heroes of the Demak Sultanate had already spread and were collectively memorized.

None of these stories can be verified or strung together to synthesize a perfectly cohesive narrative, but they give insight into the ethos of pre-Colonial kingdoms and the many transformations Javanese society has endured before the arrival of Europeans. Sunan Kalijaga is held up by countless reenactments and recitations to stand straight in the air like his staff did all of those years ago. As mentioned earlier, it is said that when Sunan Bonang returned, he found Sunan Kalijaga buried under moss and roots, literally subsumed into the forest of Java (Quinn, 2019). The staff remained upright, just like the trees, proving Sunan Kalijaga's strength to be the victor in his battle against himself. It was at that moment that he truly became a Sunan, a man of great wisdom, strength, and piety, with the ability to spread these virtues to the world. In my travels around Java I saw four *makam* and countless historical artifacts, mosques, and remnants of the *Wali Songo*. Amongst the overgrown concrete jungle and the landscapes of modern cities, these relics poke out in nooks and crannies. They have been carefully preserved and metaphorically "held upright" in the hopes that those who keep up their remembrance and seek

out their secrets will be rewarded. Finally the legacy of Sunan Kalijaga is embodied in the staff in its vigilance, patience, and call to action.

Death and Rebirth

Some say with absolute certainty that Sunan Kalijaga lived to the age of one hundred, seeing the downfall of the Majapahit kingdom and the decline of the Sultanate of Demak that replaced it. Others assured me that due to historical inaccuracies, exact dates for the birth and death of the *wali* could not be verified, but gave a timespan similar to the one hundred years believers claim he lived. Now, almost six hundred years after his birth, most agree that Sunan Kalijaga lies Southeast of the city of Demak in Kadilangu.

Because of the haziness of collective recollection, it could be easy to assume that exact moments in time and space are not as important to the Javanese faithful. Perhaps personhood overwhelms the importance of specificity, and the charisma of this story is embodied totally within the perceived personality, one that accompanies the living throughout their lives by their remembrance of the dead. Coming to the tomb of a saint certainly comes with the expectation that this is the correct line of thinking. However, after multiple experiences at *Makam Kadilangu* it seemed to be the exact opposite. Sunan Kalijaga is an important part of how the Javanese teach themselves their history, but he is almost outlived by the power of his tomb. Nahdlatul Ulama-aligned Muslims come to the tomb in order to pay respects and drink the holy water that will bring them *selamat* and closeness to the *wali*. Many members of Muhammadiyah now visit too, ostensibly “to connect with their Javanese heritage and study history” (M. Syamsuddin, personal communication, April 29, 2023), usually without the perceived “superstition” of NU’s devotional

practices (G. Quinn, personal communication, April 27, 2023). The *makam* earns its stripes as a true place of pilgrimage because it can accommodate both of these viewpoints. Despite other Islamic organizations' lesser objections to the practices of NU, the charisma and Javanese-ness of *Kadilangu* clearly inspires indiscriminate respect and reinforces itself as sacrosanct. Using the concept of Collective Effervescence as a framework, my experiences at the burial complex were mostly driven by the others around me in the moment of supplication. Whereas the staff mentioned earlier is still symbolically subordinate to the figure of Sunan Kalijaga, the location of the *makam* has achieved an independence from any one story or moment in the bandit saint's life. The constant flow of pilgrims brings a collection of hopes and desires from far and wide—they give the already rich atmosphere of Kadilangu a locomotive energy. The destination can move forward in time independent of the fact that its guest of honor is dead and can make no more stories. It is common to hear that objects within the tomb itself or stolen items will move of their own accord, curse a perpetrator with bad luck, etc., until they are returned to their rightful place of rest. In one instance, a man from Madura who reportedly stole a brick to use in the foundation of a new mosque was so badly hexed he traveled all the way back to Demak to return it and apologize (JatengPos TV, 2022). This implies that placehood is what drives the masses of pilgrims (and perhaps disgruntled objects) to the foot of the grave—and in death, Sunan Kalijaga has become a place instead of a person. In short, location is the most important perceived factor in composing an acceptable truth¹³. There is a feeling inside *Makam Kadilangu* that one has just stepped into the beating heart of Java, but this is in reality another beautiful fiction of Modernity.

¹³ This is not a new idea in Islam or in the archipelago, where the *qibla*, or direction towards Mecca acts as a device of orientation for all Muslims on the planet. Likewise, in Indonesia a traditional sense of direction is established by proximity to the mountains or the sea. This system is still in use in Bali (known as Desa-Kala-Patra) and a similar method was at one point prominent in Java—perhaps the Islamic directional sense has taken its place or altered it. For discussions on place and time relating to the *Wali Songo*, the author also highly recommends the chapter section called *Jerusalem in Java* in Shahzad Bashir's *Islamic Pasts and Futures*, 2022.

The contemporary Sunan Kalijaga is a myth, and the real figure remains formless, further down in the void of recollection beyond what can be proven. In order to reach back into history without the aid of documentation, a present anchor must be laid into the foundation of religion in order for the religious to repel downwards into the past. It wouldn't matter if there was no body, no artifacts, no story and no masjid; the story would most likely rewrite itself, or another would take its place. The location requires a *makam*, and it is an essential piece of spiritualized infrastructure.

Conclusions

My last visit to *Makam Kadilangu* was just over a week past Eid, the celebration of the end of Ramadan. After finishing our *du'a* and meandering into the main strip of vendors leading to the exit, I looked back at the tomb and listened to the low rumbling of a crowd deep in prayer. It sounded like the ocean at night. The crescent moon of Shawwal hung loosely in the air, floating just above the square roof of the masjid. Just above it, Venus shone brightly, vying for attention with the green lights that wrapped around the awnings. At that moment the first blast of the late evening *azan* rippled through the courtyard, emanating from the mosque. I stood and listened to its stunning beauty for a minute. It brought tears to my eyes, and momentarily transported me to another world— one without my phone, my trivial concerns, deadlines, worries, and finances. I looked around with blurry vision, watching everyone go about their evening quite normally. Nobody was outwardly moved at all. They sold their wares, walked through the brightly lit and open-air corridor to their parked motorbikes, begged, bartered, laughed, and talked with their loved ones. These people all believed deeply in the religion of Islam and the spiritual power of this *makam*. But they also were not foreigners, here to experience a moment of sublime bliss and then leave. They were and still are the collective owners of the narrative, living

their day-to-day lives in accordance with the teachings of Sunan Kalijaga. What felt like a powerful blast to me was a constant hum for the people of Demak, like a city on the water perpetually hears the waves. The next morning I departed for Yogyakarta to begin writing. Mas Akmal, my host while I stayed in Demak, drove me to the bus station. As I thanked him for the hospitality and settled the rent, he took me outside to have a word.

“There are modern *wali*, Mas. *Wali* that exist today. You will find them in America and you will find them here.” His words rang with an air of profundity. It reminded me of something he said earlier, before I left for Masjid Agung for the first time. “Do not focus on how strong your religion is. If you make your religion strong, and you do good towards everyone, and I make mine strong, then we become strong”. We are the pillars now. Learning about the *Wali Songo* came with a sense of obligation; it felt that the people of Demak believed I had a duty to live as the *Wali* did, and to explain their methods and history to a new audience. While sitting and talking with one consultant, he made it even more clear for me. He asked me directly (in English) if I had plans to return to Java. I told him I did after getting my undergraduate degree, and his response was instant. “I know. You’ll come back here again, I see that for you,” (Anonymous, April 29, 2023).

After my experiences in Demak it is difficult to see pilgrimage as an institution of antiquity or something on the decline. As long as new history is being written, there will be sites to visit and noble teachers to venerate. As a piece of spiritual infrastructure, *makam* serve as totems and reflections of their host society, but also have gained a charisma of their own, which has the power to guide and dictate. This place in time and in space is the tether. The *makam* silently assures us all that the past did happen, and it happened how we wanted it to. When the next *wali* of Java is born, there will most likely be no fuss or commotion. After their death,

however, we can expect the lost, the wandering, and the seekers of a pure heart to arrive at their tomb. With them they will bring offerings, which means money and business for locals. They will bring stories too, and collectively the first to arrive will etch a saga into the ground, drawing the line between what is sacrosanct and what is profane.

As I watched the *wayang* shadow puppetry show in Yogyakarta, I thought about Sunan Kalijaga hiding behind the white screen. In these projected shadows cast by leather puppets in the shape of old Hindu heroes, Sunan Kalijaga inserted the strange echoes of Islam. Every actor, singer, and musician made every performance slightly different, and made each night's show unique. The performance was in Old High Javanese and was incomprehensible to the majority of viewers, though they were familiar with the story. The stories I had heard all month flashed through my mind— the *Ramayana*, *Bhagavad Gita*, the myths of Sunan Kalijaga and his *dakwah*. The stories needed to be told. Even here, where they had to be translated and acted out to be understood, the stories needed to be told. In Demak, through the post-Eid parades, museum visits, and pilgrimages, they needed to be told. In Kudus and Mount Muria they needed to be told. All over Java, a tradition as rich and complex as the entire European literary canon continues to thrive. It hides in the places the outsider is too timid or too foolish to look, and so I have yet to understand a fraction of everything Javanese oral history has to offer. Perhaps to scholars these retellings are fictions of modernity, but stories have been told like this since civilization in Java began, and they are only becoming more important to the growing number of pilgrims and devotees that visit Javanese *makam* each year. To understand them and relate them to others is to become a link in the chain from Mecca to Java to the heart. Sunan Kalijaga and the *Wali* stand at the center of it all, shrouded in mystery. We must learn as Sunan Kalijaga intended us to, by watching the shadows that are cast.

Glossary of Terms:

Abangan– The group of Javanese Muslims that are considered uninitiated– usually they do not pray often or receive formalized Islamic education. This term most likely came into being during the mid 19th century.

Aql– ‘Personal intellect’, or ‘divine spark, soul’. In the context of this paper, ‘*aql*’ is why people are allowed to use *ijtihad*.

Bhagavad Gita– A section of the *Mahabharata*, an ancient Hindu epic which is popular in Indonesia because of Hinduism’s historical influence on the archipelago.

Collective Effervescence (CE) – A sociological term used to describe certain religious phenomena by Emile Durkheim. When certain narratives are shared or groups of people collectively experience the same emotion, each individual actor in the group can begin to act in unison without prior coordination. Oftentimes Collective Effervescence marks a redefinition of the boundaries of what is sacred and what is profane. After a moment of Collective Effervescence, places, objects, or people can gain new status as sacred and receive a new societal role with new rituals forming to accommodate this change.

Dakwah– An Arabic word describing the proselytization process of Islam. It is a noun, so one can “go do *dakwah*” or also have a method of “*dakwah*”-- meaning that they are trying to spread Islamic thought or convert people to Islam.

Du'a – small prayers that can be said during *sholat*, the Muslim formal prayer, but can also be said afterwards or at any time. Usually the praying person raises both hands so that the palms are facing upwards and quickly recites a *du'a* in Arabic. This can be before eating, before sleep, while starting a journey, or in this case, while visiting the shrines of the *Wali Songo*. It is forbidden to pray facing anywhere other than Mecca, and to pray to anyone besides God. Instead of praying at the *makam*, Muslims make *du'a* requesting something like security or health, make *du'a* for the person at the *makam*, etc.

Dhikr– Repeating utterances that hold spiritual power in Islam. Popular *dhikr* chants include “La ilaha il Allah” (There is no God but Allah) or “Astaghfirullah”/“Rabbighfirli” (God forgive me/Lord forgive me). These are repeated a certain amount of times, usually 33 or 99 times.

Gamelan– A traditional Javanese instrument. Multiple kinds of *gamelan* usually play together in a small orchestra, accompanied by drums and gongs. All *gamelan* are metal xylophone-keyed instruments hit with a hammer. Usually the notes of the *gamelan* scale are outside of the Western music scale.

Hadith– Sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad which companions and followers wrote down or transmitted orally. One of the methods of determining what is permissible and what is forbidden is Islamic jurisprudence.

Hajj- One of the five pillars of Islam. *Hajj* is a pilgrimage to Mecca. Because it is a lengthy and expensive journey, it was not popular in Indonesia and regions far away from Arabia until the turn of the 20th century.

Ijtihad– ‘Personal Reasoning’. *Ihtihad* is the use of one’s god-given intellect to come to conclusions about scripture when ambiguities arise. This is the last resort of most schools of jurisprudence– some schools reject it entirely.

Juru Kunci– Literally ‘key keeper’ or ‘caretaker’. The person or family that holds the keys to a holy site such as the *makam* of Sunan Kalijaga. They conduct interviews and tell the story of the person buried at the tomb, make sure it is properly taken care of, and essentially act on behalf of the buried to make sure everything is spiritually and legally accounted for.

Kiyai– A religious teacher in Indonesia, especially one who runs a *pesantren*– an Islamic boarding school where one learns the fundamentals of Indonesian Islam and memorizes the Qur’an.

Mahabharata– See *Bhagavad Gita*.

Makam– A tomb or small shrine to a deceased person. This word can also mean simply a Muslim cemetery, but in the context of this research, a *makam* is a cemetery with one main grave where pilgrims come to pray or give offerings.

Makam Kadilangu– The *makam* southeast of the city of Demak where Sunan Kalijaga was laid to rest. I did most of my research and work here, and went three separate times to conduct interviews and pay my respects.

Mualaf– A convert to Islam; someone who was not born a Muslim and decided to profess their faith.

Mufti– A title of respect for a Muslim with scriptural knowledge. *Muftis* are able to interpret the law of Islam (Shariah) and have the authority to issue verdicts on what is and is not permissible, or answer questions that community members have about specific issues that might have obvious resolutions.

Putihan– The so-called “white Muslims”, contrasting with the group known as the *abangan* explained above. These Muslims pray regularly, receive Islamic education, and understand the faith well, which means that they are the teachers and imams of Java. However, not all *putihan*

are these, and they can be lay people as well. The term is also not necessarily genetic, and a *putihan* family can have an *abangan* child and vice versa, depending on that child's education and acceptance of the teachings of Islam.

Priyayi– The *priyayi* in Geertz's analysis of Javanese Islam represent a third category distinct from the *abangan* and *putihan*. The *priyayi* were bureaucrats and dignitaries of Javanese society who accepted Islam and received formal Islamic education, but also kept traditional caste/hierarchy distinction. This essay does not touch on this category of Javanese society, so this description is strictly according to the traditional Geertz interpretation.

Ramayana– Another Hindu epic often performed in *wayang* puppet shows. It follows the hero Rama's journey to rescue his wife Sita from an evil king of Lanka who has abducted her. The *Ramayana* is broadcast every day on Indonesian radio.

Santri– See *putihan*. This word can mean students at a *pesantren*, but in the context of this paper it is synonymous with *putihan*.

Sheikh (Seh)– Another honorary title in Islam. It can be a religious scholar, but it is more general than *Mufti* and can refer to a tribal elder, lord, or anyone of higher social status. In Islamic theological contexts, it implies that the one holding the title is knowledgeable and educated.

Shirk– The highest sin in Islam. *Shirk* literally means 'partnership', and means to associate partners with God. In the Qur'an, Allah is described multiple times as a singular entity, and His oneness is stressed constantly. To worship idols or pray to anything besides Allah is forbidden for Muslims.

Selamat– Literally 'peace'. Oftentimes Muslims praying at the *makam* will ask for *selamat*, meaning that they may not have a specific wish or desire but want peace and a sense of stability in their lives.

Shafi'i – One of the four legal schools of Sunni Islam. Differences between the four are minimal and they all get along with one another, but they place different emphasis on methods of jurisprudence and sometimes place their hands differently when praying. Imam Al-Ghazali was a *Shafi'i* as mentioned in the paper, and it is worth noting that the majority of Indonesian Muslims (especially NU Muslims) are *Shafi'i*.

Suhoor– During the month of fasting in Ramadan, *suhoor* is the pre-dawn (usually communal) meal. Muslims wake up to eat, and then do not eat or drink water until sundown.

Sunan– A Javanese word meaning ‘saint’. An honorific title for any venerated spiritual leader, as well as all nine of the *Wali Songo*.

Sunnah- The actions of the Prophet Muhammad. These are not required for Muslims to perform, but since the Prophet was the perfect example of humanity it is recommended to follow them. Examples include: growing a beard, eating dates in odd numbers, being kind to your spouse, taking naps, and taking a different route back home when returning from an outing.

Wahdatul Wujud– Literally ‘Unity of Being’. A philosophy derived from Sufism that emphasizes God’s Unity as an emanation from a central point, with all of creation existing in and made up of God. Therefore, each individual is a piece of God and carries a part of the divine essence within them. This philosophy is used to describe the position of Syekh (Sheikh) Siti Jenar.

Wali– Literally ‘saint, helper, friend, leader’. The meaning of this word is somewhat contested and has become a political debate, which I will not touch on. Many Muslims believe that a ‘reviver of the faith’ will come every 100 years– this person is sometimes referred to as *wali*. In general, the term is given to outstanding Muslims who obtained great authority and power through the secrets of Islam.

Wali Songo– The nine saints of Javanese Islam, credited with first spreading the religion of Islam to the island. Literally ‘Nine Saints’ in Javanese. These nine were: Sunan Gresik, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Drajat, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Gunung Jati. However, the list varies from source to source, and sometimes Sunan (Sheyk) Siti Jenar, Sunan Walilanang, Sunan Ngudung and Sunan Bayat are included in place of other members.

Wayang– A form of traditional puppetry most likely brought from India, using puppets to cast shadows on a white screen illuminated by fire or a lamp. Sunan Kalijaga used this traditional art form to teach common people about Islam. See *Ramayana*.

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Recommendations for Further Study:

For further reading, the author recommends M. C. Ricklefs's 1993 book *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1300* and Dr. George Quinn's *Bandit Saints of Java (2019)* for Demak's importance in the *Wali Songo* tradition. These two books covered a broad range of topics that greatly augmented the bounds of my research and allowed me to look further into specific questions instead of asking consultants about the basics. Another fascinating article mentioned earlier in the footnotes is the sub-chapter *Jerusalem in Java* in Shahzad Bashir's *Islamic Pasts and Futures*. This online resource is halfway between an essay and a visual presentation, and promotes a book for sale by the same name. I highly recommend the entire book and online resource for those interested in time perception and the importance of timekeeping within Islam.

In terms of further study, I believe that academia has only scratched the surface of Java's cultural history. As mentioned in the paper, this could be because of the inaccessibility of Javanese history and literary resources to the average scholar, but it also may be because of a lack of interest. Even in the field of Islamic Studies, I find discussions on Java and Indonesia to be largely absent or redundant. This paper does not do nearly enough justice to the rich and complex pilgrimage culture of Central Java, but it is my opinion that any research into the wonderful and fascinating histories of Indonesia is great work. Hopefully, books and papers talking about the religion and pilgrimage culture of the archipelago will stir up more interest and get more people talking about Indonesia's role in shaping the modern Islamicate world. I am interested in continuing my academic career with Java and the *Wali Songo* in mind, and I hope to

return to Java soon to begin learning Javanese and visiting the other *makam* and historical sites that I missed this time around.