



## The Spread of Islam in Sundanese Tatars

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### Abstract

*This research aims to examine the process of Islamization in Sundanese Tatars through a cultural approach as a complement to the limitations of historical evidence, focusing on the role of myths, proverbs, and sayings in reflecting the cultural readiness of the community. The research uses a qualitative method with a cultural analysis approach to Sundanese mythical texts and proverbs that represent the value system and mentality of the community. The findings show that Sundanese myths and proverbs contain values that describe the psychological and cultural readiness of the community to accept the teachings of Islam. The internality of these values shows that Islamization in Sundanese Tatars occurred through a subtle, integrated, and organically occurring cultural process in people's lives. Islamization in Sundanese Tatars does not only depend on historical figures and events, but also on the acceptance of people's culture as reflected in oral traditions. The cultural approach has proven to be able to fill the historiographical gap and provide a more complete understanding of the process of spreading Islam in this region.*

*Keywords: Spread of Islam; Tatar Sunda; Culture*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menelaah proses islamisasi di Tatar Sunda melalui pendekatan kebudayaan sebagai pelengkap atas keterbatasan bukti historis, dengan fokus pada peran mitos, pepatah, dan peribahasa dalam mencerminkan kesiapan kultural masyarakat. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis budaya terhadap teks-teks mitos dan peribahasa Sunda yang merepresentasikan sistem nilai dan mentalitas masyarakat. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mitos dan pepatah Sunda mengandung nilai-nilai yang menggambarkan kesiapan psikologis dan kultural masyarakat untuk menerima ajaran Islam. Internalitas nilai-nilai tersebut memperlihatkan bahwa islamisasi di Tatar Sunda terjadi melalui proses kultural yang halus, terintegrasi, dan berlangsung secara organik dalam kehidupan masyarakat. Islamisasi di Tatar Sunda tidak hanya bergantung pada tokoh dan peristiwa historis, tetapi juga pada penerimaan budaya masyarakat yang tercermin dalam tradisi lisan. Pendekatan kebudayaan terbukti mampu mengisi kesenjangan historiografis dan memberikan pemahaman lebih utuh mengenai proses penyebaran Islam di wilayah ini.

Kata Kunci: Penyebaran Islam; Tatar Sunda; Kebudayaan

## INTRODUCTION

The spread of Islam in Sundanese Tatars leaves a number of academic problems that need to be studied more deeply. First, historical data on the Islamization process in this region is very limited and fragmentary, making it difficult to clearly reconstruct the methods,

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dynamics, and actors that play a role in the spread of Islam.<sup>1</sup> Second, conventional historiographical approaches are unable to explain how Islam can be widely accepted by Sundanese people, especially due to the lack of detailed records of social interactions and da'wah strategies used.<sup>2</sup> Third, there is a gap in understanding between the limited historical evidence and the strong integration of Islamic values in Sundanese culture, so an alternative analysis is needed to explain the close relationship between Islam and Sundanese. These problems raise fundamental questions about the mechanisms, cultural factors, and processes of internalization of values that allow Islam to take root in Sundanese Tatars.

The study of the spread of Islam in Sundanese Tatars has been discussed by a number of researchers from various perspectives, although it is still limited and fragmentary. In general, previous research has focused more on historical aspects, da'wah figures, and socio-cultural dynamics of Sundanese society.<sup>3</sup> Several classic works in the historiography of Islam of the archipelago place Sunan Gunung Jati as the central figure of Islamization in the West Java region. Research such as those conducted by local and national historians confirms that the political role, diplomatic relations, and networks of scholars in the 15th and 16th centuries were important factors in the spread of Islam.<sup>4</sup> However, this study tends to focus on figures without describing the da'wah approach used in detail.

A number of anthropological and ethnographic studies have examined the relationship between Sundanese culture and the acceptance of Islam. Researchers such as Muhammad Ibnu Aminim et al., and other Sundanese cultural scholars show that Sundanese values have a closeness to Islamic teachings, thus facilitating the process of religious internalization. Through the analysis of oral literature, poetry, and value systems, these studies reveal that Islamization does not take place through confrontation, but through cultural adaptation that is flexible and harmonious.<sup>5</sup> Contemporary research on Islam in Sundanese society highlights the role of social structures such as pesantren, kinship, and customary institutions in strengthening the sustainability of Islamic teachings. This study confirms that the spread of Islam did not only occur in the early phases of Islamization, but continued through educational institutions and religious organizations that strengthened the Islamic identity of the community.

Judging by its character, most of the research still relies on limited historical sources and is unable to describe the process of Islamization in its entirety. In addition, studies that use

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<sup>1</sup> Marcus Milwright, *Encounters: Medieval Islamic History in 50 Objects* (Taylor & Francis, 2025), <https://books.google.com>.

<sup>2</sup> Anzar Abdullah et al., "The Reciprocal Acculturation of Islamic Culture and Local Culture in the Nusantara: A Historical Review," *JAWI* 8, no. 1 (2025): 77–90.

<sup>3</sup> Cut Linda Marheni Muhammad, *The Concept of Islam Nusantara as Viewed by Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals: Proponents and Opponents*, 2024, <https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/items/c56ba462-5553-4c2d-a348-48ee2dadd3aa>.

<sup>4</sup> Siti Muhibah and Aslan Aslan, "THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION FROM PRE-ISLAMIC TO MODERN TIMES IN THE ARCHIPELAGO," *INJOSEDU: International Journal of Social and Education* 2, no. 6 (2025): 1878–88.

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Ibnu Aminim et al., "Theology and Culture: Walisongo's Strategy of Islamic Enculturation in Java," *Aqlania: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Islam* 16, no. 1 (2025): 73–98.

myths, proverbs, and proverbs as sources of cultural analysis are still rare. This limitation shows that there is a more in-depth research space related to how local cultural values are an important instrument in the spread of Islam in Tatar Sunda. This research has a clear distinction from previous studies that generally focus on the reconstruction of formal history, the role of Islamic propagators, and analysis of archaeological evidence such as tombstones, ancient sites, or royal chronicles. Previous studies tend to use historical-conventional approaches that rely on classical written sources, resulting in a partial understanding due to limited data on the details of the Islamization process in Sundanese Tatars. This research is here to fill this gap by focusing on the cultural dimension as a basis for analysis that has not been raised comprehensively.

The novelty of this research lies in the use of a cultural approach through the analysis of Sundanese myths, oral narratives, proverbs, and proverbs as an alternative data source to map the process of acceptance and the roots of Islam in society. By exploring the structure of mentality, local values, and symbolic expressions that live in Sundanese traditions, this study offers a new perspective that Islamization does not only take place through religious propagator figures, but through the cultural readiness of the Sundanese people themselves. This approach makes a theoretical contribution by expanding the method of tracing the history of Islamization through non-documentary cultural data, while providing a deeper understanding of how Islam is an intrinsic part of the Sundanese identity.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research. This approach was chosen because the study of the spread of Islam in Sundanese Tatars relies heavily on historical sources, cultural texts, and oral traditions documented in various literatures. Literature research allows researchers to explore in depth relevant written references and cultural texts to reconstruct the dynamics of the Islamization process in the region.<sup>6</sup> The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data includes classical texts related to Sundanese history and Islamization, local manuscripts, royal chronicles, and oral narrative documentation that has been codified in written form. The secondary data includes academic books, journal articles, dissertations, research reports, and other scientific works that examine Sundanese history, culture, and religious anthropology.<sup>7</sup> The selection of sources is carried out purposively by considering their relevance, credibility, and contribution to understanding the process of spreading Islam in Sundanese Tatars.

The data collection technique is carried out through a systematic literature review, including the process of identification, verification, and interpretation of written sources. Each data is analyzed using a historical approach to trace the chronology, context, and dynamics of the spread of Islam; and an anthropological-cultural approach to interpret the meanings contained in Sundanese myths, proverbs, and proverbs as a representation of the mentality of

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<sup>6</sup> Dudung Abdurahman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah Islam* (Penerbit Ombak, 2011), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/40455/>.

<sup>7</sup> Syamsul Bakri and Dinar Bela Ayu Naj'ma, "Membangun Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah Untuk Pengembangan Islamic Studies," *Academica: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 4, no. 1 (2020): 39–54.

the people who accept Islam. The analysis is carried out through content analysis techniques to unravel the structure of ideas, symbols, and values that appear in cultural texts and historical texts.<sup>8</sup> To maintain the validity of the data, this study uses the source triangulation technique, which is by comparing various types of literature from different disciplines of history, philology, anthropology, and Islamic studies in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding. The analysis process is carried out inductively, starting from reading and organizing data, coding the main themes, to the preparation of findings and theoretical interpretation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Traces of Islamization in the Land of Sunda in a Historical Perspective

The word "Islamization" in the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language can be interpreted as Islamization.<sup>9</sup> J. Noorduyn said that in Islamization there are two distinct stages that are clearly separate. *First*, it is the history of business movements from all over the archipelago. *Second*, it consists of parts of time, consisting of the history of various Indonesian ethnic groups so that it can be described in short and separate monographs according to region. Furthermore, if necessary, the third stage will be followed, namely the spread of Islam.<sup>10</sup> According to Ricklef, Islamization can mean a process that continues to this day.<sup>11</sup> Islamization in the sense of Islamic acceptance can also mean conversion and also means socio-cultural change. Conversion is a conversion of religion or belief that was previously adhered to Islam. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that Islamization in this discussion is a process of spreading Islam from a person or several Muslims or interpreted as since the first arrival of Islam, and its acceptance (spread) continues until now.

Sundanese Tatar is the area where the Sundanese tribe lived. Sundanese Tatar is generally equated with the West Java area. Before the western part of Java was divided into the provinces of Banten, Jakarta, and West Java, in the past, all of these regions were considered part of the Sundanese ethnicity. Therefore, when talking about Sundanese history, Cirebon, Banten, and Jakarta are always areas that are considered part of Sunda. However, now Jakarta is claimed as a place to live a special ethnic group called "Betawi", and the people of Banten consider them not Sundanese, but "Banten". Even Cirebon currently wants to separate from West Java because they feel that they are not "Sundanese", but a separate ethnicity.<sup>12</sup> It has become customary in colonial historiography that Islamization will clash with the traditional defense of local communities. For example, when colonial historians recounted the process of

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<sup>8</sup> Astri Yogatama, "Penelitian Sejarah Relasi Publik: Konsep Dan Metodologi," *Scriptura* 8, no. 1 (2018): 1–6.

<sup>9</sup> Alan M. Stevens, *A Comprehensive Indonesian-English Dictionary* (PT Mizan Publika, 2004), <https://books.google.com>.

<sup>10</sup> Christian Pelras, "Religion, Tradition and the Dynamics of Islamization in South-Sulawesi," *Archipel* 29, no. 1 (1985): 107–35.

<sup>11</sup> Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (MacMillan London, 1993), [https://www.academia.edu/download/55209974/Ricklefs\\_2001\\_A\\_History\\_of\\_Modern\\_Indonesia.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/download/55209974/Ricklefs_2001_A_History_of_Modern_Indonesia.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Siti Rohmah Soekarba, "The Idea of Pluralism in Indonesian Society: A Case Study of Cirebon City as a Cultural Melting Pot," *Journal of Strategic and Global Studies* 1, no. 1 (2018): 5.

Islamization in the Javanese cultural area. The real Islamization is a cultural process and then described by political events. Thus the war between Demak and Majapahit (1526 AD) was interpreted as a war between Islam and Hinduism; or Islam with Javanese culture.<sup>13</sup> In this case, Demak is symbolized as a representative of Islamic tradition while Majapahit is symbolized as a representative of Javanese culture.

If we look at the relationship between Islam and the local culture in this way, it can be concluded that Islam came to destroy the "culture" of the local people. In fact, the process of Islamization in Indonesia, especially regarding culture, is generally a peaceful, normal, and reasonable process without violence. People voluntarily become Muslims or not. Meanwhile, political issues are actually more related to the interests of power, than to the interest of defending culture.

The same thing will also be found when telling the relationship between Sunda and Islam. This relationship, in history, has always been associated with the memory of the war between Maulana Hasanudin of Banten and the Sunda kingdom under the leadership of Queen Samiam in 1579 which ended with the destruction of the Sundanese kingdom. This war seemed to give a sign that Islam and Sunda were enemies, something that could not be united. In fact, in the cultural memory of the Sundanese people, the war has never been an important part of identity. This means that for them, the incident is not considered as something important in the Islamization process that they are experiencing. Even in the realm of the Sundanese people's mind, the history of Islamization they experienced was never associated with hostility towards any group. In historical records, Islam came to the Sundanese Tatars along with the arrival of Islam to Java in general. Just like in other parts of Java, the peak of the success of Islamic da'wah was during the time of Wali Songo. In Sundanese Tatar, Wali Songo members who became spreaders of Islam were very famous, even to the point of succeeding in establishing an Islamic kingdom in Cirebon and Banten, namely Syarif Hidayatullah or Sunan Gunung Jati. However, Sunan Gunung Jati was not the first person to bring Islam.

### **Orang Yang Pertama Kali Memeluk Dan Menyebarkan Islam Di Tanah Sunda**

In local-traditional sources it is believed that the first person to embrace and spread Islam in Sundanese Tatar was Bratalegawa. Bratalegawa was the second son of Prabu Guru Pangandiparamarta Jayadewabrata or Sang Bunisora, the ruler of the Galuh Kingdom. He was a great merchant who was famous in his time. As a great merchant, he was used to sailing to Sumatra, China, India, Sri Lanka, Iran, and even to Arab countries. He was married to a Muslim woman from Gujarat named Farhana bint Muhammad. Through this marriage, Bratalegawa converted to Islam, then performed the Hajj pilgrimage and received the nickname Haji Baharudin. As the first person to perform the Hajj in his kingdom, he is known as Haji Purwa. He then settled in Cirebon Girang, which was then under the rule of Galuh.<sup>14</sup> If this story

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<sup>13</sup> Yusep Munawar Sofyan, "Javanese Power: A Comparative Study of the Power Systems of the Majapahit and Demak Kingdoms," *The International Journal of Politics and Sociology Research* 8, no. 4 (2021): 104–13.

<sup>14</sup> Nina Herlina Lubis et al., "Islamization of the Sunda Kingdom," *International Information Institute (Tokyo). Information* 21, no. 4 (2018): 1349–57.



becomes a benchmark, it can be concluded that Islam was first brought to the Sundanese Tatars by traders and in the early stages there were not many supporters because the Hindu influence was still too strong. Meanwhile, regarding the time, if it is associated with the ruler of the Galuh Kingdom Sang Bunisora who ruled for 14 years from 1357 to 1371 AD, then we can know that the Bratalegawa or Hajj Purwa event above occurred around the 14th century.

There are also other traditional texts that mention the story of Sheikh Nurjati from Persia. He was a scholar who came around the 14th century with 12 of his disciples to spread Islam in the West Java area. With the permission of the port authority where he landed, he was allowed to settle in Muarajati (near Cirebon) and establish a pesantren there. This story is contained in the manuscript of Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari.<sup>15</sup> In the Cirebon Chronicle, the story of the pioneers of the spread of Islam is almost similar to the story of Bratalegawa. It's just that the character this time is Prince Walang Sungsang who is also known as Ki Samadullah, Ki Cakrabumi, or Sheikh Abdul Iman. He is the son of the ruler of Pajajaran Prabu Siliwangi from his wife named Nyai Subang Larang.<sup>16</sup> However, the story is then mixed with the myth of Wadirectsang's meeting with the prophet Muhammad Saw., even though historically there was a considerable difference in times.<sup>17</sup> In the Priangan area, the child figure of Prabu Siliwangi who is believed to spread Islam in the Land of Sunda is Kean Santang, with almost the same story.<sup>18</sup>

There is another story about a scholar who came from Campa (around Vietnam) named Sheikh Quro. He stopped in Karawang together with Admiral Cheng Ho's ship. While Cheng Ho continued his mission, Sheikh Quro chose to stay in Karawang and married Ratna Sondari, the son of the ruler of Karawang. He was allowed to establish a pesantren until he could spread the teachings of Islam more freely.<sup>19</sup> These traditional sources, even though in the perspective of Western historians are considered non-authoritative sources, are not to be trusted as a whole is not the right thing to do. Therefore, as preliminary information, what is written in the traditional sources above should be considered.

If we hold these sources, it can be concluded that Islam has come to Sundanese Tatars since the 12th or 13th century. However, as in general the peaceful development of religion, the spread of Islam to become a model of the majority takes a lot of time. Therefore, if in the 16th century, the Sunda Kingdom collapsed, it does not mean that Islam destroyed it. The destruction of the Sunda Kingdom was because its political power was declining so that it was easy to destroy. However, at that time the one facing the Kingdom of Sunda was the Kingdom of Banten, so many simplistic said that the destruction of the symbol of "kasundaan" was when

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<sup>15</sup> Lubis et al., "Islamization of the Sunda Kingdom."

<sup>16</sup> Usman Supendi et al., "The Role of Sri Baduga Maharaja in the Spread of Islam in The Sunda Region," *Jejak Digital: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin* 1, no. 4 (2025): 1172–82.

<sup>17</sup> Hasan Muarif Ambary, *IE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISLAMIC RULE IN JAY A KART A*, 1975, <https://repository.kemendikdasmen.go.id/30594/1/THE%20ESTABLISHMENT%20OF%20ISLAMIC%20RULE%20IN%20JAYAKARTA.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Santi Susanti and Sukaesih Sukaesih, "The Meaning Of Sunda Cultural Construction For Javanese Individuals In Bandung," *Sosiohumaniora* 26, no. 1 (2024): 12–23.

<sup>19</sup> Lubis et al., "Islamization of the Sunda Kingdom."

Islam came. This means that political events between Banten and Pajajaran must be seen in the context of the struggle for political supremacy which does not always have to be related to the issue of belief, especially in the context of Islamization in Sundanese Tatar.

The Islamization in the Sundanese Tatars itself took place latently long before the various political conflicts between the Islamic Kingdoms of Cirebon and Banten and the Kingdom of Pajajaran. According to Hasan Mu'arif Ambary, Islamization in the archipelago, including in the Sundanese Tatars, went through almost uniform stages, namely, first, there was contact between the people of the archipelago with traders, sailors, or travelers from various parts of the world such as China, Arabia, India, Southeast Asia, Persia, and so on. This period, lasted between the 7th to the 11th century.<sup>20</sup> This contact became the initial argument for the possibility of meeting the people of the archipelago with Muslim traders from Islamic countries. Second, the existence of the above international trade contacts has opened up opportunities for the people of the archipelago to make special contact with Muslim traders. It was this contact that first introduced Islam to the archipelago. Some of the residents of the archipelago have begun to be interested in learning about it, including in the Sundanese Tatars, some areas also include coastal areas such as Banten (including Jakarta) and Cirebon which are generally the main destinations for international traders. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first center of Islamic spread appeared in the coastal area of Cirebon.

However, there is no historical information about the early contact of Islam in this region of Sundanese Tatars before the 14th century. However, if we follow the historical logic of Bratalegawa, who was the son of rulers and merchants, the conjecture that long before the 14th century Muslim communities from various parts of the world already had contact with people in Sundanese Tatars may be true. Of course, this needs further proof through the tracing of new historical evidence from the Sundanese Tatar region which until now is still limited.

Third, the growth of Islamic communities in the archipelago, both in coastal and inland areas. This phase lasted between the 11th to the 13th centuries AD. In some coastal areas of Sumatra, in this phase several early Islamic kingdoms have even emerged. Meanwhile, in the Sundanese Tatars itself, as explained above, it is likely that Muslim communities have emerged in the northern coastal areas of West Java (Cirebon, Karawang, and its surroundings). If names such as Sheikh Quro and others have appeared, it means that the Muslim community has grown there. Even when referring to the myth about Kean Santang, the son of Prabu Siliwangi, who converted to Islam, the Muslim community in Sundanese Tatars is likely to have also entered the centers of power of the Sunda Kingdom of Pajajaran. The institutionalization of Islam was marked by the growth of political power centers and Islamic sultanates in the archipelago which occurred between the 13th and 16th centuries AD. In Sundanese Tatars in this period, the most important Islam has emerged, namely Cirebon and Banten. This marked the peak of the spread of Islam in the area. When the Cirebon kingdom emerged, the Sunda kingdom came to a time of destruction due to various external and internal factors. At this time, the Islamic kingdoms were already facing the forces of European colonialism.

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<sup>20</sup> Hasan Mu'arif Ambary, "Islam Dan Tradisi Budaya Banten," *Dalam Ruh Islam Dalam Budaya Bangsa*. Jakarta: Yayasan Festival Istiqlal, 1996.

Fifth, the decline of charisma and the power of Islamic kingdoms replaced the emergence of European economic, political, and military domination. During this period, there began to be de-Islamization efforts carried out by the Dutch through various movements, both social, political, and cultural. The political de-Islamization movement was carried out by not re-enforcing the legal system based on Islamic shari'a used by Islamic kingdoms, including in Banten and Cirebon. Socially, efforts to Christianize to some extent are carried out very aggressively in Muslim-majority areas. Through culture, there have been attempts to separate Islam from local culture. The culture that lives in the midst of Sundanese society, under the pretext of "preserving" culture, is clashed with Islam that is embraced by the majority of Sundanese people. Even though it seems that for the Sunda case, it is still relatively difficult to get there.

### **Traces of Islamization in the Land of Sunda in a Cultural Perspective**

If in the historical context, traces of Sundanese Islamization in writing are somewhat difficult to obtain due to limited historical data, in fact, today Sundanese cultural artifacts are very abundant. The cultural artifacts can be witnessed from artifacts in the form of physical buildings, Sundanese behavior and customs, and a fairly abundant literary heritage. Most of these artifacts are of course rooted in a near era. A small number of them are hundreds of years old. Cultural artifacts and behaviors are one of the signs of the existence of a certain thought that is very likely to be influenced by certain beliefs as well. Islamization, which is a mental and thought process, will certainly be closely related to this cultural artifact and behavior. Therefore, an analysis of Sundanese culture will be able to bring us closer to the intensity of Islamization in Tatar Pasundan. This analysis will also be very helpful in the weaknesses left by historical analysis which until now still has to struggle to collect many sources.

The first analysis will be to see how the Sundanese attitude towards the Islamic teachings they adhere. A society's attitude towards something can sometimes be shown by the myth of what people live and believe. Myths are not just fairy tales and fantasies, but stories (even imaginaries) that become the beliefs of a society. Myths do not have clear and provable facts so that myths are always antonyms of "science" and "reality". Although both are unfounded stories, myths are distinguished from legends and fiction. Legends and other fictional stories have been realized since all as baseless stories. Meanwhile, myths, unconsciously believed to be a real reality for people who believe in them so that they affect their behavior.

Freudian analyzed this mythical phenomenon, he said that myths, even though they do not have a factual basis in their stories, have an important function in the lives of people who believe in them, among other things as a way to project what the physical reality they are facing. Through myths, people define what is currently happening before them. Myths are also believed to be the embodiment of the human subconscious, myths are also a social defense mechanism, and myths also function as metaphors.<sup>21</sup> Although what is told in the myth does not have any truth in terms of the story, it is actually a fact that the myth is "believed by the

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<sup>21</sup> Daniel Merkur, *Psychoanalytic Approaches to Myth* (Routledge, 2005), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books>.



people who believe it". Therefore, the objectification of myths is not in its "story", but in the "mental attitude" of the people or people who believe in it. Myths that develop in a society can be used as an analytical tool to see how people's mental attitudes towards something that is the focus of the myth story.<sup>22</sup> One of them, to understand how the Sundanese people interpret the Islam they adhere, we can understand well one of the most popular myths about the Islamization of the Sundanese Tatars.

Regarding the Islamization of Sundanese Tatars, the most popular myth is about Kean Santang. In a nutshell, the myth about Kean Santang is as follows. Kean Santang is real name Gagak Lumayung. He was the son of Prabu Siliwangi, the King of Pajajaran, who was also the commander-in-chief of Pajajaran who was never defeated by anyone in all of Java. He was never hurt despite having been through many battles. This is why, in the wawacan, it is stated, he has never seen his own blood. For that, he said goodbye to his father, Prabu Siliwangi, to recluse for clues on how he could see his own blood. Kean Santang had heard of a very powerful person in Mecca, named Baginda Ali. But he did not know where Mecca was. In his hermitage he received instructions to change his name to Garantang Setra. With the knowledge of tapak kancang or walking on water, Kean Santang headed west. Arrive at Mecca. He met Ali who was disguised as an old man. His Majesty Ali then gave the first test to Kean Santang, which was to take his left comb.<sup>23</sup> Kean Santang managed to find the comb, but when he wanted to take it, the comb went into the ground. Kean Santang did not manage to hold it. His Majesty Ali advised Kean Santang to say Basmalah. Then the comb can definitely be taken.

Kean Santang was invited by His Majesty Ali to help build a mosque pole in Mecca. It was here that he met the Prophet. Kean Santang converted to Islam and was given the name Sunan Rahmat. He wanted to remain in Mecca, but the Prophet appointed him as a Wali to Islamize the island of Java. The Prophet told Kean Santang to say Kalimah kalih (syahâdatain) while closing his eyes, then suddenly he had arrived in the land of Java, even in Pakuan. Kean Santang alias Sunan Rahmat alias Sunan Bidayah went to his father Prabu Siliwangi and asked him to convert to Islam. But the king of Pajajaran refused. Also when Kean Santang showed himself as the Prophet's representative to Islamize Pajajaran on a flat stone stamp with Javanese letters. However, Prabu Siliwangi did not hinder or prohibit his son from spreading Islam. To avoid a conflict of interest with his son, Prabu Siliwangi finally chose to eliminate himself (ngahiyang), the keratin of Pakuan Pajajaran he turned into a jungle. While the other kings, ministers, and regents turned into tigers and inhabited the Sancang forest.

Kean Santang traveled around the Sundanese Tatars, Islamizing the community from one village to another. Initially, in Tegal Leles Cipancar, Kean Santang circumcised a resident when he converted to Islam, but because he did not know how to circumcise, the villager died due to being pinned all over his genitals. Kean Santang then went back to the Prophet to be taught how to circumcise people. After Islamizing all Sundanese Tatars, Kean Santang returned to

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<sup>22</sup> Friedrich WJ Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (State University of New York Press, 2012), <https://books.google.com>.

<sup>23</sup> In another story that is popularly spoken Kean Santang is told to pick up the stick of His Majesty Ali that was left behind.

face the Prophet and begged to settle in Mecca. However, the Prophet did not allow him and still gave him the task of being a guardian on the island of Java. Stories (wawacan) like the above are spread almost all over the region in Sundanese Tatar with stories that are sometimes not always the same. If the name Kean Santang is known in the Priangan area, in Cirebon and its surroundings, the character of Kean Santang is known in the Cirebon Chronicle as Prince Wadirectsang. Apart from its different names, almost all of its stories, especially those of the encounter with the Prophet, are not too different.<sup>24</sup> Even though the name of the spreader of Islam is different, in all stories the figure is the son of Prabu Siliwangi.

It is interesting that the process of Islamization in the myths that live among the Sundanese people is all attributed to Prabu Siliwangi. Prabu Siliwangi is a figure who also only lives in the myth of the Sundanese people. He is considered the most just, wise, and at the same time the last Sundanese king before the arrival of Islam. Because of his justice, Prabu Siliwangi became a legend of the Sundanese people. But who is the King of Sunda who is said to be Siliwangi? There is no consensus among the researchers. There are many versions about the figure of Prabu Siliwangi. Regarding who Prabu Siliwangi is, Edi S. Ekadjati concluded that it is possible that the person in question was King Niskala Wastukencana (1371-1475) who was domiciled in the Surawisesa palace in the capital city of Kawali (Galuh) or King Sri Baduga Maharaja (1482-1521) who was domiciled in the palace of Sri Bima Punta Narayana Madura Suradipati in the capital of Pakuan (Pajajaran); Or it could be both. Both of them were Sundanese kings who succeeded in bringing the Sundanese kingdom to the peak of its glory until it was remembered by the Sundanese people. Although historically no Sundanese king has been found, titled, or nicknamed Siliwangi, the Sundanese people in general believe that this figure is really a historical figure of pride in the Sundanese people. For some people, this Siliwangi figure is not the two people above, but a figure who really exists as "Siliwangi" even though his existence cannot be proven historically.<sup>25</sup>

So legendary is Prabu Siliwangi, to the point that the process of Islamization of Sundanese Tatars, in the belief of the Sundanese people, must also be associated with this figure. By associating it with Prabu Siliwangi, the Sundanese people want to show that the existence of Islam is as important as the existence of Prabu Siliwangi. In fact, in another story, there are those who believe that Prabu Siliwangi was the first to convert to Islam and spread it to the Sundanese people, not his son Kean Santang or Wadirectsang.<sup>26</sup>

However and whoever Prabu Siliwangi is, the story about the Islamization of the Sundanese land associated with him as contained in the story above shows us several things. First, culturally Sundanese people feel that becoming an Islam is a must because this is the "mandate" of Prabu Siliwangi which they respect through his son Kean Santang. The ngahiyang of Prabu Siliwangi indicates that the belief before the arrival of Islam has been

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<sup>24</sup> Tiar Anwar Bachtiar, "Jejak Dakwah Di Nusantara," *Yogyakarta: Pro-U Media*, 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Edi S. Ekadjati, *Sunan Gunung Jati: Penyebar Dan Penegak Islam Di Tatar Sunda*, Prestasi Pustaka, 2004, <https://library.stik-ptik.ac.id>.

<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Fajar Laksana, *Sasakala Prabu Siliwangi: Sejarah Islamisasi Prabu Siliwangi Pangeran Pamanah Rasa* (Jelajah Nusa, 2011).

completely lost, brought with the disappearance of Prabu Siliwangi who did not leave any traces and traces except nature that returned to its origin (wilderness) as a sign that the teachings brought by Prabu Siliwangi have returned to their origins, without leaving any traces.

Second, the story of Islamization in the Sundanese myth above also wants to show that Islam came to this region peacefully. There is no war and bloodshed. When his son decided to embrace and spread Islam, the father decided not to get involved in the historical process that would lead to conflict in a *ngahiyang* way. The process of "ngahiyang" in the Hindu concept is comparable to *moksa*.<sup>27</sup> With the worship of Prabu Siliwangi which is the peak of the purpose of life in the Hindu faith, the position of Prabu Siliwangi who is Hindu is placed in his most honorable position. He was still respected, even if he chose not to convert to Islam. If the story of Prabu Siliwangi's Islamization is also believed by the Sundanese people, the process of Islamization shows an even more peaceful process. In this version of the story, Islam is even embraced by a figure who is highly respected by the Sundanese people.

Hostility, there was actually a bloody conflict between King Samiam (the last King of Sunda-Pajajaran) and Maulana Yusuf of the Sultanate of Banten in 1579 AD which ended the supremacy of the Pajajaran kingdom in Sundanese Tatars. However, this story is only found in Sundanese-Banten historical records.<sup>28</sup> In the tradition of the community, both in Banten and in Priangan and Cirebon, this story is not alive. This indicates that the war between the two kingdoms, for the people, is seen as just an ordinary political conflict that has nothing to do with their beliefs. Therefore, the living tradition remains about the peaceful spread of Islam. Third, through this myth, the Sundanese want to convince them that the Islam that comes to them is the original Islam that comes from its bearer, namely the Prophet Muhammad Saw. In addition, this myth is also a kind of statement of the mentality of the Sundanese people who are ready to accept anything that comes from the bearer of Islamic teachings, the Prophet Muhammad Saw. Islam such as mosques and Islamic boarding schools throughout the Sundanese Tatar region. Because they feel that the Islam they adhere to comes directly from the Prophet Saw., when further Islamic teachings are introduced, the Sundanese people tend to accept them more easily.

These are more or less things that can be interpreted from the myth of Kean Santang that is spread in Sundanese society. A myth is still a myth. He is not a historical fact. However, when the myth is connected to historical reality, this myth shows that there is a certain historical awareness inherent in the supporting community, which in this case is the Sundanese people. Culturally, this fact shows how the Sundanese attitude towards Islam came after they had previously known animism-dynamism and Hindu-Buddhism. This attitude can open our

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<sup>27</sup> According to the Upanishads, Moksa is a state of atma that is free from all forms of bondage and free from samsara. Atma is spirit. Samsara is an earthly life such as joy, sadness, pain, and so on. In Hindu belief, Moksa is also interpreted as a state in which the soul feels very calm and enjoys true happiness because it is no longer bound by various kinds of desires or material objects. At the time of attaining the state of Moksa, the soul is detached from the cycle of reincarnation so that the soul can no longer enjoy the joys and sorrows of the world. Therefore, Moksa is the ultimate goal that Hindus want to achieve.

<sup>28</sup> Hoesein Djajadiningrat, "Critische Beschouwing van de Sadjarah Banten," (No Title), 1913, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130000796083973888>.

understanding of why the Sundanese people make part of their identity Islam until the term "Islam teh Sundanese" appears; "Islam is the Gospel of Islam." Sunda is Islam).

## CONCLUSION

Studies on the spread of Islam in Sundanese Tatars show that the relationship between Islamic identity and Sundanese identity is the result of an intensive and layered Islamization process. However, the tracing of the process cannot rely entirely on conventional historical approaches, as the available historical sources are very limited and only mention a few figures with roles that are not described in detail. The existing historical data only provide a temporal indication—namely the 15th to 16th centuries since the time of Sunan Gunung Jati, without providing a complete picture of the mechanism of the spread of Islam in the region. Therefore, an additional analytical approach that is more sensitive to cultural aspects is needed. Through a cultural approach, especially by analyzing Sundanese myths, proverbs, and proverbs, it can be concluded that Sundanese people have a mental and cultural readiness that allows Islam to be accepted easily and then firmly rooted in social life. These findings show that Islamization in Sundanese Tatars takes place not only through political movements or trade, but also through the process of internalizing values that work at the cultural level.

The relatively harmonious acceptance of Islam is reflected in the vastness of the spread area that leaves almost no area completely untouched by Islamization. Even in the Baduy Dalam community who identify themselves as adherents of Sunda Wiwitan, traces of acceptance of Islamic teachings can be seen from the practice of the shahada they do. Their admission that only "a portion of the sahadatna only" indicates that the process of Islamization was underway, but did not continue, most likely due to geographical factors that made it difficult to penetrate da'wah at that time. These findings also lead to the conclusion that the process of Islamization in Sundanese Tatars is most likely carried out through da'wah strategies that utilize local cultural media. The preachers are able to touch the structure of the life of the Sundanese people through an intensive cultural approach, including through the art of speech and discourse texts that are full of Islamic content. Traditions such as Beluk and Sawyer, although no longer dominant, are historical evidence that cultural media served as an effective channel in conveying the teachings of Islam in the past.

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