Local/Global Disruption: The Response of the Samin Movement to Modernity

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor Philosophy

College of Indigenous Futures, Arts, and Society

Charles Darwin University

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March 2019
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DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Musa Maliki

Date: March 2019
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ABSTRACT

The Samin Javanese ethnic identity is in an ongoing process of transformation, negotiation, and reinterpretation of meaning, and draws sustaining energies from its dynamic, fluid, and ambiguous connections with modernity. Historical theorists, social theorists, and anthropologists have tended to reduce the Saminists by placing them in a specific theoretical framework of Western discourse, which, once rationally argued for and logically justified (within the framework of Western academic discourse), is taken for granted. Yet no study has focused specifically on the constructed social formation of the Samin Javanese ethnic identity in political and cultural dimensions, relating these to modernity from the colonial period (1800) through to the post-authoritarian (2018) period.

The Saminists are most often mentioned alongside Javanese cults (Kejawen), Javanese Islam (Abangan), and recently, the anti-cement movement as a distinct and independent cultural unit of analysis. I saw an opportunity to utilize Eisenstadt’s concept of multiple modernities, Barth’s term of ethnicity, Bhabha’s concept of hybridity to better understand the dynamic complex relations between the Samin community and modernity. Based on this idea, I suggest that the Saminists’ interaction with modernity should be perceived as a narrative to avoid an essentialist analysis. The concept of multiple modernities is applied to show that, although in a particular period they were often opposed to the Western identity (and modern identity), the Samin were distinctively modern in terms of their own narrative. The Saminists have multiple identities and their hybrid traditions are connected to Javanese, Islam, mystical, and modern forms of identity. They forge a complex contemporary situational identity that draws on tensions with and ambiguities about modernity. As a result, some Saminists resist modernity, represented by the Indonesian government and corporations, but cooperate with modern institutions such as non-government organizations (NGOs). Some others cooperate with the Indonesian government and NGOs, and still others are in an ambivalent relationship with these entities. In short, the Samin community has many layers of identity.

Discourse analysis is applied to review the studies of previous researchers who constructed the Samin community based on their judgment and theoretical framework using historical facts and colonial documents. Discourse analysis is also important to view how non-Saminists construct the Saminists when dealing with current issues. Moreover, ethnomethodological fieldwork has enabled me to engage in the everyday lifeworld where the Samin community, as participants, and the researcher, as co-participant, constructed nuanced understandings of becoming Saminists and their meanings in the context of multiple modernities.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank to institutions and people who support me. They are kindly contributed to this thesis and without any of them this thesis would not have been possible. I am indebted to my sponsor, the Indonesian Ministry of Higher Degree Education (DIKTI) incorporating with Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta (UPNVJ) for the scholarship endorsement; I humbly thank for the opportunity to conduct this doctoral research. I am also grateful to Charles Darwin University for its supports of extension that enables me to finish my thesis. I express my high appreciation to the Indonesian Consulate in Darwin for arranging the cooperation between DIKTI and Charles Darwin University.

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I express my highest gratefulness to all members of the Samin community in Pati, Kudus, and Blora whom I cannot mention their name one by one because of ethics. I wish that all of you will seize what you struggle for in life and maintain the Samin’s teachings.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Abangan</strong></td>
<td>nominal Muslim or Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings/followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agama Adam</strong></td>
<td>Saminists’ religion/belief system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adat</strong></td>
<td>custom, traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agama leluhur</strong></td>
<td>the religion of ancestor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aliran</strong></td>
<td>a scholar stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awang awung/suwung</strong></td>
<td>emptiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Babad</strong></td>
<td>writing history in Javanese way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Batik</strong></td>
<td>usually arts from Javanese of a technique of wax-resist dyeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Besek/berkat</strong></td>
<td>a packet of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buda</strong></td>
<td>Hindu-Buddhist; pertaining to pre-Islamic Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bupati</strong></td>
<td>district administrator, `regent'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Camat</strong></td>
<td>the head of subdistrict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daim</strong></td>
<td>eternal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Danyang</strong></td>
<td>place spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desa</strong></td>
<td>administrative village unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dukuh/dusun</strong></td>
<td>hamlet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dukun</strong></td>
<td>healer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fatwas</strong></td>
<td>Islamic scholars’ opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>getok tular</strong></td>
<td>word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gotong royong</strong></td>
<td>working together for free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Haj</strong></td>
<td>the pilgrimage to Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ijol</strong></td>
<td>exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insan kamil</strong></td>
<td>the best quality of human beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kades</strong></td>
<td>the head of village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kapir</strong></td>
<td>infidel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kawruh</strong></td>
<td>Javanese wisdom, Javanist lore, esoteric knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kebatinan</strong></td>
<td>Javanese spiritualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kecamatan</strong></td>
<td>subdistrict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kejawan</strong></td>
<td>Javanism/Javanese mysticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Keramat</strong></td>
<td>divinity place/existence of spiritual magical power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ki</td>
<td>a call for a wise or a spiritual Javanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiyai/kyai</td>
<td>traditional Muslim Javanese leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komunitas adat terpencil</td>
<td>isolated indigenous community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legan</td>
<td>single status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugu</td>
<td>pure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandi</td>
<td>powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mantri</td>
<td>a paramedic in rural area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merakyat</td>
<td>becoming part of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modin</td>
<td>village Islamic official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muji</td>
<td>pray/chant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutung</td>
<td>feeling upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Njawani</td>
<td>internalization of becoming Javanese; more Javanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyamin</td>
<td>using Samin attribute/identity for his vested interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyawiji</td>
<td>united</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pangaran</td>
<td>name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pendopo</td>
<td>a Javanese style of house (a meeting place)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penggiane</td>
<td>job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penghayat</td>
<td>native faith/indigenous faith/local faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pengucap</td>
<td>spell/utterance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesantren/pondhok-pesantren</td>
<td>Islamic boarding school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poso</td>
<td>fasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priyayi</td>
<td>member of nobility or aristocrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rasa</td>
<td>bodily inner feeling, intuition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratu Adil</td>
<td>A Just King; millenarian belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformasi</td>
<td>a situation after the fall of the Suharto regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rembug</td>
<td>a discussion (usually in village)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restu</td>
<td>Blessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roh</td>
<td>spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rukun/guyub</td>
<td>in a state of social harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sah</td>
<td>legal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakti</td>
<td>transcendental power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salat (Arabic)</td>
<td>prescribed Islamic prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salin sandang</td>
<td>death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santri</td>
<td>pious, orthodox-leaninng Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sedekah</strong></td>
<td>commemorative or funerary prayer meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sedulur sikep</strong></td>
<td>the Samin community; a brotherhood relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seger-kuwarasan</strong></td>
<td>healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sembahyang</strong></td>
<td>Javanese term for Islamic worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sendang</strong></td>
<td>waterholes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sepuh</strong></td>
<td>an old charismatic wise Javanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Serat</strong></td>
<td>Javanese mystical poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sikep rabi</strong></td>
<td>a condition of marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slamet</strong></td>
<td>well-being; secure, well, free of danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slametan/brokohan</strong></td>
<td>Javanese ritual feast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sukma</strong></td>
<td>soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suluk</strong></td>
<td>Islamic mystical poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tirakat</strong></td>
<td>controlling human desire to the limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turun</strong></td>
<td>son/daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Udeng/iket</strong></td>
<td>headscarf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wahyu</strong></td>
<td>divine revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wali</strong></td>
<td>saint; friend of God; charismatic Islamic leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wayang</strong></td>
<td>shadow puppet theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wedana</strong></td>
<td>the assistant head of the sub-district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wong</strong></td>
<td>a human being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wujud</strong></td>
<td>existence/real/concrete/practical</td>
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</table>
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMAN</td>
<td>Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMDAL</td>
<td>Analisis Mengenai Dampak Lingkungan (environmental impact assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BKKI</td>
<td>Badan Kongres Kebatinan Indonesia/Indonesian Kebatinan (Congress Body of Kebatinan Indonesia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUMN</td>
<td>Badan Usaha Milik Negara (State owned enterprises)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DI/TII</td>
<td>Darul Islam/Islamic Armed Forces of Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-KTP</td>
<td>Electronic Kartu Tanda Penduduk (electronic ID)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELSA</td>
<td>Lembaga Studi Sosial dan Agama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOLKAR</td>
<td>Golongan Karya (Party of Functional Groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICRP</td>
<td>Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JMPPK</td>
<td>Jaringan Masyarakat Peduli Pegunungan Kendeng (the Community Network of Mount Kendeng Preservation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAT</td>
<td>Komunitas Adat Terpencil (Isolated Indigenous community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KK</td>
<td>Kartu Keluarga (Family Card/Certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLHS</td>
<td>Kajian Lingkungan Hidup Strategis (the strategic environmental analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPA</td>
<td>Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria (Consortium of Agrarian Reform)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTM</td>
<td>Kelompok Tani Maju (Progressive Farmer Group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBH</td>
<td>Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (the Institution of Legal Aid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDII</td>
<td>Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia (Indonesia Institute of Islamic Dawah)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASYUMI</td>
<td>Majlisis Sjuro Muslimin (Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOEAC</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORA</td>
<td>Ministry of Religious Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUI</td>
<td>Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Scholars Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Government Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td>Nahdatul Ulama/Nahdlatul Ulama (Islamic Scholars’ Revival)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAKEM</td>
<td>Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat (Supervisory Body of Local Beliefs in Society).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDI</td>
<td>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (Indonesia Democratic Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERTI</td>
<td>Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (Union of Islamic Education Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name and Description</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PKI</td>
<td>Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNI</td>
<td>Partai National Indonesia (Indonesia National Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPKI</td>
<td>Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (Preparatory Committee for the Independence of Indonesia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Partai Persatuan Pembangunan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHEEP</td>
<td>Society for Health, Education, Environment and Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Sarekat Islam (Islamists Trade Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMII</td>
<td>Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (a beautiful miniature Garden of Indonesia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOC</td>
<td>Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WALHI</td>
<td>Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (Indonesian Forum for the Environment)</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Samin Javanese ethnic identity is in an ongoing process of transformation, negotiation, and reinterpretation of meaning. Its connections with modernity are dynamic, fluid, situational, and ambiguous. In this thesis, multiple modernities theory, an ethnic theory and Bhaba’s hybrid theory of frameworks are employed to suggest that there is no fixed definition to essentialize the Samin community in their encounter with modernity. The Samin community and its engagement with modernity are understood as a narrative that constitutively embraces tensions, complexities, and ambiguities, whereby the boundary between traditional and modern contexts, to some degree, is blurred. The research question for this thesis is: How far do the Samin community persistently preserve and maintain their traditions amid modernity while being constructed by modernity at the same time?

Multiple modernities is a theory of understanding the historical process of modernity from its ‘origin’ in Western Europe and takes into account different types of modern society. In non-Western Europe, modernity has expanded to take on different forms. The result is multiple modernities which began in the colonial era. Accordingly, multiple modernities can also be understood as the tension between heterogeneous/pluralistic and homogeneous/universalist tendencies and viewpoints.

Thus, modernization does not automatically indicate Westernization. It suggests differences in societies or communities that are constructed in typically modern ways, which in these ways, attempt to appropriate modernity on their own terms (Eisenstadt, 1999, 2000). In non-Western countries such as Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, these societies and communities can speak for themselves in the sense that they formulate their own narrative of modernity, starting from a particular historical colonial setting: the antinomies and contradictions of modernity. There are different reinterpretations of
different dimensions of modernity within different cultures (Eisenstadt: 1999, 2000). I am interested in better understanding modernity in the framework of multiple modernities, thus going beyond binary oppositions, modern vs. traditional, local vs. global, international vs. national, barbarous vs. civilized, and examine the responses to these challenges. The concept of multiple modernities implies that Samin ethnicity is politically and socially constructed with persistence, in contrast to the singular modernity or a typical mainstream modern Western Europe (colonialization project, the expansion of the nation-states system, and capitalism). This construction is situated in a hybrid or liminal space, which means that the Saminists are in an ongoing process of transformation and meaning creation of their lived experience.

To comprehend the process of group identity construction, I have employed an ethnicity theory while also being concerned with some basic elements of the classical anthropological approach, such as the genealogy of the family, cultural matters, and ecology. To challenge the classical anthropologists who are preoccupied with cultural essentialism, Barth’s theory of ethnicity is applied, with some modification. Barth (1969) problematized the construct of ethnic groups’ persistence. One premise of classical anthropologists is that there are essential collectives of people who share a common and interconnected culture and that this culture is distinct from all others. Barth (1969) argued that the constitution of ethnic groups and the nature of ethnic boundaries between them had not been given sufficient attention by classical anthropologists. Boundaries construct the identity of ethnic groups.

There are two important characteristics of ethnic boundaries. First, ethnic group distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, information and contact, but do involve social processes of exclusion and inclusion whereby distinct characteristics are preserved despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life
histories. Second, ethnic groups are persistent and stable, and often include vitally important social relations, while social relations are also sustained across such boundaries, they are frequently based exactly on the dichotomized ethnic statuses (Barth, 1969, p. 9-10).

In this thesis, Barth’s theory is significant because he emphasizes the contextual and contingent character of ethnicity as a setting for explaining the performances of the Samin community and modern architectures (state, religion, and corporation/capitalism) since Barth’s metaphor of culture as ‘playing the same game’ makes explicit the ethnic basis of cultural production as socially constructed not culturally given. However, Barth (1969) is naïve in emphasizing the construction and maintenance of ethnic boundaries as communal projects of groups of people who are engaged in performances of cultural diversity as a form of social organization. Barth does not elaborate on the embeddedness of constructions of ethnic identities in power structures which regulate what can be done in specific contexts. Most importantly, in the system of modernity, the power relations between the Samin Javanese ethnic community and the Indonesian government are significant because these power relations constitute a system that shapes a borderline condition of ambivalence and confusion. Two other weaknesses of Barth’s arguments are that ethnicity can be layered in terms of its form of identity and its hybrid traditions. The Samin have a Javanese ethnic identity and an Indonesian identity.

The relations among the Samin, Javanese, and Indonesian identities can be understood through Wittgenstein’s theory of family resemblance. “Family resemblance” as a term for identity – means a “family” of similarities that “overlap and criss-cross in the same way” (Suchoff, 2012, p. 79). Family resemblance is “the continuous overlapping of [...] fibres that connect different language games and lead to the discovery of intermediate forms” (Suchoff, 2012, p. 84). There are many similarities among the Samin, the Javanese,
and Indonesian identities. The Saminists claim to be Javanese and Indonesian, but clearly not all Indonesian and Javanese people are Saminists. They are united in the Pancasila principles of the Indonesian foundation of the nation-state. The Saminists to some degree have their own version of the Javanese language that is different from the majority of the Javanese people. The Saminists also to some degree recognize and acknowledge the Indonesian government, its policies and Indonesia as a nation-state. However, Indonesians, Javanese and Saminists cannot be understood as an independent fixed abstract definition but they can be understood by the expression of narration, and everyday life, language and behaviour. They have complex relations and tensions.

It is important also to highlight Bhabha’s theory of culture, which is relevant to the theoretical basis of the current research. According to Bhabha (1994), it is almost impossible for a minor or small ethnic community to preserve its originality and oppose modernity. At the ethnic boundary, there is an “in-between space,” a “hybridity,” a “liminal space”. This conceptualization is needed in order to go beyond the narrative of essentialism. Bhabha’s theory concentrates on the processes of historical events and the production of constructed cultural differences. This strategic intellectual approach also challenges the modern thought of Hegelian dialecticism which is based on the binary oppositions of thesis/antithesis, modern/traditional, primitive/civilized, and so on (Marotta, 2011).

The notion of hybridity can be interpreted in the Samin community’s case in their ability to construct and reconstruct their cultural identity and its traditions politically in dealing with modernity whilst they also continue to maintain their ethnic boundaries, for example, in their marriage traditions and religious worldview. They will not marry non-Saminists (Javanese people) though they may share the same language and claim to be Javanese as well. Samin hybridity is also understood in terms of living in a liminal space
within Javanese culture, Javanese modernity, Javanese mysticism, Islamic mysticism, and other new narratives that influence the Samin to adopt many layered identities. In the context of Bhabha’s (1994) theory of hybridity, Samin hybridity is a political and cultural movement.

In addition, I will offer a note of caution about the term “identity” in this thesis because of its modern epistemological connotations. In this thesis, when I mention “identity”, it will refer to a contextual frame of understanding of the Samin community at a specific time and place. This is because identity here is historical, contextual, and contingent (Izenberg, 2016). Identity thus refers to a complex reality which is always changing. To put this in another way, if the Samin community had lacked adaptability, they would not have survived. By this, I mean that they have been adaptable, thus their identity cannot be described without reference to a particular time and place, while they have survived as a community till today.

However, there are some principles (such as the worldview of Saminists about nature, religion, and morality) that remain ontologically beyond time and space as a number of identity-as-process differentiations and cultural production as understood in Barth’s theory as ethnic boundaries. These principles can be easily identified through social interactions. These principles distinguish their identity in contrast to modern worldview. As in fact, differentiation is a characteristic of modernity. Modernity is riddled with cultural contradictions (Heelas, 1998). In this regard, the concept of multiple modernities can be a useful way to understand modernity. This represents and acknowledges the tensions between a singular modernity and plural modernities. The identity formation of the Samin has always been a process of becoming and evolving.

By employing Eisenstadt’s concept of multiple modernities, Barth’s theory of ethnic boundary, and Bhabha’s hybridity, I argue that there is a complex, fluid, contextual and
contingent tension of power relations between the Samin and the system of modernity (the Indonesian government, corporations, and NGOs). By this tension, the Samin will include some modern cultural practices and exclude others. This also involves a process of adaptation and malleability whereby the boundary between the Samin and the context of representatives of modernity (the Indonesian government, corporations, and NGOs) are blurred.

Epistemologically, I differ from ‘absolute’ modernism, such as romanticism, rationalism/abstraction, and Cartesian discourse, all of which have influenced (Western) modernity (Cristaudo, 2015). In contrast to this ‘absolute’ modernism, I will investigate the construction of Samin Javanese ethnicity in terms of multiple modernities. I am intimately familiar with Samin Javanese ethnicity from my own fieldwork based on the ethnomethodological approach. I also apply discourse analysis in the literature review to see how far the discourse of the Samin is constructed, especially by non-Saminists, including researchers and scholars. After this, I communicate the results of the field research, which has been a matter of uncovering normal patterns of ‘rationalization’ for the participants and of uncovering their concepts of the world.

I will write this thesis through providing the relevant chronological events in order to be logical, but the level of analysis goes beyond this chronicle to find the complexity of the Samin community’s response to modernity. In short, there is no essentialism in the Samin community, nor in modernity itself. There was a long dialectical process of the Samin community being formed in the early modern world that needs to be understood as a contextual, situational, and contingent series of events. This is why I am reluctant to define the Samin community and modernity with particular meanings in the sense of the structuralism stance. I apply multiple modernity as the theoretical framework to give an
opportunity to the Saminists to define modernity itself and to define their worldview based on their rationale and let the narrative of the Saminists reveal this through their own words. I recognize that even though the Samin community proceeds from their own understanding of themselves, they have adjusted to and accommodated aspects of modernity as they are becoming modern in their own ways, particularly after the end of Dutch colonial rule and the beginning of Indonesian independence. I argue that tension in the encounter is affected by a critique of modernity from the Samin’s position within modernity itself, not from a totally objective distinct reality or outside of modernity, but through subversive political contestation from within modernity. In this political contestation, the Samin community are followers of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings. These emerged as a critical response to Western European colonial modernity in the setting of the Indian, Arabic, Asian and Western Christian and secular civilizations’ influences in Java, a historic crossroads of many cultures and civilizations (Lombard, 2008a, 2008b, and 2008c; Eisenstadt, 2000a, 2000b; 2002). Based on this idea, in this thesis I argue that the Samin movement was shaped not only by its encounter with Western European colonial modernity but by its encounter with previous axial civilizations and/or religions (Javanese Hindu, Buddhism, Asian/Chinese, and Islam). The Saminists selectively constructed their cultural material based on the existence of all these civilizations. Furthermore, what we commonly call the Samin community is ambiguous as an entity yet it persists during its encounter with modernity.

**A Literature Review**

First, I will position the Samin movement as a peasant movement by comparing it to other peasant movements. As Moksnes argues in her (2005) study, a peasant community is a collective identity of indigenous people who demand the right to live without suffering and their political struggle is part of a global struggle for justice and peace. She defines a
peasant movement as a political struggle. Her study of the indigenous peasant movement in Chiapas, Mexico, was enriched by the religious narrative of the Christian liberation theology and Marxism (Moksnes, 2005, p. 585).

In contrast, the Samin indigenous peasant movement is one of several with a collective Javanese ethnic identity. The Samin movement has its own culture and religious inspiration and construction, with no attachment to Marxism and Christian ethics. In addition, the Samin movement is passive in nature, it is thus apolitical in terms of larger global affiliations, but is perceived as political.

Indian scholars such as Ranajit Guha (1999), Partha Chatterjee (1983), Gayatri Spivak (1988), and Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) define peasant communities as communal, collective, pre-capitalist, a moral economy, autonomous people, and non-Marxist. According to them, such movements are framed as new social movements, subaltern mobilisation or peasant insurgency. It is clear that there exists strong debate about these terms. Within this, peasant resistance is positioned in a power relationship between the peasants as the subaltern classes and the dominant groups. Chakrabarty (2000) underlines the dimension of God and spirit to avoid the sociology of religion whereas Guha (1999) believes in the relationship between Hinduism and so-called subaltern (peasant) movements by using the term peasant insurgency. Some researchers provide a comprehensive analysis critical of Marxism and add a religious dimension, in particular, Hinduism (Alam, 1983; Chatterjee, 1983; Guha, 1999; Chakrabarty, 2000; Brass, 2002, Spivak, 1988 & 2004).

Reynaldo C. Ileto’s influential study, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines 1840-1910* (1979) is very relevant to the Samin community because he argues that there is a strong relationship between the peasant community and religion. In the context of revolution, Ileto’s profound work examines the history of Tagalog lower-
class movements from 1840 to 1912 and details a time marked by both millenarian 
(Tagalog) peasant uprisings and revolutions against Spain and the United States. What is 
interesting about this is that *pasyon*, epic poetry about the life of Jesus Christ focusing on 
his passion, death and resurrection, is expressed as a primordial form of peasant spiritual 
resistance. The peasant uprising in his study was part of the revolution events in context, 
but it was not revolutionary. In other words, the peasants were involved in the revolution 
physically, but in their movement, they had different experiences and discourses in contrast 
to the modern idea of a political revolution. Hence, Ileto’s study was interesting in how 
*pasyon* became a motive of resistance as the peasant imagination met the event of the 
Philippines revolution, and nationalism (modernity). Through resistance, the millenarian 
peasant uprisings and the Philippines nationalist revolution have constructed one another. 
The millenarian peasant uprisings existed because of the revolution. And the Philippines 
revolution was defined or understood with its millenarian peasant uprising components. 
The condition of revolution is completed by the existence of the millenarian peasant 
uprisings.

In Indonesia, a highly prominent historian concerned with peasant resistance was 
Peasants’ Revolt of Banten in 1888,” made the point that this movement was characterised 
as an illegal rebellion by the colonial administration, thus illustrating that colonial 
ideologies derive their epistemological status from the Western discourse of the time. 
Similarly, Aung-Thwin (2003; 2008), in his research on Myanmar, criticized the 
conventional approach to colonial historiography based on documents, government 
institutions, law, and the centralist narrative report. When he referred to such colonial 
documentation, he suggested investigating it critically.
Kartodirdjo’s (1966) study was on a West Javan peasant movement against the Dutch colonial rulers which was based on Islamic principles. As distinct from the Samin movement, they did not have any image of a primordial order but were aiming to bring back the Islamic sultanate as an act of romanticism of the Islamic world order. Kartodirdjo criticized an American-Dutch historian, Kroef (1959), refuting a framing of the movement in terms of millenarian expectations, in particular, because of the absence of mentioning the Islamic Sufi movement (tarekat movement) with their terms “perang sabil” and “jihad”. Kartodirdjo had the same findings as Ileto (1979). Their work characterised religious peasant movements as traditional, local or regional, and short-lived. Other points in common were that such movements lacked modern features such as organized institutions, modern ideologies, and nation-wide activism, being localized and disconnected. In these movements, the struggle was against religious submission. Such peasants did not feel part of a social revolutionary movement because their vision was centred on a culture from before the current era. Significant to the Samin case, while power relationships and religious issues were central, the participants were not revolutionaries. The movements exist on a continuum at the intersection of time and space and the current reality is framed in terms of an interaction between the pre-modern and modern eras.

In another work by Kartodirdjo (1978), “Protest movements in rural Java: A study of agrarian unrest in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries”, peasant protest movements in rural Java are described more broadly. These movements are expressed as millenarianism, chiliasm, eschatologism, escapism, supernaturalism, nativism, and xenophobia. Similarly, to his previous work, his research also focuses on these as social movements, led by religious leaders such as a kyai, guru, or haji who joined the Islamic

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1 Perang Sabil can be understood as a defensive war on a colonial ruler, rooted in inan (faith), justice, freedom, and a heavenly reward for the Muslims who die in the war. Jihad is a complex word which, in this context, refers to a full spirit of struggle to liberate themselves and to achieve freedom and justice, which could be indicated by the colonial ruler leaving their land or territory.
The religious nature of these movements is indicated through the terms *keramat* (divinity place/existence of spiritual magical power), *sakti* (transcendental power) and *wahyu* (divine revelation), which offer a spiritual ideology.

Kartodirdjo’s analytical scope is contextualized in the politico-economic structure of rural Java in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is also based on the ideology of social movements and the culture’s conduciveness. His analysis is not a descriptive process, but comparative, using anthropological, sociological, and historical techniques to focus on agrarian conflict in encountering the Dutch colonial regime. This perspective has assisted in delimiting the scope of the current research.

Similar work has been conducted by Gerrit (2008) who also explores a millenarian (*Ratu Adil*) movement in 1871 in Pekalongan, Central Java called the Kobra movement. This stemmed from a prophecy of King Eru Tjakra by Djojobojo (Jayabaya), dating from the beginning of the 18th century. His historical and anthropological study strongly emphasizes messianic characteristics applied to the Kobra leader. In fact, Kobra was historically the oldest Muslim saint in Java, who lived around Merapi Volcano, in the Majapahit Kingdom era. In the Pekalongan case study, Kobra was considered to be still very much alive, but the revolt had very limited members, perhaps a few hundred. Gerrit explains that these stories created fear in European communities in Central Java, especially, in Banyumas and Cilacap and categorizes the movement as syncretistic, in other words, the product of a mixed religious past. Given this, the fear of some Dutch that these movements would achieve pan-Islamist status was not widespread. In sum, the above studies and others (Scott, 1977; 2013; Korver, 1976; Tai, 1983) have underlined the notion of the peasant political movement as related to the religious affairs such as millenarianism.
Benda and Castles (1969) investigate the Samin movement by conducting serious research on previous studies such as McTurnan Kahin (1952), Jeanne S. Mintz (1965)\textsuperscript{2}, Jasper Report (1918)\textsuperscript{3}, Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo (1918)\textsuperscript{4}, Onghokham (1964), Van Der Kroef (1959), Benda (1965), The Siauw Giap (1967; 1968) and the colonial documents, producing a more historically detailed work than other previous works. Contrasting Clifford Geertz’s approach of rich description, Benda and Castles (1969) disagree with Onghokham’s argument that the Samin movement was an \textit{abangan} movement. The Samin movement does not fit into Geertz’s typology of the Javanese people (\textit{priyayi, santri, abangan}). In marriage, the Saminists tribute more respect to their wife rather than their Javanese \textit{abangan} neighbours. They also consider egalitarian relations in marriage. In their religion, the Saminists have their religion, the Adam religion. Most importantly, the Samin community makes social boundaries with their \textit{abangan} neighbours. It does mean that if the Samin challenged (orthodox) Islamic groups and the Dutch colonial, the Samin can be included in the \textit{abangan} social group. A group that challenges Islamic groups and the Dutch colonial order, and is positioned as a peasant cannot be categorized solely or simply as an \textit{abangan}. Benda and Castle agree with most scholars such as Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo (1918), Suripan Sadi Hutomo (1996), Soerjanto Sastroatmodjo (2003), and Anis Sholeh Ba’asyin and Muhammad Anis Ba’asyin (2014) on the notion that the lifestyle of the Samin community is preoccupied by a metaphor for the \textit{wayang} mythological narrative, especially the symbol of Bima (Wrekudara), therefore, they are Javanese people, but are not included in the \textit{abangan} community. Moreover, the Saminists themselves embrace the religion of \textit{Adam}. In short, the Samin is disregarded in the narrative of Geertz’s story. In general, the researchers above attempt to explore many notions from previous works, constructing their own reflective interpretation based on the

\textsuperscript{2} Quoted in Benda and Castles (1969)
\textsuperscript{3} Quoted in Benda and Castles (1969)
\textsuperscript{4} Quoted in Benda and Castles (1969)
history of the Samin movement. They preoccupiedly apply historical and anthropological approaches for understanding the Samin movement and instrumentally, frame them regarding their views.

A further perspective is offered by King (1973) who argues that the Samin movement resistance to the Dutch colonial regime was motivated by reasons which were economic (forest privatization and agricultural economy–dry rice fields), socio-political and cultural (religious). King argues that many factors the Dutch introduced led to difficulties: the strict application of the Dutch ethical policy, monetary taxation, pillaging part of the village land (as the replacement of the corvee system) and rice production to help finance village treasuries. All these were variations in the local economic system and some had environmental implications.

The Javanese agricultural fertility cult which King (1973, p. 470) perceives as similar to other peasant communities in the world was evidence for King that the Samin did not believe in Allah or any other divinity. However, they embraced the belief that “God is within me” and that each person was responsible for his or her own salvation. By quoting Benda and Castles, he argues that all these teachings of the Samin community were amplified by the Javanese mystical belief that stemmed from Ki Ageng Pengging (1973, p. 471).

King (1973) criticizes the relevance of the millenarian and messianic interpretations of the Samin movement. Samin himself refuted this, although some researchers have confused Saminism with the Samatism in Pati (e.g. Kroef). Relating to this point, I would like to mention that an influential Saminist informant in my research field also offered a view reflective of the Samatism movement. This Saminist told me about Ratu Adil (a Just King) who would return land to the Javanese and establish a kingdom based on equality (sama rasa, sama rata). In fact, Samin Surosentiko had never mentioned the notion of
Ratu Adil. In his conclusion, King attempts to go beyond the economic, social, and political factors and emphasizes the importance of the *Agama Adam* (the Religion of Samin Javanese) which served to define the Samin as a distinctive entity. Methodologically, King provides a nondeterministic multi-causal and effect analysis, also focusing on Javanese mystical belief.

*Agama Adam* is a marriage ritual that requires responsible dealings with human relations, God, and nature and is one of the central principles in the Samin’s teachings. It is not only defined in terms of religion as understood by a modern religious framework, but in a more comprehensive and holistic manner as it includes relationships among God, humans, nature in sex, agricultural livelihood, and its rituals (Benda & Castle, 1969; Ba’asyin, 2014; Ismail, 2012). It is a long process of soulmate relations (a couple) that incorporates God’s will for sustaining humans by working in balance with nature in the agricultural livelihood. There is a stage in the process of marriage, sexual relations, that cannot be understood in the modern frame as biological and pleasure relations, but broadly is the process of achieving the existence of the real human being (*manusia sejati*). The real human being (*manunggsa/manunggso*) is the united inner feeling as a journey to God’s existence (*manunggaling rasa/roso*). At this point, I need to narrate *rasa* as an introduction for further discussion instead of defining it.

According to Stange (1998, p. 6), *rasa* is practical and experiential power. *Rasa* is not only the manifestation of mind and body, but also a mystical experience. *Rasa* is the ultimate verification of cognitive sense or logical sense. Scholars say that *rasa* is intuition or instinct. In using these terms, scholars frame *rasa* in order for it to be understood by the Western mind. However, this is not a true fit because it discharges the central foundation of the process which is the process of spiritual experience bound with one’s experiential life. *Rasa* is a door or ‘transportation’ to God’s existence. *Rasa* is a tool for reading
interpreting) the ‘holy book’ of Javanese (Saminists) called *kitab teles* (literally, the wet book) of the living body. Beatty (2003, p. 42) explains *rasa* in the context of Javanese Islam where the notion is that our body is a script that can be read at any time, whereas the Koran (*kitab kering*/dry book) is a printed script which is standardized by one community of Muslims.

*Agama Adam* and *rasa* are important concepts in the Samin community that will always be embedded in their life, not in terms of their ethnic identity in the social life, but far more importantly, in their existential life. *Agama Adam* is also the centre of purification of the Saminists in the term of *rasa*. Strong *rasa* will facilitate the highest level of purity. The purer the Saminist the stronger he/she materializes the speech acts like mantras/spells (*pengucap*) (Hutomo, 1996). Therefore, it is emphasized that *Agama Adam* has another layer of interpretation, directed to speech acts as mantras/spells based on strong *rasa*.

In a short visit to the Samin community, Mulder (1974) conducted research in Kutuk village, Kudus, with an anthropological orientation, focusing on religious affairs. He concludes that the Samin’s teachings fit into Buddhism and that the Saminists choose Buddhism because the government forces them to embrace one of the six official religions in Indonesia. He explores the notion of karma, Theravada teachings, and the immanence of cosmic power which is totally different with the Javanese *abangan* but close to the Theravada Buddhism of Thailand.

King (1975) refutes this as an oversimplification, claiming that in the religious aspect, *abangan* and the Saminists seem to have some common foundations. By quoting Benda and Castles (1969, p. 209), King (1975, p. 96) concludes “Saminism, was and has remained, elusive and difficult to pin down”.

Hutomo (1985, 1996) conducted field research by observing and communicating with the Saminists. Based on this, he argues that the Samin movement in Blora and
Bojonegoro expresses the Javanese mystical beliefs and the Javanese symbolic languages are linked with Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings as Javanese Islamic mysticism to challenge the Dutch colonial ruler. Hutomo’s study gained prominence as it explores how the Samin community can be understood in terms of a religious mystical movement, especially focusing on the shared values between the Javanese and Islamic mysticism in the case of Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings.

In the context of the Saminists’ dealings with the Suharto regime, an anthropologist who has been studying the Samin community since the 1980s, Widodo (1997), conducted a study in Pati, Central Java on the power relations between the government and the Samin community. His political anthropological view focusses on how religion relates to political power. For example, at the beginning of the Suharto reign, the Samin community in Pati was accused of being Communists as they did not have any God, while a religion with a God was essential to access Indonesian citizenship. In addition, they had been humiliated in public by allegations that they had converted their belief system from assumed atheism to Buddhism. The Saminists in Pati decided to embrace Buddhism which was similar to the response in Kudus (Mulder, 1974). However, in the local political participation after that case, the existence of the Saminists was significant because they also could determine the political leader of the village, which they did in 1990. Widodo concludes that during the New Order (Suharto) regime, the overall condition of the Saminists did not improve, they were repressed and oppressed.

Fauzan (2005) continued Widodo’s work in the post-Suharto regime (Reformasi), concentrating on the Samin community in Pati. Similar to Widodo, Fauzan identifies the strategy of playing with double meanings in language. His field research reveals the local government had no single government program, which was different to other areas of the Saminists, yet NGOs were more deeply involved.
Day and Reynolds (2013) construe the Samin movement as a group of people who had not had the interest to establish a modern institution or struggle in the name of nationalism to challenge the colonial order. They propose that the dominant power dialectically produced both submission and resistance to the Saminists, an idea critical of Marxism. This is similar to Ileto (1979) who clearly emphasizes peasant movements are not revolutionary. However, they conclude peasant communities have their own mental outlook, different from the populations living within modern nation states and that a dialectical impetus between mentality and hegemony may yet lead to new revolutions or a new kind of state, which has not been proven until today in the Saminist case.

Among other researchers (Nurudin and Fatturoman, 2003; Rosyid, 2008; Samiyono, 2010 and Ismail, 2012), Ba’asyin (2014) explores Samin communities, focusing on their history and conducting field research in Blora and Kudus in Central Java. Reports from elders in two distinct locations differed. One argued that it is difficult to find a pure Saminist nowadays. Another claimed that it was not a question of purity, but of adjusting and selectively applying Samin’s teachings to the changing reality. Ba’asyin deeply explores the link between Samin’s teachings and Islamic mysticism, especially in the connection with the Javanese mystical and spiritual philosopher, Roggowarsito. It has also been confirmed by Ricklefs (2006) and Feener (2010, p. 498) that Javanese mysticism is related to Islamic mysticism, especially, Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings. I will argue that both discourses can be shared within the Samin’s teachings. The latest study on the Samin at the time of enquiry was Mardikantoro’s (2017) dissertation which, with a sociolinguistic approach, explores the Samin community in terms of the language of brotherhood and of resistance.

The literature presented in the critical review above needs to be reconsidered due to the changing of the world. As I already mentioned the Samin Javanese ethnic identity is
shaped by the changing of the world. It is impossible for scholars to essentialize these practices as an abstract concept. The Saminists are socially constructed in the context of historical events and periods linked to the colonialization of European modernity, based on an ethnic boundary, not on the independent cultural domain that it encloses. The ethnic boundary comprises the tensions between the arrival of European modernity and the response of the Samin community, which resulted in multiple modernities. In these tensions, the Saminists are in an ongoing process of social organization (not necessarily defined in terms of the Western modern understanding) shaped through interactions between the Saminists and modernity which is signaled through, but not defined by, cultural features.

In contrast, many academics define the Samin community in terms of a particular abstract concept. These concepts vary: a social and/or millenarian movement, a peasant movement, a Javanese peasant mystical movement or an Islamic mystical movement. Rather than this group being fixed and predetermined, I take the approach that an ethnic group is fluid, malleable, and, in the Saminists case, engages in dynamic complex relations (tensions) with modernity. This has occurred in two major historical periods, one in the colonial and the other in the post-colonial era. The social formation of the Saminists depends on their ethnic boundary. This involves continued interaction between them and modernity that is represented in the (Dutch) colonial state and further the post-colonial state. Its features can be seen in the terms of state and society/community relations, religious institutionalization, interaction with an industrialized corporation, and tourism.

I also took an opportunity to frame my thesis not only in terms of ethnicity, but also in terms of multiple modernities, to better understand interactions between the Samin community and modernity. Eventhough during the Dutch colonial period, the Saminists have been defined discursively as anti-modern, they are distinctively modern in the frame
of multiple modernities. That is to say, Western modernity is different from modernity itself and the definition of both is also changing. The changing narrative of Saminists’ engagement with modernity will be described with reference to the post-colonial era, in particular in the post-authoritarian era in Chapter 5.

In contrast to scholars who explain the Samin in terms of deprivation, marginalization and resistance toward the state apparatus, by renegotiating their role and being adapting to modernity, the Samin community in the post-authoritarian era has found a way to exist. They can freely express themselves under the circumstance in which Indonesia has entered a more democratic process. This study concentrates on hybrid and blurred ethnic boundaries of the Samin community.

Readers should understand that the goal of this thesis is not to apply positivistic work by using a rigid theoretical framework to frame the material data of this study. I highlight that this thesis is not theoretically driven or data driven; I have not conducted a verification or falsification procedure for the application of a theory to empirical data. In contrast to that approach, I prefer to conduct a reflective and meaningful interpretation. Therefore, it will be misleading if readers demand a rigid conceptual framework for this thesis and require verification of the empirical data.

Discourse analysis is applied for mapping previous studies and exploring how the discourse of modernity is imposed on the Saminist. The ethnomethodological fieldwork has enabled engagement in the Samins’ everyday lifeworld where they deal with modern life. The Samin Javanese as participants and I as a co-participant have constructed nuanced understandings of becoming Saminists in the context of multiple modernities.

When designing the narratives which depict their worldview, the Samin community constructed their own method of common sense by selecting Javanese culture and history (oral history) in order to preserve and maintain their cultural existence in the atmosphere of
modernity. For example, Saminists’ cultural dress is black, with a headscarf. Yet, in their everyday life they do not clothe themselves this way. Saminists’ submission with wayang as their worldview is Javanese, they are not a group of abangan Javanese that has been influenced by Islamic tradition. However, in the marriage process, the Saminist is very consistent and ‘conservative’, different from any common Javanese tradition. If he/she does not participate in the marriage process according to Samin’s teachings, he/she is not a Saminist. For the Saminists themselves, this tradition is the real Javanese.

As this study is based on an analysis of situational and relative ethnicity, it will differ from previous studies that illustrate the Samin movement in a specific time and place and through a specific theory/concept. In previous studies about the Samin, pivotal moments are highlighted which link with the Javanese tradition and Islamic mysticism, in an attempt to define the Samin in terms of one or the other. However, my study investigates the hybrid and the blurred condition of the Saminists. The Samin tradition has complex relations with Javanese tradition and Islamic mysticism. I apply discourse analysis to investigate the genealogy of the Samin’s teachings and confirm this in the fieldwork. This study demonstrates that the Samin tradition is not solely a Javanese tradition nor is it solely a form of Islamic mysticism. Chapter 2 offers a discussion on how far the discourse of Javanese tradition and Islamic mysticism fills the space of the Samin’s worldview.

Multiple Modernities: The Disruption of Local/Global or Tradition/Modernity

The concept of multiple modernities was contributed by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, the father of Israeli sociology. His research into comparative civilizations led to a new approach to critique the classical theory of modernization. This approach ultimately established the research stream exploring multiple modernities around 1986, a point of view that changed the way we view the modern world. Eisenstadt examines the relationship between social structure, culture and social change as the focus of sociological research and theorizing.
The main contribution of Eisenstadt’s research was to differentiate structural-functional theory (structuralism) and the theory of social evolution as structural differentiation (post-structuralism). Moreover, Eisenstadt analyzes sociological theory, which he elucidates as being the tension between the ‘negotiated order’ versus ‘deep structure’. Eisenstadt’s approach to ‘negotiated order’ highlights the cultural and symbolic dimensions of social interaction, by this means illustrating the autonomy of social subgroups (Preyer & Sussman, 2016, p. 1-4). Eisenstadt’s ambition is in line with Barth’s (1969) approach in that they both examine the connection between social structure, culture and social change. They promote negotiated order instead of deep structure in order to view the changes in the culture of groups as constructed by the changing social order.

The theory of multiple modernities offers a provision for understanding national and transnational religions and cultures that reflects cultural diversity and multiplicity. The concept of multiple modernities rejects both the notion of a modern and radical break with traditions (globalization) as well as the notion of an essential modern continuity with traditions (localization). The multiple modernities premise is that the West is not at the root of the process of modernity. The theory of multiple modernities acknowledges specific expressions of culture and traditions. Multiple modernities also recognizes and reflects a pluralist view of the world (Michel, Possamai, and Turner, 2017, p. 6).

The theory of multiple modernities is important to this thesis to provide a theoretical framework that enables an investigation into the ongoing process of the construction of the Samin Javanese ethnic community in an atmosphere of modernity. In short, this thesis legitimates the premise of multiple modernities where the expansion of modernity from its ‘origin’ has engendered different types of modern society (read: multiple modernities) from the colonial era to the contemporary world today (Eisenstadt, 2000).
Historically, the modernity of Western Europe has collided with the places colonized by it, as a result modernity has been created from within. The tensions between modernity from the West and modernity from other areas in the world can be explained by the theory of multiple modernities. The variability of modernities was accomplished by military and economic colonialism.

The arrival of European colonization set a narrative of the modern world requiring a distinct mode for constructing boundaries and collective identities (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 6). As an example of this idea, though there is an ethnicity boundary of the Samin community with the arrival of modernity, this community has and is appropriating modernity on their own terms (Eisenstadt, 2000).

Eisenstadt (2000, p. 4) noted various perspectives on modernity as an ideology of Western discourse: First, modernization opens up a different political order followed by protest and resistance, allowing for new institution-building as a continual component of the political process. Second, modernity entails a distinctive mode of constructing the boundaries of collective identities. Third, modernity is characterised by growing routinization and bureaucratization. Fourth, in modernity there exists a tension between the secular and the sacred political order, which is endorsed by many movements (nationalist, socialist, fascist, liberalist, anarchist, religious, and other political ideologies). Fifth, there is a continual collision between the narrative of more “traditional” sectors of society and the so-called modern sectors that have developed within them. Sixth, in the twentieth century, modernity has existed differently, with Asian, Latin American, European, African, and Middle Eastern modernity, however the United States is at the centre of modernity. Seventh, this variability of modernity was undertaken through military and economic colonialism, and neologies at the end of the twentieth century modernity encompassed the
first true wave of globalization. Eighth, the emergence of new social movements challenges the political order of nation states.

Thus, modernization does not automatically indicate Westernization. It suggests that different societies or communities are constructed in typically modern ways and attempt to appropriate modernity on their own terms (Eisenstadt, 1999, 2000a). There are different reinterpretations of different dimensions of modernity within different cultures (Eisenstadt: 1999, 2000a). An implication of the theory of multiple modernities is that ethnicity is socially constructed and persists in opposition against a singular Western European modern.

The Saminists claim that the Javanese tradition is the main narrative of their existence which in some ways is interconnected contingently with modernity. Bauman (1991) argues that there is no settlement on the date when modernity emerged. The concept is troubled with ambiguity, while its referent is obscure at the core and frayed at the edges. Modernity in basic terms is a space of humans’ contradiction or ambivalence in their actual cultural life. In some contexts, humans are traditional and in other contexts they are modern; they are spiritual and also material, continuous and discontinuous, religious/sacred and secular, homogeneous and heterodox, they believe in monotheism and polytheism, living with tensions and compromise. They experience time and space (past, present, and future) as a linear discourse within a random compartmentalisation of time and space.

There are many debates on what the indications of modernity may be, such as the secularism, capitalism, industrialization, and the sciences (Bauman, 1991; Jameson, 2002). Cristaudo (2017) perceives modernity as a life where there is the partitioning of space, and of time into the past, present, and future. In Indonesia, in the post-colonial era, Indonesian life looks disenchanted with modern times. In fact, anthropologists have found many mysterious or enchanted meanings in life in modern Indonesia. Some Indonesian people
are still living in the sacred cosmos. Some Indonesians live in mythology and its meaning in order to experience life existentially (Adeney-Rizakotta, 2018).

In Western discourse itself, there are many debates on modernity, especially about the project of enlightenment, seen by some as an earlier form of modernity in European culture. The age of enlightenment operationalized the preoccupation with measuring space and time, as Max Weber makes clear. He states that Western European modernity was implemented in capitalism, the formal legal system, bureaucratic administration, and scientific knowledge. Each, in its own way, replaced traditions and religious beliefs with morally hollow rules, regulations, and forms of knowledge (Kalberg, 2005). The existence of the Saminists during modern times is a significant case study in which the abstract vision of modern rationality as monolithic and linear is not applicable. The Saminists are a real example of the ambivalence of modernity as well as the condition of multiple modernities.

The Samin’s understanding of the human narrative cannot be appreciated only in the discourse of modernism (a term for some aspects of modernity that are linked to tension with the Samin community) or a singular modernity (Jameson, 2001, p. 142). In this respect, for the Saminists, the human narrative is filled with emotions (love, hate, jealousy), inner feeling/inward (rasa), faith (religion), and solidarity in the everyday life (lifeworld). Their understanding of the reality in which human beings live is a very complex cosmos where time (past, present, and future) and space are at the crossroads. Human beings, do not live in the externally controlled time that modern science assumes. In this context, the Saminists perceive human beings as creatures who not only enjoy happiness, but who should also endure pain, accept oppression with total patience and deal with life bravely and with dignity (Rosenstock-Huessy, 2017). Commonly, the Saminists do not seek happiness as it is imagined in Western modernism, but put themselves in
someone else’s shoes to achieve harmony between human beings, with nature, and with the Creator.

The development of the European modern civilization from the late 18th century as indicated by the industrial revolution, colonialization, and the development of classical scholarship and intellectualism, is the narrative of the modern world (Eisenstadt, 2000). This narrative constructs modernism as an ideology. It also ideologizes time in terms of a sequence: the epochs of antiquity, Middle Ages, modernity, and the recent past (Rosenstock-Huessy, 2017, p. 226-227).

Accordingly, as the product of this modern ideology, Western countries claim themselves to be modern, confronting non-Western countries which they consider to be traditional, anti-Western, and anti-modern, especially Islamic countries and China. In these terms, modernity is overly simplistic. In this thesis there will be two narrative stories: the Western modernity and the Samin modernity, which are interlinked, constitutively interconnected, and socially constructed in cultural and social change.

**Barth’s Ethnicity**

I plan to employ the concept of Barth’s ethnicity to provide a theoretical framework to explore the Samin community’s response to modernity. In 1969 Fredrik Barth and his colleagues in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* challenged the general view of classical anthropologists and social scientists. Barth’s (1969) work denoted an epochal shift in the anthropological study of ethnicity. The classical anthropologists had established primordialist notions that ethnicity was predetermined by biology, ancestry or territory and was evident through the shared cultural characteristics of stable, isolated and contained groups. According to this argument, ethnicity is fixed, stable, unchanging, and living in the imagined collective memory of the past in the present and future lived experience. Barth was against this reductive approach and proposed that ethnic groups’ identity be
appreciated as an ongoing process of transformation, negotiation and meaning-making. I argue that the Sami community act in a positive forging of difference and significance, in a strategic resistance against perceived oppression and in benign adaptation.

Barth’s understanding is relevant to this thesis in which the tensions, ambiguities and creative self-fashioning of the lived experiences and struggles of the Sami community in the modern life are explored. I believe that such an interpretation of the concept of ‘ethnicity’ is relevant to the challenges of investigating dynamic complex, fragmented and unresolved identity formation and the struggles around claiming difference. Barth’s (1969) argument is that ethnic groups are socially determined through interaction and that the ethnic boundary is a malleable social boundary. This concept reflects the understanding of change in the Sami community’s identity formation throughout time alongside the modernity process. Ethnicity is also relevant for contributing to understanding multiple modernities in the 21st century because it encourages sensitivity to the ambiguity of ethnicities. This is the case for the Sami community, who are involved in the ongoing process of construction of their identity.

Barth (1969) made three central contentions that significantly challenged the status quo of the classic anthropological primordialist approach to ethnicity. First, ethnicity is not defined by cultural content but by social organization. Second, the roots of this social organization are dichotomization, so that the ethnic boundary is a social boundary formed through interactions between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. Third, ethnic affiliation is situationally dependent and can change. These claims require some further explanation.

First, Barth and his collaborators rejected the notion that ethnic groups can be understood via ‘objective’ cultural characteristics. They sought to clarify that although ethnic categories incorporate ‘culture’ this is not a simple one-to-one relationship. Cultural characteristics are the means by which an ethnic group affirms and defines itself. They are
part of the selective processes of creating difference that is consciously recognized and subjectively salient. However, only a selection of the entire accumulation of cultural elements available is utilized as representing membership of the ethnic group. Features and characteristics that groups use and regard as significant cultural symbols and markers of their ethnic identity change with time, place and situation. Some of these characteristics are given priority or are over-communicated while others are understated, denied or replaced, and may be reinterpreted and reintroduced at another time.

Accordingly, it is impossible to entirely understand the historical narrative of an ethnic group by following the characteristics of cultural practices through time and place. Cultural materials, such as clothing, are not necessarily used to signify ethnic group membership and do not define ethnic identity. Language, another critical cultural feature, provides an informative example to further illustrate Barth’s argument that culture, and ethnicity are interrelated but not necessarily compatible concepts. For example, the Javanese language is a necessary attribute of being Samin, but language alone is not enough to establish ethnic membership. Multiple identity groups can and do exist within the same linguistic category.

Therefore, cultural features can act as markers of ethnic identity when understood as socially significant, but they do not create the ethnic group. Specific cultural features may be important in some contexts and not others, they may guide behaviour for one activity but not another (Barth 1969, p. 14). According to Barth’s theoretical position, a difference between groups exists not because a cultural characteristic occurs in a particular way, but rather a consciousness of being different to ‘Others’ is manifested in cultural practices. These cultural practices and their associated meanings can transform, depending on how difference is claimed and promoted. This also depends on the social behaviours that are central to self-identifying and being identified as belonging to that group.
Barth’s second key premise was that ethnicity is produced by specific kinds of inter-group relations. Central to ethnicity is the recognition of differentiation between members and non-members. An ethnic group cannot exist in isolation, as its formation and continuation are dependent upon communication with ‘Others’. The construction of an ethnic boundary is dependent on relationships with other ethnic groups – ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ categories of inclusion and exclusion. Ethnic groups are mutually influencing and work to maintain their differences through this dialogue. The ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ classifications occur by degrees. These are not necessarily in conflict with one another. Even as cultural features change and individuals transfer their ethnic membership, the ethnic group continues and is maintained via the “continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders” (Barth 1969, p. 14).

Barth’s third argument was that ethnicity and ethnic identities are situational and contingent, meaning that the social importance of ethnicity can vary and depends on different spheres of interaction, behavioural codes and arrangements. In the case of the Samin community, in the Dutch colonial era, scholars perceived them to have Javanese ethnicity although they themselves claim not to be part of the majority of Javanese people. After Indonesian independency, they accepted the Indonesian government including its taxation administration, as with other ethnic groups, all around Indonesia.

As Barth observes, at a time when a minority group senses the crisis of assimilation by the ethnic majority, the leaders of the former can choose to renovate its ethnic identity, vis-a-vis the one offered by the dominant group: “a great amount of attention may be paid to the revival of select traditions to justify and glorify the idioms and the identity” (Barth, 1969, p. 35).

Most Javanese people and Indonesian people in general know the Saminists as a socially constructed stubborn Javanese minority. The Saminists renegotiate and adapt their
self-ascribed difference by adopting Javanese traditions that had already influenced Islamic mysticism in their cultural practice to survive. Most importantly, the cultural markers in their everyday lives are difficult to identify as they are blurred with those of other Javanese except for special rituals (e.g. the marriage ceremony and associated rituals). They claim to be what they are as a distinct Javanese group among other Javanese and their social interaction with other Javanese creates a social perception from non-Saminists to identify them as Saminists. Their ethnic boundaries are blurred, ambiguous and dynamic, depending on social interactions. Based on Barth’s interpretation, Samin identity is not predetermined but is a matter of their community’s choice and situation, and ongoing dialogue and interrelations with modernity that are represented by the state organization, modern Javanese people, and society in general.

Barth focused on ethnic group maintenance, interaction and identity change across the boundaries, stating that categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and inclusion by which distinct categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership in the course of individual life histories (Barth, 1969, p. 9-10). The ethnic boundary entails complex behavioural organization and social relations and is continually negotiated and renegotiated by both external ascription and internal identification (Barth, 1969, p. 15).

In summary, Barth’s work indicates a significant shift in understanding ethnicity by challenging classical anthropologist primordialist view which essentialized ethnicity and sought to group ethnicity in settled, objectively observable patterns of shared culture. Barth contributed on the dynamics and processes that produce ethnic boundaries by presenting a theoretical framework that understands ethnicity as a social organization formed through interactions between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. Barth’s argument tackles the gap that social scientists and anthropologists did not acknowledge on the social and cultural construction.
of ethnicity through social interaction in order to have difference. Barth is not solely preoccupied with cultural markers.

Yet Barth’s framework has weaknesses and limitations. There are four most criticized features of Barth’s paradigm: the lack of consideration of multiple identities; the lack of consideration of the classical anthropologist paradigm which is still significant such as genealogy of ancestry, ecology and culture; ignoring the importance of cultural content (Hummell, 2017) and being naïve in dealing with the political dimension. In this thesis, I argue that the Samin community is also socially constructed by multiple identities such as becoming Indonesian, Javanese, and the Saminists itself. I also disagree with Barth’s point of view in that it only focuses on social interactions as the important aspect in constructing ethnicity. The Samin community is also constructed based on their family genealogy, historical collective memory of culture, and ecology. I argue that cultural and political dimensions are also significant to better understand the Samin community.

Most importantly, in this thesis, I will underline the narrative of the Samin and modernity that is represented by the state, the corporation, modern Javanese people, and the majority Islamic community. Through this narrative, the political dimension of power relations can be seen to constructing identities, such identities are not strongly visible in the social and cultural relations operating among these groups. In contrast to classical anthropologists and Barth, this research offers a narrative illustrating that there is a competition of discourse and power between the Samin community and modernity. This competition is about gaining space at the national and international levels by appealing on issues such as religion, tourism, and environmentalism. This is demonstrated in Chapter 5.
Bhabha’s Cultural Theory

In this regard, Bhabha’s theory of culture is very helpful and forms another theoretical foundation to this thesis. Bhabha (1994) argues that it is almost impossible for a minor small ethnic community to preserve its originality and oppose modernity. The ethnic boundary is an “in-between space” of “hybridity.” This concept moves beyond the narratives of essentialism. Bhabha’s theory deals successfully with the weaknesses of Barth’s ethnicity theory on ethnic boundaries. Bhabha’s theory concentrates on the processes of historical events and the cultural production of constructed cultural differences. Bhabha claims:

> Hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements – the stubborn chunks, as the basis of cultural identifications. What is at issue is the performative nature of those differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference—be it class, gender or race (1994, p. 313).

The notion of hybridity helps to better appreciate the development and transformation of the Samin community’s identity formation based on their self-ascription and external ascription in relation to modernity. In Bhabha’s words:

> Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of dominating through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination (1994, p. 159).
Bhabha’s concept of hybridity helps to elucidate the strong political expression in the relations between the Saminists and modernity at the beginning of its formation amid the Dutch colonial era. These relations are mutually dependent in constructing a shared culture as well as the cultural expression of self and others’ understanding. Up to now, Bhabha displays how histories and cultures in the colonial era constantly intrude on the present, demanding that people transform their understanding of cross-cultural relations. The authority of dominant nations and discourse, whether in the colonial era or in the post-colonial era, is never as complete as it seems. This is because it is always marked by anxiety, something that enables the dominated, colonized, discriminated against and marginalized to counteract. When the colonizer (the authority of dominant nations) and the colonized come together, there is a negotiation of cultural meaning. Bhabha’s work explores how language transforms the way identities are structured when the colonizer and colonized interact. Colonialism is marked by a complex of identities in which the colonized and colonizer depend on each other.

Further interpretation also supports this research to explore the multiple identities of the Saminists as becoming Javanese, Indonesian, and Saminist. Individuals, belong to multiple social units at any given time and are not solely members of an ethnic group with an ethnic identity. Individuals can have multiple or hybrid identities depending on the context. These can be equally important, or some may be more important in shaping the individual’s multifaceted identity. The preferences, combinations and priorities given to our various identity affiliations can and do regularly vary, and “can simply be more relevant than others in a given context” (Hummell, 2017, p. 67).

Multiple identities can be interpreted as the product of hybridity. “Hybridity is a problem of colonial representation and the individual that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse
and estrange the basis of its authority” (Bhabha 1994, p. 114). The politics of hybrid cultural identity can be useful in analyzing the Saminists’ motives for ethnic impersonation. The Saminists seem to be suffering from identity diffusion and are caught in the in-between stage amid different culturally dominant identities. Thus, the Saminists’ actions can be similar to dominant identities of Javanese, Islamic, and pre-Islamic traditions.

Bhabha theorizes hybridity as a form of ‘liminal’ space, where the “cutting edge of translation and negotiation” occurs (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38). In my fieldwork, I always found some Saminists used ambiguous words to explain their cultural position. While they acknowledged they are different from most modern Javanese and Javanese Islams, at the same time they said that the substance of (modern) Javanese, Islam, and other religious teachings in Indonesia enclose Samin’s teachings. Accordingly, the Saminists are very clever in playing with words as their political defence. This act is their basic cultural foundation for survival. The Saminists can be seen to shift the forces of colonial power in their environment through their language games which express their hybrid cultural identity.

In summary, Barth’s work is important in the sense that ethnicity is situational, contingent, accepts relative change and acknowledges that social organization is formed through interactions between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. However, Bhabha’s cultural theory builds on Barth’s theory in the sense that cultural and political dimensions of interactions are understood to be as important as social interactions. Therefore, the narrative of this thesis will illustrate how Saminism, as Javanese ethnicity, has changed its culture across time and place situationally and contextually depending on political and social dimensions and the circumstances of multiple modernities.
The Javanese Tradition

The Javanese and the Saminists share a “family resemblance” in Wittgenstein’s terms (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 36). The Saminists identify themselves as Javanese and are strongly constituted by Javanese tradition. We cannot describe the Samin without referring to Javanese attributes. Wittgenstein’s family resemblance means “a complicated network of similarities overlapping and crisscrossing” (Wittgenstein, 2009, p. 36). Moreover, the Samin tradition is constructed in the political and social circumstances of colonial era, which has been built by the axial civilizations of ancient Javanese, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Western modernity. This discussion will be further explored in Chapter 2.

Tradition is central to the Samin. The Samin’s meaning of life, memory, and identity are determined by their traditions. Ramadan (2010, p. 145-147) argues that tradition and modernity are a matter of our relationship with the time and space of history, shaped by power and authority. The old traditions, especially those addressing the oral tradition emphasize the significance of the past and the meaning of the life cycles that attach us to the past, repeatedly reinterpreted and giving a meaning to the present. Orality is to tradition what cycles are to time: we must speak, transmit, reiterate, and inscribe in our memories the history of our origins, our sources, family genealogy, and the path that guides us to ourselves. Traditions contain meaning and identity; we know where we are from. Traditions that contain values, norms, culture, and worldview constantly evolve to the next generation along with memory and ‘meaningful time’. A tradition that passes on values and norms to successive generations can be changed or repeated based upon a collective memory rather than individual reasoning. Most importantly, in Ramadan’s argument, tradition involves an act of trust in the faithfulness of memory; history is important to establish humanity because only memory and history guide us to the ontology
of our present life. We can learn wisdom from both the collective memory and history when it comes to the crises of conflict and decadence.

Tradition is embedded in memory; history offers hope for the future. In this context, modernity is always attached to tradition. For example, the traditions of the renaissance and the enlightenment are the traditions of modernity in the West. Modernity in the West receives learnings from that history and that tradition, carrying the mark of both of its resistance and its liberation. Western modernity that resists the political power of the Church (Christianity) is situated in the affirmation of reason, individualism, demand for progress, the sciences, secularization, and democracy. Through Western colonization and Western modernity, the world becomes disenchanted and becomes a ‘universal’ reality of scientific reason. Time becomes linear and progressive. The reality of the future is always open to being subjugated (Ramadan, 2000, p. 147).

In line with multiple modernities, Ramadan (2000, p. 147) argues that Western modernity is not the modernity of all civilizations and all cultures and this modernity is a minority if we explore all the world’s memories. The point that we need to underline is that modernity is the product of resistance to a tradition that had failed to allow members of traditionalism to fulfil their human ability because it was bound to a religious hierarchy and moral norms that were finally limited. Ramadan concludes that modernity is a process of liberation from a tradition. Every civilization did not experience the same circumstances as in Western modernity. However, during the expansion of Western modernity, non-Western modernity dealt with the consequences of Western modernity: colonization, technologization, global capitalization, and overturned non-Western traditions (Ramadan, 2000, p. 148). Ramadan’s idea indicates that without Western ‘modern’ colonization, we would never know the existence of the Javanese tradition because the collision between the Western and the ancestral traditions of the Javanese people have constructed the Javanese
tradition itself. The Javanese people also resist the Western modernity and attempt to liberate themselves from within through the Javanese ability to adapt, accept and resist Western modernity.

The existence of the Javanese tradition is always bound with Western ‘modern’ colonization. The fact that Javanese tradition has become a narrative of the past within the collective memories of Javanese people, does not represent its independent essence because it has existed throughout the colonial period and time. It accumulates through time and space, change and continuity.

According to the understanding of some Western scholars, a Javanese tradition is considered full of symbols, wisdom, and differences from other traditions. Yet, according to Antlöv and Hellman (2005), who wrote The Java that Never Was, Java has always been changing while some part of the principles has remained.

The term, ‘Javanese tradition’, itself arose since the arrival of early modernity to the island of Java and it has been interpreted by Western and ‘Indonesian’ scholars as translated from oral historical traditions, colonial documents, artifacts, and archeological research. It is a construction of this scholarship. According to Ricklefs (1978), the most known Javanese chronicles are relatively recent in date, published after 1770 AD. Ricklefs here gives an example of the fact that the understanding of Java depends on the (modern) scholar’s view.

Returning to Antlöv and Hellman’s (2005) discussion, Javanese tradition is shaped by anthropologists, historians, philosophers, political scientists, sociologists, and others. An American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1960) published many articles and books about Java, the most popular being The Religion of Java contextualized in Sukarno’s regime. Geertz interprets the social classification of Javanese people’s beliefs system into three clusters: santri, abangan, and priyayi. Santri tends to Islamic puritan putihan
traditions influenced by the Arabic culture. *Abangan* tends to the syncreticism of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Javanese indigenous traditions. *Priyayi* refers to the Javanese aristocrats or nobles, who rely on the syncretization of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. Geertz underlines some important elements of the totality of the Javanese belief system: rituals (*slamatan, brokohan*), the belief in spirits (*roh-roh*), magic, sorcery and curing (*dukun*), the debate between *santri* and *abangan* on Islamic teachings, the debate between *abangan* and *priayi* on the authenticity of Javanese traditions, the story of *wayang* (shadow puppets), mysticism and its sects (*kejawan*: Budi Setia, Sumarah, Ilmu Sejati and Kawruh Kasunyatan), and some different technical rituals from each cluster of Javanese society.

An Indonesian anthropologist, Koentjaraningrat (1985) comprehensively wrote about Javanese tradition from prehistory to the history of Sukarno’s regime of revolution. Koentjaraningrat recognizes two clusters of Javanese society: the urban and the rural. At the regional level, Javanese cultural traditions are very diverse and Koentjaraningrat saw *abangan, santri*, and *priayi* as heterogenous within themselves, in contrast to Geertz’s thesis. His work is very voluminous and detailed, including a discussion of the emergence of Javanese Islamic states after the fall of Majapahit power as a Hinduist and Buddhist Kingdom.

An anthropologist, Pemberton (1994), perceives Java as an ideological construction contextualized in the New Order (during the Suharto regime). Pemberton argues that the reproduction of Javanese tradition had a cultural purpose to legitimize and maintain the political power of that regime. In other words, the image and elements of Javanese tradition were instrumentalized by Suharto for the sake of an expansion of power.

An Australian historian, Ann Kumar produced *Java and Modern Europe* (Kumar, 1997) in which she explains the constitutive relations between Java and Europe and their shared experience. Her idea is in line with Jameson, Antlöv and Hellman, and Pemberton
in the point that modernity is a project of the Western tradition, precisely, Western emancipation (Ramadan, 2000, p. 147). Kumar (1997, p. 7) argues that ideologically, this particular form of modernity crystallized (albeit on the basis of previous development) in the West in the late eighteenth century and expanded in the context of colonialization. It was a big challenge to large areas of the non-Western world, in this context, Java.

Kumar’s second book (2009) *Globalizing the Prehistory of Japan: Language, Genes and Civilization* explores how Javanese was very much civilized and ‘modern’ at the time of what Europeans generally refer to as its prehistory. Her book provides ‘hard science’ evidence (DNA, rice genetics, and historical linguistic proof) that a Javanese group of immigrants were responsible for the great innovations in Japanese civilization in the Neolithic revolution (Yayoi period 300 BC – 300 AD). It discloses the court and village culture that they brought and clarifies their genetic contribution to the Japanese population, arguing that they brought rice cultivation and many technological influences in material culture, architecture and religion. In both Kumar’s studies (1997; 2009), the conclusion is that Java was an axis of civilization and modernity during that particular time and space.

All of these explorations become the starting point of further discussion about the complex relations between the Samin movement, Java, and modernity, which is very much an ontological exercise and practice.

**The Social, Political and Historical Setting**

Samin Surosentiko (1859-1914) and his father, Samin Sepuh (a nickname meaning the older Samin) lived in Blora, Central Java. Their teachings spread in 1890 from Blora to Bojonegoro, Kudus, and Pati (see Chapter III). Scholars (Onghokham, 1964; Benda & Castles, 1969) in the social sciences and history refer to the Samin community or the Samin movement. They are one of many rural Javanese peasant communities that were moved to protest about the arrival of modernity, as represented by the Dutch colonial rule.
After Samin Surosentiko was arrested in Rembang, exiled to Sawahlunto, 90 km from Padang in Sumatra Barat, and died in the same area in 1914, his followers (who regarded themselves as his large family) continued their teachings until the present (Benda & Castle, 1969, p. 212).

Today, the Samin community is popularly known as *sedulur sikep* or *wong sikep* (physically, a person who embraces others; philosophically, a person who perceives others equally with the perspective of a form of brotherhood). The common meaning of this name is simply ‘very close relations’ where all human beings form a family. More deeply, in terms of the reflexive context of shared values and principles and their political and cultural dimensions, the term Samin and the teachings of Samin Surosentiko are much more complexly related to Java and Islam because Samin’s teachings promulgate Javanese mysticism intersected with Islamic mysticism, in particular Syeh Siti Jenar’s teachings. These teachings seek to answer the question of what a human being (*wong*) is (which is discussed in Chapter 2).

I would like to situate the emergence of the Samin movement especially during 1830-1930 in the colonial context. This emergence had many important moments which the historian, Merle C. Ricklefs, (2007, p. 252-258) illustrates accurately, explaining that these were part of the rise of many resistance movements. First, at the beginning of the Dutch colonial rule when it ‘officially’ colonized Java, the Dutch imposed a *cultuurstelsel* (cultivation system) which brought significant social change to Java and resulted in Javanese peasant resistance (Ricklefs, 2007, p. 252). These peasant resistance movements and events were also pragmatic and strategic political responses to a growing sense of exclusion. The communities were revitalized in response to this as the Javanese contemplated the continuation of tradition and the adaptation to modernity. Javanese peasants in the sense of Reuter’s (2014) idea maintained a sense of continuity and such

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5 This data is also confirmed in my fieldwork based on participatory observation.
peasant movements can be understood as a form of social change, not conservatism (Reuter, 2013, p. 4). These movements were mushrooming as peasants were the most deprived social class in Java (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 168-169). The Samin movement was one of them.

Second, the increase of the Javanese population supported the economic investment in labour but also created problems such as poverty (Ricklefs, 2007, p. 26) and tension between classes (that it, between the priyayi elite, an emerging bourgeoisie of Islamic bent, and a peasantry being knocked down by colonialism and their social superiors). During this tension, there was a polarisation in both the cultural and religious spheres (Ricklefs, 2007, p. 28-29).

Third, due to class polarisation and the increase of the Javanese population, Islamic reform and revivalism emerged (Ricklefs, 2007). Islamic piety grew among Javanese as well as an Islamic mystical synthesis (localized Islamic mysticism) around the 1850s. Islamic mystical literature existed in Java, together with Islamic reformism (in Minangkabau, Padang and West Sumatra) and this movement continued to the north coast area (pesisir).

The flourishing Islamic reformist movement was supported by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which made it easier to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. As a result, the number of hajis grew and new ideas from the Middle East expanded into Java. These hajis returned to their place as peasant protestors, involved in Islamic mystical peasant movements or tariqa Sufi movements, and landowners (Ricklefs, 2007, p. 253; Ricklefs, 2001, p. 169). A wave then arose of Islamic reformists who called themselves putihan/santri (the white ones/pious Muslims) who looked down upon their fellow Javanese, thinking of them as less Islamic. The putihan defined these less staunch Muslims
as abangan (the red ones or the brown ones). The abangan comprised the majority of Javanese society (Ricklefs, 2007, p. 254).

Anti-Islamic sentiments could be seen among the Javanese around the 1870s (before the Samin movement occurred) and in the 1890s, became strong. These movements glorified Java’s old history, seeking the blended teachings of Budi/Buda: combining an adaptation of modern learning with nostalgia for the island’s pre-Islamic past (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 168). These ideas have been expressed in modern Javanese literature such as Babad Kedhiri, Suluk Gatholoco, and Serat Darmagandhul/Darmagandul (the chronicle of Kediri, the story of Gatholoco in the form of a Javanese Islamic poem song, and the story of Darmagandhul – the Hanging Truth in the form of a Javanese poem, respectively).

Some Javanese who had rejected this putihan pressure first embraced Christianity in the 1830s (Ricklefs, 2007, p. 254-257). This complex context of Javanese society and its movements continued with the emergence of national movements such as Budi Utomo (representing the Javanese cultural movement based on the priyayi class who rejected the putihan group, 1908), Sarekat Islam (an Islamic middle class trader movement based on putihan and abangan groups in 1912 which in 1914 split into two groups: Sarekat Islam putihan and Sarekat Islam abangan), Muhamamdiyah (an Islamic modernist movement based on the putihan group, 1912), and Nahdlatul Ulama (a traditional Islamic movement, later named a post-traditional Islam organization, 1926). This Javanese society was polarised and conflicted (Ricklefs, 2007, p. 257-258). It was within this complex context that the Samin movement emerged.

I explain the Samin movement and its relationship with modernity as a tension of a narrative in history and everyday lived experience. This is because the Samin community was established with the arrival of modernity and, at the same time, it resisted modernity itself by becoming modern on its own ways up to now. The Samin movement cannot
escape from its iron cage of the discourse of modernity. In this respect, the Samin community is a traditional and also a modern community, in the frame of multiple modernities.

From this point of view, the *episteme* (knowledge) of this community is also defined by the study of history and social science as the product of modernity. This knowledge is reproduced contextually, in the contemporary character of the Saminists. By applying discourse analysis, this study will seek to capture scholars’ arguments and the *episteme*. By applying ethnomethodology and fieldwork, I investigate the self-ascription of the Saminists according to the Samin community oral tradition, reflectively interpreting it with the participants. This is manifested within the strategy of playing with Javanese nostalgia and its collective memories, which in fact originates from within the discourse of modernity.

After Indonesian independence (1945), the Samin community accepted the sovereignty of Indonesia, paying tax, living cooperatively and co-existing with the government and various social institutions. Yet, as indicated above, the Samin community, as with other communities in Indonesia, is shaped by a cross-cultural history and a mix of civilizations, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, followed by Islamic and Christian influences and Western colonial interventions. For instance, Islamic mysticism is blended with Javanese mysticism. Previous studies have positioned it as shaped only by Hinduism (The Siauw Giap, 1969) and Buddha’s teachings (Mulder, 1974). This mystical aspect is explored further in Chapter 2.

In the context of Javanese culture, the Samin movement had its roots in the peasant class, distinguishing it from the aristocratic (*priyayi*) Javanese mainstream (during the Mataram Kingdom) that had been influenced by the Dutch colonial rulers, but they had the same bloodline from the Majapahit Kingdom, the King of Brawijaya V to Mataram
Kingdom. Compared to the urban Javanese aristocrats and modern urban Javanese, rural Javanese peasants are in some degree more Javanese (njawani) because the rural Javanese (and, by extension, the Saminists) experienced less intervention and engagement with Western and modern urban influences.

Western influence originated when some treaties were formed between the Mataram Kingdom and the Dutch East India Company (VOC/Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie) and later between the Mataram and the Dutch, French, and British colonial authorities. In 1677, Amangkurat I renewed the 1676 treaty with the VOC that allowed profound infiltration into Java from the north coast area. Amangkurat II renewed this with the VOC 1678, extending the terms so that the VOC could monopolize the trade of rice, sugar, textiles, and opium through some areas of Java such as Semarang, Batavia and the Priangan highlands, which became VOC territory. At the beginning of his reign, Susuhunan Amangkurat II (who ruled from 1677 to 1703) seemed entirely a creation of the VOC. Sultan Agung Tirtayasa of Banten accused Amangkurat II of Mataram of being a common subject of the VOC due to his close relations with that company in 1678 (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 103).

The next treaty was formed in November 1743 between Pakubuwana II and the VOC whereby full sovereignty over West Madura, Surabaya, Rembang, and Jepara was ceded to the company. One of the tragic moments for Mataram was the treaty of Giyanti in 1755, which separated the Mataram Kingdom into two Kingdoms, located in Yogyakarta and Surakarta. This treaty was signed by the VOC, Pakubuwana III as the ruler of Surakarta, and Hamengkubuwana I as the ruler of the other half of Java centred in Yogyakarta. Two further treaties divided Javanese territorial political power even more. The treaty of Salatiga (1757) separated the Surakarta Kingdom into two, with Pakubuwana III and Mangkunegara I (Raden Said from Yogyakarta) as heads under the design of VOC. In
1813, the Yogyakarta Kingdom was split under the British with Hamengkubuwana III (Mangkubumi) and Pakualaman I as heads. By this point, Western European countries were well established in terms of their economic and political advantages over Javanese people (Ricklefs, 2001). The age of colonization had truly begun.

The situation becomes more complicated because, from 1808, part of Java was under French domination, ruled by a Governor-General in Batavia, Marshal Herman Willem Daendels as the representative of Napoleon Bonaparte. In January 1811, Daendels imposed new treaties on sections of both Surakarta and Yogyakarta, which encompassed extensive annexations to Dutch government territory. At this historical moment, Javanese Kingdoms were weaker than ever because, in every district, the district ruler (a lord from a Javanese family line) was changed to an official of the European Administration, reducing the nobleman’s power and income.

In the following colonial regime, from 1811 to 1816, the British ruled Java with Thomas Stamford Raffles as Lieutenant-Governor. He too annexed many regions of Yogyakarta and Surakarta and, as mentioned above, had a role in splitting Yogyakarta into two political territories. In Raffles’ time, land rent (land tax), with the village as a primary unit of colonial administration, and the governmental bureaucratic machine were introduced (Ricklefs, 2001). This new policy was applied based on a European assumption of sovereignty and administrative authority throughout Java. According to Ricklefs (2001, p. 150), Daendels and Raffles are the most important figures in Indonesian history in shaping the colonial revolution.

From the era of colonial interventions to recent days, peasant movements arose to protest against colonialism, state policy and the capitalist system. In India, these arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century British imperialism (Bhalla, 1983). In Thailand, Buddhism influenced peasant movements to transpire against the Thai
government around the 1890s (Day & Reynolds, 2013). Peasant movements existed in Africa after colonization (Isaacman, 1990), similarly in Korea (Kim, 2013) and in the Dominican Republic against US occupation from 1916 to 1924 (Lundius & Lundahl, 2000). The Buddhism based Saya San movement in Burma agitated against the British (Aung-Thwin, 2003: 2008) and the peasant movement also erupted in Vietnam and the Philippines against French colonial rule and US occupation, respectively (Benda, 1965).

In short, the Samin community is one of the many peasant movements in the world against the negative impacts of the modern economic and political system. The Saminists are survivors. They survived the colonial era and, after Indonesian independence, the Sukarno and Suharto regimes and the post-Suharto period. As I interviewed the Saminists in Pati and Kudus, they struggled to disassociate themselves from the communist discourse that was constructed in the Suharto era (anonymous 2, 14, November 2015; Widodo, 1997; Patty, 1986, p. 69).

The issue for the Samin has been that of recognition. The ritual of the Samin marriage still has not been recognized by the Indonesian government which means that their children are not recognized by the Indonesian government as legitimate. Their religion has not yet been recognized by the government, which separates them from mainstream society. Even though they continue to be discriminated against, the Saminists have started to pay tax and function as Indonesian citizens (further discussed in Chapter 4).

However, in particular cases, the Samin have actively challenged external interventions. Around 2006, some Saminists protested against one of BUMN’s companies (Badan Usaha Milik Negara/a state-owned enterprise), Semen Gresik Corporation (now the Semen Indonesia Corporation) which tried to exploit karst (clay and limestone) around Mount Kendeng, Central Java, close to the Samin community. Protestors perceived this mountain as a source of natural springs for their agricultural livelihood. In contrast, other
Saminists have cooperated with the local government to preserve their culture by making their village a tourism site. Other Saminists have requested the government to recognize their religion. In short, in their interaction with the state, the Saminists are not fully integrated into one single and homogeneous movement.

The Saminists, then, have their heterogeneous ways of making adjustments to modernity, which is one of the main focuses of this research. More importantly, this current tradition is more complex than the tradition portrayed as existing in the colonial period as speculatively argued by King (1975) (using secondary data), and Benda and Castles (1969).

The main research question for this study is: How far do the Samin community persistently preserve and maintain their traditions amid modernity while being constructed by modernity at the same time? The research sub questions are: Why is the Samin community compatible with modernity? How is Samin discourse constructed by non-Saminists (e.g., scholars, the state, NGOs, and corporations)? These questions can be found in Chapter 5.

Both the Samin and modernity narratives are constitutively constructed by their positioning at a particular time and place in history. They are both ontologically presented in their contemporary context and in the past.

**Significance of the Study**

In this study, the complexity of the Samin community’s dealings with modernity is explained. This research challenges previous studies which define the Samin in the discourse of disciplines such as history, anthropology or social sciences. This study focuses on the knowledge of the Saminists themselves, which is always relative, changing and constructed constitutively by the narrative of modernity. The study is based on field research rather than a concern with a particular branch of social science theory, presenting
the voices of the Saminists themselves. Epistemologically, I argue that there is no theory precisely covering the complexity of the Samin community or of modernity because in terms of their encounter, both shape one another, constitutively in the disruption of the local/global distinction.

The Samin community have an ‘authentic’ tradition (in the ontological sense) and a religion which has a shared discourse and practice with Islamic mysticism (Sufism). They have operationalized their tradition and religion into birth, wedding, and death rituals and practices in the setting of modernity. This very small community is still discriminated against in terms of the mainstream social norms, economic welfare, and government administration and policy.

The ethnomethodological research mainly took place in the Samin community in Bombong-Bacem Village, Baturejo, Sukolilo, Pati, which is the biggest Saminist community and is compared and contrasted with other Samin communities (Blora, Bojonegoro, and Kudus) (Aziz, 2011; Ismail, 2012; Samiyono, 2010), one with strong involvement in the political economy as shown through its protests related to the government and corporations (PT Semen Indonesia, 2008 - 2010, and PT Indocement Tunggal Perkasa/Sahabat Mulia Sakti, 2011- the present in Pati, and PT Semen Indonesia 2010 - the present in Rembang). In tackling this issue, the Samin community works together with NGOs, scholars, and researchers to protect Mount Kendeng and maintain their agricultural livelihood. This case has exposed the Samin community in Pati to widespread attention throughout the national and international mass media as well as in social media (like Twitter and Facebook).

A further important reason for the study of the Samin movement is it is the longest-lasting Javanese movement that has been resilient and consistent in opposing the introduction of modern practices. Since the 19th century, the Samin movement has
consistently criticized modern practices, using various strategic actions including language
in ways that let them say exactly what they think without necessarily being understood by
their opponents, by creating double meanings and debating about what they consider
unacceptable using their own logic.

**Purpose of the Research**

This research aims to understand the process of the narrative of the Samin community to
survive in their dealings with modernity. It will discuss how the story of the Samin
movement has been told by Western modern scholars as well as presenting understandings
from within the community itself. The Samin emerged in modern discourse as perceived
within the Western narrative as ‘a traditional’ movement which was unique. However, this
uniqueness could not be qualified as distinct from most Javanese due to the fact that the
Saminists were part of Javanese society and constitutively, the product of modern
ambivalence.

My aim is not to seek the uniqueness of the Samin movement, but to open the
discussion about the complexity of the ongoing narrative of the Samin under the
circumstances of modernity, highlighting the Samin tensions with modernity and the
adaptability of the Samin amid modernity. There is a discourse of genealogy in the Samin
community which is related to religions, symbols, and metaphors, which is linked to a
modern discourse. Therefore, it is important to open the discourse, which is linked to the
Samin’s accumulated teachings, interpretation, collective memories, and its practice in the
present day. Accordingly, my aim is to understand their ontological being instead of
judging or framing them into an abstraction.

**Description of the Methodology**

My methodological position for this social research orientates my study to a way of
thinking about social worlds as inevitably complex and complicated, interconnected with
wider political, cultural and historical contexts. Following this, I set out the methodology and methods utilized to investigate my research question: *How far do the Samin community persistently preserve and maintain their traditions amid modernity while being constructed by modernity at the same time?*

In regard to this research question, I employ the qualitative method: discourse analysis and ethnomethodology to gain in-depth and comprehensive insights into the relations between the Samin community and modernity. Discourse analysis is very useful to disclose the imposition of modernity in the attempt to tame a group of people like the Saminists whereas ethnomethodology functions to touch on the Saminists’ lived experience and its meaning. Discourse analysis is a critical perspective to question the taken for granted reality, especially the imposing of modernity without necessarily being involved with the participants. The ethnomethodological research approach supports my participants’ voices to be heard and enables me to be involved with participants’ lived experience and to reflect upon the ambiguities and tensions inherent in the Samin identity formation. In ethnomethodology, researchers and the participants are in intersubjective relations and together construct the interpretation of social reality (i.e., data collection). The three research methods used were participant observation, semi-structured, in-depth interviews and archival data collection. Participant observation fieldwork produces deep, rich, broad and textured data (Geertz 1973).

The data collection and its interpretation from all these measures are rooted in Dilthey’s understanding of reality. According to Weinberg (2008, p. 29), Dilthey states that we do not perceive the meaning of people’s feelings, intentions, and thoughts but interpretively deduce them from what Dilthey called their public “expressions.” These expressions can be fleeting (such as hugs) or more enduring (such as rural peasant culture).
They may exhibit any manner of human concern. The more we know about the cultural context of an expression, the more fully equipped we are to interpret data.

Weinberg further illustrates Dilthey’s work by arguing that Dilthey portrays the human sciences as interpreting the meaning of expressions considering their relationship to other expressions and to the wider social wholes of which they form parts. Because our understanding of each of these elements can be informed only by our understanding of the others, interpretation is inevitably trapped within the horizons set by these culturally specific forms, or what came to be known as the hermeneutic circle. In short, the research in this study follows a cyclical process of data collection from the expression of lived experience or lifeworld with the verstehen (to understand or comprehend) method (Weinberg, 2008).

This verstehen method, which is used to seek the meaning of expression in social reality, is also highlighted in a collection of essays compiled in The Anthropology of Experience, edited by Turner and Bruner (1986). They contribute new direction points toward an understanding of experience as a continuous, ever expanding process of seeking meaning. They challenge the classical anthropological paradigms of static functionalism, social and cultural essences, and structural “research”. They propose a new paradigm of an evolutionary progression of flexibility and adaptation, change, and alteration, aligned with Dilthey’s work. They are variously concerned with describing how much anthropological research and interpretation is lacking in, or has lacked, depth and complexity, seeking thereby to establish a basis for a methodological approach which may provide the discipline itself with a more valid set of principles from which to assert the reliability and value of its endeavour. This is completed by an approach that might be described as the subject-object-in-motion strategy of analysis that seeks to discover the inter-relatedness of people and things, of experience and cultural production.
Furthermore, the strategy explores how we, at any given moment and in any given performance, are both producing and being produced, accepting that we are engaged in a perpetually emerging reality of our own making, a reality that is dynamic, flexible, and situational. This approach considers the display of experience, expression, and interpretation to cultural understanding of the lived experience of a person or a group of community.

Although their various essays are not all related to my dissertation topic, I will explore Turner’s argument on methodology as my affirmative stance. However, I do not perceive the Samin community as tribal, as Turner (1986) does. His colleague, Geertz (1960, 1981) in applying an ethnographic methodology in his two works The Religion of Java and Negara in Bali, does the same.

In contrast to both these researchers, I apply ethnomethodology instead of ethnography. What is interesting in this approach is the relations between a researcher and participants and how far a researcher becomes involved in participants’ lived experience and displays his work as an interpretation of the reflexive experience of the self. Both researcher and participants are constructing meanings in the fieldwork of experience. To quote Turner’s (1986, p. 33) methodological position:

Of all the human sciences and studies anthropology is most deeply rooted in the social and subjective experience of the inquirer. Everything is brought to the test of self, everything observed is learned ultimately “on his [or her] pulses.” Obviously, there is much that can be counted, measured, and submitted to statistical analysis. But all human act is impregnated with meaning, and meaning is hard to measure, though it can often be grasped, even if only fleetingly and ambiguously. Meaning arises when we try to put what culture and language have crystallized from the past together with what we feel, wish, and think about our present purpose in life. . . rubbing together of
the hardwood and softwood of tradition and presence is potentially dramatic, for if we venerate ancestral dicta, we may have to, so we dolefully conclude, jettison present joy or abandon the sensitive exploration of what we perceive to be unprecedented developments in human mutual understanding and relational forms.

Turner (1986, p. 40) explains further that, in the Dilthey’s phrase, meaning is produced by marrying present problems to a rich ethnic past, which is then infused into the “doings and undergoing” (Dewey’s phrase) of the local community.

Turner’s important contribution is social drama as the metaphor of the social reality. In other words, social drama is an analogy where social life is almost similar to a theatre performance. He argues that an anthropology of experience is located in certain continual forms of social experience, social dramas among them, and sources of aesthetic form, including stage drama. However, ritual and its progeny, notably the performing arts, derive from the subjective, liminal, reflexive, exploratory heart of social drama, where the structures of group experience (Erlebnis) are replicated, dismembered, remembered, modified, and mutely or vocally made meaningful. True theatre is the experience of “heightened vitality”. “At its height it signifies complete interpenetration of the self and the world of objects and events” (Turner, 1986, p. 43).

I set out to explore the lived experience of my participants by seeking ‘realities’ and meanings for individuals and communities at the micro level and situating this within macro environments, while acknowledging the constantly changing interrelationships between all these factors. Dilthey’s perspective supported me to consider the significance of the Samin community’s ethnicity in its complexity within modernity and to respond with sensitivity to the difficulties and internal struggles around the ongoing formation of the Samin ethnic identity, without generalization and stereotypification.
The social constructivist approach in the Dilthyan sense is the foundation of discourse analysis and ethnomethodology. It encourages greater sensitivity and curiosity to interpreting situations and circumstances, with a stronger focus on the relationships between individuals, society and the historical context. It promotes consideration of alternative perspectives of these situations rather than being trapped into everyday thinking in which knowledge is taken for granted and labeled, stereotyped as ‘natural’ or ‘common sense’. It is open to the presence of ambiguities and varied meanings in the formation of ethnic identity.

This is highly relevant to my research which explores the social, political, historical and cultural processes of the Samin identity formation and employs Barth’s ethnicity theory and Bhabha’s cultural theory to better understand the ambiguities and tensions between the Samin ethnic identity and the varied meanings of this identity as constructed within the context of modernity. My research attempts to contribute new insights into the Samin community by exploring the diverse narratives and lived experiences of my participants, as they are situated in particular times and places and in a cross-cultural atmosphere.

**Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is highly relevant to this thesis because it helps to uncover the operationalization of the discourse of Western modernity toward the Samin community. I employ discourse analysis to uncover the construction of the Samin community from non-Saminists such as scholars, NGOs, the state, corporations, and Javanese people. Discourse analysis draws attention to the existence of stereotyped categories in daily speech and texts. Discourse analysis also shows how language users in modern (non-Saminist) agencies classify behaviour, actions and attributes – all of which may be observable facts – in ways that express attitudes toward such facts (Chilton, 2005, p.24).
This strategy is important because discourse analysis can show how modernity, as represented by non-Saminists, exploits, imposes, and defines the construction of the Samin community as an object. In the perspective of post-colonialists like Bhabha (1994), discourse analysis sets an interpretation of the power relations between the colonizer and colonized.

Discourse analysis is important to this thesis because it is a form of inter-text related analysis of the ideas, statements, speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events, interviews, policies, of organizations and institutions. Potential data sets in discourse analysis include all forms of talk transcribed into written formats from audio or video recordings and a wide variety of written documents. Thus, discourse analysis data ranges from naturally occurring multiparty conversations in everyday and institutional settings to individual and focus group interviews. It also spans the analysis of documents, diaries, records, and newspaper items; media products such as political gatherings, speeches, or interviews; and, increasingly, visual materials and semiotic structures of place. Discourse analysis also places emphasis on the consideration of everyday language for its motivated and situated functions. The action orientation of discourse refers to the notion that people do things with words. The discourse researcher is interested in identifying persistent patterns in language use (Nikander, 2008, p. 415).

Nikander (2008, p. 414) explains that discourse analysis is often described as a methodology or as a theoretical perspective rather than a method. It is a general epistemological perspective on social life including both methodological and conceptual elements. Nikander (2008, p. 415) conceives that discourse analysis interrogates the nature of social action. It deals with how actions and/or meanings are constructed in and through text and talk. In practice, a discourse researcher looks for pattern and order in how text and talk are organized and for how intersubjective understanding, social life, and a variety of
institutional practices are constructed and reproduced in the ongoing process. How do a group of people, for example, make sense of their own identities, and how are collectives and groups—various types of “Us” and “Them”—discursively formed and maintained through text and talk.

A discourse researcher may also focus on historical and longer-term features of discursive formation. In general, topics such as the state apparatus culture, everyday descriptions, institutional practices, emotions, and identity are not investigated as abstract structures or as being separate from the interactions, conversations, and textually mediated practices that are an intrinsic part of their makeup. Instead, discursive researchers prefer to investigate these phenomena in terms of how they are talked into being as practical actions, and in relation to their social functions.

Thus, discourse analysis focuses on text or knowledge reproduction in order to uncover the truth of the world based on words (Foucault, 1980). In the context of post-colonialism, let us consider this at the larger scale of colonization, the discourse between the colonized and the colonizer. The tension between the status of colonized people’s narratives and the status of the narrative of Western European knowledge has been articulated in Edward Said’s popular work, *Orientalism* (1979). As Said also employs Foucaultian’s discourse analysis, he argues that Western scholars have been writing the narratives of colonized people within the discourse of Eurocentrism for the sake of power. Objectifying people in terms of orienting them as not belonging to Western Europe is a means for controlling the colonized people themselves. However, it needs to be noted that Said concentrates on the case of British imperialism in Africa and the Middle East, especially as represented in English literature.

Foucault’s and Said’s perspectives have reached Indonesia in a compelling study, written by Simon Philpott (2000). In the Suharto era, Philpott argues, Indonesia was
constructed by American orientalist discourse. Philpott radically deconstructs Indonesia as a state created in the post war era and argues that the nature of its formation was supported by American political scientists and later by Australian political scientists educated or influenced by American political scientists. I will not review Said’s argument and its development in Philpott’s work in detail because my point is to show that their work supports my methodological approach. In substance, their work is also similar to my own in that it is concerned with the tension between an existing culture and the arrival of an imposed culture and, in turn, the power of Western modern discourse and knowledge to construct reality for the sake of their own political interests. In the case of the Samin community of Javanese traditionalists, it is impossible to disregard Said’s work as one of the main sources of understanding Java. Most significantly, however, it is not worthwhile to differentiate between the orientalist and non-orientalist in black and white terms because both are constructed together.

As mentioned early in the introduction, the Samin movement is not an independent cultural community. In fact, this community is politically and socially defined by modernity, especially Western social science scholars. It is enclosed based on their framework of interest and knowledge to more easily map the Javanese populations and cultures. The Samin community, in this case, has always taken part in the history of resistance, accommodation, and appropriation to (legitimize) the narrative of the grand history of modernity. Modern history is constituted in human science frameworks which proceed from European assumptions and has recently emerged from a largely positivist framing (Foucault, 1989, p. 400-406). In this understanding, the existence of the Samin community and modernity are both ambivalent, operating in an ongoing process of power relations and constitutively constructed together.
Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is highly significant to this thesis because it advocates the Saminists’ meaning of expression of lived experience. Ethnomethodology assists to explore the world from the Saminist’s perception, in particular how the Saminists face, deal, view, and experience modernity in which they, since the beginning of their existence, are also being modernized in a different way. The Saminists have their own way of experiencing Western modernity by selectively constructing cultural material from the previous axial civilizations, the Javanese, Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic cultures and belief systems. Ethnomethodology supports the Saminists to speak about their everyday lived experience incorporated with modernity. Through my fieldwork and being part of their community, this was revealed to me.

Ethnomethodology is rooted in the phenomenological approach which is descriptive not explanatory or deductive (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000, p. 36; Neuman, 2000, p. 347-349). The goal of this method is to reveal the experience of everyday life as such, rather than enclosing this in hypotheses or speculating beyond its limits. Data is obtained based on a reflexive interpretation between the researchers and the object of the research (Morrow and Brown, 1994, p. 119).

Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 679-680) conceive that, from an ethnomethodological viewpoint, the social world’s facticity is completed by way of members’ interactional work. This work produces and maintains the accountable circumstances of their lives. Ethnomethodologists focus on how members “do” social life and document the distinct processes by which they, by their lived experience, construct and maintain the objects and presences of everyday reality.

Furthermore, Lynch, (2008, p. 716) elucidates that as a research project, ethnomethodology examines practical actions and language use in ordinary and
professional settings (while some approaches to ordinary language analysis, semiotics, and discourse analysis also do so). Of specific interest for ethnomethodologists is how professional (including academic) methods of reasoning, argumentation, and explanation relate to ordinary “common sense” methods. In the relationship process, ethnomethodologists suspend judgment on the supposed superiority of professional methods over their counterparts. They attempt to show how, in any given case, such methods constitute social orders. The orientation toward professional (including scientific) methods is one of indifference rather than scepticism or rivalry.

Ethnomethodology is different from ethnography. Francis and Hester (2004, p. 23) explain there are two key differences. First, ethnomethodology has quite a different take on the idea of observation; Second, and as a result of this, its investigations then take a different direction. With reference to the first point, in ethnography, observation is conceived as a sociological technique for gathering data. In this sense, the ethnographic tradition is based upon a distinction between the observer and the observed. Though the ethnographer may be a participant in the setting or activity under study, he or she is always an outsider in the sense that whatever he or she is doing as a participant is related to something else. The activity of observing sets the ethnographer apart from other people; the observer necessarily stands over and above that which is being observed. As a ‘participant observer’ the ethnographer trades upon his or her ordinary membership of the society in order to see and understand what people are doing in the situations being observed. No amount of methodological self-consciousness and professional systematization can alter the fact that this observer is utterly dependent on his or her ordinary observational competencies in order to see what ‘anyone can see’ is happening.

Yet, competent participation in any social setting demands that those involved pay attention to, and make sense of, what is happening around them. Consequently, observation
is not so much a special sociological or ethnographic technique as an inevitable and necessary part of everyday social life. Observation, in this sense, is a constitutive feature of the collaborative actions and interactions that comprise social life.

Ethnomethodology starts from the assumption that observing what is going on in the social world is something that anyone can do, and indeed it is something that everyone does as a matter of course, and then it seeks to explain how this is possible. Ethnomethodology, then, is an approach that takes seriously the implications of the routine observability of social activities. It starts from the fact that sociologists are, first and foremost, members of society like anyone else, equipped with the same kinds of social competencies that any member of society can be presumed to possess.

However, where conventional ethnography draws upon such competencies as an unexamined resource for sociological description, ethnomethodology turns its attention to such competencies as topics of inquiry in their own right. Its focus is upon the methods by which members of society are able to observe and recognize what is happening around them, and thereby know what they should do to fit their actions together with the actions of others. Another way of putting this is to say that the difference here between conventional ethnography (with sociological method) and ethnomethodology concerns the latter’s focus upon the ‘possibility’ of observation.

What does it mean to say that our interest as ethnomethodologists is in the ‘possibility’ of observations? For us this means two things. First, how is it that an observer, be it a sociologist or anyone else, is able to make sense of what they are seeing as this or that phenomenon. Second, how is the observed phenomenon produced or assembled in such a way that it is observable as the phenomenon it observably is? Ethnomethodology consists in observational studies of what is observably the case. It takes ordinary observations of social activities and asks: how is what is observably the case produced?
Ethnomethodology has a coherent relation with discourse analysis, both often being considered constructionist in their approaches. Ethnomethodology also has some affinity with a particular approach to discourse analysis that stresses the situated, rhetorical uses of knowledge claims. Ethnomethodologists and discourse analysts consider constructionist arguments as what G. Nigel Gilbert and Michael Mulkay (1984) call a “repertoire” that is used occasionally and circumstantially, instead of deploying the argumentative tropes associated with imagined realists, positivists, or objectivists (Lynch, 2008, pp. 718-719).

Discourse analysis focusses on the ways in which categories are proposed, promulgated, imposed, institutionalized, discursively articulated, organizationally established, and generally embedded in different forms of “governmentality” (an automatic system of power that can operationally force agencies to act based on the hierarchy of structure). For example, the Samin are being forced by the system of the nation-state to embrace religions officially recognized in Indonesia. Under the system of the nation-state, the Indonesian government functions to force or discipline the Samin in order to submit to the system. The way that the Indonesian government tries to control and manage the Samin community is a form of governmentality. The operationalization of power in the form of governmentality can be studied in the “micropolitics” of categories through ethnomethodology, with a focus on the ways in which the categorized appropriate, internalize, subvert, or transform the categories that are imposed on them (Brubaker, 2004, p. 13). The study of micropolitics concentrates on how a group of people respond to the form of governmentality imposed by the state apparatus. For example, in the fieldwork, I investigated how the Samin have become institutionalized by the Indonesian government and how the Samin accept government policy and are pleased to be controlled in their attitude, movement, and culture. I seek the answer from the Samin themselves about how they feel and perceive the Indonesian government policy.
In this dissertation, using discourse analysis, I investigate the politics of modernity through the state apparatus and corporations in the narrative which these systems impose on and govern the Samin community. The response of the Samin community to modernity is tackled with an ethnomethodological approach.

Data sources

As mentioned above, data for the ethnomethodological investigation was gained from the field research through participant observation. Participant observation is “a tool for collecting data about people, processes, and cultures in qualitative research” (Kawulich 2005, p. 1). This method is appropriate for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the physical, political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of participants. As a participant observer in this fieldwork, I needed to be aware of the differences between my own ‘reality’ and participants’ reality. Moreover, I needed to be aware of the critical distance between them (Geertz, 1973; Kawulich, 2005) as participant observation can neither entail complete immersion with ‘insider’ participation, nor unbiased observation.

Being a participant observer necessarily includes everyday life conversations, interviews, and engaging with the lived experiences of the participants. Field notes, journal entries, photos and videos are not merely data, but inexorably a form of analysis and interpretation, as the researcher builds understanding (Ricoeur, 1974). Contemporary data sources include emails, WhatsApp, SMS, and social media, which I also explored.

Interviews provide the opportunity for research participants to present their own narratives as they wish them to be heard and understood by the world. Methodologically, a narrative offers a way for participants to tell their stories and to make meaning by combining present and past experiences. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with participants individually and in groups with those who indicated an interest in such an interview. These semi-structured interviews improved the participant observation data and
supported the natural honest voices of participants in telling their narrative stories. I did not
conduct formal interviews because it would have been difficult to obtain data contingently
conditioned in the Indonesian and Javanese culture through this formal means.

Archival research was conducted in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Semarang, and Pati and
involved collecting secondary data from existing sources such as public library records,
census data, scholarly literature, newspaper articles, advertisements, raw video
documentaries, film, and historical records and literature. This secondary data is important
for further interpretation via discourse analysis. However, the discourse analysis approach
not only used historical data, but also fieldwork data.

Triangulation was achieved by the research methods of participant observation, semi-
structured interviews and the use of archival data. By engaging in a reflexive methodology
based on data collection through observing and critically reflecting on my interpretation as
‘co-worker’ with the participants, and by maintaining this reflectivity when interpreting the
data throughout the study, the rigor of the research was further enhanced (Alvesson &
Sköldberg, 2000).

This research was conducted with Saminists located in Bombong-Bacem Village
(Baturejo), Sukolilo, Pati District (Central Java). I also visited Samin communities in
Kudus, and Tanduran, Blora. Most Saminist informants remain anonymous with initials
and numbers instead of names, to protect their privacy. However, some names are
mentioned because these informants gave permission. This study is based on
approximately six months of fieldwork conducted between November and December 2015,
between April and May 2016, between July and August 2016, and in April 2017.

I communicated, observed and interviewed the Saminists (the key informants and
others, of all generations, women and men) directly in the field and further in Darwin,
Australia via mobile phone and social media such as Facebook (FB) and WhatsApp (WA).
I was surprised that I could attend and directly participate in various activities such as the life cycle ceremony of the 7th month of a first pregnancy, a wedding ceremony, a brokohan when someone was sick, and a brokohan death ritual. I also experienced working in a paddy field and guarded the field from rats attacking at night. I experienced the preparation and the starting point of a massive long demonstration march from Pati to Semarang regarding extraction for cement production. The march involved walking for about 80 km (49 miles) from Pati to Semarang to attend the judiciary process in the provincial court which was won by the protestors (and Saminists).

Unlike previous researchers (in the Sukarno era and the Suharto era) who had problematic access to the Saminists, in the post-Suharto era, I had better access due to the advantageous Indonesian democratic atmosphere of openness, and the environment of social media and the internet. To ensure the reliability of internet sources, I always double-checked data from the internet with the key Saminist informants whom I met during my fieldwork and with historical facts.

During these six months, I also interviewed non-Saminists who were involved with the Samin movement, especially those related to the earlier resistance against Semen Indonesia (2006) and current activists against any extraction in Pati. I also interviewed journalists from Suara Merdeka (in Pati), Mongabay.com (in Yogyakarta), and Satu Harapan.com (in Yogyakarta) who were involved directly in Samin issues.

I interviewed NGOs related to the Saminists in an informal way: ELSA6 (Lembaga Studi Sosial dan Agama), which handles the Saminists at the provincial level and the Satunama Foundation7 (literally, translated as One Name), which operates at the national level. I interviewed the chief of the Desantara Foundation8 (literally, translated as Interlinked Village) in Jakarta, the NGO dealing with the Saminists for the longest period

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6 See https://programpeduli.org/mitra/lembaga-studi-sosial-dan-agama-elsa-semarang/
7 See http://satunama.org/
8 See http://www.desantara.or.id/2008/04/a-brief-history-of-desantara-foundation/
of time. I interviewed SHEEP (Society for Health, Education, Environment and Peace)\textsuperscript{9} Indonesia in relation to a natural disaster around the Samin area. Via email, I also contacted the Sajogyo Institute\textsuperscript{10} to obtain data related to the Samin community, its agriculture and adat (custom) and the threats to indigenous people co-opted by the capitalist system. Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to contact AMAN (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (The Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago))\textsuperscript{11}. However, data was accessed through their website.

I interviewed a key staff member in the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs dealing with the Program Peduli (Care Program). This ministry supports NGO programs and distributes funds from the Asia Foundation and DFAT Australia’s bilateral aid program “Development assistance in Indonesia,” to communities in Indonesia including the Saminists. I also interviewed a staff member in the Ministry of Religious Affairs directly, and one in the Ministry of Education and Culture.

I interviewed representatives of the cement corporations (Semen Indonesia and Indocement) in a workshop held by the Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry in December 2015 and continued to obtain data. In this workshop, I also heard speeches from stakeholders, activists, scientists, and two key Saminists.


\textsuperscript{9} See https://www.sheepindonesia.org/id/
\textsuperscript{10} See https://sajogyo-institute.org/
\textsuperscript{11} See http://www.aman.or.id/
Researcher Reflection

I now reflect on my own experiences of the research process. I seek to discuss and share the unpredicted moments, the ambiguities, risks, confusions and excitement this research process has brought me over the past five years. This is my first experience in dealing with field research, previously I only conducted a study of the literature. I acquired knowledge from other scholars and researchers who had already experienced fieldwork. Even though it surprised me, investigating data in the field is very meaningful and deep. Most insightful was how I became part of the Samin community and, to some degree, maintained detachment.

This entire thesis process was like a lonely journey for me. It has been very challenging and exhausting for the last five years. During this time, I relocated away from my friends, family and university, travelled back and forth around six times to Indonesia during my field research, moved apartment, and faced family tragedies and illnesses, as well as the birth of my second child. In talking with PhD colleagues at our office the words sustained me: “doing a PhD is not everything. A PhD is important, but family is the most important”. This has helped to remind me of other moments of my life. The ‘ups and downs’ of life continue and the skills to adjust must also be continuously improved.

This thesis has opened my eyes to the enchantment of a world where the social, cultural, and political are not comprehensible through black and white binary reasoning, nor through rational or mathematical understandings. This world has its own rationality and mystery. This is why the \textit{verstehen} method was used. In Javanese culture, a person’s idea or discourse should be reflected in his/her actions and should inspire people to be better in their practical daily life. This is why many wise people who experience a deep lived experience are followed by people, yet they may have limited writing and speech. To be a philosopher in the Javanese sense does not necessarily involve writing a sophisticated
work. It means to demonstrate practical reasoning for humanity in the world (memayu hayuning bawana). I experienced unexpected events and needed to ‘go with the flow’. The unexpected were often the most revealing in the field. Some of the most memorable were a phenomenal demonstration, the Samin’s Long March from Pati to Semarang, and joining a marriage and a death ritual. I also experienced a trip to Mount Lawu with some Saminists as part of the ‘Samin’s pilgrimage’ (lapak tilas). All of these events enriched my data collection, especially for internalization of Samin’s teachings.

I had to suspend and bracket thinking of what ought to be and invite many possibilities about what is. This confirmed that I was responsible both to my participants and myself. This was part of my plan to gain natural and original data collection from participants which most often came out in discussions, such as everyday conversations in family gatherings, working in paddy field, and the Samin community discussions (rembug). Furthermore, I was open to new experiences and potential insights by living with Saminists under one roof and experiencing their everyday life which is very different.

In the eyes of people from the middle to upper social classes, the Saminists are mostly living in poverty like other peasant communities and labourers and belong to the lowest class in the social strata. There is rarely a rich peasant, farmer or Saminist, but some do exist. Most ‘rich Saminists’ spend their money on the birth ritual, wedding ritual, shadow puppet (wayang) performance, and teak (jati) furniture. Some also buy a car or motorcycle. Though they have money and the temperature in Pati, Kudus, and Blora is very high, none of the Saminists have air conditioning.

In addition, around where Saminists live, such as in Pati, the landowners and traders are richer than them. Yet most of the Saminists are still proud of their agricultural livelihood and in general with their identity. Saminists in every discussion, in their own
reflections, showed pride in their history and collective memory, though some of them live in poverty compared to traders, government officers, and factory labours.

A unique aspect of most Saminists is that every one of them has the right to criticize and at the same time they have the freedom to choose their own reflection and make decisions because they have what is called “rasa” to guide them. *Rasa*, in the Western mind can be understood as a “spiritual inner feeling,” a “sixth sense” or “the sound of the heart”. *Rasa* is part of their guidance; it tends to create diverse orientations for different Saminists. It is unique in the sense that, to have “rasa”, a Saminist needs a deeper reflexive lived experience. Furthermore, living with the Saminists, they treated me just like family (*sedulur*). They deeply respect non-Saminists.

I also experienced moments of uneasiness, awkwardness, feeling out of place, being self-conscious and apprehensive. Participants were not familiar with me. They were very new to my life. I needed to see them as they are, not through the window of my perception. They needed to be understood as people with dynamic complex lives, and broad interests and experiences, not solely as resources for my research goals.

In conducting a limited number of semi-structured interviews with my participants, the interview came with conventions that are generally understood between both parties. The researcher poses the questions, the participant answers and then waits for the next question to be posed and sometimes explores the question more deeply before moving to the next question. Participant observation fieldwork was more intensive and more time-consuming than I originally anticipated. It was often challenging to stay focused for long periods of time and sometimes there were entire days when circumstances, made it impossible to record discussions or write field notes. One example was when hiking to Mount Lawu or travelling in a car with participants. Learning how to engage with them and ask questions for the purposes of the research was very much tricky and exhausting. I needed to
demonstrate my genuine interest in their lives in order to establish good relations with them through trust and openness. My return fieldwork trips were very important to show my interest, honesty, and commitment in that our engagements were not only for a short time.

I have been cautious, sympathetic and sensitive in dealing with participants’ lived experience. I needed to collect those aspects of people’s lives that were appropriate to record for a broader audience and to distinguish those which should be kept private and personal. In this research, I am representing the lives of people who have previously been in positions of significant marginalization, discrimination, and emotional vulnerability.

I am aware that this historical vulnerability might have played a role in terms of a sense of caution when people told me their stories and opinions. Participants told me that they needed to speak for themselves to the public in order to be recognized and known. This formed part of their survival and kept their story alive. The Saminists have received much support from activists, NGOs, and scholars because they are iconic figures of a social movement. Their performances enlarge the awareness of their difference and cultural ‘uniqueness’ compared to other communities in Indonesia. Their movement is apolitical, but at the same time part of a political movement because, though they do not think politically, their action is political with many supporters.

Many people like my colleagues, especially, International Relations scholars challenged me with questions. “Why are you writing a thesis on the Samin community when your major is in International Relations (IR)?” “Which section of your thesis is about IR?” “Are you advocating for the Samin community?” In fact, the first two questions can be answered by another. “Is there any International Relations?” I have studied IR for almost twenty years, but what I studied was always bound by Western collective memory and history. The history of IR theories lacks the story of non-Western collective memory
and history. IR theories are preoccupied by an international system of states as the product of modernity. IR theories are rooted in many disciplines of the social sciences and humanities such as sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, and social psychology, which are the products of the scientific human of modern times.

This is why this research discusses modernity and its challenges, one of which is the existence of Saminists. Furthermore, a reflexive question for IR scholars is “What is IR’s boundary?” Although I am not positioning myself as an advocate for the Samin community, during my study, my time was primarily spent with Saminists who opened their lives, homes and families to me. This has built a strong connection and impression.

My participation and observations were also initially limited as I was restricted in the engagement and interpretation available to me in social encounters, such as understanding speech acts and Saminist’s language games. At the same time, however, due to the ongoing political and cultural debates and tensions, especially around language, expressed through the dichotomization of Javanese-Indonesian and Javanese-Samin identity, communication in Indonesian had a somewhat politically detached form of expression for some participants.

As I noted, not all participants were content about speaking in Indonesian to me, though they could. During my fieldwork, I lived with Saminists who could mediate between myself and other Saminists. Though I am Javanese, my Javanese language is slightly different with the Samin version of Javanese. However, I could still manage because most of my Javanese is similar to the Samin version. Being with a mediator from the Saminists and my Javanese language skill offered me easier access to obtain data.

**Chapter Outline**

Chapter 1 has explored the methodological positioning of the research project, including discourse analysis and ethnomethodology, which are utilized to address the research
question. I have employed the arguments of Eisenstadt, Turner, Barth, Bhabha, and Ramadan. Borrowing the framework of Eisenstandt, I have argued that there are many modernities and that the Saminists are modernized in their ways to survive. The exploration of the Saminists’ ways as a situational, dynamic and complex community is supported by Turner’s concept of experience, Barth’s concept of ethnicity, Bhabha’s concept of cultural hybridity and Ramadan’s concept of tradition. In addition, I have briefly described the relationship between the Samin community and modernity at the time of colonization and in the post-colonial era.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the Samin’s teachings as the contestation between the Javanese discourse and Islamic Javanese discourse. I argue that the Saminists are positioned within the contestation of many discourses such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Javanese tradition and Islamic mysticism, as indicated in their shared symbols and metaphors. In this chapter, I focus on the Samin’s worldview, its relationship with Javanese tradition and Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings, based on modern Javanese literature as Hindu and Buddhist influences have already been explained by other researchers. It is explained that the Saminists themselves, in order to maintain their identity and existence, struggle to purify Javanese tradition from outside influences, especially modern Javanese, Islam and modernity. These layered discourses construct Samin’s teachings as malleable, fluid and adjustable across time and space. Based on this argument, Samin’s teachings can survive into future generations.

Chapter 3 focuses on the practise of Samin’s teachings as a distinct Javanese ethnicity. This chapter explores the reproduction of their cultural identity, not only based on their internal interactions, bloodlines of the family, history, and geographical position, but also their social interaction with non-Saminists and modern life. In social interaction, the perceptions of non-Saminists about the Saminists justify the Saminists’ tradition.
Saminists’ lived experience in everyday life is the reflection of Samin’s teachings and their reproduction of collective memory. This chapter is based on my fieldwork during 2015-2016. I illustrate the complex and dynamic process of the pre-birth and wedding ceremonies, agricultural livelihood as their economic well-being, and death ritual. By living with modernity and interacting with modernized Indonesian people, their traditions are also situationally transformed in an ongoing process of adaptation and adjustment. Some traditions change and some remain.

The practise of Samin’s teachings in everyday life is also reflected in the social political dimension. Chapter 4 explores the position of the Saminists related to elements of modernity: how the discourses of the state and institutionalized religion that began in the colonial era and have persisted in the new state of Indonesia were imposed on the Saminists. The discussion details the response of the Saminists in dealing with this discourse.

Chapter 5 covers the Saminists in the post New Order (post-Suharto) era. They experience freedom of expression. In dealing with modernity they construct themselves in a situation more conducive to their own culture than before. This chapter provides the Saminist communities’ perceptions of their interaction with modern agencies such as NGOs, the Indonesian state, and corporations. The understanding of the Saminists in the contexts of colonialism and the Sukarno and Suharto eras is described as it has adapted to the context of a globalized world. This chapter shows how the non-Saminists such as NGOs, the state apparatus, and corporations attempt to construct the Saminists and what they think and how the Saminists also attempt to construct themselves based on their own ways.

Chapter 6 offers a summary of the role of Samin teachings in the contemporary world. A process is outlined for creating new interpretations of Samin teachings which are
related to different contemporary issues. These new interpretations are a hybridity, expressing the tension between the Saminists and modernity. Even though retaining the same principles, the Saminist discourse and practices are intertwined with many other new discourses such as ecofeminism, a new social movement, and modernism (the Western ideology). The point made is that they still can persist in dealing with modernity by the process of tension and adaptation.
Chapter 2 The Narrative of the Samin: How is Samin Surosentiko’s Worldview Positioned between the Javanese Discourse and the Islamic Discourse?

Introduction

The discourse of the Samin movement has been and remains conceptualized by some Orientalists and Indonesianists. There are Indonesian scholars who have written about this movement in the form of doctoral theses and in local and national journal articles. They attempt to theorize and define the Samin movement. Their work has influenced the academic landscape in which the Samin is explained. They are perceived to have authority to define Samin Surosentiko’s discourse. They can decide the discourse of who is a Saminist and who is not and what the Samin community culture is and how they perceive the world. I have discussed their arguments and narrative story in Chapter 1. In this Chapter, I will not repeat their work. Instead, I will show my findings from my literature study and fieldwork and elaborate them with approaches of Western ontological philosophers, anthropologists, historians, philologists, the scholars of religious studies, and other scholars who have concern with this topic.

This chapter is important because first, it provides the theoretical framework from the Samin’s worldview that will be operationalize further in the following chapter. This worldview is a contested discourse between the dominant cultures of Javanese and Islam. Defining the Samin community, whether in terms of Java or Islam, imposes a modern discourse by scholars. It is a strategic action by the hegemony towards the community so as they are easier to discipline. Through the perspective of this discourse, the Samin community are objectified in a narrative of modernity. However, the response of the Samin

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community is understood as an element of resistance or liminality. It is an enigmatic stillness that describes the present, in which the very writing of historical transformation becomes uncannily visible (Bhabha, 1994, p. 224).

Second, to open the landscape to any possibility of discourse, the Samin community is in what Bhabha (1994) and Turner (1986) call “liminality” or “liminal space”. Liminal space is a space of the in between. It is a physical, mental, and spiritual transitition of space. In the post-reformation era (post-Suharto regime), the term “the Samin movement” or “the Samin community” has become popular in the public sphere, triggered by the riot of people defending Mount Kendeng in 2006. It was a moment signaling the rise of new social movement and narrative to protect Mount Kendeng from the threat of cement corporations.

If scholars and others who are concerned about this community are not aware of the many discourses and narratives written during the colonial and post-colonial periods, they will be misled. The Samin today are neither the Samin of the past nor purely the Samin of today itself; they live neither here nor there but in a liminal position in between space and time. Therefore, scholars, interested people and the Samin themselves should not essentialize the Samin community as a contemporary social movement against the cement corporation, industrialization, and the capitalist system in general. This understanding is not given, but socially and politically constructed. In addition, it is important to investigate the narrative of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings because these teachings are the self-ascription of the Samin community. The problem is how much researchers and scholars do understand about Samin Surosentiko’s teachings and its constructed discourse.

Related to this constructing of the Samin narrative, there are many questions that need to be addressed further. Where did Samin Surosentiko’s discourse come from? Did Samin Surosentiko submit to God or was he an atheist? Why did the Samin community
only incorporate Javanese culture and exclude outsiders? All these questions are supposed to have comprehensive answers which need to be carefully considered. Discourse analysis will be applied here.

Third, we cannot simplify the Samin movement merely into a narrative of a new social movement with only a cultural domain, especially in the context of the Samin community’s political ecology, which is a very popular approach today. I argue in this chapter that Samin Surosentiko’s teachings are more complex. Essentializing the Samin in a narrative of political ecology is inadequate. There is a tension, ambiguities, hybrid culture, and layered discourse in the Samin community between the dominant traditions of Javanese mysticism and Islamic mysticism (especially Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings) in a bigger picture of an imposed narrative of modernity (see Chapter 1 on the Theoretical Framework).

The ethnomethodology approach confirmed that the Saminists selectively justify themselves in the narrative of Javanese culture. However, a Javanese cultural discourse is also a creative construction of the Saminists themselves, situationed by their liminal condition. In addition, the constructed discourse of the Javanese cultural narrative is also a contested discourse, which depends on any groups of Javanese people’s self-ascription, as mentioned before in the theoretical framework in Chapter 1.

This chapter is divided into six parts. The first explains the meaning of the word Samin in Samin Surosentiko’s teachings, based on his own understanding. The second describes the Samin’s principles. The principles indicate whether a person is a Saminist or not. The third categorizes the types of Saminists based on their response to the Samin’s teachings and their interpretation of themselves, from the Dutch colonial era to the fall of the Suharto regime. The fourth reviews the degree of Samin’s teachings in Javanese mystical discourse. The fifth outlines the degree of Samin’s teachings in Islamic mysticism
Sufism). Within this section the views of critics of some of the orthodox Muslim perspectives are also presented. The sixth part describes the position of the Samin discourse in the debate between the orthodox Muslim discourse and the Seh Siti Jenar’s discourse.

The purpose of this chapter is to point out the complexity of the discourse of Samin’s teachings, where, while unique, Samin’s teaching shares values and principles with some Islamic as well as Javanese values and principles within the construction of modernity. I argue that even though both the Saminists and some orthodox Muslim groups disagree about the idea of their sharing of values and principles, according to discourse analysis, the connection between Javanese and Islamic mystical traditions is the source of authenticity for the Samin’s teachings and practices. For example, the early Islamic preachers, around the 14th century, taught Islam in the practice of Islamic mysticism commonly called Sufism or tariqa. This meant to know the self as when we know the self we know God. This was done by contextualizing the teachings with cultural contexts (Javanese and other existing cultures) at that time on the island of Java.

It is impossible to split Islam from the Javanese culture because both have already been blended together since the 14th century in this region. Javanese culture and Islam have been incorporated and blurred into each other (Pigeaud and Graaf, 1974; Muljana, 2008; Bonang, 2007; Lombard, 2008abc; Anasom, 2002; Ricklefs, 2008; Laffan, 2011; Daliman, 2012; Mulkhan, 2015; Sunyoto, 2012, 2016). Islamic Sufism, which was contextualized within the existing cultures such as the Sundanese and Javanese, also manifested as movements and discourses which challenged modernity with the arrival of Western Dutch colonial power (Kartodirdjo, 1966, 1978; Millie, 2014, 2017). For example, the wayang (shadow puppet) Bima story that has existed until today, has its roots in Islamic Sufism, Javanese tradition, and Saminism.
I am reluctant to use the term syncretism as this is an ‘invented’ Western discourse, a popular academic term found in a Western academic world order. Instead, I will focus on the terms of shared values and the principles or intersections of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings with the influences of the Islamic mysticism of Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings and the Javanese culture. The main argument of this chapter is to understand the Javanese culture (as the embodiment of the Samin discourse) as very malleable, and similar to Islamic mysticism, in particular, Sufism.

The Javanese cultural tradition has many similarities with the Islamic Sufism tradition: they both share values and principles to achieve real ultimate inner peace. However, they also to some degree have different practices in the context of life cycle rituals, prayers, places of worship, and expressions of language. Acknowledging the similarities and differences of their discourses is important in understanding the complexity of the construction of the Samin’s teachings (Hutomo, 1996).

**The Meaning of the Name, Samin**

The Saminists or Samin people are also known by other names: *wong sikep, sedulur sikep, wong paniten* or *wong dam*. I argue that the term Samin is flexible and can be interpreted in Javanese discourse as well as in Islamic mystic teachings, as explored further below. In this understanding, language is very important to seize the complexity of the Samin movement. There are many interpretations in the Samin’s language games and their symbols, whether in the discourse of Javanese or of Islam.

In the Samin oral historical context of Javanese, Samin’s father, Samin *sepuh* (old and wise person), Raden Surowijaya, changed his son’s name from Raden Kohar to Samin. In Blora, Samin Surosentiko continued his father’s struggle and became a Javanese mystical teacher named variously Surontika, Surontiko and Surosentiko. The term “Raden” indicates a Javanese noble title (Hutomo, 1996, p. 13-14; Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 210)
whereas the term “Kohar” was a Muslim name. The word Qahhar (قاهر) is understood to be one of the 99 names of Allah (God) in the Islamic tradition. It means “subdue” (Schimmel, 1989, p. 26) and is a famous name in this tradition.

Based on the name “Raden Kohar”, I conclude that the life of Samin Surosentiko and his family was constructed by Javanese and Islamic discourse. Most importantly, the Javanese noble commonly, during the Dutch colonial era, studied at the pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) because there were no alternative schools (Ricklefs, 2007; 2008). In addition, the Mataram Kingdom was specified in the Islamic discourse as a Sultanate (Kesultanan) (Woodward, 2010). If we follow this context, Samin Surosentiko was a Javanese Muslim who criticized the orthodox Islam discourse and its attributes. He was close to the Sufism movement in the peasant movements that were set up and developed by the end of the 19th century (Kartodirdjo, 1966; 1978). He was closer to Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings than to orthodox Sufism. This idea will be explained further, especially Samin Sursentiko’s criticism of authority and hierarchy in terms of faith and the journey to God in orthodox Islamic discourse. In this context, the Samin’s teachings are positioned in the discourse of Javanese Islam and can be understood as liminal.

Samin Surosentiko was the second son of Raden Surowijoyo, who was related to the Islamic noble, Kyai Keti, in Rajegwesi, Bojonegoro. Kyai Keti was also related to Pangeran Kusumaningayu (Raden Mas Adipati Brotodiningrat). Pangeran Kusumaningayu was a ruler in the small sub-district of Ponorogo between 1802 and 1826 (Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 210; Faturrohman, 2003, pp. 16-18; Hutomo, 1996, p. 14; Ba'asyin, 2014, p. 20). The Samin family sought to escape from the noble and Islamic labels in order to become part of the Javanese rural community. This was one of the reasons that Samin’s father changed his original name which was too noble and too Islamic, into “Samin”. He did so at his residency in Ploso Kedhiren village, Randublatung, which is now located in the
southern part of the Blora regency/district. His new name brought him easy access to the local rural Javanese community which was not a Muslim (orthodox) community, but mostly related to the *abangan* Javanese; the majority of which were peasants (Pranowo, 2011; Beatty, 2003, p. 28; Geertz, 1960, p. 6).

What Samin did is now usually called *merakyat*, which refers to the desacralization of aristocratic power in many areas, such as politics, religion, and many other social sectors to more easily intermingle with the rural Javanese community. In his time, Samin was not a poor peasant because his ancestry was noble. However, he lived among the lower class of the rural community. He was wealthy enough to have six cows and five acres of land (Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 210; Giap, 1969a, p. 65; Hutomo, 1996, p. 14). This story was also clarified by many Saminists recently in Pati and Kudus. In addition, the first generation of Saminists in Pati, even though some of them did not meet Samin Surosentiko, were also not poor. Therefore, it would be misleading to say that during the Dutch colonial rule, the Saminists lived their life in poverty.

The name Samin is still identified as an Islamic name. Ba’asyin (2014, p. 120) speculates that it is close to the term *Saman* which is popular in Islamic Sufism. The term *Saman* refers to a *Sammaniyya* tariqa (a school of Sufism). Such Sufism spread from Aceh to Java. However, this is speculation. *Sammaniyya* tariqa’s teaching was close to the *wujudiyah* (ontological/existential-spiritual teaching) Sufi doctrines which had a dominant influence in Southeast Asia, particularly in northern Sumatra, by the early 16th century. The efforts of two Acehnese scholars devoted to al-Arabi’s teaching, Hamzah al-Fansuri and Shams al-din al-Sumatra, were dedicated to interpreting the *wujudiyah* doctrine; if we trace back both of them, their works were influenced by al Hallaj, an Islamic Persian mystic (Chalmers, 2007, p. 389-390).
The *wujudiyah* doctrine in Java was spread by Seh Siti Jenar around the 15th century. Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings have intersections with Samin Surosentiko’s later teachings. Samin studied in a kind of Islamic spiritual school, almost like a *pesantren*, called “*perguron Adam*” in Klopodhuwur, Blora (Hutomo, 1985, p. 21). The Samin followers called him *Ki* or *Kyai* which are titles for an educated, wise and mystical teacher (Hutomo, 1996. p.13-14). All nobles could read and write and were educated. This all points to the impossibility of Samin Surosentiko being an uneducated person.

In fact, Saminist informants in my field research told me that they were forebears from the Mataram Kingdom of Solo. There was a diversity of nobles in Mataram Kingdom. Some were rebellious and others not; some were opposed to the system of the sultanate and the cooperation between the Mataram Kingdom and the Dutch colonial rulers, while others were not. Samin Surosentiko was one of the Javanese nobles who were against the corrupt monarchical system and its cooperation with colonial rulers. His thought is in line with nobles such as Ki Ageng Pengging in Demak Kingdom and Ronggowarsito in Mataram Solo Kingdom. However, there was no clue in Samin Surosentiko’s bloodline about exactly which noble family he was related to.

Based on the Saminists’ understanding I gained in fieldwork, the term Samin itself is derived from the Javanese language game of *kerata basa*. It is also called *jarwodhosok/jarwo dosok* or *kirotoboso/kiratabasa/kirata basa/kerta basa*. *Kerata basa* is important for the Saminists because it is part of their selective identity to distinguish themselves from modern (general) Javanese, Muslims, and other ethnicities; the Saminists place *kerata basa* at the centre of ethical and spiritual knowledge and practises. *Kerata basa* is speculative word play, but it still makes sense, it is reasonable and understandable. *Kerata basa* resembles a form of etymology. The power of *kerata basa* centralises on the subjective preference of *rasa/rahsa* (*inner feeling*) or personal spiritualism (Endraswara, p.
It is the expression of the Javanese oral language game for moral, ethical, and mystical educational teachings as well as criticism of Islamic formalism or orthodox Islamic teachings. Kerata means giving a meaning regarding the sound of pronouncing or the syllable (negesi tembung manut pepiridaning wandane); basa means language (oral and written). Kerata basa refers to reading between the lines, where language can have more than one meaning. Kerata basa can be a phrase, clause, or sentence, intended to provide a double meaning.

The most popular pattern of kerata basa uses combination of the last syllable of the first clause/phrase and the last syllable of the second clause/phrase. For example, the word, gusti. Gusti can be understood as God’s existence inside His creature that associated to the most noble person or a person with the highest status in the religious sense or in the political sense, namely, lord/king/community leader. In kerata basa, gusti is rendered from the verb “bagusing ati” which literally means a process of achieving the beauty of the heart. In its flexible and contextual meaning, gusti means a personal struggle (will) for becoming kind-hearted, polite, civilized, and for attaining the highest wisdom.

In Javanese folklore, the word gusti is directed to a powerful person as an advice: “The lord (king/leader) should have a good heart.” A good heart means this person has a strong rasa that is connected to God’s existence. This wisdom is the oral understanding of Javanese folklore where a king should express a good heart to his people. In short, there are double meanings in the word gusti: a leader/lord/king representing God’s existence and kind-hearted.\(^{13}\)

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\(^{13}\) Another example is the word of guru. Guru literally, is a master or a teacher. In kerata basa, guru becomes digugu lan ditiru, which means a person is signified to be followed and imitated because of his/her good personality and attributed as a wise person. Therefore, the double reading of guru consists of the guru itself as a professional position and the profound meaning of kerata basa of guru, who appears to be a good person or a wise person who can be an example of good (ethical) life experience; another example, sepuh means an old man. In kerata basa, sepuh becomes sadane ampuh which means an experienced person in life where his/her words (saying) are mystically powerful (a kind of a spell/mantra). This person is a highly respected person. He/she is usually an old, knowledgeable, mystically spiritual, and wise person. Therefore, the double meaning of sepuh is directed to an old person and to a mystical person with profound knowledge.
Kerata basa can be used in almost every context such as referring to a part of the human body such as sirah (head) = isine rah/mberah which means inside of the head there many things (Miyake, 2014). Therefore, the literal meaning is the head itself as a part of the physical body, while the deep meaning refers to intelligence, wisdom, and mystical knowledge.

Kereta basa is significant because Javanese language is full of mysticism and ethical lessons. Beatty (2003, p. 41-42) explained:

Another technique of explication is a form of wordplay called kereta basa. Here, one takes some word or syllable, and either constructs an etymology or finds in one’s scheme some key word with which it rhymes. The word is then taken to have this meaning. One example already given is nabi (prophet). Its second syllable -bi is found (almost) in bibit (seed), so nabi means (tegese) seed. Sego golong, the packaged rice, rhymes with bolong (hole); thus, commonly, signifying the nine orifices of the body. The nine orifices, in turn, are guarded by (or, for some, merely symbolize) the Nine Saints credited with spreading Islam in Java. This much is common knowledge. But for the mystics these quasi-historical personages are merely symbols in turn: waliyullah, saint or friend of God, rhymes with and ‘means’ polah (action/doing), a key term in their ethical system. Some of the puns are widely known even though they are quite complicated and can lead to more deep discussion. For example, the word for human being, manungsa, means manunggal ing rasa: to be as one in feeling-intuition. In other words, all men are the same at the level of feeling; more profoundly, all men are united in their indwelling divine rasa.

14 In addition, kerata basa also exists in Sundanese language expression and is made by dividing each word into syllables, which can be interpreted as what the interpreter wishes. In Sundanese language, calana (pants) = dipancal salilana Calana (pants) is understood as always press down on with foot” (Sudaryat, 2015, p. 128). In Javanese Islamic mysticism (tasawuf) there are kerata basa for mystic purposes: ngalah is “nga” (goes to/a journey to/seize to) and “Allah” (God) and kendhuren (a gathering) refers to kendhung rukon ngerencangi which Sunan Kalijaga (one of the Nine Saints) interpreted as let us help each other by giving out something in harmony (Kim, 1996, p. 121).
Beatty argued that *kerata basa* is a kind of Javanese wordplay. He quotes an earlier authoritative philological figure of Indonesia, Pigeaud (as cited in Beatty, 2003, p 42):

*Kerata basa*, (like numerology), is a way of connecting diverse realms and establishing correspondences. Perhaps one should say recognizing correspondences since many of these are felt to be real, not imagined. In fact, the goal of much mystical discussion is to reveal the interconnectedness of things, to realize that ‘the cosmos is one community’. Both techniques of interpreting numerology and *kerata basa* have the effect of synthesizing or syncretizing disparate materials by identifying common denominators. This procedure also permits a divergence of opinion and interpretation within a common ritual language.

I agree with Beatty’s (2003) conclusion that *kerata basa* is related to mystical symbols and meanings where the *kerata basa* procedure depends on the person’s interpretation by using his *rasa* (inner feeling) as a divine tool to comprehend words by linking some of the syllables with an underlying meaning. The rules about using *kerata basa* are flexible, not always following the most popular pattern where the last syllable of the first clause/phrase is connected with the last syllable of the second clause/phrase. Meanings can also be revealed by interpreting the last syllable of the second clause/phrase only. In sum, *kerata basa* is an oral speculative utterance of Javanese language expression which very much depends on the person’s subjectivity, *rasa*, and knowledge to express deep meanings.

There are many examples of *kerata basa*. The *kereta basa* in the Saminist’s realm of wisdom: *tani* (farming activity) is *metani* (to arrange, neatly—also implying managing the heart); *Yai* (God) refers to *sing iso ngayai* (implying ‘God’ or anybody who can protect, secure, look after, or create peace); *udeng* (head cover) means *mudeng* (understand), *bumi* (earth) means *dimini* (preserve) or *ibu pertiwi* (spiritual motherland) or *mlebune diemi-emi*
(a husband’s penetration of his wife should be done gently/lovingly); lemah (soil) means mlumah (recumbent—lying in the missionary position/a woman underneath a man); pari (rice before manufacture) means parian (a way of justice), kuku (nail) means kukuh (persistence); poso (fasting) means nopo-nopo kepekso (endure or restrain from everything that is desirable); geni (fire) means kudune sing tegen pikirane wani sekiro kuat tenagane (strong in minds and principles and bravely followed by power) and so on.

In line with the idea of the Samin’s worldview, kerata basa in the Suluk Gatholoco\(^\text{15}\) is shahada (Islam testimony). Shahada is spoken and written as sadat (Islam testimony -- There is no god but Allah (One God) and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah), split into “sah (pisah)” and “dat (adat).” Pisah means a part or split/separate and adat means customary rules. This was explained to me in the context of death when the soul and the body split. In this process, the Muslims go to Heaven and the infidels as the enemy of God go to hell. The term sadat in this Suluk is not Tauhid testimony in regard to the orthodox Islamic discourse that “there is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God”. Rather, it is a critique directed to pious or orthodox Muslims (santri) about the omnipotence of God. According to santri, God has enemies, called infidels. Suluk Gatholoco challenges santris’ teaching, raising questions about the supremacy of God. For instance, is it reasonable that God, the creator of everything, creates infidels to reject and oppose Him? (Anderson, 1982, p.40-41)\(^\text{16}\). Regarding this understanding, it can be concluded that santri should not question God’s power.

\(^{15}\) Suluk Gatholoco/Gatoloco is a Javanese poem that was controversial and raised eyebrows. It was a Javanese Sufi mystical work in the mid-nineteenth century. The poem consists of debates between Gatholoco and groups of pious Muslims. Most of these encounters discussed definitions of the person in a physical, economic, legal and spiritual sense. It posits as the defender of the Javanese tradition from the cultural invention of Arabic Islam and Western tradition (Anderson, 1981, 1982; Day, p. 25-26).

\(^{16}\) 50. Answer said the santri three: “Our bodies mingled with the earth are found, While these our senses facultative, Together with our Light Of Life, are by our souls transported up into The highest sphere of Heaven’s bliss, Led by the Angel Gabriel.
I agree with Boogert’s (2015, p. 207-210) and Beatty’s (2003) conclusions that *kereta basa* is exegesis in the sense that it is also subjective speculation and random syllable word order such as abbreviations that are centred in *rasa* (spirituality). *Kereta basa* can be directed at a critical interpretation of a mainstream text of orthodox Muslims in order to seek the profound meaning. In the *Suluk Gatholoco* mentioned above, the discourse has an esoteric and theological meaning. In this regard, *kerata basa* is a linguistic expression of the secret and esoteric meaning for Javanese wisdom.

The word “Samin” in the rules of *kereta basa*, consists of the words “*sami sami amin*” or “*tiyang/wong sami amin*” (Ba’asyin, 2014, p. 119-122; Susilo, 2003) or “*sami

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51. “The souls of pious Muslims who
Fulfill the five salat, and persevere
In conscientious praying find
Acceptance with the Lord.
And those who keep the fast, and with untroubled hearts
Devoutly the kitab recite,
They're all transported up to Heaven.

52. “They are beloved of Allah, for
The Lord's commandments they obey always.
All that we've mentioned up to now
Are His rewards to us.
As for the souls of unbelievers, who reject
The sarak of the Messenger,
They're plunged deep into blackest Hell.

53. “They have denied the Messenger!
Such souls are surely enemies of God! ”
Quickly Ki Gatholoco said:
"It seems that in your view Allah has enemies, whom you call infidels.
If so, you're surely questioning
The omnipotence of Hyang Widi—

54. His universal order too!
The infinite variety of things
Is his creation. After all,
Who made the infidels?
Who gave them life, who granted them their measure of
Good fortune and adversity?
Who else but Lord Allah alone?

55. “Suppose Lord Allah really had
As enemies such renegades of God,
It would have been far better not
To have created them
At all! Thus would He have no enemies! By your
Own argument, your Allah must
Be very stupid, lacking sense,
sami tiyang/wong/manungso’’ (Hutomo, 1983). However, it has a better fit with sami sami amin.

The meaning of sami sami amin is one of the important principles in the Samin community. Based on the equality principle of human beings (tiyang/wong/manunggso), human beings are born into the same humanity (universal human right principles); therefore, human beings live together in the world with the right to equality. This is confirmed by Mbah Lasio, a respected follower of Samin Surosentiko as well as one of Samin Surosentiko descendants in Karangpace, Blora, who explained that Samin means “sami sami gesang ngonten alam dunnya,” translated literally as living with harmony with everyone. In this context, everyone is understood as living according to the principle of equal human beings (Hendrawan, November 28, 2012).

According to Saminists, because of this equality, people live with their rights and property, whereas public goods such as a large forest at the time of the Dutch colonial rule belonged to everyone. In Samin Surosentiko’s time, there should not have been any power to disrupt or impose upon Samin and his followers. The Samin community was both sovereign and autonomous as liberated Javanese people. Therefore, they challenged the collaboration between the Mataram Kingdom and the Dutch colonial rulers who colonized the Javanese. In this sense, neither the Mataram Kingdom nor the Dutch colonial ruler could force Saminists to pay tax and work as labourers in order to serve Dutch political interests.

The Samin rejected the colonial order because it was against their principle of sami sami amin, a principle of equality which challenged the abuse or corruption of political power. This principle also opposes slavery. Based on my conversation with Saminists in my field research, in the post-colonial era it has been a tradition for some people from the political elites to visit Saminists to request a ‘blessing’ (restu) or the word “amen” from
them. In other words, a Saminist who is ‘pious’ in following his Samin teachings, must be the one whom people visit, not the other way around, due to the Samin conviction that his word is correct.

The Samin’s teachings are very close to the teachings of Javanese masterpieces of literature which critique the dominant Javanese literary texts. *Serat Centhini, Babad Jaka Tingkir, Serat Seh Siti Jenar, Suluk Gatholoco* and *Serat Darmagandhul* challenged the mainstream Javanese narrative that supported the status quo of Java and some Islamic orthodox perspectives (*santri*). All these works were in accordance with the profound meaning of the *sami sami amin* principle and were supported by oral tradition. The Saminist history (and oral tradition) preserves Javanese originality whereas the history of the Demak and Mataram Kingdoms have become the mainstream history and are presumed to be the only valid history. Therefore, Samin Surosentiko’s teaching is significant as it reveals another realm of unique Javanese tradition.

According to Harper (1997, p. 512), oral tradition is significant to balance the mainstream history of dominant texts. The rich narrative texts of colonialist construction can be challenged by a small narrative of a community that was preserved by the management and sustainability of spiritual and magical life. This narrative makes the community’s belief in something that is valuable inherently from within persist. The narrative is an esoteric and sacred life experience. In this way, people like the Samin community challenge modernity by the continued practice of their oral tradition.

The *sami sami amin* principle has involved a long struggle since Seh Siti Jenar and his follower, Ki Ageng Pengging, opposed the rule of the Islamic Demak Kingdom. Because of this principle, Seh Siti Jenar and Pengging were executed by the Islamic Council of the Demak Kingdom, also called the Nine Saints (*Wali Songo*). Both ignored

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17 Some texts explain that Seh Siti Jenar opposed the Demak Kingdom and the Nine Saints and was executed by the Demak Kingdom with authorization from the Nine Saints and other stories do not state that. Most of the stories illustrate that Seh Siti Jenar and his followers challenged the Demak Kingdom and the Nine Saints (Sholikhin, 2014).
the Demak Kingdom’s religious authority and political power. Instead, they only submitted themselves to God, believing that the land in Java belonged to God and was for everyone. The Demak Kingdom and the Islamic Council claimed to have ownership of Java and the sovereign authority to rule it, including religious authority (Sholikhin, 2014).

According to the discourse of sami sami amin, the relationships among human beings and between human beings with nature should be framed under ideas of mutual respect, mutual understanding, autonomy, dignity between one another and everyone should be treated fairly. Power is just a manifestation of serving humanity. In this respect, we need to consider Benda and Castles’ (1969, p. 224) contribution regarding Ki Ageng Pengging’s (Kebo Kenongo’s) influence on the Samin movement and the principle of equality for all humans. According to Benda and Castles:

To mention an early example (the theological teaching between Samin and Pengging: “God is within me”), when Kiai Ageng Pengging founded a new sect in the 16th century, and was asked his doctrine by emissaries of the Sultan of Demak, he replied that the earth and the air were not the property of the prince but of all men; the prince could tax and mint coin, but everything in the world was for the use of everyone.

The sami sami amin people are a community who conduct their social relationships in a harmonious way, usually called the guyub/rukun social system. This idea can be materialized in the practice of gotong-royong which is working together, without any payment, in the interest of community togetherness. In the process of gotong-royong, people accept one another and care for each other. In guyub social relationships, the community uses their rasa with care, which means that there is a balance between the inner and the outer in order to create harmonious conditions. In short, in the mind and rasa of
everyone, there is a clear distinction between corrupt feelings (jealousy or envy) and desire (greediness), and honorable and honest feelings which foster harmony and peaceful social relations.

The term *sami sami amin* has vast implications for the *guyub* social system in constructing sociocultural relations between the Samin and non-Samin communities. The Samin community perceive and treat other communities as *sedulur* (a brotherhood). When I arrived in the Samin community and asked permission to conduct research in Pati and Kudus, they perceived me as one of their brothers, responding with warmth and positive energy, even though they had just met me. Therefore, the word of the Samin is profoundly fostering real character and mentality for the self and socially, and the community for building peace.

Moreover, the Saminists speak the *ngoko* form of Javanese language as a symbol of equality (*sami sami amin*). This language is used by ordinary Javanese people or by the lower Javanese class to communicate. It is considered as a language for everyone in Java or as a challenge to aristocrat/noble language.

Usually, Javanese people under the rule of the Mataram Kingdom use the *basa/boso* form of language (the law and order of Javanese language/*unggah-ungguhing basa*) for communication between people of different social statuses. *Basa* is a language denoting hierarchy, whereas *ngoko* is not. However, in the perspective of aristocrats and nobility, *ngoko* is a language for the lowest class.

The term *basa* is a political construction developed by the dominant discourse of the Dutch colonial rulers and the Mataram Kingdom, associated with more educated and cultured people (it also existed in the Majapahit and Demak Kingdom, but had not been developed). For example, if we speak to someone who is in a higher social class, we need to use this form of language in order to demonstrate their political power.
Today, the Samin community in Pati and Kudus also speak in *krama madya* to outsiders (middle Javanese, which is between high and low Javanese). This made me feel awkward and impolite in interacting with them due to my own language being in the *ngoko* style of the Banyumasen dialect. I would like to emphasize that by the Saminists’ speaking the *basaboso*, they are paying respect to a guest while among themselves, they speak *ngoko*. After I stayed longer in Pati and visited Kudus, we spoke *ngoko* and sometimes with young Saminists, our conversation combined this with Indonesian. After Indonesian independence, the Samin community associate with non-Saminists and the wider community by speaking the national language, Indonesian. This is how they engage with the modern state and modern society.

*Wong sikep* is another name used by the Saminists and outsiders to define the Samin people. *Wong sikep* means “those who embrace” (Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 21; Widodo, 2008). “Embrace” reflects closeness, kindness, warmness, openness, and brotherhood. This refers to relations between the Saminists and outsiders and within the Samin community. *Wong sikep* in the term of *sikep rabi* is marriage couple relations in the sense of ritual procession. In this understanding, the Saminists should be married or are married. The young Saminists should marry as soon as possible because it is an obligation as members of the Samin community.

The Saminists are more concerned with Javanese ethics being inherent and maintained in their everyday life practice rather than with their being given a label or identity. In regard to this, the Saminists in Pati, Kudus, and Blora are not bothered whether they are called *wong Samin, wong sikep, or sedulur sikep* (sedulur sikep can be understood as embrace in the term of physical movement or embrace in the term of brotherhood relations or being faithful to the tradition). The term *sedulur sikep* has become accepted outside and within the community. In contrast, Ba'asyin (2014) disagrees with using this.
term whereas other researchers, NGOs, and journalists (in *Kompas, Suara Merdeka*, and *Tempo*) use *sedulur sikep* instead of the older terms of *wong sikep* or *wong Samin*.

Amrih Widodo, a respected anthropologist who has been involved with the Samin community since the 1980s, explains that *sedulur sikep* is now familiar and relates to the struggle of the peasant community. After the fall of the Suharto era, Amrih Widodo referred to the Samin community by using *sedulur sikep*, which he considers to create a better impression than “Samin” which the Suharto regime had constructed to connote a negative image. Amrih Widodo cited one of the Saminists, Gunretno’s definition of *sedulur sikep*: “strong hug of people”. This refers to very close and profound relations between human beings (*tiyang/wong*). The Suharto regime achieved the goal of associating the word Samin with a damaging image of people who were stupid (*bodoh*), crazy, rebellious (*ngenyelan*), stubborn, and uncivilized (Widodo, 2008). My field research confirmed that many people considered Suharto’s New Order regime to have damaged the Samin community by humiliating them. One of the Samin elders said: “the non-Saminists until now are still associating Samin with the lowest creatures on the earth” (Anonymous 10, 25 November 2015). In Central Java (Cilacap, Purwokerto, and Yogyakarta), I often found outsiders to have this bad impression of the Samin community. Thus, until today in Indonesia, the government provides a policy to educate and civilize the Samin community as if they have been left behind by modern society. Therefore, *sedulur sikep* is justifiably more popular as it depicts the Samin community in a better light.

I argue that the deep meaning of term, Samin, should be preserved, while the Samin’s narrative should be rewritten. In the post-Suharto era, it is important to refresh this term since it has a robust Islamic Javanese mystical connotation. Moreover, I suggest we need to be cautious as the term, Samin could possibly be misused. In other words, by exploiting the history of Samin Surosentiko and his movement, one group of people can
claim to be a ‘truer’ Saminists than other groups, for their own interests. Further, playing with the word *Samin* could distort its meaning by associating it with modern Western values such as Marxism and feminism. For example, by association with the key concepts of Marxism, the environmental Samin movement demonstrated their opposition to the cement corporation. This mixed discourse, however, may misrepresent the Samin’s teachings. To understand the *sami sami amin* principle widely, other Samin teachings that can easily identify the characteristics of Saminists are now discussed.

**Samin’s Teachings and Principles**

The Samin communities are heterogeneous and tend to differ from one another in their interpretations of how to practise Samin teachings. However, their principles, values, and norms have many similarities, so they still see themselves as one community. Hutomo (1996, p. 17-18) explained that the principles, values, and norms of Samin’s teachings are quite concise.

First is *agama iku gaman, adam pengucape, man gaman lanang* (*agama* is a weapon, *Adam* is the utterance of a word/mantra, both comprise the totality of man’s weapons). *Agama* in this context is not religion… the term *Agama* can be interpreted as a weapon with words. Words are “sayings/mantras” (*pengucap*) to materialize reality into existence. Here, the “saying” can be understood as a “spell” or “*wujud*” (ontological term of being or existence, materialized) as well as a weapon to argue with others—especially for a *Samin sangkak* (a Saminist who resists).

One of the prominent and influential Samin figures in Kudus, Budi Santoso stated that *Samin sangkak* had many keys to lock their rivals’ arguments, so they would not lose. For every word in a debate, Saminists had their own word which acted as a key to either seal or open the flow of words (2015). In this respect, *agama* is understood as *gaman* (a weapon) that is wielded in a broad sense, namely for challenging the common/mainstream
reality. Santoso’s view was supported by a young influential figure from Pati (Anonymous).

As indicated above, as well as meaning a weapon with words, the term Agama can be interpreted to mean a mantra or spell. The Saminists believe that when saying something, they need to be careful and cautious because what is said can come into existence (wujud) especially if a Saminist has rasa, as well as an honest personality. In order to gain this level of attainment they should have a ‘pure heart’ (inner feeling), mind, and action. This is what they understand as lugu or purity; a state in which a Saminist is metaphorically speaking to a mirror of God’s existence. This purity will be manifested into being when the word has been spoken. The purity can work verbally or non-verbally with the heart (mbatin) because the purer a person, the more he/she is united with God’s word or God’s will.

The last meaning of Agama is in the marriage discourse of the Samin community, discussed in Chapter 3. Agama is the ritual of marriage that is usually connected to another word, Adam. For the Saminists, the marriage ritual is the most sacred teaching and practice that relates to the relations between human, nature, and God. As the term Agama has three interpretations, it should be used with caution.

The second principle concerns Javanese ethical discourse: aja drengki srei, tukar padu, dahwen kemeren, aja kutil jumput, bedhog colong. This is translated as “do not envy, be jealous, conflict with each other, do not accuse, do not be malicious, and do not steal”. Again, this principle can also be repeated as a mantra. This principle represents the common way of life in all Samin communities. However, the texts in some areas are slightly different from others. For instance, in Pati and Kudus, this principle is written as ojo drengki (dengki), srèt (sirik), panasten, dahwèn, kemèrèn (iri), nyio marang sepada, moh kutil jumput bedhog colong ndak lah ngalelah ngalah gunem sekecap (do not be
envious, jealous, sensitive, accusatory, malicious, steal, or say bad things). As the principle is a Javanese mantra that orally transmitted, it has never been written down by the Saminists and so naturally there are slight variations. This principle is conveyed in the chain of a mantra and profoundly expresses the Saminist way of life.

The third principle is sabar lan trokal, empun ngantos jrengki srèi, empun ngantos riya sapada, empun nganti pèk-pinèk kutil jumput bedhog colong. Napa malih barang, nemu barang teng dalan mawon kula simpanj. This principle is almost the same as the second. It means that a human being should be patient and self-controlled, not jealous of another, not arrogant or showing off to others, respectful of others, and a human being should not steal.

The fourth principle is wong urip kudu ngerti ing uripé, sebab urip siji digawa salawasé (human must understand the meaning of his/her life because his/her soul is eternal). This principle is related to the discourse of death and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The meaning is that the Saminists should know how to live ethically because their life is forever (the soul lives forever). The soul (sukma) is seen as an eternal spirit for which the body is only the cloths. Death means “fake life” (a temporal condition). To be alive means to be eternal (sukma). Birth and death in the world of the living is being dead while living at the same time. Therefore, marriage in the Samin tradition is very much rooted in the relationship between souls.

Perhaps the fourth principle is close to the idea of reincarnation: the human’s material body can be ruined and destroyed, but the sukma remains and is still alive, taking another body. However, because Saminists only conceive of life in terms of living once and forever, they do not have any knowledge of reincarnation in terms of outsiders’ worldviews such as Buddhism and Hinduism. In their oral history, there is a story in Pati that one of their ancestors waited for his wife to be reborn. The Adam tradition of the
Samins means they can and should marry within their own community. After the first ‘death’ of his wife, this Saminist ancestor knew that his wife would be born again in a family near his environment. Therefore, he waited for the baby to be an adult, as he presumed she was his previous wife whom he could marry again.

The fifth principle is *wong enom mati uripé títip sing urip*. Bayi *uda nangis ngèr niku sukma ketemu raga* (young people who died are continued by others. Baby born with the sound of crying is the sign of the meeting between the soul and the human physical body). This means when the Saminist dies (which means the separation between the body and the soul), the life of the soul (*sukma*) will still return to another body when the old soul meets the new body. The crying baby is a sign that the soul meets the material body. The soul always remains or lives forever whereas the physical body will become dust (soil) as part of nature.

The sixth principle is *dhèk jaman Landa niku njaluk pajeg boten trima sak legané nggih boten diwèhi*. Bébas boten seneng. Ndadani ratan nggih bébas. Gak gelem wis dibébasaké. *Kenèk jaga ya ora nyang. Jaga omahé dhéwé*. Nyengkah ing negara telung taun dikenek kerja paksa (In the Dutch colonial era, paying tax was obligatory and the Saminists were against it. The Saminists refused to join the work of renovating bridge. They also refused to do community night watch patrol; they preferred to guard their own houses. Against the Dutch colonial ruler, the Saminists experienced cultivation system/ "Enforcement Planting" (cultuurstelsel) for three years). This principle was in line with a story in the Dutch colonial era regarding tax demanded by force of which the Saminists did not want to pay. They considered the tax system to be inhumane and unjust and furthermore, they were reluctant to donate their labour by working on road or bridge construction and patrolling at night, which was also demanded by the Dutch. They preferred to guard their own houses. Geertz observed peasants had to give labour as well as
pay tax due to the great economic loss experienced by the Dutch, especially after the Java/Diponegoro war (Geertz, 1963, p. 52-82).

The seventh principle is *pengucap saka lima bundhelané ana pitu lan pengucap saka sanga bundhelané ana pitu* (a person should speak carefully; the literal meaning of this phrase is ‘words of five end at seven, words of nine also end at seven; the sum of words of five is seven and the sum of words of nine is also seven’). This principle means that the Saminists should talk carefully and wisely as their words are essentially a mantra. Number seven (*pitu*) is a very sacred number like ‘a key’ in between number five (*lima*) and number nine (*sanga*). Number seven also means to lock an argument in a discussion and also means a help will come over or a solution. Under the circumstances of purity, number seven is the cohesive sign of the Saminist to materialize his will into being. When a Saminist who is pure of heart and soul is being hurt by someone, his word is very effective. Even if it is only said in his heart (*mbatin*), something unfortunate may happen to anyone who harms him or other Saminists. This interpretation of the principle is not the esoteric one, it is a common version.

The eighth principle is *wit jeng nabi kula lanang damel kula rabi tata jeneng wédok*. *Pengaran (Sukini) kuku dhemen janji buk bikah mpun kula lakoni* (since the Adam era (beginning of human beings), what I do is marrying. (This time) I am married to a female named (Sukini). I vow to be true to her. We have been living together ever since). This principle is part of the ritual processions that is very much sacred; this Javanese utterance is like a mantra to lock the marriage relations. As Adam’s followers (the first human being in the world), Saminists have preserved and continued Adam’s tradition to grow and human race. Marriage is a promise, a commitment and a big responsibility. In marriage Saminists’ primary work is to live together with respect, honesty, and loyalty. It is a
marriage of two souls. This principle was also recorded by Benda and Castles (1969), and is discussed further in Chapter 3.

The ninth principle centres on some key terms, such as “turun”, “pangaran”, “sedulur lanang”, “sedulur wédok”, and “salin sandhang” (“having a baby”, “name”, “brother”, “sister”, and “death”). All of these terms involved in the cycle of life and of families are fundamental to the Saminists’ teachings. They are the Saminists’ selective terms and knowledge that differentiate the Saminists from other Javanese people. These terms are their cultural identity. We cannot reach the essence of the Saminists or Samin’s teachings without understanding the deep meaning of these concept for them. Although other Javanese share similar terms on the cycle of life and of families, they do not share the deep meaning of them. However, it is still important to acknowledge the Samin’s teachings and his followers are constituted by Javanese culture; without Javanese culture, there will be no the Samin community.

Hutomo gained these nine principles of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings from his fieldwork in the Samin community in Tapelan, Ngraho, Bojonegoro district, East Java (1970s). These principles are still relevant and significant up to the present and have been confirmed by me in the Samin community located in Pati and Kudus. These principles are orally transmitted to each generation and can be found in Samin Surosentikos’ books, collectively named _Jamus Kalimasada_ and once owned by Prabu Puntadewa (a Javanese mythological figure). _Jamus Kalimasada_ consist of several chapters: _serat Punjer Kawitan, serat Pikukuh Kasajatén, serat Uri-uri Pambudi, serat Jati Sawit, and serat Lampahing Urip_. Some researchers believe that these books exist, but in fact, nobody has seen even one of them.

Thus the books themselves are mythical. Myth is a narrative discourse in a community that attributes meanings to life and to experiences. Among other scholars,
Armstrong (2005) illustrates that human beings have always been myth makers as they seek the meaning of life. If there is no mythology as a tool to make meanings of life, human life is what Heidegger explains, falls easily into anguish, thrownness (being expelled from the world; alienation) and not being at home [das Nichtzuhause sein] (Heidegger, 1962, p. 233). This feeling of anxiety for Armstrong (2005) causes human beings to invent stories to create a meaningful life and to tackle depression and unfortunate experiences. She goes further to argue that imagination (the ability to have ideas and experiences beyond rationality) is essential for human experience. It also constitutes the faculty that constructs religion and mythology. For Armstrong, the discourse of mythical thinking has become disrespected as we often dismiss it as irrational because it is not a part of human reality according to the scientific discourse of modernity. However, as Armstrong cogently argues, scientists bring new knowledge to light and discover technology to make human lives more efficient by using their imaginations. Thus, by blending mythology and science, the scope of human beings develops.

In this respect, the mythology of wayang and the historical narrative of Babad Tanah Jawa for Saminists are more intensely influenced their way of thinking about reality of modern life compared to modern way of thinking that are served by technology, information, the industrial world, and consumerism. The Saminists say they only use technology as an instrument and this has no meaning compared to their memories of wayang and Javanese history; they fulfil their life energy through wayang story. According to their cosmology, Javanese history is flowery, colourful and meaningful. Within their memory, they live with full of meaning. They do not fall into a feeling of alienation in the world.

Armstrong makes five important points about myth. First, myths are nearly always rooted in the experience of death and the fear of annihilation. Second, mythology is usually
followed by ritual. Third, the most powerful myths are about boundaries; they push us to go beyond our experience. Therefore, myth is about mystery. Fourth, a myth is a story about how we should behave in a spiritual or psychological sense, both now and in the future. Fifth, all mythology speaks of another space and a discourse that exists within our own world, that in some sense supports it, usually related to the world of the gods. Myths tell human beings how gods behave to enable men and women to imitate these powerful beings and experience divinity within.

This is what happens in the Saminists’ life experiences. One told me they reflect on and comprehend their behaviour by considering the *wayang* figure of Pandawa, especially Bima (Werkudara) who is loyal to his couple, honest, and has dignity, principled and speak in Javanesse *ngoko* language to anyone. Yet the Saminists are also modesty exclusive about their particular teachings. This means my observation was limited. One reason for their discretion is that they needed to be careful in saying something as it could possibly happen in the future.

It is difficult to understand the Samin community in the frame of science. In other words, scientific reasoning has its limitations for understanding Samin’s teachings. According to any scientific explanation, the ‘gods’ in the ancient world were rarely regarded as supernatural beings with distinct personalities, living an entirely separate metaphysical existence. Armstrong, however, argues mythology could not be considered in terms of theology, because it concerns humans’s lived experience. In other words, people thought that gods, humans, animals, and nature were bound together intimately. There was initially no ontological gap between the world of the gods and the world of humans. The very existence of the gods in our life is the reflection of nature, such as water, wood, fire, wind or from powerful human emotions. In this respect, human life can be seen from a very different view or different space. Samin Surosentiko was perceived as the reflection
of God, as he said, “God is within me”; (Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 226). He had experienced spiritual journey for being part of God’s existence. The Saminists today have different experience with God because they have different challenges. It is important to note that the Saminists experienced moral practises in their social relations with the Saminists and with non-Saminists. These moral practises are part of their submission to the traditions. They prefer to practise moral obligations and its tradition rather than to talk about what God is and what God orders them. I presume that there is no thorough and clear transmission of knowledge about God through the passing down memory of the Saminists. The most important Samin teachings that has transmitted from generation to generation is the Javanese moral/ethic teachings. As results, for the Saminist today, the knowledge of God is replaced by the practice of rasa as an experiential spirituality. It is throughout rasa that the Saminists sense God’s existence.

This view is the esoteric experience of personal ‘ecstasy’. Thus, mythology was intended to tackle the problem of the human predicament. It helped human beings to seek their place in the world and their ‘true’ orientation. It provided the answer to the fundamental questions of where we came from and what happens when our life ends. In terms of Javanese Islam, this seizing of the human existence is called sangkan paran ing dumadi. In this respect, it is Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings. The teaching can sense God’s existence. This sense dissolves the existence of a human being and in the same time uncover God’s will. In this level, a human being is existentially part of God’s presence, but in human body appearance. In this level, a human being can perceive other human beings with clear vision on bad and good attitudes.

Armstrong notes that from the eighteenth century, the Western European discourse has developed a scientific view of history. However, in the pre-modern world, when people wrote about the past, they were more concerned with the meaning of an event. A myth was
an experiential moment which, in some senses, had occurred once, but also has meaning across time. Mythology constructs human experience to go beyond history in order to tackle the dynamic change which may rise from random events and to grasp the real meaning of human existence.

For Armstrong, mythology is not a historical record of objective fact. Indeed, it is a game that transforms our life into new opportunities. Mythology can be considered similar to a scientific exercise, where a researcher is playing with a hypothesis. We bring this speculation to our life, envisaging and examining its effect upon our lives. All these processes will reveal new insights. A myth, therefore, is real because it is useful for imagining our life. It is not a matter of providing us with factual information or authentic proof, but of offering a way to reflect and make sense of the world, to fulfill our lived experience with meanings.

There is no single, orthodox version of any myth. As our circumstances change, we need to tell our stories differently in order to bring out our timeless truth. There is no single truth in our discourse of time and space because we have a distinct reality and experience within which a partition of time and space is based on our memory. Every time significant changes occurred, humans reviewed their mythology and made it work in a new condition or even manipulate it for the sake of their interest consciously or not. What I see in the Samin community is similar to Armstrong’s interpretation of myth and it functions. The Samin very much engage with mythology in order to survive. They interpret their myths in actual life by contextualizing their values within a narrative to find the meaning of life. However, the mythology that is embedded in the Samin’s principles is not interpreted by the homogenous understanding of the Saminists. There is a degree that the Saminists really submit, conduct and implement their tradition. Due to different interpretations, therefore, there are many variants of Saminists with their own justification in practising their
tradition. Down below, we will see the variants of the Saminists that have interpreted the Samin’s teachings differently.

**The Variants of Saminists**

Since Samin Surosentiko had lived, the Saminists have many variants of movements. According to Benda and Castles (1969, p. 218), there are two types of Saminists: Samin *sangkak* and Samin *lugu* (*dlejet*). Samin *sangkak* is a person who argues when something is wrong according to their understanding; a Saminist who resists. Their arguments are logical and difficult to be defeated. They are critical and tough to deal with. A simple example is in the Suharto era, when the government ordered them to follow a religion recognized by the Indonesian government. They argued “the government is human (*wong*) like us. Every person (*wong*) is equal. So, why do we need to obey them? We have the right to embrace our religion. The Indonesian government should recognize and respect our religion. It is so easy to put our data into the computerised administration of Indonesian citizenship. Thus, why does the Indonesian government recognize only imported religions such as Islam, Christian, Hinduism, and Buddhism?” With this point of view, the government could not challenge the argument.

For Samin, *lugu* means being honest, patient, brave, enduring oppression, straightforward and considered to have a high degree of purity. They believe that for every kind action they perform, kindness would come back to them. When they lend some object to others, they would return it in the same condition as they borrowed it. They only gain something through hard work. When the Indonesian local authority forced them to embrace an imported religion, they accepted this and obeyed because they believed that every bad action (imposed by force) would be revisited on the imposer. According to one story from Samin in Sukolilo, the following month, the local authority official who forced the Saminists to adopt a religion had a family tragedy. In short, in their tradition, the Samin
*lugu* resist with their strong sense of *rasa* (inner feeling) or ‘spiritual power’ to reverse circumstances. They have this power if they live their life in a ‘pure,’ simple, and honest manner.

The Saminists can be Samin *sangkak* and Samin *lugu* in different circumstances. Samin *sangkak* is a moment when they resist the act of oppression by words. When the resistance does not work anymore, Samin *sangkak* will become Samin *lugu* by accepting the act of oppression with endurance in the sense of *rasa*. These classifications could only be established by the attitude and the circumstances that the Saminists face it. In short, these categories depend on the context needed to survive. Therefore, there are no fixed labels to Saminist’s personal identity and their movement.

A Samin follower named *Mbah Sampir*, who lives in Ngawen (a hamlet), in Sukolilo, Pati, explained other types of Samin attitudes. He mentioned Samin *grogol*, Samin *amping-amping*, and Samin *samiroto*. Samin *grogol* are Samin followers who interact with the Islamic way of thinking, yet they are not closely related with Samin *lugu*. Samin *amping-amping* are Saminists who work as merchants or brokers. This type of Saminist does not have any paddy fields or if they do, their paddy fields are done by farmers. Samin *samiroto* are not Saminists, they just imitate the Saminists. For example, Samin *samiroto* usually wears black clothing, although they are not perceived as Samin/wong *sikep*. Samin *samiroto* is a typical Saminist who has bloodline in the Samin community but practise non-Saminists culture. If a non-Saminist ask a person who is identified as a Samin *samiroto by other Saminists*, he/she will deny this framing and argues that he/she is a Saminist who tries to make an adjustment. This understanding addressed to Rosyid’s interpretation (2014) that will be explained down below. All of these are very much subjective perception from within the Samin communities. In Chapter 5, I will explore new type of the Saminists according to the Saminists and non-Saminists.
According to his informants, Samiyono (2010) obtained information that the dominant Saminist features remain Samin *sangkak* and Samin *lugu*, agreeing with Benda and Castles (1969) that the circumstances and environment influenced whether one feature or the other was at play. Additionally, Samiyono was unsure whether they imitated a Saminist or were ‘true’ Saminists (Samiyono, 2010, p. 73-74).

An anthropologist from Kudus, Rosyid (2014, p. 195-196) has put forward a different definition for Samin *samiroto*. According to Rosyid, Samin *samiroto* is a Saminist who practices other cultures or easily adapts to other traditions. For example, even though in the Samin tradition it is not allowed to conduct the marriage ritual in the KUA (Religious Affairs Office) under the Islamic law, this may still occur.

According to my field research, Saminists are clearly known based on their bloodline, but to conduct and to maintain Samin’s teachings in their practical life is difficult and create many interpretations. The idea of adaptation is also understood as the Samin’s principle to preserve the purity of Samins’ thought in a changing world; the purity does not mean independence essential culture, but an adaptation of cultural movement. This typology helps to put Samins at ease when they reflect on whether they still conduct Samin’s teachings or not, or whether they only do so at certain times because of the circumstances of modernization.

The Saminists believe in dreams. In the Samin community, dreams are medium through which warnings or advices from their ancestors are given. Even today, ancestors give messages to Saminists who follow Samin Surosentiko’s path, for example, not to be seduced by fame and popularity. Through dream, the Saminists are advised to stay together due to lack of leaders and a lot of challenges. After *Mbah* Surokidin (Samin’s son-in-law) passed away, through the interpretation of a dream, the Saminists receive clue that point them to a way to preserve Samin’s teachings in the absence of leadership of Saminists in
all areas. Today, there is no Saminist leader in the Samin communities in Blora, Bojonegoro, Kudus, and Pati. This also explains why the members of the Samin communities are very different from one another.

In general and for the purpose of introduction to go deeper about the Saminists, another way to understand the common characteristics of the Samin community is to identify their practical attributes: 1) a farmer/peasant who works in agriculture; 2) a person who embraces Agama Adam (the Religion of Adam); 3) a person wearing a black long shirt, ¾ black pants and a black headband (especially in a formal situation like a meeting or wedding ceremony, but these are not obligatory); 4) Javanese, living a Javanese culture; 5) a person who loves wayang and may even become associated with one of the wayang characters (especially Bima); 6) a person who claims their ancestors came from Majapahit, Brawijaya V; 7) a person who claims to be pure Javanese compared to common modern Javanese and Java-Islam, especially, the aristocrat Mataram in Yogyakarta and Solo that had already blended with Islamic and European tradition; 8) a person with their own simple life cycle rituals which emphasize the deep meaning of the ritual that should be actualized in everyday life; 9) a person with bloodline relations among Samin communities. These attributes are constructed not only addressing on cultural features, but also social interactions, and political resistance.

In identifying the Samin community, it should be noted that change in cultural life is inevitable. Therefore, retaining the purity of the Samin community’s identity and culture does not mean keeping the culture static and stagnant. At this stage, there are many controversies in Samin communities (in Blora, Bojonegoro, Kudus, and Pati) as to whether the Samin tradition can be changed or not. Yet as the world is changing, so does the culture and life.

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These nine attributes of Saminists are my findings in the fieldwork. It is my simplest identification of the Saminists that can be crosschecked with other researchers who conducted fieldwork in the Samin community. These attributes are common knowledge among researchers who experienced fieldwork in the Samin community.
This was corroborated by Hardjo Kardi, a Saminist in Jipang, Blora who stated that a ‘reform’ in the body of the Saminists is possible (Ba'asyin, 2014). He dreamed that the next generation of Saminists could construct the Samin discourse dynamically. If a Saminist wants to survive in the era of globalization, then some discourses, which are considered taboo, will become acceptable. This idea is also debated among Saminists as no Samin community has a legitimate leader. Hardjo Kardi does not problematize who is the purest Saminist follower. He is more flexible in applying the Samin’s teachings compared to other Saminists (Ba'asyin, 2014, p. 19).

In short, each member in the Samin communities has the right to interpret the Samin’s teaching in order to survive in the globalized world. All these characteristics can indicate that the Samin community can transform or change, but the substance of Samin’s teachings and principles remains. It is important to explore the claim of Saminists that they are the real Javanese. What is Javanese tradition that they claim as their selective cultural tradition? I will try to trace the transmission of knowledge of Samin’s teachings.

**Samin Discourse as Javanese Mystical Discourse**

Benda and Castles (1969) argue that the Samin discourse does not fit into Geertz’s conceptual framework of *Santri-Priyayi-Abangan*. In other words, Samin ideology cannot be identified as Islamic Javanese according to Geertz’s definition. Therefore, Saminists are not *santri* in terms of pure/puritan/orthodox Islamic tradition (*sharia*); they cannot also be identified as *priyayi* (noble) in terms of Javanese aristocrats because they are from the rural Javanese peasant community; they are not relevant in the *abangan* framework in regard to rural Javanese peasant community that believe in an animistic religion within syncretism (Geertz, 1960).

However, Benda and Castles (1969) contend that the Saminists in their study are confronted with *santri, priyayi and abangan*. They claim that the Samin’s teachings found
their roots in teachings from before Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic religions. The Saminists opposed the Dutch colonial institution and its bureaucrats whether secular authority or religious such as modin/penghulu/naib (officer of Islamic affairs), the Dutch government officials, and any exercise of authority. They also argued that the Saminists were located in the heartland of Java around Solo River, especially Blora and Bojonegoro, which was the centre of the Saminists (around Kendeng Mountain), whereas the north coast of Java was the centre of the santri/puritan/orthodox Islamic community. In sum, they define the Samin movement as individualistic anarchism which refused to recognize any and every authority.

In this discussion, I will try to develop Benda and Castles’ argument further. Why do Saminists not fit into Geertz’s classification? I argue that Samin’s teaching is Javanese mystical discourse. This understanding comes from the Saminists themselves, who believe that Samin’s ideas came from the oldest Javanese tradition and faith, which Benda and Castles (1969) also found. The Saminists share values and principles with the oldest Javanese belief systems such as aliran kebatinan (Javanese mysticism), but the Saminists reject the frame or label of the aliran kebatinan as part of their own tradition. One scholar wrote that it was:

...hard to translate the word kebatinan. Kebatinan is often said to be the very core of Javanism, and also that the related style of life is kebatinan, the lifestyle of the "inner-man." Basically, kebatinan is mysticism, the penetration and the knowledge of the universe with the purpose of establishing a direct relationship between the individual and the sphere of That-Which-Is-Almighty. But such a definition of mysticism includes occultism, black and white magic, enacted metaphysics, and other esoteric doings and knowledge. Yet all these may be included or excluded from a definition of kebatinan. To people who dislike the phenomenon, e.g., the
pious Moslems (santri), kebatinan especially includes all the magical actions and is at best unorthodox and sinful mysticism. For the honestly religious abangan it means mysticism, pure and simple, and the highest of his religious expressions (Mulder, 1970, p. 105).

Saminists share the mysticism discourse and the sphere of That-Which-Is-Almighty with kebatinan (Javanese mysticism), but how they practice the teaching is different. They also have a distinct emphasis on some topics such as the understanding of sacred ritual activities. Most importantly, they share the principle of the Javanese mysticism lifestyle, by which the individual seeks his own journey to advance along the path of mysticism.

Samin discourse is not kebatinan (Javanese mysticism) at the level of institutions which is applied and embodied in aliran kebatinan (organized groups of kebatinan). In contrast, there is an absence of uniform rules as well as a paucity of systematic conceptualization. The difference between Samin’s teachings and those in organized groups of kebatinan is that they have a guru (a teacher) to follow. Instead, the Samin have their own methods and insights, implicitly acknowledging the uniqueness of the individual experience and intuition. In the Samin’s teaching, one’s own parents are one’s guide to one’s own individual journey. The only guru mentioned is rasa, facilitated by their parents. In their dialogue with rasa in everyday meditation, sooner or later, the Saminist will find guidance in the form of clues that usually appear in their dreams or in everyday activities.

However, except for oral history, it is difficult to find any other documentation, especially scripts or documents about the Samin’s teaching and its relationship with Javanese tradition. For example, even though the Saminists claim to have a book, Tapal Adam, as their guide, up to now, no actual book is to be found. Today, the Saminists’ understanding is based on their oral historical tradition, their rasa (inner feeling) and the
‘wet book’ (kitab basah/buku teles) of their living body/the self. These are the epistemological foundation of the Saminists’ practical moral and ethical action in their role in their public life.

In the discussion which follows, the interpretations given by some of my informants to particular figures within the Samin oral tradition are elaborated on. This serves to underline the ongoing meaning of this oral tradition for Samin in their daily lives in terms of their ethics, particularly in relation to how to behave with other people.

**The Term of Samin in Oral Tradition of the Javanese Mystic Centrality**

My informants (anonymous) through our discussion said that the Samin teaching is a tradition which developed between the wayang era (the mythological age before humans arrived on earth), the Hindu-Buddhist era of the Majapahit Kingdom and the era of the Mataram Jati. It was a period when people were submitting to the sun (jaman ijih nyembah srengenge) and worshipping the earth. It was a time when formalised religion did not yet exist (belum ada agama, sujud pada bumi); a time when people were experiencing religious and spiritual life without any authority of an institution; a time when people were very much close to nature.

I spent hours discussed about the history of the term Samin with this informant and was accompanied by a Saminist who always led me to many sources. This informant was not formally (bloodline of the Saminists) a Saminist, but a lot of the Saminists around Pati learned Samin’s teachings from him. This informant was suggested by some of Saminists in Pati. They convinced me that he could be my legitimate source. A Saminist introduced me to him and after I interacted with him, I were convinced. I chose him as my source because not only Saminists in Pati suggested him, but he also had different view on the Saminist that could enrich the discussion on the Samin movement. Furthermore, he joined the Samin’s event frequently where every Saminist in Pati and some in Kudus knows,
recognizes and respects him as part of their community although they have no bloodline relations. Therefore, he became part of the Samin community because of social interaction, as what Barth is argued.

This informant explains that symbolically, the term Samin is a story of (the old ancient) Javanese people; it means a story of gods (dewa-dewa or jawata) in the wayang epoch and the actualization of their wisdom in the character of life of the Javanese people (Java/Jawa is Jawa Jawata). The term of Samin (not Samin Surosentiko) is related to the gods (dewa-dewa) and the godlike attribute of a wise character to achieve the ultimate meaning of life. What a wise character means can be studied in budi pekerti (moral/ethical practise) teachings. In other words, the term of Samin in this context is not a person as a noun, but it is a verb as an activity of becoming wise (the highest ethical teachings; practical wisdom teaching). The embodiment of budi pekerti (becoming wise) is a process of strong will of a person who can quickly adjust the self to nature and the universe by understanding other individuals through having a clear mind, reason, and wisdom (kudu bisa nggawa lan nata). Ideally, he/she can bring the heart and mind, rasa (inner feeling), ethics, words, and action, endogenously with his or her wisdom (nggowo pikirane, rasane, pakertine, ucapane lan sejenise) in the context of living. This person should manage and balance the heart and mind. He/she should keenly exercise rasa, listen and talk wisely, and consider living for the sake of others in a system of harmony. All of these characteristics can be seen in Semar figure.

Semar

As my informant continued his talk, he illustrates about Semar. Semar is a god who has this character. Semar in kerata basa means samar or semu (pseudo). It is a personification of a position in between. In regard to the “smiling man/woman” meaning, if someone smiles, it is not to say that Semar is delighted; in his/her smile, in fact, Semar can be full of
hatred, full of emotion and even anger (wong mesem, ra ngerti kuwi ki sengit, benci opo nesu); the point is not about inner negativity, but that in the endurance of this negativity, it can be transformed into positive external energy. In short, Semar is a difficult character to predict but about whom we need to learn more and more, as ultimately Semar is the wisest god. Textually, and simply, Semar is the highest god in the wayang epoch because he is the wisest of gods.

A Saminist lives in sikep rabi. Sikep rabi is a Semar perspective. It is a pseudo, a life in-between sexual and spiritual. In other words, this principle does not merely refer to a couple having sexual intercourse (in a marriage) but also refers to how to embrace, behave, and live with the heart and mind in spiritual wisdom ways. In social interactions, sikep rabi is a consistent person who always keeps his words and promise. In the marriage intimacy and spiritual dimension, a Saminist should conduct sexual intercourse and spiritual wisdom parallelly.

Therefore, when a person is married, this also means ‘married’ with her/his own heart, mind, and rasa. One’s heart should be like an open highway, sincere and full of kindness. All body components are integrated or united for the sake of harmony and life balance (rabi, nyikep janji, nyikep nek wong kawin, sopo wae iso. Tapi nyikepi rasa, nyipe pikirane. Kudu iso ngrabeni pikiran lan perasaane. Kudu seikat, sekata, kudu ikhlas, lurus, sama. Kudu iso nyawiji, ben ora cerai).

The Term of Samin and Gadjah Mada

Discussion with my informant which accompanied by a Saminist from the Mount Kendeng was continued. We discussed about politics of the past that was very much concerned with peace (ketentreman). In light of this understanding, the ‘Prime Minister’ of Majapahit, Gadjah Mada was a wong sikep/wong samin as his goal is to achieve peace in life. Gadjah Mada walked barefoot and his clothes were his skin. This showed symbolically, that he
respected, praised and was devoted to the earth/land (*bumi*). Using sandals was thought as creating barrier or cutting ties between us and the earth. The informant said that we need to be integrated and united, especially in *rasa*. Moreover, in unifying many islands at that time - which we call the Nusantara19 or Indonesia today-, he did so with politics and diplomacy and not war. Gadjah Mada’s oath was “*sumpah palapa*” which means to unify Nusantara in the context of diversity. Therefore, all ethnicities in the Nusantara could be integrated20.

This implies that the Samins practice a peaceful life. In the past, people were *sakti*, which means able to create and build peace, and to trust each other, in order to win the war, not the battle. A *sakti* person is one who is, at the end, respected by enemies. Gadjah Mada is one of the mythical characters that the Saminists admire, respect, and learn from.

**Javanese Ethical Life of the Samin’s Teachings**

This section is also explained by my informant lived in Mount Kendeng, Pati. In the Samin’s teaching, a Javanese should control or master his lust or desire because this is the way to become a true human being. The Samin’s teachings do not involve worldviews about nation states or power politics, but they do have worldviews about ethical life. In this respect, the Saminists are known as having many names: the silent people (*barisan tutup mulut*); silent defender of the Truth; protector of the life of nations; independent/free but humble; he who does not want to be called a hero even though he is a hero; an independent human. The Samin’s teachings provide human beings with a balanced life as human beings will destroy themselves due to their desire. It is important to learn how to master the self, according to the Samin’s teachings.

The Javanese and the Saminists believe that the earth is the centre of life. The earth is the source of human beings. The earth is called Dewi Sri or Bethari Sekar Tunjung Biru

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19 *Nusantara* consists of two words: “Nusa” means island and “antara” means in-between or bridging between two or more things (island).

20 However, another version of the story is that Gadjah Mada created wars.
and is depicted as a woman who gives birth. This is a metaphor for the earth which also gives life to nature, plants, and animals. Therefore, for the Saminists, *sikep rabi* (marriage) is imperative as the foundation of life because it is not only dealing with sexual intercourse but with developing and preserving life, the earth, nature, and the whole universe. The earth is the reflection or metaphor of a woman (wife).

As I keep listened to my informant talk, he said a Saminist should live with responsiveness and mindfulness (*kudu awas lan waspada*). *Awas* (responsiveness/alertness/awareness) means to be a visionary person who knows the signs of the future before the future happens (*weruh sadurunge winarah*). To have a vision, a person should have wisdom (*hikmah*) and the phenomenology of experience with *rasa* (*inner feeling*) within a deep live experience (*penghayatan*) in life. Moreover, in Samin’s teaching, *manungsa* (humankind) is the embodiment of words (*manungsa iku jalmaning titah*); his/her word is the manifesto of the self. *Manungsa* is the personification of words (speech acts). My informant continued to explain in his house in Mount Kendeng, if one (*wong*) can be consistent between one’s *rasa*, mind, and action (*manunggal ing rasa* (*manungsa*)), and if everyone in the nation is like this, the nation will be in peace and harmony (*nek wong iso dadi manungsa, negarane tentrem*). Therefore, there should be a coherence in *rasa*, words, and action as the act of wisdom.

**The Sources of Samin’s Knowledge**

One informant who is a Saminist and frequently conduct discussion with my previous informant who are living in Mount Kendeng mentioned about three sources of Samin’s knowledge. First, the wet book of the living body ("*papan tanpa tulis, tulis tanpa papan*”). "*Papan*” means a place for writing like a black/whiteboard, “*tanpa*” means without, and “*tulis*” means writing. Hence, these words literally means “a board without writing, writing without a board”. Despite of its simple translation, it suggests us that we need to
further learn the Saminist lived experience through *rasa*. Samin’s teaching is not written and theorized, but deeply embedded in any Saminists’ lives of which they live it consciously and learn from it continuously. The term of “*papan tanpa tulis, tulis tanpa papan*” should be understood contextually based on one’s own lived experience. This method of learning right through experience is centralised in *rasa* (inner feeling). The expression of the wet book of the living body is uttered through *pengucap* (saying) and action, especially ethical practice that need to be always coherent. As mentioned above, the term stresses on the process of reading the self (body) and conducting dialogue within the self through *rasa*, and translating result of this contemplation into action.

Second, “*ngelmu tanpa rapal,*” means that life is full of wisdom, experience, and practices. The lived experience of everyday life brings the accumulation of knowledge of the self. This production of knowledge of the self evolves continuously through the guidance of *rasa*. The deeper we know about the self, the pure and strong our inner feeling is. This is an esoteric and spiritual knowledge.

Third, “*sabda tunggal tanpa lawan*” means the words are compelling; they are the word of God. A Saminist who is pure enough (strong inner feeling) to follow his/her words will be powerful. These words will materialize his/her will as long as the word is coming from the accumulation of experience of *rasa*. “*Sabda tunggal tanpa lawan*” is very much rare in the Samin community recently because the world is changing as well as the Saminists. It is also perhaps, some Saminists do not want to show this knowledge in public due to the Samin’s ethical rule.

**The Connection between Samin’s Teachings and Suluk Gatholoco and Serat**

**Darmagandhul**

During my fieldwork, several Saminist informants mentioned about *Suluk* (Sufi poetry) *Gatholoco* and *Serat* (Javanese poetry) *Darmagandhul*, both of which are very popular in
modern Javanese literature\textsuperscript{21}. I argue that there is a connection between the Samin’s teachings and \textit{Suluk Gatholoco} and \textit{Serat Darmagandhul}. The connection is the common encounter against the Islamic orthodox or santri group. For some Saminist figures, these \textit{Suluk} and \textit{Serat} are hidden (not publicly discussed), but when I discussed with them, they expressed their disagreement to the Islamic orthodox group. During the discussion, I sensed that the Saminists’ opinion about Islam came from \textit{Suluk Gatholoco} and \textit{Serat Darmagandhul} substantially. I presumed that these \textit{Suluk} and \textit{Serat} are part of the Samin Javanese centric movement to encounter the Islamic orthodox group. Arriving at this conclusion, I need to investigate \textit{Suluk Gatholoco} and \textit{Serat Darmagandhul}.

Benedict Anderson (1981, 1982) translated \textit{Suluk Gatholoco}.\textsuperscript{22} This \textit{Suluk} supports the idea in \textit{Serat Darmagandhul} that was translated and interpreted by G. W. J. Drewes in 1966. The \textit{Suluk} and the \textit{Serat} contextually, appeared after the war of Java (1825-1830). The \textit{Suluk Gatholoco} had been printed in a book format in Surabaya in approximately 1889 (a year after the Samin movement developed). In the meantime, \textit{Serat Darmagandhul} had been printed in book format at Kediri in 1921 by Tan Khoen Swie (in the context of local movements including the expansion of the Samin movement) and the Latin version, Tan Khoen Swie published the \textit{Suluk} in 1954. Both are anonymous authors. The \textit{Suluk Gatholoco} was a literary work of Javanese that who was written by \textit{Kalamwadi}. In fact, \textit{Kalamwadi} was an initial name consisting of two words meaning; \textit{Kalam} means “words” and \textit{wadi} means “secret” (mysterious) (Drewes, 1966).

The \textit{Suluk} and the \textit{Serat} story have common background that described the Javanese Kingdom’s transition from the Hindu-Buddha Majapahit Kingdom to the Islamic Demak

\textsuperscript{21} Both of these have strong relations with other \textit{Suluk}, \textit{Serat}, and \textit{Babad} such as \textit{Suluk} \textit{Seh Lemahbang}, \textit{Serat Seh Siti Jenar}, \textit{Babad Jaka Tingkir}, and \textit{Babad Tanah Jawa}, all of which share common ideas of challenging Islamic orthodox in Java.

\textsuperscript{22} He translated it into two parts. He found the \textit{Suluk} started from the eminent missionary-Javanologue, Poensen in a shortened part document in 1873. It was quoted by Philippus van Akkeren’s thesis in 1951. Both were missionaries. It is hard to know who wrote the \textit{Suluk Gatholoco}, but he/she could be an educated person who was santri of pesantren (an Islamic boarding school).
Kingdom. First, the story is about the fall of the Majapahit Kingdom and the rise of the Islamic Demak Kingdom as the successor. In this work, the Islamic religion is related to the political power of the Islamic Demak Kingdom which is imperialistic. It has a corrupt image in the sense of Arabization of Javanese in Java. On the contrary, these works support the Javanese tradition.

Second, both *Suluk* and *Serat* describe the same general story. Both of them illustrate a betrayal by the son of the Majapahit Kingdom, Raden Patah against his father, Brawijaya V, due to his father being a *kafir/kapir* (infidel). Raden Patah was provoked by the Nine Saints (*Wali Sanga*), but mainly by Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri, to go against his father and overthrow the Majapahit Kingdom. This was a council which formed part of a group of elite orthodox Muslims who planned to establish an Islamic state and Islamize the Javanese people.

Third, both of them also describe Muslims who preoccupied the Islamic law using *kerata basa*. These satirical works question about God’s existence, Islamic rituals and the substance of religion.

Fourth, both works emphasizes that the Javanese are purer and more civilized compared to the Arabic Islamic civilizations. Saminists believe that they are the ‘marginal’ descendants of the Majapahit Kingdom as descendants of Bondan Kejawan, Jaka Tarub, Ki Ageng Sela, and the Mataram Kingdom. They have the bloodline of Brawijaya V, but never had the political power. They frame themselves as farmers. Therefore, the Saminists opposed the Demak Kingdom and Nine Saints as groups of *santri* (the orthodox Islam).

According to my observation in field research, the Saminists criticize the orthodox Muslims traditional rituals such as *azan* (the calling for Muslims to pray), *haji* (pilgrimage), *shaum* (fasting), and *shahada* (oath/testimony of becoming a Muslim). It is concluded that these criticisms are in line with the *Suluk Gatholoco* and the *serat*
Darmagandhul. In short, Saminists tend to have the same discourses and nuances of sarcasm as these two works do concerning the Islamicisation of Java.

Despite their criticisms about the orthodox Islamic tradition, the Saminists have a good relationship with the Islamic community in their environment. More importantly, one of the decent and respectable old person (sesepuh) Saminists admitted that both works are important to them, like secret and sacred ‘books’ with a hidden meaning of considerable interest. For Saminists, both ‘books’ are still transmitted orally, unlike the texts to which Anderson and Drewes referred.

Fifth, the Suluk and the Serat talk about sexual discourse which is similar to the Saminist discourse on sexuality. These works composed on how sexual intercourse discourse is interpreted as not only a biological activity, but also a mystical activity that bring impact on the harmony of public life. This notion is also the substance of the Saminist’s teachings (Agama Adam). When people ask about Saminists’ religion, a Saminist will answer, “religion of Adam”, and if they are further asked, “what do you do?” (apa penggiane?), they would answer, “as human beings, in nature we do ‘sexual intercourse’ (sikep rabi)”. The deeper meaning of this understanding is a responsibility of becoming human beings. This knowledge substantially is the essence of the Suluk Gatholoco and the Serat Darmagandhul when criticize some of the santri (orthodox Muslim) perspectives. Important terms in Islam such as shahada/Sarengat (Islamic creed), surah al Baqarah, Baitullah (the house of Allah), Mecca (sacred city in Saudi Arabia for Muslims), Baitul Muqaddas (Al-Aqsa Mosque located in the Old City of Jerusalem), and pilgrim to Mecca are sarcastically directed to the interpretation of sexual intercourse activity using kerata basa expression\textsuperscript{23}. Most importantly, Suluk Gatholoco and Serat

\textsuperscript{23} Moreover, relating to the discourse of sexuality, the Saminist’s kerata basa expresses their wisdom for respecting nature, men, and women, and for criticizing religious activity and politics.
Darmagandhul do not superficially stop on this sarcasm words of play for the sake of a sarcastic humiliation to the Islamic orthodox. It is deeper than that. They criticize the Islam orthodox groups who are preoccupied by formality, superficial ritual, and Islamic law instead of ethical practise and life aesthetics by using rasa. For example, it is better to be kind to your neighbour rather than practising religious rituals obediently.

In the following section (Chapter 3) I will discuss Agama Adam in relation to marriage. However, in this section I discuss Agama Adam that is connected to the ancient Kapitayan belief system, which predates Islamic influence although holding some similarities with Sufism. One way to explore this belief system is through the meaning of some of its concepts. These are now discussed.

The first concept is Sanghyang Taya which means emptiness or a vacuum (hampa, kosong, suwung atau awang-uwung). Taya means the Absolute Being and this cannot be reached by the rational mind or by the senses (pancaindra). Sanghyang Taya is defined in Javanese as “tan kena kinaya ngapa” (the Absolute which is beyond human beings’ control). Another meaning is awang-uwung (it is real but it does not exist, it exists but it is not real) (Ada tetapi tidak ada, tidak ada tetapi Ada); it is a figure referenced in the Semar (Sunyoto, 2012, p. 14-16) whom I mentioned before, but it is still important to be noted here as it related to this discussion. The characteristic of Semar is always beyond binary opposition. Bad but at the same time very nice. One, but also diverse. Far away, but also close. Real, but also unreal. Transcendental, but also natural (material). The end is the beginning and the beginning is the end. Taya exists in Tutu-d (heart).

These expressions are only metaphorical. The Absolute can be sensed with rasa. This view is in line with Samin Surontiko’s teaching that God does not really exist. He said: “God is within me.” There is no language expression that can fit or frame,
conceptualize or define ‘God’s being’ (wujud) because framing or naming God is impossible.

In Saminist as well as Javanese beliefs, the method of approaching God is by practising and experiencing rasa through life. This discourse has been constructed and transformed in many different forms and metaphors in Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and even Christianity since these imported religions arrived in Java but the substance stays the same, with the emphasis on Javanese or Samin rasa. Hence, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and even parts of Christianity can be seen as a body of discourses through which Javanese and Samin may express their rasa.

The Kapitayan religion is related to the Sufi literature Wirid Hidayat Jati written by Javanese ‘spiritual thinker’ Ronggowarsito, which was studied by Simuh. Simuh argues that, according to his studies, Suluk Gatholoco and Serat Darmagandhul are related (Simuh, 1988, 2016). This is the theme of the following section.

**The Intersection Between the Samin Discourse and the Javanese Sufism Discourse**

The Samin’s teachings are claimed by the Saminists to be associated with the purity of Javanese mystical discourse and practices. Saminists also share values and principles with the Islamic faith, in particular, Javanese Sufism and Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings.

Javanese Sufism arose as part of the Javanization of Arabic Islam, when Islam arrived in Java or, to use Abdurrahman Wahid’s term, ‘Pribumisasi Islam’ (bringing down Islam to earth). The scholar Tariq Ramadan describes this phenomenon as contextualizing Islam (in Western countries) (Drewes, 1966; Hefner, 1985, 1987; Musa, 2011; M. C. Ricklefs, 2006; Woodward, 1988, 2010, 2011; Mulkhan, 2015). Since the 1980s (post-colonial era), there has been a reverse movement from the Javanization of Islam to the Islamization (in the sense of Arab Islam) of Java and Indonesia as a whole (Askuri, 2017; Azra, 2013; Ricklefs, 2007; Seino, 1988; Walker, 2016).
Initially the Javanese culture became the vessel of Islamic faith and principles, but not of Arabic culture. In other words, some of the Javanese cultures were able to be sustained because Islamic Sufism legitimized them – according to the logic of Sufism. There is a great amount of literature in the form of modern Javanese poems and historical writings of the Javanese civilization where this mix with the Islamic faith is evident. In other words, the Javanese literature was injected with Islamic values and principles. This intersection between Islam Sufism in Java is still in the frame of normative Islam and normative Sufism (the orthodox Islam).

However, this intersection had not gone further to Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings which in Javanese Sufi works such as *Suluk Gatholoco, Serat Darmagandhul, Serat Centhini, Serat Cabolek, Serat Kanda, Serat Dewa Ruci, Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati, Serat Seh Siti Jenar, Babad Jaka Tingkir*, and others (Muljana, 2008; Sholikhin, 2014). In regard to this understanding, Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings were different than other orthodox Sufism such as the Nine Saints who believed in *sharia* (Islamic law) and mysticism, from Islamic orthodox organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah and from Sufi *tariqa Naqshbandi* which is popular in Indonesia (Makhasin, 2016). This is explained in more detail below.

First though, the point must be made that existing Javanese cultural practices in the pre-Islamic era were confirmed by normative Islamic Sufism and thus became Islamic Javanese traditions such as the practice of *selametan/brokohan* (a ritual for the human life cycle), *Maulid Nabi Muhammad/Gerebeg Maulid* (prophet Muhammad’s birthday celebration), *nyekar* (the pilgrimage to the cemetery), Javanese music and the *gamelan* instrument, architecture, and *wayang* culture including all the norms, values and ethical life embodied in the performance. All these cultural practices were confirmed and adopted by Nine Saints (Picard, 2011; Sunyoto, 2016).
Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings radicalized the Nine Saints’ teachings, especially through two of the more famous teachings: Sangkan Paranining Dumadi and Manunggaling Kawula Gusti. These teachings focus on the journey to God through inward experience by accepting existing cultural practices. The point of his teachings is to have the profound mystical experience to disclose God’s existence.

How is the Javanese Sufism discourse related to the Samin’s teaching and discourse? First, the teaching of sami sami amin that is rooted in Seh Siti Jenar’s teaching justified the existence of Javanese culture. The principle of sami sami amin is not only to achieving the best quality of humanity (insan kamil), and ‘egalitarianism’ between human beings (Sangkan Paraning Dumadi knowledge), but also the ‘unity’ between the creator and the created (Manunggaling Kawula Gusti), not in terms of lahir (the empirical/material/outward), but in terms of batin (the ontological/ inner feeling/ inward) and existential. In the Sufi understanding of Ibn Arabi, al Hallaj, and Bustami this is known as wahdatul wujud (Atmadja, 2010, Sholikhin, 2014; Mulkhan, 2015). This teaching will be discussed below.

Second, the script of Serat Tapal Adam literally or implicitly, is one of the important Samin teachings mentioned in the history of Seh Siti Jenar based on the source of Babad Cirebon (Sunyoto, 2012, p. 38). It is also cited in some of the modern Javanese literature influenced by Seh Siti Jenar’s discourse in the Serat Darmagandhul version (Drewes, 1966), Suluk Gatholoco (Anderson, 1982), and Serat Centhini (Woodward, 1985). This historical book of Seh Siti Jenar’s was rewritten by the leader of LESBUMI PBNU (2015-2020)24, Agus Sunyoto, as a fictionalised version in order to avoid controversy.

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24 Pengurus Pusat Lembaga Seni Budaya Muslimin Nahdlatul Ulama (LESBUMI NU) in English can be understood as the Arts and Humanities Institution of Nahdlatul Ulama Organization.
Tapal Adam is the source of the Saminists’ Agama Adam. Originally it was written by Seh Bayanullah\textsuperscript{25} in the form of Javanese poem. A friend of Seh Siti Jenar, Abdul Malik Israil, asked Seh Siti Jenar on how this script of poems could be preached to illiterate people in Pasundan (the West Java Kingdom) and Majapahit Kingdom (the Central and the East Java Kingdom). Getok tular (words of mouth) is the answer given by Seh Siti Jenar. Thus, this Javanese oral tradition has been used until now by Saminists and Javanese people in general to transmit knowledge, especially by illiterate rural communities. We should note that Seh Siti Jenar and his followers were also peasants (Sunyoto, 2012, p. 39-40). In the form of Javanese poem, rural Javanese people can easily memorize and transmit knowledge through oral tradition. There are many forms of poem depend on the situation that illustrate life cycle of human beings: maskumambang (fetus), mijil (born), sinom (on young age), kinanthi (a process of learning), asmarandana (in seeking couple), gambuh (marriage), dhangdhanggula (on hard life), durma (serving to people), pangkur (on old age), megatruh (death), and pocung (funeral). This Javanese poem is also memorized through singing called uro-uro. This style of singing is more likely to let them sharing and passing on knowledge among rural community members. This act is different from the pure Hindu and Buddhist teachings which were circulated among nobles in the Majapahit Kingdom (Mulkhan, 2015).

The interpretation of Adam and Eve in Tapal Adam is different from that of the pious Muslims (santri). As mentioned above, Beatty explains that pious Muslims look to Adam and Eve as historical figures and Nabi Adam as the first prophet in the Abrahamic religion whereas some particular Sufi mystics believe Adam is everyman in that each man has the seed of humanity in his sperm. Thus, nabi (prophet) ‘means' bibit (seed).

Adam and Eve, like our immediate parents, are considered in Sufism to be mere intermediaries (lantaran), not the original source of life and wisdom. For the mystics, the

\textsuperscript{25}Islamic Sufism. One of Siti Jenar’s families who live in Cirebon, West Java.
scriptural account of creation is a story invented by humans from which symbolism is extracted. This symbolism is fitted to what we know directly from our inner understanding, the only true source of knowledge. The self is known as a deep and esoteric lived experience whereas piety is understood to be exclusive to Islam and brought to humanity by Muhammad.

Saminists tend to regard Adam and Eve as the Javanese mystics by connecting knowledge back to the self. In addition, Saminists read Adam and Eve as a symbol of the spiritual relations between a married man and woman. In this sense, every married Saminist brings the symbolism of Adam and Eve into being. This Sufi understanding is based on the Sangkan Paraning Dumadi teaching that teaches about the origin and the destination of being. It is an experiential journey to know the self by reading the deep and esoteric lived experience (kitab teles). Within the rasa is the Javanese and Saminists’ way of life.

Third, Suluk Darmagandhul and Serat Gatholoco are in fact Sufi’s works criticizing santri (the orthodox Muslims) who believed in sharia (Islamic law) at the time of the fall of Majapahit and the rise of the Islamic Demak Kingdom. Both works are not anti-Islamic in any sense, but they do criticize santri for not embracing profound spirituality and mystical experience through rasa. Suluk Darmagandhul and Serat Gatholoco were based on Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings (Sholikhin, 2014, p. 17) that focus on critiquing the dominant power and the use of religion for political power. Both tell a story of how Islamic Arabs conquered Java by force.

In the Suluk Darmagandhul, there are 21 cantos, rewritten by Drewes (1966). The take the form of discussions between the guru, Darmagandhul and his student, Kalamwadi which cover many topics. I would like to underline the topic which is in line with the Samin’s teachings and, in particular, those of Seh Siti Jenar.
1). The Javanese are represented by a teak tree, believed to be the strongest tree. Thus, Javanese do not need to follow the Arabic culture which is symbolized by the weringin (banyan) tree – a weaker tree than the teak. The Saminists also put a high value on teak tree, especially as materials for building their houses. It is a symbol of a strong personal character and spirituality.

2). Javanese’ knowledge is the highest form of rationality: budi (wisdom). The Saminists are very proud and full of confidence about their budi, which they see as equal to that of other religious communities such as the Muslims. Nevertheless, they are humble people and respect Muslims, based on their values and principles which are directed towards harmony and mutual respect.

3). The decline of budi as a pre-Islamic religion was the consequence of the rise of orthodox Islamic religion and legal tradition (sharia). Budi means a spiritual journey to come close to God by using rasa to read the self. By practising sharia, the orthodox Muslims could be deceived. Sharia could form a barrier to God as it can stop them from respecting heterodox groups who are different or have different religions. Sharia could be dangerous, becoming the goal of religion itself while, at the same time, the real spiritual purpose of experiencing God is forgotten. Orthodox Muslims conducted violence such as violating Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings and destroying it as murtad (heresy).

4). The orthodox Islam, like other forms of orthodox religion, can lead to divisions between orthodox believers and others. In contrast, the Samin principles and Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings lead to respect between people and respect for other religions, living in harmony, not only among human beings, but also all creatures in the universe.

5). Seh Siti Jenar is the only Saint of the Nine Saints who opposed the majority of the Nine Saints because they overpowered the Majapahit Kingdom. Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings were condemned as dangerous to the Demak Kingdom’s stability. In Darmagandhul
version, it is told that by the authority of the Sultan (the King of Demak Kingdom), Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri came to Seh Siti Jenar’s place to punish him. In fact, Seh Siti Jenar was immediately killed by Sunan Giri. In addition, the power struggle of Raden Patah (continued by Sultan Trenggono) overthrew the Majapahit King.

6). The story of the fall of Majapahit was shocking because it was told of a son who rebelled against his father. However, in the Samin community, this story and the collision between the Agama Buda of Majapahit and Islam of the Demak Kingdom is rarely discussed. Perhaps, these stories are too sensitive. In the Samin community, another side of Majapahit which was closer to the Samin discourse and part of their ancestry is usually talked about. This is the story of Majapahit from the side of another son of Brawijaya V, Raden Bondan Kejawan of Jaka Tarub. Bondan Kejawan had a bloodline with two of Brawijaya V’s sons, Panaraga and Ki Ageng Pengging (Kebo Kenanga) who want the throne of Majapahit, in opposition to the Islamic Demak King, Raden Patah. Ki Ageng Pengging and his followers were Seh Siti Jenar’s students. The Saminists believe that their ancestry was from this bloodline. I argue that not only this bloodline but the transmission of knowledge itself is also linked genealogically.

The stories I found in the Serat Darmagandhul and as told in the Samin community are in line with Babad Jaka Tingkir, the content of which are stories about Javanese Kingdom after the Islamic Demak Kingdom. All of those stories are about how the Islamic community took over the Javanese empire and its tradition. In the context of the Majapahit dynasty system, the one who should have become the Javanese King at that time was a Javanese descendant with the bloodline of Pengging and not Raden Patah (a Chinese and Islam-Arabic successor). Theoretically, the throne should have been inherited by Ki Ageng Pengging or Ki Panaraga after the Brawijaya V ended his era. As indicated in the previous discussion of the Serat Darmagandhul and the Suluk Gatholoco, Raden Patah was
provoked by Sunan Bonang and the other Nine Saints to take over the Majapahit King’s throne by force. After Raden Patah ruled the Demak Kingdom, supported by the legitimization of religious opinion (fatwa), Raden Patah decided to capture and kill Ki Ageng Pengging and his teacher, Seh Siti Jenar, whom both were killed.

7). The Serat criticizes the bad behaviour of Muslims. They were not thankful to Brawijaya V for allowing them to live in Majapahit. They also were preoccupied by sharia (Islamic law). The serat illustrates the Muslims as mice which eat the entire rice stock; in other words, they undermined the Majapahit. The underlying meaning of this story is that the walis (Saints) are hypocrites and greedy, obtaining political power through a son betraying his father. They disguised this intention by making the excuse of spreading Islamoc sharia Whereas their motive was to gain absolute power to conquer Java.

8). Sunan Kalijaga in this Serat also provides kerata basa to persuade Brawijaya and two of his servants. Simplifying Islam, in Kalijaga’s version this is referred to as the in-depth knowledge of shahada (sahadat) which is the essential rule in Islam. Performing prayers, therefore are useless without a deep understanding of sahadat. Sahadat means nésahkèn roh lan dat ing Hyang (the dissolve of the self as he/she meet the Essence of God; like the light of candle in the front of the light of the sun). Its meaning is slightly similar to the term manunggaling kawula gusti. In another layer of interpretation, sahadat sarengat really means sexual union as it is a process of spreading humanity to recognize the spirit and God. Further, Kalijaga provides a phallic interpretation of various Islamic and other terms, in such a way that sexual intercourse is the fulcrum on which everything turns26. Kalijaga was trying to reinterpret the cultural context by referring to Islam, without

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26 For instance, Kalijaga explains the terms: sarengat means yen sare wadine njengat (when sleeping the penis erect); tarekat is taren kang estri (to seek a woman’s assent in intercourse); kakekat is unggil kapti, kedah rujuk estri kakung (the willingness of both man and woman to have intercourse; makripat means to know the rules and practice of married life. He continues his kerata basa about the four points of the compass; wetan (East) refers to wiwitan (origin); kulon (West) to këlonan, (to nestle up to a woman); kidul (South) means kalam dudul wadi (penis reach vagina); lor (North) refer to lair rasa, (the appearing of inner feeling). After Kalijaga’s explanation about Islam in his version, Brawijaya V converts to Islam and lets his son rule Java as the first Islamic Demak Kingdom. What I need to underline is that the
totally changing the previous understanding of the Javanese culture where sex is important for achieving the journey to God. At this point of understanding, Kalijaga’s perception of the Islamic worldview and the Samin worldview are interconnected because sexual intercourse is not understood as only a biological activity, but also as spiritual, mystical, and a way to reach and become one with God.

The fourth important point that is the Javanese Sufism discourse related to the Samin’s teaching and discourse, is in all debates between the orthodox Islamic groups and the heterodox groups of the Sufi mystics, theological debate is one of the core issues. However, as the research for this thesis is an anthropological study, it is concerned with people’s experience of God’s existence, not the problematization of God’s existence. The main arguments as presented above are to understand the spiritual (mystical) experience of God’s existence in the Samin community as it relates to the debate between both the orthodox Islamic groups and the heterodox groups of Seh Siti Jenar’s followers.

The most popular utterance of Samin Surosentiko when he was interrogated, was “God is within me” (Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 226). This utterance is similar to the statement of Yazid al-Bastami –known as Bayazid, “I am God” and al Hallaj’s utterance, “I am the Truth.” This also exposed by Seh Siti Jenar in the words of Manungaling Kawulo-Gusti. In the concept of Manungaling Kawulo-Gusti, God’s existence is within me; me as the self dissolved and the only existence is God. My existence is being in nothingness within God’s presence is all over. There is no me, but God only. Oneness with God’s being is the nothingness of me.

understanding of Islam here in the terms of sarengat, tarekat, kakekat, makripat is very much in line with the substance and the principle of the Samin teachings of Agama Adam. It is a rule of marriage with the achievement of recognizing the spirit and God’s existence. It is Islamic in the heterodox sense of spirituality.
This is summed up as mati sajro ning urip (dying within life), which is the expression formulated by Seh Siti Jenar. Similarly, God’s existence is explained by Samin Surosentiko’s as God within me. Benda and Castles (1969, p. 225-226) made the point:

The exact nature of the religious beliefs which sustained the Saminists in such clashes with authority cannot be described confidently, as they came to the knowledge of the authorities largely in the form of sayings with secret meanings. Very likely the explanations given by the Saminists did not cover the full meaning. (The Javanese have a special fondness for investing sayings with two or more meanings.)

According to this context, the Saminists have a mystical understanding of the Sufi teachings. At the time of the Dutch colonial rule, any movement related to the Sufis (tarekat) and peasant communities should be kept under surveillance and control. During this time any relationships with Sufis or tariqa (tarekat) movements and peasant movements was a way to resist the Dutch colonial rule (Kartodirdjo, 1966, 1978). In short, the meaning behind the terms “God within me” and “dying within life” is in line with the purity of which Samin Surosentiko spoke to his followers. The purer that humans (Saminists) are in life the deeper they experience esoteric life; make a distance between the self and the (materialistic) world.

Benda and Castles (1969, p. 228) stated that the Saminists have quite clear ethical principles: “do not be idle; do not lie; do not steal; do not commit adultery; behave patiently; if insulted remain silent; do not ask for money or food from anyone, but if anyone asks for food or money of you, give it”. They attributed the Saminists with such traits as honesty, generosity, patience and industriousness. All these practical exercises will create purity in order to dissolve into God’s being. In other words, in order to become the true or real Samin (Samin Sejati), the Saminists should master or control their desire and
lust (*matèké raga*) and live an honest life, including being consistent, keeping a promise, being mindful and earnest and taking action accordingly. All these words are the utterance of the unification between body, inner feeling, and mind (*nyikepi rasa, nyikepi pikiran, ngrabeni pikiran lan perasaane, kudu seikat, sekata, ikhlas, lurus, lan nyawiji*).

Because of all these practices, the Saminists are labeled as the silent people (*barisan tutup mulut*). I would say that the utterance of Samin Surosentiko “God is within me” is substantially similar to another utterance of Seh Siti Jenar, “*iya ingsun iki Allah*” (I myself am Allah) (Saleh, 2001: 38) because silence does not mean be quiet or a feeling of loneliness or alienation, but peace in God’s presence; this condition resembles meditation. Accordingly, it is consistent with the utterance of the great Sufi, al Hallaj, “Kill me, O my faithful friends, to kill me is to make me live”; “My life is my death, and my death is my life”; “*Anā ‘l-haqq*” (“I am the Truth”). Similarly, Great Sufi, Ibn Arabi stared, “When you know yourself, your “I-ness” vanishes, and you know that you and God are one and the same”; in the Koran, it is written, “We are nearer to him than you, but you do not see” (Qur’ān 56:85), and “We are nearer to him than his jugular vein” (Koran, 50:16; Vaughan-Lee, 1995).

As Benda and Castles (1969) mentioned, Saminists have secret meanings in their utterances, which can be revealed, layer by layer. When Saminists refer to Adam, they do not refer neither exclusively to the prophet Adam in Abrahamic religion nor marriage ritual and its symbol. Adam could refer to non-being (*suwung wungwang*), as explained by Zoetmulder “One must prostrate oneself before Prophet Adam (Nabi Adam), but this is not the prophet Adam; rather, “adam” signifies empty non-being (*suwung wungwang*) whose being is eternal” (1994, p. 175). Zoetmulder (1994, p. 176) also recited *Serat Centhini* when he explained the term of *suwung* (*an emptiness/being in nothingness*):
[...] sajati ning suwung pesti ananèki/ anané tan kinarya. Tan wiwitan tan wekasan pesti/ datan mamak datan kasatmatal pan ana anané dêwé/ anèng enengirèku/ eneng ingkang merdika suci [...].

This can be translated as:

[...] the essence of true non-being is fixed (stable); it is not made. It is stable, without beginning and without end. It is not blind yet is invisible, for it is its own being in a state of perfect silence, a silence which is sovereign and holy [...].

This is in line with the Javanese Sufi, Seh Bari’s utterance: al-airifu gharaqa fi bahri ‘l-adam, (the mystic is swallowed up in the sea of non-being) (Bonang, 2007, p. 17 & p. 97). Similarly, followers of the religion of Kapitayan believe in Sangyang Taya which means suwung or non-being, as discussed above.

Semantically, Sangyang Taya expresses the name of God with Tu or To such as Tu-nggal (Sangyang Manikmaya/God/Being), Tu-han (Sangyang Wenang/God/Being), Wa-tu (rock), Tu-gu (monument), Tu-ngkub (the sacred building), Tu-lang (skull), Tu-nda (Punden Berundak), Tu-nggul (Pennant), Tu-k (spring/water sources), Tu-ban (waterfall), Tu-mbal (sacrificing animal or human), etc. In the sacred ceremony of Sangyang Tunggal, Javanese people provide offerings (sesaji) such as Tu-mpeng, Tu-mpi (Javanese traditional cake), Tu-mbu (a place for flowers), Tu-ak (arrack), and Tu-kung (a kind of chicken). The Kapitayan tradition involves submission to God. For around an hour they conduct their prayers using various postures: Tu-lajeg (stand), Tu-ngkul (nod the head), Tu-lumpak (kneel), and To-ndhem (place your head, knees, and hands on the floor). This ritual for dissolving the existence of Sangyang Taya (God/Being) is located existentially in the Tu-tu-d (heart). The pious followers of Kapitayan religion believe they will gain supernatural power which is Tu-ah (positive power) and Tu-lah (negative power). Their leader is called
ra-Tu (King) or dha-Tu (Sunyoto, 2012, p. 13-16). All these rituals of Kapitayan involve substantially submitting to non-being or suwung (emptiness).

Throughout these discursive practices, we can look at the big picture of consistency and substance in the Saminists’ teaching, Javanese Sufism, and Kapitayan discursive practices. There is also consistency in the practice of recitation, breathing, bodily positions, and meditation. These discursive practices were implicit, as Bruinessen (1999) explained: there is a clear relationship between Javanese cosmology in the pre-Islamic era and Javanese Sufis in the Islamic era. It is a way of self-annihilation for presenting the True Being. It is a condition of fanā (Zoetmulder, 1994). The Javanese Sufis and Javanese orthodox Muslims both apply this term to their religious practices. In short, Javanese Sufism is the connection between the Jawa Sejati (Jawadipa, Jawa Buda/Jawa Siwa-Buddha) and Islam. Indeed, both discourses agree and believe in Sangkan Paraning Dumani (the goal of eternal life).

Javanese Sufism developed due to the influence of Diponegoro after the Java War (1825-1830) (Brown, 2005; Bruinessen, 2014; Carey, 1986, 2014; Kartodirdjo, 1966, 1978). In the Diponegoro era, the movement against the Dutch (English) colonial rule was powerfully motivated by the spirit of Sufism (tarekat) and influenced by the Javanese Sufi discourses such as Ronggowarsito and other masterpieces of the Javanese Sufi literature that have a chain of transmission from Seh Siti Jenar. The war was strongly backed by Kyais (s religious leader) and a part of spiritual journey (sufi/tariqa) members.

The strongest response to the Diponegoro movement occurred when Diponegro was given the title of the Just King (Ratu Adil) which meant he would bring justice to the Javanese people. Consequently, the Islamic and spiritual movements against the Dutch colonial ruler in the post-Diponegoro war mushroomed (Carey, 1976, 2014; Dhofier,
1980). Afterward, the sacred label of the Just King was also given to Samin Surosentiko because he had received revelations (Wahyu/Tejo/Pulung).

The other indication that Javanese Sufism is strongly in line with the Samin’s teaching was because Seh Siti Jenar’s student, Ki Ageng Pengging, is an ancestor of the Samins. All these indications make it possible to argue that the Javanese Sufi imagination and its circumstances have been in the memory of the Saminists, although they did not realize that their traditions have a chain of transmitted knowledge which can be traced back to Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings. In short, it does not matter whether the Saminists refuse to believe that the Javanese Sufi tradition is part of their religious practice, symbol, or identity. Most important is the fact that the Samin’s teachings share values and principles with Javanese Sufism, which have been transmitted by the oral tradition of Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings.

As I mentioned before, the Saminists are also very close to stories in wayang. The Saminists believe that wayang is a tool or medium through which Javanese teachings were transferred to the next generation of Javanese people. Wayang was also used and developed by the Nine Saints to islamize the Javanese people. In other words, wayang was used by Muslims to teach Islamic principles to the Javanese, whom at that time were illiterate. Therefore, the ethical and esoteric Islamic teachings enriched the Javanese culture. Through this process, the Islamic value transmitted to the Saminists who perceived wayang as a source of their knowledge.

Furthermore, each of wayang main characters is a reflection of Islamic Sufi and Islamic ethical teachings. For example, Serat Dewa Ruci, a story about wayang character Bima, was written by a scholar from Surakarta, Yasadipura I. It tells a story about Bima’s journey to meet God. Bima also seeks to understand the concept of manunggaling kawula
gusti throughout his esoteric experience. This story is in line with Samin’s teachings as discussed above.

Moreover, Hutomo (1996, p. 22) argues that in Samin’s work, Serat Uri-Uri Pambudi, manungaling kawula gusti is referred to just as in Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings and also the concept of “rangka umajing curiga.” This concept means the blade (kris) comes into the sheath (rangka) A mystic reading of this is that s human is a vessel like a sheath while the blade (kris) is understood as the True Being (God). The body of a human is like a veil for God’s existence. The real meaning of life for humans is to share with one another life because they originate from the same source that will become dust, whereas the soul is a mirror of God and remains as God’s existence (sangkan paraning dumadi). Humans do not have the rights on anything. There is no human rights concept in the Samin’s teachings because humans already have their fate and destiny. Humans only serve God.

Whether happy or sad, rich or poor, suffering or not suffering, humans need to accept all these conditions without complaint. This acceptance is an active movement of in humans’ journey of life to go back to their origin. This means life is a never-ending process where being patient never stops one from enduring the pain (sabar trokal. Sabare dieling eling, trokale dilakoni). This knowledge is part of Saminists’ life experience in everyday life. It is not philosophical knowledge where reflection on reality is made necessary by the intellectual activity of the mind. Perhaps, in response to Immanuel Kant’s a vowed plea “dare to think!” (sapere aude), the Saminist’s plea is “dare to experience life!”

To sum up, the Javanese Sufis and the Saminists share many ideas and principles. Religion in their discourse is not a label, institution or a claim of identity, but the esoteric experiential journey to know their ‘God’. To know their God is the same as to know their origin and to know where they will end (sangkan paraning dumadi). Humans’ existence is
nothing compared to God’s existence. Accordingly, knowing is experiencing actual life according to the principles and values of Javanese Sufism as well as the Saminists.

Human culture is the expression of religion, but religion is not human culture. Religion is the original state of the nature of humans to tackle angst and emptiness. The substance of religion is spirituality aiming at curing angst and emptiness by fulfilling the esoteric lived experience. Religion also consists of faith and principles whereas culture constitutes the medium of religious expressions, using metaphors to know God and to act in the world according to God’s will. In this context, Islam can be a reminder to humans to know their creator. In other words, Islam is not an institution or a culture that is constructed by authoritative preachers (ulama) who claim the Islamic people to be the best humans in the world while the rest are infidels who will go to hell. Islam is a way as well as a process of a never ending journey to God by performing everyday life in the name (for the sake) of Being (God).

Until now, some debates between Seh Siti Jenar and the Nine Saints have not been settled and there are other interpretations on the Suluk and Serat which absolutely need to be addressed.

First, Seh Siti Jenar was a human being, he did not come from a worm. He came from a noble family similar to Samin Surosentiko. His bloodline can be traced back to Husein, Ali’s son, and Muhammad peace be upon him (PBUH). The worm is only a metaphor which is intended to convey that Seh Siti Jenar belonged to the lower class as a farmer.

Second, Seh Siti Jenar did not steal knowledge from listening to the conversation between Sunan Bonang and Sunan Kalijaga. He studied persistently from many teachers and explored many religions. Third, he was neither murtaad (apostate) nor a deviate, he was a Sufi like al Hallaj, al-Arabi, and the like.
Fourth, there is some controversy surrounding his death. He was not killed by the Nine Saints, but died naturally in Cirebon, West Java. Some people believe his corpse became a horrible dog while others believe that he was moksa, that he disappeared, leaving a fragrant scent behind him.

Fifth, with respect to the conflict between the Majapahit and the Demak Kingdom, some argue that the fall of Majapahit was a result of internal conflict and also external conflict with the Kediri Kingdom, not the attack from the Demak Kingdom which was supported by the Nine Saints (Atmadja, 2010; Sutiyono, 2010; Simon, 2005; Pigeaud and De Graaf, 1974). I assumed that there is an effort to separate and purify both Javanese and Islamic culture. However, it is impossible to purify both of them, as in fact, the two have blended layer by layer.

Sixth, Seh Siti Jenar’s followers were not crazy and did not rebel or act in a criminal manner, but their story was politized to give Seh Siti Jenar a negative image. Seventh, Ki Ageng Pengging was assumed or suspected to be have been killed by Sunan Kudus. However, Ki Ageng Pengging was the teacher of Sunan Kudus, therefore it was impossible that Sunan Kudus would have murdered him. Ki Ageng Pengging was killed on the battlefield when Sunan Kudus attacked the Pengging area.

In short, in this discussion, there are many diverse versions of the overtaking of the Majapahit Kingdom by the Demak Kingdom (Sunyoto, 2016; Sholikhin, 2014; Pranowo, 2011; Atmadja, 2010; Sutiyono, 2010; Simon, 2005; Mulkhan, 2015, 2011, 2007; Guillot & Kalus, 2008; Pigeaud and De Graaf, 1974). In the discussion above the aim has been to explore the similar shared principles and values of the Saminists and the Javanese Sufi influenced by Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings. These relate to ethics, to the perception of God (manunggaling kawula gusti), and involve a general rethinking of religion.
Up to today, the orthodox Islam discourse is still challenging Seh Siti Jenar discourse. Therefore, I will be cautious in explaining the Samin discourse in the next discussion, which contextualizes it in the debate between the orthodox Islamic discourse and the heterodox Islamic discourse associated with Seh Siti Jenar.

**The Position of Samin Surosentiko’s Teachings in the Debate Between the Orthodox Islamic Discourse and Seh Siti Jenar’s Discourse**

It is clear from the previous discussion that the Saminists have a worldview that is similar to Seh Siti Jenar’s position, whose view clashed with the orthodox (*sharia*) Islamic discourse. The discussion above on *manunggaligawulagusti* indicated Seh Siti Jenar and the Saminists have a different understanding to the theological interpretation of orthodox Muslims, which pushed the Saminists to become associated with atheists or communists. Regarding the Javanese culture and Islam, Seh Siti Jenar is in line with the Saminists whereas the Javanese culture is also Islamic to some degree (which is evident in practices such as *brokohan/selamatan*, see Chapter 3).

Seh Siti Jenar defined Islam within the Javanese context while the orthodox Islamic groups interpret Islam according to the Arabic cultural context. Seh Siti Jenar justified the actual faith and cultural practices of the Javanese in his time while the orthodox Islamic groups who challenged him would have liked to reframe Javanese culture into an Arabic version.

Seh Siti Jenar radicalized Arabic Islamic religion and culture by melding it with the Javanese style of religion and culture while the orthodox Islamic group radicalized Javanese religion and cultural practice into Arabic Islamic religion and culture. The orthodox Muslim focuses on the formal rituals of *sharia* such as the importance of the five pillars in Islam: the ritual of *shahada* testimony, the practice of *sholat* (praying five times daily), *sedekah* and *zakat* (charity) *puasa/poso* (fasting), and *hajj* (pilgrimage) whereas Seh
Siti Jenar argued that *sharia* was substantially about appearances only (*iku wis palson kabez*).

*Sharia* at that time was indeed conducted superficially as a formal ritual. When people submit and surrender to God in such a formalised way, they, in fact, do not really deeply experience spiritual obedience. In other words, according to Seh Siti Jenar, these Muslims were pretending to be Muslim. They were lying when they embraced Islam. Islam was just a tool for legitimizing political power.

When imposed or practised for political advantage, Islam is far from the spirit itself (Chodjim, 2002, p. 197-198). Being a Muslim was something to be proud of, but, more than this, it involved having more power than being a non-Muslim. In other words, Muslims became arrogant because they were Muslim. Yet for the Saminists and Seh Siti Jenar’s followers, ritual does not exist not for its own sake, or for displaying arrogance and power. Rather is is for seizing or achieving peace for the self and spreading peace and prosperity to all beings in the world. In Javanese terms, this was “*hamemayu hayuning bawana*” or “beautify the world” (to struggle for the salvation of the world and to preserve the world and all its contents in order to remain harmonic).

The radicalization of Seh Siti Jenar’s interpretation of Islam profoundly extends beyond ritual practice and formalism. Its ethical principles are similar to the Samin principles of diligence, honesty, faithfulness, open-minedness, tolerance, endurance, independence, generosity, patience and sincerity. Conducting oneself with all of these attitudes is called *sholat daim* which means that all of these characteristics are part of the spiritual flow of everyday life activities. Through having these attitudes in their activities, people are remembering God’s existence as the deep meaning and essence of prayer itself. For example, when the Saminists start work in the morning by remembering God’s gift,
God’s will and God’s existence sincerely, they conduct sholat daim (Chodjim, 2002, p. 2000).

*Sholat daim* is a true prayer, where the existence of the self is banished before God’s existence. It is the eternal prayer of a human being in the world, which is different from the ritual prayer with a fixed movement that in the Javanese perspective only served as a manner (*tata krama*) of human beings to God’s Almighty. Talking, sleeping, and any activities in the world are understood as *sholat daim*. In this respect, Islam in Seh Siti Jenar’s teaching is a universal religion of mercy for all beings (*rahmatul lill ‘alamin*). Importantly, there is no distinction between secular and sacred life.

In contrast to this argument, the orthodox Muslims believe that Islam has its own authenticity, originality, and jurisdiction. They critique Seh Siti Jenar’s teaching as *bid’ah*, meaning innovation in religious matters. For them, everything can be found in the Koran and Hadist. Islamic teachings are established and entire (*kaффah*). However, in Seh Siti Jenar’s discourse, Islam has also been modified as a cultural product because of the innovations offered by the revelations of Moses, Jesus and other prophets. Islam justifies and validates many of God’s previous messengers by incorporating them into the religious doctrines. In short, Islam has also experienced its own development, sharing values and principles of previous religious movements. This reminder of its mutability goes back to the principle of the unification humans and God (*manunggaling kawula gusti*) to use Seh Siti Jenar’s terms.

Based on the principles of *sami sami amin* and *manunggaling kawula gusti*, Islam is not a label, brand, identity, or appearance, but an inner feeling of a sense of spirituality (*rasa/batin*) of peace. In this sense, Islam is a universal faith, not exclusive for Muslims, and especially not exclusive for the orthodox Muslims. This universal faith is a religious phenomenological experience for each human being to exercise his or her ascetic life to
seek the quest of God or the revelation of the “True Being” in daily life. Religion is man-made while religiosity is God’s sovereignty in order to be known and recognized by his creatures.

Islam is a spiritual process of seeking and experiencing God’s presence by behaving ethically (akhlak) in public life, not by isolating the self (although some Sufis turn away from the world for an esoteric life). So, in a sense, Islam is not a noun, but a verb; the nature of Islam is dynamic (and is therefore modern), not static (jumud). The end of this quest for God is the essence of the what it means to be a human being in the world (sangkan paran ing dumadi). This reinforces the earlier Sufi point that, for human beings, the origin is the destination (in nalilahi wa inna ilaihi roji’un).

As a result of ‘knowing’, through Islam, a person experiences peace, safety and security, and a harmonious life. The Javanese term “ngilmu” (obtaining knowledge) means “nglakoni/ngalami” (experiencing) or “kelakone kanthi laku” (achieving wisdom). The spiritual experience in the words of the Javanese Sufi, Seh Siti Jenar, is “rangka umajing curiga / warongko manjing curigo” (the blade come into the sheath). It feels like God is overwhelming the self; God is all around. God is everywhere, including within, where one feels nothing. This mystical experience is hidden in practical experience (Mulkhan, 2002; 2007; 2015, p. 5). For the Saminists, this practical experience is expressed in the implementation of the Saminist principles in public daily life, such as in the practice of rembug (discussion), slametan/brokohan (the sharing of food, conversation and togetherness), and an agricultural livelihood.

In sum, this discussion has emphasized the previous discussions about the shared principles and values of Javanese Sufism represented by Seh Siti Jenar’s discourse and Samin Surosentiko’s discourse. Both manifest a very deep understanding of Islam, both are Islamic in a sense. Javanese, including the Saminists, accept Islam in the sense that the
appearance or vessel of Islam is the Javanese culture which some people define as “Islam-Jawa” (Chodjam, 2002, p. 211).

Therefore, it is reasonable if many Saminists did and still do not recognize Islam as people today understand it because Islam today has become modernized into a form of identity, status, and institutions, and is led by the so-called authoritative law (fiqh). The Saminists are not concerned about the name attributed to their identity or the name of their faith. Instead they are focused on their substantive principles and ethical actions.

**Conclusion**

The complexity of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings comes from the tension between the knowledge of Javanese mystic centrality and of Islamic mystic teachings. These knowledge exist because the arrival of the knowledge of modernity. Modernity brings mysterious knowledge into being and known. Modernity, which was introduced by colonialism, encouraged people in Java to pursue originality, authenticity and purification. However, the notion of essentializing their culture had made it easier for the Dutch colonial ruler to map and control them.

From the perspective of Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings, the Javanese cultural narrative shares values and principles with Islam. It is impossible to tear apart Javanese tradition and Islam. Seh Siti Jenar legitimized the existing traditions of pre-Islamic teachings (Javanese traditions) because they contained the same principles and values as in the Islamic teachings. In contrast, Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings were perceived as heretical by the Nine Saints. This liminal phase of becoming ‘Javanese Islam’ is quite distinct from Geertz’s understanding of the religion of Java, especially in abangan group. As a constructed narrative in the discourse of Javanese Islamic mysticism, the Saminists embrace the religion of Adam (close to Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings) while ordinary Javanese people,
according to Geertz, embrace the religion of Java. However, the Saminists are Javanese, too. This proves that the Samin case is beyond Geertz’s theory.

The father of Samin Surosentiko changed his son name from Raden Kohar to Samin. It signify that he wants to represent a significant symbol of the Javanese and not an Islamic one. He tried to perform Javanese tradition in the spirit of Islam, which resembled Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings. He also had *perguruan* (school) Adam and educated students with his teachings. Those action indicate that Samin Surosentiko and his family could be Muslim (Hutomo, 1996, p. 21). However, he was not known as a Muslim because his religious expression was based on the Javanese mystical practice that challenged the orthodox Islamic discourse. Samin’s spiritual enlightenment made him realize that the spiritual journey did not necessarily need *Agama* in terms of an institutionalized religion ans its symbols. Instead, his teachings are that the spiritual journey should be based on *rasa*, not preoccupied by rules in a (written text) book and a structural approach. Even though Samin’s teaching was based on many influential books, he always educated his Javanese followers in the oral tradition and by experiencing the deep meaning of spiritual journey. In other words, he educated them to read the self by focusing on experiencing *rasa*.

Samin’s teachings were influenced by some of Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings which had been written in modern Javanese (around 1870), in particular *Suluk Gatholoco* and *Serat Darmagandhul*.

Research findings on *Babad Jaka Tingkir*, especially on the topic of Seh Siti Jenar, found similarity to the Samin’s worldview, especially the Samin community in Tapelan that was investigated by Hutomo (1996). Samin’s teachings were directed to knowing the self by using *rasa* and, most importantly, these pointed to an understanding and alignment with Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings. In contrast, my ethnomethodological fieldwork found that the Saminists consider themselves to be pure Javanese (not include Islam whatsoever); the
Saminists in Pati and Kudus perceives themselves in the frame of Javanese centrality. This claim is contradicted by some of other Saminists in Pati and Kudus who claim that all religions are constituted in the Samin’s teachings, including Islam.

It is clear that the idea of equality, God, and life-death are the liminal phase between Samin Surosentiko’s worldview and the Seh Siti Jenar’s worldview. Both teachers challenged the dominant power in different contexts of histories but with the same essential principles and ethics, which develop into a movement to achieve equality, autonony, and independence. They perceived God as existential, experiential, and united in the self within. God is not “out there” or transcendence, but “within me” (manunggaling kawula gusti). The idea of purity in Samin’s teaching is about a clean and clear rasa not the symbols of the Javanese tradition centrality. They perceive death as only related to the body while the soul remains forever. Therefore, humans in the world should accept pain or joy without any complaint as it comes from the body not soul; it is normal and natural for humans to experience sadness and happiness. However, the purpose of humans in life is to achieve peaceful soul.

As this chapter has shown in some details, it is a complex to construct the Samin narrative. No single label or definition can be imposed on the Samin reality. However, the discourse analysis that is confirmed by my fieldwork has shown that the Samin’s teachings are situated at a time of tension among the Islamic, Javanese, and modern discourses. In other words, it is almost impossible that the Samin community came into being without the push and pull movements of the the Islamic, Javanese, and modern social and political interactions.

These different discourses and their influences will be explored further in Chapter 5 by mapping the interpretation of the Samin’s teachings into many different Saminist narratives, based on the words of Saminists themselves in the post-Suharto era.
Chapter 3 History, Population, Geography, and Life Cycle of The Samin Community

Introduction

In this chapter, evidence is brought to bear to support the argument that being a Saminist is not only a matter of identity, but also of developing a true Javanese ethic in terms of the Saminist communities’ actual lived experience. The Saminists communities’ actual lived experience in this chapter lies in the fact that the history, community populations, and locations of the Saminists are presented as empirical data. Their actual lived experience is based on their interpretation of Samin’s teachings, in a search for the meanings explored in Chapter 2. The Saminists’ daily lives are infused with meaning which can often be accessible through their narrated oral histories, although this meaning is sometimes ambiguous. The Saminists attempt to put what their culture and language have crystallized from the past together with what they experience in their present life.

In this chapter are displayed the ritual narratives of pre-birth, marriage, and death, and the ritual narratives concerning their agricultural livelihood, all of which show the meaning of their lives as Saminists that it has been passed on from generation to generation. All of these narratives were part of my experiences when living with the Saminists. Naturally, these will be different to the experiences of other researchers. In this chapter also the Saminists are compared and contrasted with Javanese people in general, to illustrate a deeper understanding of the Samin community.

The Samin community’s culture domain is not only based on cultural features but also stems from their social relations, interactions, social practices, and their own self-ascription as ‘belonging’ to this community. Throughout the various phases of their lives, the Samin Javanese ethnic identity becomes clearly understandable. According to Barth (1969), this ethnic boundary defines them, not the cultural ‘stuff’ that it encloses or indeed
primordialism. Primordialism is the idea that ethnicity is predetermined by one’s bloodline, ancestry, or territory and is evident through shared cultural attributes, as an isolated and contained group. I argue that both the notions of the ethnic boundary and primordialism are still significant to the construction of the Samin Javanese ethnic identity.

Making references to historical and meaningful figures and symbols is a common practice in asserting a group identity. Identity is declared and debated in conversation, practices, texts, memories and political movements as illustrated in Chapter 2. In the present chapter, the Saminists’ cultural identity is depicted in the ritual practices that are presented. They are saturated with images, figures and names that continue to reinforce a view of the Saminist identity as unique and ‘other’, especially to the Indonesian identity in general and to the Javanese to be more specific. The uniqueness of Saminists’ rituals provides a stage for unique structures of experience, known as Dilthey's Erlebnis, which presented in milieus separated from mundane life (Turner, 1986, p. 41). These unique structures of experience can be understood through the interpretations Saminists have offered about them. Finally, this chapter presents the most recent actual lived experience of the Saminists in the contemporary world. Readers can understand the ethnic boundary of the Saminists based not only on cultural features, but also on their social interactions with others, especially in the cultural and social events of the various stages of life. In this chapter, an empirical and concrete narrative of the Saminists is given.

This chapter begins with general information about the history of the Saminists in the colonial era and, to a lesser extent, in the post-colonial era. A discussion follows of the Javanese population and its geographical landscape as the background to the Saminists in Pati. Finally, details are provided of their life cycle in terms of birth, marriage, work, and death, with reference to Pati as well as Kudus and Blora.
Short History

It has been estimated that in 1859, Samin Surosentiko (or Samin Surondiko in the Blora dialect) was born as the son of Raden Surowijoyo (the regent of the Tulungagung/Sumoroto Regency) at Randublatung, in the southern part of Blora. When he was young, his name was Raden Kohar. It is generally said that around 1890, at the age of 31, he started to express his thoughts on ethics and religion publicly, subsequently attracting followers. His way of thinking then spread to Plosowetan and Rembang Regency (Benda & Castle, 1969, p. 210; Hutomo, 1996, p. 12-13).

Up to 1901, Samin thought comprised mystical lessons (kebatinan) which did not have any relationship with any open resistance. According to the Resident of Rembang, L. Ch. H. Fraenkel’s report, in 1903, there were 772 Samin followers across 34 villages in South Blora and Bojonegoro. In 1904, Samin thought was perceived by the colonial Dutch as similar to Islamic thought. In 1905, Samin himself stopped paying land tax (pajak tanah) and head tax (pajak kepala), a practice which was adopted by around half his followers. However, Samin asked to them not to imitate his action because they were not yet “pure”. His acolytes, he contended, should pay tax as voluntary contributions (Benda & Castles, p. 211).

In 1906, Samin thought had become fragmented due to different approaches taken by various followers. Samin Engkrak27, one of Samin Surosentiko’s colleagues, created a passive resistance movement but it failed; Samin Wonokerto in Blora perceived tax as a charity which stemmed the kindness of the Samin people and he accepted work as an obligation to the ruler, while Samin’s son-in-law, Surokidin, rejected paying tax and working for the village but he and his followers still respected the ruler (Ba'asyin, 2014, p. 20-23).

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27Engkrak is the name of the person. The additional word “Samin” in front of a man’s name means he conducted Samin’s teaching. It is a common practice for the Javanese to add “Samin” in front of the names of people who conducted Samin’s teaching.
In 1906, Samin thought continued to spread to Ngawi, Grobogan and part of Rembang Regency (Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 211). According to a Dutch report in 1907, their number had reached three thousand (Sukidi, 1977), which was considered dangerous. A rumour was spread that they would revolt on 1 March in the same year. Furthermore, the Dutch discovered that on 8 November 1907, Samin Surosentiko was chosen by his followers as the Just King (Ratu Adil) with the title “panembahan suryangalam”. This was not Samin’s own claim (Scott, 1977a, p. 239; 1977b; 2013, p. 58). Although Samin realized this would lead the Dutch to consider him a threat, he could not reject the title. This triggered the Dutch to plan the arrest of Samin and his followers (Ismail, 2012, p. 58; Sastroatmodjo, 2003; Ba’asyin, 2014, p. 4-5; Winarno, 2003, p. 58). On 27 February 1907, Samin and eight (some say six) of his followers were detained in Kedung Tuban, Randublatung, Blora during a slametan (ritual celebration) on the command of the representative of the Dutch colonial ruler, Raden Pranolo, Ndoro Setèn, the assistant wedana (the assistant head of the sub-district) (Hutomo, 1996, p. 15). Samin ran away and a couple of days later was seized at the Rembang regent’s place and was exiled to Sawahlunto, 90 kilometres from Padang, in West Sumatra (Sukidi, 1977). Samin himself passed away (moksha) in Padang in 1914 (Ba’asyin, 2014, p. 20-23; Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 210-212; King, 1973, p. 458-459).

In 1911, Samin’s son-in-law, Surokidin, and Samin Engkrak focused on their teachings in Grobogan Regency, while another Saminist named Karsiyah spread his teachings in Kayen, Pati Regency (Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 211-213). In 1912, the Samin communities rejected going to school because of the subjects included. In 1914, Saminists in Tapelan, Bojonegoro protested to the assistant wedana, disagreeing about the high land tax. This protest expanded to Grobogan, Tuban and Kayen. In Kayen, Karsiyah claimed himself as Pangeran Sendang Janur (title of charismatic leader) to confront the ruler. As a

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28 Moksha is a process of liberation away from a body to release from rebirth or samsara
result, he and his followers were put in jail by the police and administrators (Ba’asyin, 2014, p. 23-24). My informant (25, November 2016) in Pati said that in around 1916, people in Mbombong-Bacem, Sukolilo, Pati started to join Samin’s teachings through Kudus, in Kayen and Pati, not through the efforts of Karsiyah.

According to a 1917 report of Tuban’s Assistant Resident, J.E. Jasper, the number of the Samin members had decreased from 3,000 (in 1907) to 2,305 followers, with 1,701 in Blora Regency, 283 in Bojonegoro Regency, and the rest in Pati, Grobogan, Ngawi and Kudus Regency (Ba’asyin, 2014, p. 23-26). In the same year, Karsiyah and Samin Engkrak were arrested by J.E. Jasper. In 1920, Saminist thought in Pati and Blora was well established. One belief was that the Twin Princesses (Ratu Kembar) were the chosen people to rule the land of Java. This idea was related to a Just King. It is reasonable in this context that scholars should perceive the Samin movement as a millenarian movement. In 1928, the colonial Dutch were alarmed by the resurgence of the Samin passive resistance movement in Genengmulyo, Pati since the movement had decreased in the 1910s (Shiraishi, 1990, p. 95).

The Samin community continued to survive through the period leading to Indonesian independence (1945) and beyond (today). Benda and Castles (1969) stated that Indonesian civil servants were puzzled by the movement, similarly to the colonial Dutch. It was not until 1955 that the Saminists realized that the Dutch had been replaced by the new state of Indonesia. Surokarto Kamidin (Mbah Suro) met President Sukarno in early 1960, after which the Samin community accepted the Sukarno regime and complied with the government’s policy.

Scholars do not classify the Samin community as a nationalist movement during this period because the Saminists did not have any political agenda. In the transition from Sukarno to Suharto (1966-67) there was a rumour that a member of the Samin community
in Pati protected Indonesian Communist Party members. Widodo (1997, p. 261-262) has confirmed this accusation was wrong. Later during the Suharto regime, although the Samin community was finally free from accusations of an association with communism, they were still discriminated against by the local government in terms of their religion which they still could not freely conduct. Consequently, the status of their marriages was illegal and their children were considered to be illegitimate because their data could not be registered in the Indonesian government’s administrative system. Further, in their social life, they were discriminated against by people in the surrounding environment, especially in the Islamic community.

**Population and Geographical Setting**

For the last seventeen years, Indonesia has been the fourth largest national population in the world, after China, India, and the United States. In 2000, Indonesia’s population reached 205.8 million people; in 2016, it increased to 261.9 million, and in 2018, 266.9 million. Indonesia is a multi-ethnic society that consists of up to around 1,000 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups with 17,504 islands (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2012). The largest ethnic group is Javanese, followed by the Sundanese, the Malay, the Madurese, the Batak, the Minangkabau, the Betawi, the Buginese, the Bantenese, the Banjarese, the Balinese, and other smaller groups. In 2010, the Javanese population comprised 40.2% of the population. Most Javanese live in Central Java, including the Samin community (Ananta & Nurvidya Arifin, 2005; Worldometers, 2016; Worldometers, 2018).

The lowest level of the government administration structure in Indonesia is called the *kampung* or *desa*²⁹ (village) which is headed by the *kades* (*Kepala Desa*) who is not a career government officer, unlike his/her counterpart in the urban areas. *Kades* are elected by the villagers and inaugurated by the *bupati*, the head of the district (Regency). The *kecamatan* (sub-district) is a higher level of administrative structure than the *desa* and is

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²⁹ The term for this government level in the urban area is called *kelurahan*.
headed by the camat, a career bureaucrat, appointed by the bupati. The governor is the head of the province. This administrative structure reports directly to the central administrative government of Indonesia, led by the President.

The majority of the Javanese live in rural areas (Ananta & Arifin, 2005). The Saminists mostly live in the rural areas of Pati, Kudus and Blora districts. In these there are smaller structures than the desa, namely, the dukuh or, even smaller, the dusun (hamlet). 

Dusun leaders are elected. I conducted my field research in the hamlet of Mbombong-Bacem. Generally speaking, a desa (village) is a regional area that has a visible geographical and physical border such as a river or a mountain. The administrative and geographical borders do not limit where the Samin community can live.

Saminists’ lives are bounded by their religion and culture. They are surrounded by many Islamic communities around desa Wotan, desa Baturejo, dusun Mbombong and dusun Bacem, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Yakari, Rafi’iyah, and Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia streams (schools of thought/aliran) as well as other believers that exist in the complex Javanese society. Therefore, a border is not always present in the form of strict geographical and administrative lines, but by culture and religion.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is known as an Islamic traditional organization (1926) that contextualizes the Javanese tradition within Islam in Java and now in Indonesia. This organization is continuing the Nine Saints (Wali Songo) tradition, which spread Islam in Java. Muhammadiyah is a modern organization (1912) that accepts education from modern European discourse brought by the Dutch colonial era. Muhammadiyah emphasizes the use of rationality, social movements in education and healthcare and technology to spread Islam and criticize superstitious activities and dogmatism. In contrast to both streams that strongly adopt the Syafii school of thought, Yakari, also known as Zakariya is an Islamic stream led by Tablighi scholar Muhammad Zakariya Kandhlawi from India which focuses on the Hanafi school of thought. Zakariya is very minor in Indonesia compared to NU and Muhammadiyah. Rifa’iyah is an Islamic organization established in Kalisalak village, Batang, Central Java by Ahmad Rifa’i. This stream focuses on Islamic teachings based on Javanese languages without any Arabic. Their book is based on Tarejumah which was the interpretations of Javanese scholars of Javanese language, culture, and arts in understanding Islam in taubid (theology), fiqih (Islamic law), and Tasawuf (Sufi) dimension. The LDII (Indonesia Institute of Islamic Dawah) is an Islamic organization established in 1972 with Nurhasan Al-Ubaidah Lubis as the founding father centred in East Java, especially Kediri and Jombang. Initially banned, today based on Indonesian law, this organization is legal. They perceive non-LDII members as infidel. They will clean anything that touched by non-LDII members because they are considered dirty (unholy/impure). LDII members live in all parts of Indonesia and in Australia.
Desa adat is a term that the Indonesian people and the government use to refer to villages that are unique in their way of life, culture and habitation. Selo Soemardjan (1993, p. 8) defines adat (custom) as the way of life in a village community that has developed over the centuries. Adat is occasionally linked with tradition including belief systems (religion). In the post-colonial era, the adat representatives coordinate and communicate with the Indonesian government officers because adat has its own ‘bureaucracy’ which is different from the government bureaucracy. Today, the rule of government bureaucracy and the status of adat ‘bureaucracy’ still overlap, especially when it comes to land issues (Bakker, 2009; Li, 2001; McCarthy, 2005; McWilliam, 2006; Suartika, 2007; Tyson, 2011).

With regard to desa adat (village custom), the Saminists’ areas cannot be identified as such because the Saminists are not linked to a specific territory. Their settlements are based on the Samin teachings and their agricultural livelihood. Desa adat is a term referring to adat people who transmit their lands through generations to their offsprings. In contrast to desa adat, the Saminists are Javanese people who practise Javanese adat, but who are allowed to freely buy and sell their land.

The Samin community is one of the many distinct Javanese cultures which focus on a religion or a belief system as its foundation. Most importantly, ethnicities and religions are always endogenously constituted when it comes to Javanese cultures and traditions. Therefore, to understand Saminists, one should perceive them in terms of ethnicity and religion, as the Agama Adam (the religion of Adam). In short, the Saminists follow the adat of Java and what makes them different is not their ethnicity but their belief system.

In Blora district, the Saminists can be found in four desa, desa Tanduran (kecamatan Kedungtuban), dusun Randhu Blatung (desa Klopopu wur), desa Kemantren (kecamatan Kedungtuban), and desa Sumber (kecamatan Keradenan). The Saminists in Kudus district
live in four desa, desa Larikrejo (kecamatan Undaan), desa Kaliyoso (kecamatan Undaan), desa Kutuk (kecamatan Undaan), and desa Bulung Cangkring (kecamatan Jekulo). Finally, the Saminists in Pati district are located in four desa: desa Ngawen (kecamatan Sukolilo), desa Baturejo32 (dusun Mbombong-Bacem, kecamatan Sukolilo), desa Kedumulyo (dusun Curug, kecamatan Sukolilo), and desa Nggaliran (kecamatan Sukolilo). There are only a few Saminists in dusun Jepang, desa Margomulyo, and kecamatan Margomulyo Bojonegoro (in East Java Province, sharing a border with Central Java Province). The locations of Saminists in the Province of Central Java can be seen in Map 1. The location of my research in dusun Bombong-Bacem, desa Baturejo, kecamatan Sukolilo, Pati district is presented in Map 2.

Map 1. Location of Samin Communities in the Province of Central Java (Kabupaten Blora, Pati, and Kudus)

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32 This also includes the Saminists in desa Wotan (two families) who associate with the Saminists in desa Baturejo.
The position of *dusun* Mbombong-Bacem is in southern Pati near the border of Purwodadi-Grobogan district. The closest highway is the Purwodadi-Pati Highway. From Yogyakarta (Central Java), *dusun* Mbombong-Bacem can be reached via Semarang or Solo. On the eastern border of Pati are the neighbouring districts, Kudus and Jepara. Kudus is the closest place to Pati with a short cut through Sukolilo, *dusun* Mbombong-Bacem and Wotan Road. Through this route, one can reach Kudus by motorcycle from Pati in forty-five minutes. In northern Pati are the Rembang and Blora districts that can be reached in a two-hour drive.

The main livelihoods of people in Pati are fishery and agriculture. The fishing centre is located in Juwana, one of the big ports in the Dutch colonial era near the northern coast of the Java Sea. In contrast, Pati’s agricultural area is located in the southern parts, near to the northern part of Mount Kendeng. Pati is named *Bumi Mina Tani*, meaning the earth fulfills the needs of the Pati people through agriculture and fishery. In *kecamatan* Sukolilo,
most people are farmers. The second most common occupation is being a construction labourer, and other occupations are factory labourer, merchant, entrepreneur and public servant.

Below is a map of mining in the Province of Central Java (Map 3). It shows the area of Mount Kendeng, from Kudus to Blora across Pati, Grobogan, Rembang, Blora, and Tuban districts, as one of the mining areas in Central Java. Mount Kendeng is rich with phosphate, trass, quartz sand, and limestone. Although the corporations supported by the government are eager to exploit this mining, some of the local people, organized by NGOs, are opposed to this idea. Thus, the area, which is marked with red and is the exact location where the Saminists live, is a potential location for dispute.

On top of this, the issue of land grabbing and the prospect of industrialization further add concerns to the peasant communities there. If these come into realization, their livelihood will not be the same again. Moreover, Mount Kendeng is significant for its role in the conservation of water, land, and ecosystems in the surrounding area which have become the source of the local villagers’ livelihoods.

In line with the government perspective, the cement corporation states that objective scientific research and technology indicate the environment would be protected if mining were undertaken (anonymous, 15 December 2015; IGAI, 2016). It should be also noted that on 16 May 2014, the Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources issued a decree on “the decision on the Sukolilo karst landscape area”, 33 which comprises Pati district (Sukolilo, Kayen, Tambakromo), Grobogan District (Klambu, Brati, Grobogan, Tawangharjo, Wirosari, and Ngaringan), and Blora district (Todanan and Kunduran), prohibiting mining exploration or exploitation. In short, the case between the Saminists in

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Sukolilo, Pati and the cement corporation is closed, which is explained further in Chapter 5 whereas other cases appear out of Sukolilo, Pati (the Tambakromo and Rembang cases).

Map 3. The Mining Area of the Province of Central Java (Widi, 2013; Andri 2013; Putri, 2017)

From the Dutch colonial era until the end of the Suharto regime, the Mount Kendeng area was blanketed with a teak tree plantation. Today, Mount Kendeng has become barren land as the trees were looted on the fall of Suharto in 1998. Even today, the smaller remaining trees are not safe from looting by corrupt government officers and state-owned forestry enterprise staff, which is an open secret in Pati. The plains around Mount Kendeng, especially in dusun Mbombong-Bacem, kecamatan Sukolilo, experience frequent flooding every year. The floods enter houses and paddy fields, creating crop failures. A local cigarette corporation has distributed breadfruit seedlings, yet this effort has not been sufficient to prevent floods.

In dusun Mbombong-Bacem, the Saminist population reached 148 households or 706 inhabitants (2004). According to official data, the Saminists constituted 10% of the population in desa Baturejo which consisted of 5,752 inhabitants (non-Saminists) in 2003
(Uzair Fauzan, 2005, p. 78). In 2007, the Saminist population reached 900 with 52 percent women and 48 percent men (Ismail, 2012). In 2013, a local Pati radio reporter obtained data from the Head of Civic Registration and Demographic Service (Kepala Dinas Kependudukan dan Pencatatan Sipil), Dadik Sumarji, about the Saminist population. The Saminist population by that time had reached approximately 400 households in dusun Mbombong-Bacem, desa Baturejo, kecamatan Sukolilo. The reporter also related that the head of the village, Nur Subiyakto, stated that 708 Saminists had registered for the government electronic identity card (E-KTP) and that around 100 or 200 Saminists had not yet been recorded by the government administration. The last data that I obtained at the end of 2015 comes from the village secretary Suhardi, who mentioned that the Saminist population in desa Baturejo had reached 1028 Saminists (male: 489; female: 439) or 16.5 percent34 of the total population of 6,109 inhabitants.

In 2016, I randomly checked the most updated E-KTP cards of about 100 Saminists, finding a dash (-) in the religion column for each one. This meant that their religion had not been acknowledged by the government, which is consistent with Indonesian law, which only recognizes the six (official) religions: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Confucianism, the last of which was added in 2000 by President Abdurrahman Wahid’s administration. Meanwhile, according to the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace, there are approximately 245 non-official religious organizations across Indonesia (Aritonang, 2014). The government response to minority voices has been ongoing since the 1998 reformation but religious recognition is still in progress.

This differs markedly with Suharto’s regime, when the followers of non-official religions, were forced, particularly by local governments, to convert to one of the five

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34 This percentage is derived from data of the family registration cards/the population who have an identity card and are registered in the family registration card (Kartu Keluarga: 297 Samin families).
official religions of the time. In 2017, the provision for leaving empty the religious column in identity and family registration cards was challenged by penghayat (indigenous faith/native-faith followers) and the previous law was annulled by the Indonesian Constitutional Court. At the time of writing, the government are yet to implement this policy change. This issue is explored further in Chapter 5.

It is important to note here that the dusun where the Saminists live is surrounded by Islamic community streams: Muhammadiyah, NU, Rifa’iyah, Yakari and Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia. The only places of worship in desa Baturejo are the seven mosques (masjid) and nine smaller prayer buildings (musholla). However, Saminists do not need any specific place of worship. If they want to meditate, they can do it in their houses. Every morning around 5 a.m., the call to prayer (adzan) emanates very sonourously from loudspeakers at the mosques which seem to compete against each other to attract people.

Further, the Saminists’ dusun is a Javanese rural area that is surrounded by a semi urban environment and not far from an urban environment. A dusun is associated with a poor community and the local government and people perceive them as poor. For example, the government still includes them in the subsidized rice delivery program although most Saminists have rejected this offer and they, together with the village secretary (sekretaris desa), do not accept their being officially classified as impoverished (Suhardi, 3 December, 2015; Uzair Fauzan, 2005, p. 103).

Moreover, for a period of time the government also classified the Saminists in the frame of a program entitled Komunitas Adat Terpencil/Tertinggal (KAT/isolated indigenous community) (Ismail, 2012; Uzair Fauzan, 2005). This initiative was owned and implemented by several local government offices in the Pati Regency which formed a KAT Working Group Program with the objective to support isolated local custom
communities to improve their lives. The KAT Working Group Program consisted of the Office of Social Affairs, the Office of Education, the Department of the Religious Affairs, the Office of Housing and Regional Infrastructure, the Office of Agriculture, the Regional Development Planning Agency, village leaders, heads of kecamatan, etc. However, the Saminists and the secretary of the village rejected this KAT project because it reduced their dignity and pride. By 2006, the KAT program was no longer heard of.

The Life Cycle of the Samin Community

Birth

A child means a gift from God. Having a child is one of the important goals in the rural and urban Javanese marriage journey. It means taking responsibility as a human being, having an heir to the family tradition and culture, and receiving a blessing with happiness. Therefore, the whole process of giving birth is to be celebrated. The purpose of the celebration is to provide safety to the (un)born child and the family. The Saminists as Javanese usually hold celebration that is resembling American thanksgiving (brokohan/slmetan/kenduri) for their (un)born children, usually in the evening after working in the paddy fields (sawah). Like any other Javanese people, the Saminists calculate the sacred day for a ritual birth similarly to the day for a wedding. Before the day of brokohan, the family prepares food and makes other arrangements. On the day, the women also prepare food in the kitchen while the men converse in the living room. After this preparation, some women move to the living room, while others stay in the kitchen discussing their own topics of interest.

Javanese culture has various ceremonial birth practices which differ depending on the area: West Java, Central Java (Banyumasan, Yogyakarta, and Solo), and East Java (Banyuwangi). Generally, the series of brokohan (slmetan) celebrations for an (un)born child in Java is tingkeban, babaran, pasaran, and pitonan (Geertz, 1960; Rhee, 1996). For
the Saminists in Pati, this series is slightly similar. In every ritual stage, three values are always involved: togetherness (*rukun*), praying (*muji/doa*) for the safety of the baby and the family, and social and cultural sharing and caring relationships to emphasize the feeling of togetherness and unity. In the following, I describe the Saminists’ celebration rituals for their children before and after birth in the frame of the phenomenological approach as actual experiential life.

First is the *tingkeb* (*mitoni/tingkeban*) ritual which marks the seventh month of the pregnancy (*mitoni* means *pitu* or seven). Here the family invites people to pray together for the safety and wellbeing of the unborn child, the mother and the family. The prayer is chanted in Javanese and is usually led by a Saminist elder who also gives a speech afterwards. The elder asks the guests to pray with him by saying “*nggih*” meaning “amen” or “*aamiin*” in the abangan context (Geertz, 1960, p. 13). The chant is as follows:

Brothers and sisters, please witness my words. I have an intention for all of you to hold this ritual *[brokohan]* from beginning to end. This ritual is for the goodness of the unborn child who has reached seven months. It is for the unborn child’s benefit in everything. You have all gathered here for the sake of this ritual. You pray for the safety of the unborn child. We also conduct this ritual in order to get blessed by the guardian of the spirit. We conduct it from the beginning till the end, the whole day, in order to get goodness from the guardian of the spirit (Rosyid, 2010, p. 582).35

The quotation above was Rosyid’s anthropological experience of a *mitoni* event in Kudus district. The substance of this text is the same as one I witnessed conducted in Kecamatan

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Sukolilo, Pati district. Both communities have strong blood relations and geographical
proximity, although each time the exact words depend on the art of the elder who leads the
chant (muji). The Saminists have a strong belief in the guardian of the spirit. This concept
was also written about in Geertz’s study (1960) on Javanese Islam in terms of the abangan
worldview. The difference is that the Saminists speak in Javanese whereas the abangan
use Arabic.

Unlike what Geertz (1960) found, the Saminists do not reflect on a propitious time
(in the Javanese calendar such as legi, paing, pon, wage, kliwon) for when to hold tingkeb
(seven months pregnancy celebration). Saminists also do not prepare special dishes (for
instance like, providing yellow rice mixed with grated coconut and a whole stuffed
chicken, which Geertz recorded). The Saminists do not make seven small cones of white
rice that symbolize the seven months of pregnancy and do not make sadjen (a special
offering for the spirits) or any offerings for the Nine Saints (Wali Songo). To sum up, apart
from not having any Javanese influence in these practices, neither are they influenced by
Islam in their prayers.

In contrast to the Saminists’ tradition, the anthropologist Geertz observed that the
tingkeb (mitoni) ritual in the Javanese abangan community was full of religious symbols
from a mixture of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, deities, cultural heroes and native spirits. In
addition to the whole process of the birth ritual, Geertz described a dukun bayi (traditional
midwife) who conducted the ceremony which helped a woman deliver her child (1960, p.
41-42). Today, a dukun bayi is very rare and most rural Javanese deliver their babies at a
hospital or clinic with a mantri (paramedic in rural areas) or midwife/nurse.

In 2016, I attended a tingkeb ritual which, according to the Saminists, was the most
expensive tingkeb for over two years. This Saminist family held a shadow puppet (wayang)

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36 In Geertz’s (1960) study, there are three types of Javanese Muslim: priyayi, santri, and abangan. Abangan refers to
rural Javanese who are still conducting Javanese ritual and superstitions while already converted to Islam.
show, served fresh buffalo meat, and were joined by all members of the community. I heard that from the Sukarno to the Suharto era there had only been one time a similarly big event was held in Pati. In addition, I noticed that the main road in Sukolilo, from desa Baturejo to desa Wotan, was closed because of this tingkeb which began at night and ended around six a.m. with the wayang taking place in the middle of the road.

I felt a sense of awkwardness blended with timidity because the ceremony had started and I was concerned that my arrival would bother their mood, nuances, and attention in watching the performance. After being introduced to various elders from Kudus and Pati and the leader of the environmental Samin movement, I sat in the middle instead of at the front with the elite elders and the distinguished guests (including leaders).

The wayang performance used the Javanese North Coast dialect, some of which I could not understand; the story was about the current Saminist condition. Samin’s teachings were full of the ‘local custom’ of the Northern Coast culture (Blora to Pati) that was mixed with the earlier existing cultures (Malay, Arabic and Persian) (Vickers, 2009).

I was told the title of the wayang performance was “Semar Boyong” and also “Sekar Pudhak Tunjung Biru”. It was about the competition between Lesmana and Arjuna to bring Semar from his/her place called “Klampis Ireng” to their own respective areas because Semar was the only person who could restore their country from drought. However, Semar could only help one person, either Lesmana or Arjuna, so he/she decided to hold a contest. Whoever could get a ‘flower’ called “Sekar Pudhak Tunjung Biru” (Dewi/goddess Kanastren/the metaphor of the deep ethical values and principles) in Kahyangan Cakrakembang, Semar would follow.

When the performance stopped for a break, the head of the family holding the tingkeb (seven months pregnancy celebration) started a little conversation with me then

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37 Semar is a character in Javanese mythology. He/she is not a woman nor a man and can seem old or young. He/she is one of the punokawan (‘clowns’), the wisest person. He/she is the dhanyang (guardian spirit) of Java and is regarded by some as the most sacred figure of the wayang set and is defined as a god (Sang Hyang Ismaya).
decided to sit in front of me, joining my ‘group.’ At that event, one could see that every Saminist had their own small group with whom they comfortably sat and talked. Furthermore, they were happy and felt appreciated because even though I was a guest, I joined in their ceremony. This experience implied that the Saminists were very open to outsiders being part of their experiential life. They wanted their customs and traditions to be known.

The story of the wayang performance was quite political, reflecting the issues facing the Saminists at that time, that is, the polemic of industrialization. In addition, the dalang (the master of wayang performance/shadow puppet) used satirical words in his narration. At that time, all parties involved in this polemic were present. Hence, the atmosphere was awkward. Then, the story suggested to the Saminists to reflect on their internal conflict and return to a harmonious and peaceful (rukun/guyub) life. Wayang envisages the Saminists’ behaviour as the personification of humans’ behaviour, character, and mentality (mentalitet). A wayang story about the Saminists’ world defines who they are, where they will present their actual life, and for what goal.

Usually a tingkeb event is only celebrated by a shared meal (brokohan) without a wayang performance and without sacrificing a buffalo (wayang and buffalo are most expensive for Saminists’ brokohan). In fact, brokohan can be quite inexpensive. For example, based on anthropological research for eight months in 2007 and 2008, Ismail (2012, p. 72-73) perceived that tingkeb celebration cost a small amount of money compared to other rituals and the guests provided ingredients for the meals, such as sugar, rice, coffee and other items. Ismail witnessed the main event starting from around 3 p.m., until the middle of the night. The leader of the Saminists at that time could not come and was replaced by another elder. After the speech and dinner, people went back to their homes with a small packet of food (besek/berkat).
Some differences in the tingkeb’s appearance can be seen in the food, clothes, and entertainments, which depend on the hosts’ economic wellbeing and social status. Ideally, Saminists do not focus on the concept of social status because in general people in the world are considered the same (podo podo wonge) and should be treated equally. However, to respect the elders, elites or other important people (non-Saminists), Saminists acknowledge their social status by allowing them special seats. In this respect, some Saminists, perhaps, have been influenced indirectly by feudal aristocratic Javanese. Therefore, if the Saminist family has more money to spend on their tingkeb, they would hold a very expensive celebration for the sake of togetherness, communal happiness, sharing and caring, and praying for the unborn baby and the family. It was said that for the tingkeb I joined in 2016, the family had spent around AUD 5,000, which is not far from the upper class spending in an urban setting. For urban Muslim Javanese, the tingkeb is often deemed meaningless and out of date and, if conducted, it would be for the sake of formality only. In contrast, in the Saminists’ worldview, the tingkeb and its ornaments have deep meaning.

After tingkeb, the next birth ritual according to the Saminist tradition is babaran or conducting a celebration (brokohan) on the child’s birth. This brokohan event is the same as the previous brokohan. Therefore, it is not explained here in detail. It serves the same communal purpose. The time of naming the child comes when the umbilical cord stump attached to baby’s belly button falls off, approximately four nights or five days after childbirth (babaran). Then, another brokohan is held, known as nyepasar/puput. This event is similar to the other brokohan: sharing a meal, usually at dinner time, together with the guests who are invited to chant (muji) for the child’s safety, blessings, and health.

In the nyepasar tradition, the family sacrifices a goat or, if they have enough money, they can sacrifice a fat cow or a large buffalo. The nyepasar tradition may be considered
equal to *syukuran* (giving thanks to God) in the Javanese Islamic community (Geertz, 1960; Koentjaraningrat, 1989). It is the sacred appreciation of the Almighty through sharing food, closeness, and joy with families, relatives, and friends so as to connect with each other through their feelings of commonality, integration and harmony. For them, giving a name to the born child is important to differentiate between a male and female. There is no other interpretation regarding the symbolism of the name or any other purposes. The difference between the Saminists and the Muslim Javanese is the latter package the ceremony with the recitation of an Islamic prayer (*doa*), giving an Arabic name and sacrificing a goat according to the Islamic customary law which is called *kekah*.

In the Saminist tradition, usually the father gives his newborn child a Javanese name. According to de Grave (2011, p. 70), the social background of the parents is the first contextual element indicated by a person’s name. A farmer would not give his/her child a name used by the nobility or bourgeoisie. If bad luck happens, such as the child falling ill, or living an unhappy life, they will change his/her name (Askuri, 2017; Geertz, 1960, p. 48; Ismail, 2012, p. 73). Even though social status and labeling people are unnecessary for the Saminist community, unlike the Javanese (Ismail, 2012, p. 73), they will not give a noble or bourgeois name to their children because the environments (habitus) which that represents does not fit their culture.

However, Saminists cannot avoid the Islamic discourse (Askuri, 2017) and have taken Arabic names such as Sabar, Sakinah, and Jasmin. Even young Samin Surosentiko was referred to by the Islamic name of Raden Kohar. Raden is a name of noble Javanese status and al-Qahhar (الْقَهْر) is an Arabic name. Islamic discourse had deeply influenced the Javanese society for fourteen centuries since the Majapahit Kingdom which ruled Java was replaced by the political power of the Islamic Demak Kingdom. However, according to my

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38 This is one of the ninety-nine names of God. It means to overcome, to conquer, to overpower, master, to dominate over, to prevail, to subdue, to subjugate, to compel against one’s wishes. It exists in the Qur’an, for example in Surah 39: 4.
observation in Pati, there were only a few Saminists with Arabic names, about the same frequency as lower social class names.

Nowadays, the newborn of Saminists are situated in the globalized world and one is named Andi. Nevertheless, Saminist children’s name are still dominated by the ‘pure’ Javanese ones, as confirmed by Ismail (2012, p. 73) who used data from the Isolated Indigenous Community program (Komunitas Adat Terpencil) of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2007. For example, names such as Suparman, Wati, and Widowati signify the Javanese middle class; Parmin and Peno are associated with the Javanese lower class; there are Arabic names such as Solehah, Zaenal, Imam, and Rizal; and names that refer to Indonesian political figures, such as Megawati. In short, it is normal in the Saminist discourse to adapt or to adjust their way of naming newborn children to the current context, but mostly their names are still framed through the perspectives of the rural Javanese society.

Between childbirth (babaran) and naming (puput), the relatives, friends, and neighbourhood should stay awake through midnight to morning. They spend time chatting, smoking, drinking coffee or tea and having some traditional snacks (jajanan pasar). I asked one of my Saminist informants why. He said, “It is just a custom (wis adate) from the previous generations. We just follow what the grandfathers, grandmothers, and the ancestors did.” According to this context, adat is a frequent or routine activity that has been regularly repeated for centuries since the Javanese culture came into existence (Tyson, 2010; Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann, 2011).

The tradition of staying awake for four nights has been the custom in most Javanese society for a long time. Commonly, in the oral tradition, the name of this custom is melekan. These four nights are used to discuss and recollect their historical ancestors’ narratives and talk about everyday life issues. This practice is part of what maintains
Saminist existence. Becoming a Saminist is a long process of becoming pure Javanese or a pure human being: knowing where one comes from and knowing where one will go (sangkan paraning dumadi).

However, among urban Javanese, where the influence of foreign culture is stronger, specifically, the influence of the Western cultures, the tradition of melekan has almost disappeared. The urban society tends to be individualistic, busy seeking money to survive in a globalized world. In urban culture, the melekan is associated with wasting time (Koentjaraningrat, 1989, p. 104) whereas in the discourse of rural Javanese, this tradition can maintain social bonds and a harmonious life (rukun/guyub). This melekan custom is also conducted the day after a funeral for around seven days, which is totally different to the urban Javanese who, after a funeral, return to work and business as usual. In contrast, in rural Javanese society, the working class perceive working not only as an economic activity, but a cultural one. Therefore, working as a farmer in rural Javanese society is understood as an existential activity because such work is the meaning of life itself.

Finally, the last brokohan event for a recently born child happens in the selapan/pitonan (birth celebration ritual) usually 36 days after the birth. It starts with a small shared meal, usually in the evening with close family members, a few relatives and friends, where only red and white porridge (bubur merah putih39) are provided. The red symbolizes the mother (earth) and the white symbolizes the father (sky); blood is also represented by the colours red and white; a further meaning is that white represents the sperm of a man and red symbolizes the ovum of a woman.

These red and white metaphors were also used in a story narrated by a Saminist elder. When I met him the first time, he asked me, “Before human beings existed, who existed?” (“Sedurunge wong katah, niku wonten tiyang nopo mboten?”) I just kept silent

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39 Bubur merah putih is made from rice and coconut milk. After the porridge is cooked, half of it is mixed with palm sugar to make it red (to be precise, brownish) and sweet, while the other half is seasoned with salt.
because I did not know the answer according to Samin teachings. The elder then said the beginning of the world was *awung-awung*, or according to Sunyoto (2012, p. 13), *awang-awung*. This means emptiness, nothingness or ‘*adam*’. After that, the world, consisting of the sky and the earth without human beings, came to be. Human beings were present because *bibit kawit* or *adam* (sperm) created a person. I received the same information separately from two different Saminist elders (12 November; 25 November 2015).

The colours of red and white also refer to the colours of the Majapahit Kingdom and today, the Indonesian flag, as well as the difference between *santri* (white/puritan Islam) and *abangan* (red Islam). In short, the meanings of red and white are consistent and significant to Indonesia, the Javanese, and the Saminists, with many layers of interpretations. This discourse will be explored further in the following chapters.

There are some important points to note concerning the childbirth ceremony. First, the Saminists now use nursing services. There is no *dukun bayi* (traditional midwife) anymore. Second, *sajen* (food for the spirits) has never been offered by the Saminists. In this sense, they are very empirical and rational. Third, the Saminist ceremony does not include anything related to Islamic symbols. Fourth, the Saminists do not have any knowledge about magic spells (*jampi-jampi*); they only know about the ‘saying of words’ (*pengucap*). They believe that if a person is clean (holy), kind, honest, and innocent (*lugu*), one’s words can come true like a magic spell. Therefore, magic is not about the utterance of words, but the condition of being *rasa*, clean (as discussed in Chapter 2). Fifth, there is no *modin* like in Islam and no priest like in Hinduism or the Tengger people’s culture in Bromo Mountain. The Saminists do not resist the influence of Islam, Hindu or Buddhism, but are selective, especially about its formal or ritualistic symbols. This is why the Saminists practise simpler rituals compared to other Javanese cultures influenced by these three religions.
Marriage

Benda and Castles (1969, p. 226), Hutomo (1985, p. 19), and Ba'asyin (2014, p. 150) concur that marriage in the Saminist community is an essential principle of becoming a Saminist. These were some of the quoted words chanted in the ceremony which concern the marriage vow\(^{40}\):

- It belongs to the male to marry.
- To make up (his face for the wedding) if he loves (someone).
- Nabi Adam (Man) shall exist till the end of the age.
- What I know is (only) the regulation of the conjugal household.
- He who embraces knows what he has.

The text above was a literal translation offered by the Western orientalists, Benda and Castles (1969). This has a limitation as the Javanese words are contextual and have a deeply philosophical meaning. Actually, this chant (doa) cannot be translated because it is rapalan or a kind of magic spell, about which the most important aspect is the person who makes it function, it is especially powerful therefore when said by a couple as a marriage vow.

The real meaning behind these words is the Samin’s way of life as becoming sikep rabi (responsible of being a Saminist after the marriage ritual procession). It illustrates how a male and a female know their existence as human beings (wong). Informants said that overall, the destiny of a human being (wong) is to continue the generation of human beings through the marriage ceremony, which is witnessed by its public announcement so that

\(^{40}\) Djenengé lanang, damelé rabi, Toto-toto wedok djandji demen. Tetepé Nabi Adam kandegé wekasan. Sing kalo niténi tatané sikep rabi. Wong sikep weruh tèké déwé.
everyone would know *weruh têké déwé* (knowing one’s belongings)\(^{41}\). This destiny is considered to be their ‘state of nature’. The meaning of *Nabi Adam* in this context is that *Nabi* is a woman and *Adam* is a man. Sikep *rabi* makes Saminists more mature in their ethical responsibilities to one another as a couple. The maturity of the couple broadens into the community as a social norm to maintain a community living in harmony. Further explanation is kept secret, only known by the Saminists themselves.

According to my understanding from discussions with Saminists, the text above means that the nature of man is to propose while the nature of woman is to accept or to reject this proposal (the texts of “*djenengé lanang*” and “*damelé rabi, Toto-toto wedok djandji demen*”). My further interpretation is that when she accepts a male to be her husband, she should provide for her future husband and the most important thing is to be consistent with her word (keep her promise) because a female in the eyes of Saminists is the one who determines the outcome of the proposal. Of course, the male also has a duty to keep his promise because he is the first who committed to it. Therefore, both have responsibilities and both are equal. This process is the beginning of the Samin’s way, *sikep rabi*. To put this another way, the commitment to marriage is a microcosm of the larger commitment of the community to live in harmony.

My experience living with a Saminist family in Pati has shown that they do not know about the idea of domination in marriage relations. In many aspects, they seemed to be able to settle problems, through *rembug* (discussion, finding similarities, or realizing that one of them is not as good as the other, to solve problems) without forcing each other. They know what should and should not be done contextually. Most importantly, they know when a

\(^{41}\) *Weruh têké déwé* means that each couple should know the self, belong to one to another and should know their responsibility and also for the public announcement to know their belonging. The system of marriage structures the couple to limit the action according to his/her position as husband and wife. The concept *weruh têké déwé* applies also to all aspects of life such as the mode of production, lands, and life affairs.
husband is capable of doing something while his wife is not and vice versa. In short, each member of the couple complements the other.

This fact is confirmed by Ismail (2012, p. 78) who stated that marriage relations were written about in books referred to by Samin Surosentiko as *Kalimasada* and *Serat Pikukuh Kasajaten*. These books were also mentioned by Hutomo (1996, p. 20) who explained that Samin Surosentiko had them. Now the books’ whereabouts are unknown. They have become a myth in Javanese folklore, a story in Javanese oral history, especially in the Saminist community.

According to these books, the most important thing in the Saminists’ world is the meaning of marriage, which is to achieve purity in life through endless love. In the process of marriage, a couple perceives marriage as a journey of developing a family based on Javanese etiquette and the main goal of the Samin’s teachings, that is, the purity of the self.

Saminists seem to display another layer of the meaning of marriage, that is, sexual relations, which are referred to as are “sembahyang” and “budo”. *Sembahyang*, a common Javanese term, is rooted in the terms of “sembah” and “Yang”, which means the act of submission to *Yang*, the Almighty God. The extended and thus the entire meaning of *sembahyang* is praying. In contrast to this typical Javanese translation, the Saminists have created another meaning.

To them, *sembahyang* stems from “mesem tambah granyang”, which means the act of penetration in sexual intercourse which couples enjoy until they reach the state of orgasm. The other term, “budo”, in common Javanese refers to an old Javanese religion that was influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism during the Majapahit era. In contrast, the Saminists interpret “budo” as the act of penetration during sexual intercourse; *Budo* stands for “mlebune udho”, which means when couples penetrate each other, they should take off their clothes; *mlebune* means to penetrate and *udho* means naked (Widodo, 1997).
Saminists have different terms about marriage compared to most Javanese traditions. The Saminist who is ready to get married is *Adam birahi* while *Adam timur* is a person who is not yet prepared. *Adam birahi* is a Saminist who already understands responsibilities, the good and the bad, and most importantly, Saminist principles. *Adam timur* is still learning about ethical behaviour and the foundations of Saminist principles: knowing the basics of practical ethics, the highest practical ethics being a decent and respectable person (*dasar laku, unggah ungguh, and budi pekerti*). *Adam timur* is usually under 15 years old. A man is ready to get married if he has been circumcised and a woman if she has had menstruation. Saminists usually marry at around fifteen for the bride and above sixteen for the groom; although this is variable.

There are four essential steps in the Saminist marriage process\(^\text{42}\). The first is *nyumuk*, the visit of the friends, family, relatives or anybody who is sent by the male’s family. They will ask the family of the potential bride whether the daughter is still single (*legan*) or already has another marriage candidate. The response will be given by the visitors (usually only one or two people) to the male’s family. *Nyumuk* is usually carried out without the presence of the future groom and his parents.

Usually, the prospective couple come from the same village or sometimes from different villages but they have met and interacted before when playing and growing up, through community events, working in the paddy fields and other kinds of daily activities. Sometimes matchmaking is organized by the parents. Prospective partners do not mention love, but give clues to express their liking or interest. The introduction process is short and there is no dating. Once they are seen together, the future couple and their parents have a conversation in each family about the possibility of marriage. In the matchmaking process,

\(^{42}\) The data sources of the marriage process were obtained from my fieldwork. I interviewed with some of Saminists who already married. I obtained this marriage data on December 2005 and April-May 2016. Further I elaborated this fieldwork sources with data literature from Rosyid (2010) and Ismail (2012).
the parents do not force couples to marry. The only parents’ obligation is to acknowledge the marriage couple officially at a later stage.

Because the Saminists consist of a small number of communities around Pati and Kudus, they mostly get married to their own relatives, such as cousins. Parents often introduce their daughter to other relatives who have a male bachelor in the family because they are afraid that their daughter will become an older virgin (*perawan tua*) in which case it is more difficult to find a partner. The sooner their daughter marries the better. The consideration is more for child bearing reasons rather than gender stereotyping. Women who marry late do not want their female future generation to suffer as they have experienced before.

In particular cases when a community member decides to marry a non-Saminist, they will be expelled from the religion of the Samin community, but socially and culturally, they can still live with them. The other choice is that the non-Saminist spouse embraces the religion of Adam and becomes a Saminist, with the possibility of being ostracised by his/her family and from social relations with non-Saminists. If a non-Saminist wants to marry a Saminist, commonly their parents will discourage and even prohibit him or her because of the fear of their son or daughter converting to the Adam religion. As an act of discrimination, intolerant people will speak negatively about the married couple. This condition creates uncomfortable social interactions, but as time goes by, the community becomes relatively more tolerant towards the married couple through habituation.

The second stage of the marriage process after *nyumuk* is called *ngandek* (engagement). The *ngandek* is also known in the Java tradition, as “*lamaran*”. While serving the same purpose, prayer (chanting) is done in different languages, with different clothes and food. The couple, the couple’s parents, and the elders wear formal Saminist clothes: a black headscarf (*udeng/iket*), black ankle length pants, and a black
mandarin/standing collar shirt; meanwhile, the guests wear their daily clothes. The ngandek ceremony is a commitment between both families. Usually, the groom’s mother brings gifts (buah tangan) to the prospective bride as a symbol of the families binding together (endek/diwatesi). The gifts consist of crops and various modest festive meals which will be served to the guests. This is usually attended by the elders, families, and neighbours, both Samin followers and non-followers.

At this stage, the groom’s father starts speaking to the bride’s parents. First, he gives greetings (asking after their health). Second, he confirms information he has received from his son and the messenger and then he speaks to the parents of the bride to confirm her daughter’s name and her marital status. The bride’s father will answer, “Yes, we have a daughter, whose name is … and she is still single” (Turunku (name)... legan). Then, the groom’s father asks the next question, “If she is still single, would you mind if my son proposed to her?” (Nglakoni tatane wong sikep rabi). The bride’s father then answers, “We would be pleased to accept your proposal.” The groom’s father responds, “If that is so, I would like to propose your daughter to be my son’s wife because he is interested in marrying her. In the next session, he will come himself and ask for your permission to take your daughter to be his wife.” The bride’s father says, “Yes, sure” (Injih, Mbah). And the groom’s father responds again, “If that is so, please remember our agreement today. I will keep my word and you keep yours” (Ucapmu titeni dewe, sing ucapku tak tinetane).

Subsequently, a Saminist elder will continue this process saying that the ngandek has been witnessed by the forum and giving some advice (sesorah) to both families to be patient waiting for the next and subsequent stages of the marriage process (nyuwito). At the end of the ceremony, the family of the bride as the hosts will invite the guests to enjoy the food prepared by the groom’s family.
The third process is *pasuwitan* or *nyuwito-ngawulo* (the marriage contract) at the bride’s family house. The (future) groom or groom’s family approaches the bride’s family with gifts\(^\text{43}\) such as traditional foods, jewellery, gold, and personal items for the bride\(^\text{44}\) (*hantaran*) for unifying the couple (*tali gunem*) and as an expression for nurturing their children (*ujut sandang pangan*). He is welcomed by the (future) bride’s family through greetings and handshaking.

Then, the main ceremony begins. The couples come in and sit down face-to-face, between their parents at the front of the living room. All the guests sit down behind the couples. The first step of the main ceremony is a speech from the groom’s family, represented by the father. He first makes a greeting (*seger kuarasane*), repeats his commitment in the *ngandek* process, and then states, “Now I am here with my son to fulfil our promise. The groom will ask the father-in-law and the bride concerning his intention to marry her”. The the father’s bride responds to him by saying, “Yes, please.” At this cue, the groom takes over his father’s speech, says a greeting (*seger kuarasanel* how are you) and asks similar questions as have been asked in the *nyumuk* ceremony, “Is she really your daughter and is she still single?” This is answered by the bride’s father, “Yes, I have a daughter, her name is … and yes, she is still single.” The groom responds, “If that is so, I would like to propose her to become my wife if during and at the end of the *nyuwito* process, we love each other. What is your opinion?” The bride’s father responds by saying, “As her father, I would be pleased. I am with her now. You can ask her, straight away.” By looking at her, the groom asks her (the bride) whether she is pleased to marry (*sikep rabi*) him and be his wife or not, if, during the *nyuwito* process, their love grows. The bride answers, “Yes, I am ready to marry you if, during this process, our love grows.” With this

\(^{43}\) There is no dowry in the Saminist marriage tradition, although they do bring gifts for the bride and her family. This practice is different from the Islamic tradition, where at the marriage procession it is mandatory for the groom to pay a dowry (in Arabic, *mahr/mahar*) to the bride in the form of money, gold, or other possessions that legally become her property.

\(^{44}\) The bride’s personal needs included in *hantaran* usually are the things she uses or wears in daily life, such as a powder compact, soap, shampoo, sanitary napkins, etc.
answer, the groom reports to the bride’s father that he has received her permission if in time their love grows. Then the bride’s father answers again that he would be sincerely pleased if his daughter married.

Then the groom says: “Injih, Pak, nak ngoten, wiwit niki ajeng kulo tunggu wonten mriki, nitik pertikel, artikel, pengucap lan kelakukan sing kados ndiko lakonani.” These strong words mean that he not only promises to look after the bride as his wife as the substitute for her parents, but also expresses a Saminist’s promise to practise the Samin teachings (sikep rabi principles). Accordingly, the bride’s father asks, “Will you be patient to accept all of these challenges?” The groom answers, “Yes, I will accept these challenges with all their consequences. I will keep my word.” The groom’s father says that he witnesses all his son’s words and emphasizes that everyone also witnesses the process where the couple and both parents express their commitment through this nyuwito process.

At the end of the nyuwito process, the groom’s father states that if there is a mistake in conducting this process, he apologizes. He also expresses his sincere gratitude to the bride’s family for everything. The end of this dialogue is the beginning of the brokohan session in the marriage contract where everyone celebrates the nyuwito by having a meal together. At the end of nyuwito, the couple officially becomes husband and wife, because the dialogue is the legal process and contract of marriage.

This process of nyuwito is almost similar to the marriage contract in Islam (ijab qobul) except that for the Samin, the marriage contract is ‘officiated’ by their parents in Javanese while in the Islamic wedding, the contract is officiated by a clergyman or marriage celebrant (pengulu/modin/naib) from the Office of Religious Affairs and the ceremony involves reciting prayers in Arabic.

The concept of pengulu/modin/naib itself exists in Indonesia as the representation of the state to rule or administer religious affairs. In the original Islamic teaching, a marriage
is legal \((sah)\) if it is conducted by the groom and the father or male guardian of the bride, witnessed by other people (who can be parents, relatives, or others), and a dowry is given from the groom to the bride as a symbol to bind the marriage contract.

The next stage is the *pesaksen* which is the biggest of the series of Saminist marriage celebrations which signals that the couple have done their duty of *sikep rabi* physically and spiritually \((lahir-batin)\). This session takes place a long time after the *nyuwito* because there is a period of waiting until the couple’s love has grown stronger and they have reached the moment for sexual intimacy. The Saminists can reach this stage within days, months, a year, or even longer. This process is part of becoming Saminists \((wiji sejati, titine anak Adam)\) who practise Samin principles.

In between the *nyuwito* \((pasuwitan)\) and *pesaksen*, the groom serves the bride’s family and lives together with them under one roof or vice versa, according to their previous agreement. The process of serving the bride’s or groom’s family is called *ngawulo* \((mengabdi)\), and its purpose is to honour the spouse and his or her parents socially, culturally, emotionally, and spiritually \((batiniah)\). During this process, when the couple has proceeded with sexual intercourse (overcoming their awkwardness and having embraced intimacy), the groom will say to the bride’s father in the bride’s house that he has done his ‘duty’ \(\text{Pak, gaweane kulo, sampun kulo lakoni}\). Further, his father-in-law says, ‘Yes, I will do my duty as well’ \(\text{Iyo nang, ganti kewajibanku bakal tak ujudi}\). What he means by these words is that he will organize the biggest wedding celebration \((pesaksen)\) in the bride parents’ house.

This implies that they are already a match and suitable for one another and the last celebration \((pesaksen)\) will happen if there is no issue between the groom and bride and their families. It signifies their readiness to continue to the next steps: a big announcement and witnessing \((pesaksen)\) of the couple in public. After they have had their sexual
intimacy (nyawiji) as a symbol of being one soul and one heart, the couple should celebrate paseksen as soon as possible. Pesaksen originally comes from the Javanese “being announced” or “witnessed” and it legitimizes the situation by the participation of parents, family, villagers, friends outside the village and anyone who comes. Therefore, pesaksen is the final and largest celebration of the Saminist marriage process.

The first step of pesaksen is the bride’s father’s speech in which he mentions he has already witnessed the couple having carried out their duty as Saminists, that is, sikep rabi (physically, sexual intercourse)45. However, the journey from the nyuwito to pesaksen is not achieved by the sexual intercourse per se, which is only a sign of reaching the pesaksen stage. The other important element in nyuwito (pasuwitan) is the process of ngawulo and nyawiji. The deep meaning of this long ngawulo process is often disregarded by outsiders. The couple need to dissolve their egos in order to achieve the unification of their souls and hearts. A couple should serve and fulfill one another in order to reach the same frequency to enable the unification of body, soul, and heart.

The second step of pesaksen is the groom’s speech in which he publicly promises his strong commitment to maintain their marriage contract until the end of their lives. The bride is present among the people. A marriage contract is only to be done once in a lifetime (siji kanggo selawase). This is a pledge (sadat) of all Saminists (Ismail, 2012, p. 81; Rosyid, 2010, p. 581)46.

The father’s bride speaks: “Dumateng sedulur kulo sedoyo, porombah, poro bapak, ibu, kadang kulo seng pernah nem, jaler miwah estri sing wonten monoane kulo miriki. Kulo niki gadah kondo mangke do ndiko sekseni. Kulo duwe turun wong jeneng wedok pengaran A (name), empun dijawab wong jeneng lanang pengaran B (name). Kulo empun ngelegake, yen miturut kandane wong jeneng lanang pengaran B turune tatanane wong sikep rabi pun dilakoni (Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to say, please witness my words. I have a daughter, named A (name), who has been responded to married by B (name). I allow this sincerely according to the information from B, B has done his job in obeying the Samin marriage rule.” The guests or forum will reply: “Nggih (yes).” He further reiterates, “Niku kondo kulo do ndiko sekseni piyambak (here my words have been witnessed by your own eyes).” To which the forum will reply: “Nggih (Yes).”

In the long version, he should say, “Wit jeng Nabi Adam jenenge lanang damele rabi tata-tata jeneng wedok pangaran A (name) Aku kukuh demen janji buk nika empun kulo lakoni (since the first human being (Adam), human beings have been made offspring as a law of nature. A, I make a promise to get married.) The groom will state, “Kulo duwe kondo ndiko sekseni. Kulo ajeng ngandaake syahadat kulo. Kulo wong jeneng lanang pengaran B (name) toto-toto noto wong jeneng wedok pengaran A (name). Kulo sampun kukuh jawab demen janji, janji sepisan kanggo selawase, inggih niku kondo kulo ndiko sekseni (I am going to say something, please witness my words. I would say my statement of marriage. I
The third step of *pesaksen* is to pray for the couple (*nyintreni*), which is led by a Saminist elder. The prayer is for the couple’s happiness, safety, peace and harmony in dealing with life’s challenges and struggles according to the Samin principles.

The last step of *pesaksen*, like almost any other process, is conducting *brokohan* where all guests enjoy a meal and smoke local cigarettes. The ceremony serves as a channel of information to announce a new couple to the community, during which both the bride and groom will be introduced along with their status, origin, bloodline, and other details. Usually, the entire *pesaksen* is held in the evening, in accordance with the Samin principle that the night is for joy and the day is for work and bread-winning (*Miturut sipatane wong sikep, merge yen bengi iku kanggo tatane uwong, yen rino kanggo tatane sandang pangan*). However, according to my experience, it can also be convened in the afternoon. Of the four stages of the Saminist marriage process, I experienced only the *pesaksen*. It is a gathering of the largest number of people compared to the *nyumuk*, *ngandek*, and *nyuwito* celebrations. I was warmly welcomed by the Saminist elders and others. The ceremony was very warm and friendly with everybody enjoying the atmosphere. They asked me to sit together with all of the elderly and to take part as one of the witnesses.

From the perspective of the Saminists, there is no need for a representative from the state to witness any of the couple’s marriage process. For the Saminists, the government officers are the same as anybody else, human beings. Therefore, it is unnecessary for the Saminists to request them to give legitimacy to their marriage contract. In fact, their parents, family, and the people who are willing to come are sufficient to be the witnesses, however government officers can witness the *pesaksen* if the host invites them to come. There is no written invitation sent out; it is spread orally.

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*B have conducted my job with A. I already promise deep inside my heart that I will be together forever with her. I finish my statement. Here, my words have been witnessed). “The forum will replay: “Yo, Le… (Yes)”.

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The clothes they wear during the pesaksen are simple; they wear the same clothes as in other traditional ceremony, such as a funeral, nyumuk, and nyuwito. In my experience, nobody wore shoes, mostly sandals. Before the main ceremony, traditional cakes, snacks, drinks, and, most importantly, cigarettes were on the table. This smoking tradition does not have a sacred, mystic or superstitious orientation. Some Saminists do not smoke. At the brokohan I attended, all the food was provided by family members and neighbours, including the non-Saminists and this included buffalo meat soup. After enjoying the brokohan, the guests went back to work because the meal was held in the afternoon.

In contrast to the Saminists, common Javanese hold their big wedding celebrations (pesaksen) in the aristocratic traditional Yogyakarta or Solo style with fancy and complicated decorations and accessories. Most Javanese prefer to adopt the aristocratic or urban Javanese style wedding to show a high social status and follow a more popular culture.

An anthropology expert on the Samin community of Kudus, Rosyid (2010), noted a unique break up case of a Saminist marriage process. During my field research in Pati, I also obtained similar information. After ‘spending time’ with the prospective husband from Kudus (most probably in the ngawulo stage), a Pati woman felt uncomfortable living with him. Therefore, they did not move further to the next stage. The woman’s father said to the man’s father, “First of all, I hope I meet you today with you in good health. Secondly, my daughter feels that he is not the man whom she wants to live with. She does not want this marriage to be continued. It is better to be stopped rather than forcing her to continue to the next process. I do apologize.” (Kulo pengen sumerep kahanane Jenengan, nopo sami seger kewarasan. Semoneten ugi kulo seger kewarasan. Kapindone, putri kulo mboten purun jegodohan kalayan Parto (fake name), tinimbang dipun pekso. Pangapuntene).” The father of the man replied, “You are right, they are not meant to be together. Even though it fails,
we are still a big family” (Pancen durung jodone yo... Kang. Senajan ora sido dadi besan, seduluran tetep mbok lanturno). To which the father of the woman replied, “Yes, sure” (Inggih, kulo mboten bade supe, mboten bade kulo pedot). The man himself finally said, “The heart cannot be forced. We will get the best with others” (Kranten roso mboten saget dipekso, kersane menawi kulo mangke wontening kang luweh sae kagem kulo lan kagem dek Wati (fake name)).

When a Saminist couple call off their marriage process, they settle this problem through family discussions, called musyawarah-mufakat (rembug). There are no third parties advocating for either member of the couple during the divorce process, only both sides of the family assist in negotiating on issues of finance, property, and other matters. During my stay in Pati and my visit to Kudus, I did not find any evidence that indicated any long-term problems among Saminists when the process of the wedding was cancelled or a divorce occurred between married couples.

In my opinion, maintaining their marriage tradition is the reason for Saminists to live. This tradition is their existence and the expression of their sacred life. They belong to what they believe. They never try to alter this tradition, which is the core principle of Samin teachings. They continue to pass on this teaching and tradition from generation to generation. The marriage process is an essential aspect for ensuring the regeneration of the Saminists’ existence. Likewise, the oral tradition in transferring Saminist knowledge is effective for internalizing it into community members’ hearts and minds. This tradition is related to the essential principle of the Samin’s teachings, while the superficial accessories can be adjusted in accordance with the actual world as it changes.
The Economic Roots of the Saminist and Agricultural Livelihood

In this section, some historical aspects of Saminists’ interaction with the Dutch colonial power are presented. This is followed by a description of the Saminists’ daily life in their agricultural pursuit and what this means for them spiritually.

Benda and Castles (1969) depicted the Saminist movement as a peasant movement that resisted the Dutch colonial power. They argued that the conflict between the Dutch and the Saminists was about economic grievances, including the issues of: corvée labour (subjects are forced to work for free as a form of tribute to their lords), the obligation of paying land tax, other forms of tax such as property tax which was introduced in 1890 (Cribb & Kahin, 2004, p. 426), and the privatization of land, water, and wood. This was supported by other researchers (Kahin, 1952; Ricklefs, 2001; Vickers, 2013).

However, these peasant protests against Dutch colonial rule need to be further explored in the context of political pressures on the government of the Netherlands regarding changes in its political economy starting from the 1870s. A wave of political liberalism in the Netherlands influenced the colonial area, due to which private capitalism came to exercise a strong influence on colonial policy. Dutch industry began to realize that Indonesia was a potential market in the Netherlands as well as in other international markets, which also entailed lifting the living standards in colonial areas, in this context, Java.

Since the 1870s, ‘Indonesia’ in general attracted both Dutch and international markets for investment and the employment of cheap labour to obtain revenue for modern enterprises. This supported the political interests to maintain peace, justice, and welfare in a modern state system. Liberal humanitarians rationalised the businessmen’s interests and expectations to obtain profit. In this context, ethical policy was born (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 193).
The beginning of liberal policy in Indonesia started around the 1870s with the introduction of the Agrarian Law which stated that unused or so-called ‘waste’ land was land that was not actively and permanently cultivated on Java and Madura. This land was declared to be owned by the colonial government (Cribb & Kahin, 2004, p. 232). The cultivation system in Indonesia was deregulated; the people were no longer obligated to grow crops for exports and Java (and ‘Indonesia’) was opened up to private enterprise. This was a huge success for the Dutch colonial rulers and private enterprises, but the people suffered even more hardship due to the scarcity of land for rice production and the increasing population, especially in Java (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 161-170). Moreover, there was a worldwide recession in the 1880s and in the early 1890s the prices of commodities collapsed, which led to worsened conditions for the Javanese people (Vickers, 2013, p. 16).

In 1901, under the liberal policy, the Dutch colonial rulers implemented an ethical policy in Indonesia which meant they assumed responsibilities to increase the welfare of the colonized people (Vickers, 2013, p. 17). In this framework, the Dutch spent more on the new programs in Java and the outer areas. Moreover, due to the First World War, colonial finances substantially increased taxation (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 196). In the Netherlands, there was also a revision of income tax in 1914 that demanded higher revenues (Fritschy, 1997, p. 1061). Between 1900 and 1930, the Dutch increased their expenditures on public health projects nearly ten times, but with the massive poverty and overpopulation of Java, the results were less beneficial (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 198). Booth explained that perhaps tax was not increasing rapidly in Java, but people had been ‘taxed to the maximum limit, and given the prevailing low level of incomes, it was not possible to press more from them’ (Booth, 2013, p. 45).

Furthermore, an internal factor, the poor environmental conditions in the Saminist occupied regions, is also responsible for their resistance. The Saminists in Blora lived on
dry land that consisted of limestone that was hard to cultivate and they lacked water for irrigation (Onghokham, 1964, p. 12-14). Although the Dutch colonial rulers assumed a moral obligation to increase the welfare of their colonized people by creating development programs, such as irrigation, education and migration, these required more government spending, which raised taxes. This pressure in Java made the Saminists disobedient. They refused assistance from the Dutch to build a granary, refused to pay tax, refused to send their children to school, refused to conduct a night watchman service around the village, rejected providing pebbles to fix the roads, and created a feeling of annoyance (mutung/ngambek) as an expression of passive resistance (Benda & Castles, 1969; Onghokham, 1964, p. 31).

The politics of ngambek was typical among Javanese people who usually expressed disagreement by doing nothing and/or pretending not to know anything. For instance, if they were asked to pay a tax, they would say, “What is tax (pajak)?” They might have known what the Dutch meant by taxes, but perhaps they insisted on understanding taxes from their own perspective, in which they had no obligations to the Dutch colonialists. What was important was their independence. The Saminists had their own meaning for the word pajak (tax), completely distinct from paying tax. Saminists converted pajak into “a person being consistent or a person who keeps his word” (sipatan sing ajeg/jejeg).

From the Dutch colonial era until the Suharto era, the Saminist heartland was located in the teak forest region of Java. The teak was exported to Germany and experts in the Indies were brought in from Germany to offer the latest techniques of scientific forestry. The Saminists took the branches of teak that had already dried on the forest floor, especially for cooking. In their view, they did not steal from the Dutch government because they believed that the earth, including the soil, teak, water, and everything else was free for everyone. This was in line with Kyai Ageng Pengging’s teaching when he was
resisting the Demak Kingdom ruler, “The earth and the air are not the property of the prince, but of all human beings; the prince can tax and mint coin, but in the world, everything is for everyone” (Benda & Castles, 1969, p. 224).

The other internal issue that Saminists faced was the lack of agricultural land because it was owned by the controller (kepala desa). This land (tanah bengkok) comprised the largest portion and thus the controller’s ownership of land sustained a feudal system. Put simply, the lands of the Saminists and other farmers were not enough for a population of their size to survive so the Saminists tried to find a different approach. They asked the Dutch to open the forest area or alternatively if they could utilize the deforested land for agriculture, both of which were rejected. Tragically, the expanded population and ensuing increasingly smaller parcels of land for each family, combined with the land tax and bad harvests, situated the Saminists at the lowest level of social stratification and with the most suffering (Onghokham, 1964, p. 12-14). Yet, even in these deprived circumstances, they insisted on remaining peasants.

Every time I met the Saminists and I was aware of their suffering, I asked why they did this. They said they believed that every person has his/her own way (fate) or portion in life. They call fate or destiny pak. Here, they surrendered, accepting life as it is with patience and awareness (sabar lan waspada). It has been proposed that this persistence may be due to their belief in a so called “agricultural fertility cult”. Benda and Castles (1969, p. 228) argued that behind the formula “Bumi, adji, djaman” (earth, incantation, age/epoch), there were relics of such a cult, which is supported by Onghokham (1964, p. 54).

I disagree with this argument because this formula for the Saminists is a chant, prayer or spell that they recite when they are going to start working, as an expression to the One who gives them life and protection (whether God or their ancestors; it is their
theological point of view not to express this with words). This is almost similar to a Muslim who recites a prayer before doing some activity, “Bismillaah, tawwakaltu ‘ala Allah, laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa Billaah” (In the name of Allah, I put my trust in God, and there is no power and no strength except with God). For Muslims, this is a protective invocation.

A Saminist elder informed me that when the Saminists go to work they call the concept toto nggauto. They will say: “Bumi aji, aku jaman, jamane A (name) ape macul. Paringono apik, sing dipacul apik, sebalik A (name) ya apik” (Lords, it is time for me to work. Please bring virtuousness for me and to the land) when translated literally. The translation and its meanings are not too important compared to the purpose of the words themselves, an expression to the Greatest Almighty. This sacred relation is common for religious people in general the world over, with different forms of expressions and interpretations invoked in order to be safe, protected and blessed.

I argue that to be a farmer or peasant is considered the best choice for the Saminists. In other words, to preserve and maintain the Samin teachings, working as a peasant is the best strategy to survive. However, nowadays most researchers, scholars, and intellectuals still identify the Saminists in the frame of a peasant movement or a peasant community. In effect, they were overwhelmingly defined as a peasant cult (Benda & Castles, 1969; Widodo, 1997). Here, I highlight that Samin’s teachings survive through their livelihood where they have a great respect towards the land. Being a peasant is something they know and they can do. The discourse of the Samin’s teachings is to be an honest person and to work in the field, which is real and concrete (nyata/wujud). Most importantly, the origin of the Saminists’ material products should be clear (dumunung); they must come from their concrete work. In other words, where a product comes from, who produced it, and how it
was produced must be evident and it should be the product of hard work (Ismail, 2012, p. 96).

Many conversations ensued during my fieldwork in which ethical understandings were explored through the interpretation of words or kerata basa (discussed in Chapter 2). One Saminist said that tani (farmer or peasant) means metani (self-reflection) because it relates to managing the mind, heart, and soul in terms of rasa (spiritual inner feeling); another stated that tani means tatane wong dilakoni (translated as obeying the rule of Samin principles by action) or ngratani (managing something in order to be organized). Yet another Saminist interpreted tani as natani sing apik lan sing bener. This means to manage something in order to be good and correct; putting it into order (aesthetically and ethically) and being well equipped. The wordplay of Saminists here is well illustrated.

Other examples of plays on words (kerata basa) related to agricultural activities are pacul (hoe) which was explained as sipate dewe aja nganti ucul (to be a peasant, is to be stuck in Samin principles and to be consistent with rasa, one’s mind, words, and action); sawah (paddy field) which means ajang pendapat lain sing ngawah-ngawah (a paddy field is a place also for discussion and sharing ideas); pari (paddy) meaning parian (a Saminist should find his true path of life); lemah (land) which means mlumah (sleeping in the soldier position, on one’s back with both hands at one’s sides, a position for a woman or the paddy field to be ready); angin (wind) meaning angan-angan (idea or wishful thinking); and banyu (water) which means penguripan (the sources of life).

We should not forget that there is no leader or single authority in Samin communities. Therefore, there is no hierarchy of power (authority) such as the priesthood system. For the Saminists, their guidance is only their rasa which must be connected with mind and action coherently. If rasa is insensitive, then the mind and action will be misguided. In short, there could be many different interpretations among members of the
Saminists, but all interpretations are directed to the same source and goal, that is, the ultimate meaning of life. Each Saminist has a different destiny (*pak*). It depends on their *rasa* to find it out.

In contrast to other professions, a trader or a merchant is, according to Saminists, a risky job as they perceive it is hard to avoid lying, cheating, consumerism, and materialism. Most of the time, though not all, if a merchant’s *rasa* tells him that he should not do a bad thing, he might be tempted to keep doing bad in order to fulfil his desire to gain profit. He will be misguided, further his *rasa* will be covered by insensitiveness or corrupted. From the perception of the Saminist, his life will be dragged into misery and in the next life, he will face difficulties again because as you sow so shall you reap. However, becoming a real Saminist is to be *lugu* (pure, clean, simple, honest, and innocent), which means to follow one’s *rasa* (a deep calling from the voice of the self from within), to be equipped in the mind, and to be consistent in all one’s words and actions. All of these characteristics, I was repeatedly informed, can be achieved more easily by working as a farmer.

Saminists seem to consider any kind of religiosity as the sacredness of life which will only be meaningful if it can be implemented as universal values and life experience. For instance, practising praying rituals or going to temples will be useless if someone cannot refrain from their desire to do evil things like cheating and harming people. Therefore, practising the universal values of humanity to be a good human being is also practise a sacred life. In other words, to be an honest person is at the same time being a religious person. In short, for the Saminist, the sacred and the secular are one.

The Saminists are adaptable and simple. They need to survive through their agricultural livelihood. In the Dutch colonial era, their way of farming was similar to other Javanese peasants. Since the Suharto regime adopted the green revolution, the Saminists
have also been following this system to grow their crops, which involves pesticides and seed strains. If some Saminists now practise an organic system of rice plantation, they must be influenced by environmental activists. The organic approach is a new movement which emerged in the post-Suharto era as part of a political ecology ideology that has been widely promoted in the U.S., Japan, India, and Bangladesh, and has found popularity in many parts of the world (Cone & Myhre, 2000; DeLind & Ferguson, 1999; Feagan & Henderson, 2009; Kimura & Nishiyama, 2008; Kondoh, 2014; Lagane, 2014a; Lagane, 2014b; Mariola & McConnell, 2013; McGreevy, 2012; Ostrom, 1997; Russell & Zepeda, 2008; Trauger, Sachs, Barbercheck, Brasier, & Kiernan, 2010).

The Saminists are adaptable to every governmental regime and seek effective ways to survive without losing their principles. During the Suharto period, if they experienced an issue in their agriculture, this was shared by other peasant communities in Indonesia: natural disasters, fertilizer, the quality of rice seeds, and pest attacks. The Saminists’ economic life as peasants is not different to most peasant communities in Indonesia and if they receive government subsidies, these will also be provided to all peasant communities around Sukolilo, not only the Saminists.

In order to survive, the Saminists in Pati also do other work such as fishing, searching for snails (keong) to be exchanged for money (ijol) in the nearest traditional market, working in construction building, or migrating and opening a food stall (warung makan) for labourers in urban areas such as Jakarta, Tangerang, the island of Kalimantan, Padang, and West Papua. These are the ways the Saminists adjust to the modern world today. If they only rely on agricultural products, their community will not last.

Furthermore, as alluded to above, the Saminists’ area in Sukolilo, Pati is frequently flooded by the watershed of the Bacem and Juwana Rivers. It is flanked downhill of Muria Volcano in the north and downhill of Mount Kendeng in the south. As a consequence,
every year the Saminists’ paddy fields are inundated. This is another reason why they have needed to adapt via some in the families adopting other kinds of income sources.

The problem of rat plagues in the paddy fields is also an enormous issue. One story in Javanese and Balinese folklore is about thousands of rats falling from the sky at night to attack their fields, a story shared by Saminists. The moral of one variation of this story is that farmers would be punished for cursing the rats and showing disrespect to them as animals in their paddy fields, which a fine painting by a famous Balinese artist, Cekeg (2007) illustrates. Its title is “Dewi Sri and Rare Angon.” It depicts a farmer swearing at rats around his paddy field. Rare Angon, the goddess of shepherds disagreed with the farmer’s swearing at the rats and reported it to Dewi Sri, the goddess of fertility. Dewi Sri agreed and let the rats ruin the farmer’s field.
My engagement with the Saminists during my field study taught me how they struggled to survive in their agricultural activity. The land sizes and consequent capacities to produce are decreasing following an increase of community members and crop failures. Apart from the issues mentioned above, they face several other challenges: expensive fertilizers, a lack of pesticide, limited irrigation, and expensive diesel fuel for the irrigation machinery.
There is also the external factor of competition with imported rice. Although the life of the Saminists is very demanding, they can still endure it and survive. They believe that happiness comes from the *rasa* and social harmony. In addition, happiness will occur by the time they experience and seize the path of Samin’s teachings.

By asking to join them, I experienced first hand the way the Saminists farm. They usually come to their workplaces at around 5 a.m. for a chance to catch up with each other. It took 15 minutes for me to go to their paddy fields by motorbike. The first step is to prepare the soil. Even though I have had experience holding a hoe, I found it hard to use it in farming on a scale much larger than my garden. While I held the hoe, I tried to mix the soil with water in order for it to be muddy and smooth. The muddy soil covered my legs up until near my knees; it was around 30-35 centimetres deep. To mix the soil with water in order for it to be smooth, muddy, and fertile is an art and a spiritual activity for them. Gaining spirituality is precisely the target of the Saminists’ farming activity and accomplishing this depends on one’s experience, intuition, feelings, mind, senses, and intention towards God.

Second, the Saminist proceeds to the seedling nursery in order to then plant the leveled land. The Saminists conduct *sebaran*, this means spreading soaked seeds to grow into sprouted ones. After around twenty days, these grow into seedlings that are ready to be transplanted to the larger and wider lands of the plantation. The male Saminists then take the seedlings, a process called *ndwut/ndaut*. This is done before the seedlings are transplanted. They are washed to remove excess mud, then tied into bunches. In the evening, clusters of seedlings are left to soak in the muddy lands in provided spaces. This process in common Javanese is called *mbanjat* (row positioning) (Koentjaraningrat, 1989, p. 168).
The third phase is planting (*nandur*). Female Saminists come to the paddy field in the early morning, take the seedling bunches, and walk backwards as they put the seedlings into the mud. In Javanese, this is called *nandur: nancep mundur mlaku mundur* (placing seedlings while walking backwards). The paddies are planted in rows (*mbanjar*), to attain a maximum harvest as well as for convenience. When this process is completed, the peasants should watch the water level in order to keep it from drying out. For planting, all of the workers were females. They came before sunrise, earlier than the males and made very precise rows. They went home towards the afternoon because the weather in Pati was very hot and unsuitable then for planting.

**Picture 2. Planting (*Nandur*) by Female Saminists**

The fourth stage is fertilization, which is preceded by *matun* (weeding). Usually, fertilization is conducted in two weeks with fertilizers such as *pupuk pusri* (a popular one from Palembang) while *pupuk SP 36 (ponska)* provides the ‘vitamin’ for the land. The
process of fertilization can be done once, twice, or three times, as many times as are needed. I helped with the *matun*, which needed patience. We weeded for half a day. Usually, this is done in one rice terrace by one person, but more than two or three terraces can also be achieved if the weeder is capable. The size of the land tends to vary.

The fifth process is handling pests such as rats, birds, and grasshoppers. The Saminists use electric shocks in their paddy fields to kill the rats which are by far the biggest pests; iron or zinc sheeting and plastic are also used and the fields are guarded almost every night. I kept watch for rats during the night in the paddy fields, walking around with torches and driving them away with a stick. Sometimes we took a rest and chatted, also meeting other farmers. In the middle of the night we went home by motorbike as we could not find any rats at that time. It was a blessing for us and for the paddy field. Actually, this practice contradicts the mythology which proscribed that we were not allowed to hit rats. In this matter, Saminists are rational and follow the spirit of modernity.

The sixth phase is harvesting. Usually, one hectare is harvested by fifteen people. Each labourer obtains around 10,000 rupiah (71 cents USD) per day, lunch, cigarettes, and snacks. Normally, the Saminists work with *abangan*, Muslims from NU, Muhammadiyah, and/or Rifaiyah. This is called the *gotong-royong* system (which is explored in Chapter 2). Some Saminists only have the chance to work as labourers because their land is not sufficient to fulfil their basic needs.

The seventh stage is exchanging (*ijol*) the rice for money. Middlemen from nearby towns usually come to the Saminists’ houses for this. Although the paddy price floor has been decided by the Indonesian government, sometimes the middleman has offered a lower price than this. Five factories process the paddy. Usually, Saminists grind their paddy before they exchange it. In this context, the Saminists are playing with the word
“exchange” (ijol) instead of using menjual (sell) in order to be consistent with the Samin principle that does not allow them to conduct trade (by buying and selling).

The eighth stage is brokohan, a ‘thanksgiving’ celebration to God followed by a shared meal with the extended family, neighbours, and friends. This is held after the harvest is completed. There is no special ritual, only gatherings where people get together and muji (prayer/chanting), which is similar to many other brokohan with different hopes and intentions.

In maintaining their agricultural livelihoods and in adapting to modernization, during the post-Suharto era the Saminists established an agricultural institution called Kelompok Tani Maju (KTM) at the sub-district level (kecamatan). Its members consist of seven people (mostly Saminists) to coordinate around forty-five peasants. This organization has made it easier for the government to communicate and assist many peasants in Sukolilo. The government provides irrigation aid and instruments such as water pumps (14 water pumps for 584.50 hectares, including the Saminists’ areas), the Jratun Saluna River irrigation system that connects to the Juwana River as a watershed system (not as a river), and other subsidies.

There have been some tensions arising over the control of water. This situation, which is explained and contextualised below, is an illustration of what can happen when an ambitious Saminist engages with modernity in the form of peasant activism. According to my field study, an issue between the Saminists over the water pump occurred around 2007 or 2008 which has remained controversial. The water pump should be free, but the KTM members have been charged by their leader who was also a Saminist. One of the members, a Saminist, would even like to bring down the leader (Ismail, 2012). The price of diesel is also too high for them. These pressures have made it hard for them to survive as peasants.
The KTM is not only a peasant institution, it is also associated with a Saminist organization because the leaders up to now have been Saminists, and most importantly, since its establishment, all Saminists have to join the KTM. This organization seems to be a space for the Saminists to contest political power among themselves. Saminist KTM members believe that the leader of KTM exploited the KTM institution and the image of the Samin community to obtain Indonesian government aid as well as NGO support which is however, in practice managed for his own benefit (Ismail, 2012). This was confirmed by many Saminists and influential intellectual public figures in Pati as well as the Saminists in Blora with whom I discussed this. The consensus was that one of the previous leaders of the KTM exploited the image of Saminists to gain popularity and to enrich himself.

In contrast, another point of view emerges from the (mainstream) media, most NGOs, activists, scholars, and intellectuals, who argue that this person honed his skills in the KTM from the beginning to be able to manage the organization and develop his negotiation ability. He tackled peasants’ issues related to the government, corporations and other issues. He has built wide networks with NGOs, scholars, and intellectuals to advocate peasants’ interests, particularly in Sukolilo. According to one sociologist and activist whom I have interviewed, he became the leading social movement figure and representative activist in defending weak peasants. In the eyes of the media, scholars, and activists, he is a peasant ‘hero’ today who resembles the figure of Samin Surosentiko.

Subsequently, the KTM leadership has been changed recently because of many reasons, one of which was the previous leader’s role in another organization that he established. This was a more influential peasantry organization dealing with bigger issues, for instance protesting against the cement corporations in Pati, Rembang and generally, in Java. It is proven today that he is very popular among activists, social movements, political elites, and even the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo. According to one of the
mainstream newspapers, *Suara Merdeka* journalists in Central Java, he is a media darling because he always brings good news for them to publish (*Suara Merdeka*, journalist, May 2, 2016). The KTM organization was, for him, a ‘school’ for his initial education in this field, to obtain more experience in his political activism career. It was a sure stepping stone to achieve more political power in social movements at the national and international levels. Today, people (the Saminists and non-Saminists) around Sukolilo (sub-district of Pati) also sees him as the most powerful and richest Saminist in Pati.

Based on the size of his paddy fields, he has also become a landlord. He has the biggest and most luxurious house in the village. In short, he has become a famous and influential figure of peasant movements, not only in Java but also in Indonesia, generally. This opinion was shared with me through the testimonies of activists and campus scholars (intellectuals).

In sum, I have captured the life experiences, for both the Saminists and myself, on the farm through self-interpretive introspection (self-reflection). This has been a way for me to understand myself immersed in the world of the Saminists. My participation in farming with the Saminists was a primordial life experience at a particular time and place. I have tried to understand how the Saminists work on the paddy fields through their way of thinking which involves self-interpretive introspection with an openness to the conditions of farming. It is affective (experiencing emotional and sentimental phenomena) in the sense that it involves a pre-theoretical and powerful actual life experience. Only by being submissively devoted (*hingabe*) to the phenomena themselves, can I be receptive to what is given within the agricultural living experience of the Saminist, as recommended in the work of Clifton-Soderstrom (2007, p. 85-86).

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47 One of his immediate family became the representative of the Saminists in AMAN (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara/ the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago). I found testimonies about him on social media, in blogs, websites, and articles from many activists in Indonesia who are concern with the same issues as him, such as capitalism, corporations, government policy, and land reform. I do not mention the person’s name because today the issues are still sensitive.
Death

About a week after my arrival at the location of my research in dusun Samin Bombong, desa Baturejo, a member of the Saminist community passed away. The funeral ritual started at the home of the deceased, where people gathered before departing for the graveyard. Before I describe and interpret my experiences in further detail, I would like to note some different points about the two funeral processions that I experienced.

During the first, the person who led the Saminists in praying or chanting (muji) was an elder (sesepuh) above the age of 60, while at the second funeral, the person who led it was younger, approximately 36-40 years old. The recognition of one as an elder is earned because of his or her charisma, experience, personality, knowledge on Samin teachings, arts of spells (rapalan/muji/do’a) and spirituality.

The funerals were attended by two different groups of Saminists and some aspects of how the ceremonies were conducted represent the different views of the younger and older Saminist generations in Pati. The two processions reflected their different perspectives on the Samin teachings related to the current issue concerning Saminists, that is, the cement corporation conflict in Pati. This issue has socially and politically distanced the two groups. A third group tried to be neutral, aware and objective.

In the second funeral procession, I saw that elders, the leader of the environmental Samin movement (against the cement corporation), government officials and elite persons were all sitting together in one group. The seating arrangement was structured according to status and age. I could not reach these distinguished guests and none of them asked me to join them. I stayed far from them, with the majority of the Saminists in attendance.

This hierarchical phenomenon is common for Javanese ceremonies, the elite persons are always seated in one group. However, in the Samin community, there is actually no strict and formalistic hierarchical status, especially in the seating arrangements. For
example, at the first funeral procession, the younger person who led the funeral prayers sat with me. He was pleased to have a conversation with me about the Samin teachings. This reflects the Saminist equality and respect for one another, based on a common humanity, not on socioeconomic and political status. Most Saminists prefer to give respect to people rather than wanting to be respected by them.

In contrast to the second funeral, at the first one, all the elders sat with everyone else, including me. They welcomed me warmly, everyone could easily mingle and the conversation was fluid. We were in equal and unstructured relations in which everyone could speak freely. In addition, I did not see any government official nor the elite leader of the environmental activists. Most Saminist elders came to the first funeral rather than the second funeral. Importantly, in the first funeral, I had the impression that it reflected a warmer and more equal procession compared to the second one.

Following this brief overview, some details about the first funeral are now given. I lived in Marjo’s (a pseudonym) house, a Saminist who had become a village administrator for the community in *dusun* Bombong. It did not even take us five minutes to walk to the house of a very sick woman, who later died. Saminists’ houses are close to one another, which is intended to create a communal atmosphere in their social and cultural interactions. We arrived at the same time as some elders. One of the elders was trying to heal Marjo’s sister-in-law, while one of the Saminists tried to find a *mantri* (a paramedic in rural area). She was lying on a bed in the middle of the living room which was spacious and had no partition. The house was one of the two oldest Saminist houses in Pati and Kudus and had a wide front veranda; it was a Javanese style house called a *joglo*.48

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48 The building was predominantly made of old teak timber at the front, and in the frame and doors. I saw that the roof of this house was also made of old brown teak wood with an old black carving of Javanese art. The rest of the house had been constructed using local red bricks. This house was inherited by the family from their great great grandparents. Typically, there was no unique or special Samin housing style. The Saminists’ houses are the same as the Javanese’s. Unlike this house, today most Saminists build houses using bricks, cement, and teak wood materials with modern architecture. A house as a place to live is not a source of social status for the Saminists. For example, the house of the Saminist leader who has already passed away was far from what modern people perceived as appropriate because the
The sick woman was surrounded by her sisters. One of the elders was unsuccessful in rousing her to consciousness. After a couple of minutes, the mantri came and checked her. He examined her with his instruments, but unfortunately she was beyond help and her body had already become stiff. When they realized she had passed away, the women started to cry hysterically. The mantri left after confirming her death.

She passed away at about 9 am and was buried at about 1 pm that same day. In this a Saminist family is quite flexible; they could decide to wait for distant relatives who want to participate in the funeral procession. The Saminist funeral procession that I experienced was also the same as what Geertz (1960, p. 68) stated about the Javanese Islamic tradition, “the sooner he is buried, the sooner his spirit can return to its natural home.”

The news of her death spread easily, through word of mouth (gathok tular). The Saminists worked fast in managing a simple funeral (layatan). This event was also helped by non-Saminists around the village who helped to provide the equipment and meals. Some Saminists set up a special tent for the funeral while others contributed to preparing the grave. The person who owned the tent was a Muslim, the one whose vehicle supported the procession was also a Muslim. Women who cooked and served the guests were both Muslims, some with a veil (jilbab) and some not, and Saminists.

In the Javanese tradition, this funeral gathering is called gotong-royong (mutual cooperation). It emphasizes working together with sincere intentions to help someone on a special occasion. Gotong-royong is often portrayed as an altruist tradition that personifies Indonesian rural life where people are working hand in hand to help one another without payment, based on the spirit of kindness and a sincere feeling of being part of the community. In some rural Javanese communities, it is called sambatan.

The affection floor was made of soil (untiled), the walls of woven rattan material, and the bathroom was located outside the house with a traditional well. Meanwhile, the rest of the Saminists have modernized their houses with bricks covered by cement and modified with a minimalist architecture style. In short, we cannot judge the Saminists’ social status based on the appearances of their houses.
displayed through acts of *gotong royong* also cushions the heavy burden people endure when facing trouble, disaster, or tragedy. In this funeral, everyone was genuine.

Not long after the news spread, many neighbours, particularly women, came to help the funeral gathering, supporting the mourning family by contributing some trays of rice, sugar, tea, coffee, cigarettes, and other items to serve the guests. This is similar to what Geertz’s (1960, p. 68) observed, “As soon as they receive the news of death, the neighbours drop whatever they are doing and go off to the house where the death has occurred.” After loudspeakers became common, Javanese Muslims, particularly around the Saminist community, announced obituaries using those of the mosques’, meanwhile the Saminists still used word of mouth. This is because the Saminists do not have a special place for worship and are reluctant to use loudspeakers.

Different to funeral processions in the Islamic tradition and among the *abangan* class, the Saminists forbid people to give money to the mourning family members. They are cautious about issues that are related to money because it brings back old memories of the Dutch colonial era when corporations and the *petinggi* (bureaucrats) used the money to control people or to divide and conquer. They concluded from these experiences that money can ruin the harmony and peace in a community and it makes people disregard the principles of Samin teachings, corrupt their hearts and lead to a dark way of life.

While waiting for the funeral preparations, the elders asked me to join them inside the house near the woman’s body. When community members arrived, some people waited at the front of the house without talking to each other while some elders and other guests were situated inside the house. Their visiting was a moral and social obligation as a member of the Javanese society. They had a sense of belonging to preserve and needed to maintain the norms, values, and life of the village. This social relation, as performed during funeral occasions, was also described by Geertz (1960).
I sat together with the elders in the dining room on a teak bench that could be occupied by three people. In front of us, there was a teak table full of cups of tea, coffee, mineral water, a traditional jug, traditional snacks (jajanan) and packages of local cigarettes (rokok sukun). I wore black ankle length pants and a gray t-shirt, following the Saminists’ type of clothes. Most wore ankle length pants, a black head cloth (iket/udeng), and a black shirt with a mandarin style standing collar. Black is typical in Javanese culture and symbolizes equality (see also Chapter 2); the udeng connotes mudeng (understanding/knowledgable). However, the young generation tended to wear casual shirts and did not dress up for the funeral.

While we waited for the others to come, we talked about many topics, such as Samin history, legends, folklore, ancestors, and current issues, such as rats ruining their paddy fields; the conversation was full of Javanese mythology. One of the elders dominated the conversation while the younger people in the group chipped in to clarify or confirm the stories. Meanwhile, I listened intently and observed my surroundings. While we talked, some of the women served a bowl of tasty young buffalo soup while other women accompanied the deceased beside the men. While they cooked, they also talked among themselves, the same as the men.

After everyone had already gathered, the corpse was ready to be taken to the graveyard. Someone asked one of the elders to pray (muji) for the deceased. Most of the people had already gathered. The difference in the Saminists’ funeral compared to the Javanese Muslim traditions is that Javanese Muslims require the body to be cleaned (showered), while the Saminists do not bathe their dead. The deceased was lying down on the wooden bed from the moment the woman died until her body was buried. The reason why Saminist corpses do not need to be cleaned prior to burial is that the bodies do not
commit any more sin once they have died. Additionally if it is a male who has a *kris* (knife), the *kris* accompanies him into the grave as his partner.

At the graveyard, before it was laid inside the grave to be buried, one of the Saminist elders prayed for the corpse and the deceased family—a simple chant in Javanese which substantially contained hopes that the souls of the dead would go back to where they belong (go home) and be unified with the Almighty (*manunggal/nyawiji*), while the families who faced loss should be strong, patient, and find peace in continuing their life (Primaswi, 2015; Rosyid, 2008, p. 134; Roziki, 2015; TribunJateng, 2015). Prior to the burial, the Saminists wrap their dead in Javanese batik textiles or white textiles (*kafan*); they are flexible on this.

In this funeral, the body was wrapped the same way as Javanese Muslims would wrap their dead, using white *kafan* (shroud) cloths. In contrast, the corpses of Saminists in Kudus are usually wrapped in batik textile with brown and black patterns, representing Javanese peasantry. Javanese Muslims’ deceased would be surrounded by some people who would recite any *surah* that they like from the Koran, but most commonly the *Surah Yasin*, while the *modin* (leader/director of the funeral procession) and his assistants usually recite the *Surah Ultaqlim*. This ritual is then followed by funeral speeches addressing the deceased person, which is standard in Javanese tradition (Koentjaraningrat, 1989, p. 362).

Unlike the Muslim *modin*, there is no single leader in a Saminist funeral. Any of the Saminist elders can be trusted to lead the prayer/chant (*muji*), but the whole funeral process is usually arranged by anyone who volunteers or this is chosen randomly. This is another example of the flexible way that Saminists adjust to circumstances. If there is something important that needs to be tackled, anyone can take the initiative to do it, order others to tackle it, or just remind anyone when something is forgotten or misplaced.

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49 *Mugiyo sapto murtining bavana, langgeng swargi enggal-enggal saget kondur menunggal dateng mula-mulanipun manet pranataning jagat. Mugi keluargo ingkang katilar, senantayoso pinaringan tutag, titis, tanggon, rahayu, raharjo jayeng gesang anggenipun sanya netepi tugas gesangipun, satuhu.*
As distinct from the Saminist funeral, in the Javanese Islamic tradition, the modin is the leader of all processions (Geertz, 1960; Koentjaraningrat, 1989) as the official religious specialist of the village. He usually comes from a santri group (a faithful Muslim) and leads the arrangements and the prayers. Samin Surosentiko rejected the authority of the modin in any kind of Saminist occasion. Moreover, the role of the modin was politicized by the Dutch colonial authorities to control the natives.

To return to the first funeral I witnessed, when the grave was ready, the corpse was placed in a litter (keranda/layon) made of bamboo over which textiles had been laid out. This is how the body was taken to the cemetery. The litter was carried by six men, all of whom were relatives or close family members of the deceased. The litter had also been covered by batik textiles above the white shroud to keep the body away from sunlight on its way to the graveyard. At the front of the litter, a relative brought an umbrella to symbolize giving the last respects and also to protect her from the sunlight. In addition, they also brought water inside a kendi (a water container made from soil). People followed behind the litter. Everyone walked because usually the graveyard in rural Javanese area is not far from the house.

The Saminis do not have any particular cemetery so the deceased could be buried anywhere: around their house in their large yard or in a public cemetery. This reflects the idea that they do not make the cemetery sacred, which is entirely different to most Javanese beliefs, such as kejawan (mystical Javanese Islam). Koentjaraningrat (1989, p. 365) argued that the cemetery becomes a mystical place (keramat) for the kejawan to ask blessings (pangestu) or wishes. Javanese Muslims sanctify the graveyards where their imam or wali (charismatic Islamic leader) and their parents are buried. These burial sites become one of the best place to send prayers (do’a) to God.
When we arrived at the cemetery near the river, the corpse was removed from the litter at the grave. People had already gathered near the grave and inside it were the grave-diggers. When in this grave, the corpse was treated almost the same as a Javanese Muslim. Ismail, an anthropologist who conducted research in Pati and whom I interviewed, also was of the opinion that the Saminist funeral processions followed the custom of the Javanese Muslims (2012). This happened because the Muslim community who lived around the Saminists asked them to follow their Islamic funeral traditions. However, Ismail also noted that during the funeral, the deceased was laid down in a coffin made of teak wood (Ismail, 2012, p. 90), which is more common in Christian traditions and most burials within the Western culture.

The Saminists do not acknowledge the necessity of burying a body in the Javanese Muslims’ way, which involves cleaning it, wrapping it in white textiles (kafan/mori), placing stones or balls of earth on both sides of it, and positioning it to face the kiblat (westward towards Mecca). Rosyid, who observed a burial ritual in Kudus, explained to me via electronic message (Whatsapp, 29 December 2016) that the Saminists place their dead in graves in any position they desire. The corpses are usually dressed with batik clothes (jarit) and a gravestone is placed to mark the burial site. Rosyid explained that in Kudus (Kaliyoso) the corpse is covered by white clothes in the same as Javanese Muslims (Rosyid, 2008, p. 134).

Brokohan is a variation on the original words barakah/barokah/baraka in Arabic which mean “divine blessings.” Brokohan is usually used interchangeably with slametan or said together: slametan brokohan. Saminists prefer to use the term brokohan rather than slametan because the latter is associated too closely with Javanese Islamic traditions which they perceive as Arab traditions. In fact, Javanese has also adopted many Arabic words.
After I came back from the graveyard, I joined a brokohan held in the house where the deceased died. I sat on the same chair together with most of the elderly of the Saminists. We then prayed again for the woman whose body we had just buried before we had a communal meal, led by a different elder. After enjoying the food with a little conversation, I went with my informant who was also my host and prepared for the night event (jagongan), which means being with the family of the deceased for approximately a week. Visiting for an entire week is not considered an obligation, but it is expected that whoever has time to come, should come.

During the nights of jagongan, we just stayed up and had conversations from near sunset (about 6.30 pm) until about midnight. Some people stayed up until morning. The family of the deceased always provided us with foods, drinks, and cigarettes. For me, these nights of jagongan were just like a focus group discussion where I could gather data. A lot of the stories told over these nights were related to Javanese folklore, the history of Samin Surosentiko’s deal with the Dutch colonial ruler, and current issues. The atmosphere was democratic; there were many conversations, sharings, and fluid discussions. The Saminists here were open-minded and easy to communicate with. In general, they are also a simple community that is not suspicious of outsiders.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated the everyday life of the Samin community in terms of the cycle from before birth to death, and also in terms of the cycle of the paddy, which is at the centre of their economic and social activities in the farming community in which I lived as a participant observer. They live in a pluralistic society, sharing their community with various types of Muslims, modern Javanese, and people who are in between those traditions. Saminists interact and communicate in a relatively peaceful and respectful
manner with one another. This social interaction fosters the self-ascription of the Samin Javanese ethnic identity as distinct from other Javanese ethnic groups (Barth, 1969).

However, behind their harmonious social interactions, different perceptions exist in the sense that each community criticizes each other and talks behind their backs about one another. For example, the Islamic community criticizes the Saminists and the other way around. They perceive the Saminists as infidels, stubborn (*ngenyelan*), and people who do not believe in God (not necessarily atheist or agnostic). On the other hand, the Saminists talk about the Muslims as being stupid, ritualistic, and producing a negative image about the Samin community. In short, these communities endure each other’s feelings so that they can live side by side in peace. Each community is aware that they cannot force or impose their perceptions on the other, even though in some cases such as the burial process, the Saminists were told they should follow the Muslims in terms of wrapping the deceased with a white shroud. In every interaction, they are always careful not to offend others and manage to speak properly and kindly. These social interactions construct the being of the Saminists in a liminal dimension that needs to exclude and include cultural practices from others, especially from the dominant group, the Islamic culture.

The Saminist community in which I stayed also live in an accessible geographical location. In general, Saminists do not live in isolated places, they prefer to be in their communities. The communities are located at the crossroads of Purwodadi, Blora, Kudus, and Rembang, not far from the national highway. The various Saminist community locations have good infrastructure and facilities such as roads, shops, hospitals, clinics, and rice factories. These communities are openly accessible, allowing people to interact and share ideas. Therefore, they are inclusive. In terms of the landscape, the areas where they live cannot support their agriculturally based life properly anymore due to deforestation, flooding and an expanded population.
The life cycles of the Saminists and the traditional Javanese are quite similar. There is a liminal phase of complexity where both identities is blurred, hybrid, and confusing, while still in an ongoing process of construction and tensions. In (pre/) birth rituals, the Saminists share the same tradition with rural Javanese except theirs does not involve Islamic practices with the Arabic language. The Saminists try to exclude the Islamic culture and maintain the rural Javanese culture in the sense of the words they use. In addition, in the pre-birth ritual (for instance), if the Saminists have more money, they will celebrate this with a wayang performance which is very expensive, prestigious and spiritual, also inviting non-Saminists such as Muslims and others. This participation in cultural performances and social interactions with non-Saminists is to assert their Samin identity.

In regard to married life, Saminists have a different marriage ritual from the Javanese rural people. They do not emphasize the wedding ceremony as such, rather, they focus on the process of the extended family becoming responsible for the couple and of the couple coming to know each other under one roof as part of a family, with several steps in the journey, before the final ties of marriage are formally concluded. The process of ngawula is an important stage in the marriage which determines the integration of both families. The couple also strive to comprehend their emotions and rasa (spiritual inner feeling) in order to get through the marriage process more easily. Ngawula takes time, sometimes years, because the couple need to experience living together in everyday activities.

With regard to the wedding reception, the Saminists’ wedding is a totally different practice to the common Javanese wedding tradition which is very aristocratic, fancy, complex, and full of performance attributes. Moreover modern and ordinary Javanese weddings are a combined implementation of Islamic or Christian practices and the Javanese tradition. In contrast, the Saminists’ wedding is simpler and less ritualistic, yet substantial because it is consistent with the principles, values, and practices of the Samin
teachings and their meanings. Most importantly, their relationship within the couple in the marriage process is relatively equal depending on the contexts and issues they are dealing with. These relations are sometimes not seen by outsiders and there is the potential for a patriarchal interpretation.

Due to the belief that there is only one soul, a marriage between a couple implies it lasts forever. In other words, a marriage means two souls are united into one. It is assumed that if they are born again they are meant to be united again because of the belief and the pledge of saling sandang (death) and siji kanggo selawase (one for forever).

In economic life, Saminists work just like any other peasants. However, from the Saminists’ perspective, their work means the manifestation of their submission to God following their Adam religion whereas non-Saminists work in agriculture are for the sake of economic well-being. The Saminists can take work other than agriculture as their side job, however they cannot leave their main work in the paddy fields. The experience of work in the paddy field as everyday life for the Saminists is cultural and spiritual. It is important to make the point that the economic welfare of the Saminists cannot be separated from the ritual/spiritual/supernatural dimension, nor from the secular dimension, but these are included in their actual lived experience, which makes life meaningful.

The way in which Saminists arrange their funerals shows something of their perception of human life and death. They perceive the human as only a salin sandang (changing body). The concept is that when we die, we just change our body and the soul moves to another body to be born again. According to the Samin teaching, the cemetery is not sacred, as the other Javanese believe. They believe in and respect the ancient spirits, but they are not preoccupied with ritual ceremonies. They only do meditation before and after sleeping and whenever they want to do it. Meditation is for the sake of examining and exercising rasa and engaging with the ancient spirits.
In sum, the world of the Saminists described in this chapter reflects complexity in the sense that there are many layers (a liminal space). There is a simplicity in their ritual practices. Yet there is also complexity because they persist with their traditions and principles of the past to make meaning in modern times and in their actual life. The complexity is also seen in the logic they use to suit their daily life while at the same time, they are deeply spiritual and hold different traditions from other communities surrounding them. Most importantly, Saminists are very aware of modernity. They persistently hold onto the Samin teachings in order not to be dragged into a capitalist and globalized world. Yet they continue to try to make adjustments. They are neither the Samin movement of the past nor of the present. They are in the ongoing process of here and there in the liminal space.
Chapter 4 The Nation State of Indonesia and the Saminists

Introduction

Today, Indonesia is the largest Muslim democratic country in the world. Indonesia is also the most pluralistic society in the world with many religions, ethnicities, and belief systems. Since Indonesia obtained independence as a new nation state in 1945, it has recognized six official religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Based on Presidential Decree No.1/PNPS/1965 on the Avoidance of the Misuse and Desecration of Religion (Penetapan Presiden No. 1/PNPS/1965 tentang Pencegahan, Penyalahgunaan dan/atau Penodaan Agama), especially Article 1 which restricts freedom of expression (Nasution, 2016, p. 373)\textsuperscript{50}, there are no other recognized religions except those six. The government, according to this law, will punish any religious movements or anyone insisting on declaring a religion which is not based on the six recognized religions or which are deviant to the teachings from these six official religions (Nasution, 2016, p. 374).

As a consequence, there are many ‘unofficial’ (unrecognized) religions in Indonesia which are not under the responsibility of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. These unofficial religions are defined as cultural entities or adat (customs) of the community under the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEAC). Significantly, the religious status on the citizens’ ID of members of these unofficial religions or adat communities should have included one of the official six religions in the Suharto regime. Nowadays, in the post Suharto regime, there should be a blank space for the religious status. This is facilitated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. For some scholars,

\textsuperscript{50} Article 1: Every person is prohibited in public from purposely conveying, endorsing or attempting to gain public support in the interpretation of a certain religion embraced by the people of Indonesia or undertaking religious based activities that resemble the religious activities of the religion in question, where such interpretation and activities are in deviation of the basic teachings of the religion.
this policy based on a Presidential Decree is an act of discrimination and has the potential for strong human rights protest.

Apart from this, there were around 245 unrecognized religions which were acknowledged only as faiths of *adat* communities, comprising 10 million followers. There are about 1,000 mystical and/or indigenous religions or local faiths (*kebatinan/aliran kepercayaan*) organizations in Indonesia (where 2009 is the latest data); the exact current number is still unidentified. Even though Indonesia provides freedom of religion as stated in various laws and its Constitution, the act of discrimination and criminalization based on religious identity exists, especially due to the existence of the Presidential Decree (Mutaqin, 2014). In regard to this idea, the so-called unofficial religions can also be called indigenous beliefs and/or native faiths. In this regard, the Saminists, who are devoted to the religion of Adam, are included in these *adat* communities. According to my field research, they are treated unfairly and discriminated against in political and social dimensions by the Indonesian government and, as a consequence, they are also treated this way by the communities surrounding them.

My argument in this chapter is that the MORA (the Ministry of Religious Affairs) from the beginning of its formation was a product of the political representation of the orthodox Muslims. It was a political tool to control Indonesian citizens and to supervise heterodox religious groups and communities. Since the beginning of Indonesia as a nation, some orthodox Muslims intended to form a new state based on Islamic law. However, the majority of orthodox Muslims agreed on Pancasila (the five pillars of Indonesian ideology) as the foundation of Indonesian ideology. Nevertheless, other Muslims still insisted on adding *sharia* Islam to Pancasila. As this intention was overruled by the nationalist (secular), non-Muslims groups and orthodox Muslim nationalists, the MORA was established as a form of compensation for their loss.
Since orthodox Muslims have politically shaped the MORA as a representation of their political interests in the state, they can define which religion group is recognized by the state according to their own standards. They define which are the heterodox religious groups, in other words *adat* belief groups, and also proscribe religious groups considered illegal, such as those they perceive as sects or cults (Mutaqin, 2014, p. 1). Those belonging to the former are those formally included in the stream of *penghayat kepercayaan pada tuhan yang maha esa* (native-faith followers have faith in to one supreme God) or *aliran kebatinan* (mysticism/science of the inner/indigenous religions/native beliefs) (Mulder, 1970, p. 105).

The government of Indonesia facilitates the existence and practices of heterodox groups under the MOEAC. In other words, because of the MORA’s exclusion of such heterodox groups, it became the MOEAC’s role to serve the *aliran kebatinan* and *adat* (custom) communities under the directorate of *kepercayaan terhadap tuhan yang maha esa dan tradisi* (the directorate of beliefs in one supreme God and tradition), as mentioned by Syamsul Hadi, the representative of this directorate (WhatsApp, 2 & 3 May, 2018). It is deemed necessary by the Indonesian government under the direction of the MORA and the MOEAC to facilitate and supervise its citizens’ religious (and cultural) affairs as part of the act of governing for the purpose of security, stability and peace.

I argue that in Indonesian history, the Samin community were excluded in the context of the Indonesian government’s policy from the Sukarno to the Suharto era because they are different, not pure enough for the six official religions, and cannot be included to one of them. It should be kept in mind that my understanding of this community is in terms of a small local Javanese ethnic religious movement instead of in terms of *adat* only. As explained in the previous chapter, the Saminists are a sub-Javanese ethnicity who embrace the religion of Adam instead of the religion of Java in Geertz’s
terms. They submit to their agricultural livelihood as their religious expression and this gives their life meaning. There is no specific and exact research on how they became embroiled in the construction of the Indonesian recognition of politically approved religions which excludes them. However, based on my ethnomethodological fieldwork, though they are not a political movement, the majority of Muslims perceive them as a political movement that will threaten them.

As mentioned in the introduction, studies that were conducted in the colonial era were not much concerned with the political exclusion by the state of its citizens. Instead the Dutch focus was on gaining the understanding of the Samin community and their teachings to acquire knowledge for the purposes of colonization and to gain more tax. In the colonial era, the Saminists were subjected to a process of being defined by the colonizer, to be further governed. The colonial ruler perceived the Samin community as a unique movement that was still to be defined.

In contrast to the colonial order, in the Sukarno and the Suharto eras, the political entity that was presented in terms of the nation state of Indonesia tried to exclude the Samin community and delegitimise their religious discourse as drawn from a confused understanding of tradition. As a consequence, the government constructed the discourse of the Samin community as marginalized and as a result, they were discriminated against. The Samin community, in turn, acted independently of state government. In other words, they were difficult to control. By insisting on embracing their religion, they were seen to be part of communist groups and further forced to embrace one of the five recognized religions.

This chapter presents how the discourse of modernity in Indonesia is destructive in the sense that the state apparatus imposes restraints on religious communities like the Saminists in many ways. One obvious one is the requirement to belong to one of the recognized religions in order to obtain and identity card or citizenship. In the previous
chapter, I have argued that the Saminists are Javanese, yet have their own ethnicity within this overarching one. This is confusing, complex, hybrid, and highlights the tensions of different cultural systems. This chapter shows that the state apparatus of Indonesia is trying to govern the Saminists oppressively, but the Saminists are resistant. The state apparatus and its government officers define them as *aliran kepercayaan* (*indigenous religions/local beliefs*) based on their own perceptions and standards, which is an instrumental rationalization in the Weberian sense.

In this respect, the state apparatus is preoccupied by the metaphysical absolutes of nation states coined by European (political) philosophers such as Weber in the context of the European enlightenment and a metaphysical philosophy. In other words, the Indonesian government mimics the European state system episteme. This chapter shows the tensions and complexity which can be seen between the Samin and modernity.

Chapter 1 has explained the claims of modern philosophers, positioning them in terms of the Western epistemic deontologism (the concern to account for the distinction between justified and unjustified belief), in other words, the claim of what is true and what is false. The a priori proposition is that modernity is universal and can be applied in the globalized world, whereas in fact, it is particular or located in the province of a specifically Western European understanding of reality. To be clear, this argument is in line with Howell (2005, p. 477) who mentioned that the construction of a definition of religion derived from Enlightenment Protestantism and early modernist Muslim belief. In terms of these philosophical traditions, a legitimacy was established regarding religions which maintained that they ought to be doctrinally explicit, exclusive, rational (non-ecstatic and non-magical), congregational, and firmly bound. Based on this framing, the story of the Samin community is located in a different reality and discourse from that which the state has set.
The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, the relations between the state and religion in two separate regimes in Indonesia are explained: the Sukarno regime and the Suharto regime. In the Sukarno regime, great debate occurred concerning the extent to which the state should control religious affairs. In this short regime, the Samin community were excluded from the prestigious five (now six) recognized religions. Relatively speaking though, the Samin community had constructive relationships with the Sukarno regime.

In the Suharto regime, religious affairs were interpreted in a particular way whereby the native faiths and Javanese mysticism (*aliran kepercayaan*) were defined as part of a culture, not a religion. The Samin community were marginalized into a corner.

In the second part of the chapter the Samin community is described vis-à-vis the state and (some) orthodox Muslims. At the present stage, the Samin community are indeed still discriminated against at the level of the state and in social life. The chapter ends with a conclusion that the Samin community has no chance to have equal rights in Indonesia even though they are Javanese.

**The Relations between the State and Religion in Indonesia**

The nation state and nationalism in international relations is a construction and a consequence of expansion. In Indonesia’s case, this is indicated by the arrival of the colonial Dutch (Bull & Watson, 1984). As a consequence of a modern Western country’s expansion of the state system and its discourse, the Dutch introduced the idea of modernity as a universal discourse that was articulated through their system of economics, politics, religious affairs, and education. A universalized state architecture was expressed by nation-building, indicated through a sense of unity among people who are bound as members of one nation according to their memories, symbols, narratives, and emotions (Anderson, 2006; Smith, 1992).
In Indonesia, this idea is more complex. Not only did it need to deal with the imported Western modern discourse of a state apparatus, but also had to deal with the traditional discourse among a mix of cultures in an archipelago. Therefore, the idea of Indonesia was Andersonian (modern) as well as Smithian (‘traditional’) in some senses. Indonesia thus is an illustrative case of what Eisenstadt (2000) calls multiple modernities—Indonesia was modernized in its own ways.

I will not deeply explore the construction of Indonesia before independence since many studies have already been written (Kartodirdjo, 1978; Kahin, 1952; Means, 1947; Barker, 2008, p. 526; Abeyasekere, 1972). In this chapter I briefly explore the very relevant historical facts of Indonesian construction in the Sukarno and Suharto regimes, related to the collision of the state and religion, especially in terms of how state apparatus oppresses the Saminist’s religion.

**Sukarno Regime: The Debate on Religious Affairs in Shaping the Indonesian Constitution**

The history of political contestation in constructing the state of Indonesia is very significant and vibrant. The founding fathers of Indonesia engaged in three crucial events and many debates in the establishment of the new state, which was facilitated by the Japanese military administration (*Gunseikanbu*). One crucial debate concerned the tension between orthodox Muslim groups and moderate Muslim groups, secular groups, spiritual groups and the rest of the non-Muslim groups. The question was whether Indonesia would be an Islamic state under *sharia* law or a secular state under secular law. In other words, this debate at the very beginnings of the Indonesian state had to do with the preference for Islamic teachings and Islamic experience rather than an epistemological view on the limit of Islamic teachings.
Among other manifestations, this debate was enacted formally through three significant historical events. The first was the debate in the San’yo Kaigi Jimushitsu (Supreme Advisory Council) which took place on 16 December 1944 at its initial session, in preparation for the following sessions. The second was the debate in the BPUPKI (Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan (Indonesia)/Investigating Body for the Preparation of Independence [of Indonesia]/Dokuritu Zyunbi Tyoosakai) on 28 April 1945. The third forum was in the PPKI (Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia/Preparatory Committee for the Independence of Indonesia), established on 7 August 1945 and holding its the first meeting on 12 August 1945 (Ichwan, 2012).

As Ichwan (2012) explained, in the first debate of the Supreme Advisory Council, there was an unequal proportion of Islamic groups and secular groups, with the Moslems dominating. The discussion centred on choosing the leader of the mosque, the Islamic religious advisors for the regent and regional high courts, the Islamic judges in case a secular state was established, and the issue of what kind of Islamic power would be used in the courts. The second meeting of this forum was held on 14 April 1945 at which debated topics concerned reducing the separation of religious affairs, state affairs, Islamic affairs and administration. Put another way, this discussion was about freedom of religion and equality among religions.

Ichwan (2012) and Darmaputera (1982) gave detailed accounts about the Investigating Body for the Preparation of Independence [of Indonesia] (BPUPKI). This forum consisted of 62 members and seven Japanese as extraordinary members. Dr. Rajiman Wediodiningrat, a Javanese priyayi, a former chairperson of the Budi Utomo movement as well as a fierce defender of Hindu-Javanese culture, led the forum. The forum also had two Vice-Chairpersons, one Japanese and the other Indonesian. This forum was intended to draft major plans for the independent state of Indonesia. The debates
continued about the formation of the state of Indonesia, the foundation of the state, and whether Indonesia would be a religious or secular state. The second issue in this debate was that of Indonesian identity, the concept of unity in diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*).

Both Ichwan (2012) and Darmaputra (1982) found a deadlock between the Islamic groups and the secular groups. This tension was resolved by Sukarno’s speech on 1 June 1945 which is now commemorated by Indonesians as the anniversary of Pancasila—the philosophical basis for the Indonesian state. Pancasila was promoted as the solution, a political compromise which was neither an Islamic state nor a secular state. In its first draft, Pancasila contained specifications concerning 1) *Kebangsaan Indonesia* (Indonesian nationhood), 2) *Internasionalisme/Perikemanusiaan* (internationalism/ humanitarianism), 3) *Mufakat/Demokrasi* (unanimous consensus/democracy), 4) *Kesejahteraan Sosial* (social welfare), and 5) *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (the One Lordship). This proposal was rejected by the Islamic group.

The next stage of the Pancasila was to reformulate it in a forum called the “Committee of Nine”. The reformulation was later called the Jakarta Charter (*Piagam Jakarta*). In this committee, the ‘secular’ nationalist group was represented by Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta, Achmad Subardjo, Muhammad Yamin and A.A. Maramis (being the only Christian), while the Islamic group was represented by Abikusno Tjokrosujoso, Kahar Muzakkir, Agus Salim and Wahid Hasjim. The group signed the Jakarta Charter on 22 June 1945.

In this format, the order of Pancasila’s founding pillars was reversed following the Islamic group’s requirement, and it included an additional phrase on Islam: 1) One Lordship with the obligation to carry out the Islamic sharia for its followers, (2) a just and civilized humanity, 3) the unity of Indonesia, 4) peoplehood guarded by the spirit of wisdom in deliberation and representation, and 5) social justice. This change indicated a
strong influence from the Islamic groups who, at the same time, compromised by ruling out the proposal of an Islamic state in exchange for the most significant phrase (see Point 1 above). This phrase was popular because of the (seven) words (in the Indonesian language version) indicating an obligation to practice sharia Islam: with the obligation to carry out the Islamic sharia for its followers (dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluknya) (Boland, 1982, p. 23-26; Picard, 2011, p. 12).

As Darmaputera (1982) explained, the Jakarta Charter also became a primary basis for the draft Indonesian Constitution in the second plenary meeting of BPUPKI. A Constitution forming committee of nineteen members had Sukarno as the chairperson. The first draft was ready on 13 July 1945. Article 29 of the draft Constitution consisted of two principal sections: first, the state was based on (the principle of) One Lordship, with the obligation to carry out Islamic sharia law for its adherents. This was a repetition of the Jakarta Charter. The second section mentioned that the state guaranteed the freedom of every person to profess and to worship according to his/her religion and belief (Darmaputra 1982, p. 300). Wongsonegoro, as a prominent representative of Javanese mysticism (Kejawen/Kebatinan), recommended the word “belief.” However, some orthodox Muslim groups rejected the proposed second section of Article 29, claiming the word “religion” was considered an apostasy and thus should be changed into the word “Islam.” In the end, this draft was deadlocked.

The situation quickly changed after that. Due to the sudden defeat of the Japanese by the Allied Forces in August 1945, the impatient younger nationalist leaders urged Sukarno and Hatta to declare Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945, without waiting for the Japanese to grant them independence. All of a sudden, the Constitution then needed to be declared immediately (Ichwan 2012, p. 10-11). It had been a long wait due to the controversy surrounding Islamic power. The Preparatory Committee for the Independence
of Indonesia (PPKI) members were more diverse than the BPUPKI and the additional references to Islam bothered the non-Islamic groups from Christian Eastern Indonesia. They would not join the Republic if these additional Islamic words remained (Ahmad, 2019).

On 18 August 1945, some hours before Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution was officially announced, Hatta consulted Muslim representatives such as Bagus Hadikusumo, Wahid Hasjim, Kasman Singodimedjo, and Teuku Muhammad Hassan on this issue in order to ensure that the new nation was not divided. In the PPKI forum, the Muslim representatives agreed to remove the additional references to Islam, replacing them with “Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa” (Belief in one supreme God), because this was still in line with the Islamic principle of tawhid (monotheism). After this, the PPKI agreed on the final draft of Pancasila, which has been maintained until today and contains: 1) belief in one supreme God, 2) just and civilized humanity, 3) the unity of Indonesia, 4) democracy, and 5) social justice. The reference to “God” in the first pillar of Pancasila was written using the word “Tuhan” not “Allah” as a neutral and universal term to make a compromise between the extreme part of the orthodox Muslim groups and the extreme section of the nationalist groups.

This decision was deemed a defeat for Islam according to some orthodox Muslim groups, which produced resentment (Crawford, 2014; Hadreas, 2007, p. 66; Menchik, 2014, p. 598). When it comes to politics, religion becomes a dangerous instrument for political desires (Hidayat, 2016). This led to various movements to resist Pancasila, overseen by Kartosuwiyo, the leader of the Indonesian Islamic state movement (Indonesian House of Islam/Dar al-Islam [DII/TII, 1942-1962], followed by his supporters in Central Java (led by Amri Fatah), South Sulawesi (with Kahar Muzakkar as leader), South Kalimantan (spearheaded by Ibnu Hadjar), and Aceh and around Sumatra (directed by
Daud Beureueh). The epistemological view of these groups was influenced by Islamic scholars such as Al Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, and the Muslim brotherhood discourse. All these movements instrumentalized Islam for the sake of politics and power.

The debate on the Islamic state and Pancasila continued to the Suharto era. Prominent Islamic scholars during this era, such as Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur), Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), Ahmad Syafii Maarif (Buya Syafii), and Emha Ainun Nadjib (Cak Nun), defended Pancasila as already Islamic, similarly to the view promoted by Sukarno, Muhammad Hatta, and Agus Salim. Pancasila is a complex and universal ideology which united all citizens of Indonesia. Pancasila is very much pluralised in the context of Indonesian society, including the ways many Muslims experience their Islamic teachings (Barton, 1995; Burhani, 2013; Maarif, 1996; Madjid, 2014; Nadjib, 1979).

Nevertheless, Pancasila is very much Islamic; in Emha Ainun Nadjib’s view, “Pancasila is religious” (Nadjib, 1979).

These historical facts can be interpreted in the following way. First, religion is indeed a significant element in constructing the politics of Indonesia. Religion became a pivotal issue in the theological and political debate between orthodox Muslims groups (such as Hamka and Muhammad Natsir, Kazar Muzakkar) and nationalist groups (including Rosin, TB Simatupang, Supomo, and Muhammad Yamin). This debate focused on the interpretation of Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa (belief in one supreme God). On one side, the orthodox Islamic interpretation was that “Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa” was not Islamic, it did not come from revelation, but was cultural. The argument went further, claiming that the phrase not only meant nothing; it was heresy and that Allah should be the term to replace it as “the One and Only”. On the other side, other Islamicists and nationalists argued that “Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa” was inclusive to every religion in Indonesia and could be interpreted by every Abrahamic religion (monotheism) and belief system (local
religions). The word “Tuhan” meant the most powerful or the Almighty and symbolized objectivity. It was very much primordial in the Indonesian context and at the same time universal in world religious discourses (Ropi, 2017, Chapter 7). Both groups labelled the ‘Being’ with their own discourse.

Second, the collision between the extreme nationalists and the extreme orthodox Muslims is a dynamic social political condition that can reappear at any time. This dichotomy has been analysed by many scholars (including Islamic ones) through multiple interpretations of Pancasila within its universalistic values and principles. Therefore, the primordial identity of Indonesia as well as its universal principle (Pancasila) forms a bridge between the opposing groups.

Third, Pancasila is a symbol of the spirituality of Indonesia, it is the substance of Indonesian values and principles which are very diverse. As the philosophy behind a new culture, Pancasila was purified from old feudal traditions and liberated from its particular ethnic roots but still maintains the spirit and wisdom of the traditions (Schefold, 1998, p. 269). Pancasila symbolizes the Indonesian people, a very diverse population. This idea was confirmed by aprominent Islamic scholar, Madjid (2014) who stated that Pancasila is full of universal values and principles which are true for any kinds of religious communities. Pancasila is a cultural product of all the traditions, religions, and belief systems of the Indonesian people and it contains the spirit of Islam. In this sense, Indonesian Muslims were not defeated in constructing the form of Indonesia, but they did “gotong royong” (work together) with many other groups to establish harmony and peace.

It is interesting to point out how the idiom was variously rendered into English: the Department of Information (Departemen Penerangan) translates the phrase as “the belief in the One Supreme God,” while the MORAs defines Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa as “the belief in God, the One”; Yamin defines it as “the belief in the All-Embracing God”; Hadjabat as “the belief in the Divine Omnipotence”; Harun Hadiwijono calls it “the belief in the Absolute Lordship”; Kafrawi mentions it as “the belief in the Being of Supreme Deity of Oneness”; Boland construes it as “the belief in the One and Only God”; van Kroef put it as “the belief in the Absolute Unity of God”; van Niewenhije states it as “the Overlordship of God Who is Absolutely One”; Anshari defines it as “the belief in God Who is Absolutely One”; prominent Christian scholars name it as “the belief in One Godhead” and “the belief in One Lordship” (Ropi, 2017, p.98).
Fourth, Javanese mystical groups/the science of the inner (aliran kebatinan) were placed equal with other religions. As Supomo states, the identity of Indonesia has an inner spirituality dimension (mysticism) (Ropi, 2017, p. 66). Therefore, up to now, Indonesian people are religious in the sense that they rely on spirituality to maintain harmony and peace. Such spirituality is at the centre of any relations in Indonesia. However, in reality, these spiritual groups were still excluded from the official framing of religion. The government tried to tackle this problem by providing facilities for these groups from the MOEAC in order to treat them fairly. Pancasila was the middle way to resolve the extensive tension between two extreme groups, to promote harmony and stability (Hidayat, 2016).

Politics is about compromise. To compensate for this legislative “loss” of some orthodox Muslim groups, the MORA was set up at the executive level of government. Muhammad Yamin proposed the MORA in the second session of the BPUPKI on 11 June 1945, inspired by the colonial Dutch Advisory Office for Native and Islamic Affairs, an institution which had taken part, unsuccessfully, in the religious control of Islamic society. At the meeting of PPKI on 19 August 1945, Ahmad Subardjo again raised the idea of the creation of the MORA, but of all thirteen ministries, only the idea of the MORA was rejected again by other PPKI members, such as Latuharhary, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, and Kusumasumantri.

In the parliamentary system, Islamic parties such as Masyumi (Madjlis Sjuro Muslimin Indonesia, a leading Islamic party in the 1950s) and Perti (Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah, a political party of Sumatran origin) gained support from the first parliamentary Cabinet led by Prime Minister Sjahrir. Finally, the MORA was established on 3 January 1946, based on Presidential Decree No. 1/SD/1946 (Ropi, 2017, p. 102). The President ultimately signed off on the establishment of the MORA due to the strong bargaining
position in the parliament for Islamic representation (Ropi, 2017, p. 102-103). The MORA’s first minister, Muhammad Rasjidi, stated it had been established for the regulation of religious affairs. The MORA’s role was to regulate the administration of the Islamic marriages, courts, mosques, pilgrimages, and education in public schools at the level of local government officers (Karesidenan) and regional Ministry offices (Jawatan Agama Daerah or Kantor Wilayah Agama), a model that was adopted from the Dutch colonial era.

The MORA also began to enlarge its administrative authority by enacting Law No. 22/1946 on Islamic marriage. Another example of the MORA’s role being extended was that it became involved in the practical administration of mosque assets and cash-flows (zakat) and other religious charities (sedekah). Moreover, the MORA provided the state’s mufi (an Islamic jurist qualified to issue a nonbinding opinion) and fatwas (religious nonbinding opinions) to the government and offered religious advice (nasehat or tausiyah) to any institution that required it (Ropi, 2017, p. 104-106).

In line with Rasjidi, some other orthodox Muslims argued that the MORA is the manifestation of a middle way between the theory of the separation of religion from the state (secularism) and the theory of the unity of religion and the state (Islamic state). In contrast to this argument, Subagya (1981) emphasised that a political consequence of the establishment of the MORA was discrimination in non-Muslim religious communities because the MORA’s role was based on an Islamic worldview.

The MORA’s existence was similar to the Dutch colonial administration of religious life. It excluded and included different religious communities based on a power preference, not based on their right to religion. Through a modern bureaucracy, the MORA could achieve religious superiority, defining what was right or wrong in religious affairs. There is value in the perception the MORA became a sizeable bureaucratic machine for Islamising
the state and at the same time for drawing Islamic affairs into the state budgets. Thus, through the MORA, orthodox Muslim groups subsumed control and administration of all Islamic affairs. Perhaps these groups were waiting for a further target, Islamising the entire state. Yet the MORA’s role has not yet gone beyond this administrative function (Ropi, 2017, p. 107).

The MORA also institutionalized the protection of religion from the growing political influence of the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia or Indonesian Communist Party) and from the robust development of spiritual groups in the society. The first outbreak of violence between Muslims and communist groups was the armed conflict between the Indonesian government and a communist faction in September 1948 in Madiun, East Java. Following this, Islamic parties such as Masyumi condemned communism, not only for political purposes, but also for the religious reason that communism was atheistic and atheists cannot live in Indonesia.

In the meantime, as Ropi (2017, p. 108) explained, the growth of the spiritual movement (aliran kebatinan) which later was known as aliran kepercayaan (Kejawen), was reported as rising to approximately 360 groups in Java in 1953, compared to only 29 in 1952. This increasing number bothered some orthodox Muslims who looked to the MORA to take responsibility. The spiritual activists tended to criticize the established religions (Islam in particular). They were questioning the nature of God and his relationship with humanity, in particular in Central Java.

To tackle this issue, the MORA established PAKEM (Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat/Supervisory Body of Local Beliefs in Society). PAKEM later became an autonomous unit in 1954, based on Government Decree No. 167/Promosi/1954. Following this elevation of PAKEM as an autonomous unit under the auspices of two ministerial offices (the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General), a year later, the BKKI (Badan
Kongres Kebatinan Indonesia/Indonesian Kebatinan Congress Body) was founded at its First National Congress held on 19-20 December 1955 in Semarang, Central Java. Chaired by a prominent politician and a former BPUPK member, Mr. Wongsonegoro, the BKKI became the sole institution through which kebatinan activists might conduct negotiations with the government as well as with political parties (Ropi, 2017, p. 108-109).

The first Indonesian general parliamentary election in September 1955 highlighted the BKKI as one of the critical factors in the win of the Indonesia National Party (Partai National Indonesia/PNI), particularly in Central Java. Therefore, for many orthodox Muslim activists, the spiritual groups became a political threat. They were afraid that the BKKI would soon declare their “religious” position, given the principle of Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa. In this respect, the Third Congress of BKKI (1957) confirmed these orthodox Muslims’ concern as it formally demanded President Sukarno recognize the spiritual groups as equal with the other established religions. The BKKI also asked the President to choose spiritual stream representatives in the House of Representatives. In fact, this equality had been justified since the 1945 Constitution because in it the words agama (religion) and kepercayaan (belief) were separated by a slash mark “/”, meaning they were equal or identical. However, this created some insecurity for some orthodox Muslims (Ropi, 2017, p. 110).

Furthermore, the MORA was deeply concerned that spiritual followers would form communist cells (Ropi, 2017, p. 111-112), as indicated through its 1958 instructions in monitoring developments on religious affairs. In 1960, the Fourth Congress of BKKI issued a new recommendation to demand that spiritual groups be recognized as having an official religion, thus challenging the MORA. However, instead this Ministry decided to limit the freedom of religion and its expression under the policy of the realization of Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa (One Supreme God). The MORA played an important role not
only in directing state policies to be in favour of orthodox Muslim groups’ norms and values but also in setting up its interpretation of Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa. This strong influence was evident in the ratification of Presidential Decree No. 1/PNPS/1965 on the Avoidance of the Misuse and Desecration of Religion, signed on 27 January 1965. This new policy, in essence, saw the state as not only “maintaining” the national identity, but also “protecting” Islam from the BKKI. In this respect, I need to quote directly Ropi’s (2017, p. 121) statement about this Presidential Decree:

The socio-religious and political factors surrounding the enactment of the Act (Presidential Decree) were clear. One of the reasons for its application was the rise of a variety of aliran kebatinan (spiritual streams). For many, the unprecedented development of this new religious movement was seen as a source of social disorder, national disintegration and religious “confusion” in society, as frequently argued by religious leaders such as Natsir. As a matter of fact, many aliran kebatinan indeed misused particular teachings from established religions for their own ends, while at the same time attacking other doctrines in terms couched in an offensive manner.

In the Dutch colonial administration’s policy, many religious vilifications and humiliations occurred, the perpetrators of which were not brought to justice. Consequently, the traumatic experience of being religiously attacked was deeply rooted in the minds of many Muslim groups. To prevent these unwanted incidents being repeated in the post-colonial era, the ratification of the Presidential Decree was very significant (Ropi, 2017).

Many Muslims found that demagogic comments against Islam and its defamation did not decrease. These came not only from Christian missionary zeal but also from spiritualists who believed that the authentic religion of Indonesia was spirituality, as it had been rooted for centuries at the local level (Ropi, 2017). The Samin community also
claimed their religion as more authentic compared to an imported one such as Islam. However, this questioning of Islam in Indonesia had its repercussions. It was reasonable for Islamic groups to fully support the enactment of the Presidential Decree. They did not want spiritualism as an official religion with equal status to other religions. This illustration confirms Picard’s claim that santri Muslims controlled the MORA. This religious institution was used to curb Javanese abangan and, as such, to commit more strictly to Islam whereas another Ministry, the MOEAC has become a Javanist spiritualist stronghold base.

The 1945 Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, that is, to believe in and to embrace faith. However, spiritualism is not a religion according to the MORA. There have been never-ending debates on the definition of religion. The MORA issued an official definition of religion based on Presidential Decree No.1/PNPS/1965 and Law No.5/1969 on the Enactment of Various Presidential Decrees and Acts as Law. The religions were defined as founded by a “prophet” or “messenger” (nabi or rasul) and had a “scripture” or “Holy Book” (Kitab Suci) offering universal teachings embraced by citizens of various countries across the world. This definition privileges Islamic orthodoxy. The official definition of religion was pronounced because MORA was concerned by the founding of around 360 new and popular “religions” by native prophets. Local religious traditions were forced to adapt to this government policy. As the consequences, local “religions” were excluded by the framing of the government definition of religions and instead reduced to the status of aliran kebatinan/kepercayaan (spiritual streams) (Makin, 2016, p. 9).

**Suharto Regime: Stereotyping the Samin Community**

Since the beginning of the New Order, Suharto started to socialize the anti-communist regime that had some connection with the spiritual stream. The failed coup d’état of PKI on 1 October 1965 was the beginning of a political alliance which unified military factions
and many elements of civil society (religious organizations, political activists, and student circles) to move brutally against the PKI (Ropi 2017, p. 128). Suharto’s regime also allegedly placed Sukarno as aligned with the PKI and the spiritual groups. Suharto’s policy rejected the rehabilitation of political parties such as Masyumi in order to prevent the reestablishment of the Jakarta Charter as a project to Islamise Indonesia. Makin (2016, p. 11) agrees with Ropi in perceiving the result of the 1965 disruption as a period of the homogenization of Islamic religiosity as anti-communist propaganda.

By demonizing communist elements, this would open the way for some orthodox Islamic authority to hold sway over Indonesian political and social life. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Suharto acted to fulfil his political legitimacy by homogenizing diversity and suppressing plurality in both politics and religions. He simplified politics into three political parties, namely Golongan Karya (Golkar/Functional Group), Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (Democratic Indonesia Party/PDI), and Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (Unity Development Party/PPP). He also strengthened the status of the five official religions: Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism based on Presidential Decree No.1/PNPS/1965. According to Sezgin and Künkler (2014, p. 451), in Suharto’s regime (1966–1998), the religious policy closely resembled the Dutch colonial regime’s so-called ethical policy: tolerating and at times even consolidating religion into society, allowing large Islamic organizations to provide much of the social services, while keeping political Islam at bay.

In short, the political expression of Islam was very limited under Suharto’s regime, but in its intellectual and social expression, Suharto’s regime was supportive. The Saminists’ status in this context was at the bottom of political and social classes because, at a time when every citizen would like to escape from the communist label, the Saminists were alleged to be part of communism. The Saminists were also reluctant to join the
spiritual movements/local religions (*aliran kepercayaan*) as it was protected by and supported the Golkar political party later on. Indeed, the Saminists did not have any alliance with any political organization or party, which made its position unclear in the eyes of Suharto’s regime (Ropi, 2017, p. 129).

In line with this understanding, my research is similar to Beatty’s (2003) study in the context of investigating characteristics of rural Javanese community and its mysticism. Beatty conducted this research in Banyuwangi (Blambangan), East Java. He concludes that the mystical Javanese community has been allegedly accused as communist and socially marginalized by some orthodox Muslims because their worldview was not based on an official religion (Islam) in Indonesia which relied on scriptural texts, ritual texts, and was well institutionalized, widely established, and with a recognizable formal structure.

Moreover, during this period efforts were made to remove any obstacles that could harm the program of modernization. Many Muslims, especially prominent Muslim scholars such as Rasjidi, Hamka, and others, strongly believed that Indonesia would be westernized and secularized by Suharto’s regime—while the government argued that Indonesia would not be westernized and secularized because that would be against Pancasila and the government would only conduct the development programs for the sake of economic growth and peace (Ropi, 2017, p. 130).

Ropi (2017, p. 131-132) explains two crucial points concerning the management of religion in the Suharto regime. The first was to serve capital circulation. For instance, Presidential Decree No. 07/PRIN/10/1968 on *zakat* (a mandatory charitable contribution in Islam, often considered to be a religious tax) and a Circular Letter to government offices entailed them to establish the mechanisms of *zakat* collection in their workplaces and the regulation and administration of pilgrimages to Mecca. This meant that Islam had privileged treatment compared to other religions.
The second aspect was to control religious groups’ anti-communist sentiment, in order to eradicate all traces of the PKI. For instance, MPRS (Provisional People’s Consultative Assembly) Decree No. XXVI/1966 required the government to guide (memberikan bimbingan), administer (pengurusan) and control (pengawasan) all religious activities. This took practical effect with the elevation of Presidential Decree No. 1/PNPS/1965\(^2\) into law through the enactment of the Law No. 5/PNPS/1969. In this context, this regulation mainly targeted the spiritualists/Javanists (aliran kebatinan). Makin reported that between 1964 and 1971, the government banned many such groups (2016, p. 7-8). In 1971 alone, the regime disbanded around 167 sects. In 1972, the Secretariat of the Cooperation of the Believers in One Supreme God (Sekretariat Kerjasama Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa/SKK), a national secretariat for all spiritual organizations, recorded 644 sects: 257 in Central Java, 83 in West Java, 55 in East Java, 83 in West Sumatera, 70 in Yogyakarta, 26 in Eastern Indonesia, and about 112 recorded elsewhere. Yet by 1984, PAKEM only acknowledged 353 religious sects.

In the eyes of the Indonesian government, administratively, the Saminists did not exist until they were forced to embrace one of the five recognized religions of Indonesia. The Saminists were by nature ignorant about modern institutions. For them, spirituality or religiosity was and is an experiential journey of a human being (wong) with his/her rasa. This is therefore very private and cannot be institutionalized. Until today, their religious status has not yet been cleared in term sof their ID and citizenship.

One of the essential strategies in the early Suharto regime was to eliminate communism. This included sending 60,000 new religious teachers under the MORA to be posted to ex-communist regions (Ropi 2017, p. 132). In short, there were only two choices: choose to embrace one of the official religions or be a part of adat (customary)

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\(^2\) In 1959, the Minister of Religious Affairs, K.H. Wahib Wahab was asked by the House of Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat) to define officially the meaning of religion. The response was that religion should have a revelation from God, Holy Book, prophet, a place for submission, and a system of law for the followers.
communities under the MOEAC. Here, theoretically, the MORA was understood as a regime of religious truth or “the tyrant of truth” as Nøhr (2017) phrases it. The truth was politically constructed as the result of the political battle of the Jakarta Charter for which the MORA was the compensation for Muslims, as well as an effort to contain the anti-communist movement. It was based on this truth that the Saminists were included automatically under the MOEAC as adat communities.

The Suharto regime also repressed ethnic and religious groups outside the official religions. Suharto banned the ethnic Chinese from practising their traditions and cultures through Presidential Decree No.06/Preskab/6/67. One of the applications of this decree was the instruction to change ethnic Chinese names into Javanese names. Presidential Instruction No.14/ 1967 prohibited Chinese cultural traditions being performed publicly. Similarly, the Samin community (Central Java), the customary community of Wet Semokan (Bayan, West Lombok, NTB) and the Dayak Pitap and Meratus (South Kalimantan), Orang Wana (Central Sulawesi), and Patuntung communities (Bulukumba, South Sulawesi) had been forced to convert to one of the official religions for their citizenship ID or otherwise be identified as communists. Without this document, they would also have had problems as accessing education and administrative services and in their social and cultural life.

Religious groups during the Suharto regime were classified and their movements were mapped (Mulder, 1970, p. 110). This simple policy was based on a rational choice to control religious believers. Some other ethnic minority groups were constructed in the frame of tourism attractions displayed in pamphlets, and their works were exhibited in galleries and museums. Ethnic and religious groups were also on show in the Miniature Park of Beautiful Indonesia (Taman Mini Indonesia Indah/TMII), a park initiated by the First Lady, Tien Suharto. According to Schefold (1998) and Hellman (1998), the display of
ethnicities and religions in the TMII was reproduced for Suharto’s political interests. However, the government argued that its purpose was to present Indonesia’s unity in diversity and to facilitate the study of Indonesia on a small scale. In fact, Meuleman (2006, pp. 45-69) and Hellman (1998, p. 11) argued that the Suharto regime used cultural diversity to counterbalance class and religious differences and create its own plurality.

Under Alamsjah Ratu Prawiranegara (1978-1983), the MORA extended its role and, consistent with some orthodox Muslims, spiritual groups (aliran kepercayaan) were accepted only as cultural groups, not as religious groups. Therefore, their administration was to come under the supervision of the MOEAC. Alamsjah Ratu Prawiranegara publicly commented on the “nullification of seven words” of the Jakarta Charter, saying that Muslims bestowed both “the biggest sacrifice” (pengorbanan terbesar) and “the biggest gift” (hadiah terbesar) to the state. After that, the government ratified the enactment of People’s Consultative Assembly Act No. 11/1983, emphasising the Pancasila as the sole foundation for all political parties and mass organizations in Indonesia. Alamsjah Ratu Prawiranegara also made a model, to be known as the Trilogy Kerukunan (Trilogy of Religious Harmony) which promoted harmonious relations among religious communities (kerukunan antar umat beragama), within the community (kerukunan intern umat beragama) and between the religious communities and the government (kerukunan antar umat beragama dan pemerintah).

He created a new semi-formal organization for consultation among religious groups known as Wadah Musyawarah Antar Umat Beragama (an organization for dialogue, discussion and consultation among religious groups). In addition he employed the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) for the Muslims (1975), the Communion of Indonesian Churches (PGI) for the Protestants (1984), the Indonesian Council of Bishops (MAWI/KWI) for the Catholics (1987), the Representatives of the Indonesian Buddhist
Community (Walubi) for the Buddhists (1978) and the Indonesian Hinduism society (Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia) for the Hindus (1959) as official state-sponsored religious consultative assemblies.

This minister also conducted strict controls on *dakwah* (Islamic preaching) for which permission from the state authorities and the military officer in charge was needed. For example, the regime regulated how the *kuliah subuh* (sermon following the dawn prayer) should be presented through radio broadcasts in terms of the methods and contents of *dakwah*. The other technical policies were regulating the religious day and making guidelines for the use of loudspeakers in mosques and other smaller Islamic places of worship like *mushalla* and *langgar*. In short, Alamsjah Ratu Prawiranegara initiated various policies for controlling religious affairs (Ropi, 2017, p. 145-147).

There were significant differences between the Sukarno regime and the Suharto regime in dealing with religious affairs (Ropi, 2017, p. 148). In the Sukarno regime, the MORA served as the institutional watchdog for all religious movements, in the name of “the realization of *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*” (the First Principle of Pancasila) in public life. The MORA was responsible for supervising individual freedom to “promote healthy religious movements”; this was the main argument for supervising the spiritualist groups (*aliran kebatinan*). This monitoring was not only undertaken simply for the sake of social order but also to make Islamic teachings clear for Indonesian society, so that they were not confused with *aliran kebatinan*.

In contrast to the Sukarno regime, the Suharto regime served as the guardian of religious orthodoxy. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the regime gave guidance (*memberikan bimbingan*), administered (*pengurusan*) and controlled (*pengawasan*) religious activities as promulgated in Decree of the Provisional People’s Consultative Assembly No. 26/1966. This mandate was later enacted in Statute No. 5/PnPs/1969 on
“Preventing the Misuse and Defamation of Religion”. It was considered to have a more militaristic sense than the previous laws (Ropi, 2017, 148; Hafner, 2018, p. 215).

From 1965 to 1995 more than 110 regulations related to religion were issued. This is itself is a telling statistic. These took various forms and had a hierarchy of precedence: Statutes (Undang-Undang), Decrees (Keputusan), Joint Decrees (Surat Keputusan or Surat Keputusan Bersama Menteri), Instructions (Instruksi), Circulars (Surat Edaran), Radiograms or Telegrams and Guidance (Pedoman Dasar) signed by the President, Ministers, the Attorney General, and Provincial Governors. Some of these were applied nationwide while others catered for religious problems at the provincial and district levels (Ropi, 2017, p. 141-143).

In short, it is clear that Suharto operated the executive role to control religious affairs by creating many kinds of rules and laws whereas Sukarno only focused on the judicative role in the 1945 Constitution. Suharto, in religious policy, excluded the spiritual groups (aliran kebatinan), but Suharto’s political party, Golkar, supported them. In the period of preparations for the 1971 elections, spiritual groups supported the Nationalist Pancasila. During February and March 1970, spiritualist leaders had been asked to join Golkar at the local levels (Mulder, 1970 p. 110). Under Golkar, the political position of spiritualist groups seemed to be protected as long as the country was ruled by the then government of mystically inclined abangan (included in these groups) military. Golkar expressed the regime’s dislike of politicized Islam.

Even though non-institutionalized spiritual groups were still repressed in their religious practices (and their right of citizenship), they did not have any choice. It was better for these groups to align with Golkar compared to the orthodox Muslim groups who already disliked them. In the Sukarno era, the Saminists experienced freedom and had a chance to be recognized based on the Indonesian Constitution. However, in the Suharto
regime, the government created a difficult choice for them because the Saminists were not included in the spiritualist groups. This position made the Saminists the lowest class of Indonesian citizen; they were discriminated against and marginalized the most.

**The Saminists vis-à-vis the State and (some) Orthodox Muslims**

After colonialism, particularly in the Sukarno era (1945 to 1967), the Saminists believed Sukarno was “the son of prophecy” and the state perceived the Samin community as a local religion and equal to ‘imported’ religions. During the Suharto era (1967 to 1998), the Saminists were constructed by the state pejoratively and were repressed due to their unclear religious affiliation. In the Sukarno era, Saminists were perceived (de facto) by the regime as part of the spiritual stream of groups whereas under Suharto, they were viewed as uncivilized and stupid people. According to the Saminists themselves, they are Javanese with their own religion, the Adam religion. In this respect, their religion needs to be recognized as equal to the imported official religions by the Indonesian state and society.

In relation to the Dutch colonial government policy on religious affairs, the Samin community posed a threat due to their Javanese mythology concerning a messiah. The Dutch knew that its leader, Samin Surosentiko was chosen as the Just King (*Ratu Adil*) with the title *panembahan suryangalam* in 1907. Scott’s study confirms Samin Surosentiko’s rejection of this title (Scott, 1977a, p. 239; 1977b; 2013, p. 58). Despite this refusal, his Javanese followers still ordained him as such and eventually he was captured by the Dutch (Ismail, 2012, p. 58; Sastroatmodjo, 2003; Sholeh Ba'asyin, 2014, pp. 4-5; Winarno, 2003, p. 58). The prophecy of the Just King continued until Japanese colonization when the prediction of the Dutch colonial government’s fall came true.

According to information provided during my field trips, the Saminists apparently foresaw that the colonial Dutch would be defeated by soldiers who had a symbol on their right arm, which the Japanese did, their red and white flag. The soldiers maintained
political occupation in Java for only three years, which had also been predicted by the Saminists, who mentioned *ratu petruk* (a short period of power). The final part of the prophecy was that land would be given back to the Javanese people who would then be able to control it independently (*Jawa wis balik Jawa*).

After Indonesian independence, an informant stated, this prediction, which his grandfather had told him, came true: a Javanese would rule Java. This turned out to be Sukarno, who would lead Java to be a better place. An heirloom from Samin Surosentiko would be passed to this eventual ruler, a *kris*, which is an asymmetrical dagger with unique blade patterning. In Sawah Lunto, Padang, Sumatra, Samin Surosentiko entrusted this *kris* to his son in law, Surokidin. Before Surokidin passed away, he handed the *kris* to Surokamidin, as the third-generation descendant. In the end, Surokamidin passed the *kris* to Sukarno some time in the 1950s or the early 1960s.

This prophecy was not precise in predicting a specific time, but it was of immense historical significance for the Saminists, reflecting a robust Javanese mysticism and their struggle against colonization. This story is experiential and part of the Samin community’s record in opposing the political power of modernism. Within their mystical teachings, the Samin community are always related to rural community resistance against an oppressive power. This record has been reproduced as a collective memory to complete the narrative of the Samin community inside and outside the community, verifying their historical experience via oral history.

Since Indonesian independence, the Samin community’s existence has been out of touch with or excluded from the debate of the construction of Indonesia as a society. The Samin community cannot be defined satisfactorily as part of the spiritualist movement (*aliran kebatinan*), *abangan*, Hinduism, nor Buddhism. Neither is it a complete definition to call it an agricultural cult, *adat*, a millenarian movement, or a syncretic movement,
however all these interpretations have been made by outsiders. The Saminists consider themselves as Javanese people practising the religion of Adam. This religion does not fit into a modern religious framing, neither is it an institutionalized religion. According to them, their religion includes all religious principles and norms, but they have their own practices. In order to preserve this belief system, they make their livelihood through agriculture, which is at the core of their existence.

The Samin community supported Indonesian independence, which is in line with their ancestor’s prophecy. Java was returned to the Javanese and Sukarno was their salvation from the colonizer, a leader who would open the Golden Age (Anonymous 3, 14 November 2015; Ba'asyin, 2014, p. 51). Most Saminists were proud of Sukarno. Even today, some Saminists’ houses have a picture of Sukarno or symbols from that era. No Saminists protested against Sukarno’s policy. Statistical data about the Saminist population was delivered to Sukarno’s government through Saminist representatives.

Furthermore, in the Sukarno era, the government recognized them and provided some facilities. In Pati and Kudus, it is believed that Sukarno came to Pati, delivered a speech and met Saminists. In fact, when I checked the National Archives of Indonesia, the person who came was not Sukarno, who was overseas, but his representative.

Saminists’ memory of the Sukarno regime has no comparison with their memory of the repressive policy of the Suharto regime when the community insisted on their religion. In Suharto’s regime, the MORA and presidential regulations limited the spiritualist movement (including the Saminists) and heterodox Muslim groups, which Howell (2005, p. 474) has referred to as “delimited pluralism”. This policy defined what legitimately counted as a religion and imposed on Indonesian citizens an obligation to belong to one of these officially recognized religions, all of which originated elsewhere. While the Saminists stated that they were not communist, when asked about their God, they said
nothing (Anonymous 1, 2, 3, 14 November 2015). This has confused people until today, in particular, some orthodox Muslims who live around the Samin community in Pati (Ismail, 2012). They were perceived by some orthodox Muslims as a dangerous community because they influenced them. In fact, the Saminists could not express their belief in their God publicly. For them, God is in *rasa*. Correspondingly, because of their connection with Sukarno, they could not escape from the labels of communism and spiritualism. The Samin community was then accused of belonging to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), which has been proven wrong (Ismail, 2012; Widodo, 1997, p. 261-262). Sources in the field confirmed that Saminists had become the victim of this false accusation due to the political turmoil at that time.

Due to their resistance against religious conversion, the Saminists in Pati were forced by the local government to participate in a mass marriage event based on one of the official religions, Buddhism. This was led by a government official named Munaji and supported by the military and police, which made this ceremony impossible for them to avoid. According to Widodo (1997, pp. 261-262), on 7 August 1989 117 Saminist couples were forced to be married by the state. Widodo described the situation before the wedding day. The village chief and his apparatus had made approaches to the Samin representatives, who were gathered together four times by the village head to meet with the district chief, the head of the district police, and the commander of the district military. They were threatened with expulsion from their village like their ancestor, Samin Surosentiko had been if they did not go through with the mass marriage. There was no other choice but to accept this order.

The ceremony was held in the house of villager named Wondo and was meant to be a public event in order to demonstrate the political power of the government. To the Saminists, this treatment was humiliation. Government officials, neighbours and journalists
were invited to this event, which proved the village chief’s power. However, after this the incumbent chief lost the next election; the Saminists and their supporters voted for other candidates. The point of this is that under the Suharto regime, the Saminists were not treated well and were not equal to other citizens. Their unclear religious status forced the Saminists to appear to convert to Buddhism.

According to my Saminist informant in Pati, some Saminists who joined this wedding ceremony were recorded as Buddhists, while others embraced Islam. In this process, the Saminists let the government officials write any religion they wanted because they did not care and actually disregarded it. After this, a Buddhist preacher regularly came to their village to share Buddha’s teachings, but gave up after a month because of the Saminists’ reluctance to learn. They resisted by showing no motivation and intention to learn Buddhism, performing like dull students who had difficulties understanding the lesson. He never returned to the village. Their stubbornness was their way of passively resisting the Suharto’s regime interference in their affairs.

The other success story of Suharto’s regime was to give the word “Samin” a bad connotation in Indonesia, especially in Java (Widodo, 1997). The term “Samin” became and still becomes a term to label people who like to have a baseless argument or circular debate (ngenyelan), disobey the law, are stubborn, foolish, underdeveloped and atheist. The Saminists were associated with people who were not progressive and were confined to their moment of history, and their memories of earlier times. There was a transformation of the Saminists’ discourse from heroic and fearless to foolish, disobedient, and underdeveloped. Nawari’s study verified this during the Reformation era in 2012 (Ismail, 2012).

Up to now, the Saminists are still being framed as foolish, stubborn, and likely to argue (ngenyelan) not only by the government but also by the society at large, especially
the majority of Muslims. The most interesting aspect of this framing is that the Saminists are also depicted as *Gatholoco* which refers to the *Suluk Gatholoco* that is always paired with the *Serat Darmagandhul* by the Muslim community who live around the Saminists. In Chapter 2, it has been explained that, since their publication, the *Suluk* and the *Serat* have been understood as dangerous teachings of Javanese mysticism by many orthodox Muslims.

These Javanese mystical masterpieces were troublesome to orthodox Muslims. The first minister of the MORA, Rasjidi (1967) wrote a book that criticized *Suluk Gatholoco* and *Serat Darmagandhul* as religious vilification because many Islamic terms in them had been spun into entirely different words and meanings. The Javanese *Suluk* and *Serat* had changed the sacred rituals of Islamic teaching and discourse into sexual discourse. These Javanese works were part of the reason for the establishment of the MORA, PAKEM, and issuing Presidential Decree No. 1/1965. Therefore, it appeared that Samin’s teachings were Javanese mysticism that would demonize Islamic teachings and confuse Islamic followers in the future. Because of this, it was essential for (some) orthodox Muslim groups and the government to prevent the Saminists’ influence spreading, which formed the basis for why they should not be recognized to be followers of a religion which was equal to the six official religions in Indonesia.

Additionally, from the Suharto regime onward, people who liked to disobey the orders from authoritatives such as the government, a teacher, or parents, have been called “dasar Samin” (silly Samin). Nyamin means pretending to be Saminists so as to gain specific benefits or to resist the government’s rule (Widodo, 1997, pp. 269). At this level, the government and the majority of Muslims controlled the truth. Politically, the Samin community were defined in terms of *adat* (custom). Even until today, the Adam religion holds a place lower than acknowledged religions, according to the government and
orthodox Muslims. In other words, to believe in something or to embrace what someone wants to believe in Indonesia needs permission from the government through the MORA and thus, indirectly, from orthodox Islamic groups. Most importantly, some of them perceive the discourse of the Samin community to be deviant teachings.

The last example of the penetration of the Suharto regime’s legacy into the Samin community is through language. The process of krama-tization (high and/or middle level Javanese language that implies patron-client relations) has been steadily influencing the Samin community. Today, the Saminists speak krama to newcomers such as myself, which is what happened the first time I visited the community in Pati. I was surprised because I thought they spoke ngoko (the lowest level of the Javanese language). In fact, I could not understand many words because I spoke ngoko as well. In this respect, we can say that the Saminists since the Suharto era have spoken a mix of languages: ngoko, krama, and Indonesian.

According to the advice of their ancestors, after Indonesian independence, they should obey the Indonesian government in paying tax, joining in voluntary work with their community, and supporting the government’s programs. During the Sukarno and Suharto regimes, Saminists respected their ancestors’ advice. At first, they rejected the government’s requests but, in the end, they accepted all government programs while rejecting them in their hearts and minds. By trying to follow the government’s rules, this contributed to changing the negative image of the Samin and their characterization as nyamin.

For example, the Saminist community joined the Green Revolution project, the government agricultural program to produce good quantities of high quality rice fast with modern technology and fertilisers. Therefore, there is no emphasis on organic cultivation in
the Samin community because there is no actual obligation to do so. What is important in their agricultural livelihood is the meaning of this work itself in regard to their religion.

When times change, the Saminists follow along, adjusting the practices of their livelihood yet holding onto their religious principles. This is decided by each Saminist individually, by reflecting on their experience in practising their religion, followed by discussion and consultation. In Samin’s teachings, there is no authoritative institution or leader to decide what the community are supposed to believe. The Saminists do not have any system to decide on the most authoritative person to lead them and to standardize Samin’s teachings. This is because they persist in maintaining their principles of egalitarianism values.

Overall, according to the Saminists with whom I interacted, in contrast to the Sukarno regime, the Suharto regime offered a difficult life for them. As previously mentioned, the Suharto regime was an authoritarian one in which the Saminists were oppressed and forced to embrace legal religions, although they renounced them internally. Importantly too, before and during both regimes, Samin’s teachings were never homogenous. Since the beginning, these have had multiple interpretations by the followers. Samin’s teachings have never been standardized or institutionalized. They are developing and open ended as a discourse. Furthermore, the Saminist community always let each Saminist freely interpret the teachings due to there being no single authority on the text of Samin’s teachings.

**Conclusion**

Religious matters are significant in Indonesia because they have become part of politics. In the colonial era, the Saminists’ proliferation was considered dangerous in the sense that they were not compliant to the colonial impositions. Concerning their religious nature, the Dutch considered the Samin community needed to be managed similarly to Muslims, but
did not attempt to include them into Islam. However, the Samin community were difficult to be governed because they could not be institutionalized, defined, and constructed with a fixed or essential identity.

In the post-colonial era, the Saminists experienced euphoria under the Sukarno regime because they perceived that government to be cooperative. However, when the Suharto regime began, they became marginalized and repressed. The tension between the Saminists and modernity during Sukarno’s regime was constructive, but at its end and under Suharto this became tightened up and politically discriminatory.

In both regimes, the Saminists’ position or status was still problematic because of the voice of orthodox Muslims through their instruments of institutions and laws. Even though there is freedom of religion according to the 1945 Indonesian Constitution, politically, the orthodox Muslim groups still control the state institutions and the interpretation of the Constitution to defend their religion orthodoxy from blasphemy and humiliation. This constrains the support for freedom and democracy in Indonesia. Political competition and political transactions between the nationalists and some orthodox Muslim groups have decided the status of their religion, the position of their religiosity, and its teachings.

The Samin community are not defined as a religion because their belief system/faith is not clear; it is a liminal religion. It is difficult for such teachings to be defined based on the standards of the modern discourse (orthodox Muslims’ perspective) where six official religions are institutionalized (Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism). In the Suharto regime, there was no one who defended or protected the Samin community to live as dignified human beings.

The Saminists’ position as a religious group is possible only under the MOEAC. The MOEAC facilitates the Samin community as a part of aliran kebatinan and adat (custom) communities whereas the Saminists themselves have not obtained any significant facilities.
Their wedding ceremony is illegal and not recognized by the state. Consequently, the children from this marriage are also illegal according to the government’s administrative records. In other words, the state does not have any institution to legalize the Saminists’ marriage.

In addition, it is difficult to administer their right of citizenship under Indonesian law because of the Islamic political interpretation of Indonesian Constitution. As a consequence, this is burdensome for Saminists’ social life and interactions with non-Saminists. In the context of religious affairs, the Saminists are not under Indonesian government protection. They continue to be repressed because of how their religion was treated during the Suharto period. Up to now, their religion has not been accepted as equal to the six official religions.

The Indonesian government is still controlled by some orthodox Muslim groups who remain afraid about Javanese mystical discourse, based on their experience in the past (regarding the *Serat Darmagandhul, Suluk Gatholoco*, and Seh Siti Jenar’s teachings). Because some orthodox Muslim groups have many formalistic and standard Islamic rules, they do not want criticism or debate regarding their faith, norms and values. In contrast to these orthodox Muslim groups, Saminists love to debate and argue because of their tradition and the dynamic nature of their teachings. This leads to little communication at all between the two groups about values and beliefs because of the two utterly different kinds of discourse. To some degree, the Saminists are diverse. In the following chapter, I explore the range of Saminist approaches to the modern discourse and the ensuing issues.
Chapter 5 Remapping the Samin Discourse in the Challenge of Modernity

Introduction

This chapter builds on the arguments presented in earlier chapters. Chapter 2 identified in details that the construction of Samin's worldview and practices are complex, with multiple linkages to both Javanese mysticism and Islamic Sufism. This chapter develops the argument that, while retaining an ongoing ethnic identity, Saminists have been documented to have changed and developed into different forms of identities. This, however, is a social construction. This chapter relies on Barth’s (1969) work in understanding ethnicity. Like Barth, I react against the static objectivism of then prevailing approaches to ethnicity, which sought to group ethnicity into stable, objectively observable patterns of shared culture (Brubaker, 2009, p 29). Grounded also in Bhabha’s cultural theory of hybridity (1994) and Turner’s liminal space (1969), in this chapter the narrative of the Saminists is traced as it has kept changing, predetermined by the historical situation and ongoing dialogue and interrelations with other key players. In Indonesian history, the Saminists have been described by scholars to have many forms of identity and many corresponding discourses: a peasant community, anarchy, a deprived community, a social movement, a millenarian movement, abangan, a Javanese Islamic mystical community, and a Javanese mystic community including Kejawen (spiritual Javanese cult).

In the post Suharto era, there are new liminal interpretations of the Saminist narrative. These take the form of an environmental identity, a religious identity, a cultural tourism identity, and the absence of an identity altogether. When I started my research on the situation of the Samin community after the fall of the Suharto regime, I interpreted the Saminists to constitute a new environmental movement against the cement corporation...
(and therefore a movement against industrialization). This was because I encountered a lot of data on the topic of the Samin vs. the cement corporations.

However, after conducting ethnomethodological fieldwork and intensively collecting primary and other secondary data, other issues emerged. These were related to religion and the cultural tourism in Pati, Kudus, and Blora. Therefore, the Saminists who resisted and protested against the cement corporations (Semen Indonesia and Indocement/ PT Sahabat Mulia Sakti) were engaged in a narrative that was not overarching for all Saminists. It can be seen that, in the context of complex tensions between the Samin’s teachings and modernity, the narrative of Saminist environmental activists is one of various new interpretations of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings in the contemporary globalized world. This chapter demonstrates Barth’s (1969, p. 9-10) concept of ethnicity that ethnic groups like the Samin Javanese ethnic is changing identity across flexible boundaries.

This chapter demonstrates that the ethnic identity of the Saminists is not predetermined but is influenced by the ongoing interrelations with modernity. Ethnic Samin Javanese (in other words, Javanese Samin) maintain their core identity and ethnicity, but their social, political, and cultural interaction with modernity present challenges to which they respond in the form of environmental activism, a religious movement, or cultural tourism.

These new variants of the Saminists bring them to the liminal site of modern society, which not only fits in Barth’s (1969) social interaction dimension, but also involves the political and cultural dimension of Bhabha’s (1994) cultural theory. In other words, there are liminal space and ambiguous boundaries between the Saminists and modernity.

Through ethnomethodological fieldwork and discourse analysis, four categories of Saminists have been identified, according to how they interpret Samin’s teachings. This classification differs from previous researchers’ findings, and highlights the complex
relations and tensions between Javanese mysticism and Javanese Islamic mysticism in the modern age and in modern sources of literature (reviewed in Chapter 2).

These classifications are as follows:

*First* is the environmental activist movement that defends the purity of Mount Kendeng against the state and the cement corporations (as agencies of the capitalist system);

*Second* is the religious movement that advocates for the Adam religion to be recognized by the Indonesian government and its citizens (accommodating Saminists into the Indonesian social order and social norms);

*Third* is the commodified Saminist movement that engages with the government in a cultural tourism project;

*Fourth* is the Saminists who are not involved in any of these three issues, thus engaging in an absence of discourse. They emulate their predecessors’ beliefs and practices when faced with the challenge of modernity. This is exemplified by the view of Mbah Sariman, a highly respected Saminist.

The discussion which follows gives some further background to Mbah Sariman, a Saminist prominent figure who lives in Tanduran hamlet, Kedungtuban village, Blora district, near the Wadu railway station. Both Saminists and non-Saminists visit him to seek advice. At the time of writing, he was still at the centre of Samin’s teachings and well recognized by almost all Saminists as an honest, straightforward, and genuine person. When I met him on April 2017, I perceived that his words could be easily understood; they are simple in form but deep and difficult to put into practice. However, Mbah Sariman was not popular among NGOs and activists since he was considered too ‘soft’ against modernity represented by the state and the cement corporations by not commenting on the issues. My take on Mbah Sariman’s implicit claim is that he refused to join any NGOs or

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53 An elder, spiritual and/or charismatic person is addressed with title “Mbah” by Javanese. The lexical meaning of “Mbah” in Javanese is grandmother or grandfather.
government program because of his practicing of the Samin’s principle in the sense that he
has his own business to do.

Mbah Sariman has his own discourse and ideas on the Saminists. During my visit, he
stated that there were now two types of Saminist narrative: Samin and nyamin. The first
followed the principle of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings or traditional ways. The second
were those who utilized Samin’s symbols and metaphors for his or her own interest. Mbah
Sariman’s view is important as it comes from within the Samin community. His
classification (Samin and nyamin) underlines how far Saminists are consistent with their
traditions in terms of spirituality, piety, and humility and points to the possibility of the
misuse of the Samin tradition. This reflective interpretation is based on the foundation of
rasa (inner feeling - spirituality), mind, and the practice of the Samin tradition. In this
chapter, Mbah Sariman’s narrative is important because it has strong ethnomethodological
basis without any discourse imposed by external agencies, unlike other three classifications
of Saminist teachings mentioned above. Mbah Sariman can be described as just a ‘old
fashioned figure’ of a Saminist who lives according to Javanese ethics and traditional
customs with little engagement with modernity.

Fourth, this chapter displays the diversity of the Samin discourses and goes beyond
the partial or essentialist approach of previous researchers who have defined the Saminists
as a peasant movement, an agrarian cult, a messianic movement, and a millenarian
movement. All these definitions frame and freeze the Samin community with a limited
perspective of the existential reality. This reality is constructed and contextualized in
accordance with a particular time, place and human reflectivity. This chapter shows that in
the context of post Suharto era, multiple discourses of the Saminists emerge. Importantly,
the Samin reality cannot escape the transformation which arises from the interaction
between tradition and the ideology of the modern. In addition, Western modernity cannot
achieve all which is modern. In other words, modernity takes different forms in different contexts.

The Samin community has accepted the challenge of modernism and remained reflective, retaining the memory of their tradition and its historical construction across time and space. In this chapter, each of the four discourses of the Saminists in the contemporary globalized world is examined: the environmental Samin movement, the religious Samin movement, the tourism Samin movement, and the stance characterized by Mbah Sariman, in other words, the Saminists who do not participate in movements.

The Environmental Samin Movement

One of the signs of modernity is developmentalism which is indicated by industrialization, technology, large scale manufacturing, and state bureaucracy. Industrialization expanded from European countries through the rest of the world in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East in the colonial age, bringing with the ideology of modernity (Ahluwalia, 2012; Ashcroft, 1994, 2001; Bassnett, 1999; Chakrabarty, 2000; Said, 1979). In the post-colonial era, since its inception as Indonesia, the country has modernized itself in many aspects of life such as politics, the economy, security and defence, and infrastructure. This post-colonial country has sustained the modern Western discourse, in particular in the New Order (Chwieroth, 2010; Hadiz & Robison, 2005; Panglaykim & Thomas, 1967; Rifai-Hasan, 2009). Indonesia faces many challenges such as environmental degradation, the lack of social space and intimacy, and globalized institutionalization, all as consequences of modernity (Giddens, 1990, 2009; Meštrović, 1998).

Today, the Indonesian government under President Joko Widodo’s administration has been continuing the program of developmentalism (pembangunan) which focuses on state stability and economic growth to compete with other countries. The program is manifested in Indonesian government policy through deregulation, infrastructure projects
and the call for investments (Warburton, 2016). With regard to land, mining, and agricultural livelihoods, Indonesian developmental policy also depends on the balancing of economic development, social justice, and environmental protection.

McCarthy and Robinson (2016) explored the disputes between the state, corporate interests, NGOs, and society concerning economic sharing, social justice, and environmental management. This research provided a thorough historical explanation of land tenure which has been problematic since the colonial era and remains one of Indonesia’s perpetual challenges. The research pointed to many case studies that showed inequality, injustice, and the complex management of land related to industrialization, including for the cement industry. This is considered the world’s most polluting industry yet it is significant in order to boost the infrastructure policy in the Widodo administration (Indonesia Investment, 2016; Erwin Azizi, Anwar, Alimuddin Hamzah, & Maming, 2016; Rifai-Hasan, 2009; Rustinsyah, 2016).

Before, during, and after production, industrialization, especially the cement industry, harms the environment, and the social and cultural dimensions of agricultural livelihoods in the name of economic growth. There is a wide gap between the ideal of nation states that function as authorities which provide collective goods, secure justice, redistributed wealth and protection for the environment and the reality of the nation states’ policies in practice (McCarthy and Robinson, 2016).

The Samin movement rose once more in the post Suharto era. Due to the Dutch colonial rule, the modernity they introduced had started to repress the rural Javanese traditions of the Samin community’s agricultural livelihood. In the post Suharto era during Reformasi (reformation), the Samin movement began to be recognized within the environmental movement. The Samin case supports Giddens’ (1990, p. 159-161) argument that the green movement is important in the discourse of globalized modernity.
In the narrative of a peasant movement, environmental Saminism was started when the Indonesian state-owned enterprise (BUMN), Semen Indonesia (formerly PT Semen Gresik) attempted to explore karst for cement in Sukolilo, Pati in 2006. However, Semen Indonesia failed to acquire a permit in 2009 after a court case in Semarang which it lost. The cement factory was then set up in Rembang in 2010 and the corporation has been facing challenges again by the environmental Samin movement and NGOs until the time of writing. In the same year, another cement corporation commenced operations in Tambakromo and Kayen subdistricts, Pati. This was PT Sahabat Mulia Sakti (SMS), a subsidiary of PT Indocement Tunggal Prakarsa Tbk, part of a German corporation, the HeidelbergCement (HC) group. This corporation was also brought to the court in Semarang by the peasant communities led by Jaringan Masyarakat Peduli Pegunungan Kendeng Utara (JMPPK, whose leader was the leader of the environmental Samin). In Semarang which JMPPK won and later when the case brought to Surabaya, the Saminists lost, meaning the corporation was permitted to legally operate in Pati. However, the dispute continues between the JMPPK and these two corporations until today.

However, the narrative of the environmental Samin movement has faded away and been replaced since the narrative of Kartini Kendeng rose in early 2018 (Erdianto, 2018). Even though the leader of the Kartini Kendeng movement remains the same, a Saminist, he was reluctant to identify the Samin community with the environmental movement in the public sphere because this creates a dispute among members of the Samin community. The majority of the Saminists are against the use of Samin attributes and identity for such purposes as protesting against cement corporations and the Indonesian government whereas activists and scholars support this. This context will be my reason to stop the investigation on the narrative of environmental Samin movement.

54 Kartini is a national heroine. She emancipated women in the Dutch colonial era and was a feminist figure who challenged the oppressor.
Since the JMPPK was established in 2007, its leader has been a Saminist called Gunretno. Later his sister, Gunarti, also joined her brother by creating a women’s section of the movement, Simbar Wareh (a name of wellspring in Mount Kendeng). They undertook to interpret Samin Surosentiko’s teachings in a new light, presenting the idea of environmental discourse. They also played a strong role at a later date to transfer the JMPPK’s struggle against the cement corporations from the environmental Samin movement to the Kartini Kendeng.

In the earlier history of the Samin movement, no records exist about environmental disputes between the Saminists and the colonial rulers or the Sukarno and Suharto regimes. This is supported by one of my informants, Anis Sholeh Ba’asyin (Discussion 0, 22 April, 2016), an activist and a public intellectual in Pati, who argued that Samin Surosentiko was not an activist, but a spiritual teacher and a well-known figure in Javanese society who resisted colonialism through a spiritual struggle with words, not through demonstrations. Anis Sholeh Ba’asyin reported that Samin Surosentiko never mobilized people to rebel in relation to any environmental issue.

According to Anis Sholeh Ba’asyin and most Saminists, the third generation of Samin Surosentiko’s successors advised the next Saminist generation to accept and support the Indonesian government as the authoritative body of the new nation state, ruled by a Javanese (Sukarno). Another Saminist informant from Kudus argued that nature has its own defence mechanisms and these are bound up with its destiny, adding that “What we need to defend are only our belongings (privately owned property)” (wong samin ngerti tekke dewe).

It can be concluded that the early dispute in Pati between the Semen Indonesia (formerly Semen Gresik) corporation and the Saminists under the JMMPK organization raised a new discourse of the Samin movement, that is, the environmental Samin
movement, to challenge modernism in the face of the cement industry. However, this narrative was built in a globalized world where the social system is constructed by instant information and communication as well as consumerism (Giddens, 1990, p. 1). Many journal and newspaper articles in Indonesia and overseas shaped the knowledge of the environmental Samin movement in Pati and later in Rembang.

In the bigger picture, this narrative challenged the global capitalist system (Apriando, 2015; Aprianto, 2013; Aziz, 2012; Endrayadi; Idhom-Nim, 2010; Laksana, 2013; Nawiyanto & Endrayadi, 2017; Purnaweni, 2014; Suharko, 2016). One of the influential Saminist figures in Pati used the word “capitalist” to criticize the Indonesian government. This raised the question of where he had learned this term if not from the left wing NGOs with whom he and his followers had intensively interacted. Since the fall of the Suharto regime, NGOs had been mushrooming and expanding in Indonesia.

The environmental Samin movement has also inspired other peasant movements in Banyuwangi and Gombong (Banyuwangi, 2017; KPA, 2016; Aprianto, 2016). All these narratives add weight to McCarthy and Robinson’s (2016) view that there is limited government support for agricultural livelihoods and environmental protection, even though peasants still comprise the largest population in Java, as well as in Indonesia. Yet the environmental Samin movement has been opposed by the majority of the Samin community in Pati, Kudus and Blora, which verifies my argument and also those in previous studies that explain this community as heterogeneous (see Chapter 1).

**Debate between the Environmental Samin Movement and the Majority of the Samin Community**

One significant example of this lack of support is that, despite followers in Pati, Kudus, and Blora, not more than twenty Saminists joined the long march demonstration from Pati to Semarang for the court case against Semen Indonesia (formerly Semen Gresik) in 2015.
However, the environmental Samin activist movement was not only popular among activists, journalists, researchers, and scholars, but has formed part of a revival of social movements in Indonesia.

The movement adopted the ideas of Samin Surosentiko by focusing on the discourse of respecting nature and submitting to an agricultural livelihood. It was argued that Mount Kendeng should be protected and preserved because it supported this kind of livelihood and was considered sacred in the Javanese tradition. In addition, the Saminist environmental activists believed that, according to Javanese cosmology, nature should be in balance. Hence, this argument was based on the Samin’s tradition of finding a balance between nature (the environment) and human beings.

Gunretno’s narrative emphasised that being a peasant was fundamentally significant for Saminists and non-Saminists around Mount Kendeng. He stressed that he would not be compromised by the promise of a wealthy life and the riches of capitalism (pemodal) but would continue his struggle to achieve self-sufficiency as a farmer (Hartiningsih 2014). In 2006, he won against Gresik Corporation and succeeded in obtaining a karst protection zone in Sukolilo as stipulated in Government Decree No. 2641k/40/MEM/2014. Based on this success, he became a part of the narrative of famous advocates and activists for the environmental movement. Gunretno conducted this movement because he believed that every human being needed to be responsible for protecting the earth (the land) ("bagi sedulur sikep lemah podo duwe, bumi podo ngencike"), following Samin’s teachings (Hartiningsih, 2014). Further, he believed that the current reality of government support for capitalist enterprises was similar to the Dutch colonial era when Dutch policy supported corporations to control the land and people (Hartiningsih, 2014).

The movement Gunretno led was not anti-modernity in the sense of technology. He stated that modern technology was a replacement of kesaktian (Javanese magical
knowledge as a weapon to survive) and he used mobile phones, laptops, the internet (including social media), mass media publications, and documentation through film. Furthermore, Gunretno also used national symbols blended with scientific research to support his environmental movement. He was aware that the elements of modernity were a double-edged sword (Hartiningsih, 2014).

The environmental Samin made their demands through modern democratic means: demonstrations, freedom of speech, and mass media publications (local, national, and international journals and newspapers). They also conducted theatrical performances, produced documentary films, and intensively collaborated with NGOs, researchers and scholars’ networks. By using modern elements, the environmental Samin movement could easily reach their goals effectively. They were well-known and popular, nationally and internationally. Their messages were received by the Indonesian government including a direct meeting with President Joko Widodo which resulted in his instruction to review the Strategic Environmental Study on Mount North Kendeng (Kajian Lingkungan Hidup Strategis/Kajian Lingkungan Hidup Strategis/Strategic Environmental Study (KLHS)).

The environmental Samin movement also remained rooted in Javanese traditions and its rituals, Javanese Islam and farmers’ symbols. These symbols were expressed in the ritual offering which combined selamat (brokohan) and tirakat. This ritual was well-documented and publicized by using modern instruments of communication. It was also instrumentalized as a means of fighting the cement corporations. The meanings of the ritual offerings of selamatan and tirakat are explored below.

An offering is an act of submission to the earth. This has a long oral history in Java. The metaphor for the land in rural society is ‘mother’. This ritual was conducted in the most ancient Javanese traditions (pre-Hindu, pre-Buddhist and pre-Islam) and it survives in modern times in agricultural communities. This ritual is in line with the core of Samin

In this ritual in ancient times, a human life was sacrificed to the land as a substitute (tu – mbal) for what the people had received from the earth. Nowadays the offerings are generally food and drink. In general, it has parallels with many other peasant rituals such as in Turkey (Karaömerlioğlu, 1999; Karaömerlioğlu, 1998), Latin America (Lundius, 2000), and Maori New Zealand (Eliade, 1967). These rituals are centred on an idea about human existence and its life cycle that depends on the land (earth) as ‘a mother’ and the sky as ‘a father’.

According to one of the members of the oldest Samin generation whom I interviewed in Pati (anonymous 9, 13 November, 2015) the terms ‘mother earth’ and ‘father sky’ were part of the sacred narrative in this community. This data supports Siauw Giap’s (1969, p. 72) argument concerning Greek and Hindu-Aryan mythology, suggesting that this discourse has been the core of peasant cults all over the world. In the context of Javanese Islam, the meeting between man and woman, symbolizing heaven and earth, is related to the story of their origin. In this sense, this mythology of origin is always centred on the idea of sangkan paraning dumadi (the origin and the human destination of life, see Chapter 2). The use of this ritual in Gunretno’s movement justified the construction of the environmental Samin movement, dynamically organizing traditional symbols and memories within the modern culture in order to shape the presence of the environmental Samin movement in a particular time and place.

The practice of the offering is called selamatan (brokohan in Samin). This Javanese tradition had been transformed at some time in the past from human sacrifice into wealth-sharing and gathering together as a community. While this modification occurred through a long-term process of acculturation, along with its complexities, the principle remains the
same, that is, respecting nature and the earth (Betty, 2003; Geertz, 1960, pp. 11-82; Wessing & Jordan, 1997; Woodward, 1988, pp. 54-84). The offering is important to balance (Javanese) cosmology, which includes all beings on earth, and to maintain social interactions and order. A selamatan ritual took place in Pati before the long march in 2015. Gunretno argued that the long march itself was part of tirakat.

Tirakat is an ascetic Javanese practice with its roots in Sufism of ritual prayer with the intention of restraining the human desire or exercising self-control. By creating ‘suffering’, we will earn our hope and wish; it is an act of suspension from joy and pleasure, from the satisfaction of a desire. The long march is tirakat to seize kesaktian (magical knowledge) by being close to God as well as to have hopes and wishes easily granted (diijabani).

Tirakat is part of the Javanese tradition which is becoming more attenuated in the contemporary Indonesian consumerist society. Yet through the long march and other opportunities for offering or sacrifice, the environmental Samin movement reproduces tirakat and, in doing so, tirakat validates the environmental Samin movement. Importantly, tirakat is a tradition which is not visible today in daily life as a general rule. Even though the principle of tirakat is similar to Islam’s teachings of a spiritual and modest life, the majority of Javanese Muslims have abandoned the tirakat practice.

The act of tirakat is not negative suffering. Its purpose is to put human desire last in order to link human beings with their inner knowledge. This innerness is a way to connect with God’s presence. By exploring tirakat, the environmental Samin movement justify their movement as a unique Samin and Javanese representation, as distinct from the cement corporations which represent modernity.

The environmental Samin movement is aligned with the green (ecological) discourse which emerged as a political force in many countries from the mid-1970s onwards.
(Paterson, 2005, p. 235). As argued by ecologists, all beings are fundamentally ‘embedded in ecological relationships’. Therefore, no convincing reason can be used to make a clear distinction between humans and non-humans. The philosophy posits that all entities are provided with relative autonomy within the ecological connections in which they are rooted and therefore humans are not free to dominate the rest of nature (Paterson, 2005, pp. 238-239).

This idea provides a theoretical framework for the traditional practice of Javanese cosmology’s discursive ethics. The rituals of offering and brokohan are expressions of the embedded ecological relations. For instance, if people do not conduct the offering, as a consequence, natural catastrophes such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes may happen (Wessing, 2010). In the Javanese cosmology, such disasters may be interpreted as a sign of imbalance in nature.

In this context, it is useful to discuss briefly the documentary film entitled “Samin vs. Semen” made by Watchdoc (Watchdoc Production House) and produced by Dandhy Laksono55. This film advocated for Saminists and peasant communities to defend their land against industrialization through cement production and, in general, against the capitalist world order. The purpose of this film was to promote the campaign against the cement corporation and it was considered the most influential outcome of the environmental Samin movement. After it was aired, members of the movement received many invitations at the

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55 Dandhy Laksono is a journalist who had experience in radio and television. He worked in SCTV and RCTI (Indonesian television). When fired from both due to differences of opinion, he established his own corporation called Watchdoc (Watchdoc Production House) in 2009, stating he was unsatisfied with television broadcasting in Indonesia because it only served the capitalist system. As CEO, he ran Ekspedisi Indonesia Biru and made many other social, political economic critiques of relations between the local and national levels of Indonesian society and the globalized world. A graduate from the International Relations Department in Universitas Padjadjaran, he has had many achievements both at the national and international level. He has also published books regarding his journalistic experience. See [http://www.wideinfo.org/watch/E1E9D0wzJ3s.htm](http://www.wideinfo.org/watch/E1E9D0wzJ3s.htm), [https://vimeo.com/1650-07-17/majalah/artikel.php?pin=23&id=163570](https://vimeo.com/1650-07-17/majalah/artikel.php?pin=23&id=163570), [http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/asia-pacific/indonesia/85771-review-samin-vs-semen](http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/asia-pacific/indonesia/85771-review-samin-vs-semen), [http://www.dw.com/id/samin-vs-semen-diputar-di-10-kota-di-jerman/a-38652664](http://www.dw.com/id/samin-vs-semen-diputar-di-10-kota-di-jerman/a-38652664), [http://watchdoc.co.id/2015/01/ekspedisi-indonesia-biru-official-trailer/](http://watchdoc.co.id/2015/01/ekspedisi-indonesia-biru-official-trailer/), [http://arsip.gatra.com/1650-07-17/majalah/artikel.php?pin=23&id=163570](http://arsip.gatra.com/1650-07-17/majalah/artikel.php?pin=23&id=163570), accessed on 10/07/2017.
national and international levels to further elaborate on the impact of environmental
destruction on the Samin and other peasant communities. This movie greatly increased the
interest of the media as well as academics.

Dandhy Laksono believed that Samin’s teachings brought wisdom in life by
challenging corporations in the context of the capitalist world system. In other words, as a
resurgence of local wisdom, these teachings can offer an alternative solution to deal with
the capitalist system. During his film presentation in Germany, he mentioned his intention
to apply social and political pressure on the German as well as the Indonesian government
to stop environmental exploitation, especially in Mount Kendeng (Welle, 2017b). The film
was significant in provoking the national and international public to support environmental
activism, peasants’ livelihood, and the Saminist’s worldview in challenging modernity.

Most importantly, it provided an important moment for everyone to speak and for the
under-represented voice of the weak to be heard in public discussion. In German online
and local newspapers, Gunarti, Gunrato’s sister, was called an activist of an Indonesian
citizens’ movement, JMPPK, and a member of the Saminist group. Her appeal to defend
the peasants’ livelihood in her area was well publicized (Altmeyer, 2017). The film was
effective in drawing German public attention in order to get more support to challenge the
cement corporation (Asian News Monitor, 2017; Crosby, 2009; Dittmer, 2017; Gunarti,
2017; Kern, 2017; Knight, 2017; KNPA, 2016; RainforestRescue, 2017; Sakasi, 2017a,
2017b; Walden, 2017; Welle, 2017a; Yulius, 2016).

This film presented the success story of the Saminist community struggle in Pati
which was highlighted to shape the campaign strategy in the Rembang dispute. Promoting
the environmentalist discourse and including the idea of romanticizing nature in the past,
the argument of the film was that industrialization threatened the environment, including
the land, agricultural livelihoods, the variety of species, and the water sources around
Mount Kendeng. By using drones, the film showed the cruelty of the cement industry in exploiting nature. It started with women protesting in Gunem, Rembang where the police tried to drive them away from the Semen Indonesia factory. At the end of the film, there was an interview with an old man in Tuban who recalled his memories of cement industrialization in the Suharto era.

Gunretno and Gunarti were the film’s main characters, which explained the label of “Samin” in the title, while others included Joko Prianto (JMPPK, Rembang). In one scene taken at night in Sukolilo, Gunretno romanticized the past (trajectivum) by reminiscing about the Samin movement. Many other scenes focus on Gunretno’s\(^{56}\) and Gunarti’s\(^{57}\) criticism against the cement corporation (PT SMS/ PT Indocement Tunggal Prakarsa Tbk, part of a German corporation, the HeidelbergCement (HC) group) and the Indonesian government, especially on their lack of rights to citizenship. They referred also to Saminists’ education\(^{58}\), an artistic performance held by Gunretno, and Samin identity\(^{59}\).

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\(^{56}\) Gunretno argued that as Java had the highest population density in Indonesia, the government and the corporation should find another place with a lower population density, such as Irian Jaya (West Papua). Gunretno had interviews with some people in Tuban who gave up their lands to a cement firm twenty years ago. In these, the people explained that they had been in fear of the Suharto regime and were forced to sell. In the dry season, the area was polluted by the dust from the cement factory. Even though there were green belts (with trees as air filters), the pollution was still dangerous for humans and the environment. One respondent claimed that the corporation and the Indonesian government did not keep their promises. They said they did not have a ‘weapon’ to fight for their rights to live properly and so they accepted their fate. Gunretno emphasized that he resisted the cement corporation in Central Java because East and West Java had already been damaged. He called on ‘our brothers’ (a typical term for Javanese: sedulur-sedulur) to not sell and to learn from this earlier experience, stating that the land should be passed down from generation to generation.

\(^{57}\) Gunarti came to each village, met with people and warned them about the danger of the cement corporation, reminding them not to sell and asking them to stick together in defending Mount Kendeng because the money would be quickly spent while otherwise, it would remain for the next generation. She encouraged them with the example of PT Semen Gresik’s withdrawal from Pati in 2009. She argued that since their ancestors’ time, they only needed land, water, and food, not cement and it was better to have a cement crisis rather than a food crisis. Other Saminists supported this by stating the Saminist could not live without their agricultural livelihoods and that the land was hereditary. Muslim representatives also spoke directing all Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) members and followers to ask for support in their struggles and not be tempted to be divided by money and wealth.

\(^{58}\) Gunarti explained that she taught her children on her own and that formal (modern) education contributed to the negative impact on social and cultural relations because it only educated people to delude and control one another instead of trying to understand morality; to manipulate one another instead of sharing; to make a fool of one another instead of helping each other. The Saminists home school because they do not need status or a career. She emphasized that the Saminist educational custom does not make people smarter (pinter), but makes people understand each other, adding that if people became smarter (pinter), they would delude or trick (minteri) one another.

\(^{59}\) Gunarti showed her national ID card in which the religion column was left blank and added that previously it had the word Islam. She had insisted her religion be written on her ID card but after a long debate with officers in the Kecamatan (subdistrict), they were the ones who decided what to write, not her. All Saminists’ ID cards in Pati issued after 2013 have the religion column left blank.
The environmental Samin movement led by Gunretno and Gunarti and their film production provoked a refutation from the majority of the Samin community. First, in Pati, Kudus, and Blora, the Samin community protested against the misrepresentation of their beliefs by the environmental Samin movement. They claimed that the Samin teachings’ reputation was suffering because of the negative image projected by the environmental Samin movement. In my conversations with some Saminists in Kudus and Pati, at that time, it was a common belief that while some were trying to cooperate with the Indonesian government concerning the acknowledgment of their religion and the development of cultural tourism, the environmental Samin activists downgraded the community’s image (Anonymous 5, 21 November, 2015). Many Saminists had already protested to Gunretno and his followers directly and through the media and even reported them to the provincial government. From their perspective, these environmentalists ruined relations between the Saminists and the government while other Saminist groups were willing to engage with the government. This left a question for the Indonesian government: which group were the real Saminists?

Gunretno argued that he did not use Samin symbols for the JMPPK organization for political gain. This was problematic, since he could not deny that his movement claimed to be based on the Samin tradition’s teachings. He told them that his movement was his own interpretation of Samin’s teachings (Anonymous 1, 1 November, 2015) and a new transformation of the earlier Samin movement. He quoted the last Saminist teaching leader (from the third generation of Samin Surosentiko’s progeny) who had passed away in Pati in 2009. This leader was also remembered to have opposed industrialization in Java and Gunretno stated he was continuing this tradition. It is irrefutable that Samin’s teachings have an important role in resisting the cement exploitation in Java, although with a new and contemporary interpretation.
Apart from concerns about their reputation and relations with the government, a second issue was the use of Samin symbols for materialistic purposes. The majority of the Saminists argued that Gunretno took advantage of his Saminist identity to enrich himself, which betrayed the most profound of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings. After Gunretno became famous and his relations with NGOs intensified, the majority of Saminists started to question his increasing wealth and property, which they presumed came illegitimately from donors although this was difficult to prove. He owned a large house, his paddy fields had expanded, he travelled regularly, and had entertained luxuriously with a wayang performance. All of this amounted to much more than he had inherited.

There was also a case where a donor asked other Saminists whether they accepted the money channelled via Gunretno to which they replied they had not received any. This issue is still a controversial narrative in Pati. The donor said that the organization had already given the money to Gunretno but he denied this. My purpose here is not to establish which side of the story was the truth, but to recognize that this story has become part of everyday conversation among Saminists in Pati. Simply put, the evidence points to various stories and contradictions among the Saminists. The majority perceive Gunretno’s movement as not truly implementing Samin’s teachings but this a hidden narrative, kept away from the public sphere.

Third, there is the issue of representation. The majority of Saminists felt that they had been treated unjustly by Gunretno’s environmental movement as he had portrayed himself as the leader of the entire Saminist community, whereas in fact, he did not represent them. Moreover, his sister, Gunarti, had found a place as a leader of Saminists in AMAN (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara, the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago) which they considered to be wrong because there was no leader in the Samin community.
It is also argued by Amrih Widodo, a very good friend of Gunretno and Gunarti (ANU, Canberra, 15 September, 2018) that the Samin community is not an adat or indigenous community. Widodo argues that the AMAN movement is a social political movement and that Gunarti was a political choice for appointment to a senior position. She had assumed a position in DAMANNAS (the Council of AMAN at the national level) from 2014 to 2017 (RT, 2017; Titi, 2014; AMAN, 2015). As I have confirmed from many Saminists in Pati, Kudus, and Blora, both of these young Saminists acted to represent the entire Samin communities without the permission of all Saminists. Some of them felt backstabbed by Gunretno’s movement in the sense that he was using the Samin name for his own interests.

Most importantly, Gunretno learned about the history of Samin Surosentiko and his teachings from the elders’ collective memories. According to one of the most prominent elder figures in Blora (not a leader, but a charismatic and well-respected teacher of Javanese tradition), Gunretno came often to him to learn this history and teachings (Discussion 8, 21 & 22 April, 2016). This happened well before Gunretno became busy with his activism. The elder expressed disappointment in Gunretno’s attitude and actions, which was considered to show disrespect (Discussion 8, 21 & 22 April, 2016).

Fourth is the issue of consistency in upholding the Samin’s principles. Similar to the majority, Budi Santoso, who advocated for official recognition of the Adam religion, stated that the real Saminists should disregard issues that were not related to their belongings as this provides the basis for living in harmony. In his words, “the Saminists know their belongings” (“wong Samin weruh take dewe”). According to this principle, Budi Santoso argued that nature, especially Mount Kendeng, had its own defence mechanism and means...
of ‘rebellion’. Nature would fight back when someone tried to destroy it, for example, through a natural disaster. It was his view that nature had its own law.

Moreover, the general Saminist perspective is that Mount Kendeng belongs to the government which administers the land. While the government supports cement corporations based on laws and regulations, such as environmental impact assessments and other mechanisms, the cement corporation has environmental recovery mechanisms in their project planning using modern technology. This has become a standard for mining exploration. Thus the environmental Samin movement was considered misguided.

Fifth is the issue of civil disobedience and confrontation. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Samin Surosentiko initially disobeyed the Dutch colonial rulers because he was protecting his own belongings, his agricultural products and cows, after which his action was followed by other Javanese people. Budi Santoso thus argued that Samin Surosentiko did not mobilize people to rebel and there is no demonstration of this in Samin’s teaching. In this sense, Samin Surosentiko did not protest on the street against the colonial government the way that Gandhi did.

Accordingly, the Saminists are not what Western scholars perceive as a social movements (as argued in Chapter 1). The Samin movement is more sporadic, unorganized, and directed by rasa. It cannot be compared to either Gandhi’s nonviolent resistance or Islamic peasant protest movements in Java (Kartodirdjo, 1966).

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Samin movement was sporadic. A group of people named Samin Surosentiko as their source of inspiration to rebel against the Dutch colonialists although Samin Surosentiko himself did not have any intention to rebel or fight against these colonialists. This is illustrated by a story offered by one of Saminist informants (Anonymous 2, 28 November, 2015). While Samin Surosentiko was working as a servant and labourer on teak trees in the forest, all he wanted was to be free. Even as he
worked in this Dutch controlled environment, he did whatever he liked, which often made
the Dutch irritated. When the Dutch officer asked him to cut a teak tree (*jati*) he cut one
and carried it by himself, placing it wherever he liked, which made the officer outraged.

Based on this story and Samin’s teachings as presented in Chapter 2, the
demonstrations of the Saminist environmentalists were irrelevant to the profound meaning
of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings, in which Samin focused on the Javanese ethical
teachings. These teachings are spiritually profound. They do not merely focus on an
engagement with rituals, superstitions, mythology, and symbols in the way the
environmental Samin movement has done recently in their demonstration challenging the
cement corporations and the Indonesian government. This is why most Saminists protested
against the Saminist environmental movement.

Sixth is the issue of Gunretno’s personality, skill, and charisma. According to my
fieldwork observations, for a farmer, Gunretno’s hands are too soft and he must scarcely
have worked in the paddy fields. It was common for Saminists to work outside Pati or even
outside Java in a mining company or as a construction labour. Before Gunretno became
famous, he was once a labourer and a driver in a mining factory in Kalimantan. After he
came back to Pati, he helped to found a peasant organization called KTM (Kelompok Tani
Maju/Progressive Farmer Group). In this organization, his career developed and his skill
attracted researchers and NGOs, making him a ‘hub’ of NGOs and research projects. Due
to his personality, skill, and charm, he drew attention from foundations which gave him the
task to circulate funds. The NGOs and researchers tend to defend him unreservedly
because he has their trust and has become a symbol representing the ‘enlightenment’ of
social movements in Indonesia, or, as some people say, the agents of change.

In order to challenge the messages in the film “Samin vs. Semen” and Gunretno’s
‘brand’ in the Samin community, some intellectuals in Pati and the majority of Saminists
in Kudus and Pati produced their own film entitled “Si kep Samin Semen” (Sekep Samin Cement) in the same year (2015). This film was full of facts and figures about the Samin community and it refuted Gunretno’s movement. The narrative started at Budi Santoso’s house in Kudus and continued to Pati, Blora, and Bojonegoro.

In contrast to Gunretno’s approach, this film showed the Samin Javanese’s way of life and spirituality, known as the religion of Adam. This film sent the message that the environmental movement did not represent all Saminist communities, but only a small number of them. Although Gunretno himself did not claim his movement as representative of all Saminists, this is how it has been perceived by some outsiders. The point was made that the potential location in 2006 for Semen Indonesia’s factory in Kecamatan Sukolilo was not owned by the Saminists. As for the 2010 cases in Kecamatan Kayen and Kecamatan Tambakromo, this land was even further from the Samin community.

In a scene at Budi’s house, some Saminists argued that the documentary “Samin vs. Semen” misled the public and that no Saminists participated in the film except Gunretno’s close relatives. They argued that Gunretno’s movement blemished the Samin’s teachings, expressing disappointment that women in hijabs (veils) played the part of Saminist females as this is contrary to Saminist tradition. Budi also stated that since Indonesia’s formation as a nation state, the Saminists have been living in difficult circumstances but that life was improving during this Reformasi (reformation) era. Budi and these Saminists were afraid that relations would worsen with the Indonesian government due to Gunretno’s work and that they would again be treated to oppression as had occurred in Suharto’s regime (see Chapter 4).

In the film, addressing two young Saminist men, Budi said that Samin Surosentiko had a hope or wish (gegayuhan) that needed to be achieved and that the next generation should adjust to their time and place without losing the direction of Samin’s teachings
(“anak putu kudune Medun lakune: mapah gedang, nggeni mbrabut, mbayu suket”). In other words, that the young generation should contextualize Samin’s teachings and contribute to Indonesia as a nation state (not run by any particular government). Budi explained that nation states on a large scale meant the institution of the government and on a small scale the institution of the family. He added that the Saminists would not get anything from the struggle against the cement corporation except a poor image, which would make things worse. There was an expectation that the government could discriminate against and disempower all Saminists due to the actions of some, namely Gunretno and his followers.

A question arose: Should young Saminists oppose the Indonesian government’s policy on industrialization or should they support it? In the film, these two young Saminists were then asked to travel far and wide in Samin communities to verify the Samin teachings. They found that the teachings of harmony (rukun), togetherness (sedulur) and respect for each other were more important principles than defending something (even if this is land or the environment) that were not his or her belongings.

Even though the majority of the Saminists were critical, they let Gunretno conduct his movement because there is no single interpretation of Samin teachings and every Saminist has his or her right to act in his or her own way and would reap the benefit or otherwise of their deeds. For most Saminists, if someone misuses the name of Samin and its attributes for his own interests, they will say “sa butuhe.” This means “let the circumstance determine his/her action”. It is in line with the Islamic teachings in Sura al Isra: 7, “If you do a good thing, you do a good thing for yourselves; and if you do evil, [you do it] to yourselves.” In Hindu and Buddhist religions, this is called karma (Mumfangati, 2004, p. 25). For the Javanese, the ethical practice within rasa is the most
important principle in life. The idea of *sa butuhe* leads to appropriate behaviour according to nature or the circumstance.

In this second film, many young Saminists argued that Gunretno’s version of the Samin in the first film was too showy, with too much action, and too much public performance ("ngumbar suara, ngumbar tumindak, ngumbar tatanan"). The consensus was that the Saminists should distance themselves from the outside world and that the Samin way of life is about humility and being contented with ‘enough’ of everything. Therefore, they should know their limits, which is defined by what they own and what they do not. Another comment was that as Samin teachings advocated harmony and brotherhood (*sedulur*), the logic of opposition in “Samin vs. Semen” was irrelevant.

The film’s narrative continues as the two younger Samin visit other elders outside Pati. Another Saminist in Karapace, Klopodhuwur, Blora informed them that Gunretno and Amrih Widodo came to his place to ask for his support against the cement corporation. This was not given as it was presumed that this movement was a means to make money from NGOs. A similar visit by the two happened in Tanduran, Kedungtuban, Blora to Mbah Sariman, a Saminist elder, who stated that he had rejected their request (also confirmed by Amrih Widodo, 15 September, 2018).

Mbah Sariman’s view was also presented in the film. He stated that Gunretno’s movement was unrelated to Samin Surosentiko’s teachings, even going so far as to say that it betrayed them. He concluded that at the centre of the Samin way of life was “*sa lugune*” (purity like the hearts of children). Mbah Sariman also questioned Gunarti’s status and intentions in AMAN and the two siblings’ travel activities, adding that the life of the Saminists was in the paddy fields and not ‘travelling around’ to deal with other people’s problems.

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61 First, the Saminist should not *drengki srei* (envy), *dahwen* (do not accuse), *panesten* (jelous), *kemeren* (do not be malicious). The heart should be pure from the poison of lust, desire, or bad intention. Second, do not *nyio marang sepodo*, meaning do not hurt anyone; be polite and kind to one another. See Chapter III
The documentary then moved to a location not far from Mbah Sariman’s house, where another Saminist commented, stating that the Saminists should not hurt others if they did not want to be hurt and that all human beings were equal. Therefore respecting one another is a must. The sentiment was expressed that the Samin’s teaching teaches *sabar lan nrimo* (patience and acceptance) as well as *ngalah lan ngalihi* (the extreme act of patience). To endure pain without any complaint involves mastery of the self with sincerity, in order to gain future benefit. The demonstration was therefore seen as Gunretno’s betrayal of these values because he created a confrontation that contradicted patience and ‘stepping aside’ (*ngalah* and *ngalihi*). During the colonial era, this principle was manifested peacefully by pretending to be ignorant, ‘innocent’ or ‘stupid’ (*mbodo*) and moving further into the forest.

The last Saminist elder to be visited in the film was Mbah Harjo Kardi from Jipang, Margomulyo, Bojonegoro who explained to the two young Saminists that, in contrast to demonstration, Samin teachings involved the practice of harmony (*rukun*), working in the paddy fields, and helping one another with a sincere heart (*gotong royong*). His view was that “Samin vs. Semen” disgraced the entire Saminist communities and that it was simplistic and did not do justice to the truth (*Nek ngomong aja waton ngomong, nek ngomong aja nganggo waton*). Mbah Harjo Kardi, who was one of the elders Gunretno used to visit to learn of the Samin teachings, commented that the most important principle was never to come to non-Saminists to request something. It should be the other way around. Usually, government officials and political candidates visit the Saminist elders, to have their blessing, get advice and maintain brotherhood. The documentary ended on this powerful note.

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62 *Ngalah lan ngalihi* is a highly spiritual activity. It is to accept loss and endure pain in order to master the self. It is a journey to very deep knowledge which many religions understand as a journey to God. Literally, *ngalah* means to let the opponent win; *ngalihi* does not hold the literal meaning of to step aside from the opponent. Its deeper connotation is to discipline the self through a deep spiritual journey in order to gain harmony and peace.
The Debate between Proponents and Opponents of the Environmental Samin Movement

Many scholars (lecturers, intellectuals, activists, and researchers) have attempted to define the Samin movement. Maarif viewed it as an ecologically based political movement or adat ecology movement (Maarif, 2017). Some feminists frame it as an ecologically oriented feminist movement (Candraningrum, 2014; Dhewy, 2016; Soegijapranata, 2016; Sigit, 2017). The Saminists provide an open opportunity to anti-globalization movements in Indonesia to challenge modern capitalism.

The definition of Saminist activism as an ecological movement has mostly been promoted via social media (Facebook, Twitter, and others) through videos and articles by many NGOs, activists and media, such as KPA (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria/Consortium of Agrarian Reform), WALHI (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia/Indonesian Forum for the Environment), LBH (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum/institution of Legal Aid), AMAN (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara/Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago) with its media (Mongabay), Watchdoc and Indonesia Biru, Satunama, and the Sajogyo Institute (KNPA, 2016; Sigit, 2017), Islam Bergerak/Progresif (Progressive Islam), Komnas HAM (Human Rights Commission) and Komnas Perempuan (Women’s Commission) (Nandarson, 2017) and Kompas (Kompas, 18 March, 2017). Thus, it seems the movement succeeded in gathering support from most of the relevant organizations and the media to force the Indonesian government and cement corporations to revoke their plan to industrialize Central Java.

On the other hand, the corporations and the government argued that they would ensure a sustainable environment. Semen Indonesia had gained a prestigious award in managing the environment in 2015 and 2016 (Setiawan, Kompas, 20 May, 2017). In 2017, through Minister’s Decree No. 2537/42/MEM.S/2017, the government confirmed that
there was no water in the Watuputih groundwater basin. This decree provided a further legal basis to execute the cement corporation plan (Aditya, Solo Pos, 30 March, 2017; Ihsanuddin, Kompas, 30 March, 2017; Sudrajat, Antaranews, 31 March, 2017). In contrast, JMPPK argued there was a considerable amount of water in the Watuputih groundwater basin, which had been empirically proven in the field (JMPPK, 31 March 2017). The last government record reviewed was that the KLHS (strategic environmental assessment) had announced a moratorium of operations for twenty-two cement corporations (Masduki, President Staff Office (Kantor Staf Presiden), 12 April, 2017; Rahayu, Detik.com, 12 April, 2017).

From the corporation’s perspective, it was argued that they would not jeopardize their reputation and especially their shares as a public company in the stock market by degrading the environment (anonymous Semen Indonesia representative, 15 December 2015). They had met difficulties in exploring karst in Central Java although obeying the regulations set by the Indonesian government, including providing the planning for a project to restore the environment and protect the local population. What happened in Rembang was similar to the case in Pati. For example, on 12 August, 2010, Alexander Frans, the director of PT Sahabat Mulia Sakti came to Gunretno’s house to resolve the problem, but Gunretno entirely rejected any compromise (the representative of Semen Indonesia, 15 December 2015; Omah Kendeng, 2011; Novianto, 2016, p. 203-204). Semen Indonesia had to bear a loss on the implementation of the pre-production phase as the whole Rembang project was cancelled (Semen Indonesia, 2017). In addition, there are disputes among the staff of some influential universities in Indonesia on whether the operation of the cement factory would damage the nearby population’s agricultural
livelihood and ecosystem or not. This debate has also widened to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

In conclusion, the debate between the Saminist environmental movement and the majority of Saminists was based on different interpretations of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings. The environmentalist group focused on the protection of an agricultural way of life while most Saminists focused on their Javanese worldview which included being lugu (pure) through a humble and ascetic life. The Saminist environmental movement contradicted the intentions of most Saminists who were trying to improve their image as a community for what they saw as a more significant purpose, that is, the recognition of the Adam religion. Meanwhile, the Saminist environmentalists argued that through this movement they would get that recognition. The environmental movement had many scholars as advocates, while the majority of Saminists had very few as they did not actively involve themselves in movements. Every community faces fragmentation or friction when there is a conflict over natural resources due to industrialization and this involves agents such as NGOs, scholars, and activists who oppose the uncontained effects of globalization.

The process of making and remaking culture and identity lies between tradition and modernism. Both the Saminist environmental movement and the rest of the Saminists keep adjusting to the context of the day, trying to survive in the tension between tradition and modernism, concepts which for them are decompartmentalized. Therefore, Samin’s teachings in principle remain the same, but are open to interpretations relying on rasa, mind, memories, discourse, symbols and practices.

63 For example, there is a debate between ITB’s (Institut Teknologi Bandung/Bandung Institute of Technology) natural scientists and UGM’s (Gadjah Mada University) scholars, all of whom support the cement corporation versus IPB’s (Institut Pertanian Bogor/Bogor Institute of Agriculture) and UPN’s (Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Yogyakarta) natural scientists. (Arif, 2014; “Kenapa pabrik semen di Rembang menuai kontroversi?,” 2015; Pranowo, 21/03/2017; Teguh, 14/12/2015). Both groups provide robust data and arguments (Putri, 21/04/2015).
The Religious Samin Movement

Saminists who are concerned about religion argued that the Indonesian government has yet to provide full citizenship rights to Saminists by recognizing their Adam religion, which affects their rights to education and social recognition. This issue is seen by many Saminists as more urgent compared to the environmental issue. The official recognition of indigenous religions has been the subject of a protracted campaign in many cultures throughout the world (Mayo, 2006), such as the Maori in New Zealand (Harawira, 2005; McIntosh, 2005 & 2014; Andrae, McIntosh, Coster, 2017) and the Chiapas in Mexico (Speed, 2010). In Indonesia, cases include Sunda Wiwitan/Madraisism in Kuningan, West Java (Mutaqin, 2014), Adat Wet Semokan in Bayan North Lombok, Dayak Pitap in Kalimantan, and Wana people in Central Sulawesi (Budiman, 2005).

During the post Suharto era, when people could freely express their thinking and strive for their rights and dignity, NGOs (such as Satunama and ELSA) have advocated for this movement, of which Budi Santoso is one of the leaders. The religious Saminist movement has engaged with the central and provincial governments. At the national level, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of the most prominent Islamic organizations, advocated for promoting the Saminists’ rights as Indonesian citizens. As I discussed with Budi Santoso (a Saminist) during my field research, NU was very helpful to create a bridge between the Saminists and the Indonesian government at the national level. An online media agency, Tirto, in an interview with the leader of Lakpesdam NU, Rumadi Ahmad (11 November, 2017), explained that NU had advocated for Penghayat Kepercayaan ((indigenous faith/native faith followers, including Saminists) and will do so until Penghayat Kepercayaan is afforded the status of a religion by the Indonesian government.
As Erdianto reported (Kompas, 12 June, 2017), the Constitutional Court of Indonesia\textsuperscript{64} accepted the judicial review of Penghayat Kepercayaan on Articles 61 (1) and (2) and Articles 64 (1) and (5) of Law No.24/2013 on Demographic Administration. This law was a revision of Law No. 23/2006 on Demographic Administration and the particular articles regulated the provision for leaving empty the religious column in the ID and family registration cards. In Penghayat Kepercayaan’s ID cards, this was then considered discriminatory. Justice Saldi Isra and Arief Hidayat agreed that the disputed articles provided no legal certainty and violated principles of equal justice for all Indonesian citizens as they created difficulties in marriage registration, accessing civil administration services, and obtaining equal rights on e-ID and family registration cards for Penghayat Kepercayaan.

It was suggested that in the religion column “Penghayat Kepercayaan” could be written, without detailing the name of the respective native faith. To implement this policy, the Ministry of Home Affairs would coordinate with the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Education (Kompas, 12 June, 2017) to reconcile the data on penghayat. According to the Ministry of Culture and Education, there were about 1,200 native faith groups with at least 12 million followers across the Muslim majority country in 2016 (Erdianto, Kompas, 12 June, 2017; Johnson, Library of Congress, 17 November, 2017; BBC News, 7 November, 2017 Sapiie, The Jakarta Post, 7 November, 2017).

This decision was welcomed by Penghayat Kepercayaan groups since they had been discriminated against and also associated with tribal people who embraced ‘uncivilized’ beliefs (Erdianto, Kompas, 12 June, 2017; Prasetya, Merdeka, 9 November, 2017; Rompies, The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 November, 2017). However, the Saminists were

\textsuperscript{64} The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia (Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia) is part of judicial branch of the Indonesian government. The primary role is to review the constitutionality of regulations and processes under the Constitution. It also has administrative law functions such as ruling on competence disputes between governmental entities, giving final decisions on impeachments, and making judgments on the dissolution of political parties.
less satisfied because they insisted that their religion was not “Penghayat Kepercayaan” (a native faith) but “Agama Leluhur” (a religion of their ancestors) (Interview with Budi Santoso, 8 December, 2017).

In contrast to NU’s position, Muhammadiyah, the other prominent Islamic organization, was ambivalent about this decision and its execution. On one hand, Muhammadiyah accepted the decision at an official meeting with the Indonesian government at which Muhammadiyah welcomed the recognition of ‘native faith’ followers so that they could obtain equal rights with the other six recognized religions (Sahroji, okezone.com, 11 November, 2017). The Secretary-General of Muhammadiyah, Abdul Mu’ti said the Constitutional Court’s decision had boosted efforts to provide legal certainty for the country’s followers of indigenous faiths, many of whom had had their rights denied in the past. He suggested that the government should follow up the court ruling by compiling data on the native faith followers across the country, adding “There is no need to limit native faith followers by [deciding] who is recognized or not” (Masyrafina, Republika, 7 November, 2017; Sapiie, The Jakarta Post, 10 November, 2017).

On the other hand, the day after the Constitutional Court’s decision, one of Muhammadiyah’s leaders, Professor Yunahar Ilyas, expressed his disappointment in a sermon in the College Foundation of Al Irsyad Surabaya (YPAS/Yayasan Perguruan Al Irsyad Surabaya) Mosque (The Muhamamdiyah Post, 9 November, 2017). In the following month (8 December, 2017, 21:44 WIB), he repeated this on Muhammadiyah TV. The highest leader of Muhammadiyah, Haedar Nashir, also criticized the Constitutional Court’s decision. In a sermon in the Muhammadiyah main office in Menteng, Jakarta, he stated it was subjective and its process was questionable. Yet the legal process itself does not require any consultation between the court and Islamic organizations (Afandi, Muhamamdiyah, 9 December, 2017). Another objection came from the Indonesian Ulama...
Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI) which protested that it would never accept penghayat kepercayaan (native faiths) as equal to world religions or even recognize them as religions (Kuwado, Kompas, 15 November, 2017; the Jakarta Post, 30 November 2017). In line with them, a MUI representative and former Muhammadiyah leader, Din Syamsuddin, argued that the latter were more modern, civilized and scientific (Adhi, Tirto, 24 August, 2017; Wiwoho, CNN Indonesia, 23 August, 2017). In short, many Muslim representatives argued that native faiths should be subsumed and their followers converted to Islam or other recognized religions.

There is a problem with the concept of “religion” when translated into Indonesian. The term “religion” is understood as “ad-Din” in Arabic and both are translated as “agama”. In fact, many studies indicate the concept of “religion” stems from the history of modern Western civilization and often is related with the concept of secularism (Asad, 1992, 1993; Bangstad, 2009; Brittain, 2005; Craig Brittain, 2005; Knibbe, 2011; Strenski, 2010). In contrast, the concept of “agama” comes from the Indic discourse, is related to Hindu and Buddhist teachings, and is rooted in Indonesian society. In comparison, the Arabic concept of “ad-Din” became acculturated discursively to equate with the term “agama”. The terms religion, agama, and ad-Din have a different range of meanings and contexts (Picard, 2011; Ropi, 2017).

Hefner (1998, p. 84) argued that multiple modernities provided space for any religions in the world, including heterodox religious groups. Hefner criticized the positivist view that world religions were more rational than other religions. This view was also confirmed by Arjomand (2011, p. 328) who realized there was a possibility of radical transformation by heterodox religious groups. However, in Indonesia, while the orthodox Islamic perspective is strongly political, heterodox religious movements cannot be ruled out because they embody the nature of a pluralistic society in the globalized world. The
view that world religions are superior, more rational and more civilized than native faiths is similar to some earlier Western orientalists’ discourse, which has become the target of post-colonialist criticism.

The debate continued with the leader of Muhammadiyah, Haedar Nashir, stating that Indonesia could not be jeopardized by any principle that went against Pancasila, such as secularism or liberalism (Afandi, Muhammadiyah, 9 December, 2017), by which he meant native faiths. His argument infers that Pancasila was considered different from and/or contradictory to secularism and liberalism. In fact, he was consciously or unconsciously guided by the discourse of modernization, waxing rhetorical in order to rationalize what he believed as the truth.

The first pillar of Pancasila is “the principle of One Lordship” (belief in One Supreme God) and the second is a “just and civilized humanity”, both of which are directed to the principle of respecting differences and other religious faiths (see Chapter 4). Indonesia with Pancasila can be seen as an Islamic state that uses a secular frame and bureaucracy to satisfy the orthodox majority of Muslims, whereas the historical reality is that Pancasila and the Indonesian Constitution are the result of experiencing plurality based on the principles of humanity, part of which includes acceptance of the principles of all belief systems.

Nashir generalized secularism and liberalism to involve egotistical, materialistic, hedonistic, and pragmatic lifestyles that marked a decline of morality and a tendency towards anarchy (Afandi, Muhammadiyah, 9 December, 2017). However, being a secularist does not necessarily mean to be opposed to religion nor to be an atheist. Indeed, secularism has come to have many definitions since this term was first applied after the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 which ended a war involving several European countries,
two for as long as 80 years (Spain and Holland). Liberalism has developed from secular values.

For a working definition of liberalism, based on Maclure’s (2017) study, John Rawls’ political liberalism will be reviewed. It consists of several factors: the justification of basic public norms and institutions, the non-confrontation of religions, and consolidation under conditions of reasonable moral pluralism. This type of political secularism attempts to implement a separation between religion and politics and the private and public spheres, keeping the state neutral towards religion. In the real world, there is no single country that is totally secular.

Religions such Christianity in Western countries still play an important role and, in a secular discourse, they are thought by some to be a potential threat to the authority of the state and to the idea of citizenship. In France, the practice of political secularism is considered severe (laïcité) while in the UK, a less secular discourse was implemented due to the Anglican Church’s historical role in British politics (Maclure, 2017). In addition, the practice of secularism in non-Western countries such as India (Roover, 2015) and Indonesia (Salim, 2008) is also controversial.

Western academics are similarly divided on the discourse of secularism and religion. For example, Steinvorth defined secularization as the rationalization of religion that involves a changing perception of what is absolute in the world. In contrast, Taylor believed that traditional religion was compatible with the scientific (secular) picture of the world. Kant held that God could be replaced by practical reason with its categorical imperative approach and Nietzsche claimed that God could be replaced by the will to truth and power as the absolute (Tomaszewska & Hämäläinen, 2017, p. 12). In short, the meaning of secularism depends on one’s intention in using the term.
Nashir (Afandi, *Muhammadiyah*, 9 December, 2017) intended to blame Western values in order to justify his rejection of the native faiths in Indonesia, which I argue is unwise. More importantly, if we frame the term “secularism” in the logic of *laïcité*, then native faith or any religion as well as religious symbols and inspiration will not be allowed to exist in the country. In contrast, in the United States, a native faith or any religion is recognized. Pancasila and the Indonesian Constitution are not framed by a secular and liberal ideology but were formed in the spirit of Indonesian nation building (Darmaputera, 1982). Therefore, according to this logic, Nashir’s argument is religiously biased and too simplistic.

As with secularism, the idea of liberalism is very complex. Macintyre (2007) argued that the dominant form of liberalism in the Western countries does not reflect proper liberalism per se. As an Aristotelian defender, Macintyre criticized the project of enlightenment and Nietzschean critics of enlightenment in terms of the practical moral values of liberalism. He argued that liberalism was a product of the metaphysical abstraction of enlightenment (Hume, Kant, and Mill) and more useful as a political vehicle rather than for practical moral values. Macintyre conceived that the rules of morality and law were not about the abstraction of what a good life was for human beings or some prior justification of rules, but practical, compassionate and experiential morality, and the law (2007, p. 119).

Both Rosenstock-Huessy (2017) and Macintyre (2007) criticized the idea of modernity or enlightenment which was based on individualistic abstraction, including liberalism or idealistic values. They highlighted the historical experience of the community and the larger society, which constructed their moral code of conduct instead of any individual teleological abstraction such as Kant’s and Hegel’s work. Thus in relation to Nashir’s rhetorical speech, the discourse of secularism and liberalism and their practice are
profound, complicated and contextual in the narrative historical discourse of Western European countries. In that case, we cannot easily reduce the values of Pancasila and the Indonesian Constitution to secularism and liberalism.

Secularism and liberalism involve the principles of respect, tolerance, multiculturalism, equality, liberation, and the like (Altman, 2011; Appiah, 2007; Archibugi, 2011; Barton, 2010; Beatriz, 2008; Beck, 2014; Douzinas, 2007; Held, 1992; Lilla, 2008; Tibi, 2014; Yu, 2014). Accordingly, in both Haedar’s and Yunahar’s rhetorical speeches, there is a generalization about Western civilization and values, and in particular the concepts of secularism and liberalism. They also neglect the fact that Pancasila and Islam also share the same values and principles, such as God, humanity, nationalism, democracy, and justice (Darmaputera, 1982, 1988; Densmoor, 2013; Ismail, 1995; Ramage, 1995; Sukarno, 1989, 2000, 2001; Titaley, 1991; Yudi, 2012).

To respect native faiths, it is essential to consider the values of the equal basic rights of human beings and freedom of religion, in order to live in justice and harmony. In addition, if Muhammadiyah and MUI were suspicious that the proponents of the native faiths had been secularized, liberalized, and westernized, they were completely misguided in terms of the heterodox Islamic view which supported respecting the rights of other Indonesian citizens to be treated equally.

The Saminist religious movement in the post Suharto era, especially in Joko Widodo’s administration, has received an opportunity to practice freedom of religion. The Indonesian government, the judiciary, NU, and some NGOs support the native faiths being recognized as equal to the world religions. The nationalist groups, NU, and NGOs have supported minority groups gaining full Indonesian citizenship. With disagreement from Muhammadiyah, MUI, and some other orthodox Islamic groups, this decision concerning citizenship is yet to be implemented. These groups face a dilemma: how to sustain a
coherent worldview and steady social engagement while acknowledging the plurality of Indonesian society.

Relevant here is Hefner’s (2014) argument that contemporary Muslims confront two important internal discourses: on one hand, discourses that long were associated with Islamic ethics and law and on the other, a normative tradition (Islamic ethics and law) which has been selectively transformed in the face of modern plurality by Muslims’ internal debate on their interpretation. He accepted the idea of “radical reform” proposed by Tariq Ramadan that Muslims needed to radically reinterpret their understanding in order to tackle the contemporary challenges of a pluralistic society. In this context, I argue that NU is, to some degree, more responsive to the idea of a pluralistic society compared to Muhammadiyah and MUI. In the current situation of a pluralistic society, the native faiths, including the Samin communities, are still waiting for the administrative institutions to execute the new revision of the national law. Even though, some orthodox Islamic groups and heterodox Islam collide with each other in the pluralistic society of Indonesia, cultures keep transforming into a different collective identity.

The Cultural Tourism Issue

The Indonesian government engaged the native faiths, including the Samin community in Blora, to promote cultural tourism as part of in their region’s tourism attractions. This formed a part of the government’s effort to manifest the Indonesian principle of unity in diversity, framing and commodifying the Samin community as a mode of the production of culture to support Indonesia’s economic development projects. The Ministry of Tourism, through its local government’s office in the region, played a significant role in engaging with the native faiths, in this case, the Saminists in Blora. The Tourism Office promoted the Samin community’s culture and history by presenting it as cultural heritage (cagar
budaya), assisting the community to preserve their tradition and to find new ways to promote it.

The Samin cultural tourism movement was promoted by Mbah Lasio, a Saminist descendant of Mbah Engkreke65, living in Karangpace, Klopoduwur Village, Banjarejo Sub-District, Blora Regency and Mbah Pramugi Prawiro Wijoyo, living in Blimbing, Sambongrejo Village, Sambong Sub-District, in the same regency. This movement framed the Samin community in terms of ‘custom’ (adat) instead of religion (faith). Contrary to the environmental and religious movements, Mbah Lasio and Mbah Pramugi engaged with modernity in political, economic and sociocultural dimensions. They cooperated with the Blora Local Government through the Transportation, Tourism, Culture, Communication and Information Office to publicly display the culture (adat) and the figure of Samin Surosentiko (Humas Protocol Setda Blora, 23 November, 2017; Hendrawan, 28 November, 2017).

For example, at the total solar eclipse in 9 March, 2016, Mbah Lasio conducted a tirakatan66 the whole night that could be publicly watched. This community meditation ritual was done to achieve peace, harmony, protection of their paddy fields, and wellbeing. In this unique ritual, they spread ashes from the kitchen (awu pawon) onto their houses. At another location, Mbah Pramugi conducted a different tirakat ritual called klotekan lesung67, that consisted of Saminist women pounding rice on huge lesung (mortars) to make rice flour for cooking bubur merah putih (porridge from white and brown rice) while singing along to the sounds of their alu (pestles) (Kabupaten Blora, 22 November, 2017; Supriyadi, Koran Muria, 8 March, 2016). This klotekan lesung ritual is a common ancient Javanese tradition also practised, for example, in Sundanese Java (West Java). This is also

65 Mbah Engkreke was a close friend of Samin Surosentiko and according to oral history, he was one of Diponegoro’s soldier who escaped from the Dutch colonial rulers in 1830s.
66 The tirakatan, a Javanese meditation ritual, was conducted collectively by the Samin community in Blora at this event.
67 Lesung is a hollowed piece of wood (carved from one log) used by Javanese women that functions like a mortar for pounding rice to separate the husk from the grain or to grind rice into flour. They use alu as pestles.
similar to the Japanese ritual of making *mochi* (Japanese rice cakes) (Kabupaten Blora, 6 November, 2017).

On 20 October 2017, in front of a study tour of foreign students (from the United States, Uganda, Malaysia, Tanzania, Vietnam, France, and other countries), Saminist women performed *klotekan lesung* and the Vice Regent of Blora also joined them to welcome the students. In President Joko Widodo’s era, tourism has been positioned as a leading sector in the national economy. Tourism has been promoted by the local government as the fastest, easiest and cheapest way to generate gross domestic product (GDP) and employment (Kabupaten Blora, 20 October 2017).

Yet cultural tourism cannot be separated from the commodification of culture. An example of commodified culture is *telasan suran* in Mbah Lasio’s place, Karangpace. This is a new ritual specifically conducted by the Samin Karangpace community and unknown to other Saminists. It is like a Thanksgiving celebration. There is *nasi tumpeng* (a cone-shaped yellow rice dish with side dishes of vegetables and meat) and a *wayang* (shadow puppet) performance in this *Satu Suro* ritual in the *pendopo* (meeting place, also called a *joglo*). The goal is to show gratitude to God and pray for safety, harmony and peace on the whole night of *Satu Suro* (Kabupaten Blora, 1 November, 2016). This ritual is preceded by the *tirakat laku deder* and *ngrowot* rituals and collecting water from seven *sendang* (waterholes) (Kabupaten Blora, 1 November 2016).

In order to show their support for Samin culture, the officers of the Blora government must wear the Samin traditional clothing once a month (Daryanto, 2017). Only in Blora have the Saminists received funding from the government to build a *pendopo*. The Saminists in Pati, Kudus, Bojonegoro, and Tanduran have rejected the government’s offer

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68 *Satu Suro* is the first day of the Javanese calendar year in the month of Suro, corresponding with the Islamic month of Muharram which is celebrated by traditional Javanese with various rituals.

69 During the night of *Satu Suro*, Saminists walk without sitting or resting from 08.00 pm – 03.00/04.00 am in the area surrounding Pendopo. The goal is to show their devotion to mothers.

70 Saminists avoid eating rice and salt and only consume fruit and tubers for 40 days before *Satu Suro*. 
to build such a meeting place. Meanwhile, Gunretno has a meeting place called “Omang Kendeng” which was built with NGOs funding.

Some Saminists argue that a meeting place is vital to empower the Samin community, though the majority reject this because of two reasons. First, Samin Surosentiko’s teachings did not include this tradition and instead he received donations for the empowerment of his movement. Second, having a joglo can lead to conflict among Saminists. A meeting place is a symbol of power and it may trigger a struggle for power to become a leader, which may ruin the peace and communal nature of the Samin community. Moreover, each Saminist has his own joglo (wong sikep weruh teke dhewe), their house, that needs to be cared for. In sum, there is still tension among the community on the matter of receiving gifts or donations.

Other actions initiated by the Blora government also show support for the Samin community there. These have become sources of pride for Blora people and are visual markers which tourists can easily observe. A post office was named after Samin Surosentiko (Harian Blora, 18 January, 2015). A large billboard in Blora displays Samin Surosentiko. As part of a women’s empowerment program, the Samin’s batik has also been developed with the support of the local government since 2014. On his visit to Blora, on 7 March 2015, President Joko Widodo was accompanied by the Minister of the State Secretariat, Pratikno, and the Central Java Governor, Ganjar Pranowo. President Joko Widodo directly gave financial support to the Samin community when he was there for the renovation of irrigation and houses. These dignitaries sat with members of the Samin community and discussed issues they faced, especially in agricultural concerns, while drinking from a kendi (traditional water jug made from clay) (Detik.com, 7 March 20115; InfoBlora, 3 October 2017; Antaranews, 8 March, 2015). In sum, in the Widodo era, the Samin community has been acknowledged as an asset to promote tourism and to develop
the Blora Regency as well as the Province of Central Java, a position which was never
given to them before.

In their efforts to survive, the Samin community is not foreign to additional work
outside agriculture and it is in this context that the innovative practice (for Saminists) of
producing batik must be seen. Modernity provides challenges to the culture as many have
been forced to work in the cities in labouring and street food preparation due to population
increases and competition for land. Indeed, the globalized world poses a dilemma for
Saminists in the sense of choosing between upholding the Samin principles and continuing
unrewarding agricultural work, or adapting to change to survive. Nevertheless, at the core
of their culture is a spiritual nourishment through their connection to rasa.

No discussion of the Samin tourism movement would be complete without
consideration of two studies which relate to the political economy and the commodification
of culture. The first is by Sholeh Ba’asyin (2014) in Blora, Bojonegoro, Kudus, and Pati
who found that the third and the fourth generations of Saminists had studied in formal
schools and a few in informal schools, which the current study confirms. Through this
education, the Saminists acquire sufficient capabilities to interact with the world of trading
and engage in cultural commodification while still preserving their heritage, culture, and
identity. My research in the field indicates that those prominently involved in the
environmental and religious Samin movements had at least completed public education at
the middle school level. Construction and agricultural workers are competent in maths,
economy, and literacy.

Ba’asyin (2014) also found that the Saminists could commodify their historical
narrative tradition due to their everyday interaction with the researchers, intellectuals, and
lecturers who visited them, some by reconstructing the knowledge about the Samin’s
teachings which their visitors already had and elaborating on it. Then, the narrative became
Commodification began with the story of the Samin published in books and on television and the internet. This has led to divisions in the community due to the vested interests of some Saminists.

The second study is by Samiyono (2010) who conducted field research in different villages and dusun (sub-villages) in Sukolilo, coming to same conclusion. On a larger scale, the Samin narrative has been commodified by the political economy which arose with modernity (shaped by the state, NGOs, and corporations) in the globalized world. In Pati, the Saminists’ engagement tends to be influenced by NGOs, researchers, and activists as a social movement for the recognition of their religion, whereas in Blora they tend to cooperate in the promotion of cultural tourism with the Indonesian local government and researchers. Up to now, both locations are still popular with NGOs, researchers, and the international media such as those from the United States, Europe, and Australia.

A further aspect of the rising conflict among the Saminists due to these commodification concerns is who has the right to lead the community. Anis Sholeh Ba’asyin found that some Saminists in Karangpace, Blora claimed to be the legitimate heirs of the Samin community. However, the way some thought about and practised the Samin’s teachings there did not reflect the teachings themselves as they were blended with Javanism (kejawen). For instance, some traditions, Anis Sholeh Ba’asyin explained to me were not practised by Saminists in other areas. Moreover, Anis Sholeh Ba’asyin found that a Saminist who claimed himself to be a believer of the Adam religion was always accompanied by a Javanist (kejawen) follower who seemed to have become the spokesman for the Saminist. It is concluded that the flexibility of Samin’s teachings, especially in rituals, can be developed with Javanism as a performance of cultural tourism.
Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Samin traditions are always changing in their appearance. The Samin cultural tourism movement can be an economic alternative or a supplement to agriculture for the community to survive in the contemporary globalized world, while retaining most of the Samin principles. In Blora, the idea of Samin’s teachings and its practices, such as building a pendopo, cultural performances, cultural modifications for the public, the development of Samin batik, and the branding Blora as a Samin symbol, can be interpreted either as using abundant creativity to survive or a superficial downgrading of the way Samin Surosentiko experienced life to adapt to a consumerist society in the globalized world.

In sum, cultural commodification in the Samin community is happening. Some may struggle during their encounter with consumerism, some are attracted to consumerist society, and others try to relate to the consumerist society by drawing on their rasa (inner awareness). The concept of sa butuhe is important to maintain awareness in dealing with the seduction of a consumerist society. I talked to Saminists whom I sensed were the most lugu, ‘ascetic’. They lived with some connection to consumerism and the market, but they knew their limits. The Saminists live between their traditions and the sophisticated social, political and economic structure of modernity and its tensions. In these circumstances, President Joko Widodo’s policies have shaped the Samin tourism movement and brought it into being.

**The Samin Movement is a Non-Issue: Mbah Sariman’s View**

Only a few Saminists still resist the challenges and seductions of modernity. Addressing Mbah Sariman’s view⁷¹, these will be referred to as traditional Saminists. A traditional Saminist does not care about issues related to the external environment, religion, and the commodification of culture as tourism. Their everyday lives are mostly spent in the paddy fields. They do not make time for travelling around with the NGOs and/or the government.

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⁷¹ In this discussion, I rely mostly on Mbah Sariman’s view.
They do not involve themselves directly in the government’s development projects or challenge industrialization. What they attend to is only what belongs to them, their paddy fields, which is already a tough struggle. Their logic is that if they turn their attention to doing something else, they will abandon their own business and disregard their ancestors’ culture.

In addition, they are not concerned about what belongs to other people because if they disturb this, what is their own will also be disturbed. This is consistent with their principles, namely, “aja drengki srei, panasten, dahwen, kemeren, moh nyio marang sepada, moh petil jumpit bedog-colong ndah la ngalelah ngalah”\(^{72}\) (do not envy or be jealous, do not dispute, do not accuse, do not hurt others, do not steal, and always endure pain). The safest job for preserving these principles is the work of peasants who directly enjoy their work and know what they consume.

These traditionalists are visited by government officials, researchers and the political elite, especially before elections. Yet these traditionalists do not accept any kind of sponsorship, reward or facilities. They maintain that what they have is enough (sa butuhe). They are, however, still willing to receive such visitors and answer their questions. They perceive themselves as independent. One argued, “if this place (tanduran) is the food source (prosperous), why should I receive a gift?” This was the stated reason for not accepting the funding for a pendopo.

The concept of belongings conveys a struggle in which traditional Saminists pursue everything through their own efforts, of which they are proud. This principle cannot be shaken. In Tanduran, one informed me that on one occasion the government provided

\(^{72}\) In Blora, these principles are worded differently but still have a similar meaning. These are “aja drengki srei, tukar pada, dahwen, kemeren, aja kutil jumpit, bedhog nyolong (do not disturb people and their belongings, do not argue and dispute, do not accuse, do not be malicious, do not envy or be jealous, do not steal). The principles continue with “sabra lan trokal empun ngantos drengki srei, empun ngantos riyu sapad, empun nganti pek-pinepek, kutil jumpit bedhog nyolong. Napa malik bedhog colong, napa milik barang, nema barang teng dalan mawon kulo simpangi (be patient and trust in God, do not disturb others, do not show off and be arrogant to others, do not steal and when walking and seeing something that does not belong to you, just pass it by)(Mumfangati, 2004, pp. 23-24).
pumps for irrigating their paddy fields, but they did not utilize them, relying only on their own pumps. Agricultural instructors regularly sent by the government to serve the farmers’ needs were considered ineffective. The Saminists thought they knew better about their paddy fields out of their deep experience, wisdom and connection with nature. The only offer that the Samin traditionalists were willing to accept was the seed subsidy which was offered to every farmer in Indonesia.

Traditionalists did not join in any activities related to the Mount Kendeng cement issue, arguing, “Every Saminist has his/her own issues to deal with.” For them, Samin Surosentiko’s principles are incompatible with the act of protest as well as the discourse of a sociopolitical movement. They have a saying, “Becoming Samin is not about who you are, but it is about what you do.” To be a traditionalist is to practise and deeply experience the Samin’s teachings without any overwhelming label, identity, or modern institution. The traditionalist is also reluctant to give attention to the religious movement because religion in their understanding is more complex than the modern definition of religion (the six recognized religions in Indonesia).

Most importantly, the Adam religion is not a matter of the institutionalization of a faith and its representation in symbols or through state recognition. There is no relation between the spiritual dimension of their way of life and any religious institutions. Nor is their identity legitimated by any state institution. They question why their faith bothers the government and why it needs to be institutionalized and recognized as an organized religion. This response problematizes the concept of world religion, as discussed above. The traditionalists’ understanding about the concept of religion is totally different from that of the Indonesian government as well as most Indonesians. Inspired by Reza Aslan (2005), I argue that religion is the story of faith. The faith itself is malleable, but the discourse and
its practice are particular, contextual, and culturally constructed with a system of symbols in a particular time and space. As Aslan so eloquently states,

Religion, it must be understood, is not faith. Religion is the story of faith. It is an institutionalized system of symbols and metaphors (read rituals and myths) that provides a common language with which a community of faith can share with each other their numinous encounter with the Divine Presence. Religion is concerned not with genuine history, but with sacred history, which does not course through time like a river. Rather, sacred history is like a hallowed tree whose roots dig deep into primordial time and whose branches weave in and out of genuine history with little concern for the boundaries of space and time. Indeed, it is precisely at those moments when sacred and genuine history collide that religions are born. The clash of monotheisms occurs when faith, which is mysterious and ineffable and which eschews all categorizations, becomes entangled in the gnarled branches of religion (Aslan, 2005, p. xvii-xviii).

The story of Samin religion is a story of various Samins’ faith within the Saminist communities. On one hand, the religious Saminist movement constructs the system and symbols of the Saminist faith in order to gain recognition from the modern institution of the Indonesian nation state. On the other hand, the traditional Saminists maintain their old system of faith and symbols without being institutionalized and overwhelmingly exploited. The traditionalists are indifferent towards the state, corporations, and the identity card. From the traditionalist perspective, what is essential is ethical behaviour within spirituality, not the rituals, symbols, and tools that commonly appear in well-institutionalized religions that are so much more easily observed.

For traditionalists, myths deeply guide their lives. It is not important whether the myth is scientifically and empirically real; instead the foundational purpose of the myth is
meaningful for their life. The values within the stories provide their legitimacy and credibility. Therefore, to ask whether Samin Surosentiko actually vanished (moksa) in Sawah Lunto, or whether he could do ‘shadow clone techniques’ when he was in prison so that people in many places could confirm his presence outside, or whether he alone could carry a large teak log is totally irrelevant.

No religion is purely concerned about the objective studies of historical events. In all histories of the Kingdoms and political powers of what has become Indonesia such as the Majapahit, Demak, and Mataram, there are many versions. The story of the Saminists is an interpretation of events which gives a structure (set of discourses) and meaning to the myths and rituals of the Samin community, providing the future generations of Saminists with a collective identity, a common aspiration, and a common story. Therefore, it is open to many sorts of interpretations.

**Conclusion**

Barth’s ethnic theory, Bhabha’s cultural theory, Turner’s experiential anthropology and liminal theory have made it possible in this chapter to justify the development of four group classifications of Saminist cultural identity which is quite different from the previous attempts by researchers to understand Samin ethnic identity. The ongoing process of being in a Samin Javanese ethnic community and the changes determined by the context of social, political, and cultural interactions with modernity have developed this construction. This *becoming* a Samin Javanese ethnic community is shown in the post Suharto era. The Saminists are variously involved in environmental, religious, and cultural tourism issues, while one group who was aware of those issues did not get at all involved, only focusing on their agricultural livelihood. Most Saminists from the communities located in Pati, Kudus and Blora oppose the enviromental Saminist narrative movement because it has radically transformed Samin Surosentiko’s teachings into an alignment with essentially
modern institutionalized environmental groups such as NGOs, as a package: the Indigenous Peoples’ Alliance of the archipelago (AMAN). This means they have become modernized in their own ways.

The environmental Samin movement is part of a new social movement with social, political, and cultural interactions with modernity. Discursively, they are shaped by the wave of modern democracy in the post Suharto regime. This movement accesses freedom of speech in the public sphere nationally and internationally. My ethnomethodological research has revealed that this movement is a new and creative interpretation of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings that attracts scholars’ and activists’ sympathy whereas the majority of the Saminists criticize this movement as blaspheming Samin’s teachings. There is no hierarchy of authority or leader in the Samin community. This system has facilitated multiple interpretations of the Samin teachings and a competition of discourses among of them.

In this chapter, there is no intention to assess the relative validity of the four discourses of the Saminists. In fact, Mbah Sariman’s view is still the mainstream narrative followed by most Saminists. It can be understood as anti-structure and anti-institutionalization. Although opposed, the majority of Saminists still respect and allow the environmental Samin movement to exist because of one of Samin’s principles: they believe that any action will have its own consequences or, in other words, “as you sow, so shall you reap”.

In modern times, the challenges faced by the Samin community not only involve internal dynamic relationships, but relationships with modern elements such as the government, corporations, and institutionalization. While the environmental Samin movement engages with NGOs and is institutionalized in the one NGO structure (AMAN) to resist the Indonesian government which supports the cement corporations, the rest of the
Saminists were neutral and preferred to deal with their own issues. The religious Saminist movement engaged with the Indonesian government to obtain recognition for their Adam religion as did also the Saminists who were concerned with tourism projects.

The Saminists also adjust their identity preference in response to imposed modern institutionalization. Saminist groups have agreed to institutionalize their religion or their cultural identity. Meanwhile, the majority of Saminists remain focused on their lived experience of an agricultural livelihood to preserve the meaning of being a Saminist without bothering with recognition, institutionalization and engagement with any modern agencies. Every Saminist has her/his own way of interpreting to extract the memory of the past for the sake of the present and the future in order to maintain the deep meaning of being a Saminist.

It is worth mentioning that, although every Saminist has the right to interpret Samin’s teachings, the four categories explored in this research only represent Saminists’ inclinations. This categorization is therefore not intended to deliver a fixed definition of the Saminists, but describes the various narratives of Saminist groups in encountering the globalized world (i.e., modernity) according to my fieldwork.

All these different interpretations are shaped by the tension between tradition and modernism. Samin Surosentiko’s teachings are interpreted in different social, political, and cultural contexts. Based on this understanding, the Samin community survive and possess freedom in their own ways and discourses in dealing with modernity, and the future will bring further changes and adaptations. Therefore, it is difficult to essentialize or define the Samin community. We can only tell the narrative of the Saminists in each important event. There should not be a set of disciplines which seeks to strictly define the Samin community. As suggested by the ethnomethodological approach, let them speak for themselves.
Chapter 6 Conclusion

In this study, I have investigated the encounters and responses of the Samin community to the multiple challenges of modernity. Drawing on extensive interviews and observations in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Kudus, Pati, Blora, and through living among the Saminists for around six months, the complexity and ambivalence of the Samin encounter with modernity, and tensions, have been explained. The Saminists have their modes of adaptation and resistance to modernity in political, social, cultural, and economic dimensions.

In my research I sought to acquire deeper understandings of the Samin ethnic identity through exploring participants’ lived experiences and my own engagements when living in the Samin community. This research also examined ethnic theory, cultural theory (hybridity/liminality), and the theory of modernity (multiple modernities) as a tool of analysis, not as a driven deductive theory to be easily understood by the readers. My research question was How far do the Samin community persistently preserve and maintain their traditions amid modernity while being constructed by modernity at the same time? With the aim of gaining rich and meaningful data relevant to my research question, my research approach applied a combination of discourse analysis and ethnomethodology. The data collection was through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and reviews of archival information.

My research findings have contributed to the body of knowledge on modernity and on the Samin community. They explored the ambivalence of modernity as well as offering a critique to structuralism and essentialism. A key finding of this thesis is the complex and varied self-understandings of becoming a Saminist as dynamically lived, able to transform and respond to modernity. Creating meaning by negotiating and renegotiating with modernity is central to the Samin community to construct their dynamic and malleable
identity. Barth’s ethnicity theory has enabled a way of understanding Samin identity as continually evolving and fuelled by these living tensions and ambiguities amid modernity. Bhabha’s and Turner’s cultural theory strengthen Barth theory that tensions and ambiguities between the Samin community and modernity are in the hybrid space of political and cultural dimensions. Multiple modernities confirm that the persistence of the Saminists constructed this community as modernized in its own ways. Multiple modernities are an alternative way to perceiving modernity. The concept challenges singular modernity and supports non-Western European societies and cultures to modernize themselves with their own ways.

The nature of the Samin experience of modernity has been explained in terms of their religious beliefs and practices drawn from a selective Javanese culture which engaged Hindu and Buddhist values and then Islamic mysticism amid the Dutch colonial modern era. At the same time, the study confirms that the Samins’ worldview is constitutively constructed with modernity from their encounter with the Dutch colonial system to their encounter with the modern Indonesian state and the corporate world of capitalist industrialisation. Regardless of this finding, the Saminists are positioned in a hybrid/liminal space and keep adapting to change in dealing with the contemporary world. By using discourse analysis and further confirmed by ethnomethodology, I have been able to show that Samin’s teachings develop their culture through not only the cultural domain such as through history, rituals, marriage, and other cultural features, but also throughout interactions, tensions, and selections from civilizations that have moved across Java.

The Samin movement has been changing over time and this is supported by Barth’s (1969) understanding of ethnicity theory. In relations with the the colonial regime (modernity), the Samin movement or community has not been homogenous since the Dutch colonial era. At the same time, those varied forms and discourses embraced
common norms, values, and principles. The Saminists were involved in passive and active movements and in both, they were relatively non-violent. During, this time, some of them accepted taxation, while the rest did not accept it; those who accommodated the demands of the state were named Samin *lugu* and those who did not Samin *sangkak*. In all of these differences, they believed in the principles of the Samin’s teachings such as the religion of Adam which consists of the sacred ritual of marriage, the centrality of *rasa* (spirituality), and the practice of Javanese ethics which enjoins humanity, respect, humility and simplicity.

As introduced in Chapter 1, by using multiple modernities, the Samin tradition is shaped by modernity, but is not completely modernized because the memory of the pre-modern teaching, a period before the Western colonial discourse arrived, has been reproduced and sustained. Presenting the past as a collective memory in the present reality, the Saminists are constructing new ways of interpreting meaning. The Samin community is modernized in terms of its own ways of dealing with modernity.

In the multiple modernities approach, modernity is not monolithic (Eisenstandt, 2000); the Samin movement is part of the modern world and its time and space. Modernity itself is actual life that is experienced by many discourses of the past and the present realms. Therefore, this complex reality with tensions and ambiguity between the Samin and modernity should be understood as narration, not a fixed definition. In other words, the Samin community and modernity cannot be simplified into a definitive frame by using deductive reasoning.

Chapter 2 described the narrative of the Samin community as situated in complex tensions between the discourse of Javanese mystic centrality and a mix of Javanese culture with Islamic mysticism in the set modern episteme, i.e., the modern knowledge of Javanese literature. Chapter 3 revealed the narrative of the Samin community by applying Samin’s
worldview in Saminists’ everyday lived experience. This narrative described the cultural features of the Samin community and social relations with non-Saminists in constructing their ethnic boundaries. The cultural features which individuals display depend on their preferences and choices. For example, some Saminists wear black clothes habitually as a symbol of their culture while some others do not wear these even in special ritual events. In social relations, the boundary between the Saminists and non-Saminists and within the Saminists themselves are clearer than cultural features because mostly, each of them can express her/his thoughts, emotions, and perceptions.

Chapter 4 deals with the narrative of imposing modernity on the Saminists and their strategy of dealing with this modern oppression as represented by the Indonesian government. Chapter 5 relates the narrative of the Samin as diverse although belonging to one ethnic group: environmental Samin, religious Samin, cultural tourist Samin, and non-structural/non-discursive Samin. All these narratives are very much situated in social, political, and cultural relations in constructing the Samin community with modernity. This construction is an ongoing process because the Samin community is malleable, fluid and dynamic positioned in hybrid liminal space.

Theoretically speaking, scholars try to define the Samin community in many different frames of deductive explanations such as a social movement, peasant movement, millenarian movement, religious/spiritual movement, agricultural cult, and subaltern movement. Even though I found that the relationship between their religion and agricultural livelihood is inherently interconnected for the Samin, by applying the ethnomethodological approach, I avoided the attempt to capture the complex reality of the Samin movement from an incomplete definition which imposes an incorrect understanding of the Samin. In fact, the complex reality described in this research is a group of existential human narratives that are dynamic and malleable in nature. What we should capture about
the Saminists is their story as a complete human being, not only by describing their appearance or material culture, but also their sense of emotions, beliefs, and the everyday life narrative which gives meaning to their life. From an ethnomethodological approach, what is important is “letting them show us what matters and it is possible to enter and understand this unfamiliar, entrancing world” (Beatty, 2009, p. x).

The Samin’s teaching is a tradition. The Saminists’ tradition is always evolving, being reinterpreted and at the same time, being transmitted, repeated, and inscribed in the Samin community’s memory of the as guidance to their current life and the future. The Samin tradition was selectively shaped by dominant discourses: Javanese (mystical) tradition that had a shared identity with the pre-Hindu and Buddhist era, the Hindu and Buddhist traditions (during the pre-modern era), Javanese Islamic mysticism, modern tradition (with the arrival of Western civilization in Java), and modern Javanese tradition. I found that the Saminists provide guidance to identify what traditions have changed and what have remained in everyday life because there are cultural practices that will change while the ethical principles will remain. I found many layers in the complexity of the Samin’s teachings, although as a non-Saminist, there were limitations for me to explore and more deeply cross-examine Samin reality. As one of the Saminists acknowledged to me, there is knowledge that they are unable to share publicly.

The Saminists claim to be the real Javanese/purer Javanese (Jawa Sejati) rather than belonging to the abangan community or the mixed Javanese Islam culture. This is because, in the context of practising their Javanese tradition, the Saminists do not use any Islamic attributes or Arabic culture in their rituals. They have made this boundary clear. They reject all Islamic attributes and definitions according to the orthodox Islam discourse. However, in Chapter 2, the discourse analysis conducted for this research revealed that the
Samin’s worldview and Islamic mysticism share a common language of spirituality and mysticism, and some values and principles.

For example, the marriage ceremony is one of the most important Saminist rituals in the religion of Adam. It is the only way to become a true Saminist and a long journey. This ritual strongly challenges structural religious institutionalization. Significantly, the Muslim ritual was the one institutionalized and recognized by the Dutch colonial administration.

My field research revealed a unique tradition as part of the Saminist marriage ritual. I could not find any marriage process in Southeast Asia, and, in particular, any Javanese tradition that has any similarity in this respect with the Saminists. The marriage ritual is considered to be part of everyday life, experienced in stages, especially the period of *ngawula* (a husband lives in wife’s house with her parents and subserve his life). A tradition is something unique and has deep meaning within its metaphors for the Saminists. Yet traditions are not frozen. In short, I found that in the Samins’ cycle of life from birth to death, some parts of their practices are changing, being negotiated and renegotiated across time and space, but some practical traditions which are as strongly embedded in the collective memory still remain.

In Chapter 2, I found that there is a process of hybridization with Islam in becoming a Saminist. Many values in the Samin’s teachings are shared by Islamic Sufism. Samin Surosentiko could be a ‘Muslim’, as indicated in his childhood name, his noble genealogy, his status and knowledge, the term Samin itself, and the similarity of his teachings with those of Siti Jenar. Even though Samin teachings and Islamic Sufism have different attributes and practices, I found that, in substance, they have the same interpretations in understanding at least three ideas: equality, God, and death. Discursively, both sets of teachings place importance on the idea of equality and independence in Java. This idea moved them to challenge the dominant power. The challenge neither came from the
orthodox Islam perspective nor from Western modernity. The idea of God is expressed in terms of unification with God (manunggaling kawula Gusti) or in the term “God within me” (Hutomo, 1996; Benda & Castle, 1969). Both sets of teachings hold that death happens in the world in the context of the human body, but when we are really alive, we live forever in the context of the soul.

Both teachings also maintain that tradition cannot only take the form of rituals; a tradition should be part of everyday lived experience. Therefore, a tradition is situated in the existential nature of life, not as a structural formalistic ritual. Meaning is sought in tradition as it is at the centre of the religion of Adam. This search is a long spiritual and mystical journey.

Even though there was an influence from modern Javanese literature, I found that the most important principle in the Samin’s teachings and Siti Jenar’s teachings are rasa (spirituality/inner feeling) as a wet book/a body as a script (kitab teles). The enrichment of rasa (inner feeling) is what both try to achieve, not personal enrichment by exploiting their desire in the materialistic form. The value of rasa enables the Saminists to reject the imposed materialism of modern society’s consumer lifestyle of. Through rasa, they seek the meaning of self, feeling dignified and at the same time humble. Strong rasa can easily control both human desire and corrupt behaviour. In other words, rasa is the antidote for the human corruption which can be a consequence of modernism. It is at the centre of Siti Jenar’s teachings in sangkan paraning dumadi (the origin and the destination of being; where we come from, what and who we are at present, where we will go).

The Samin movement has been increasingly exposed in the international media (in the case of the environmental Samin movement) and at the national level (in the case of the religious Samin movement). Though this exposure has only recently occurred since the disputes with cement corporations, it is rooted in the changing Indonesian political
landscape, changes that have been under way since 1998. These changes have been caused by several factors such as globalization, the wave of democratization, and the revolution in information. All these factors are “modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization” according to Appadurai (1996).

Yet modernity at large has a dangerous side that needs to be addressed. Cristaudo in his introduction of Rosenstock Huessy’s (2017) work understands the dark side of modernity as the “hegemony space of Greek philosophy”. It is dangerous because modernity discriminates and marginalizes tradition. In the logic of modernism, modernity imprisons human beings in the metaphysical abstraction of the mind. In this respect, human beings have no future in the context of their own lived experience.

If modernism prevails all over the world, the Samin movement and other similar narratives might resist it with their own traditions, even though the Samin community is not completely independent in these traditions because modernity shapes them. We live in the multiple modes of modernities (Eisenstadt, 2000). The Samin community recently celebrated their freedom of expression under the Indonesian democratic system in the post Authoritarian regime. Before I conducted field research, I only knew that Saminists expressed their freedom of expression through the environmental movement. Fieldwork showed me many narratives of Saminists: the Saminists who struggled with anti-cement corporations and defended Mount Kendeng, the Saminists who struggled for their religious recognition, the Saminists who promoted eco-cultural tourism, and the Saminists who attempted to be independent and not get too deeply involved with modern organizations such as NGOs, the state, corporations and modern life in general.

Compared to the other Saminists’ narratives, news of the environmental Samin movement was widespread by the international media. The struggle of Saminists in defending Mount Kendeng around the 2000s was part of a democratic movement within
Indonesia. Scholars and activists were amazed at their struggle against the cement corporations and their challenging of the Indonesian government. The connection of the Saminists with modernity was also indicated by their strong networking with NGOs, activists, scholars, and government officials.

They utilized the process of democratization through many demonstrations with Javanese theatrical performances combined with the Samin’s attributes and symbols. The Pati-Semarang long march of no less than 83 kilometres in November 2015 was the biggest demonstration of the environmental Samin movement and was conducted with NGOs, activists, scholars, and university students. This demonstration successfully triggered public discourse on the national and international stage. Through the idealism of NGOs, activists, and scholars, the Samin movement from the past was romanticized. I found the environmental Samin movement had succeeded in contextualizing the Samin’s teachings in the globalized world, as well as adjusting to modernity in its own ways through collaboration with NGOs, activists, and scholars. However, according to the majority of Saminists, this was and remains a distortion of the Samin teachings.

There was a strong sense among most Saminists that environmental Saminists violated the Samin attributes and identity in order to be noticed. As the label Kartini Kendeng (‘feminist’ Mount Kendeng movement) is popular, they began switching their brand from Samin to Kartini Kendeng. However, this was an incomplete transformation because the leader of this environmental movement is also a Saminist.

The environmental Samin movement narration created an awkward relationship among Saminists in Pati, Kudus, and Blora. Moreover, the popularity of the movement’s leader created the sense of jealousy and envy among Saminists, which is contrary to their ethical principles to avoid such feelings. It has been difficult for the Saminists, especially
in Pati, to follow Samin’s teachings and redevelop the guyub (harmony) of the Samin community which existed prior to the existence of the environmental issue.

Another narrative of the Samin is the religious Samin movement. I perceived that this narrative was not as widely known as the environmental movement, but it is still significant and relevant as an example to point out the relationship between the discourse of the Samin Javanese tradition and the discourse of Western modernism. This generates more discussion on Indonesian ethnic religious studies. Before the Suharto era, there was a lack of religious study beyond the six world religions. The case of the religious Samin movement provokes the study of religion in Indonesia to redefine the meaning of religion and questions the term of religion under the ‘spell’ of modernism. This movement is also part of the democratic movement. Scholars and NGOs, and one of the biggest Islamic movements in Indonesia, NU, had advocated for members of many local religions, including the Samin community, to engage with the state in order to be recognized.

However, in the post-Authoritarian regime, Scholars and NGOs, and one of the biggest Islamic movements in Indonesia, NU actualized the process of democratization through convening many discussions, building networks, and issuing publications. As a result, the Indonesian government agreed to recognize their religion by revoking the existing regulation of leaving the religious column in the identity cards blank. Some (particular) Islamic orthodox institutions objected to this policy pursued the Indonesian government but they were turned down.

In this respect, the recognition of Samin’s religion is probably imminent. Although the religious Saminists are selective in dealing with modernity, this movement has engaged with the state. Importantly, they accepted the frame of religion which is shaped by the state system of modern discourse and agreed to institutionalize their Adam religion within the larger frame of penghayat kepercayaan (native-faith follower). The religious Saminists
believed that the true way to maintain the Samin’s teachings is to achieve the recognition of the Agama Adam by the state. This is the main context of their engagement with the Indonesian government.

In contrast to this movement, it is important to recognize that Samin’s teaching is critical of any modern institution. Agama Adam is not an institutionalized religion similar to the six recognized religions or aliran kepercayaan (indigenous religions or local faiths that had been established in the Suharto regime. Therefore, this religious Samin movement significantly renegotiated and transformed the Agama Adam from a spiritual journey of everyday lived experience within rasa into a more structural formalistic religion.

There has not yet been a serious discussion between a religious representative of the Indonesian government and the Saminists related to the principles of religion. Questions therefore remain such as whether the religious Samin movement agree on the principles of religion based on the Indonesian government or not? And how far do certain orthodox Muslims interfere with this issue? The standardisation and institutionalization of religious life in Indonesia creates a more complicated life for religious followers.

The third narrative is represented by the Samin community that promotes eco-cultural tourism. I found that they conducted many events related to a process of Javanization of the Samin’s teachings. It is interesting that even though the Saminists are Javanese, some of Samin’s teachings do not exist in the common Javanese tradition (the Javanese grand narrative). There are some cultural innovations in Saminist cultural tourism.

The local government has facilitated cultural tourism efforts through providing infrastructure such as the joglo (meeting place) for their cultural performances and introducing special Samin designed batik (a traditional fabric dyeing art). The local government also embraces the Samin’s culture by instructing its officers to wear
Saminists’ clothes as uniforms once a month, a policy which was also taken to support the local economy in the Samin community and Blora. The Indonesian government even showed they were more supportive compared to the previous regimes at the highest level by the visit of President Joko Widodo, his wife, and government staff in 2015.

The Samin movement of eco-cultural tourism was undeniably part of a larger government development project oriented to the political economy of the market. In order to survive, the local government needed to promote local cultural tourism and, as a consequence, take part in the commodification of culture.

This type of Saminist is not particularly concerned about religious recognition because for them, it is enough for the Samin’s teachings to be understood as tradition in the frame of a cultured life, not in the frame of modern religion. They are content as long as they can keep and sustain their tradition. They also disagree with the environmental Samin movement because it does not have any relationship with the culture and the Samin’s teachings.

However, this movement is in a dilemma, which they do not realize. On one hand, they need to survive as Saminists with their cultural traditions, on the other hand, in order to survive, they need to innovate and ritualize Saminist culture for financial gain. In other words, the Samin’s teachings and Saminist innovation are for sale as cultural products to accumulate capital. In this context, this movement is challenging the core principles of Samin’s teachings, by practising trade and business.

The last type of Saminist is based on Mbah Sariman’s view which does not include any of the concerns previously mentioned. I found that modernity shaped them in how they conducted their farming. One of the important issues is that they did not practice organic farming whereas the environmental Samin movement encourages this. They use modern fertilizers in order to survive. Nevertheless, they question the acts of other Saminists
involved with certain issues which have distracted them from their main activities, agriculture. As a consequence, they believe that these kinds of Saminists are no longer following the Samin path. Not only is farming their main livelihood and occupation, it is also their life. Thus, by being heavily preoccupied with other activities, they are restrained from acting independently, wasting time on something that is not their concern, and most importantly, disregarding their tradition and culture.

I found that the tension between the Samin community and modernity creates bricolage that has never existed before. The conflicting interpretations among Saminists in challenging modernity contribute to the plurality of discourses and their practices. This is a circumstance that underlines the presence of multiple modernities. There is reflexivity in the Samin community to have distinct interpretations, visions, and ontological conceptions. The tensions and accommodations between the Samin community and modernity maintain the authenticity of this community because there is a long process of reflection based on memory of the past.

The narratives of the contemporary Samin discourse mentioned above are different compared to the previous Saminist groups such as Samin sangkak and Samin lugu in the Dutch colonial era. Even though the Samin sangkak is still strongly linked to the environmental Samin movement, in practice, they are both different from each other. Samin sangkak never conducted demonstrations whereas the environmental Samin movement uses these as a consistent strategy. Furthermore, even though the Samin lugu are strongly linked to Samin who do not get involved with any issues, both are distinct from one another in how they reflect their experiential life because of their historical circumstances (during the Dutch colonial rule and during the post Suharto era of a democratic system). In this case, the Saminists in the present are more heterogenous compared to the previous Saminists because they have more challenges.
I found that the tension between the Samin community and modernity has made me realize that the idea of lifeworld (lebenswelt) is important. The idea of lifeworld enriches the study of modernity that is preoccupied by the assumption of simplistic and monolithic natural science standardization (positivism). In the dimension of lifeworld, this study contributes to the interpretation of symbols and metaphors as human faith in believing in something through the experience of spiritual life. It does not matter whether this thing called faith is in the frame of religion or not. Faith is in the nature of human beings, which some natural science scholars cannot understand.

In this sense, I found that in the cross of reality (using Huessy’s ontological position), there is a Saminist who believes in something that cannot be materialized or visualized, but can only be sensed by rasa whereas the natural scientist may use deductive reasoning and empirical data verify it. The Saminist believes in something inside their rasa where he or she cannot conceptualize this ‘thing,’ but this ‘thing’ is something that is the most powerful ‘thing’ and beyond human capacity whereas the natural scientist names this amazing great ‘thing’ as science. The Samin use kerata basa (the Javanese language game) to express their lesson as part of refining rasa to be more sensitive while some scientists use positivistic and empirical methodology to verify something for finding the truth. By using kerata basa, the Saminists seek the profound meaning of life and harmony whereas scientists seek epistemological truth.

The Saminists are not preoccupied with the conception or framing of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings or his theory of life. They practise them based on their previous legacy, memory and rasa within their reflexivity and creativity and in their complex actual reality, whereas the natural scientist or positivist tries to frame and control the complex actual reality into an imposed and simplistic understanding. In the Samin’s discourse, all
these processes are mixed and intermingled and not to be understood in terms of linearity and the modern concept of time.

The practices and the narrative of their life had been confusing me at the beginning of my construction of a theoretical framework. I originally realized that I was too preoccupied with abstraction and the collection of background knowledge on the Samin community and Samin’s teachings. In contrast, what I found in my field work was their cultural practices in their everyday life, in their lifeworld. In short, to understand the Samin community is to experience their actual life experience as closely as we can reach it, in order to get the sense, the atmosphere, the humanity, and the enchantment of this world.

**Limitations and Considerations**

Although this study is limited in its scope and time because it only focuses on the Saminists in Pati, with some visits to Kudus and Blora, Central Java, it assists to understand contemporary Saminists as a Javanese local peasant community and its sacred life in dealing with modernity. Yet this study is insufficient to draw final general conclusions about the whole spectrum of the sacred life of the Javanese peasant community in religious, political, anthropological, and sociological dimensions in Indonesia.

Future studies should thoroughly examine other important issues such as finding the script of Samin Surosentiko’s teachings and studies based on a philological approach, studying the *sangkak* language game which is still hidden and perhaps developing Samin’s dictionary. Such studies will present a more comprehensive picture of the contemporary Saminist in Indonesia in their own terms.

Within the limitations mentioned, in this this study, the response of the Samin community to the multiple challenges of modernity has been intricately explained by applying an ethnomethodological approach supported by discourse analysis. This response
is based on their own worldview and existential lived experience. Each Saminist has his or her own interpretation of the Samin’s teachings. Therefore, there is no single Samin community which can be identified and described in terms of its dealing with the multiple challenges of modernity. Nevertheless, Saminists have a selective culture, preferences, and principles that can integrate them into one authentic community. Even though they have different ways of encountering modernity, they persistently maintain the primordial spirit of Samin’s teachings. These are selectively extracted from a primordial Javanese culture which engaged with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islamic mysticism. The complicated and ambivalent relationship between the Samin community and modernity has also been detailed.

In short, this research has succeeded in demonstrating the existence of the Samin community as a Javanese ethnic identity that is transforming, renegotiating, and reinterpreting the meaning of Samin’s teachings. This Samin community draws sustaining energies from dynamic, malleable, contextual, and ambiguous connections with modernity. Saminists are constitutively constructed by the system of modernity with its agencies (non-Saminists) as well as actively constructing themselves through their own modernized ways.
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3. Syamsul Hadi, the Representative of Directorate of Trust in God, the One and the Tradition, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2 and 3 May 2018

4. Prof. Emil Salim’s speech in Economics (former Minister of State for Population and the Environment in Suharto, Member of the Advisory Council to President Yudhoyono as the adviser for environment and sustainable development issues, the Chair of Foundation for Sustainable Development), 14 December 2015, Jakarta.

5. Focus Group discussion in Lokakarya held by Ministry of Environment and Forestry’s Directorate General of Natural Resource and Ecosystem Conservation (Ditjen KSDAE), (National Conference), 14 December 2015, Jakarta

6. The chair of Direktorat Jenderal Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam dan Ekosistem (Directorate General of Natural Resource and Ecosystem Conservation), 14 December 2015, Jakarta

7. Gunarti (a Saminist), 14 December 2015, Jakarta

8. Gunretno’s speech (a Saminist), 15 December 2015, Lokakarya held by Ministry of Environment and Forestry’s Directorate General of Natural Resource and Ecosystem Conservation (Ditjen KSDAE), (National Conference), Jakarta

9. Semen Indonesia company and Indocement company, 15 December 2015, Jakarta

10. The representative of Sunda Wiwitan, Bandung, 13 December 2015
11. The Director of Desantara (Non Government Organization), 21 May 2016, Jakarta
12. The Representative of Satu Nama (Non Government Organization), 30 April, 2016, Semarang and 21 May 2016, Yogyakarta
15. Amrih Widodo (Scholars, Researcher & Activist), 15 September 2018, Canberra
16. Eko Teguh (Lecturer, Researcher & Activist), 14 December 2015, Jakarta
17. Arif Novianto (Researcher and Activist Pati), 3 November 2015, Yogyakarta
18. Javanist (*Kejawen*), 1 May 2016, Pati
20. The Former JMPPK member, 3 December 2015, Pati
21. Nawari Ismail (Lecturer & Researcher), 2 November 2015, Yogyakarta
22. Prof. Robert Hefner (Lecturer, Boston University, USA), 6 October 2016, Jakarta
23. Village Secretary (Sekretaris Desa), Suhardi, 3 December 2015, Pati
24. Discussion 0. with Activist, Suara Merdeka journalist (Central Java’s newspaper) and public figures Pati, 30 November 2015, 22 April 2016, Pati
25. Discussion 1. Samin and ELSA (a Non Government Organization), 20 November 2015, Kudus
26. Discussion 2. three Saminists, 17 November 2015, Pati
27. Discussion 3. four Samin Families (around fifteen Saminists in different places, 14 November 2015, Kudus
28. Anonymous 1, Samin, 1 & 8 November 2015, Pati
29. Anonymous 2, Samin (two Saminists), 14 November 2015, Kudus
30. Anonymous 3, Samin (three Saminists/a family), 14 November 2015, Kudus
31. Anonymous 4, Samin (a family), 14 November 2015, Kudus
32. Anonymous 5, Samin, 21 November & 28 November 2015, Kudus
33. Anonymous 6, Samin, 24 November 2015, Pati
34. Anonymous 7, Samin Sepuh (one of the oldest Saminist), 15 November 2015, Pati
35. Anonymous 8, Samin (the son of Samin leader who passed away), 19 November 2015
36. Anonymous 9, Samin Sepuh/Yato (one of the oldest Saminists), 13 November 2015, Pati
37. Anonymous 10. Samin Sepuh (one of the oldest Saminists), 25 November 2015
39. Discussion 4. Samin family (around five Saminists), 12 November 2015, Pati
40. Discussion 5. (four Saminists), 23 November 2015, Pati
41. Discussion 6. Samin family (around five Saminists) 2 December 2015, Pati
42. Discussion 7 with journalists (around fifteen journalists) and Saminists (around fifteen
Saminists including Sesepuh such as Yato/anonymouse), 16 November 2015, Pati
43. Discussion 8. The Samin Family (around six Saminists, from young to the oldest
generations) 21 and 22 April 2016, Blora
44. Budi Santoso, a Saminist, 8 December 2017, via Text Message from Darwin to Kudus.