

VISHNU IN TWO CLASSICAL JAVANESE ISLAMIC TEXTS

Continuity and Harmony among the Javanese Revisited

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Abstract: This paper discusses the character of Wisnu (Vishnu) in Javanese culture as seen from two classical Javanese Islamic texts, namely Babad Tanah Jawi and Serat Suluk Warna-warni. Based on the two texts, this paper argues that Vishnu has been historically inseparable from the development of Islam in Java. Called the first king in the Land of Java, Vishnu was seen as the progenitor for the hereditary rulers of Java up to the Kingdom of Mataram Islam. In the texts, Vishnu underwent a transformation from one of the major deities in Hinduism to an important figure in the development of Islam in Java. Vishnu's reincarnation is also present in the form of artifacts and various wayang (shadow puppet) plays. In the context of Java, Vishnu and Islam represent a form of continuity that emphasizes the importance of the harmony of the universe. The presence of Vishnu and Islam brought safety and peace into the life of the Javanese. This study is expected to inspire the idea that revisiting literary works of the past could contribute to efforts to develop a peaceful and harmonious cultural life in Java.

Keywords: Vishnu, classical Javanese Islamic texts, continuity, harmony.

Introduction

Studies of Javanese Islam have mostly been carried out centering on the *slametan* tradition, as it is perceived to be the core religious system of the Javanese¹. Researchers conceptualize *slametan* tradition as

¹ C. Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (New York: Free Press, 1964); T. Schweizer, "Economic individualism and the community spirit: divergent orientation patterns of Javanese Villagers in Rice Production and the Ritual Sphere," *Modern Asian Studies* 23, 2 (1989), p. 297; A. Beaty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion: in Anthropological Account* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

a blend of Islamic religious thought (and practice) and earlier Javanese traditions. Javanese Islam is a syncretic religion between the practices and beliefs originating from Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, animism, and previous Javanese ancestral beliefs.² (Boogert, 2017; Nasir, 2019). Syncretism developed due to the similarity of identity between Islam and Javanese culture in terms of cultural genealogy, Islamic mysticism, traditional Islamic teaching orientation, and the conception of power in the Javanese palaces.³

In one of his studies, which took place in the Keraton Yogyakarta, Woodward⁴ found that the development of Islam in Java was very different from that in its place of birth (Arabia). The way Islam was introduced in Java was through interacting with the previous local cultures. In subsequent developments, Islam and Javanese culture became two related entities that are mutually reinforcing. Normative piety and Sufism in Java are understood as a single religious form. The existence of Hindu and Buddhist elements is also due to the dominance of Sufism in Javanese Islam. As in the history of Islam, Sufism is very open to terms coming from outside of Islam. This finding is supported by Rubaidi's study conducted at the Majelis Shalawat Muhammad in East Java, where it was found that Islamic mysticism activists in Surabaya and Bojonegoro could understand the dialectic between Islamic mysticism and indigenous Javanese culture (Javanese mysticism), thus giving birth to Javanese Islam⁵. Although not explicitly mentioning Javanese Islam, Makin in his study on pluralism in Classical Javanese texts found that Islam developing in Java was heavily influenced by the previous local culture⁶. The results of his analysis of the *Serat* and *Babad* texts showed that the Islamic religious tradition in Java does not reconnect Islam to its origins in the

² Jochem van den Boogert, "The Role of Slametan in the Discourse of Javanese Islam," *Indonesia and The Malay World* 45, 133, pp. 352-273; MA. Nasir, "Revisiting the Javanese Muslim Slametan," *Al-Jami'ah* 57, 2 (2019).

³ Susilo, "Common Identity Frame Work of Cultural Knowledge and Practices of Javanese Islam," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 6, 2 (2016). pp. 161-184.

⁴ Mark Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

⁵ Rubaidi, "Javanese Islam; A Blend of Javanese and Islamic Mysticism Viewed from Post-Colonial Perspective," *El Harakah* 21, 1 (2019).

⁶ Al Makin, "Unearthing Nusantara's Concept of Religious Pluralism Harmonization and Syncretism in Hindu-Budhist and Islamic Classical Texts," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 54, 1 (2016), pp. 1-32.

Middle East but to the Hindu-Buddhist past of Majapahit. It is also shown that the stories in the written tradition in Java embodied the Javanese ancestors' efforts in formulating the concepts of pluralism based on local wisdom.

This paper focuses on the character of Wisnu (Vishnu) in classical Javanese Islamic texts. As Makin pointed out, Hindu and Buddhist figures are found in classical Javanese texts, retold with various modifications and local spirit. In several classical Javanese Islamic texts, it is shown that Vishnu plays an important role in the life history of the Muslim communities in Java. *Babad Tanah Jawi* as the most popular Javanese historical text retells Vishnu as the first Muslim king in the Land of Java. As such, Vishnu became the progenitor of the hereditary kings in Java down to the Kingdom of Mataram Islam. Likewise, in the text of the *Serat Suluk Warna-warni*, Vishnu becomes an important figure in the life history of the Javanese Muslim communities. In the text written during the development of Islam in Java, Vishnu is described as a representation of Islam. Whereas in Hinduism's Trimurti, Vishnu is one of the major gods besides Shiva and Brahma. Vishnu is believed to be bearing the *sthiti* (preserver) aspect, while Shiva is the destroyer and Brahma the creator⁷. Among the three gods, Vishnu and Shiva became the most venerated because they are directly related to human life. In Indian mythology, Vishnu is the supreme soul and supreme deity. Vishnu is believed to be the essence of all life including the past, present and future; He who regulates, sustains, and maintains everything that has been created. The Vaishnava tradition places Vishnu as the highest deity.

In the Javanese society, Vishnu is very popular in *wayang* (shadow puppet) performances, derived from both the Mahabharata and Ramayana. In a wayang show of the Mahabharata origins, Vishnu incarnates as Krishna, who taught Arjuna the dharma of a warrior against the wrath of the Kauravas⁸. While in the Ramayana, Vishnu incarnates as Sri Rama who taught Wibisana the various values of truth and justice in the face of Ravana's greed. The two incarnations of Vishnu are always present to maintain world peace against wrathful evildoers. The knights of the incarnate Vishnu have always succeeded

⁷ Cima Kavakebi, "Tri Murti Manifestation in Hindu Temple," *JACO Quarterly* 10 (2016).

⁸ M. Ryando, "Kresna Gugat dalam Pertunjukan Wayang Kuli Purwa," *Gelar: Jurnal Seni Budaya* 10, 1 (2013).

in building a harmonious and prosperous world for the people. In addition, Vishnu is always present in Javanese wayang performances in the context of the *ruwatan* or the cleansing ceremony, in which the figure of Vishnu is the solution to a Javanese family whose life is threatened by Bathara Guru's demonic son, Bathara Kala. By disguising himself as the *dalang* (puppeteer), Vishnu with his wisdom saves the family members who are affected by the *sukerta* and restores them to their full being humans to live a normal life.

This paper attempts to reveal the significance of Vishnu, the character in the classical Javanese Islamic texts, especially in the Yogyakarta version of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* from the British Library Collection, London Add 12320 and the *Serat Suluk Warna-warni* from the Sana Budaya Library Collection, manuscript code PB A.242. The *Babad Tanah Jawi* is a very popular text and is believed to be the history of the Javanese. Written during the times of Mataram Islam, this text is an important source of historical study on Javanese culture. *Suluk Warni-warni* was also written during the development of Islam in Java and was constantly being copied. As the name suggests, *suluk* is a work identical to Javanese Islamic mysticism or is classified as a work of Javanese Islamic literature. Before being analyzed, both texts have been criticized to make sure that they are error-free. Thus, the text studied in this paper is a text that can be accounted for as a proper source of research⁹. This paper seeks to understand why Vishnu, one of the major deities in Hinduism, later became an important figure in the history of Islam in Java. Another question this paper seeks to address is why Vishnu and Islam become inseparable in the Javanese society.

Vishnu in Hindu Traditions

Hindus recognize three gods or Trimurti they worship, namely Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma¹⁰. Shiva is believed to be the destroyer; Vishnu is known as the preserver and Brahma is the creator. As the personification of Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa in his capacity as the preserver of the universe, Vishnu has many names including Vasudev, Narayan, Viraat Purush, and other names as a form of reincarnation.

⁹ Baroroh Baried, *Pengantar Teori Filologi* (Yogyakarta: Badan Penelitian dan Publikasi Fakultas Sastra Universitas Gadjah Mada, 1994).

¹⁰ Sang Jingyu and Wimal Hewamanage, "Mythology of Gods: Origin and Development of the Concept of Gods in Indian Religion," *Sri Lanka International Journal of Buddhist Studies (SIJBS)* 4 (2015).

Etymologically, the word *Vishnu* comes from *Vishwa* 'universe' and *anu* 'atom.' Therefore, Vishnu can be interpreted as an atom that spreads and gives peace to the entire universe.

Vishnu's enormous role in maintaining the life of the universe makes him the most venerated deity. Although known to be part of the Trimurti, Vishnu is often interpreted as being omnipresent, because the universe is a manifestation of him. In the book of *Nirukta*, Vishnu is defined as *Vishateb* which means the one that presents in everything. Vishnu is also interpreted as *yad vibito bhavati tad vishnurbhavati*, which means that which is not bound¹¹. In Indian mythology, Vishnu is the supreme soul whose essence includes all life and controls the past, present and future. Likewise, in the Vaishnava tradition, Vishnu is believed to be the highest and major god to be worshiped.

In worshiping their gods, Hindus describe Vishnu as a handsome man with dark blue skin. The color symbolizes the sky as a cosmic dimension connecting the earth, rain, and thunder. This characteristic illustrates that Vishnu is the brother of Lord Indra who is the god of weather, thunder, and rain. Being a life preserver in the universe, Vishnu is also believed to be the god of water. Dewi Sri as the goddess of rice is inseparable from water¹². In Balinese Hindu society, the veneration of Vishnu as the God of Water is manifested in the *mendak toya* ceremony, which is a request to Vishnu's blessing for the water that irrigates the fields.

Vishnu has a wife named Lakshmi the goddess of luck, fertility, beauty, and strength¹³. The word *lakshmi* comes from the Sanskrit *lakṣya* ("goal"). Thus, *lakshmi* means the purpose of life, that is, physical and spiritual prosperity. Goddess Lakshmi accompanies Vishnu in each of his incarnations in carrying out his mission as a sustainer of the world. When Vishnu incarnated as Krishna, Lakshmi incarnated as Rukmini. She incarnated as Sita when Vishnu incarnated as Parashurama and when Vishnu incarnated as Rama, Lakshmi became Sinta.

¹¹ Gosta Liebert, "Iconography Dictionary of the Indian Religions: Hindhuism, Buddhism-Jainism," *Studies in Shout Asian Culture* V (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), p. 342.

¹² Ni Luh Gede Sudaryanti, "Pemanfaatan dan Makna Air dalam Veda," *Vidya Werita* 1, 2 (2018), pp. 107-116.

¹³ Ida Ayu Arniati, "Dewi Laksmi sebagai Simbol Kesuburan dalam Perspektif Gender," *Vidya Werita* 1, 1 (2007).

In the Vedas, Vishnu is mentioned as leading the group of eight gods (Adityas) of the offspring of Aditi and Kashyapa and consisting of Baruna, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Daksha, Ansa, Surya or Savitr and Ravi. As the leader of the eight Adityas, Vishnu is able to present himself in the three worlds of Triwikrama or Urukrama, namely a presence on earth, in the sky, and in heaven¹⁴. Vishnu's presence in heaven has not been seen or understood by humans.

While in the Puranas, Vishnu is described as frequently appearing or reincarnating in 10 manifestations, known as Dashavatara or Maha Awatara. The embodiment of Vishnu's incarnation can be in the form of animals or humans¹⁵. The purpose of the incarnation is to restore the cosmos or the order of the world's life. Vishnu's ten forms of reincarnation are as follows: (1) **Matsya**: Matsya is the first avatar of Vishnu as a giant fish. In Hindu mythology, Matsya Avatar appeared during the Satyayoga period during the reign of the Son of the Sun God, namely King Satyabrata or Maharaja Waiwaswata Manu. At that time Vishnu incarnated as Matsya to save the first human from the catastrophic deluge that would destroy the whole earth. Vishnu in his incarnation as Matsya ordered Maharaja Waiswaswata Manu to make a large ship to save mankind; (2) **Kurma**: Kurma is the second embodiment of Vishnu as a tortoise avatar. In the Book of Adiparwa, Kurma appeared in the time of Satyayoga by the name of Akupa. Kurma came to be the rotating base of Mount Mahameru, from which the Amrita water (holy water of life) in the Mantana Ocean or the Ocean of Milk is extracted. Amrita water is used to save the lives of mankind; (3) **Varaha**: Varaha is the third avatar of Vishnu as a wild boar, appearing during the Satyayoga period. At that time the earth was about to be drowned by the demon Hiranyaksha. Facing the impending destruction of the world, Vishnu incarnated into a wild boar with long fangs to support the earth so that it would not sink. However, Hiranyaksa resisted Vishnu's efforts, and a fierce conflict ensued that lasted for years. In the end, Vishnu defeated Hiranyaksa and, using both his fangs, lifted the earth from the ocean to be put in its proper place; (4) **Narasimha**: Narasimha is the fourth avatar of Vishnu as a human in a lion head who came in the time of Satyayoga to protect every devotee of Vishnu who was threatened by

¹⁴ Amamath Vidyalankar, *The Holy Vedas* (Punjab: Clarion Book, 1983).

¹⁵ Ashoke Kumar Chatterjee, *Purana Purusha Yogiraj Sri Shama Chum Labiree: A Complete Biography* (Kalkota: Yogiraj Publication, 2007).

Hiranyakashipu, Hiranyaksha's brother. Hiranyakashipu was very revengeful to Vishnu and his worshipers because his brother was killed by Varaha (Vishnu's avatar in the previous life). Despite Brahma's blessing that no animals, humans, or gods could kill him, Hiranyakashipu was finally killed by Vishnu in his incarnation as a lion-headed man; (5) **Vamana**: Vamana is the fifth avatar of Vishnu as a dwarf brahmana carrying an umbrella. Vamana appeared in the time of Tretayoga to uphold truth and justice by giving punishment to King Mahabali, an asura who had seized heavens from Indra.

More: (6) **Parashurama**: Parashurama is the sixth avatar of Vishnu as a brahmana armed with axes, bows and arrows who appeared in the time of Tretayoga when the knights, who were supposed to be protecting the weak, were always fighting and causing chaos on earth. Parashurama came to crush the greedy and troublemaking knights; (7) **Rama**: Rama was the seventh avatar of Vishnu as a knight in the time of Tretayoga. Rama was born as the son of King Dasaratha of Ayodhya. Vishnu's reincarnation as Rama was to destroy the evil and tyranny caused by the demon King Ravana of Lanka; (8) **Krishna**: Krishna is the eighth reincarnation of Vishnu in the form of a dark-skinned man, crowned with peacock feathers, as King Dwarawati. Krishna came down to the world to save mankind from the cruelty of King Kamsa and Jarasandha. Krishna also helped the Pandavas to uphold justice and truth by eradicating the anger caused by Kurawa; (9) **Buddha**: Buddha was the ninth avatar of Vishnu in the form of a prince named Gautama, the son of King Sododana of Kapilawastu India. Buddha means he who attains enlightenment. Buddha Gautama came to teach mankind that would lead them to the attainment of consciousness and perfect enlightenment; and (10) **Kalki**: Kalki is described as the tenth Avatar and final reincarnation of Vishnu that would appear in the time of Kali Yuga or the age of darkness and destruction. Kalki would manifest as the son of a brahmana who hid among the Himalayan mountains and would come down to the world to put the dispute and enmity due to human deviation from the teachings of dharma. According to the Hindu teachings, Kalki will descend when the inter-religious conflict in the world reaches its peak. After his mission is completed, Kalki will ascend to heaven and Satyayoga or the era of virtue will start.

Vishnu has supernatural properties and always incarnates according to his mission in bringing truth, justice, and prosperity to the

world. The deity is depicted with certain attributes according to his character in the form of paintings, statues, sculptures, or reliefs to make it easier for adherents to embrace. Vishnu is described as a handsome man with four arms symbolizing his power, with each hand carrying a weapon¹⁶. First is Panchajanya or conch shell trumpet held in the upper left hand which symbolizes creativity and contains the elements of the universe, namely water, earth, fire, air and ether or electricity. Second is Cakra, a war discus with a rotating sharp edge called Sudarshana, held in the upper right hand as a symbol of wise views or thoughts. Third, a mace named Kaumodaki which is held in the lower left hand. It symbolizes the existence of individual humans. Fourth is the Lotus flower (Padma) as a symbol of freedom. The flower also symbolizes the power of the universe. Vishnu's complexion is described as dark blue, symbolizing the color of the sky as an eternal power without limits. His chest bears the symbol of Shrivatsa for his lover Dewi Sri or Lakshmi. He also wears a crown, a Kaustubha divine jewel on his neck, and a pair of earrings that symbolize the conflicting nature of life. Vishnu always rests in the bed of Ananta Sesa or the holy snake.

In the Vaishnava traditions, Vishnu is depicted to have different forms with six divine attributes, namely *Jñāna* (knowing everything that happens in the universe), *Aishvarya* (omnipotent and nothing can control him), *Shakti* (having the power to make the impossible possible), *Bala* (capable of sustaining everything without feeling tired), *Virya* (having spiritual power as a holy spirit in all beings), and *Tejas* (giving spiritual light to all beings). Vaishnava scholars believe that Vishnu is the embodiment of the Almighty, so he has countless supernatural powers. He exists in every manifestation in the entire universe, not only in man but also in every animal, plant, gods and in every place and time.

Vishnu in the Javanese Contexts

Archaeological studies reveal that the oldest Vishnu statue in Java was found in Cibuaya, Kerawang, West Java. It is estimated that the statue has existed since the seventh century¹⁷. During the heyday of the

¹⁶ Gosta, Iconography Dictionary of the Indian Religions; I Made Titib, *Teologi dan simbol-simbol dalam Agama Hindhu* (Surabaya: Paramitra Triguna, 2003), p. 235.

¹⁷ Soekmono, "Candi, Fungsi dan Pengertiannya," Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta (1974).

Hindu Mataram Kingdom in the eighth century, King Sanjaya had worshipped Vishnu as one of the Hindu deities in Java¹⁸. The Canggal inscription dating back to 654 Shaka or around 732 CE wrote that King Sanjaya worshiped Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma. The veneration of the three gods was done by building the Prambanan temple which consists of three main temples, each of which was dedicated to worshipping Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

In Javanese mythology, it is believed that the earth was created by Brahma and the first human was created by Vishnu¹⁹. When creating the earth, Brahma also wanted to create humans as its inhabitants, but Brahma's efforts to create humans always failed. Only with the help of Vishnu was then the earth filled with humans. Vishnu created a human from clay equipped with a soul. In the first attempt, Vishnu forgot to include breath (prana). As a result, the newly created humans fell apart and the soul that was in the destroyed human creation became an evil ghost. With that experience, Vishnu made another effort to create a more perfect human being equipped with the necessary elements. Thus, the first expected human came into being, and Vishnu named him Adam. To complete Adam's life in the world, Vishnu created another female human from a lotus flower, who was named Kana (Eve).

Throughout the history of Javanese Hindus, gods have always been worshiped so that people find peace, tranquility, and happiness. The Javanese hold various rituals and offerings to their gods. In practice, the gods who are often worshiped are Shiva and Vishnu. Both deities are believed to be the driving force of life in the world. Shiva is the destroyer on earth, while Vishnu is the restorer. With the existence of these two elements of destruction and restoration, the life of the world will continue. As the sustainer of the world, Vishnu is also believed as be able to unite the world²⁰.

¹⁸ D.G.E. Hall, *History of Southeast Asia* (New York: Mac Milan & Co Ltd., 1955), pp. 46-50; N.J. Krom, *Zaman Hindhu, terjemahan Arif Effendi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sarjana, 1956), pp. 60-65; Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1994), p. 43.

¹⁹ Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1994), p. 329.

²⁰ Haryati Soebadio, *Jnanasiddhanta* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1985), p. 153.

The old Javanese book of *Tantu Panggelaran* written in the fifteenth century Majapahit narrates the origins of the island of Java²¹. It is said that Bathara Guru ordered Brahma and Vishnu to fill the island with human life. At that time, the island was still floating and tossed about by the waves in the ocean. To make the island stop and not be shaken by the ocean currents, the gods decided to peg the island to the seabed by using Mount Mahameru from India. To achieve this, Vishnu transformed himself into a dragon named Ananta Boga as a giant rope to bind Mount Mahameru to make it easier to transport the mountain to Java.

During the times of the Hindu kingdoms in Java, many kings described themselves as Vishnu's incarnations. The beliefs in Vishnu's duty as the preserver and restorer of the world made people support their kings who claimed to be the incarnation of Vishnu. The kings of Kediri always claimed to be descendants or incarnations of Vishnu²². King Airlangga who died in 1094 AD was buried in a stone building called Candi Belahan. There is a relief in the mausoleum depicting Vishnu as riding an eagle and flanked by his two wives, Dewi Sri and Laksmi²³. This shows that during Airlangga's reign, Vishnu was believed to be the highest and most revered god.

In the Mahabharata and Ramayana stories, ideal kings including Krishna and Sri Rama are also depicted as Vishnu's incarnations. As an incarnation of Vishnu, Krishna is known as a clever and wise king, both in governance and on the battlefield. Pandhawa's victory in the Bharatayuda war was inseparable from Krishna's role as their advisor. Krishna's advice to Arjuna to continue fighting against his brother Karna was one of the keys to the Pandavas' victory. Similarly, Sri Kandi's victory in the face of Bhishma, the Kurawa commander, was also the fruit of Krishna's strategy.

In the Ramayana story, the character of Sri Rama is the incarnation of the powerful and wise Vishnu. With his supernatural powers and wisdom, he managed to defeat a very powerful demon king named Prabu Rahwana (Ravana). Sri Rama is also known as a noble and humble person, making him an ideal king. There are two parts of the

²¹ Pigeaud, *The Tantu Panggelaran* ('s-Gravenhage: Nedherland Book-en Steendrukkerij voorheen H.L. Smits, 1924).

²² N.J. Krom, *Zaman Hindhu, terjemahan Arif Effendi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sarjana, 1956), p. 153.

²³ Sockmono, "Candi, Fungsi dan Pengertiannya.

story in the Ramayana which contain Sri Rama's advice about the duties of an ideal king. First, is Sri Rama's advice to his younger brother Bharata, who is required to reign in Ayodya. Sri Rama's advice is contained in Sarga III Kakawin Ramayana. The Javanese poet Yasadipura I adapted this advice to become Serat Rama. Second, is Sri Rama's advice to Raden Wibisana, after being crowned King of Alengka to replace his brother Ravana. Known as Asthabrata, this advice was so popular in Java that it was adapted by Prince Karanggayam in the *Book of Nitiruti* and by Sri Paku Buwana V in *Serat Centhini*. The advice of Sri Rama, Vishnu incarnate, was used as a guide for the kings in Java in ruling their people²⁴.

Vishnu in the Classical Javanese Islamic Texts

The presence of Vishnu (Wisnu) in the life of the Javanese Hindus was maintained during the Islamic period. Although no longer believed to be a god to be worshiped in Javanese society, Vishnu still occupies a special place in Javanese society. In *Babad Tanah Jawi* written during the development of Islam, the figure of Vishnu is described to have an important role in the history of Javanese life. It is said that the history of the island of Java began with Prophet Adam who had a son Nabi Sis, who later had a child Nur Cahya, who later had a child Nur Rasa, who eventually had a child Sang Hyang Wenang. Then, Sang Hyang Wenang himself had a son Sang Hyang Tunggal who later had a son named Bathara Guru. The later had four sons Bathara Sambu, Brama, Mahadewa, and Vishnu. Bathara Guru crowned his youngest son Bathara Vishnu as the first king on the island of Java, as in the text of Pupuh 1 Dhandhanggula from the 3rd and 4th stanzas below:

The One who composed the song
narrates the history of the kings
on the Island of Java (as follows):
In the days of the ancestors
Prophet Adam had a son
(named) Sis, (who) had a son Nurcahya
Nurcahya had a son
named Nurasa
whose son was Sang Hyang Wenang

²⁴ Karkana Parta Kusuma Kamajaya, *Kebudayaan Jawa, Perpaduannya dengan Islam* (Yogyakarta: IKAPI, 1995), p. 139.

who then had a son Sang Hyang Tunggal.²⁵

Sang Hyang Tunggal had a son named Guru
 Guru had five offspring
 Sang Hyang Sambu being the eldest
 Brama the second
 Mahadewa being the middle
 And the youngest was Vishnu
 who became a king
 reigning on Java Island
 and with the religious belief
 (of) Islam from the Land of Arabia.²⁶

These lines state that Vishnu was revealed to be a king in Java. When Bathara Guru crowned Vishnu, his consideration was the religion of Islam which came from Arabia. In line with the meaning that Islam is peace, Vishnu was expected to rule the people on the Land of Java towards a peaceful and prosperous Javanese society. Vishnu and Islam have the same vision and carry out the same mission, namely, to create peace and prosperity in the universe. Thus, this text emphasizes that despite coming from the Land of Arabia, Islam is a blessing to the entire universe. Islam is not only a guide for the Arabs but for the people of the entire world, including the Javanese.

In *Serat Suluk Warni-Warni*, especially *Pupuh Dhandhanggula I:5*, it is told that an *irbas* was the basis for the life history of the Javanese people, namely Prabu Kresna as the incarnation of Bhatara Vishnu, just as the miracle revealed by God to the kings in the Land of Arabia, as stated in the following text.

During the successions of kings,
 the beginning was born in Java, King Sri Sindula,
 Banjaransari followed suit,

²⁵ The original version in Javanese says:

Hyang aripta atêmbang artati; kang tinutur sajarabing nata; ing nusa Jawi sakebe; dhibin ingkang lulubur; Nabi Adam aputra; Esis putra Nurcahya; Nurcahya asunu; iya kang aran Nurrasa; nuhya putra Sang Hyang Wênang iku singgih; aputra Sang Hyang Tunggal.

²⁶ The original version in Javanese says:

Sang Hyang Tunggal Guru putraneki; Guru ika aputra lilima; Sang Hyang Sambu pambarêpe; Brama ingkang panggulu; Mahadewa panêngabneki; Wisnu nuragilira; kang jumênêng ratu; jumênêng ing Nusa Jawa; iku iya titimbaning agami; Islam nêgara Arab.

Then, the Kingdom of Kanjeng Rosul,
Rara Panji from Java,
Irhas incarnated with respect,
Three are already perfected
in Java at first,
Prabu Krishna, Vishnu's incarnation to Java
And the miracles of the rulers in Arabia.²⁷

It is narrated in the text that there were successions of kings in the history of Java, starting from Prabu Sri Sindhula to Raden Banjaransari. The next change was to the Kingdom of Kanjeng Rosul, that is, the Islamic Kingdom in the Land of Java, with *irhas* incarnated or revealed with respect. That said, three perfections started the Islamic Kingdom of Java, namely Prabu Kresna as the incarnation of Vishnu and the miracles of the rulers in Arabia, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. These three miracles from Allah became the basis for the course of the Javanese Islamic society towards peace and prosperity.

In Serat Suluk Warni-Warni pupuh Dhandhanggula, the 26th and 40th stanzas lines 8-10, it is said that at first Vishnu incarnated as King Pakukuhan to spread Buddhism. However, as time changed, Vishnu ended his mission in the world by spreading the teachings of Islam, as in the following text:

Vishnu incarnated to the King of Pakukuhan,
originally preached Buddhism.²⁸

In the subsequent stanza, it is narrated that:

As time went by and changed,
He ended his mission on earth in the morning prayer,
And Vishnu had lost his Buddhism.²⁹

The two excerpts show the transformation of Vishnu in Java. At the time of his incarnation in the Pakukuhan Kingdom, the

²⁷ The original version in Javanese says:

*Duk sekabat ngratu genti-genti; twuh neng Java beskal Sri Sindhula;
Banjaransari anempel; Kratone Kanjeng Rosul; Rara Panji saka ngejawi; Irhas
titis nembrama; langkep tiga sampun; Ing Java beskalira; Prabu Kresna titis
Wisnu irhas Jawi; mujijat pra gung Arab.*

²⁸ The original version in Javanese says:

Wisnu titis Pakukuhan; pencar gaga tata gama Buda kawit.

²⁹ The original version in Javanese says:

*babar tengkeh genti mangsa; mungkas duta bumyantara salat enjing; Wisnu
murca Budanya.*

reincarnation was understood as the ninth avatar, namely Buddha. In his reincarnation as Buddha, Vishnu is represented as a prince who teaches mankind the teachings of Buddha for enlightenment. Along with the changing times, Vishnu had to end his mission as a messenger who taught Buddhism on earth. The change was marked by Vishnu praying in the morning to start a new mission. The morning prayer is a symbol of the changes in life that the Javanese people go through. This means that Vishnu has since started a new day and is no longer reincarnated as Buddha but has become a Muslim by performing the dawn prayer.

Vishnu's transformation from Buddhism to Islam is also depicted in Pupuh 1 Dhandhanggula verses 27 and 28 of the *Serat Warna-warni* as follows:

The three Javanese expressions *basuta basuti*,
basunanda; with *basuta* being the caterpillar
basuti is the cocoons,
basunanda is the butterfly,
the banujan was like a caterpillar,
thrown down onto Java,
morphed into a cocoon,
changed name to Manikmaya,
become Sang Hyang Vishnu the butterfly, who descended the genie,
Nawasanga's father.³⁰

Then Vishnu was like a caterpillar again,
turned into a cocoon as the inspiration for the Javanese Kingdoms,
started reincarnation in Pakukuhan,
down through Banjaransari,
Vishnu's final incarnation,
was with Brahma,
And Demak turned into a butterfly,
both named *irhas*,
in Bintara, the sanctity incarnated on the saints,
of Java, nine in number.³¹

³⁰ The original version in Javanese says:

Sloka Jawa basuta basuti; basunanda basuta ulernya; basuti enthung jarwané; basunandané kupu; pra banu jan uler upami; binuwang tibèng Jawa; babarané enthung; ngalih aran Manikmaya; dadi kupu Sang Hyang Wisnu wijining jim; bapané Nawa Sanga

³¹ The original version in Javanese says:

Vishnu's transformation is told in Javanese expressions or figures of speech, namely *basuta*, *basuti* and *basunanda*. The figurative language describes a process of metamorphosis in the life history of the Javanese people. *Basuta* means caterpillar, *basuti* means cocoon and *basunanda* means butterfly. Banujan is like a discarded caterpillar that fall on the Land of Java. The caterpillar morphed into a cocoon and changed its name to Manikmaya. Then he turned into a butterfly, namely Vishnu who descended the genie and became the father of Lord Nawasanga.

In the next stanza, it is told that Vishnu metamorphosed again into a caterpillar which then turned into a cocoon. The cocoon became the revelation for the kings in Java, which was revealed to King Pakukuhan down through Banjaransari. In the end, together with Brahma, Vishnu incarnated in the Kingdom of Demak as a butterfly. Both became *irhas* who brought the light of salvation, namely Islam to the Kingdom of Demak. Their *karamah* (sanctity) was also passed on to the nine saints in Java, who became the main preachers of Islam in the archipelago.

In two stanzas of Pupuh Dhandhanggula I, namely stanzas 118 and 119, it is told that Vishnu was the beginning and order of Islamic life in Demak.

The noble rule was to begin,
Demak's irhas and the sanctity of Ampel and Bonang,
the second embodiment of Vishnu,
sanctity melted in Mataram,
like a priest who received,
Irhas embodied to the sultan,
Java grew well,
boys carrying the holy book,
attending religious learning in health and fervor,
so at that time.³²

The longer it grew, the better it got,

mulya Wisnu pindha uler malib; babar enthung pulung kraton Jawa; wit Pakukuhan titisé; sampèng Banjaran Santun; pamungkasé Sang Wisnu titis; tumbuk kélawan Brama; Demak babar kupu; dbapur kalib nama irhas; nèng Bintara kramaté nitis pra wali; nèng Jawa gunggung sanga;

³² The original version in Javanese says:

tata Jawa mulya gya sekawit; Irhas Demak kramat Ngampèl Bèrang; roro Wisnu babarané; kramat murcèng Mentarum; Kya katègan mangonah tampi; irhas nitis jeng sultan; Jawa wuruh wangun; bocah lanang gèndhong kitab; pating srendhil lunga ngaji séhat terkis; duganya wit samana.

goods from outside, all clothes,
 Java was abundant with food,
 followed the subtle authority,
 it's the inspiration of the Egyptians,
 the kingdom of the prophets,
 the ancient nations,
 met the Javanese inspiration,
 Vishnu's nation has gained glory in Ampel and Giri,
 continued until Tegal.³³

According to the stanzas, the new order for the Javanese people was about to begin. The rules of Javanese life are based on an *irhas* in Demak, which brings *karomah* to Ampel and Bonang. The stanza also mentions the second incarnation of Vishnu (Kurma Avatar), namely Vishnu incarnated in the form of a giant turtle as the foundation of Mount Mahameru which was used to drill the *amrta* water in the Mantana Ocean³⁴. Vishnu's success in extracting the *amrta* water can save human life from destruction. The symbol of Vishnu's presence as a turtle avatar is still clearly visible today in the form of a turtle carving at the *mihrab* wall of the Great Mosque of Demak³⁵. His sanctity passed down to the Mataram Kingdom, his *irhas* passed on to the Sultans so that the life of the Javanese grew well. The prevalence of Islamic teachings in the neighborhood is evident from the large number of boys who travel back and forth in good health and enthusiasm to attend religious learning facilities.

The blessings of Islamic teachings are increasingly bringing progress in life, not only in religious life but also in worldly life. Along with the spread and development of Islam in Java, international trade routes in the archipelago developed rapidly³⁶. Various kinds of goods from clothing to food became a commodity of international trade on

³³ The original version in Javanese says:

*saya lama wuruh wangun malih; brana sabrang dhapur sandhang-sandhang;
 minuh pangan ngejawa kèh; manut perbawèng lembut; punang irhas keng bangsa
 Mesir; tur kraton kanabéan; nguni bangsanipun; tumbuk lawan irhas Jawa;
 bangsa Wisnu wit mulyanèng Ampèl Giri; pulet wijil ing Tegal.*

³⁴ Dennis Hadson, *The Body of God: An Emperor's Palace for Krishna in Eighth-Century Kanchipuram* (Oxford: University Press US, 2008).

³⁵ Maharsi, "Simbolisme dalam Arsitektur Masjid Demak," *Journal Thaqafiyah* 5, 1 (2008), p. 34.

³⁶ H.J. De Graaf and G. Pigeaud, *Kerajaan-Kerajaan Islam di Jawa: Peralihan dari Majapahit ke Mataram* (Jakarta: Grafiti Press, 1998).

various coasts in Java. This situation imitated the greatness of Egypt, where the kingdoms of the prophets in the past thrived. Along with the irhas bestowed on the Land of Java, people's lives have become more and more prosperous. The northern coastal area of Java from Ampel to Tegal became an international maritime trade area that brought prosperity to its citizens.

In Serat Suluk Warni-warni Pupuh 1 Dhandhanggula, stanzas 44 and 45, it is also told about the change in the author's religious understanding, especially related to heaven, hell, Prophet Adam, and the existence of Lord Vishnu in the life history of the Javanese Muslim community, as in the following text:

As a little kid I learned,
Heaven and hell were indestructible,
even eternal forever,
The Kilir when he murdered,
the dead was the son of Adam,
and the embodiment of the gods
Nawa Sanga Vishnu,
not immortal in the Holy Qur'an,
the sanctity of Walisanga had no effect,
to the perfection of Java.³⁷

As I grew up, I relearned,
Paradise and hell will surely be ruined,
never eternal ever,
The Kilir when he murdered,
the dead was not the real son of Adam,
and the existence of the gods,
Nawa Sanga Vishnu,
certainly, fulfilled in the Qur'an,
and Walisanga's sanctity was crucial,
to the perfection of Java.³⁸

³⁷ The original version in Javanese says:

begandring ku kala bocah cilik; swarga nraka nora kena rusak; malah langgeng selamsé; Sang Kilir kala bunuh; Iku anak Adam kang mati; myang glaré para déwa; Nawa Sanga Wisnu; tan langgeng neng dalil Kuran; Wali sanga prabawané tan nguruni; munggèng kamuksan Java

³⁸ The original version in Javanese says:

sareng gedhé san begandring malih; swarga nraka pesthi kena rusak; ora langgeng selaminé; Sang Kilir kalabunuh; lain anak Adam sayekti; tuwin glare pra déwa;

The text narrates that a person's maturity and knowledge have a great influence on his understanding and religious beliefs. When the author of the text was young and was beginning to learn, he was taught that heaven and hell are eternal. It is also taught that the embodiments of Lord Nawasanga and Lord Vishnu are not found in the Qur'an. Similarly, the sanctity of Wali Sanga has no effect on the perfection of Java.

However, his understanding and belief changed when he was an adult and learned more about Islam. After advancing his study, he found out that heaven and hell are not eternal. In other words, there is no single verse in the Qur'an that clearly states heaven and hell's eternity³⁹. Verses of the Qur'an, for example, Surah Al-An'am: 128, Hud; 107 nor An-Naba': 23, do not mention the eternity of heaven and hell. Meanwhile, according to Mohammad Iqbal, heaven is a state of joy after getting the victory in overcoming various impulses towards division, while hell is sadness and torture. In the Qur'an and Hadith, heaven and hell are humans' inner realities described by their characteristics.

In the same vein, the author of the text believed that the existence of Lord Nawasanga and Lord Vishnu is present and complete in the Qur'an. According to Chambert-Loir (1985), the gods are the descendants of jinn whom God created from the fire a thousand years before Adam was created⁴⁰. The first jinn that God created was named Jan Manjan, who descended Bathara Guru. Then Bathara Guru descended Vishnu who became the ancestor of the Islamic kings in Java, starting from Raden Patah to the kings of Mataram Islam. The Sultanate of Demak Bintara with Raden Patah as the first sultan was perfected thanks to the sanctity of Walisanga. The presence of Raden Patah and Walisanga is a symbol of the Kingdom as an Islamic kingdom in Java that is peaceful and prosperous, being the embodiment of Vishnu and Lord Nawasanga as in the past.

The author of Suluk Warni-warni is aware that constantly re-learning the teachings of the Qur'an will help to understand its meaning. Deepening the teachings of the Qur'an will open people's

Nawa Sanga Wisnu; Wus pesthi langkep neng Kuran; Walisanga prabawané anguruni; Munggèng kamuksan Jawa.

³⁹ Deddy Ilyas, "Antara Surga dan Neraka," *Jurnal Ilmu Agama* 14 (2016), pp. 113-128.

⁴⁰ Henry Chambert-Loir, *Cerita Asal Bangsa Jin dan segala Dewa-dewa* (Bandung: Angkasa, 1985).

minds to reveal the real essence of Islam in the Qur'an, especially in revealing the meaning of Vishnu and Islam as a blessing in Java.

Conclusion

Since the times of the Old Mataram Kingdom, Javanese people had known Vishnu as one of the three principal gods in Hinduism along with Shiva and Brahma. In Trimurti, Vishnu is the preserver, Shiva is the destroyer and Brahma the creator. The Javanese Hindus recognized Vishnu as the gods who maintains and brings peace to the universe. Vishnu also reincarnated in various avatars to maintain and restore the worldly order of life. The embodiment of Vishnu is also present in the form of artifacts and various shadow puppet shows. Vishnu has a crucial role in bringing peace and safety to the universe that the deity has many devotees.

When Islam was introduced and began to develop in Java, the figure of Vishnu kept being present in Javanese Islamic texts. *Babad Tanah Jawi* and *Serat Suluk Warna-warni* are two popular texts in the development of Islam in Java. Both texts narrate that Vishnu was the ancestor of the kings and rulers of Java. *Babad Tanah Jawi* proclaimed Vishnu as the first King of Java who adhered to the religion of Islam originating in Arabia. In turn, Vishnu became the progenitor of kings and rulers in the Land of Java, from King Pakukuhan, Banjaransari, down to the kings of Mataram Islam. Meanwhile, *Serat Suluk Warna-warni* narrates that Vishnu was one of the holy inspirations for the lives of Javanese Muslims in addition to the two miracles originally revealed in Arabia, namely, the Qur'an and Hadith. *Serat Suluk Warna-warni* also mentions that Vishnu morphed from a Buddhist propagator to a preacher of Islam in Java as well as a metamorphosis from the Pakukuhan Kingdom to the Demak Islamic Kingdom, whose *karamah* (sanctity) was embodied in Raden Patah and Walisanga as the preachers of Islam in the archipelago.

Vishnu's metamorphosis during the Demak Kingdom resulted in a peaceful and harmonious Javanese life order. The order brought progress not only in the religious sphere but also in worldly affairs. Religious life was marked by the increasing number of children who recited the Quran or learned Islam while the blessings for worldly life were seen from the growing trade. The spread of Islam on the north coast of Java opened international trade routes that brought prosperity. Various commodities were traded in the northern coastal areas of Java.

The Ampel -Tegal region became the center of trade routes that brought prosperity to the Islamic community in Java. The presence of Vishnu and Islam in the history of Javanese life was inseparable as a form of continuity that emphasized harmony and prosperity in the universe.

The author of *Serat Suluk Warni-Warni* also deduced that a person's maturity and knowledge have an effect on his understanding and religious beliefs. Only after he grew up and learned again that he was able to understand the existence of heaven, hell, Adam, and the gods including Vishnu contained in the Holy Qur'an. []

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