

## BEYOND SYNCRETISM

### Evidence of the Vernacularization of Islamic Theological Terms in Javanese Literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

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#### Abstract

*Scholars have long debated whether the relationship between Islam and Javanese culture should be considered syncretism or inculturation. This article analyzes Javanese literature to discuss post-syncretism in Islamic studies. It argues that Javanese literature exemplifies the vernacularization of Islamic theology into Javanese language and discourse. It describes how Islamic theology was used in eight Javanese texts at different historical points in the 19th Century. The leading Islamic theological terms (God, angels, Al-Qur'an, Prophet, and the Last Day) have consistent meanings in the Javanese text. Differences were only found in spelling, pronunciation, and written script that converted Arabic to Javanese and Pegon. Vernacularization functions as a tool for transmitting knowledge while the substance, meaning, and content remain unchanged. Therefore, there is no evidence of syncretism in using these terms. Syncretism may have operated in Javanese culture (e.g., Javanese Islamic rituals), but it does not appear that syncretism has penetrated the realm of theology. Accordingly, future studies on local Islam should explore discursive traditions and how knowledge has been generated alongside the process of Islamization.*

*[Para sarjana telah berdebat lama apakah hubungan Islam dan budaya Jawa, sebaiknya berupa sinkretisme atau inkulturasi. Artikel ini membahas literatur Jawa untuk mendiskusikan post-sinkretisme dalam kajian Islam. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa literatur Jawa mencerminkan penyebaran*

*teologi Islam melalui bahasa Jawa dan wacananya. Artikel ini menunjukkan teologi Islam dalam enam teks Jawa dengan penekanan historis yang berbeda pada abad 19. Istilah teologi penting seperti, Allah, malaikat, al-Qur'an, nabi dan kiamat, mempunyai makna yang tetap dalam teks Jawa. Perbedaan yang muncul hanya ejaan, pengucapan dan penulisan saat dialihkan dari bahasa Arab ke bahasa Jawa dan aksara pegon. Pribumisasi berfungsi sebagai alat transmisi pengetahuan, sedangkan substansi, makna dan kandungannya tidak berubah. Oleh karena itu tidak ada sinkretisme yang digunakan dalam pribumisasi ini. Sinkretisme mungkin berlangsung di wilayah budaya, tetapi tidak dalam konteks teologi. Dengan demikian, kajian ke depan tentang Islam lokal mengarah pada diskursif tradisi dan bagaimana pengetahuan berkembang seiring dengan proses islamisasi.]*

**Keywords:** Javanese Islam, vernacularization, post-syncretism, Javanese literature, Islamic theology

## A. Introduction

The study of Javanese and Islamic literature has increased, especially after the development of Islamic studies in the 19th century. There are at least two schools of thought from previous studies regarding the positioning of Islamic and Javanese literature studies. The first is *Islam Jawa*, focusing on the original version of Islam. Snouck Hurgronje put forward this view. The second is Javanese Islam, often referred to as the Javanese religion. This second view emphasizes the anthropological perspective. This view, proposed by Clifford Geertz<sup>1</sup>, Koentjaraningrat<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>2</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Niels Mulder,<sup>3</sup> A. H. Johns<sup>4</sup>, Michel Picard<sup>5</sup>, and Jochem van den Boogert<sup>6</sup>, argued that there had been a synthesis between Islam and Javanese culture that become syncretic Islam in many contexts.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of the debate between these streams of thought, including the perspective in understanding syncretism as argued by Al Makin,<sup>8</sup> the syncretism of Islam in Java was generally considered within the lives of religious communities.

Previous studies have described the occurrence of syncretism between Islam and Java. *Slametan*<sup>9</sup>, and *wiwitan*<sup>10</sup> are examples of this religious syncretism. However, Islamic and Javanese syncretism in literature studies must be reviewed. .

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<sup>3</sup> Niels Mulder used the term Javanese Weltanschauung to describe the concept of Javanism that was claimed to have wider coverage compared to the religion. J.A. Niels Mulder, "Aliran Kebatinan as an Expression of the Javanese Worldview", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1970), pp. 105–14; Niels Mulder, "Abangan Javanese Religious Thought and Practice", *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, vol. 139, no. 2 (1983), pp. 260–7. Other than that, Ricci coined the term Balinese theology to describe the root of Saiva religion in Bali. Andrea Acri, "Modern Hindu Intellectuals and Ancient Texts: Reforming Śaiva Yoga in Bali", *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, vol. 169, no. 1 (2013). A similar attempt was done by Ricci in analyzing Jewish literature in Java without using religious syncretism, though the contexts were similar. Ronit Ricci, "The Ambiguous Figure of the Jew in Javanese Literature", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 38, no. 112 (2010), pp. 403–17.

<sup>4</sup> A.H. Johns, "From Buddhism to Islam: An Interpretation of the Javanese Literature of the Transition", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1966), pp. 40–50.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Picard and Rémy Madinier (eds.), *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, Orthodoxy, and Religious Contention in Java and Bali*, 1st edition (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> J.W.P. van den Boogert, "Rethinking Javanese Islam. Towards New Descriptions of Javanese Traditions", PhD. Dissertation (Leiden: Leiden University, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> L.F. Brakel, "Islam and Local Traditions: Syncretic Ideas and Practices", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 32, no. 92 (2004), pp. 5–20.

<sup>8</sup> Al Makin, "Unearthing Nusantara's Concept of Religious Pluralism: Harmonization and Syncretism in Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic Classical Texts", *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 54, no. 1 (2016), pp. 1–32.

<sup>9</sup> Jochem van den Boogert, "The Role of Slametan in the Discourse on Javanese Islam", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 45, no. 133 (2017), pp. 352–72.

<sup>10</sup> Agus Maimun, Agus Indiyanto, and M. Mujab, "Educating Islamic Values through Wiwitan Tradition", *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2020), pp. 359–86.

Javanese literature mainly is found in *kakawin* (old Javanese long narrative poems) carved into temple reliefs. The *kakawin* adopted pre-Islamic Javanese literature.<sup>11</sup> After the development of Islam in Java in the 13th Century, the study of Javanese chronicles, *suluk* (poetic texts/mystical songs), and other manuscripts cannot be separated from Islam. After 1300, Islam became firmly rooted in Javanese society. Javanese literature teaches both religion and traditions.<sup>12</sup> Suluk Sunan Bonang, Suluk Kadrêsan, and Suluk Regol are among the oldest examples of Javanese Islamic literature. Due to Islamic dogmas and worldviews<sup>13</sup>, Islam's position was evident in that literature. Islamic Javanese literature includes translations in Javanese and Pegon scripts written in Javanese with Arabic characters. G. W. J. Drewes showed that Javanese Islam caused tension between Islam and Hinduism-Buddhism, as demonstrated by the *Sêrat Darmogandul*.<sup>14</sup> *Sêrat Gatoloco* and *Sêrat Darmogandul* were also considered syncretistic. The two works of literature were not created to meld religious views. Instead, they responded to new ideas and cultures in a faltering Hindu community. Ricklefs called them anti-Islamic literature.<sup>15</sup>

Theodore G. Pigeaud successfully systematized Javanese literature.<sup>16</sup> Pigeaud regarded the cultural and intellectual heritage of Javanese civilization as necessary. Alongside religious services, Islam grew in Java as oral tradition influenced its discourse. In contrast, the study conducted by Edwin<sup>17</sup> challenged Pigeaud's hypothesis that

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<sup>11</sup> Helen Creese, "Old Javanese Studies: A Review of the Field", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 157, no. 1 (2001), pp. 3–33.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> G.W.J. Drewes, "Javanese Poems Dealing with or Attributed to the Saint of Bonang", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 124, no. 2 (1968), pp. 209–40.

<sup>14</sup> G.W.J. Drewes, "The Struggle Between Javanism and Islam as Illustrated by the *Sêrat Dêrmagandul*", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. 122, no. 3 (1966), pp. 309–65.

<sup>15</sup> Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *Polarising Javanese Society: Islamic and Other Visions (c. 1830-1930)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Theodore G. Th. Pigeaud, *Literature of Java* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967).

<sup>17</sup> E.P. Wieringa, "A Nativist Defence of Javanism in Late 19th-Century Java: The Suluk Gatoloco and its Co-Texts in the *Sêrat Suluk Panaraga* Compilation", *Indonesia and the Malay World*, vol. 47, no. 139 (2019), pp. 335–52.

Suluk Gatoloco was once part of the curriculum of Islamic religious schools in Panaraga. Anthropologists like Clifford Geertz proposed the term “Religion of Java” as one based both on literature and living traditions.<sup>18</sup> Koentjaraningrat then highlighted what Clifford Geertz called Javanese culture.<sup>19</sup> These two scholars agreed in their view of the Islamic dimension as limited to an anthropological discourse that neglects religiosity. However, both *Agama Jawa* and *Islam Jawa*, as reflected in Islamic terms, were theologically and doctrinally Islamic, especially in the transition to a Javanese Islamic civilization. It is therefore necessary to revisit the hypothesis above about the connection between language and society, especially in understanding how absorbing Islamic theological terms could symbolise something beyond syncretism, vernacularization, indigenization, or language reproduction. From this perspective, language becomes an essential reference in an attempt to find common ground between Islamic theological studies and Javanese literature.

Language conveys meaning to the reader and represents the dialectics between ideas and reality, which develop, interact, and complement each other to form identity. A.H. Johns adopted a similar outlook on *Agama Jawa*, particularly in his analysis of four Javanese works: *The Book of Bonang*, *Primbon Jawa*, *Tantu Panggelaran*, and *Bimasuci*.<sup>20</sup> According to A.H. Johns, *Agama Jawa*'s dominance was rooted in Hinduism and Buddhism. Islam was not merely a religion, as it produced multiple approaches to combining monism and opposing concepts, with various compromises and combinations between new and old religious traditions.<sup>21</sup> Javanese literature used local language or vernacularization to ease knowledge transmission, but its substance, episteme, and paradigm remained unchanged through pure monism. Manger argued that anthropological studies of local Islam should also include the roles of discursive traditions and knowledge production alongside the spread of Islam.

Post-syncretism is an effort to reconstruct the meaning of the

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<sup>18</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>19</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>20</sup> Johns, “From Buddhism to Islam”.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

syncretic relationship between Islam and Java built by previous scholars. This paper aims to enrich the post-syncretist discourse in the context of Islamic studies in Java by studying the Islamic theological terms that exist in Javanese literature. This article will discuss three research findings about Islamic theological terms in Javanese literature in the 19th century. In the first part, explains the concept of God in Javanese Islamic literature. In the second part, it describes the concepts of angels, the Qur'an, and the Prophet/Apostle. In the third part, it examines the concept of The Day of Judgment and God's Destiny. This study finds that these terms of Islamic theology in Javanese literature represent a type of vernacularization. It proves that there is no religious syncretism in the realm of linguistics.

## B. Islam and Javanese Literature

Literature including the translation and description of Islamic theological terminologies into Javanese can be found in three types of texts. The first type of texts were created through the process of writing knowledge related to Islam into ancient Javanese by the poets of *keraton* (Javanese palace). This process produced works in Javanese. Some of these include *Serat Centhini* (The Book of Centhini [BC]) and *Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati* (The Book of Hidayat Jati [BHJ]).<sup>22</sup> These text were written in ancient Javanese in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The second type of texts contain Islamic theology written originally in Arabic and translated into Javanese. The third type of texts also contain Islamic theology, such as *Niat Ingsun Ngaji* (NIN),<sup>23</sup> *Kitab Taubid Jawa* (TJ),<sup>24</sup> and *Syi'ir 'Aqidah Islamiyyah* (AI).<sup>25</sup> These three types of texts exemplify the dynamics and pattern of development as Islamic theological terms interacted with Javanese culture and language in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The emergence of a tradition of knowledge and its transmission through translation and the invention of new languages was part of the process of internalization produced by pesantren. Pesantren attempted

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<sup>22</sup> Simuh, *Mistik Islam Kejawen Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita: Suatu Studi Terhadap Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati* (Jakarta: Penerbit Universitas Indonesia, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> Syaikh Badawi Hanafi, *Kitab Niat Ingsun Ngaji* (Cilacap: Ihya Media, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> KH. Asnawi, *Kitab Taubid Jawan* (Semarang: Toha Putra, 1958).

<sup>25</sup> Ahmad Baha'uddin, *Syi'ir 'Aqidah Islamiyyah* (Kudus).

to provide the teaching materials, for instance, in translating Arabic texts into Pegon (*Jawa-kitabi*). From the historical perspective, the process of adapting an idea into another language is nothing new, and it has occurred from time to time. In the context of the Javanese Islam, however, one of the earliest projects of vernacularization is found in the translation of the theological text *Aqā'id al-Nasafī* from Arabic into Malay.<sup>26</sup> It also served to uphold national identity in the midst of rapid social change due to modernization and globalization.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, the method of translation was not only the method adopted by Muslim intellectuals. Another method employed was adaptation, such as adapting an Arabic text into a Javanese text by summarizing the meaning a text into a local conception. Such an adaptation process is, according to Saussure, a necessity because language is not only made up of sounds and images but also of concepts.<sup>28</sup>

One of the significant factors in the development of the discourse of Javanese Islamic theology is the process of Islamic learning and Islamic preaching that was accepted and flourished in Javanese society and with Muslim intellectuals.<sup>29</sup> Such a dynamic configuration of Islamic thought produced the inclusive and egalitarian character of Muslims in Java and throughout Indonesia. Therefore, it is not surprising that language became the trigger for the crystallization of religion and social phenomena.<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, language, whether local or national, can help to construct social harmony. The crystallization of religious teachings, harmony, and social disharmony is possible because religion is understood

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<sup>26</sup> Muhammad Naguib Al-Attas, *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of the 'Aqā'id of Al-Nasafī* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1988).

<sup>27</sup> Toha Machsum, "Bahasa dan Sastra Jawa dalam Tradisi Pesantren", (Surabaya, 27 Nov 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Ferdinand la Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (LaSalle, Ill: Open Court, 1998), pp. 12–15, 66–67, 101.

<sup>29</sup> Ronit Ricci, "The Discovery of Javanese Writing in a Sri Lankan Malay Manuscript", *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, vol. 168, no. 4 (2012), pp. 511–8.

<sup>30</sup> Ali Alalou, "Language and Ideology in the Maghreb: Francophonie and Other Languages", *The French Review*, vol. 80, no. 2 (2006), pp. 408–21; Torsten Tschacher, "Can 'Om' be an Islamic term? Translations, Encounters, and Islamic Discourse in Vernacular South Asia", *South Asian History and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2014), pp. 195–211.

as a shared system organized around a transcendental meaning that provides the basis for many interpretations, especially those relating to the principles of religious terms such as God.<sup>31</sup>

### C. About God

Discussion about God has always been a fundamental issue in any religion. Qadi Abd al-Jabbar affirmed that the first obligation inherent to human beings as a creature was to know God as the creator.<sup>32</sup> Discussion about God in religion is therefore fundamental, as a person who does not recognize the existence of God could be labeled as Godless and automatically classified as an atheist. For that same reason, discussion about God is a sensitive issue.<sup>33</sup> Despite that, the discussion about God is far more ancient than the discussion about religion because discussions on God often relate to human identity and authenticity while discussions on religion touch on the issues of human social institutions. God tends to be personal, while religion tends to be a collective and communal concern.

The concept of God to the Javanese, according to Koentjaraningrat, is relatively simple. From a linguistic perspective, the terms *Gusti Allah* and *Allah* describe God as the creator of the whole of nature. Description about God in Islam exists in the context of Javanese culture. He explained that an essential source of concept about God was found in *Nawaruci*, the earliest book of Balinese-Javanese prose at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, which was an essential source for the concept of God. Interestingly, God in the *Nawaruci* was symbolized as a tiny object in the middle of an ocean.<sup>34</sup> This view shall be elaborated on later. Discussion about God became very interesting during the expansion of Islam in

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<sup>31</sup> Ira Allen and Saul Allen, "God Terms and Activity Systems: A Definition of Religion for Political Science", *Political Research Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 3 (2016), pp. 557–70.

<sup>32</sup> 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Aḥmad al-Asadābādī, Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn Ibn Abī Hāshim, and 'Abd al-Karīm 'Uthmān, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*, (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1965).

<sup>33</sup> Stuart Robson, "Speaking to God in Javanese", *Homme*, vol. 34, no. 132 (1994), pp. 133–42.

<sup>34</sup> Koentjaraningrat, "Javanese Terms for God and Supernatural Beings and the Idea of Power", in *Man, Meaning and History: Essays in Honour of H.G. Schulte Nordholt*, ed. by R. Schefold, J.W. Schoorl, and J. Tennekes (Leiden: Brill, 1980), pp. 127–39.

Java. In *Serat Wijil*, P. J. Zoetmulder<sup>35</sup> and G. W. J. Drewes<sup>36</sup> indicated a rather complex discussion about God. When this interaction between Islam and Javanese culture became more intense, the Javanization of Islam had yet to acquire its characteristics. Linguistic differences and the genealogy of ideas reinforced the potential of symbolization, allowing for a wealth of meaning in Javanese culture.

Studies on the abovementioned texts suggested that the word Allah was used in the light of the understanding of the author, the target readers, and the religious context of that specific time. In the book *BHJ*, the word Allah, referring to the Islamic God, was mentioned ten times, as shown below:

*Niyatingsun amet banyu kadas, angilangake kadas cilik land gede perlu karena Allah* (I intend to purify, both from minor and major *hadath* [impurities], because of Allah);

*Saka Dalil pangandikaning Allah, kang kasebut ingdalem Hadis* (From the word of God mentioned in the Hadith);

*Tegesing dallil, anudubake pangandikaning Allah* (The word *dallil* means the word of God);

*Dzating Gusti Kang Amaha Suci, dadi sipating Allah kang sejati* (The substance of God the Most Holy becomes the true nature of God);

As revealed above, *Gusti* (Lord) was used interchangeably with *Allah* (God).<sup>37</sup> In the *BHJ*, the word *Gusti* was mentioned eight times, and they all referred to the same being, God. This fact indicates that *BHJ* was not simply a syncretism of Islam but also a robust discourse on the theology of Islam. Finally, *BHJ* contains expressions and evidence beyond syncretism or denotes indigenization rather than syncretism.

The concept of God can also be identified from the phrase “*Zat Kang Amurba Amisesa Kang Kawasa anitahaken sawiji-wiji*” (The Almighty Substance who has the power to create everything).<sup>38</sup> *Amurba Amisesa*

<sup>35</sup> Petrus Josephus Zoetmulder, *Pantheism and Monism in Javanese Suluk Literature: Islamic and Indian Mysticism in an Indonesian Setting*, ed. by M.C. Ricklefs (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Drewes, “Javanese Poems Dealing with or Attributed to the Saint of Bonah”.

<sup>37</sup> P.J. Zoetmulder and S.O. Robson, *Old Javanese-English Dictionary* (s-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1982), p. 564.

<sup>38</sup> Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita, *Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati*, ed. by R. Tanojo (Surabaya: Trimurti, 1954), p. 3

arrived from *the* Sanskrit word defined as dominating or ruling or the Almighty who rules.<sup>39</sup> Ranggawarsito revealed that the concept of divinity in BHJ was understood through *Sanskrit*, a language closely associated with Hinduism. Accordingly, the concepts of God in Islam and Hinduism were interrelated. This linkage makes it easier for ordinary readers to understand Divinity in Islam. In other sections of BHJ, the term *Pangeran* (Prince) was also used to refer to God. Surprisingly, the word *Pangeran* was not listed in the *Old Javanese Dictionary*<sup>40</sup>. However, the term *Pangeran* was recorded in the Kamus Bahasa Indonesia-Daerah as a Sundanese term referring to *Tuhan* (God). *Pangeran* commonly referred to as an honorable person in Javanese society, like the renowned Pangeran Diponegoro.

The term *Pangeran* was stated eighteen times in BHJ. In general, those eighteen words referred to the same meaning, which is God. *Pangeran*, in this sense, is linked to the concept of *Ilah* (divine) to indicate a more specific concept of God, Allah. An example can be found in the phrase “*ora ana Pangeran, anging ingsun dzat kang angliputing kabanana jati...*” (There is no God except me (Allah) who covers all nature). Apart from that, the term *Pangeran* was also found in the phrases “*ora ana Pangeran anging ingsun*” (there is no God except me [Allah]), “*ora ana Pangeran ananging ingsun Dzat kang nglimputi ing kabanana Jati*” (there is no god but me [Allah] who covers all nature), “*tegesipun mboten wonten Pangeran anging Allah*” (there is no other God but Allah).

There were other instances where the term *Pangeran* was employed to translate the word, Allah, for example, in the phrase “*Pangeran Kang Maha Suci*.” There was no contradiction between the word *Pangeran* as God and *Pangeran* as Allah since the author of BHJ, like in the phrase “*ingkang dipun wastani Pengeran punika Dzat ing gesang kita pribadi*” (what is called God is the essence of our lives).

The intensity of theological-Sufistic terminologies in BHJ is understandable, considering the BHJ as an adaptation of the book and the concept of *Taşawwuf*, which was conceived by Ibn Arabi, as written by Simuh. However, this does not imply that BHJ does not correlate with the theology of Islam. Readers unfamiliar with the genealogy of theological

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<sup>39</sup> Purwadi and Eko Priyo Purnomo, *Kamus Sansekerta Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: BudayaJawa.com, 2008), p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> Zoetmulder and Robson, *Old Javanese-English Dictionary*.

terminologies constructed by Ranggawarsita would immediately conclude that Ranggawarsita was the instigator of Islamic syncretism or even label him as representing *Kejawen Islam* or Javanese Religion. However, his work was comprehensible and acceptable from the perspective of how the author employed the signage to persuade his reader.

Unlike BHJ, which is rich in theological linguistics, BC employed theological linguistics in the context of the discussion to accommodate the narration of stories.<sup>41</sup> In BC, the concept of God was written and described in various terms. Similar to BHJ, BC uses both Islamic and Javanese-derived terminologies. However, the meaning of the terminologies persistently refers to one word, Allah. Some of the terms included were: *Pangeran*, *Gusti*, *Gusti Allah*, *Hyang Widdhi*, *Hyang Buwana*, *Hyang Agung*, *Hyang Maha Suci*, *Hyang Manon*, *Hyang Sukma*, and the word *Allah* itself. More than 50 “Hyang” words were recorded in BC book1 and 2, followed by Agung, Widdhi, and others. BC quite frequently suggests a supernatural dimension. In the context of religion, the supernatural being is also referred to as God.

Another term used to describe Allah was *Hyang Widdhi*. The author of BC applies the word *Hyang Widdhi* to describe a concept of God in Islam, not the Gods of other religions. In twelfth book, *pupuh* (song) number 255-264 reads: “*Ki jatiswara ingkang brangti ing Hyang Widbi lalana saking tanah Cempa ngajawi, angsal wangsit supados kepanggih Seb Amongraga*”; and in eleventh Book, *pupuh* number 221-246 reads: “*Seb Amongraga asung pitédah wangsul ing paugêraning agêsang kinarilana ing Hyannng Widdhi sarana sabar tawakal*”. The term “Hyang Widdhi” seems to be deliberately used by the author of SM to show the context of the discussion and the appropriateness of the context. What the BC writer says about God is essentially God in the context and terminology of Islam. However, depending on the context, the term God was sometimes expressed in other words such as *Gusti*, *Hyang Widdhi*, and *Pangeran*. The pattern of expression using various terms was recorded in the al-Qur’an. Apart from the word Allah, al-Qur’an also documented the use of the word “al-rabb” as in the verse “*rabbana ma khalaqta hadza batila*”; or the word “*ilahi*” as in

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<sup>41</sup> Fauzan Naif, *Kiamat dalam Serat Centhini* (Yogyakarta: Semesta Ilmu, 2012), p. 74.

the verse “*wa ilahukum ilahun wahid*” that simply means *Gusti* or *Pangeran*.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to BHJ and BC, which were written purely in *ha-na-ca-ra-ka* script and Javanese, the other three texts, *Kifayat al-awam* (KA), *Aqidat al-‘awam* (AA), and *Kharidat al-bahiyah* (KB) were written in Arabic and later translated into Javanese and written in *Pegon* scripts. This was done to ensure that the students could understand the content of the text, similar to the *makno gandul* pattern of translation (meaning of words written below the word) or between-line translation.<sup>43</sup> Hence, the translation still retained its original concept. The word Allah was still translated as Allah.

The use of the language does not remove the literal and conceptual meaning, as long as it is still written consistently. For instance, KB verse thirteen shows a similarity of ideas with BHJ and BC. The word *Pangeran* which refers to the term al-ilah, is still accompanied by the word Allah in the phrase “*Allah kang Mengerani*.” In verse twenty-nine, the phrase “*wa al-Rabb al-‘ali*” was interpreted as “*kang dadi Pengeran kang lubur*.” Although the between-lines translation is consistent with the original Arabic words, the explanation was written below the verse in the *Pegon* script. As shown in picture one, the term Allah was always stated as *Gusti Allah*.<sup>44</sup>

The translation process of KA only involved between-rows translation, without further notes or explanation. The book’s translator was still inclined to use local terms (Javanese). A similar pattern was found in the translation of AA. Although explanation was found in AA, apart from the context of between-rows translation, the word Allah was still translated as Allah, not *Gusti Allah*. In the explanation, however, the translator used the term *Pangeran*.

In contrast to KA and AA, and the other theological texts written in Javanese, the authors did not seem fixated on Arabic terms. They were more flexible in expressing themselves in the local language. In TJ, for instance, the authors directly used the terms *Pangeran* and *Gusti Allah* to refer to the word *Allah*. When the word Allah was used at the beginning of the sentence as *mudaf ilaihi*, the author used the word

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<sup>42</sup> Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur’an: Semantics of the Qur’anic Weltanschauung* (Karachi, Pakistan: Royal Book Company, 2002), p. 100.

<sup>43</sup> Henri Chambert-Loir (ed.), *Sadur: Sejarah Terjemahan di Indonesia dan Malaysia* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> KH. Asnawi, *Kitab Taubid Jawan*, pp. 21–2.

Allah. For instance, in the phrases “*Allah dawuh*” (God says), “*kitabipun Allah*” (the book of God), and “*malaiikatipun Allah*” (the angel of God). A similar structure was found in AI, a book written in the *nadham* pattern. The pattern somehow determined the idea and diction determined by the lyrics. As a result, the author interchangeably used the words *Gusti*, *Pangeran*, and *Gusti Pangeran* to adjust with the structure of *nadham*. In comparison, NIN only used the terms *Allah* and *Gusti Allah*. No other words like *Pangeran* or *Gusti Pangeran* were used.<sup>45</sup>

The overall discussion above indicates that apart from the writing and the use of Allah, Muslim intellectuals who were well-versed in writing Javanese also employed *Gusti Allah*, *Pangeran*, *Gusti*, and *Sang Hyang Hyang Widdhi* to refer to the same divine being. The intellectuals deliberately used the terms to facilitate and accelerate the learning of Islamic theology without compromising the meaning and substance of these teachings.

Zoetmulder, the concept was written within the context of humanity. These terms are closely related to the word Allah, as they serve as an explanatory and affirmative part of the structure of rational arguments about the existence of God. All books reviewed, BHJ, BC, KA, AA, KB, TJ, AI, and NIN, consistently used the two terms in their original terms since they had no equivalent in Javanese. This evidence indicated that those terms were not related to theology prior to Islam in Java.<sup>46</sup>

BHJ is a book rich in words and expressions related to divinity, as it is full of elaboration of ideas about God, divinity, and Sufism. The terms related to God are classified into four categories: *zat* (substance), *sifat* (attribute), *asma* (name), and *af'al* (acts). For example, it is written in this statement: “*Ana pepujaningsun sawiji, dzate iya dzatingsun, sifate ya sifatingsun, asmane iya asmanngsun, af'ale ya afa'alingsun, Ingsun pujaing patemon tunggal sakabanan inggun, sampurna kalawan kudratingsun*”.<sup>47</sup> The four unified in the context of the existence of God, on the one hand, and the existence of nature as the creation, on the other hand.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, it was explained in BHJ:

<sup>45</sup> Baha'uddin, *Syi'ir Aqidah Islamiyyah*., pp. 2-3

<sup>46</sup> Zoetmulder and Robson, *Old Javanese-English dictionary*.

<sup>47</sup> Ranggawarsito, *Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati*., p. 10

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13

*Ingsun dzat kang luhur Kang Jumeneng Ratu Agung, kang amurba amisesa, kang kawasa, andadekake ing kratoningsun kang agung, kang amaba mulya, Ingsun weningku sempurna sakapraboningsun, sankep, saisen-saisening kratoningsun, pepak sabalingsun, kabeh ora ana kang kekurangan, byar gumelar dadi saciptaningsun, ana sasedyaningsun, teka sakarsaningsun kabeh saka ing kudratingsun.*

The explanation above revealed that *dzat* was always combined with the concept of *sifat*. *Sifat* is described subsequently as *dzat*, as written in the phrase “*Dzatkang Amaba Suci, Dzatkang Agung, Dzatkang Elok, Dzatkang Amisesa.*” For that reason, it was then written, “*Mula bebasane wabanning Dzatkang iku anyamadi sifat, sifat iku anartani asma, asma iku amartandani af'al, af'al iku dadi wabananing Dzatkang.*”<sup>49</sup> Although not discussed within the frame of rationalistic theology, the argument on these four concepts cannot be separated from the original theological and linguistic dimensions, that is, the native word, not the translated terms in Javanese. The Javanese translations were only targeted at details about the *sifat* and *asma* of Allah.

As explained earlier, limited description on *dzat*, *sifat*, *asma*, and *af'al* of Allah can be found in BC. The character of BC is different from BHJ. Some examples of the limited description include the phrase “*asmaul husna*”, as found in “*Mas Cebolang miréngakén katrangan bab asmaul husna (asmaning Allah) tuwin kbasiatipun*”;<sup>50</sup> and about the *dzat* of Allah in “*Seb Amongraga tuwin Seb Sukmasidik rérémbungan bab: asal-asalanipun jagad serta pundi ingkanng wonten langkung rumiyin; katrangan bab Datulah kanti papricenipun.*”<sup>51</sup> There were twenty *sifat* of Allah found in BC, as stated “*ing dalu She Amongraga mejang garwanipun bab sajatining Pangeran lan maknanipun sipat twenty, serta kandunganipun salat five wekdal, sunat minal wutri saba tal wutri.*”<sup>52</sup>

The explanations of *dzat*, *sifat*, *asma*, and *af'al* above evidently indicate that the original language of the four had remained unchanged. Therefore, we could conclude that the attempts and process of

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19

<sup>50</sup> Raden Ngabei Ranggawarsito, *Serat Centhini (Suluk Tambangraras)*, vol. 4 (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Centhini, 1986), pp. 76–88.

<sup>51</sup> Raden Ngabei Ranggawarsito, *Serat Centhini (Suluk Tambangraras)*, vol. 5 (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Centhini, 1986), pp. 71–8.

<sup>52</sup> Raden Ngabei Ranggawarsito, *Serat Centhini (Suluk Tambangraras)*, vol. 6 (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Centhini, 1986), pp. 41–6.

vernacularization are very demanding, both for the authors and society. The scarcity of ideas about *dzat*, *sifat*, *asma*, and *af'al* was rooted in the discourse within the Javanese society that is inclined towards *rasa* (feeling or affect), as stated by Koentjaraningrat. On the other hand, the emergence of the concept of *dzat* and *sifat* arrived from the process of cognition in trying to understand the existence of God in Islam.

Since the teaching about God has to be conveyed to His people, communicating the message would require writing media, such as books, among others. Books on a theology of Islam comprising rationalistic ideas became teaching materials or references for the Javanese people in the process of religious teaching. Because of that, one can conclude that these books also had roles in the vernacularization of ideas of monotheism in the Javanese language.

#### **D. About Angels, the Qur'an, and the Prophet/Apostle**

Some of the most commonly expressed terms in Javanese are *Malaikat* (Angels), Qur'an, *Nabi* (the Prophet) or *Rasul* (Apostles), and Taqdir Allah (Destiny). Apart from Allah, these terms are also crucial to be examined further. These words led to the notion that there was an inculturation of Islam into Javanese culture. In reality, the issue had nothing to do with inculturation. Instead, it had something to do with vernacularization. The attempt was made to facilitate the absorption of ideas into the collective reasoning of Javanese society.

One of the most common terms in Islam expressed in BHJ was angels. As stated,

Allah kang kinawin, winalen dening rasul, pangulune Muhammad, saksine malaekat papat, iya iku Ingsun kang angawin badaningsun, winalenan dening rahsaningsun, kaungguhke dening cahyaningsun, sinakesnan dening malaikatingsun papat, Jabrail, iay iku panngucap ing sun, Minkail panganbuningsun. Israfil paningalisun. Ijrail, pamijarsaningsun, srikawine sampurna saka ing kudratingsun.

The description can be perplexing to the Islamic theology follower inclined to be textual. However, when interpreted from a deeper perspective about the existence and meaning of angels, the explanation above can be a rational interpretative position and understanding of angels in the context of theology. The concept of the angel was barely

discussed in BC. BC understandably did not focus on religious ideas but on how Islam can be taught to significant others, family members, and society. Among the supernatural ideas one should consider is in book V/VII verse 115-131 where the author stated, “*Soal jawab nalika taksib awing-uwung dereng wonten bumi langit ing pundi dunungipun Allah. Punika kasebat la takyun-kun. Saderengipun; nukat gaib, wilayat, gaibul guyub gaib-alumiyah, kawontenanipun boten katingal.*”

AA was a book on *tawhid* (oneness of God) aimed at first-time learners. The book discussed fifty basic *tawhid* or *aqaid* (Islamic creed). Although the term *malaikat* (angel) appeared in KA, the word did not appear in discussing angels; interestingly, the word *al-malaikah* was still translated as *malaikat*. Similarly, angels are also barely discussed in KA.

Furthermore, the term *al-malaikah* was written in plural form (*jama'*) in KB. The term used was “*almalaik.*” The word appeared in the context to convey that Muslims should believe in jinn and angels. No further explanations on angels were stated in the book.<sup>53</sup>

Interestingly, in contrast with the previous books, the explanation of angels was discussed in one separate chapter in *Aqidah Islamiyyah* (AI).<sup>54</sup> This is a surprising finding, considering that the book was intended to discuss *tawhid* for first-time learners. Similarly, in TJ, the explanation of angels was thoroughly explored. From the viewpoint of its writing, translation into Javanese, or general explanation, the book appeared similar to the other texts. It implies no adapting or vernacularization of *malaikat*, as the word was often pronounced as *malekat*. Again, in contrast, the book NIN did not explore the concept of angels. The conclusion to the above findings suggests inconsistency in Javanese literature on the discussion of angels.

Regarding the Qur'an, BHJ does not mention the word Qur'an or the Qur'an or the Holy Book. The ideas of Sufism in the BHJ are from a theosophical and theophanic point of view and not from the viewpoint of ethics, so they have little contact with the Qur'an. In short, Sufism in BHJ seems to contrast with Sharia because Sharia is based on the Qur'an. For this reason, since Sufism does not agree with Shariah, Sufism is also interpreted as less agreeable with the Qur'an. There was one phrase related

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<sup>53</sup> Ahmad bin Muhammad al Dardiri, *Al-Kharidah al-Bahiyah*, p. 26.

<sup>54</sup> Baha'uddin, *Syi'ir Aqidah Islamiyyah*, p. 23.

to the Qur'an, "*pangandikaning Allah*," followed by the phrase "*ingdalem hadis*," which is translated as the "Hadith Qudsi is not an al-Qur'an text." In contrast to this view, according to the Sufistic tradition, anything that was conceived was in line with the Qur'an because the Qur'an had *zahir* meaning (exoteric or apparent meaning) as believed by the followers of Shariah, as well as the *batin* meaning (esoteric or hidden meaning believed by the followers of Sufistic tradition).

In contrast, BC stated the term Qur'an by using the word "*Kur'an*". The *Kur'an* was described in a way that reading the holy book was considered as a Muslim virtue, as stated in the Eighth Book, verse 140-49, "*Niken Tambagraras supe nêdha lan tilêm, tansab sêmbahyang ngaos Kur'an, tuwin sêdhêkab kêndhuri wilujêngan*." In the same light, Book VIII, verse 147-255 stated, "*Para tamu kapondhokakên ing griyanipun kadhang warga, namung Seb Mangunrasa ingkang kapapanakên ing tajug. Pasugatan ambanyumili, lajêng kenduri. Sonten kempal ing pandhapi sami ngaos kasambet kataman Kur'an, kalajengakem bawaros ngilmi*." In BC, there was no change of the term *al-Qur'an* to Javanese.

Al-Qur'an was mentioned both in AA and KA to explain the nature of God, *al-Kalam*.<sup>55</sup> In this context, the author did not directly identify the term *al-Qur'an*. The author did direct the discussion to identify the meaning of *al-kalam* and the differences with *al-Qur'an*. From the perspective of a language or discourse, the two texts confirmed the influence of Islam on local religious discourse in Java. The dimension of locality was limited to the local languages in the translation and writing up. Transformation into the local language is evidenced in the context of theological terms, primarily in how those terms were written in the Pegon script. Notably, although the terms in those two texts were presented in the Javanese language and written in Pegon script, the theological terms were consistent with the original pronunciation and writing in Arabic.

However, although AI was intended to discuss *tawhid* for first-time learners, an explanation about *al-Qur'an* was found in one specific

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<sup>55</sup> Muhammad Ibn asy-Syafi'i al-Fudhali, *Kijayat Al-'Awam: Makna Jawa*, trans. by Abdullah Shalih al-Fasuruani (Surabaya: Salim Nabhan wa Auladuh, 1920), pp. 44–6; Ahmad al-Marzuqi, *Aqidat al-Awam*, trans. by Abu Abdullah Adib (Surabaya: Al Hidayah), p. 6; Dardiri, *Al-Kharidah al-Bahiyah*, pp. 15–6.

chapter.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, *al-Qur'an* was also discussed in depth in TJ.<sup>57</sup> Further assessment of the texts indicated that AI and TJ did not expressly limit faith to *al-Qur'an* but the “holy book”. The terms used were “*Iman Kitab*” (belief in the holy book) or “*Iman datheng Kitab*” (belief in the holy book). Within the local and more specific context, the concept “book” here refers to the same word in the pillars of faith professed by all Muslims. Thus, the word *al-Qur'an* was not explicitly mentioned in AI ad TJ because *al-Qur'an* was perceived as a part of the concept of faith in the Books of Allah. Contrary to the findings in AI and TJ, due to the similarities in NIN, AA, and KA, the word *al-Qur'an* was not recorded in NIN at all.

Javanese Islam literature displayed high respect for the Prophet, which is in line with the social norms of a Muslim society. For instance, the word Muhammad was always accompanied by “*Kanjeng*.”<sup>58</sup> The term “*Kanjeng*” or “*Gusti Kanjeng*” was attached to the Prophet Muhammad, as the term “*Gusti*” was attached to the word “Allah.” In BHJ, the word Muhammad began with the word “*Kanjeng*” or “*Kajeng*”. It read, “*Kanjeng Nabi Mubammad*”. *Kanjeng* (excellency) is translated from the Arabic word *Sayyid* (lord) or *Sayyidina* (our lord). Thus, *Kanjeng* is the most suitable to reflect the original term. This tribute to the Prophet Muhammad in Javanese Islam literature corresponds to the spread of Islam in Java and the development of religious order and traditions.

Like the findings in BHJ, the word Muhammad began with the word “*Kanjeng*” or “*Kanjeng Nabi*” in BC. Even a unique term recorded in BC was “*Kanjeng Nabi Rasul*” or “*Rasul*.” Moreover, the four mandatory attributes of the *Rasul* (apostles/messenger), namely *siddiq* (truthful), *amanah* (trustworthy), *tabligh* (deliver), and *fathonah* (intelligent), were mentioned in BC, as well as the three *mubal* (impossible) attributes. In other words, to emphasize the meaning of *Rasul* and Allah, it was stated, “*Lajeng sukur dhateng Allah tuwin Rasul*.”<sup>59</sup>

BC contained many stories and names of the prophets and their identities. There were “*petang naas Nabi*”, “*lampabing para Nabi*”, and

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<sup>56</sup> Baha'uddin, *Syi'ir Aqidah Islamiyyah*, p. 21.

<sup>57</sup> KH. Asnawi, *Kitab Taubid Javan*, pp. 25–7.

<sup>58</sup> Abdul Ghoffir Muhaimin, *The Islamic Traditions of Cirebon: Ibadat and Adat among Javanese Muslims* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), pp. 32–4.

<sup>59</sup> Ranggawarsito, *Serat Centhini (Suluk Tambangraras)*, 6: 56–8.

“*Sangat Nabi*”. On Nabi Muhammad, the book stated “*Sudibya prawireng kenub, kinajrihan kanan-kering, ngagêm agama minulya, sasat jêngandika Nabi, Muhakammadin anga jawa, ngrènggani nagri Mantawis*”. The prophets mentioned in BC were all written in the Islamic religious context to explain stories of the past, faith, and life after death. In addition, the book also included explanations of the Prophet Ibrahim, the story of the followers of Solomon, the children of Rasulullah, the role of the Prophet Isa on judgment day, and the prophethood of Muhammad.

In discussing the Prophet, AA focused on the genealogy and family of the Prophet Muhammad. In KB, the description of the *Rasul* was written in three verses, entitled “*Bayan al Wajib fi Haqq al-Rusul*.” In KB, *al-rusul* refers to the messengers and not the *Rasul*. The term became more open for interpretation compared to the word *Rasul*.

In KA, the term prophethood was explained as part of Allah’s *jaiẓ* (permitted/lawful) attribute to care for the Prophet. In AI, the term *rasul* was explained in the context of faith, including the mandatory attributes, the *muhāl* (impossible) attributes, the *jaiẓ* (permitted/lawful) attributes of *Rasul*, and *Nabi Pungkasan* (the last Prophet), all of which were described in 30 verses. In TJ, except for *Nabi Pungkasan*, the explanation of *Mu’jizat* (miracle), *Ulu al-Aẓmi* (patience and persistence), the concept as well as names of Prophets and *Rasul* (messenger) were the same as in AI. Lastly, the issue of prophethood in NIN focused only on the mandatory attributes, *muhāl*, and *jaiẓ*, written in brief without much explanation.

Based on the abovementioned findings, the terms of prophethood are theological in various sub-concepts. On the one hand, interpretation in Javanese made the concepts and sub-concepts easier to understand, but the terms became more open for interpretation. The term *rasul*, for instance, was translated as *Utusan* (messenger) and not complete as the messenger of God, or using its original term, *Rasulullah*, to simplify it for learners.

## E. The Day of Judgment and God’s Destiny

In Javanese Islamic literature, the judgment day was written within the context of faith. In BHJ, the signs of the Hour were described in a statement, “*Manawa wis parek dina kiyamat, ing kono ana kang dadi tanda*

*bakal katekan Bangas.*<sup>60</sup> BC described the end of time as *kiamat kubra*.<sup>61</sup> In AI, the term “judgment day” was interpreted as *iman dina akhir* (belief in the last day), including sub-topics on *alam qubur* (the realm between a person’s death and his resurrection on the final day of judgment) and *dina qiyamat*.<sup>62</sup> In TJ, the phrase “judgment day” was interpreted as *dinten akhir* or *dinten qiyamat* in formal Javanese terms. In other words, similar to other literature, the context of judgment day was emphasized in terms of the signs of the Hour. The pattern of interpretation that focuses on the signifier dimension and aspect, rather than the signs and substance, is a general pattern used in the discourse of Islamic theology on judgment day.

Other Javanese literature, such as AA, KB, and KA, did not record or explain the concept of judgment day. The three books were more focused on explaining God and Rasul, on the issues of *sifat* (attributes) and *dzat*. Similarly, the same pattern was observed in NIN since NIN had the same pattern as AA, KA, and KB. It became apparent here that, although written in the local Javanese language, the basic idea of the study on specific themes in those texts consistently uses the framework or ideas from its original literature in Arabic.

On the issue of human free will and the *taqdir* of God (predestination), the structure of knowledge in BHJ, loaded with Sufism’s teaching, apparently indicated God’s dominant omnipotence. It was stated in the excerpt, “*Mung Ingsun kang anglimputi ing alam kabeh kalawan kudratingsun*”, followed by “*ing mengko Ingsun-ruwat ing sadosaningsun kabeh saka ing kudratingsun.*”<sup>63</sup> In BHJ, the word *kudratingsun* was recorded twenty-one times, indicating that nature’s existence was solely by God’s power. God is interpreted here as God’s *kudrat*, as written in the statement, “*Iman iku tegese angandel, kang diandel kudrate, tegesing kudrat: kuasa,*” followed by “*tokid tegese mubung sawiji, tegese pasrah marang iradate, tegesing iradat: kersa.*”<sup>64</sup> There was no explanation of the fatalistic principles since the concept of

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<sup>60</sup> Ranggawarsito, *Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati*.

<sup>61</sup> Raden Ngabei Ranggawarsito, *Serat Centhini (Suluk Tambangraras)*, vol. 3 (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Centhini, 1986), pp. 342–6; Ranggawarsito, *Serat Centhini (Suluk Tambangraras)*, 6: 1–6.

<sup>62</sup> Baha’uddin, *Syi’ir Aqidah Islamiyyah*, pp. 23–30.

<sup>63</sup> Ranggawarsito, *Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati*, p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

*kudratingsun* refers to the power and existence of God in all of his creation.

In BC, although not as comprehensive as BHJ, the idea of *takdir* (predestination) was firmly presented in the context of humanity, as stated in “*Ing panépen Seb Amongraga méjang garwanipun bab asal lan kodrat dumadosing manungsa*”<sup>65</sup>, and “*sumiwi ing ngarsaningwang wus pasthi karsaning Widdhi*.”<sup>66</sup> AA, KA, NIN, and KB did not cover the term’s *qadha’* and *qadr* (belief in the divine preordainment and divine decree), although the judgment day is also part of the pillars of faith. On the contrary, AI and TJ, mainly prepared for first-time learners, elaborated on *qadha’* and *qadr*.

## F. Concluding Remarks

Islamic theological terms in Javanese literature took place in the vernacularization of the Arabic terms into Javanese by adding and translating the terms. The addition of terms can be found in how the word Allah was transformed into *Gusti Allah*, or the word *Nabi* (Prophet) into *Kanjeng Nabi*. At the same time, the translation of terms was evident in the case of the word Allah into *Sang Hyang Widdhi* or *Gusti Pangeran*. From the perspective of Javanese people in the 19th Century, the concept of God was not conceptualized as God in the theology of salvation adopted by formal religions such as Islam and Christianity. God, to the Javanese, was more related to an inner experience. At the same time, limitations of the Javanese language in rewriting and interpreting Islamic theological terms resulted in the Javanization of these terms. Examples include the word *tahid* becoming *to the kid*, *syari’at* becoming *sarengat*, and *malaikah* becoming *malekat*. Due to these limitations, language production and vernacularization arose by transforming linguistic signs.

The transformation of linguistic signs and the limitation of theological terminologies in Javanese culture raised concerns about syncretism in the context of faith. This view was supported from the perspective of cultural existence through the actualization of faith in religion and religiosity in the acculturation process. In contrast with this view, actualization and religious attitudes are entirely different from the linguistic field. There is no evidence of syncretism, both conceptually and

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100–3.

<sup>66</sup> Raden Ngabei Ranggawarsito, *Serat Centhini (Suluk Tambangraras)*, vol. 1 (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Centhini, 1986), p. 21.

in the use of the theology of Islam. It means the substance or content remained intact and followed the principles of Islamic teaching in terms of the consistency of idea, episteme, and formation of the discourse on the theology of Islam. The use of local language or vernacularization was intended to ease the transmission of ideas about the theology of Islam. Study findings suggest that the process of syncretism was “skin deep.” This fact shows that the process was more a process of post-syncretism or the indigenization of the terms of Islamic theology rather than religious syncretism as it is generally understood. This fact shows that the process is Islamic syncretism, and it shows the existence of a robust discourse on Islamic theology.

Furthermore, the vernacularization of the terms of Islamic theology into the local language made it possible to allow for bargaining to occur, resulting in a new tradition and culture within Javanese society. Moreover, the emergence of the texts on Islamic theology presented in the local language indicated the birth of new subcultures, like Java’s *pesantren* and *keraton* cultures. Accordingly, one of the most critical factors in the discourse of theology Islam in the Javanese language is the freedom of expression in Javanese society and the creativity of Muslim intellectuals. The dynamics of Islamic thought impacted the characteristics of Muslims in Java, and Indonesia in general, that is, a religiosity that is egalitarian and open to diversity. In the end, the development of the theological discourse of Islam in the Javanese language became one of the factors that shaped the Islamic-Javanese civilization.

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