

Producing Appropriation: Negotiating Islam-Sunda in Terebang Sejak

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Abstract

This article is an ethnographic account of my research on negotiating Islam and Sunda in Islamic Sundanese music. By taking special case of Terebang Sejak, I draw my attention on the issue based on my fieldwork in Cikeusal village, TasikMalaya, West Java. Observations and interviews are the main tools I used in gathering information. By presenting particularity of Terebang Sejak, this paper aims to present complexity and negotiations that are formed from the interaction between Islam and Sunda in the music in the village. In this context, presenting the idea of the truism of marginalizing Islam on local culture is in accordance with the idea of Indonesian modernity, which has parallelism with the mission of modernist Islam. While many scholars describe Islam in Indonesia with the idea of syncretism to depict the religion as 'not really Islam', in this article I provide different interpretation of localizing Islam by which people produce their own interpretation and appropriation in response to social and political changes in their environs. This interpretation will contribute to new understanding in addressing the particularity of meanings based on local knowledge, among Cikeusal people that forms what coded as 'identity' of being Muslim-Sunda. Here, Islamic text of Kitab Mulud in the music has played an agentive role to acknowledge the music as Islamic, thus continues to be part of ritual.

Keyword: *Islam and Sunda, in Islamic Sundanese music, Terebang Sejak, Ajengan*

A. INTRODUCTION

Terebang sejak performance is a part of harvest ritual of "syukur panen" organized by Komunitas Cermin, 09 March 2013, in Cikeusal village.

"There was a time when *Ajengan* (Islamic authorities) examined the text of *Kitab Mulud* played in *terebang sejak* whether it fitted with the reference book of *Kitab Barzanji* (the Islamic formal reference) or not.¹ We checked it carefully and all is fine." (*Ajengan Akub*, 14 January 2013)

The quotation above is an unequivocal expression taken from my interviews with players and religious leaders on how Islam and the Islamic music called *terebang sejak* has been negotiated. It was stated by *Ajengan Akub*, one of Islamic authorities in the Cikeusal village. He is an Islamic leader, the *imam* of a mosque, in the Cisaat neighbourhood of Cikeusal village. In various interviews that I conducted at other times with *terebang sejak* performers I heard them express the same view on how *Ajengan* tried to involve in controlling *terebang sejak*. This article discusses the

¹ *Kitab Mulud* is a text of Terebang Sejak song written by Aki Hambali (the former and the founder of Terebang Sejak group) which refers to *Kitab Barzanji*, the most popular Islamic text in Indonesia.

constructed meanings of *terebang sejak* and how it generates negotiated forms between Islam, performance and a local custom. *Terebang sejak* is a good example of how local people produce an appropriation in making a dialogue of Islam and local culture.

B. METHODS

This research is based on observations and interviews as the main tools to collect information

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

It is important to underline that the intersection of Islam and local culture is based on a general assumption that Islam has interfered with local culture. In Indonesia, this is the result of the objectification of Islam and local culture since the colonial era and has been continued for centuries until the New Order era. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, debates about the modernist movements within Islam have taken precedence over the debate about the compatibility of Islam with local customs. Further, following development programs of the country, the idea of modernity has prevailed in discursive strategies of the relation between Islam and local culture over decades. As a result, a common argument has appeared in the scholarly works explaining that Islam has interfered with local customs and that it has caused them to become marginalized or even meant they have disappeared in some cases (see Newland, 2000, 2001; Harnish, 2007, 2011; Prasetya and Handayani, 2010). At the same time, Islamic authorities have a similar mission of Islamic purification as expressed in words such as ‘when Islam has been well understood and practiced among Muslims, they would slowly leave inappropriate practices’.² The general public tends to express their willingness to comply with the views of their religious leaders by using phrases such as, “We do not follow this old practice anymore”.³

In this paper, I argue that negotiating Islam and local culture has occurred by producing an appropriate tradition that suits villagers’ needs and their localised resources. In this respect, Islamic text becomes agentive in playing such a role to remain the performance to be part of ritual practices in the village. To cover this issue, this paper has three sections. In the first place, I argue that the widely held view that Islam is hostile to traditional village culture is debatable. I show that this argument fails to take account of modernity, and I relate the broader argument to the particular case of Cikeusal village of TasikMalaya; second, the particularity of *Kitab Mulud* that is sourced from Islamic reading, *Kitab Barzanji*, in which the case shows how Islamic authorities play an important role to control normative values of Islam; and lastly, I examine how the process of localizing Islam in the village reveals in complex negotiation of forms in performing arts.

1. The Truism of the Marginalizing Islam on Local Culture

Throughout its long history, Islam’s relationship with local cultures has been the subject of scholarly discussion. The model of a gentle and gradual process of Islamisation, such as occurred in the nine saints (*Wali Sanga*) in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Java is often considered to be most appropriate model. In this regard, the use of various local performance practices has been widely accepted as being in that process of Islamisation with the appropriation that had done by the saints (van Dijk, 1998; Simon, 2010; Sumarsam, 2011). Hood (1980) considers that under the Wali model of Islamisation the role of the traditional arts as a form of religious expression was

² This comment is stated by some Islamic authorities I interviewed.

³ Interviews with some villagers, 15 January 2013.

highly regarded as shown in certain traditional practices associated with ancestor cult that were accepted and even included in Muslim ritual.

Furthermore, with the extensive examples from East and Central Java, van Dijk (1998) has examined some local performances, such as wayang, gamelan music, and children songs that were used as main tools to convert Javanese people to Islam. Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Giri, and Sunan Bonang were the well-known saints who implemented this local approach. In fact, Simon (2010) states that the large gamelan ensembles from Central Javanese courts were formed after the coming of Islam. Following Islamisation, there were further developments in this art form, but these resulted from political and economic forces rather than religious influence.

The influential and powerful story of the nine saints in their *dakwah* mission continues to inspire current preachers, especially in rural areas. However, the depiction of Islamic life in Java as explained by scholars such as Geertz (1976), Hefner (1985) and Dijk (1998) is differs from that of Sundanese in West Java. The characters of the Sundanese people, I suggest, is best explains this difference. The affinity of Islam and Sundanese practices are regarded as a main factor of unifying the two values. This closeness has even raised a claim such as 'the Sundanese people were Muslims even before Islam was arrived' (Kahmad, 2009).⁴ On the other hand, in the modern Indonesian context, it is often argued that Islam and traditional/local culture are in some respects incompatible, as I will discuss below.

2. Islam and Culture Opposition in Indonesian Modernity

The formation of a cultural and political hegemony, especially during the New Order era, has spread the discursive strategies of modernity through political power apparatus including in religious practices. In fact, Indonesia is a country where religion serves the interest of the state (Nurkhoiron, 2010) and is used to support its goal of modernity through progress and development (Atkinson, 1983). In this respect, the nexus between Islam and modernity has impacted upon the public perception of local performances. However, since the collapse of New Order regime, the focus of this debate has returned to the issue of the appropriateness of traditional practices at the local level. Regarding this, Islam-Sunda discourses have begun to re-appear in public debate recently as part of this contestation.

There are different ways of interpretation to scrutinize of how Islam and local culture negotiate each other. The notion of syncretism is the most widely discussed concept to describe the nature of Indonesian Islam. It has been argued that Islamic movements have occurred to respond what the so-called syncretism in Islamic life of Indonesia by introducing the idea of purification. Purification aims to bring Islam in its original form, which refers specifically to Al Qur'an and Hadith as it is in the Middle East. The purpose of purification is to eradicate every inappropriate practice, including heterodoxy and superstition, which are mostly referred to local practices of *adat* (Azra, 2004).

Albeit the process of purification has been occurring since the beginning of ninetieth or twentieth century, in fact, Islamic expressions in the public sphere in Indonesia are still dominated by

⁴ Another mythology has been said among Sundanese that Prabu Siliwangi, the last king of Pajajaran kingdom is also believed to convert to Islam when he died. See Williams, S. (2001). *The Sound of The Ancestral Ship*. New York, Oxford University Press.

cultural Islamic groups (Hasan & Abu Bakar, 2011). Scholars have proposed the idea of syncretism to show the dominant features of Indonesian Islam (Geertz, 1973 [1960]; Beatty, 1999; Newland, 2001; Brakel, 2004; Fealy & White, 2008). This idea has been seen as a way to 'indigenise' Islam (Fealy & White, 2008). In some ways, this syncretic idea has been used to identify Indonesian Islam as 'not really Islam' as it is found in the Middle East (Newland, 2000). Meanwhile, in the New Order era, as Newland (2001) asserts, the notion of syncretism has gone further to have more political intention than its original purpose. Thus, syncretism has been interpreted as referring to old practices; backward, traditional, and non-Islamic. So that in conjunction with the idea of modernity in Indonesian Islam, these practices are considered to need to be modernized or changed in their function as a spectacle rather than a ritual which is called the process of the desacralization (see Acciociali, 1985; Newland, 2000, 2001). Government has absorbed these rituals as a part of cultural activities, and further as a tourism attraction rather than a religious one. To this point Newland (2001) concludes that the government's policy of discouraging the presentation of these traditional practices as expressions of religious belief is equivalent to promoting the goals of modernist Islam.

Concerning this issue, instead of accepting the view that an accommodation between Islam and traditional local religious practices amounts to syncretism, I would argue that the acceptance of *terebang sejak* provides a model for a certain appropriation of a wider range of traditional cultural practices with Islam. This idea has been proposed by Indonesian Islamic scholars to show the importance of 'the indigenisation of Islam' (Wahid, 2001; Baso, 2002). According to Nurrohman (2009), a policy of reaching a mutually acceptable accommodation between local cultural practices and Islam over a long period (Kahmad, 2009) has proved to be an important strategy for achieving harmony between Islam and Sundanese culture. In this paper, I argue that the effect of the negotiation processes of Islam and Sunda in Cikeusal, as demonstrated in the case of *terebang sejak*, is to produce appropriations of the art forms by following social changes, especially in the Reformation era, and yet still fulfil spiritual needs of villagers.

3. *Terebang Sejak* in Cikeusal Village

It is often noted, by both Muslim authorities and the general public that the more Islamic a village is, the fewer traditional, pre Islamic practices will survive. There is a common perception that Islam discourages in development of local performing arts, and as a result they are now declining. There are some Islamic authorities who believe that this decline is a natural consequence of a more whole-hearted adoption of Islam. Despite such views, the village of Cikeusal has a strong Islamic life and yet maintains its rich tradition of local performing arts.⁵

In the village of Cikeusal, local performing arts have existed for centuries and have developed over time. They are considered to be an important part of cultural life of this agricultural community. Yet, this is also a village where there are many places for worship and where religious activities are important part of everyday life. Thus, the village has grown to be very 'Islamic'. In earlier times, Cikeusal's rich tradition of local performing arts earned for it the reputation of "a village of the arts". The villagers report that, since the arrival of Islam, religious practices based upon Islam have assumed greater importance for all villagers, including performers. *Terebang sejak* is the only local performance in the village that is still regarded as a part of ritual activities.

⁵ I got this statement during my interviews and light conversations with range of people who are concerned with this issue. Some people I interviewed disagreed. They said the loss of old performances is because of modern life, rather than the effect of Islam.

Cikeusal village is a home to the Candralijaya group, local organisation that organised all local performing arts in the village in a group. The group continues to perform a number of their traditional Sundanese arts. Cikeusal is part of the Tanjung Jaya sub-district, TasikMalaya regency, West Java. The village is located in a mountainous area, about 15 kilometres from Singaparna sub-district, the closest town, 15 kilometres from the capital sub-district of Tanjung Jaya, and 20 kilometres from the capital city of TasikMalaya. Because TasikMalaya covers large areas, after the Reform era it was divided into two regencies: the municipality of TasikMalaya and the TasikMalaya regency. The municipality includes the area of the sub-district around the city, whereas the regency includes the peripheral area of the city.

Terebang sejak is old Islamic-Sundanese music, performed by the Candralijaya, which uses the Islamic text of *Kitab Mulud* taken from a popular Islamic book glorifying the prophet Muhammad and his family called *Kitab Barzanji*. It consists of five *terebang* (frame drums) of different sizes, with each frame drum fulfilling a function. It is played by ten to twelve performers with five musicians, two vocalists, and some substitute performers. In the *terebang sejak*, as in all Islamic music, the Islamic message of the lyrics is of the greatest importance to the listeners. The two main features of *terebang sejak* related to Islam are the lyrics and the use of percussion instruments. The lyrics come from *Kitab Mulud* which was written by Aki Hambali, the founder of *terebang sejak* in Cikeusal, in 1961. Meanwhile the percussion instrument called *terebang* (frame drum) is a common instrument in most parts of Asia and the Middle East (Doubleday, 1999)

In Indonesia, the *terebang* is commonly known and widely found both in traditional and Islamic (*pesantren*) communities.⁶ It is popular among Muslim communities to play the *terebang* during rituals. It is a general perception of Indonesian Muslims that the history of the *terebang* is associated with the activities of the *Walisanga* (the nine saints) in spreading Islam in Java.⁷ Nonetheless, Kunst notes (1968) that an instrument similar to the *terebang* (a frame drum) has been found in old inscriptions, as found in terra cotta statues in the soil of Majapahit palace, dated approximately to the fourteenth century. This indicates that the frame drum was a traditional and popular musical instrument and that its use was widespread in different areas, including in West Java.

Although this music is associated with specific audiences and specific events related to Islamic rituals and life cycle festivities, performers identify the music as Sundanese music. This acknowledgment was stated by my informant when he explained his reason for keeping this musical tradition alive. He said: "my father said, 'this is a genuine art of Sundanese (*kesenian asli Sunda*), a legacy from our ancestors, thus you have to keep it alive in the future, do not leave it'."⁸

It is commonly understood that local performances that are based on tradition were passed down to the next generation through family agency, or what Urban (2001) called "parent-child bond". Parents transmit their expertise to their children using series of trainings and practices so that their children can continue the tradition. In the case of *terebang sejak*, pak Naim (71 y.o.) and pak Uloh (54 y.o.) are relatives from the second generation who accepted the responsibility of preserving the music as a legacy from their father, Aki Hambali, in which Aki Hambali is the first generation

⁶ *Pesantren*: Islamic boarding school. *Pesantren* community is also a term used to describe a community who adhere strong Islamic characteristics.

⁷ For example see Sumarsam 2011. Also, results of my interviews with members of the group and villagers during my fieldwork.

⁸ Interview, Pak Naim, 28-01-2013

who built the group.⁹ When their father was alive, they did not take a part in *terebang sejak* activities. Their father had his own group containing people from different neighbourhoods. The brothers did not involve themselves in the performance because their father asked them to focus on their activities in teaching children in an Islamic school situated close to their homes. Nonetheless, after their father's death, both feel that they have an obligation to continue the performance as a legacy from their father. Senior members of the *terebang sejak* group like Aki Oman (70 y.o.) and Aki Entoy (67 y.o.) have asked the brothers to join with them.¹⁰ Thus, the brothers play a role as vocalists who read the text of *Kitab Mulud* in the group. In the case of Cikeusal village, this bond, however, interestingly does not necessarily of 'crucial relationship of intergenerational continuity' (Urban, 2001) as many local performances do. In case of Cikeusal, some local performances do not necessarily rely upon family relationship in this circular stewardship rather more open to outside family members in the community.

4. *Kitab Barzanji, Terebang Sejak* and Normative Surveillance—The Story of Aki Hambali

Despite the fact that *terebang sejak* is labelled 'Islamic', it does not mean that the music did not involve a conflict with Islamic groups in the village. Indeed, with the label of 'Islamic' that means the Islamic authorities have more power to control the music, especially the lyrics they use. *Kitab Barzanji*, which was used as a reference in writing *Kitab Mulud*, is regarded as sacred. No deviation is allowed. *Kitab Mulud* consists of thirty-two songs sourced from *Kitab Barzanji*, and will take the entire night to sing all the songs. Today, the performers adjust their performance time to be shorter by singing to ten songs only. Aki Hambali, the writer of the book and the founder of *terebang sejak* group, was also an Islamic teacher (*ustad*). He had ability to transfer the content of *Kitab Barzanji*: selecting the text and rewriting it into a new version of *Kitab Mulud*. To this point, for Islamic authorities to control is to share the power, which means to show their authority on Islamic matters where *terebang sejak* is positioned as a religious activity.

When the Islamic leaders intended to investigate the lyrics, whether they conflicted with the Islamic texts or not, they instigated a process of negotiation. Some texts of the songs were written in Sundanese language with Arabic letters, but were still sourced and translated from the *Kitab Barzanji*. On the other hand, as a writer, Aki Hambali used his own creativity when he produced a segment of Sundanese text in the book that is pertinent to the birth of a baby. This segment was used for a Sundanese ritual, known as *nurunkeun* or *akekah* (a traditional Islamic celebration of the seventh or the fortieth of baby birth). It consisted of the midwife bringing the baby to circle the home yard, her collecting soil and putting it in a kind of pouch, the midwife chewing a certain herbal mix and casting spells, *nyawer* (throwing coins with rice among the crowd, mostly kids), and so forth (see Mustapa, 1985). For a wealthy family, people slaughtered one or two goats, or for common people, prepared yellow rice. All this is followed by cutting some hair of the baby and giving him or her names. At night before, people would read *solawat* or *Kitab Mulud* (*terebang sejak*) for the ritual.

However, in its current development the text of the baby part is left out and not read anymore in the performance. Aki Hambali has forbidden his children (pak Duloh and pak Naim, vocalists of the group) to read that particular part, which is a message for a newborn baby. Both pak Naim and Aki Oman, the senior members of the group, do not exactly understand the reason for this ban. They

⁹ Mang Uloh is Mang Naim's wife siblings.

¹⁰ Aki Oman and Aki Entoy are siblings who joined the group for long time since it was founded by Aki Hambali.

were thinking that the lyrics are probably considered similar to spells or *jangjawokan* in Sundanese. Initially, they avoided telling me about that particular text, but later Aki Oman pointed out that part carefully. The lyrics are as below:

My baby, listen to what your mother says, your father says/you were going down from the top, you were coming from happiness, ya Allah, ya Allah/his/her age is for the whole sky, its wide for the whole world, let's swinging...¹¹ (my translation)

Indeed, there are no such bad words or something out of Islamic teaching in those words. However, Aki Hambali's prohibition to read the text might be resulted from some other reasons. First, it is the only text in the book that was not sourced from *Kitab Barzanji*, rather from his own creativity; and second, it is probably caused by some ritual activities in celebrating a baby's birth, that were considered inappropriate with Islamic ritual as described above. In another part of the book, although some lyrics are written in Sundanese, it still refers to the *Barzanji* text, in a form of Sundanese translation. Aki Hambali's concern indicates how strong Islamic discourse is in coming into the performance. Therefore, to make sure it stays well accepted among its audience it should follow a mainstream, as stated in the Islamic book, to avoid deviation. Deviation means a resistance and this will raise a conflict. At this point, performers keep compromising what the mainstream allowed them to do. Thus, a situation when Islamic authorities used their authority to investigate the truth of book content is evidence that for Aki Hambali a conflict should be avoided.

In the process of this investigation, I tried to scrutinize the handwritten manuscript of *Kitab Mulud* that was transcribed by Aki Hambali in 1961. It is worn with age and difficult to read. However, because it refers to the *Kitab Barzanji* which can easily found in book stores and in places for worship or people's houses, I still can match the text through a new version of the *Barzanji* book that I found to understand the lyrics. There is not much difference. I also made the effort to read some Sundanese versions of the song, of which there are few. Because Aki Hambali's transcription of the book is damaged and difficult to read, Pak Naim, the *terebang sejak* vocalist, Aki Hambali's son-in-law, has initiated to duplicate it into another handwritten book but he has not finished it yet.

Concerning the meaning of the text, most people in Cikeusal do not really draw attention to it. Even, the singers do not pronounce the lyrics clearly, which made it very difficult for me to follow what they sang. In this regard, as it happens in many religious cultures, the ideology of the text is salient, as included in the *Kitab Mulud*. However, it is not important for people to understand the text, the lyrics in performance. Yet, both the singers and listeners do know the purpose and its general meaning. They do not understand what they read or sing in detail, but they do understand that they glorify the prophet Muhammad and it is a good reading to bring blessings upon their life. The spirit of reading, and the blessing they get from the reading, is much more important than understanding the text. In religious life, the sacred text is a very important symbol for its believers. It has an authoritative place. The religious leaders are those who have a task to explain the meaning and the function of the text to their followers. For the general public, the religious text is not to be questioned, rather to be accepted with full obedience.

¹¹ "...utun anaking rungukeun saur ibu rungukeun saur bapa/da inji turun ti luhur da inji datang ti suka ya Allah ya Allah/umurna satungkebing langit luasna saalam dunya ayun ambing/..."

It is noteworthy that despite the fact that the performance is mostly used in rituals rather than on stage, local practices of ritual, such as offerings or certain symbols in old beliefs, have been abandoned. Because some players are organisers and teachers in local mosques, this indicates that previous beliefs and customs may have been negotiated and compromised. Meanwhile, in the previous generation, during Aki Hambali period, some rituals were still used. For example, before playing they would collect all instruments in a circle position and made a wish or prayers to avoid threats from others or attacks from those who do not like them, which was a particular form of using spells. There was a time when one of the group members, Aki Oman, got sick for six months. Members of the group believed that it was because of someone's spells that were antagonistic towards them.

In this process of negotiation, Aki Hambali is a central figure in doing so, including in prohibiting his successors from continuing what the Islamic authorities consider as inappropriate practice. Pak Naim says, "when I asked my father whether he wanted me to continue the practice of ritual, he strictly forbade me to do so by saying: 'no, you do not need to do this, it's enough'".¹² This is, according to pak Naim, because this practice has attracted a conflict between them and some Islamic leaders. To sum up, old practices in *terebang sejak* has been negotiated and compromised with change in social realities among villagers.

5. Producing Appropriation: The Negotiation

The new era of regional autonomy in Indonesia has made a locality an issue whereby it becomes a crucial symbol for a local political power. As a result, locality has been celebrated and re-investigated. Local governments put more efforts to re-enactment of locality as an identity project. They also put more funds into hold ceremonies and festivals of local performing arts and local customs. It is a new trend whereby *kampung adat*, which refers to an indigenous community village, are rebuilt in many places; and local rituals are also reinvigorated, such as *hajat lembur*, the name for a harvest ritual in a village. Among academics, seminars and discussions are held to reinvestigate local values to be applied (see Baso, 2002). In this situation, local performances are celebrated and performed, and in this sense, the meaning of modernity undergoes changes. Modernity has produced the 'new' locality to strengthen a local or even a national identity of Indonesia. What was once called backward, irrational, and traditional is now important again.

In this context, albeit a local identity project of new government, has added local performances to get more political diligence, which means they get more spaces to articulate the arts, it is, however, still at a superficial level. In the state of Cikeusal, *terebang sejak* is not really be influenced by this project, rather they produce their own meaning of how locals deal with the new era. It is an example of how Islam is being indigenized. It is absorbed and practiced in local ways. People in Cikeusal perceive what the so-called modern life is without any confrontation between their local values and Islam. In short, the performance has actively responded to the situation with appropriate meanings of theirs.

Although there is a negotiation, in form of purifying the text, it has different intentions. Purification in this case does not have the same meaning as that among the modernist, which is to leave off all forms of old ritual practices. I use the term 'indigenisation' to explain this situation. Indigenisation means a dynamic process by which villagers have given meaning and signification, how they have made some adjustments in ritual. Indigenisation means to include Islam in local colour yet in a way

¹² Interview, 14 January 2013.

still considered Islamic. This idea has shown that negotiating cultural identity is complex and dynamic.

Ajengan Entoy, the oldest Islamic leaders in the village has interpreted the lawfulness of music is an interesting. He argues that the basic rule of music in Islam is *munkarot*. *Munkarot* means things that bring one to bad behaviours. But, then it depends on its own purpose. He contested the basic rules of music, of when it is allowed (*mubah*) and when it is forbidden (*haram*). His interpretation is in sympathy with many Islamic moderate scholars, that when the music is categorized as a sport for healthy reasons then it is allowed, whereas if it is only used to follow lust (*lahw*-Arabic, *hawa nafsu*-Indonesian), for pleasure, then it is not allowed. This is a common argument utilized among moderate Islamic scholarship. In fact, in the context of Cikeusal, he prefers to avoid restricting the performance in a hard way. In his words, "Islamic rules, if they are used in a strict way they will be not easy to accept".¹³ This approach is popularly employed by traditional Islamic leaders, which also has similarities with those applied by the nine saints in the beginning period of Islam. Thus, the interpretation is in harmony with the social realities in which the *Ajengan* dwells.

Another *Ajengan* I interviewed is Ajengan Akub. He has a similar explanation with more moderate argument and interpretation.¹⁴ To refer to an argumentation in lawfulness of music Ajengan Akub quoted a fragment of verses in the al-Qur'an "find a glory wherever its source".¹⁵ He explained that the background of this given verse is that when the Prophet was going to war, no one among his companions could ride a horse for war. Here, he makes an analogy for arts with a sport. This analogy makes local performances less debatable. To justify his opinion about the lawfulness of music in the village he also contends that *beluk* and *terebang sejak* used to employ *solawat* (Islamic text) so they are Islamic. Moreover, to respect different interpretations among Muslims on the lawfulness of music, he refers to the Prophet's words, "our companions like stars in numbers, whoever you go with, you will get guidance".¹⁶ This understanding of the lawfulness of music among Islamic authorities in the village is similar with the Indonesian Islamic scholars mainstream that put music as *mubah* (allowed).¹⁷

Furthermore, changes among people and their performances are not only caused by outsiders who came to the village to bring some new thoughts, it is also influenced by changes among villagers themselves, especially among the younger generation when they go to outside the village to study Islamic subjects in *pesantren*. Villagers called this Islamic learning process by saying "going to the city" means going to outside the village. After their return to village, they bring new understanding of Islam. These new thoughts sometimes evoke a conflict between the older and the younger generation, as happens in many places. Interestingly, villagers have always a way to compromise. As illustrated by Ajengan Akub:

In monthly *pengajian* in the village, both those new Islamic teachers and the older one have the same opportunity to deliver their opinion about Islamic teaching, including some new thought. However, they do not allow imposing their different views among people.

¹³ "aturan Islam mun dimeleskeun moal payu" (aturan Islam jika terlalu ketat enggak laku).

¹⁴ Interview, 14 January 2013.

¹⁵ "teangan ku maneh kamuliaan ti mana wae asalna" (*Wa'iduu mastato'tum biquwwah*).

¹⁶ "Sahabat kami teh saperti bentang dina lobana, ka mana wae turut pek asal ti sahabat kami nu sholeh" (*Ashabi kannujum, biayyihim iqtadaitum ihtadaitum*).

¹⁷ Indonesian literature talking about the issue, see Jahja (1964); Masruhan (2004); Handayani (2009). There are also some exceptional figures of kyais who have outstanding taste in music as it can be reviewed in Ni'am (2008); Handayani (2009); Nurkhoiron (2010).

They should let people to choose and decide which argument they would follow. In most cases, villagers tend to avoid those who bring new thought that easily judge for *halal* and *haram* things.¹⁸

Meanwhile, in the case of *terebang sejak*, the Islamic authorities do not forbid music in rituals because of some old practices in it has been compromised. The performers were leaving those old practices out and had replaced them with something that is more suitable with Islam. They produced appropriation for their performances. Performers also tend to avoid a hard conflict; rather they choose to follow Islamic rules. While justifying the *Kitab Mulud* text was initiated by Islamic authorities, leaving old practices such as collecting *terebang* in a circle, praying, giving offerings and spells, and leaving some parts of the text to be read were a compromise made by performers, especially by Aki Hambali, the founder and the former leader of the group. In this case, both parties were making a commitment to compromise with each other and to avoid a conflict.

To conclude, this paper has provided discussions on complex negotiations between Islam and Sundanese culture in Cikeusal village through the case of *terebang sejak*. Sejak has offered various levels of interpretation on this interplay where at some points both performers and Islamic leaders have actively produced appropriation. As mentioned, some Islamic leaders in the village deliver their perception of Islam and performing arts in more moderate ways by saying “there is no problem with practicing arts as long as it does not interfere with Islamic activities”.¹⁹ This statement is used to justify the problem I discuss here of how negotiations happen between Islam and local culture in Cikeusal village. They made compromises and negotiation which ultimately produced mutual understanding between performers and Islamic authorities.

D. CONCLUSION

Terebang Sejak has offered a different meaning and interpretation of the intersection of Islam and local performance. The music has shown its main characteristic as a ritual activity that experienced the process of negotiations between the performers and Islamic leaders following the changes of Islamic life in the village. This process of negotiation cannot be separated from the wider context of social and political change in the country in which the idea of modernity is intersected, and to some extent is overloaded with the idea of Islamic modernism in the era of development program of country.

Apart from that, Cikeusal is a particular in negotiating local performance and Islam because of the close ties between performers and Islamic leaders by kinship or marriage. In this case, Islamic leaders do not take fully control to performers rather they also can stand in performers' side. Thus, a negotiation and compromise come from both parties by which it avoids a tendency where one dominates others.

To keep the music play in rituals, purifying and justifying the text used in the songs and leaving old rituals in the music are main parts of negotiation processes. At the same time, villagers identify *terebang sejak* as a representation of their feeling as being Sundanese and being Muslims. Regarding this, their expression to the music has made their acknowledgment to the music as the

¹⁸ Interview, 14 January 2013.

¹⁹ Interview with Ajengan Entoy, 8 January 2013

Sundanese music instead of the Islamic one as the way they sing, the tone; the expressions are very close to their feeling as Sundanese.

In this performance, the purification of the text that has been done by Islamic leaders works in two ways. On one hand, as a textual record subject to orthodoxy-based surveillance, it is subject to change and purification. But at the same time, it acts as a source of legitimisation and support for performance practices that might otherwise be abandoned. It sustains purification at one level, but resists it at another.

Furthermore, the change of some old elements in the music has been considered as part of the change of Islamic life of villagers. It is true that the case of leaving old practices is to negotiate with the Islamic practice, yet it does not mean to leave the performance. It is still part of rituals. In this situation, not only the Islamic aspect that is negotiated but also the local aspect, the Sundanese-ness, the Sundanese aspect, has actively taken part in this negotiation.

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