Between Integration and Cultural Boundaries: Arab-Hadrami Responses to Sundanese Cultural Policy in Purwakarta, 2015–2020

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Abstract

This article examines Arab-Hadrami responses to the institutionalization of Sundanese culture by the Purwakarta Regency government between 2015 and 2020. It approaches these responses through the history of a locally rooted diaspora rather than a binary of acceptance and rejection. Following the historical method, the analysis distinguishes the documentary record of policy and public controversy from subsequent recollections by residents, religious officials, and educators. Regulations, planning documents, contemporary reports, regional histories, and institutional accounts establish the setting in which cultural policy developed. The interviews illuminate how particular actors later remembered and interpreted that encounter. Festival accounts distinguish support for cultural preservation from objections to religious symbolism and public expenditure. Debates over wayang statues concern theology, historical representation, and political purpose. School testimony describes the incorporation of local themes into literacy, environmental care, charity, and worship. These accounts suggest that participation in local society could coexist with criticism of particular governmental representations of culture. Policy continuity after the 2018 leadership transition provides a further context for examining accommodation, although the record does not establish that dialogue alone prevented communal conflict. The article develops selective integration as an interpretation of these differentiated responses: Islamic commitments informed the boundaries of participation without necessarily requiring withdrawal from shared civic life. The extent and timing of acceptance remain subject to the distinction between documented practice and retrospective testimony.

Keywords: Arab-Hadrami diaspora; cultural policy; local identity; Purwakarta; Sundanese culture; selective integration

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Introduction

Indonesia's post-authoritarian decentralization changed more than the distribution of administrative authority. It enabled district governments to formulate public identities through local languages, landscapes, ritual calendars, school programs, and narratives of historical inheritance. Such projects were commonly defended as the recovery of traditions marginalized by centralization and as an ethical answer to the social dislocation of rapid development. Yet once the culture of a regional majority becomes a vocabulary of government, it ceases to be only an inherited practice. It also becomes a public norm that residents of different genealogical, ethnic, or religious backgrounds must interpret. Vedi R. Hadiz's analysis of localized power is useful here: decentralization created new arenas in which local elites could mobilize identity, resources, and institutions, but it did not predetermine whether the resulting politics would be inclusive, competitive, or coercive.[1]

Purwakarta, a regency in West Java, offers an unusually revealing case. During Dedi Mulyadi's two terms as regent, local government made Sundanese culture increasingly visible in official planning, public architecture, festivals, education, and everyday administrative symbolism. The language of *Purwakarta Berkarakter* (Purwakarta of Character) connected local wisdom, religiosity, environmental stewardship, and governmental conduct. By 2015 this orientation had acquired a denser regulatory form through character education and the cultural-village program. Wayang figures stood at intersections; public buildings adopted Sundanese architectural motifs; trees were wrapped with patterned cloth; festivals dramatized agrarian memory; and schools organized weekly themes of national, global, Sundanese, creative, religious, and familial formation. These measures made culture a repeated experience of government rather than an occasional ceremonial display.

The project was also contested. Yanwar Pribadi has shown that the confrontation between Dedi Mulyadi and the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) was embedded in the political openings produced by democratization and decentralization. The controversy around statues, cultural symbols, and the greeting *Sampurasun* revealed that "local culture" and "Islam" were not self-evident, mutually exclusive blocs. They were rival claims to public legitimacy articulated by political leaders, religious organizations, and their supporters.[2] This public confrontation is important, but it can obscure the responses of communities whose encounter with Sundanese culture was older and more intimate than the controversy itself.

Among those communities were the descendants of migrants from Hadramaut, southern Arabia, concentrated historically around Pasar Rebo in Nagri Kidul. Their settlement was shaped by nineteenth-century commerce, colonial ethnic administration, kinship, Islamic learning, and intermarriage. Regional histories and more recent studies identify an organized Arab presence in Purwakarta by the late colonial period, including an officially recognized Arab lieutenant, religious

[1] Vedi R. Hadiz, *Localising Power in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia Perspective* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 172.

[2] Yanwar Pribadi, "Budaya Lokal versus Islam: Perseteruan antara Bupati Purwakarta dan FPI dalam Kerangka Demokratisasi dan Desentralisasi," *Harmoni: Jurnal Multikultural dan Multireligius* 15, no. 3 (2016): 75–86.

institutions, commercial networks, and a durable neighborhood center.[3] This history matters because the community that encountered Sundanese cultural policy after 2015 was not a newly arrived minority deciding whether to enter local society. It was a locally rooted diaspora whose members already spoke Sundanese, traded with Sundanese neighbors, participated in shared Islamic institutions, and nevertheless maintained surnames, genealogical consciousness, ritual practices, and educational traditions.

Existing scholarship establishes several necessary parts of this history without explaining their relationship. Nina Merlina describes Arab–Sundanese interaction in Purwakarta as an associative process sustained by commerce, language, religion, and everyday cooperation.[4] Wahyu Iryana and his co-authors reconstruct the religious life of Yemeni Arab descendants at Pasar Rebo and emphasize the role of communal institutions.[5] Fransisca Ria Susanti and Riyan Haqi Khoerul Anwar, Andri Nurjaman, and Muhamad Yusuf examine the construction of Sundanese-Islamic identity and the search for Islamic values within Dedi Mulyadi's cultural program. Kustini Kosasih, Moh. Zaenal Abidin Eko Putro, and Asnawati Mardamin situate Purwakarta's local leadership within religious moderation and sustainable development.[6] These studies explain long-term interaction, community institutions, local leadership, and public controversy. They do not ask how members of the Arab-Hadrami community differentiated among specific policy media—festival, urban symbol, and school program—or how their prior history of integration structured those distinctions.

The resulting historiographical gap is both empirical and conceptual. Empirically, public polemics cannot be treated as a transparent record of the whole Arab-Hadrami community; individual activists and clerics exercised agency, but their positions did not automatically represent neighbors, parents, traders, or educators. Conceptually, "acceptance" is too imprecise to describe participation accompanied by criticism, and "resistance" is too broad to describe objections to a symbol that coexist with support for the policy's stated cultural purpose. John W. Berry's distinction among integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization supplies a

[3] A. Sobana Hardjasaputra, *Sejarah Purwakarta* (Purwakarta: Pemerintah Kabupaten Purwakarta, Dinas Pariwisata, 2004), 54; Wahyu Iryana, M. B. Mustofa, Ahmad Abas Musofa, and Arum Puspitasari, "Religious Activities of Yemeni Arab Descendants at Pasar Rebo Purwakarta, West Java Indonesia in Comunication Interpersonal (1885–1900)," *Proceeding of ADIA* (2024): 317–30.

[4] Nina Merlina, "Pola Interaksi Masyarakat Arab–Sunda di Kabupaten Purwakarta," *Patanjala: Jurnal Penelitian Sejarah dan Budaya* 1, no. 1 (2009): 42–54, https://doi.org/10.30959/patanjala.v1i1.229.

[5] Wahyu Iryana, M. B. Mustofa, Ahmad Abas Musofa, and Arum Puspitasari, "Religious Activities of Yemeni Arab Descendants at Pasar Rebo Purwakarta, West Java Indonesia in Comunication Interpersonal (1885–1900)," *Proceeding of ADIA* (2024): 317–30.

[6] Fransisca Ria Susanti, "Islam Sunda: Konstruksi Identitas Kolektif dalam Masyarakat Jaringan (Studi Kasus di Purwakarta)," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Meneguhkan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Keindonesiaan*, ed. P. Y. D. E. Agustinova (Yogyakarta: Fakultas Ilmu Sosial, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2017), 163–77; Riyan Haqi Khoerul Anwar, Andri Nurjaman, and Muhamad Yusuf, "Dinamika Budaya dan Agama (Studi Analisis atas Pencarian Nilai-Nilai Islam dalam Kebijakan Budaya Sunda Masa Bupati Dedi Mulyadi di Purwakarta)," *Scientia: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian* 7, no. 2 (2022): 129–37; Kustini Kosasih, Moh. Zaenal Abidin Eko Putro, and Asnawati Mardamin, "Kepemimpinan Lokal, Moderasi Beragama dan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan di Purwakarta," *PENAMAS* 34, no. 2 (2021): 221–42, https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v34i2.511.

vocabulary for avoiding that binary, provided it is used as an interpretive aid rather than a substitute for historical causation.[7]

This article therefore asks how the historical formation of Purwakarta's Arab-Hadrami community informed responses to Sundanese cultural policy between 2015 and 2020, and why the responses described in the sources differed across policy domains. Its argument centers on *selective integration*. Trade, neighborhood life, Islamic worship, bilingual communication, education, and intermarriage had provided established forms of participation in local society. In the informants' accounts, such participation coexisted with judgments expressed through Islamic ethical and theological commitments. Educational activities were described as acceptable where local themes could be incorporated into literacy, charity, environmental care, and worship. Festival imagery, wayang statues, and poleng cloth raised different questions about religious meaning, historical representation, and political authority. The analysis examines these distinctions without treating individual recollections as the position of the entire community.

The article contributes to the social history of post-Reformasi Indonesia in three ways. First, it connects a nineteenth- and twentieth-century diaspora history to the governance of local identity after decentralization. Second, it disaggregates minority response by policy medium rather than assigning a single attitude to an ethnic community. Third, it places ordinary interpretation alongside spectacular conflict. Its contribution lies in explaining that integration operated through the preservation and negotiation of boundaries, not through their disappearance. The evidence does not support a romantic narrative of frictionless harmony, but neither does it support an opposition between an Islamic Arab minority and a Sundanese cultural majority. The history is one of unequal visibility, disagreement, adaptation, and sustained coexistence.

Method

The research follows four stages of historical inquiry: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics involved identifying written, oral, visual, and institutional evidence relevant to the Arab-Hadrami community and Purwakarta's cultural policy. Materials were collected from the Purwakarta subdistrict Office of Religious Affairs, the Purwakarta Indonesian Ulama Council, the Ministry of Religious Affairs office for Purwakarta Regency, the Nagri Kidul administrative office, SDIT Ali bin Abi Thalib, and the Bandung Regional Library. The written corpus includes the Nagri Kidul profile, local histories, statistical publications, regency planning documents, Regent Regulation No. 69 of 2015 on Character Education, Regent Regulation No. 70.A of 2015 on Cultural Villages, and Regent Regulation No. 9 of 2016 concerning honoraria for the religious-tolerance task force.[8]

[7] John W. Berry, *Acculturation: A Personal Journey across Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 11–14.

[8] Purwakarta Regency, *Peraturan Bupati Purwakarta Nomor 69 Tahun 2015 tentang Pendidikan Berkarakter* (Purwakarta, 2015); Purwakarta Regency, *Peraturan Bupati Purwakarta Nomor 70.A Tahun 2015 tentang Desa Berbudaya* (Purwakarta, 2015); Purwakarta Regency, *Peraturan Bupati Purwakarta Nomor 9 Tahun 2016 tentang Besaran Honorarium Satuan Tugas Toleransi Kehidupan Beragama/Kepercayaan di Kabupaten Purwakarta Tahun Anggaran 2016* (Purwakarta, 2016).

Contemporary news reports and videos were used to reconstruct festival activity, disputes over public statues, and official explanations of cultural policy.

Oral sources were indispensable because the study concerns the reception and remembered meaning of policies within a living community. Interviews were conducted with Erlin Sofia Hanafiah on Arab social life in Purwakarta; Muhammad Faraz Bajri, Husein Bajri, and Zidan Bawazier on Arab-Hadrami responses to Sundanese cultural policy; Agus Salahudin of the Ministry of Religious Affairs on religious institutions and public controversy; and Agus Mulyadi, principal of SDIT Ali bin Abi Thalib, on the implementation of local educational policy. The use of oral history follows Paul Thompson's insistence that testimony can restore actors and experiences underrepresented in official archives while requiring critical attention to memory, position, selection, and retrospective interpretation.[9]

Source criticism assessed the relationship between events and the evidence used to reconstruct them. The analysis examined policies and public controversies through documentary sources, while treating interview accounts as participants' recollections. These accounts informed the interpretation of experience without establishing that the views expressed also characterized the events under study. The record also documents subsequent access to earlier online reports, distinguishing their original publication dates from the dates on which they were consulted. Photographs illustrate cultural representation but do not independently establish chronology where their creation dates are unknown. Internal criticism examined each source's proximity, purpose, institutional position, and corroboration. Hanafiah's testimony informs family and neighborhood memory; Mulyadi describes school practice; Salahudin explains religious administration; and the community informants articulate particular judgments about symbols and expenditure. These accounts identify perspectives, not a collective mandate, and do not establish the timing of an earlier response without dated corroboration.

Interpretation proceeded on two levels. First, the evidence was arranged chronologically to connect the colonial formation of Pasar Rebo, the consolidation of Arab religious and educational institutions, the post-1998 localization of governmental authority, the expansion of cultural policy under Dedi Mulyadi, and its continuation after Anne Ratna Mustika assumed office in 2018. Second, the evidence was compared thematically across festivals, public space, and education. Berry's acculturation typology provides an interpretive vocabulary grounded here in the community's historical circumstances. Integration is not inferred merely from the simultaneous presence of two cultures; it is examined through participation in common institutions together with the maintenance of community identity. Assimilation would require the abandonment of that identity, while separation would require systematic withdrawal from local interaction—neither of which is supported by the record.[10]

[9] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 27, 83.

[10] John W. Berry, *Acculturation: A Personal Journey across Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 11–14.

Historiography brought these sources into a narrative of continuity, change, and interpretation. Louis Gottschalk and Sulasman's formulations of historical method emphasize that explanatory claims depend on tested evidence and reconstructed relationships. [11] The narrative accordingly distinguishes policy intention from social reception and documented events from remembered experience. Their accounts illuminate how informants interpret the policies, but do not independently establish the documentary record. They also provide insufficient grounds for estimating acceptance across the community or reconstructing shifts in opinion with precision. The full periods of collection and analysis are not specified in the research record; the years 2015–2020 identify the historical subject, not the dates on which the research was completed.

Results

From Colonial Quarter to Local Community

The Arab-Hadrami presence in Purwakarta developed as part of the wider nineteenth-century movement of Hadrami merchants and religious specialists through Batavia, Cirebon, and other Javanese towns. Purwakarta's growth as an administrative and commercial center after the transfer of the Karawang regency capital in 1831 created conditions for settlement. The study's chronology places the arrival of Yemeni Arab families from Cirebon between approximately 1870 and 1878 and records 107 Arab residents by the end of the nineteenth century. The railway connection later strengthened mobility between the district and larger commercial centers.[12] These dates should not be read as a single founding moment. Migration proceeded through family and trade networks, and the community became visible to colonial administration as it acquired demographic and economic weight.

Colonial racial governance shaped the geography of that visibility. Pasar Rebo became associated with the Arab population, while Pasar Jumat was associated with Chinese residents and the area around the square with the Indigenous population. The *wijkenstelsel* and *passenstelsel* concentrated and monitored designated "Foreign Oriental" communities, restricting settlement and movement. Local records refer to the Arab neighborhood as *Kampong der Arabieschen* and to its head as *Luitenant der Arabieschen*. Sheikh Hasan bin Ali Bajri served as Arab lieutenant from 1925 to 1942. This office simultaneously registered colonial segregation and the community's internal hierarchy: the lieutenant mediated between government and residents and was expected to possess wealth, linguistic competence, reputation, and authority.[13]

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[11] Louis Gottschalk, *Mengerti Sejarah*, trans. Nugroho Notosusanto (Jakarta: UI Press, 1985), 32; Sulasman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah: Teori, Metode, Contoh Aplikasi* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2014), 73, 96, 104, 147.

[12] A. Sobana Hardjasaputra, *Sejarah Purwakarta* (Purwakarta: Pemerintah Kabupaten Purwakarta, Dinas Pariwisata, 2004), 42, 54; Ahmad Said Widodo, *Sejarah Stasiun Kereta Api dan Dipo Purwakarta* (Purwakarta, June 26, 2024).

[13] Ahmad Said Widodo, *Sejarah Stasiun Kereta Api dan Dipo Purwakarta* (Purwakarta, June 26, 2024); Nabiel A. Karim Hayaze, *Hikayat Kapitein Arab di Nusantara: Jejak Dakwah dan Nasionalisme* (Yogyakarta: Garudhawaca, 2021), xxvii–xxviii.

Religious and educational institutions helped turn the colonial quarter into a durable social center. In local memory, Masjid Ar-Raudlah, commonly known as the Arab mosque, and Madrasah Adabiyah Islamiyah (MAI) are associated with 1926. Hanafiah's account describes the mosque as a place of prayer, preaching, gathering, and instruction, and relates MAI's early formation to the local Arab congregation, Jam'iyat Khair, and an early leader named Abdulharat. These recollections do not independently distinguish the opening of an institution from its administrative establishment. The exact dates therefore remain unconfirmed by the documentation cited here. The institutional history nevertheless places religious learning and education at the center of communal continuity, while MAI's later provision of Diniyah, Tsanawiyah, and Aliyah education extended its significance beyond Arab families.[14]

Family structure sustained a distinct identity without preventing social change. In her recollection of family life, Hanafiah identified Bajri as the most numerous surname in Pasar Rebo and also named Assegaf, Al-Habsyi, Alidrus, Alatas, Hilabi, and Bawazier. Surnames signaled genealogy, collective responsibility, and family reputation. Marriage across ethnic lines had once prompted anxiety because of lineage and the continuity of the surname, but Hanafiah described a gradual increase in acceptance of Arab–Sundanese marriage. Descendants continued to be recognized as part of the family network even when an older preference for endogamy weakened.[15] The change did not erase genealogical consciousness; it altered how that consciousness was maintained.

Hanafiah's account locates everyday integration in commerce, language, and religion. Arab-owned shops at Pasar Rebo depended on sustained exchange with Sundanese customers and workers. Sundanese became a normal language of business and neighborhood communication, while Arabic expressions and a mixed register continued within families and among Hadrami descendants. Foods such as nasi mandi and samosa retained ceremonial significance, yet everyday consumption largely converged with that of neighbors. Maulid, haul, collective recitation of *Ratib al-Haddad*, Qur'anic study, and Islamic-history lessons transmitted religious learning within the community, but the mosque and madrasah also attracted non-Arab Muslims.[16]

This long formation explains why later cultural policy did not confront two socially separate populations. Merlina's study found that interaction was associative rather than dominated by conflict: market exchange, shared Islam, language acquisition, schooling, and neighborhood participation had made Arab–Sundanese

[14] Erlin Sofia Hanafiah, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Kehidupan Masyarakat Arab di Purwakarta," October 7, 2024; Dzhilaal Al Baqi Bahalwan, "Dinamika Perkembangan Sekolah Bentukan Komunitas Hadrami di Indonesia 1905–1942," *Khazanah: Jurnal Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam* 12, no. 2 (2022): 121–31.

[15] Erlin Sofia Hanafiah, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Kehidupan Masyarakat Arab di Purwakarta," October 7, 2024.

[16] Erlin Sofia Hanafiah, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Kehidupan Masyarakat Arab di Purwakarta," October 7, 2024; Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren, dan Tarekat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995).

relations routine.[17] The historical boundary remained real—through surname, genealogy, ritual repertoire, food, and institutional memory—but it was porous. By 2015, members of the Arab-Hadrami community already inhabited Sundanese social space and had contributed to its religious and educational infrastructure. Their responses to cultural policy emerged from this double position: they were local participants and custodians of a particular diasporic-Islamic inheritance.

The Institutional Expansion of Sundanese Culture

Purwakarta's cultural turn began before the article's principal period. After Dedi Mulyadi became regent in 2008, *Purwakarta Berkarakter* supplied a normative language connecting regional development to religion and local wisdom. The 2008–2013 development plan and the concept *Salapan Lengkah Ngawangun Nagri Raharja* translated that language into fields of government: education, public administration, the built environment, social welfare, and community development. Culture was thereby repositioned from an object of preservation to an instrument and idiom of governance.[18]

The shift became more visible during the 2015–2020 period. Regent Regulation No. 69 of 2015 made character formation a formal responsibility of educational institutions. Its implementation became widely known through *7 Poe Atikan Purwakarta Istimewa*, a weekly sequence that associated particular days with national belonging (*Ajeg Nusantara*), global knowledge (*Mapag Buana*), Sundanese rootedness (*Maneuh di Sunda*), creativity and social sensitivity (*Nyanding Wawangi*), spiritual purification (*Nyucikeun Diri*), and family life (*Betah di Imah*). The program did not create a separate subject called "Sundanese culture." It encouraged schools to embody its values through dress, language, traditional games, reading, environmental activity, charity, worship, and family participation.[19]

Regent Regulation No. 70.A of 2015 on Cultural Villages extended cultural governance into village administration and social practice. It promoted local institutions, environmental stewardship, traditional skills, religious life, and Sundanese architectural markers. Some provisions became controversial, including rules touching private and gendered conduct, and the West Java governor later annulled several provisions. The regulation nevertheless shows the breadth of the government's ambition: culture was conceived not simply as performance but as a framework for ordering village life.[20]

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[17] Nina Merlina, "Pola Interaksi Masyarakat Arab–Sunda di Kabupaten Purwakarta," *Patanjala: Jurnal Penelitian Sejarah dan Budaya* 1, no. 1 (2009): 42–54, https://doi.org/10.30959/patanjala.v1i1.229.

[18] Purwakarta Regency, *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah Kabupaten Purwakarta Tahun 2008–2013* (Purwakarta, 2010); Dedi Mulyadi, *Gagasan Pembangunan Purwakarta Berkarakter* (Purwakarta: Bappeda Purwakarta, 2011), 4, 35–40.

[19] Purwakarta Regency, *Peraturan Bupati Purwakarta Nomor 69 Tahun 2015 tentang Pendidikan Berkarakter* (Purwakarta, 2015); Anggy Giri Prawiyogi, "Kajian Tujuh Poe Atikan Pendidikan Purwakarta Istimewa dalam Peraturan Bupati Nomor 69 Tahun 2015," *Madrosatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 1, no. 1 (2018): 62–72, https://doi.org/10.47971/mjpgmi.v1i1.18.

[20] Purwakarta Regency, *Peraturan Bupati Purwakarta Nomor 70.A Tahun 2015 tentang Desa Berbudaya* (Purwakarta, 2015); West Java Province, *Keputusan Gubernur Jawa Barat Nomor 188 Tahun 2015*

Festivals and urban design supplied the program's most public face. The government had sponsored Sundanese festivals since 2009, but later events grew in scale and thematic specificity. Festival routes, international delegations, Bebegig performances, agrarian symbols, and Sundanese arts turned streets into stages of regional identity. Public architecture adopted *julang ngapak* roof forms; bamboo lighting and traditional gates marked the city; wayang figures occupied intersections; and cloth wrapped around trees connected landscape management to an official story about local tradition. Susanti's analysis appropriately treats these practices as the construction of a networked collective identity: administrative action, symbols, public space, media, and cultural performance reinforced one another.[21]

The policy outlived its principal political architect. When Anne Ratna Mustika succeeded Dedi Mulyadi in 2018, cultural festivals and education programs continued, though their emphases changed. This continuity indicates that the cultural turn had acquired institutional and symbolic momentum beyond a single officeholder. At the same time, studies of Purwakarta's local leadership have noted that the language of Sundanese wisdom, religious moderation, and development could support social cohesion while also generating controversy over who possessed the authority to interpret culture and Islam.[22] The state's public identity was therefore neither a fixed doctrine nor a consensual inheritance. It was an ongoing political and moral claim.

Festivals: Support for Preservation, Dispute over Representation

Festival policy placed the Arab-Hadrami community in direct contact with concentrated representations of Sundanese culture. The 2015 Purwakarta World Festival, held for the regency and town anniversaries, involved more than one thousand performers and delegations reported from Japan, Italy, Turkey, Egypt, South Africa, South Korea, India, and China. Government framed the event as a meeting of cultures through which Purwakarta could present a confident Sundanese identity to a wider world. In 2019, the Nyi Pohaci Festival emphasized agrarian memory through *awug* processions, agricultural attributes, and the rice-associated figure of Nyi Pohaci. The change of event format after 2018 altered the imagery but not the official commitment to public cultural performance.

tentang Pembatalan Beberapa Ketentuan dari Peraturan Bupati Purwakarta Nomor 70.A Tahun 2015 tentang Desa Berbudaya (Bandung, 2015).

[21] Fransisca Ria Susanti, "Islam Sunda: Konstruksi Identitas Kolektif dalam Masyarakat Jaringan (Studi Kasus di Purwakarta)," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Meneguhkan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Keindonesiaan*, ed. P. Y. D. E. Agustinova (Yogyakarta: Fakultas Ilmu Sosial, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2017), 163–77.

[22] Kustini Kosasih, Moh. Zaenal Abidin Eko Putro, and Asnawati Mardamin, "Kepemimpinan Lokal, Moderasi Beragama dan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan di Purwakarta," *PENAMAS* 34, no. 2 (2021): 221–42, https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v34i2.511; Riyan Haqi Khoerul Anwar, Andri Nurjaman, and Muhamad Yusuf, "Dinamika Budaya dan Agama (Studi Analisis atas Pencarian Nilai-Nilai Islam dalam Kebijakan Budaya Sunda Masa Bupati Dedi Mulyadi di Purwakarta)," *Scientia: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian* 7, no. 2 (2022): 129–37.



Figure 1 Bebegig performance at a cultural festival in Purwakarta. The enlarged mask, costume, procession, and crowded public setting show how cultural policy concentrated symbolic representation in an encounter between performers, government, and spectators

Festival research describes such events as sites of cultural contact in which visitors interpret displays through prior knowledge and social position.[23] Faraz Bajri's recollection distinguishes the cultural purpose of a festival from the meaning attributed to its symbols. Muhammad Faraz Bajri regarded festivals presenting Sundanese arts to the world as legitimate and even desirable. His reservation concerned events such as Bebegig or Nyi Pohaci when members of the community interpreted their imagery as originating in pre-Islamic belief. In his account, many alternative Sundanese themes could preserve culture without producing a perceived contradiction with Islam.[24]

Recalling the festival controversy, Zidan Bawazier acknowledged the public enthusiasm surrounding festivals but criticized what he perceived as an imbalance between cultural programming and Islamic activity, particularly when both drew on the regional budget. His objection was therefore distributive and political as well as theological. It questioned which traditions government chose to elevate and finance. Neither informant framed his criticism as a rejection of Sundanese cultural preservation. Both distinguish preservation as a public good from representational choices that, in their judgment, placed religiously ambiguous symbols or cultural expenditure ahead of Islam.

These accounts describe a form of conditional participation. Faraz and Bawazier recognized cultural preservation as a legitimate public purpose while questioning the religious associations or budgetary priorities of particular events. Their distinction was between culture understood as art, history, and celebration and

[23] Yong-Guang Zou, Fang Meng, Ningqiao Li, and Enling Pu, "Ethnic Minority Cultural Festival Experience: Visitor–Environment Fit, Cultural Contact, and Behavioral Intention," *Tourism Economics* 27, no. 6 (2021): 1237–55, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354816620966404.

[24] Muhammad Faraz Bajri, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Hubungan Orang-Orang Arab Hadrami dengan Kebudayaan Sunda," October 7, 2024.

imagery interpreted as carrying cosmological claims. The interviews therefore illuminate the grounds on which these informants judged participation. They do not establish how widely their judgments were shared during 2015–2020, or when particular objections first arose.

Table 1. Policy Medium, Arab-Hadrami Response, and Historical Interpretation, 2015–2020

Policy medium	State implementation	Arab-Hadrami evidence	Reported response	Historical interpretation
Festivals	World, Bebegig, and Nyi Pohaci festivals; anniversary processions	Approval of preservation alongside criticism of pre-Islamic associations and perceived budgetary imbalance	Conditional acceptance	Participation remained open, but symbols were filtered through Islamic boundaries
Public space	Wayang statues, Sundanese architecture, bamboo lighting, gates, and poleng cloth	Calls for broader historical representation; theological concern; suspicion of political instrumentalization	Critical negotiation	The city became an arena where cultural, historical, religious, and political meanings competed
Education	Character Education Regulation and 7 Poe Atikan weekly themes	Local themes integrated into Islamic curricula, charity, literacy, environmental activity, and worship	Reported practical acceptance	Compatibility depended on program substance and institutional translation
Mediation	Religious-tolerance task force, Ministry of Religious Affairs explanation, Safari Budaya	Contextual religious interpretation and continuing public dialogue	Managed accommodation	Dialogue accompanied policy continuity; its effect on disagreement remains uncertain

Public Space: Theology, History, and Political Purpose

Urban symbolism produced a more persistent encounter because residents did not choose when to enter it. Wayang statues of Semar, Cepot, Bima, Gatotkaca, Arjuna,

Yudhistira, Nakula, and Sadewa, as well as statues of national figures, appeared at prominent roads and intersections. Government publications and scholarship presented these works as a visual pedagogy: the city itself would introduce cultural and historical figures, while Sundanese architecture and ornamental design would make regional identity materially legible.[25] Cloth wrapped around trees was officially explained as an adaptation of an older protective sign rather than the imitation of Balinese ritual, illustrating the government's effort to control the meaning of a symbol that viewers could interpret differently.

Controversy demonstrated that official intention could not determine public reception. Statues were damaged, religious organizations organized protest, and some clerics invoked Islamic prohibitions concerning images. The conflict should not be attributed wholesale to the Arab-Hadrami community. Public reporting concerned broader Islamic mobilization, and the participation of an Arab-descended cleric represented the agency of a specific actor rather than a communal mandate.[26] The later interviews describe more differentiated positions.

In his recollection, Faraz Bajri's criticism concerned historical representation. If the purpose was to honor Sundanese culture, he asked why government relied so heavily on wayang figures rather than also commemorating Sundanese historical actors whose contribution to society could be documented. The argument neither denied that wayang belonged to regional cultural history nor called for the removal of every statue. It challenged a selective canon. Public space, in this view, should represent the historical plurality of Sundanese achievement rather than equate Sundanese identity with one mythic repertoire.[27]

Husein Bajri's account shifts attention from the object to the political intention behind it. He argued that cultural policy should be evaluated according to whether it genuinely elevated Sundanese culture or operated as a strategy for maintaining political power. If culture became an instrument of personal legitimacy, it violated the social philosophy it claimed to preserve. This testimony makes visible an interpretive problem common to decentralized cultural governance: precisely because the regent's persona, public performances, and policy language were closely intertwined, residents could support local culture while suspecting its personalization.

Agus Salahudin recalled a change in religious responses to statues. Initial anxiety among clerics was substantial because Islamic traditions concerning images were invoked. The Ministry of Religious Affairs promoted a contextual distinction between an image treated as an object of worship and a statue functioning as cultural

[25] Riyan Haqi Khoerul Anwar, Andri Nurjaman, and Muhamad Yusuf, "Dinamika Budaya dan Agama (Studi Analisis atas Pencarian Nilai-Nilai Islam dalam Kebijakan Budaya Sunda Masa Bupati Dedi Mulyadi di Purwakarta)," *Scientia: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian* 7, no. 2 (2022): 129–37; Dedi Mulyadi, *Gagasan Pembangunan Purwakarta Berkarakter* (Purwakarta: Bappeda Purwakarta, 2011), 35–40.

[26] Tri Ispranoto, "Mengenal Patung-Patung Wayang di Purwakarta," *Detiknews*, February 14, 2016; Yanwar Pribadi, "Budaya Lokal versus Islam: Perseteruan antara Bupati Purwakarta dan FPI dalam Kerangka Demokratisasi dan Desentralisasi," *Harmoni: Jurnal Multikultural dan Multireligius* 15, no. 3 (2016): 75–86. Accessed February 5, 2025.

[27] Muhammad Faraz Bajri, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Hubungan Orang-Orang Arab Hadrami dengan Kebudayaan Sunda," October 7, 2024.

identification or urban ornament. As the purpose became more familiar and the community's monotheistic commitments were not perceived to be endangered, the controversy diminished. [28] His account does not prove that every objection disappeared. It suggests that institutional explanation and familiarity mattered to his understanding of accommodation, while leaving the timing and extent of that change uncertain.

The public-space accounts bring together theological reasoning, criticism of historical representation, and concern about political purpose. These positions address different questions: what public culture should represent, how an image functions, and who has authority to define its meaning. Salahudin's recollection suggests that distinguishing urban ornament from devotional use helped some observers reconsider the statues. It does not establish that this interpretation became universal or that objections had diminished by a particular year. The evidence supports examining a process of negotiation rather than declaring the controversy conclusively resolved.

Education: Institutional Translation and Reported Acceptance

Educational policy entered family life through institutions responsible for interpreting and implementing it. Regulation No. 69 of 2015 linked character education to religious commitment, discipline, respect for parents and teachers, environmental care, and local culture. The weekly *7 Poe Atikan* themes allowed schools to connect those aims with activities suited to their institutional identity. In the school testimony examined here, this capacity for adaptation explains why local cultural content was described as compatible with Islamic education. The regulation establishes the program's framework; the principal's later account explains how he understood its reception.[29]

Looking back on implementation at SDIT Ali bin Abi Thalib, Agus Mulyadi described local regulations as obligations that could be implemented wholeheartedly because the school retained the capacity to integrate them into its own curriculum. Monday's *Ajeg Nusantara* could involve care for the environment; Tuesday's *Mapag Buana* emphasized literacy; Wednesday's *Maneuh di Sunda* involved local dress and *kaulinan barudak*; Thursday included *Beas Kaheman*, through which children contributed rice for people in need; and Friday combined collective remembrance and Qur'an reading before lessons. The school did not receive these activities as a self-contained cultural doctrine. It translated them into national belonging, knowledge, play, charity, and worship.[30]

[28] Agus Salahudin, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Keterkaitan Kementerian Agama dalam Hubungan Masyarakat Arab dan Sunda," October 8, 2024.

[29] Purwakarta Regency, *Peraturan Bupati Purwakarta Nomor 69 Tahun 2015 tentang Pendidikan Berkarakter* (Purwakarta, 2015); Anggy Giri Prawiyogi, "Kajian Tujuh Poe Atikan Pendidikan Purwakarta Istimewa dalam Peraturan Bupati Nomor 69 Tahun 2015," *Madrosatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 1, no. 1 (2018): 62–72, https://doi.org/10.47971/mjpgmi.v1i1.18.

[30] Agus Mulyadi, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Respon SDIT Ali bin Abi Thalib terhadap Kebijakan Pendidikan Daerah," October 10, 2024.

Mulyadi reported that Arab-Hadrami parents did not object and associated the activities with greater participation and character formation among children. This is an institutional account of parental response, not a direct record of every parent's views. The sources cited do not identify dated records sufficient to corroborate the extent of that acceptance during 2015–2020. His testimony is more useful for explaining the school's mediating role: local themes were presented through an Islamic educational setting and linked to practices the principal considered consistent with the school's aims.[31]

MAI offers a related institutional context, although its evidentiary basis differs. The 2014 study describes a madrasah combining national, regional, and local curricula while maintaining its Islamic orientation. That history helps explain a capacity to accommodate different curricular requirements, but predates the 2015 regulation and cannot by itself establish its subsequent implementation. No dedicated interview with MAI's leadership is cited. Salahudin's later testimony describes the Ministry of Religious Affairs as supportive of local curricula that reinforced religious activity and as applying common supervisory principles to Arab and Sundanese students. These sources clarify the institutional setting; they do not establish MAI's specific response to each element of the later program.[32]

The educational accounts suggest that compatibility depended on the content of an activity and the institution presenting it. Literacy, charity, environmental responsibility, respect, and worship could be understood through both local character education and Islamic ethics. In Mulyadi's description, traditional dress and games became teaching resources within that shared framework. This account provides a concrete example of how an Islamic school could interpret regional policy without relinquishing its own identity. It supports an explanation of institutional adaptation, while leaving the comparative level of acceptance across schools and families unresolved.

Governmental Continuity and the Management of Disagreement

Criticism did not cause the regency government to abandon its cultural direction. Instead, policy continuity was accompanied by institutions and practices of communication. Regent Regulation No. 9 of 2016 funded the religious/belief tolerance task force, indicating that cultural governance developed alongside administrative attention to interreligious and interpretive tension.[33] The Ministry of Religious Affairs offered contextual explanations, while Dedi Mulyadi's *Safari Budaya* combined performance with encounters involving community leaders, cultural figures, and pesantren circles.

[31] Agus Mulyadi, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Respon SDIT Ali bin Abi Thalib terhadap Kebijakan Pendidikan Daerah," October 10, 2024.

[32] Eka Nurdelima, "Manajemen Tenaga Pendidik pada Madrasah Tsanawiyah MAI Purwakarta" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2014); Agus Salahudin, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Keterkaitan Kementerian Agama dalam Hubungan Masyarakat Arab dan Sunda," October 8, 2024.

[33] Purwakarta Regency, *Peraturan Bupati Purwakarta Nomor 9 Tahun 2016 tentang Besaran Honorarium Satuan Tugas Toleransi Kehidupan Beragama/Kepercayaan di Kabupaten Purwakarta Tahun Anggaran 2016* (Purwakarta, 2016).

Policy continuity and accommodation should be distinguished. The continuation of cultural programs after the 2018 leadership transition is documented in the sources discussed above. The effect of dialogue on community relations is less securely established. Salahudin's recollection and scholarship on local leadership suggest that communication offered a means of addressing disputed meanings, but neither demonstrates that it prevented lasting conflict or eliminated communal withdrawal.[34] The evidence thus places dialogue alongside continuing cultural governance and institutional adaptation as a possible mechanism of accommodation, without assigning it an exclusive causal role or a settled outcome by 2020.

Discussion

Selective Integration as a Historical Process

The historical record makes integration a useful interpretation, provided its scope remains precise. In Berry's typology, integration combines the maintenance of a group's cultural identity with continuing participation in the wider society.[35] The practices described in the sources suggest both conditions, without establishing that every resident experienced them in the same way. Surnames, genealogy, family networks, Maulid, haul, ratib, mosque life, and Islamic schooling retained social force. At the same time, Sundanese speech, commerce, mixed neighborhoods, intermarriage, shared religious practice, and public education connected the community to local society. Neither assimilation, understood as the abandonment of a distinct identity, nor separation, understood as avoidance of wider interaction, describes this history.

Yet integration alone can conceal the mechanism producing variation. The accounts examined suggest that the informants did not respond to "Sundanese culture" as a single, bounded object. They encountered different combinations of medium, meaning, institution, and authority. A festival condensed symbols into a temporary spectacle and invited judgment about religious association and expenditure. A statue made a representational claim permanent in shared space and invited judgments about images, historical canons, and political power. A school program passed through teachers, curricula, and parents who could translate it into ethical practice. The differences in these accounts concern institutional interpretation as well as the cosmological or political meanings attributed to symbols. They suggest an explanatory relationship rather than a measured correlation between policy medium and acceptance.

Selective integration describes the relationship between participation and criticism in these accounts. Selection did not occur outside integration, as though residents first stood apart and chose isolated elements of a foreign culture. It took place within a long-established field of interaction. Informants already claimed

[34] Agus Salahudin, interview by Irham Fauzan Abdullah, "Keterkaitan Kementerian Agama dalam Hubungan Masyarakat Arab dan Sunda," October 8, 2024; Riyan Haqi Khoerul Anwar, Andri Nurjaman, and Muhamad Yusuf, "Dinamika Budaya dan Agama (Studi Analisis atas Pencarian Nilai-Nilai Islam dalam Kebijakan Budaya Sunda Masa Bupati Dedi Mulyadi di Purwakarta)," *Scientia: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian* 7, no. 2 (2022): 129–37.

[35] John W. Berry, *Acculturation: A Personal Journey across Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 11–14.

Purwakarta as their social world and Sundanese culture as a legitimate regional inheritance. Their criticism was frequently articulated as advice about how that shared public world should be represented. Faraz Bajri's proposal to commemorate documented Sundanese historical actors, for example, was not an external attack on Sundanese identity. It was an intervention in its historical canon. Husein Bajri's objection to political instrumentalization similarly defended a moral conception of culture against its possible use by power.

This reading extends Merlina's account of associative Arab–Sundanese interaction.[36] Everyday cooperation provides a context for understanding why disagreement need not imply ethnic separation, but association alone does not explain why one policy was more acceptable than another. The historical institutions of integration supplied the channels through which differences could be negotiated. Market relations normalized bilingual contact; mosque networks created a common Islamic vocabulary; the later accounts describe schools adapting official programs, families negotiating marriage preferences, and religious officials explaining disputed symbols. The same history that preserved a distinct community also provided its repertoire for participating in local government and criticizing it.

Culture, Islam, and the Problem of Public Representation

The results also complicate the historiographical opposition between local culture and Islam. Pribadi correctly identifies the conflict between Dedi Mulyadi and FPI as a contest generated within democratization and decentralization, where leaders could mobilize cultural resilience and public Islamic piety.[37] At the level of mass politics, the confrontation personalized opposing claims and amplified them through media. At the level of Arab-Hadrami social history, however, the opposition dissolves into a series of interpretive questions. Does a Bebegig costume function as theater, cosmology, or both? Does a wayang statue commemorate art, invite veneration, or create a selective historical canon? Does patterned cloth protect a tree, invoke a ritual tradition, or merely brand a city? Does character education impose majority culture, or can it organize obligations already legible as Islamic ethics?

These questions demonstrate that symbols possess histories but not singular social effects. Government could explain its intention, yet viewers brought inherited theological concepts, political experience, and community memory to the encounter. Conversely, a religious objection was not immune to historical change. Salahudin's recollection of the declining statue controversy suggests a reclassification of function: as people became accustomed to the objects as urban markers rather than sacred presences, some initial anxiety weakened. The process did not require agreement that all representations were aesthetically or historically appropriate. It required a workable distinction between cultural display and worship.

[36] Nina Merlina, "Pola Interaksi Masyarakat Arab–Sunda di Kabupaten Purwakarta," *Patanjala: Jurnal Penelitian Sejarah dan Budaya* 1, no. 1 (2009): 42–54, https://doi.org/10.30959/patanjala.v1i1.229.

[37] Yanwar Pribadi, "Budaya Lokal versus Islam: Perseteruan antara Bupati Purwakarta dan FPI dalam Kerangka Demokratisasi dan Desentralisasi," *Harmoni: Jurnal Multikultural dan Multireligius* 15, no. 3 (2016): 75–86.

The school account illustrates a different interpretive setting. The official program contained explicit Sundanese themes, but Mulyadi described their implementation alongside literacy, charity, environmental responsibility, Qur'anic recitation, prayer, and respect. Within that account, Maneuh di Sunda formed part of a broader educational routine rather than a competing religious doctrine. The proposed explanation is therefore institutional: teachers could connect local dress and games to practices already intelligible within Islamic education. Whether other schools and families made the same connection requires evidence beyond this principal's testimony.

Kosasih, Putro, and Mardamin associate local leadership in Purwakarta with cultural wisdom, religious moderation, and sustainable development.[38] The accounts examined here suggest how intermediary institutions might contribute to that relationship. A school could interpret a policy through curriculum and worship, while a religious office could explain the distinction between ornament and devotion. Such mediation may help explain the accommodation described by Mulyadi and Salahudin. It does not establish that institutional translation consistently produced stronger or more durable acceptance than other approaches; that comparison exceeds the evidence available.

Agency, Memory, and the Limits of Communal Representation

The evidence requires caution about communal voice. Six interviewees cannot statistically represent all Arab-Hadrami residents of Purwakarta. They occupied different roles and spoke retrospectively. A principal described school practice and parental response from an institutional position; a government religious official narrated controversy through the logic of mediation; community informants foregrounded the cultural and theological questions that mattered to them. Their testimony is strongest when used to identify repertoires of interpretation and when corroborated by documented practice, not when converted into numerical estimates of support or opposition.

Oral history examines how experience is organized in memory rather than treating testimony as a direct reproduction of opinion. Thompson emphasizes that testimony can reveal meanings absent from administrative records while remaining shaped by the narrator's identity and knowledge.[39] The interviews describe controversy, familiarity, and accommodation through participants' recollections. These accounts may merge distinct episodes or interpret events through the narrators' perspectives. They are therefore considered alongside documentary evidence as interpretations of lived experience, without assuming that the views expressed in the interviews also characterized the events being recalled.

Agency also operated on several scales. Dedi Mulyadi used the authority of the regency to institutionalize a cultural vision. Anne Ratna Mustika's continuation of

[38] Kustini Kosasih, Moh. Zaenal Abidin Eko Putro, and Asnawati Mardamin, "Kepemimpinan Lokal, Moderasi Beragama dan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan di Purwakarta," *PENAMAS* 34, no. 2 (2021): 221–42, https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v34i2.511.

[39] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 27, 83.

festivals demonstrated bureaucratic and political continuity. Religious organizations converted symbolism into public controversy. Arab-Hadrami clerics could participate in protest, but their actions did not erase the different judgments of educators, parents, traders, and other residents. School leaders reworked policy at the point of implementation. The principal reported parental acceptance, although the range of parents' own responses is not independently recorded. Treating "the state," "Islam," "Sundanese culture," or "the Arab community" as single actors would conceal precisely the historical process the evidence makes visible.

Continuity and Change in Post-Reformasi Local Governance

The longer chronology reveals two interacting continuities. The first was Arab-Hadrami rootedness. Institutions founded under colonial segregation became foundations of local integration. Pasar Rebo, Ar-Raudlah, MAI, commercial networks, and family memory preserved communal continuity while facilitating relations beyond the community. The second was the institutionalization of Sundanese cultural governance. What began as the political vision of a regent entered plans, regulations, architecture, school schedules, and annual events, allowing it to continue after leadership changed in 2018.

Change occurred where these continuities met. Colonial ethnic boundaries no longer organized legal residence, but surnames and institutions retained social meaning. Sundanese culture had long structured local life, but government transformed selected elements into administrative expectations and public branding. Islamic traditions had long connected Arab and Sundanese Muslims, but they also supplied the criteria by which new cultural representations were accepted or criticized. Continuity did not prevent conflict; it determined its language and its limits.

Berry's model is most useful at this point if treated as an outcome to be explained rather than a cause.[40] The community did not integrate because it selected an abstract strategy. Integration became historically available through generations of bilingual exchange, shared institutions, and shifting family boundaries. Nor was it completed once and for all. Each new policy medium reopened questions of identity, authority, and meaning. The accommodation described in later recollections is best understood as contingent and uneven. It does not establish a settled equilibrium by 2020 or universal agreement on cultural governance.

The article's principal historiographical proposition follows. Minority responses to post-decentralization cultural policy are best understood neither as reactions by fixed ethnic groups nor as direct effects of state symbolism. They are historically conditioned acts of interpretation. In the accounts examined, Arab-Hadrami informants evaluated policy from within local society and through a distinct Islamic-genealogical inheritance. Their criticism marked the boundaries of participation; it did not negate participation itself. This finding shifts analysis from a

[40] John W. Berry, *Acculturation: A Personal Journey across Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 11–14.

binary of harmony and conflict to the practices through which plural local societies continually negotiate public culture.

Conclusion

Arab-Hadrami responses to Sundanese cultural policy in Purwakarta between 2015 and 2020 cannot be adequately described through acceptance and rejection alone. The documentary history places the community within more than a century of local formation. Pasar Rebo, commercial exchange, religious institutions, education, bilingual communication, and shared Islamic practice connected a distinct diasporic identity to participation in Purwakarta society. This established setting provides the context for interpreting later recollections of policy, rather than assuming that cultural controversy brought previously separate populations into contact for the first time.

The sources support different conclusions at different levels. Regulations and contemporary reports document the institutional expansion of Sundanese culture, public disputes, and the continuation of programs across the 2018 leadership transition. The interviews describe how particular actors subsequently understood that history. Faraz and Bawazier distinguished cultural preservation from contested imagery and spending priorities; Husein questioned political purpose; and Mulyadi described the incorporation of local themes into Islamic school practice. Salahudin recalled religious explanations that he associated with declining controversy. These accounts illuminate the terms of participation and criticism, but do not establish their prevalence throughout the community, the comparative strength of educational acceptance, or the precise timing and causal effects of accommodation.

Selective integration brings these distinctions into a historical interpretation without treating the community as a single voice. It describes participation accompanied by the preservation of identity and the ability to question particular cultural representations. The article's contribution lies in relating a long history of local involvement to differences in how festivals, urban symbols, and educational programs were interpreted. Institutional adaptation offers one explanation for those differences, rather than a proven measure of their intensity. The documentary reconstruction and the informants' subsequent recollections therefore remain complementary but distinct: the former establishes the historical setting, while the latter clarifies remembered meanings that require independent corroboration when used to date a response or infer a collective outcome.

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