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**ISLAM AND MYSTICAL MOVEMENTS
IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDONESIA:
SUSILA BUDHI DHARMA (SUBUD)
AND ITS DOCTRINES**

A thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts

by
Chuzaimah Batubara

Institute of Islamic Studies
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C A N A D A

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ABSTRACT

Author : Chuzaimah Batubara
Title : Islam and Mystical Movements in Post-Independence
Indonesia: Susila Budhi Dharma (Subud) and Its Doctrines
Department : Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University
Degree : Master of Arts

This thesis deals with the rise of mystical movements (*Aliran Kebatinan*) in post-independence Indonesia, focusing on Susila Budhi Dharma (Subud), founded in 1925 by Muhammad Subuh. Despite that Subuh had been raised as a Javanese man and was heavily influenced by Javanese culture, he also learned from a *Ṣūfī* master who introduced him to certain fundamental concepts of Islamic mysticism. The aim of this thesis is therefore to observe the possible influences on Subud doctrine from both Javanese and Islamic mystical traditions. The major themes of this thesis are three in number: first, to discuss the historical background of the emergence of mystical movements in Java, and to present two mystical movements; second, to give a brief account of Muhammad Subuh's biography and the basic concepts of Subud; and lastly, to analyze Subud theories and practices and see its relation to both Javanese and Islamic mystical traditions.

This work also addresses the question of why this movement and other *Aliran Kebatinan* held such an appeal for Javanese and Westerners alike, and why they gave rise to such bitter polemic amongst Indonesian scholars. In the case of Subud the answer to both of these questions lies in its blend of

Javanese and Islamic tradition, which attracted the spiritually inclined but at the same time not alienating the *shari'a*.

RÉSUMÉ

Auteur : Chuzaimah Batubara
Titre : L'Islam et les mouvements mystiques en Indonésie post-indépendante: Le Susila Budhi Dharma (Subud) et ses doctrines
Département : Institut des Études Islamiques, Université McGill
Diplôme : Maîtrise ès Arts

Ce mémoire porte sur l'ascension des mouvements mystiques (*Aliran Kebatinan*) en Indonésie post-indépendante, particulièrement sur le Susila Budhi Dharma (Subud), fondé en 1925 par Muhammad Subuh. Malgré que Subuh fut élevé en Javanais et fut profondément influencé par cette culture, il fut aussi formé par un maître *Ṣūfī* qui l'initia à certains concepts fondamentaux du mysticisme islamique. L'objectif de cette recherche est donc d'observer les influences possibles sur la doctrine du Subud d'après les traditions mystiques javanaises et islamiques. Les thèmes majeurs qui seront abordés sont au nombre de trois. Premièrement, le contexte historique de l'émergence des mouvements mystiques à Java ainsi que la présentation de deux mouvements mystiques seront débattus. Deuxièmement, il sera question de donner un bref aperçu de la biographie de Muhammad Subuh ainsi que les concepts de base du Subud. Enfin, les théories et les pratiques du Subud seront analysées afin de les relier avec les traditions mystiques javanaises et islamiques.

Cette étude posera aussi la question pourquoi ce mouvement ainsi que les autres *Aliran Kebatinan* sont si attirants à la fois pour les Javanais et les occidentaux et pourquoi ils ont suscité tant d'âpres polémiques parmi les spécialistes indonésiens. Pour ce qui est du Subud, la réponse à ces deux

questions se trouve dans le mélange des traditions javanaises et islamiques et qui a attiré un public tenté par la spiritualité sans pour autant aliéner la *Shari'ā*.

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I am greatly indebted to all my friends here in Montreal for their valuable intellectual exchanges, generous help and encouragement. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Islamic Studies Library, in particular Salwa Ferahian, Wayne St. Thomas and Steve Millier who assisted me in obtaining materials, books and articles relating to the topic of my research. I also owe a considerable debt to Steve Millier, who consistently helped me in rendering my rough drafts into better English and to Jane Trembley, who translated the abstract of this thesis into French.

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Montreal, June 1999.

Chuzaimah Batubara

NOTES

Throughout this thesis the sources of reference have been placed in footnotes at the bottom of every page. For example, Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968) 29. While each source has been referred to in full detail at its first occurrence in a particular chapter, from its second occurrence on, only the author, the title (in short form with quotation marks), and the (volume and) page number were recorded. Later references will use a shortened form of the work, such as Geertz, *Islam Observed*, 45.

The system of transliteration of Arabic words and names applied in this thesis is that used by the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University. The table of transliteration is as follows:

b = ب	dh = ذ	t = ط	l = ل
t = ت	r = ر	z = ظ	m = م
th = ث	z = ز	' = ع	n = ن
j = ج	s = س	gh = غ	w = و
h = ح	sh = ش	f = ف	h = هـ
kh = خ	s = ص	q = ق	y = ي
d = د	ḍ = ض	k = ك	' = ء

Short : a = _ ; i = _ ; u = _

Long : ā = ا ; ī = ي ; ū = و

Diphthong : ay = اي ; aw = او

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract -----	i
Résumé -----	iii
Acknowledgments -----	v
Notes -----	vi
Table of Contents -----	vii
Introduction -----	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE RISE OF MYSTICAL MOVEMENTS (ALIRAN KEBATINAN) -----	7
A. Growth of and Responses to "Kebatinan" Movements -----	7
B. Basic Doctrines and Practices -----	25
a. Sumarah (the Society of Self Surrenderers) -----	27
b. Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal (Pangestu) -----	31
CHAPTER TWO: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUBUD AND ITS DOCTRINES -----	37
A. The Life of Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo ----	38
B. The Spread of Subud in the World -----	47
C. Some Basic Concepts in Subud -----	54
a. The Divine Concepts -----	55
b. The Concept of Man -----	60
CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS: SOME MAJOR INFLUENCES ON SUBUD -----	68
A. An Analysis of Muhammad Subuh's Influences -----	68
B. Basic Concepts in Subud: Possible Influences from Javanese and Islamic Mysticism -----	75
a. The Concept of God -----	78
b. Conception of Man -----	84
Conclusion -----	95
Bibliography -----	98

INTRODUCTION

Sufism¹ has long been a key element of Islamic discourse in Indonesia. Indeed, from the first arrival of Islam in the archipelago, *ṣūfī* practices soon became familiar to all and even served as a means of Islamizing the region. Some scholars point out that the type of Islam that came to Indonesia, especially to Sumatra and Java, was of the *Ṣūfī* variety, and that in Java it was readily accepted and embedded in Javanese syncretism.² The mystical Islamic thought spread by the nine Muslim apostles (*Wali Sanga*) successfully accommodated the Hinduized customs and practices prevalent among the

¹ Generally, "sufism" can be described as the intensification of Islamic faith and practice. The term is usually associated with the Arabic word, *Ṣūfī*, which originally referred to "one who wears wool." "By the eighth century the word was sometimes applied to Muslims whose ascetic inclinations led them to wear coarse and uncomfortable woolen garments. Gradually it came to designate a group who differentiated themselves from others by emphasis on certain specific teachings and practices of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. By the ninth century the term *taṣawwuf*, literally "being a *Ṣūfī*" was adopted by representatives of this group as their appropriate designation. In general, the *Ṣūfī* have looked upon themselves as Muslims who take seriously God's call to perceive his presence both in the world and in the self. They tend to stress inwardness over outwards, contemplation over action, spiritual development over legalism, and cultivation of the soul over social interaction." For more detailed explanation about the origin and the development of the term, see Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam. An Introduction to Sufism* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1989); Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975). William C. Chittick, "Ṣūfī Thought and Practice," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, vol. 4 (1995): 102-9.

² James L. Peacock, *Indonesia: An Anthropological Perspective* (Pacific Palisades: Goodyear Publishing Co, 1973) 23-28. Johns also argues that it was the mystical nature of Islam that constituted the most important factor in the rapid conversion of the Indonesian people to Islam not only in Java but in Sumatra as well from the thirteenth century onward. See Anthony H. Johns, "Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History," *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 2, 2 (July 1916) 20-23.

Javanese at that time.³ Therefore, it goes without saying that *Ṣūfī* practices and mysticism⁴ have always been a very powerful undercurrent of Javanese culture.

Given these circumstances, conversion to Islam in the case of the Javanese took a different form than it did in other regions of the archipelago. In central Java, for instance, Islam appeared to lack any legitimacy and cultural status, and was seen not as a new element in the mix but as a cultural blight that put an end to the splendor of Hindu Java.⁵ Prior to the coming of Islam, Hindu and Buddhist beliefs split the Javanese into two types: *priyayi* (J., aristocrats) and *wong cilik* (J., the common people). The former constituted the nobility the Javanese kingdoms and observed Hindu rituals, an important distinguishing factor. The *wong cilik*, on the other hand, were largely comprised

³ Koentjaraningrat says that the answer to why Islamic mysticism easily penetrated in Java is not only because Java had been dominated by the mystical elements of Hindu-Buddhist cultural tradition previously, but also because the Islamic Javanese literary works, written in the early period of Islamization of Java's north coast, show the persistence of elements of the older tradition. See Koentjaraningrat. *Javanese Culture* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985) 48.

⁴ The term "mysticism" is very different from the term "*sufism*". As having been explained before (see note 1), "*sufism*" rooted from Islamic background that is always referred to Qur'an and Sunnah. On the other hand, "mysticism" can be found in any religion. Some scholars usually define it as mystical experience that is an experience in a religious context that is immediately or subsequently interpreted by the experienced as encounter with ultimate divine reality. See S. Ellwood. *Mysticism and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1980) 29. However, Schimmel finds that *mysticism* contains something mysterious, not to be reached by ordinary means or by intellectual effort, and is understood from the root common to the words *mystic* and *mystery*. Mysticism usually is called "the great spiritual current which goes through all religions." Therefore, many thinkers comprehend the word "*sufism*" as Islamic mysticism. Schimmel. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 3-4.

⁵ A. H. Johns, "Sufism in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26, 1 (March 1995) 172.

of villagers who still preserved the animistic traditions.⁶ The Islam introduced by the Bengali *Ṣūfīs* who accompanied the merchants on their visits to local rulers⁷ was certainly not dismissive of these traditions, nor of the traces of Buddhism and Brahmanism which still remained in both religious beliefs and social institutions. The stories told in shadow puppet plays, an important legacy of Hinduism, for example, are more familiar to Javanese Muslims from their childhood than stories of the Prophet Muḥammad.⁸ The heroes of Ramayana and Mahābrata become their heroes and furnish given names for many children. Furthermore, many Javanese Muslims in their ritual life consciously observe the *sesajen*, a Hindu tradition in which food or flowers are offered at certain times and in certain places such as in a corner of the house on Fridays or at the gravesite of a relative.⁹ Javanese Islam is still, therefore, characterized by a blend of Indic mystical tradition and Islamic sufism.

Nevertheless, the movements advocating normative Islam which emerged on a large scale in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries introduced different religious patterns among the Javanese. The Hinduized Muslim syncretists crystallized into the *abangan* (J., syncretic and mystical Muslims) variant

⁶ Simuh. *Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam ke Mistik Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 1995) 19.

⁷ These Indian *Ṣūfīs* dispersed the *Ṣūfī* tradition in Sumatra regions, Aceh. See Johns. "Sufism as a Category," 20-23. Later this traditions which was developed by *Ṣūfī ṭarīqa* (A., *Ṣūfī* order) enlarged into Java island. Simuh, *Sufism Jawa*, 54.

⁸ Kafrawi. "The Path of Subud: A Study of 20th Century Javanese Mysticism Founded by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjoja," (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1969) 12.

⁹ H. M. Rasjidi. *Islam & Kebatinan* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1967) 1-5.

within the Muslim community, as opposed to the *santri* (J., normative Muslim) variant.¹⁰

It was the influence of Middle Eastern reformism, pioneered by Muhammad 'Abduh in Egypt, that began to alter the religious conditions in Indonesia. In Java, K.H.A. Dahlan, who founded the Muhammadiyah in 1912, tried to purify the syncretic views of the Javanese and to cleanse their faith of mystical elements. He and other reformists desired to bring modern relevance to Islam in Indonesia through this reformation.¹¹ The political tension between Islamic and nationalist groups, the latter calling for a religious commitment from all Muslims at the time of Indonesian independence, seems only to have strengthened the growing mystical tendencies of the Javanese, especially in the *abangan* group. While continuing to acknowledge themselves as Muslims, they nevertheless managed to preserve their way of life inspired by their own rich culture. The rise of the *aliran kebatinan*¹² (I., mystical movements) for example,

¹⁰ Geertz has produced a definitive explanation of this category, as he has for its counterpart, the *priyayi*. See Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe: the Free Press, 1960). Although Geertz's typology of the *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* has been criticized by many scholars, it is still useful for understanding the characteristics of Indonesian Muslims.

¹¹ For more information about the Muhammadiyah's development and its purpose, see for example, Howard M. Federspiel, "The Muhammadiyah: A Study of an Orthodox Islamic Movement in Indonesia," *Indonesia* (October 1970): 57-80; Achmad Jainury, "The Muhammadiyah Movement in Twentieth-Century Indonesia: A Socio-Religious Study" (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1992).

¹² Hadiwijono has tried to trace the meaning of the term and its difference from the word "*klenik*". The word "*kebatinan*" literally can be translated "inwardness," and "*aliran*" as mainstream. Among the definitions of *kebatinan* provided by Hadiwijono is "The basic source of the principle of Absolute Lordship to achieve noble character for the sake of the perfection of life." See Harun Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism* (Baarn: Bosch en Keuning N. V., 1967) 1-2.

is one result of this pressure.¹³ The development of this movement has however led to polemics not only from Muslims but also from other adherents such as Christians.¹⁴

The phenomenon represented by the *aliran kebatinan* in this modern era demands further elaboration of their nature and doctrines. In order to provide a more comprehensive analysis, this study focuses on one of these movements, Susila Budhi Dharma or Subud.¹⁵ Subud has become a large and widely-known mystical sect, today counting thousands of members not only in southeast Asia but also in Western countries. The movement was founded in 1925 by a Javanese Muslim, Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (1901-1987), whose life and character provided the basis for Subud teachings. His initiation and training at the hands of a Javanese mystical master, as well as at those of a *Ṣūfī* master, explains the dual influence of both Javanese and Islamic mysticism on his ideas. This study will be based on the writings of Muhammad Subuh himself and other essential Subud texts. It will also draw on various

¹³ Niels Mulder. *Mysticism & Everyday Life in Contemporary Java* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1978) 2. Various opinions concerning the cause of emergence of *kebatinan* mysticism has been given by some scholars. One of in-depth accounts of these opinions is Samuel Agustinus Patty, "Aliran Kepercayaan. A Socio-Religious Movement in Indonesia" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Washington State University, 1986).

¹⁴ For the debate among Muslims in the writings of that are Rasyidi, Hamka, Hasbullah Bakry and Warsito, see *Di Sekitar Kebatinan* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973). Another source on discourse of the topics, Harun Hadiwijono (a Protestant), *Kebatinan dan Injil* (Djakarta: Badan Penerbit Kristen, 1960). See also Rahmat Subagyo (a Catholic). "Kepercayaan-Kebatinan, Kerohanian, Kejiwaan dan Agama," *Majalah spectrum*, vol. 3 (1973) 228-33.

¹⁵ Susila Budhi Darma (recently better known by its acronym Subud) was established in 1925 in Semarang, the capital of the Province of Central Java. Today, however, its headquarters are located in Jakarta.

seminal studies of the movement, chief among these Kafrawi's¹⁶ and Pangarisan Paul Sitompul's.¹⁷ The latter dissertations however places more emphasis on Subud spiritual exercise (in I., *latihan kejiwaan*) than its doctrines, while Antoon Geels¹⁸ addresses primarily the Javanese cultural aspect, not the Islamic one. Therefore, this study will try to examine the topic from both Islamic and Javanese perspectives.

The discussion will begin with a brief survey of the rise of mystical movements, including the growth of and responses to "Kebatinan" movements and their basic doctrines and practices. The second chapter of this study will provide an account of Muhammad Subuh's life and a survey of his ideas concerning God and man. The last chapter will offer a critical analysis of Muhammad Subuh's intellectual formation and his concepts, focusing on the possible influences from the Javanese cultural tradition and Islamic mystical teachings, particularly in terms of the concept of God and man.

¹⁶ Kafrawi, "The Path of Subuh. A Study of 20th Century Javanese Mysticism founded by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjoja" (M.A. thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies McGill University, 1969).

¹⁷ Pangarisan Paul Sitompul, "Susila Budhi Dharma. Subud - International Mystic Movement of Indonesia" (Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1974).

¹⁸ Antoon Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997).

CHAPTER ONE

THE RISE OF MYSTICAL MOVEMENTS (ALIRAN KEBATINAN)

A. Growth of and Responses to "Kebatinan" Movements

The word *kebatinan* comes from the Arabic word 'bāṭin' meaning inner, interior, or hidden, secret. The opposite of *bāṭin* is *ẓāhir* meaning outer, outward or perceptible, apparent. Both can be predicated of living beings; whereas in the Qur'ān (57:3) God is described as *al-ẓāhir wa al-bāṭin*. Most frequently, however, the term *bāṭin* or *ẓāhir* is associated with the concept of 'ilm (knowledge). Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), as quoted by B. Radtke, explains the meaning of 'ilm *al-bāṭin* in his *Risāla fī 'Ilm al-Bāṭin wa al-Ẓāhir* in this fashion: "'Ilm *al-bāṭin* can sometimes be knowledge of inner things, such as knowledge of intuition and moods existing in the heart, and it can also be knowledge of extrasensory things of which prophets were apprised. On the other hand, it also can mean knowledge which is hidden from most people's understanding."¹ All groups and sects which distinguished between the *bāṭin* and the *ẓāhir* of the Qur'ān and Islamic law (*sharī'a*) can be called *Bāṭiniyya*.

The fact that *kebatinan* is derived from an Arabic word implies that it must have been introduced to the Indonesian language when Islam, and especially sufism, penetrated to the Indonesian archipelago, including Java. One theory concerning the Islamization of Indonesia, prominently supported by A. H. Johns, suggests that the sufism which entered the country beginning in

¹ For a brief explanation of this term, see B. Radtke, "Bāṭen," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* vol. 3, 859-861. Both senses of the concepts *bāṭin* and 'ilm *al-bāṭin* gained currency, mainly in *Shi'ite* and *ṣūfī* circles.

the thirteenth century was the primary agent of conversion there. The Islamization of Indonesia, he says, coincided with the period when sufism came to dominate the Islamic world, i.e., after the fall of Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258. He points to *Ṣūfīs* of all nationalities – from such countries as China, India, and Arabia – who traveled to Indonesia aboard trading ships and once there successfully propagated their more eclectic and less austere version of the faith.² When Ibn 'Arabī died in 1240, the monistic theosophy of the *Ṣūfī* tradition was well articulated and widely diffused. This, together with the fact that the earliest extant manuscripts from North Sumatra show evidence of a strong concern with such theosophical speculation seems to suggest a causal relationship between the development of theosophical sufism and Islamization in the archipelago.³

In Java, mystical Muslim teachers, perhaps claiming supernatural powers, appear to have been a plausible means of conversion amongst a people who had long been familiar with the mystical speculations of Hinduism and

² See Anthony H. Johns, "Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History," *Journal Southeast Asian History* 2, 2 (July 1961): 13. Also his similar writings, "The Role of Sufism in the Spread of Islam to Malaya and Indonesia," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 9 (January 1961): 147-52.

³ Anthony H. Johns, "Sufism in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26, 1 (March 1995): 170. Johns' explanation of this matter is aimed at those who expressed concern with his theory that *ṣūfism* was the main element of conversion in Indonesia. Ricklefs, for instance, argues that Johns' theory lacks evidence, for no organized *Ṣūfī* brotherhood is documented in Indonesia from this early period. Although he admits that the strong mystical strain is found in the two sixteenth-century Javanese religious texts and in later centuries, the precise role of mysticism as a part of Islamization, according to him, still remains unclear. To him, it seems perfectly clear that trade was an essential element in bringing Islam to Indonesia. M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia, C. 1300 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981) 12. For similar arguments, see G. W. J. Drewes, "New Light on the Coming of Islam to Indonesia?," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 124 (1968) 438-40.

Buddhism.⁴ Although there are documentary problems concerning the evidence of a *Ṣūfī* nature in works dating from the sixteenth century, and probably earlier, the sixteenth century manuscripts are a clear indication that *Ṣūfī* teachings were already known in Java.⁵ Those manuscripts containing Islamic mystical teachings survive because they were brought back by the first Dutch expedition to Indonesia (1595-97). But these mystical teachings might also be characterized as "pantheistic" heresy. Based on the monistic Javanese view of reality both before and since the introduction of Islam, it can be said that many Javanese Muslims could only conceive of man as a drop in the ocean of God's existence.⁶ The reality within man was no different from the divine reality, which was indwelling in man. The doctrine that man and God are one was and

⁴ Johns, "The Role of Sufism in the Spread of Islam," 150. See also his "Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History," 15-16. Federspiel supports the idea that Islam was easily accepted by Indonesians due to its mystical dimensions which accommodated local beliefs and customs, animistic beliefs and Hinduistic practices. Fortunately Islam reached the Indonesian Archipelago through Gujerat (on the West coast of India), whose traders who brought their original customs, Hindu and *Ismā'īlī* influence in mystical form. See Howard Federspiel's introduction to his *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia* (Ithaca, New York: Modern Indonesia Project Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1970) 2. Also see, Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun, Indonesian Islam under the Japanese Occupation 1942-1945* (The Hague and Bandung: W. Van Hoeve, 1958) 12.

⁵ The sixteenth-century MSS edited by Professor Drewes are both orthodox *Ṣūfī* works from that time; see *The Admonitions of Seh Bari*, ed. and trans. G. W. J. Drewes (The Hague, Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde, 1969).

⁶ M. C. Ricklefs, "Six Centuries of Islamization in Java," in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York & London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979) 107-8.

is a common belief in Java and occurs frequently in Javanese mystical texts.⁷ It can be seen from the traditions concerning the supposed martyrdom of certain teachers, such as Shaikh Among Raga, Shaikh Siti Jēnar and Ki Cabolèk, who revealed this doctrine of unity.⁸ But a Javanese mystical text called *Primbon*, which consists of an ethico-religious nature, often related to a life devoted to mysticism, i.e. the life of an ascetic, in solitude, practicing 'remembrance' of God or repetitive prayer (*dhikr*) as the main themes seems to assert the Islamic brand of sufism rather than Javanese mysticism.

In Central Java, where the Mataram kingdom was based, Islam was neither exclusive nor limited in its orientation. There were a number of Javanese who performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, and who brought back Middle Eastern ideas of Islam. But Javanese Muslims seem to have been little concerned with these ideas and were perhaps more impressed with the supposed supernatural skills of the newly-returned pilgrims. Nor did this contact with the Middle Eastern sources of Islam cause the Javanese to abandon many older ideas. As it is stated in a nineteenth-century version of the *Babad Tanah Jawi*: "At that time many Javanese wished to be taught the religion of the Prophet and to learn supernatural powers and invincibility."⁹ Such supernatural energies were apparently used against the coastal kingdoms, with whom the Mataram rulers of the seventeenth century were

⁷ See P. J. Zoetmulder, *Pantheism and Monism in Javanese Suluk Literature*, ed. and trans. M. C. Ricklefs (Leiden: Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, 1995) 179-208.

⁸ These traditions are briefly described in Soebardi, "Santri-Religious Elements as Reflected in the Book of Tjēntini," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 128 (1971): 331-349.

⁹ Ricklefs, "Six Centuries of Islamization in Java," 108-9.

often at war. This belief was opposed by Sunan Giri, who ruled at Gresik near Surabaya.¹⁰ Sunan Giri was one of the nine apostles (*Wali Sanga*¹¹) who according to legend are said to have played an important role in the Islamization of Java. Not only, as legend would have it, were they instrumental in bringing about the conversion of many Javanese to Islam, but they mark the beginning of a new era in Javanese history and culture, the *Jaman Kuwalèn* (Era of the Saints), which supposedly followed the *Jaman Buda*, the Hindu period.¹² Nevertheless, the stories concerning the teachings and lives of these nine Saints are still colored by mystical elements. Geertz describes Sunan Kalijaga, the most famous of the *walis*, as a Javanese cultural hero who provides the model for the syncretic variant of Javanese Islam;¹³ and his conversion to Islam was not due to having read the Qur'ān or having entered the mosque, but to practicing the same sort of yoga-like psychic discipline that was the core act of the Indic tradition from which he came.¹⁴ This meditation led to his realization of the true faith, Islam. The mystical teachings spread by these nine saints however sometimes incurred retribution on themselves.

¹⁰ Ricklefs, "Six Centuries of Islamization in Java," 109.

¹¹ A recent book concerning these nine saints and their stories has been translated into English from Dutch. See D. A. Rinkes, *Nine Saints of Java*, trans. H. M. Froger, ed. Alijah Gordon (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute (MSRI), 1996).

¹² See G. W. J. Drewes, "D. A. Rinkes: A Note on His Life and Work," in *Nine Saints of Java*, xxxii. Also his "Indonesia: Mysticism and Activism," in *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, ed. Gustave E. von Grunebaum (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955) 298.

¹³ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960) 325.

¹⁴ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968) 29.

Rinkes points out that some of the nine Saints, such as Seh Siti Jēnar and Seh Among Raga, were executed for heretical practices which were mystical in nature.¹⁵

All these facts show that the distinctive nature of Islam in Java rendered it different from that found in other areas of Indonesia. This may have been partly because Islam reached Indonesia not from the Middle Eastern heartland, but from India, and that this Islam, filtered through the religious experience of India, which was itself colored with mysticism, found fertile soil in Hinduized Java.¹⁶

The whole Islamization of the Javanese down to the end of the eighteenth century may be considered a success given that most Javanese seem to have adopted the Islamic faith, but it was an idiosyncratic Islam which flourished. It was mystical, much given to metaphysical speculation of a kind not greatly different from that of pre-Islamic days in which Hindu-Buddhism dominated Javanese life. Since Java, according to Berg, has never really been converted to Islam, it is meaningless in his eyes to try to trace the people who converted to it. To him, the truth is that Java's pattern of culture absorbed elements of Islam – in this case that of an Indian pattern – just as it had absorbed elements of Hinduism and Buddhism before. The process of absorption has been no more rectilinear than any other process of social change, as it consisted of random shifts in the position of the constituent elements of the pattern, with each shift

¹⁵ Rinkes, *Nine Saints of Java*, 43-4.

¹⁶ Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, 12.

being of local importance and dependent on the circumstances.¹⁷ Therefore, it could be said that in Java a part of Islam came into being, blended with all manner of animistic and Hindu-Javanese beliefs and essentially opposed to any orthodoxy. For although in other parts of Indonesia Muslim orthodoxy may play a considerably larger role, in Java, this has generally not been the case.

According to Geertz, after the advent of Islam the Javanese religious orientation developed into three separate, rather incommensurate streams.¹⁸ First, the Indic tradition continued, stripped of the bulk of its ritual expression but not of its inward temper. Second, the mass of the peasantry remained devoted to local spirits, domestic rituals and familiar charms. The third stream represented the *santri*, the Javanese term for a religious student, who was presumed to demonstrate stringent adherence to the legal, moral, and ritual demands of Islamic scripture.

The rise of *kebatinan* movements (mostly in Java) after the declaration of Indonesian Independence on August 17, 1945¹⁹ brings several questions to the fore: What does *kebatinan* really mean for the Javanese or for whoever might

¹⁷ See C. C. Berg, "The Islamisation of Java," *Studia Islamica* 4 (1955) 137. The arguments correspond to Kroef's statements, "At any rate the Islamization of Java must be seen in the context of indigenous eclecticism, which soon managed to weave the new strands of eschatology into the older tapestry of *kedjawèn*." Justus M. Van Der Kroef, "Javanese Messianic Expectations: Their Origin and Cultural Context," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1 (1958-59): 308.

¹⁸ Geertz, *Islam Observed*, 66.

¹⁹ Hundreds of *kebatinan* movements of different sizes have emerged, and the rapid growth of these movements immediately drew the attention of Javanese observers and that of the government, especially the Ministry of Religion. After giving some consideration and devoting several studies and discussions to this new form of mysticism, the Ministry admitted the existence of three hundred and sixty new mystical groups in 1953.

choose to perform *kebatinan* mysticism? Is there a similarity between this *kebatinan* mysticism and the *bāṭiniyya* in Islam, or is *kebatinan* mysticism a purely Javanese tradition or another model of early Javanese mysticism as described above? And lastly, if there is a diffusion of Islamic mysticism within this Javanese mysticism, to what extent does the latter adopt those Islamic teachings? These questions are fundamental and need an answer, since the mystical movements that appeared in Java after the introduction of Islam experienced a number of changes. At least two major factors had an effect on the Javanese mystical orientation: colonialism and Islamic revivalism. These two factors originated independently of one another, but were bound to collide, out of which collision there would occur the first manifestations of the nationalist movement of the early twentieth century. I will try to survey the Javanese situation in the light of these two factors, but of course my description will be limited to showing how these two factors affected Javanese religious orientations.

Besides causing much hardship and suffering through their large-scale exploitation of Java's natural wealth, the Dutch presence for more than three centuries in the Indonesian archipelago served to strengthen the Islamic spirit and teachings of Javanese Muslims, which significantly, had an anti-European aspect.²⁰ Throughout the nineteenth century, Java's countryside was shaken by a series of rebellions, many of which used Islamic symbols and the idea of a holy war to mobilize the masses against the Dutch colonists. This situation was also enhanced by contacts with outsiders, especially from the central Islamic

²⁰ Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888* (Leiden: Verhandelingen Van Het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, 1966) 140-1.

lands. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, Arab traders from the Hadhramaut, a Muslim stronghold at the southern tip of the Arabian peninsula, began to come in ever increasing numbers to settle in Indonesia and to transmit their fine sense for orthodoxy to the local merchants with whom they dealt. And, with the growth of sea travel, many Indonesians began to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca where beat the heart of their religion. The *hajjis* (pilgrims) acquired from their religious experience at least a sense for the original Islamic beliefs, which differed in spirit from the polytheistic mysticism to which the Javanese had been so long accustomed. Up until about the second decade of the present century the various Islamic boarding schools, or *pesantrens*,²¹ located throughout the countryside remained independent, mystically modified religious brotherhoods in which a certain compromise was achieved with the religious beliefs of the *abangans*²² on the one hand and the

²¹ Geertz points out that the growth of Islam in Java during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was in great part due to the interaction of two social institutions: the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the rural Qur'anic school or *pesantren*. When many Arab traders came to settle in the Java region, the *pesantren* became a major channel for the penetration of the coastal trading culture into village life for those traders and local citizens, since many traders used *pesantren* as stopping places. See Clifford Geertz, "The Javanese *Kijaji*: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (1959-1960): 231-2. For more information about this Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*), see Karel A. Steenbrink, *Pesantren Madrasah Sekolah*, trans. Karel A. Steenbrink and Abdurrahman (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1986).

²² This term was introduced by Geertz in his *Religion of Java* in which he distinguished two different categories of Javanese Muslim. The first, known as *santri*, included those Muslims who observe the ritual and ethical prescriptions of Islam in a strict manner. For them, the whole ritual is set to the *umma*, Islamic community as social circles. The second, known as *abangan*, referred to those in Java's Muslim community who are less rigorous in their performance of orthodox duties, and are influenced by aesthetic and ritual styles to some degree related to Java's pre-Islamic past. For the *abangan* the basic social unit to which nearly all ritual refers is the household – a man, his wife, and his children. In this book, Geertz suggested that these religious styles (with a third

fear on the part of the colonial government of an organized and socially conscious Islam on the other. In the towns, however, perpetual contact with Hadhramaut Arabs led to a developing merchant ethic, the growth of nationalism, and modernist influences from the Islamic reform movements of Egypt and India, which combined to produce a greater militancy among declared Muslims. It was thus that Islam became a living faith in Indonesia.²³

Islamic revivalism in Indonesia was pioneered by the Muhammadiyah organization founded in Yogyakarta in 1912 by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, a descendant of a distinguished family in the sultanate and a follower of the modernist ideas of Muhammad 'Abduh.²⁴ Early in its history many Muhammadiyah followers became for a time active in the political movement of the Sarekat Islam,²⁵ but the main activities of the organization in Java have

category associated with Java's *priyayi* aristocracy) were loosely correlated with social and economic class. See Geertz, *The Religion of Java*. However, some scholars like Koentjaraningrat argue that this pattern is not entirely accurate as a picture of Javanese society as a whole. Koentjaraningrat has observed that the Javanese use *santri-abangan* as a religious distinction that transcends social class, and *priyayi* as a social class cutting across religious distinctions. Koentjaraningrat, Review of *The Religion of Java* by Clifford Geertz, *Madjalah Ilmu-ilmu Sastra Indonesia* 1, 2 (September 1963) 188-91.

²³ Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, 16-8.

²⁴ Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973) 73.

²⁵ The organization was originally founded in 1912 by Muslim traders in Central Java for the purpose of counteracting Chinese business competition. This organization changed its name into the Partai Sarekat Islam (Muslim Association Party) in 1921 and into Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Association Party) in 1930. The mutual relationship between Sarekat Islam and the Muhammadiyah was mostly in the form of promoting a reformist Islam. Sarekat Islam for one was led by Agus Salim, a Western-educated leader who is influenced by the currents of Islamic reformism. For the relation between these two organizations, see Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, 42-55.

been nonpolitical.²⁶ Religious, educational, and social work has been its primary focus. In an effort to spread its reformist ideas, the organization has sought to purify Javanese Islam of various pre-Islamic practices such as *tahlilan* which is the reciting the phrase *lā ilāha illa Allāh* (usually conducted in chorus during the *slametan*), visiting holy gravesites, mystical activities of any kind, etc., instead promoting a greater adherence to the formal obligations of Islam.²⁷ The Muhammadiyah is even on record as stating that Islam must be accommodated to the requirements of modern life through a "new *ijtihād*," by returning to the Qur'ān and Tradition by seeking new interpretations. The Muhammadiyah's outstanding success lay in educational activities which incorporated a generally Western-style education as well as religious instruction based on the study of Arabic and the exegesis of Islamic scripture, aimed at both old and young. An increasing number of Javanese Muslims have as a result gained better understanding of Islam and its teachings, a greater commitment to its theology and practice, and a more flexible interpretation of their faith in its relationship to modern life. Through education, these

²⁶ See Drewes, "Indonesia: Mysticism and Activism," 302. However, Alfian in his *Muhammadiyah: The Political Behavior of a Muslim Modernist Organization under Dutch Colonialism* contends that, despite its overtly non-political character as a socio-religious organization the Muhammadiyah was indeed involved in political matters both in and outside Java. In this book, he wrote an extensive analysis of the political role of this organization during Dutch colonialism. See Alfian, *Muhammadiyah: The Political Behavior of a Muslim Modernist Organization under Dutch Colonialism* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1989).

²⁷ Another similar organization, which launched a reformist drive at heretics, was Persatuan Islam, officially founded on September 12, 1923 in Bandung. This organization was particularly condemnatory of the *Ṣūfīs*, regarding the latter as guilty of *bid'ah* (innovation) or heresy because they purportedly believed mystical experience, which dealt with "the truth of a thing" to be more important than the *Shari'ah*. For more information about the Persatuan Islam see, Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam*.

modernist ideas are spreading from higher social levels to lower and from the rural areas into the urban regions.

Nevertheless, when compared to its influence in other regions in Indonesia, such as Minangkabau, the Islamic modernism advocated by the Muhammadiyah in Java, which was meant to eradicate Javanese mystical traditions or "*kejawén*" (Javanism) as a whole, was less successful.²⁸ A number of factors were responsible for this. There was the fact that Javanese society had a substantial number of *abangans*, the peasant class who took their religion less seriously, if not very lightly, and the *priyayis*, the traditional elite who were strongly influenced by Hindu-Javanese culture, yet only nominally professed Islam as their religion. Even the *santris* were not fully committed to Islamic reform, since many of the leading figures were non-Javanese. Furthermore, Islamic modernism in Java was much more evolved in urban centers, whereas in rural areas, the traditional Islam stressed by Javanese *ulama* (religious leader) of the Nahdlatul Ulama²⁹ (Renaissance of the 'Ulama) was much more dominant.

Geertz's findings from his field research during the 1950s in Paré, a village in East Java, where he found that mysticism continues to be practiced both individually and on a group basis, provides at least partial proof of the failure of Islamic reforms in Java.

²⁸ Alfian, *Muhammadiyah*, 131.

²⁹ This organization was set up in 1926 to counter the 'heresy' embodied by reformist movement. Although at first organizationally inferior to the Muhammadiyah, this organization soon became widespread throughout Java and in later years forcefully competed with Indonesian reformism, especially in rural centers. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, 50-1.

In Paré, the practice of Javanese mysticism was still a *priyayi*, or aristocratic, phenomenon. Some of the mystical groups that Geertz describes had 'a large *abangan* admixture,' but these groups were based on the teachings of high *priyayi gurus* (teachers) in the court centers and were modeled after the more elevated sects.³⁰ The mystical sects in this village were among the sects classified as *kebatinan* mysticism. But Paré also boasted a modern *abangan* cult called Permai (Persatuan Rakyat Marhaen Indonesia, translated as Organization of the Indonesian Common People) which functioned not only as a mystical group but also as a political party.³¹ According to Geertz, politically, Permai represented three things: first, a cult offering powerful remedies for illness; second, a set of esoteric beliefs patterned on typical *abangan* ones but with special twists and hidden meanings accessible only to the initiated; and third, a vigorously anti-Islamic social organization composed mainly of town laborers, employed or unemployed, impoverished rural radicals, and estate workers past and present. Members of Permai believed in a 'pure native science' based on 'original', that is pre-Islamic and even pre-Hindu beliefs, which combined the modern nationalist *PancaSila* (Five Principles) ideology with traditional Javanese religious patterns.³² However one looks at the movement, Geertz says, one sees the *abangan* religious system adjusted to a social context where things had changed. It was a religious system designed for peasants coming to urban areas.³³ The *kebatinan* sects in Paré – which included Budi

³⁰ Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 309.

³¹ Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 113.

³² Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 113-5.

³³ Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 118.

Setia (which might be translated as "Faithful in the Rational Search for Understanding"), Kawruh Bedja ("Knowledge of True Good Fortune"), Sumarah ("To Surrender to God's Will"), Ilmu Sedjati ("True Science"), and Kawruh Kasunjatan ("Knowledge of the Highest Reality") – arose in reaction to the familialistic-geographical context of *abangan* religion and the congregational organizations of the *santris*.³⁴ These latter included the Majelis Sjiro Muslimin Indonesia (Masjumi, Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims) and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) as the main *santri* political parties, and the Muhammadiyah as a *santri* social organization concerned with Islamic reform directed towards heretics.

The emergence of *kebatinan* movements, however, was not necessarily a reaction to Islamic organizations. There have always been religious traditions among the Javanese such as *slametan*,³⁵ the giving of *sesajen* (offerings) at fixed times in particular places, and routine visits to graves, all designed to fulfil a sense of spiritual satisfaction (certainly a *bāṭinī* trait). Similarly, *kebatinan* movements also signify the Javanese attempt to acquire a spiritually more meaningful life. The question, then, is: Why have so many mystical movements

³⁴ Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 349.

³⁵ A ritual meal at which Arabic prayers are recited and food offered to the Prophet Muhammad, saints, and ancestors, who are implored to shower blessings on the community. For more information about this Javanese ritual, see Geertz, *Religion of Java*, 11-85. Mark R. Woodward, "The Slametan: Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam," *History of Religion* 28, 54-89. Robert W. Hefner, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985) 105-25. In the last book, Hefner identifies the precise nature of difference between the Islamic and Tengger *slametan*. Interestingly the author found that although Tengger as part of Javanese society continue to perform Javanese traditions, they are, however, not much interested in forms of *kebatinan* mysticism. Hefner, *Hindu Javanese*, 21.

reemerged during the twenty-five years after Indonesia's declaration of independence, on 17 August 1945?

The factors which led to the rise of *kebatinan* movements, according to Hadiwijono, are not simply political in nature, and cannot be attributed to any one cause.³⁶ Mystical beliefs surface especially in times of stress and social unrest, when people start seeking for new foundations upon which to build the structure of their existence. It can be imagined that in the wake of independence people needed a "new foundation" on which to base their society, and the mystical movements seemed to offer a way to achieve this. *Kebatinan* groups generally promoted "noble character" amongst their members and for the country's well-being. However, Mulder tends to agree that the emergence of *kebatinan* was not merely a reaction to, escape from, or compensation for modernization: it was primarily a viable search for cultural identity allowing the Javanese to deal with the present.³⁷ At this point, Mulder's arguments are more reasonable, especially in the Javanese case. After struggling for freedom from colonial encroachments for more than three and a half centuries, the Javanese people began to explore their cultural roots with the purpose of reinforcing cultural identity in answer to spiritual needs. In addition, since the followers of *kebatinan* mysticism were not only the powerless or poor, but also members of the military leadership and other elite groups from the *priyayi*, explanations

³⁶ Harun Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism* (Baarn: Bosch en Keuning N. V., 1967) 3.

³⁷ Niels Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life in Contemporary Java, Cultural Persistence and Change*, 3rd ed. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983) 12.

based on "escape and compensation" are insufficient to explain the phenomenon.

Early in 1952 the Indonesian government's Bureau of Religious Affairs for West Java announced the emergence of 29 new religious sects in the area.³⁸ The rapid growth of these mystical sects immediately drew the attention of Javanese mystics themselves and the Indonesian government, especially the Ministry of Religion. In keeping with a constitution that acknowledges the freedom of every Indonesian citizen to profess and to practice his or her religion ("the State shall guarantee the freedom of the people to profess and to exercise their own religion" chapter 10, article 1, section 2 of the 1945 Constitution), the Ministry admitted the existence in 1953 of three hundred and sixty new mystical groups after devoting several studies and much discussion to the sects. In the following year, the Ministry established the *Pengawasan Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat* (PAKEM, Supervision of the Belief Movements in Society) as the authority entrusted with the duty of keeping watch over these new mystical groups and their activities. PAKEM has tried to stabilize Javanese society by supervising and guiding its ritual activities. On 19 and 20 August 1955, a convention attended by representatives of dozens of *kebatinan* groups from accros Java held a seminar in Semarang, in an attempt to unite all the *kebatinan* sects. Another convention held on 7 August 1956 in the central Javanese court city of Surakarta attracted over two thousand participants from various *kebatinan* sects. The establishment of a nationwide federal

³⁸ For this historical survey, I rely on Rahmat Subagyo, "Kepercayaan, Kebatinan, Kerohanian, Kejiwaan dan Agama," *Majalah Spectrum* 3 (1973): 228-33. Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life*, 4-6. Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985) 398-99.

organization, called Badan Kongres Kebatinan Indonesia (BKKI), or the Indonesian Congress of *Kebatinan*, was one result of this second convention.

In 1964 PAKEM registered 360 religious movements including *kebatinan* sects; however, after the events of 30 September 1966, when an attempted coup by the PKI (communist party) was aborted, it closed down a number of these religious movements which were suspected of being sympathetic to communists. Consequently, the number of these movements on PAKEM's list decreased to 217 in 1971, of which 177 were active in Central Java.

Yet in spite of its rapid development, the *kebatinan* movement encountered difficulties in getting accepted as a legitimate religious expression, and even encountered polemics not only from Muslim scholars but from Christian ones as well.³⁹ Nor did it fit into the government's definition of a religion. A proper religion, according to the authorities, should have a Holy Scripture, a Prophet, belief in God, and a system of law for its followers. Geels observes that the purpose of this definition was to exclude *kebatinan* movements as forms of religious expression from political function.⁴⁰ The strategy, nevertheless, was unsuccessful. In fact, leaders of *kebatinan* movements were invited to join the government-sponsored organization Golkar (Functional Groups, the Government Political Party), although only at the level

³⁹ For the print debate between Rasjidi, Hamka, Hasbullah Bakry and Warsito, see Rasjidi, Hamka, Hasbullah Bakry and Warsito, *Di Sekitar Kebatinan* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973). Another source for the discourse on the topic is Harun Hadiwijono (a Protestant), *Kebatinan dan Indjil* (Djakarta: Badan Penerbit Kristen, 1970). See also Rahmat Subagyo (a Catholic), "Kepercayaan, Kebatinan, Kerohanian, Kejiwaan dan Agama."

⁴⁰ Antoon Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997) 82.

of representation. In order to improve its chances of winning the election, Golkar approached all kinds of non-political organizations, including the mystical movements, which were regarded as a potentially strong source of support. This effort, described as a sign of "national support" in Mulder's analysis, may have stemmed from a sense of dislike for Islamic politics and the strong influence of Indic-Javanese culture on the minds of the ruling group.⁴¹

Religious scholars from both Islamic and Christian backgrounds viewed the movement on the basis of the teachings they believed in. But essentially most of them agreed that the popularity of Javanese mysticism, to some extent, was a reaction to the dogmatism and rituals of the established monotheistic religions that ignored the Javanese need for mystical expression and inner experience.⁴² This argument still neglected the force of Javanese culture, its integrity and its flexibility in adapting to the modern world and social change. The basic Javanese culture and identity hasn't changed much over time, and the Javanese are very conscious and proud of their cultural continuity. In addition, the relation between one's soul and one's God is very essential to and inseparable from the Javanese psyche; any threat to this could produce among the Javanese a reaction against what might seem a distasteful intrusion into their spiritual life.

Despite the various opinions offered in explanation of why so many mystical sects arose after independence, the existence of the *kebatinan* sects

⁴¹ Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life*, 9.

⁴² See H. M. Rasjidi, *Islam & Kebatinan* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1967) 107-9. Hamka, *Perkembangan Kebatinan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1971) 89-95. Hadiwijono, *Kebatinan dan Indjil*, 7-9.

was finally acknowledged in 1973 as *de facto* and *de jure* equal to other religions by the Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (MPR – People's Consultative Assembly) in law: MPR RI No. IV/MPR/1973.⁴³ However, the Assembly decided that these sects were more cultural than religious in nature, for which reason it determined that they should fall under the responsibility of the Department of Education and Culture rather than the Department of Religion.

B. Basic Doctrines and Practices

As part of Javanese culture, some teachings of the *kebatinan* movements refer specifically to Javanese mystical concepts of God, whether in pantheistic or monistic terms, and to human existence in its wider cosmological context and in its search for ultimate unification with the Creator. Each *kebatinan* sect possesses an attitude, lifestyle, ceremony, and set of spiritual exercises under the guidance of teachers and leaders. Indeed most of these attitudes and practices are basically common to all the *kebatinan* movements. All of them insist on having the willingness and ability to detach the individual self from the material world, and to reject the desire to possess wholly material things. The ability to maintain this spiritual attitude is indicative of the mystic's inner strength and stability of soul. The denial of material possessions is

⁴³ The contents of this document are as follows: 1. On the basis of the belief of the Indonesian people in the Oneness of God, religious life and the life based on the belief in the Oneness of God will be founded on the freedom to live and to observe the Oneness of God according to the *Pancasila* philosophy. 2. The development of religion and belief in the Oneness of God has as its purpose to build a harmonious atmosphere of life within religious communities and among the followers of belief in the Oneness of God, among all the religious communities and all believers in the Oneness of God, and also to make people mindful of the need to practice good deeds while building society together.

simultaneously correlated to the spīritual attitude of *narīma* (l. (in A., *qanā'ā*), the total acceptance of one's fate) and of *sabar* (l. from A. *ṣabr*), meaning 'patience', 'endurance', of one's destiny.⁴⁴

This spiritual ability can be acquired not only through a modest, pure, and simple lifestyle, but also through certain ceremonial activities, and through exercises in meditation or yoga.⁴⁵ The proponents of *kebatinan* sects believe that one can change one's inner self by purifying it of material desire, which will lead to total clarity and understanding of the essence of life. However, performing spiritual exercises or yoga does not mean that man escapes from his duties in real life. He is still obliged to work and live ethically like other people and look after his mundane needs.

Most mystical movements search for purification of the soul without the ultimate objective of experiencing unification with God. The aim they want to achieve is a spiritually secure life, free from fear and uncertainty, all of which obtainable by leading an ethically responsible life. It is not much different from the aim of the meditation process, which is to detach oneself from the material world, but purification of soul tries to avoid the spiritual exercise that serious meditation demands. The *kebatinan* movements tend to attract people who seek religious fulfillment without being forced to do something in accordance with habit, custom or formal religious rules.⁴⁶ They also stress individual spiritual liberation, emphasizing the individual character rather than the communal one.

⁴⁴ Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, 402-3.

⁴⁵ Ma'ruf al-Payamani, *Islam dan kebatinan: Study Kritis tentang Perbandingan Filsafat Jawa dan Tasawwuf* (Solo: Ramadhani, 1992) 208.

⁴⁶ Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, 404.

Usually there are strong emotional ties between members of these movements and their spiritual leaders, who are for the most part Muslim and have an Islamic background, but who, on account of their *abangan* origins identify more with the Javanese cultural heritage. Members' loyalty towards their leader is sometimes more important than that towards their family.⁴⁷

Having described the general situation, we will now briefly outline the particular teachings and practices of two very popular *Kebatinan* movements: Paguyuban Sumarah, "the Society of Self Surrenderers," and Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal, "the Society for Meditation on the Oneness", the shorter form of which is Pangestu. This will give a broad overview of kebatinan teachings or doctrines against which we might examine in the coming chapters our main topic, the movement known as Susila Budhi Dharma.

a. Sumarah (the Society of Self Surrenderers)

Paguyuban Sumarah is a large *kebatinan* sect which was established in 1937 by Sukirno Hartono (d. 1971), who claimed that he had received spiritual revelations. Nevertheless, it wasn't until 1950 that it was formally established in Yogyakarta. The doctrine of Sumarah (*Ilmu Sumarah*) is not very elaborate, since its emphasis is on meditative practice.⁴⁸ Its aim is to achieve direct communication with God through *sujud*⁴⁹ (self-surrender). Neither the founder

⁴⁷ Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 86.

⁴⁸ Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism*, 152. Geertz, *Religion of Java*, 339.

⁴⁹ Stange as quoted by Mulder defines *sujud* as "to surrender every aspect of the personal being so that the self functions as no more than a channel for God's will." See Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life*, 28.

nor Sumarah members profess a doctrine of God; for them, His existence is accepted without need of explanation. Frequently God is referred to "*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*" (I., the Absolute One Lord) or in abstract, non-personal terms, like "*Zat Yang Maha Esa*" (I., the Absolute Essence), which is immanent in human beings as *urip* (J., life).⁵⁰

The spiritual exercise in Sumarah consists almost entirely of meditation with the object of communing with God. But first of all the adept must pass through a test, consisting of learning Sumarah's nine "articles of readiness" or the nine vows.⁵¹ When these articles are accepted, the training of *sujud sumarah* starts, i.e. communion with God through self-surrender under the guidance of an instructor. It usually begins with a short period of absolute quiet. After a rest, there is a somewhat longer similar period; and finally there is a very long meditation, often over an hour in length and sometimes performed while standing. At the end of meditation, it is hoped that one has reached *sujud sumarah* (I., communion with God) in which one unites the thought, feeling and *budi* (J., the light of life).⁵²

⁵⁰ See Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism*, 152. See also Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 97.

⁵¹ These consist of: 1. belief in God and His Prophets and their Holy Scriptures; 2. the willingness to think of God at all times and to strive for communion with God through self-surrender to His wills; 3. to endeavor to develop a healthy body, inner peace and purity of soul; 4. to promote brotherhood based upon deeply rooted love; 5. to make effort to widen the scope of daily life and duties; 6. to pledge oneself to do good; 7. to refrain from evil; 8. to do one's best to extend the knowledge to every sphere of activity; 9. not to be fanatic. See Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism*, 15. See also Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 343-4.

⁵² Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism*, 15.

Sumarah is among the most highly organized of the sects. Not only does it consist of four ranks – youth, regular members, advanced members, and gurus, chosen through meditation by the central governing board in Yogyakarta – but it also has a written constitution and regular meetings where advanced students of Sumarah groups from different towns gather and meditate together.⁵³

Unlike the concept of God, the view of man in Sumarah is more complex and exhaustive.⁵⁴ Sumarah classifies the existence of Man into three categories: the physical body, which originates from the four elements earth, wind, water, and fire; the body of passions, which comes from God, but reaches man through the devil; and the *jiwa* (I., soul) or the *ruh* (A., spirit).

The physical body is equipped with several organs and the five senses which are guided by the faculty of thinking. The body of passions on the other hand consists of four types: first, *mutma'inna*, related to nourishment and the search for God; the second, *ammāra* which is the driving force behind anger; the third, *ṣupiya*, which represents erotic force; and the last *lawwāma*, which is critical of selfish actions.⁵⁵ Because the temptations of the passions are so

⁵³ Paul Denis Stange, "The Sumarah Movement in Javanese Mysticism" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1980) 241.

⁵⁴ See Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism*, 152-63.

⁵⁵ These kinds of soul are well-known among the *Ṣūfīs*. As mentioned earlier there are three types of soul mentioned in the Qur'ān as being present within human beings: (1) the extravagant lower soul: *nafs ammāra* (Q. 12:53), literally, the imperative soul, "the one which commands" evil, the passionate, sensual lower ego; (2) the "blaming" soul: *nafs lawwāma* (Q. 75:2), "the one which censures," criticizes the self-selfish; (3) the "pacified" soul: *nafs mutma'inna* (Q. 39:87), the soul which in the true sense is the heart (in A., *qalb*), to which the Qur'ān addresses the words: "O pacified soul, return to your Lord, accepting and accepted." Najm al-Dīn Rāzī discusses at length these three types of soul in his *Mirṣad al-'ibād*. The Qur'ān which says, "Truly the soul

strong, one's soul should be purified of their tyranny. Liberation means freeing the soul from tyranny.

The path to liberation is similarly quite elaborate, in that it consists in achieving four stages of awareness known as *sujud sumarah*. In the first stage, called *sujud raga* (I., physical self-surrender), one has to perform the *dhikr* (A., reciting the names of Allah). In the second stage, called *sujud jiwa raga* (I., physical and spiritual self-surrender), the memory which has already been separated from the faculty of thinking and led deep into an individual's innerbeing, is brought closer to *rasa* (I., the deeper feeling) within his *bāṭin* (A., inwardness). When this second stage is successfully achieved, one automatically reaches the third stage which is the designation of permanent belief in the *bāṭin* or inwardness. The final stage is the highest stage described as "conformity of the servant and God," or "being acquainted with the union with God," in other words, mystical union.

commands unto evil (Q. 12:53)," has emphasized implicitly that the soul is the greatest enemy of human beings. From it arise all reprehensible attributes. All praiseworthy lofty and spiritual attributes were present in the heart, and all reprehensible and lowly qualities such as arrogance, hostility, irritability, obstinacy, tyranny in the soul. But since the soul was the offspring of both spirit and frame or body, it too had praiseworthy attributes that pertain to spirituality. The existence of passion and anger put the soul into its nature which inclines to reprehensible attributes. It is the Law and the alchemy of religion which restore each of passion and anger attributes to a state of equilibrium. So that it can no longer exercise them except in accordance with the Law, praiseworthy attributes appear within the soul: shame, generosity, liberality, courage, forbearance, modesty, manliness, etc. The soul will quit the station of commanding and come to that of *muṭma'inna* (tranquillity). See Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return (Mersād al-'ebād men al-mabda' elā'l-ma'ād)*, trans. Hamid Algar (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1982) 190-200.

b. Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal (Pangestu)

Paguyuban Ngesti Tunggal, which may be translated as "union for those who search for the One," better known by its acronym Pangestu, is another large *kebatinan* movement which was founded by Soenarto, who between the years 1932 and 1933 received a series of divine messages written down by two of his early followers and published as a book, entitled *Sasangka Jati*⁵⁶ (I., The True Light). The doctrine in the book was revealed by *Sang Guru Sejati* (I., the True Teacher); however, Soenarto himself contends that he is merely a medium or a pipeline who divulges the teachings spoken by the True Teacher or God.⁵⁷ This sect was formally set up on 20 May 1949 in Surakarta.⁵⁸

Pangestu is comprised of a basic monotheistic view, and acknowledges monotheistic religions, like Islam and Christianity. God in Pangestu doctrine is One who ought to be worshipped: "there is no God who is worshipped, except Allah, and Allah is the Real Being."⁵⁹ God is not a material substance and cannot be associated with others. It is further stated that God already existed before creation, for He is eternal, meaning, not bound by time or place, and without beginning or end. Nothing can be compared to Him, He is beyond all

⁵⁶ This book consists of seven sections: *Hasta Sila* (The Eight forms of Good Behavior), *Paliwara* (The Great Prohibitions), *Gumelaring Dumadi* (The unfolding of Creation), *Tunggal Sabda* (One in Word), *Dalan Rahaju* (The Way of Salvation), *Sangkan Paran* (Origin and Destination), and *Panembah* (Adoration).

⁵⁷ Soenarto, *True Light (Sasangka Jati)*, 2nd Ed., trans. R. Marsaid Susila Sastradiharja (Jakarta: s.n., 1965) 12.

⁵⁸ Al-Payamani, *Islam dan Kebatinan*, 283.

⁵⁹ Soenarto, *True Light (Sasangka Jati)*, 51. See also Al Payamani, *Islam dan Kebatinan*, 287; cf. Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism*, 196; cf. Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 103.

knowledge and pervades all things.⁶⁰ Therefore, human beings actually cannot comprehend God with their knowledge.

This concept of God precisely manifests the direct link between Pangestu and Islam. Pangestu's doctrine of *Tri Purusa*⁶¹ (Trinity), which determines the three aspects of God, however seem to delineate the influence of Christianity.⁶² God as the Absolute is regarded as a trinity, the One with three attributes: first, *Suksma Kawekas* ("The Real God", "Primeval Life"); second, *Suksma Sedjati* ("The Real Predecessor", "The Real Teacher", "The Messenger of God"); third, *Roh Suci* ("The Real Man", "The Real Soul of Man").

In fact, the founder of Pangestu tried to unite the Islamic mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī, Hinduism and Christian teachings in a new guise. The metaphor for *Suksma Kawekas* is the quiet ocean, while *Suksma Sedjati* is designated as the movements in the water that give rise to waves. In this metaphorical language *Roh Suci* denotes the droplets of water evaporating from this surface.⁶³ Simultaneously, *Suksma Sedjati* is symbolized by "the Reality of Jesus" or "the Reality of Muḥammad" (*Nūr Muḥammad*). If *Suksma Kawekas* is the sun, then *Suksma Sedjati* represents its radiance, also called "the Light of

⁶⁰ Al-Payamani, *Islam dan Kebatinan*, 287.

⁶¹ In Pangestu the One God is described into three aspects, namely:

1. *Suksma Kawekas* (Ultimate Soul, Ultimate Source of Life, True God, God the Father), in Arabic: Allah Ta'ala.
 2. *Suksma Sejdati* (True Soul, True Giver of Life, True Leader).
 3. *Roh Suci* (The Holy Spirit, the Real Man), the real psyche of man).
- See Soenarto, *True Light (Sasangka Jati)*, 11.

⁶² Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism*, 197.

⁶³ Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 104.

Muhammad.⁶⁴ Using this metaphorical language, i.e. the ocean and its droplets of water, is reminiscent of Ḥamzah Fansūrī's teachings.⁶⁵ He regularly explains his doctrine of emanation by the use of metaphor. In addition, it is very plausible that the concept of *Tri Purusa* is due to Christianity's influence, even though the doctrine is not totally new to Javanese tradition. The Javanese people had long been acquainted with the Hindu idea of *trimurti* before the coming of Islam.

Pangestu defines man as possessing a physical body which consists of the five sense organs and the seven elements.⁶⁶ The latter are divided into two groups: the four passions and three psychical functions. On the whole, Pangestu's concept of passions is not much different from that of Sumarah. However, Pangestu tries to relate this concept of the passions with the four elements: air, fire, water, and earth, and with the physical body as their counterpart. The passion of *lawwāma* derives from the earth element, and has its physical counterpart in the flesh. This passion brings out selfishness, greed, laziness, negligence, and other negative or bad character traits, but it also has a positive aspect, if it serves the more ethical and refined group *muṭma'inna*.

The passion of *ammara* (I., from A., *ammāra*), on the other hand is seen as arising out of the element of fire, and as having its counterpart in the blood. It is characterized by a sense of longing or desire, of being uncontrolled, or even

⁶⁴ Soenarto, *True Light (Sasangka Jati)*, 52-3.

⁶⁵ For more information about his teachings, see Syed M. Naguib al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970).

⁶⁶ For this explanation, I refer to *True Light (Sasangka Jati)*, 31-42. Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism*, 202-30; Al-Payamani, *Islam dan Kebatinan*, 289-301.

evil. The next passion, *supiya*, originates in the element of water, and has its physical counterpart in the spine. It gives rise to desire and affection, as well as the spiritual will. The last passion, known as *mutmainna*, designates the sacred, devotion and mercy. Where these four passions are controlled, a good and fascinating character results.

Pangestu refers to the three psychical functions by complementary with psychological terms. They are, first, "mighty influence," i.e., *pikir* or *cipta* (I., thought); second, "miraculous power," i.e., *nalar* (I., associative functions), and third, "charm, spell," i.e., *pengerti* (I., insight). These three functions help to control the four passions. The key attitudes designated by these three are *narima* (J., acceptance), *rela* (I., and J., renunciation), and *sabar* (I., patience). All of them legitimize the basic philosophy of life that the material world is perishable, and that one should distance oneself from it by exercising asceticism and developing a feeling of *pemudaran* (J., inner liberation), which is to commune with God.⁶⁷

The path to liberation in Pangestu can only be traveled under the guidance of a Guru, who directs and aids man to reach the Ultimate Reality or communion with God.

It is impossible for a human being to appear before God without the help of *Guru Sejati*, who will lead him, as otherwise he will be like a bat who will die by flying in day-light because of the blinding rays of the sun. *Guru Sejati* is like the moon reflecting rays of the sun (*Suksma Kawekas*), the light of which does not blind bats and the like. Therefore, it is necessary that a human being should acquire *Guru Sejati's* guidance, in order to be safe in his journey along the path of virtue, by doing his utmost to get united with *Suksma Sejati*, in order to be able to appear before God (*Suksma Kawekas*).⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 107-9.

⁶⁸ Soenarto, *True Light (Sasangka Jati)*, 12.

Judging by its doctrines, Pangestu clearly emphasizes the importance of morality in human life. It has even a moral code for members, which includes unstinted devotion to *Suksma Kawekas* and *Suksma Sedjati*, and respect for the laws of the country in which one lives, for one's parents, older brothers and sisters, for one's teachers, for the moral code of one's group, for one's neighbor and for all religions.⁶⁹

In sum, the *kebatinan* sects basically serve as a means for the individual to learn how to tread the path of mysticism. The common spiritual exercise is through self-surrender, in order to commune with God. It is realized that to achieve communion with the sphere of God is not easy; the adept of *kebatinan*, therefore, should undertake these exercises under the guidance of a guru or mediator. The pattern of spiritual exercise sometimes imitates the Islamic mystical practice, such as in the use of *dhikr*, or repeated religious recitation and some of the *Ṣūfī* concepts. Sometimes this spiritual exercise requires a loose mental discipline, although not on the part of the guru. Extensive meditation is usually engaged in by those who have had a long mystical preparation and experience. The ordinary members of *kebatinan* sects are not expected to reach high levels of mysticism, unless they insist on it. Their main ambition is to gain a noble character, and to be satisfied in sitting beside their charismatic guru and listening to his teachings.

The teachings of *kebatinan* imply that man has interrelated aspects linking his outward qualities with an inner potential. It is man's moral task to

⁶⁹ Justus M. Van Der Kroef, "New Religious Sects in Java," *Far Eastern Survey* 30, 2 (February 1961) 22.

establish harmony between the *lahir* (I., outward: in A., *ẓāhir*) and the *batin* (I., inner: from A., *bāṭin*) aspects of life, in the sense that the *batin* is more powerful and guides the *zahir*. If such virtues as *narima* (J., acceptance), *sabar* (I., patience; from A. *ṣabr*), *waspada-eling* (J., mindfulness, carefulness, and alertness), modesty and other good character traits are well established and able to regulate human personal conduct, the harmony of human life for the society and the individual will ultimately result.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUBUD AND ITS DOCTRINES

Subud is the only *kebatinan* sect which has acquired an international character, having long maintained centers in a number of American and European cities. The term Subud, as is the case with the names of many other *kebatinan* sects, is an acronym for the Sanskrit phrase *Susila Budhi Dharma*: *Susila* denotes the nature of a man whence are derived the true human qualities he should possess; *Budhi* means that there resides within man a superior power which can guide him; while *Dharma* signifies the submission of man to the Greatness of God above everything else, so that his own experience will reveal to him that no other wish is stronger in him than to submit to God.¹ This sect was established in 1925 in Semarang, the capital of the Province of Central Java by Raden Mas Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, usually called "*Bapak*" (the normal term of address for a respected man in Indonesia) by his followers.

As is the case in other sects, the core notions of Subud are found in the thoughts of its founder or *guru* (teacher); thus it is necessary to look at Muhammad Subuh's background both before and after the creation of Subud in order to discover what factors contributed to the creation and development of the sect. Careful attention will be paid to his ideas regarding the relationship

¹ Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, *Subud and the Active Life*, 3rd ed. (London: Subud Publications International, 1984) 22. See also his *The Meaning of Subud* (England: The Subud Brotherhood, 1960) 10.

between divine being and human subsistence or the ontological relationship of mankind to the Absolute Reality or God, and to his notion that human beings recognize their potential as a creation of God to live peacefully among them.

A. The Life of Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo

Raden Mas Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo was born on 22 June 1901 in Kedungjati, a small village near Semarang, central Java,² and died on 23 June 1987 in Jakarta. The words Raden Mas indicate that Muhammad Subuh was of noble descent, while his surname Sumohadiwidjojo exhibits a *priyayi*³ (aristocracy) name. "Widjojo" is a Javanese variant of the Sanskrit word "*vijaya*," meaning "victorious". On his father's side, he was a descendant of the rulers of the Mataram dynasty, mentioned in the legends of Javanese historical tradition. The heroic Senapati Ingalaga (c. 1584-1601), who, according to the

² Based on his autobiography which was published after his death (although the manuscript actually had been completed on June 22nd, 1980), he was named 'Sukarno' at birth and was delicate as a child. At one time it was thought that the baby would die, but a man wearing a white robe came and told him that Sukarno was the wrong name for the child and that he should be called 'Muhammad Subuh'. His name was then changed and his health improved. Subuh, his personal name, comes from the Arabic word '*ṣubḥ*' meaning sunrise, which corresponded to the time of day he was born. See Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, *Autobiography*, Trans. Raymond Lee (E. Sussex: Subud Publications, 1990) 3-6. See also Gordon Van Hien, *What is Subud* (London: Rider & Company, 1963) 28; cf. Muhammad Rusli Alif, *Khatir Ilham* (Jakarta: Kartika Bahagia, 1988) 12. Changing a name is a Javanese custom related to curative purposes, or to gain a better destiny. For instance, when Clifford Geertz was carrying out fieldwork in Paré, he was given a new name, Kartopawiro, meaning "a brave, orderly person." Because his own name, Clifford Geertz, was too difficult for Indonesian to pronounce or remember, the new name was considered more suitable for his character and would prevent him from having bad experience. See Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960) 83-4.

³ See note 22 in previous chapter.

Javanese chronicles, was the founder of the Mataram kingdom and responsible for its expansion, was one of Muhammad Subuh's predecessors.⁴ On his mother's side, he claimed spiritual ancestry extending back to the well-known group of nine saints, the *wali sanga*, and specifically to the saint of Kalijaga.⁵

This blend of the secular and spiritual realms was typical of the Javanese historical experience. According to Javanese *babad*, or royal chronicles that provide accounts of the lives of kings, councilors, and rebels, Sunan Kalijaga is frequently mentioned as ally, legal advisor and spiritual guide to the early Mataram rulers. In some accounts he was the inventor of the *slametan* (J., I., ceremonial meal), the Javanese *wayang* play (shadow puppets), and the state ceremonies of Demak and Mataram.⁶

This remarkable mix of characteristics bestowed upon Muhammad Subuh by his ancestors emerged in him at a very early age. As a boy, for instance, he was said to have clairvoyant powers, which distinguished him decisively from his peers. He said that, although he occasionally tried to imitate

⁴ Antoon Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical tradition* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997) 113.

⁵ Alif, *Khatir Ilham*, 11. According to some accounts of *babad* literature, Sunan Kalijaga was a son of the Majapahit prince of the time. His original name was Raden Sahid. His father was a holy man who devoted himself to the performance of *tāpā* (meditation). Woodward contends that the process of his conversion to Islam (see previous chapter) on the one hand, signifies the essential theme that is the student/teacher relationship, between Sunan Kalijaga and Sunan Bonang, rather than the attainment of mystical knowledge, but that on the other, both his conversion and attainment of mystical knowledge actually reveal that the ideal *santri* is one who blends *sharī'ah* centric piety with mystical practice. He was even described as saying that a bandit becomes a saint through the love of *Allāh* and devotion to his teacher. See Mark W. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press) 96-102.

⁶ Woodward, *Islam in Java*, 96. See also Geertz, *Religion of Java*, 325.

his companions with little tricks and lies, he found that his voice always refused to make the required sounds. On one occasion, when he was less than three years old, Muhammad Subuh was taken by his grandmother to a betrothal ceremony, in the middle of which he declared to the assembled guests that the couple, who had not yet seen one another, were incompatible and would separate within a year. Amazingly, his prediction was duly fulfilled, after which his grandmother never took him to any more betrothals.⁷ All this is an indication of Muhammad Subuh's inner life which often emerged as peculiar behavior.

Coming from a family so well acquainted with Javanese traditions, Muhammad Subuh took these values to heart as he grew. In this sense he patterned himself after his mother, Ibu Kursinah (b. 1885), who often practiced a traditional form of asceticism. When she was a child, she fasted and tried to stay awake at night. When she slept she sometimes chose to do so alone in a cemetery, sleeping by the grave of her mother's grandfather.⁸ This is a typical Javanese mystical tradition, especially on a Thursday night, should one wish to acquire spiritual enlightenment or guidance, to have a healthy baby or to get married soon.

Muhammad Subuh started his education at the age of six years in a private Dutch school in the nearby town of Ambarawa. Two years later he transferred to the newly-built government school built in his village, Kedungjati, where he completed his primary school years. After that he went back to the

⁷ Subuh, *Autobiography*, 7-10. See also J. G. Bennett, *Concerning Subud* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1958) 54.

⁸ Subuh, *Autobiography*, 3.

school he had attended previously in Ambarawa where he mastered the Dutch language. The school promised its graduates a good job in either the Civil Service or a Dutch company, and hence a better future.

His spiritual education began after undergoing a decisive experience at the age of fifteen. One night, an old man, dressed in black and carrying a staff awakened him. The old man drew near and said, "You will soon leave this place to work, but always remember that later you will receive a gift from Almighty God."⁹ For Muhammad Subuh this message could have but one meaning: that he was going to die at the age of thirty-two. Immediately after this experience, Muhammad Subuh decided to leave school and inquire after his fate. He visited some spiritual teachers from various disciplines, and began to learn and practice the traditional Indonesian system of self-defense called *pencak silat*, often viewed as a preliminary step before initiation into a *tarekat* or mystical order.

Among the spiritual masters Muhammad Subuh met was *Kiyai* Demang Poncokartoko, the spiritual guide of Pangeran Adipati Anom Mangkunegara the Fifth, the Sultan of Surakarta, who taught him a secret formula to recite during meditation with the aim of gaining invulnerability.¹⁰ Muhammad Subuh studied under this teacher on several occasions, during which time he underwent another decisive spiritual experience, firmly rooted in the magical-mystical tradition of Java. Once while meditating, he saw a very young child approach

⁹ Subuh, *Autobiography*, 11. Geels contends that the information on this experience is ambiguous. In one source, Muhammad Subuh confesses that he saw the man "as if in a dream", but later clarifies that he "awoke and sat up" when he heard the messages, then interpreted them as "inner counseling." See Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 118.

¹⁰ Subuh, *Autobiography*, 15-6.

him and ask why he had called him, and what Muhammad Subuh really wanted. Muhammad Subuh was not aware of having called the child, and when the boy persisted, he said that he wished to find God.¹¹

One of the most prominent spiritual teachers to initiate Muhammad Subuh in the years preceding the emergence of the Subud sect was *Shaykh Abdurrachman*,¹² a well-known shaykh of the Naqshbandī order.¹³ Like other spiritual teachers, this *Ṣūfī* noticed the spiritual potential of the young Muhammad Subuh. Most such masters, however, including Shaykh Abdurrachman, were reluctant to teach him, since based on their own inner

¹¹ According to Longcroft, this young child was a representation of Muhammad Subuh's inner teacher, called *Dewa Ruci* or the Holy Spirit. In this case, "Holy Spirit" means "Divine Spirit". Harlinah Longcroft, *Subud Is a Way of Life* (Golden Cross: Subud Publications International, 1990) 40.

¹² Subuh, *Autobiography*, 22-5. Also Martin Van Bruinessen, "The Origins and Development of the Naqshabandi Order in Indonesia," *Der Islam* 67 (1990): 179.

¹³ The Naqshbandī order, which was originally introduced from Mecca, entered the Indonesian archipelago in the 1850s. The Indonesian Naqshbandīs actually belong to various branches of the order such as the *Khalidiyya*, *Mazhariyya* and *Qādiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya*. In Java, in earlier centuries, it was the *Shattīriyyah* that left an imprint on Javanese culture, while in recent times the Naqshbandiyya, with its silent *dhikr*, the repetition of a sacred word or phrase such as *Lā Ilāha Illa'llāh* and *Allāh Akbar*, and meditation-like exercise, seems to have a more significant impact. For brief information about this order, see Hamid Algar, "A Brief History of the Naqshbandī order," in *Naqshbandis, cheminents et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman*, ed. M. Gaborieau, A. Popovic and T. Zarcone (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1990) 3-56; and for its introduction and spread in Indonesia, see Bruinessen, "The Origins and Development of the Naqshabandi Order in Indonesia," 150-79; cf. also his, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia: Survei Historis, Geografis dan Sociologis* (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1992); cf. Warner Kraus, "Some Notes on the Introduction of the Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya into Indonesia," in *Naqshbandis, cheminents et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman*, ed. M. Gaborieau, A. Popovic and T. Zarcone (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1990) 691-706.

knowledge, they realized that the young Muhammad Subuh would ultimately accede to spiritual or mystical life through God's direct guidance.

Despite Muhammad Subuh's considerable achievement as a spiritual leader, it appears nonetheless as though Shaykh Abdurrahman contributed indirectly to the establishment of Susila Budhi Dharma (Subud) by declaring to his other students that Muhammad Subuh would one day become a saint, exceeding even himself in knowledge. Soon after this statement was made, most of Abdurrahman's students as well as other people began paying more attention to Muhammad Subuh, even to the extent of visiting his house in search of inner guidance and advice. For Muhammad Subuh, it was more of an honor than anything else to receive such attention, until he received the spiritual experience in 1925 that marked the establishment of Subud: from that point onwards the people visiting his house became members of his sect.

It was at the age of twenty four that he underwent the first experience of the Subud's *latihan kejiwaan*, the spiritual exercise of Subud characterized by total surrender to Almighty God. One night, Muhammad Subud went out after having studied for hours on end. He suddenly observed "a light shining from above.... a ball of radiant white light," falling onto his head.

My body started shaking; my chest was heaving. I feared I would collapse in the street. I quickened my pace to get home as quickly as possible. But on reaching the house, the shaking stopped and my chest was calm. I knocked on the door, which was immediately opened by my mother, who asked, "why do you look so pale?" to which I responded briefly, "It's nothing!"

I went directly to my room and stretched out on my bed. I folded my arms over my chest and surrendered to Almighty God. Amazing, I saw my whole being filled with light. This lasted for just half a minute. Then I arose, but not from my own will, and went to the room that I used for prayer and study. There I stood and

performed two *rakaats* of prayer. After finishing the prayer, I returned and lay down again on my bed and fell asleep.¹⁴

That was the beginning of a series of spiritual phenomena which lasted for approximately three years.¹⁵ Muhammad Subuh spent several consecutive nights in performing spiritual disciplines, snatching only fitful hours of sleep during the day. Among his experiences, he admitted that he had met the Prophets and conversed with them, his guide on this occasion being the Prophet Muḥammad himself. His soul traveled to various planets and grasped the final culmination during which his physical body remained in a cataleptic trance. In this state he was commanded to fulfill a task decreed by Allah for the benefit of humanity. It was obvious to Muhammad Subuh that he had been chosen to undertake a divine mission.

Receiving a series of different visionary experiences, mostly in the form of dreams, was not an easy thing for Muhammad Subuh to endure, and he suffered moments of great anxiety. For example, on one occasion he was approached by a man holding a spear which was then thrust into his chest. The man withdrew the weapon and soon put a round object, the size of a chicken's egg, bright and sparkling, into the hole left by the spear. By a simple stroke of the man's hand, the wound was healed.¹⁶ On another occasion, when performing the *dhikr* ritual, reciting the words *lā ilāha illā'llāh* (A., There is no god but God), he watched as there fell into his lap a large book, whose cover

¹⁴ Longcroft, *Subud Is a Way of Life*, 24.

¹⁵ Hosein Rofē, "Muhammad Subuh: Mystic of Java," *The Islamic Literature* 3 (1951) : 306. See also his other work, *The Path of Subud* (London: Rider & Company, 1959) 78.

¹⁶ Subuh, *Autobiography*, 29.

depicted a group of people from different races moving, praying, crying, shouting, and asking God for forgiveness. Suddenly the book vanished into his chest.¹⁷ Muhammad Subuh did not know the meaning of all those experiences, nor apparently did his teacher, Shaykh Abdurrachman, either. Consequently, it remained obscure in Muhammad Subuh's mind.

In *Ṣūfī* terms such mystical experiences, according to some accounts, can be related to the concept of *fanā'*, literally meaning 'annihilation'. *Fanā'* is first of all an ethical concept: the man is annihilated, and takes on God's attributes – a confirmation of the alleged *ḥādīth* or tradition "*takhallaqu bi akhlāq Allāh*," "qualify yourself with the qualities of God," i.e., through constant mental struggle. Its essential message is to exchange one's own base qualities for the praiseworthy qualities by which God has described Himself in the Qur'ān. The next stage is annihilation in vision, when the soul is surrounded by the primordial light of God. The final stage, then, is "annihilation from one's vision of annihilation," in which one is immersed in the *wujūd*, the "existence" of God or, rather, the "finding" of God.¹⁸ A full interpretation of this concept is given by the Japanese scholar Toshihiko Izutsu,¹⁹ who defines *fanā'* as "the total nullification of the ego-consciousness, when there remains only the

¹⁷ Longcroft, *Subud Is a Way of Life*, 29. See also Subuh, *Autobiography*, 29-30.

¹⁸ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975) 142.

¹⁹ Toshihiko Izutsu, "The Basic Structure of Metaphysical Thinking in Islam," in *Wisdom of Persia: Collected Papers on Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Hermann Landolt (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1971) 39-72.

absolute Unity of Reality in its purity as an absolute awareness prior to its bifurcation into subject and object."²⁰

Muhammad Subuh's mystical experiences, however, apparently allowed him to achieve the final stage of *fana'*, in which one is actually annihilated in God. During his spiritual exercises, when he was surrendering to the Power of Almighty God by reciting the words *Allāh Akbar*, Muhammad Subuh felt that he was embraced with the light of God. His soul traveled beyond this universe and arrived in another great space where God showed him His creations such as beautiful angels. He reports, "There I saw Almighty God's creatures clad in white and praising the majesty and greatness of Almighty God. I looked up and saw a dazzling light. Before me, I saw a line of ladies of great beauty wearing clothes of light."²¹

After his ascension, Muhammad Subuh began humbly welcoming other people besides Shaykh Abdurrachman's disciples, in fact initiating them into *latihan kejiwaan*²² (I., the spiritual exercise) in Subud. There is a significant difference, as Muhammad Subuh points out, between this *latihan kejiwaan* and other spiritual exercises held in a *tarekat* (I., mystical order).

²⁰ Izutsu, "The Basic Structure of Metaphysical Thinking in Islam," 52.

²¹ See Subuh, *Autobiography*, 34-5.

²² This Subud spiritual exercise is a purification process which aims at acquiring the state of perfect man. It proceeds at several levels of the psycho-physiological human being, starting with the body as the lowest. However, the Subud spiritual exercises are concerned not only with the purification of the psycho-physiological being of the person practicing it, but also with past sins committed by his/her ancestors. For more explanation about this spiritual exercise, see Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 148-65. Muhammad Subuh, *The Latihan Kejiwaan of Subud*, ed. Rasunah Donovan (Chicago: Subud USA, 1981).

The *latihan* (training) of an esoteric or *tarekat* teaching is done according to the theory or rules of the founder of that teaching, whereas what happens in the *latihan kejiwaan* of Subud is that each person individually, at the moment of surrendering himself to the Power of the One Almighty God, receives movements in the inner feeling in accordance with his own capacity, although all is directed towards worship of God.²³

Subud training therefore aims at allowing a soul to surpass the limited reality, the world and then rebirth in a new realm. It can only be achieved however by souls who have already advanced; in other words, by those of excellent character or those who have used their talents for others' benefit, as well as for the few who can advance further only with superhuman assistance.

Slowly, the sect developed and was disseminated all over Java island, eventually extending beyond Java and eventually outside Indonesia. Among Muhammad Subuh's disciples who made a significant contribution to the development of the sect was Husein Rofé, the son of a British Jew and a Belgian Catholic mother. Rofé converted to Islam upon meeting his teacher, Muhammad Subuh, for the first time.

B. The Spread of Subud in the World

Susila Budhi Dharma was formally established as a *kebatinan* sect, as explained in the previous chapter, during the period in which Indonesia struggled to rediscover the Indonesian identity, a period described by many as one of transition and crisis.²⁴ For the Javanese, despite having the solid

²³ Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 126.

²⁴ Politically, this was the time of the rising tide of Indonesian nationalism. There were bitter conflicts between Dutch colonial rulers and the leaders of nationalist movements. In the meantime, there was also disagreement amongst political leaders regarding the right solution for the

foundation of their cultural heritage to depend on, the strife, revolts, social upheaval, and moral decay of those years induced a general process of soul-searching and redefinition of self-identity.

Given this local reality, how was it that non-Javanese, in fact non-Indonesians, became so interested in Subud and deeply involved in its *latihan kejiwaan*? The Subud spiritual exercise is after all a unique phenomenon. Frithjof Schuon's analysis may provide some answers. He contends that in an age of confusion and thirst, in which the advantages of modernity and transformation are prized over those of secrecy, it is only esoteric, or in a narrower sense, mystical knowledge that can satisfy the imperious logical needs resulting from the scientific mindset of the modern world.²⁵ The disintegration of Western cultural values and disenchantment with the experiences of modernism, as well as the observation of the catastrophes brought about by modern civilization and the anticipation of more to come, have all contributed to an enthusiasm for spiritual life. These problems resemble in many ways those faced by the Javanese who seek the spiritual strength needed to face the pressures of modern life. Subud, through its *latihan kejiwaan*, has helped them to acquire this strength.

There are many who would be interested in Subud, providing they could have conclusive evidence that it does work, even if they could not accept the supernatural account of its origin. Thus we

problems faced by the Indonesian people. Economically, Indonesia underwent very serious economic difficulties due to the government maladministration and the domination of Chinese merchants over almost all fields of Indonesian economy. See G. M. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952) 66-8.

²⁵ Frithjof Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle and as Way*, trans. William Stoddart (Pates Manor: Perennial Books Ltd, 1981) 7.

have seen that many professing naturalism who reject belief in God and the Supernatural as superstition, have come to Subud to *satisfy some inner need*, and have verified for themselves the reality of its action.²⁶

For many, the *latihan* produced the first sense they have ever had of inner peace and detachment, as well as vivid psychic experiences such as visions, locutions and ecstasies.²⁷ Besides, the theoretical argument which declares that "esoterism prolongs and deepens religion, or, inversely, religion adapts esoterism to a certain level of consciousness and activity"²⁸ concurs perfectly with Muhammad Subuh's statement to the effect that the *latihan* will never convert one who believes in a certain religion, but on the contrary will strengthen the religious convictions of the one who practices them.²⁹ These are all solid explanations for why the phenomenon of Subud has attracted so many non-Javanese as members.

In his *What is Subud?*, Gordon Van Hien testifies frankly that before deciding to become a Subud member, he wrote an Anglican bishop for his views on the sect.³⁰ In his answer the bishop stated that every religion possesses its own fundamental errors: in Christianity, for example, the deepest problem and the one most difficult to understand is the split between the Catholic and Protestant wings, while for Muslims it is the fulmination against the 'unbeliever' who will burn while the faithful luxuriates in paradise. Hence, the best answer

²⁶ J. G. Bennett, *Christian Mysticism and Subud* (London: The Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences, 1961) 6.

²⁷ Bennett, *Christian Mysticism*, 2-3.

²⁸ Schuon, *Esoterism as Principle*, 233.

²⁹ Bennett, *Christian Mysticism*, 7.

³⁰ Van Hien, *What is Subud?*, 21-2.

in such circumstances is the path of the spirit, which is marked by signs that are not difficult to understand and which welcomes followers of all religions, not only Christians or Muslims. This response led Van Hien to decide to become an initiate of Subud. For him, Subud is just like water which is able to occupy "the shape of the Christian vessel, the Muslim jar, the Buddhist flask and even the pagan pot."³¹

With its simple rule that members need only surrender patience, trust, and sincerity to Almighty God,³² Subud spread all over the world reaching 60 countries by 1970,³³ and 78 by 1997.³⁴ A small Subud group existed in Tokyo

³¹ Theoretically, this notion is in conformity with the common epistemological concept that in religions there is a line between esoteric and exoteric. The fundamental distinction is not between religions; it is not, so to speak, a line that, reappearing, divides religion's great historical manifestations vertically, Hindus from Buddhists from Christians from Muslims, and so on. The dividing line is horizontal with esoterism above and exoterism below. This division leads to the thesis that religions are alike in essence or esoterically while differing in form or exoterically. Thus in the esoteric groups, there are men and women who realize that they have their roots in the Absolute, while in the exoteric ones, it is composed of the remainder of mankind for whom the way of talking about religion is sterile if not unintelligible. See Huston Smith's remarks in his introduction to Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1993) xii-xv. Likewise, Muhammad Subuh does not insist that any one religion is the true one; rather, he embraces all kinds of religion considering that the Subud's mystical path, *latihan kejiwaan* is primarily a means for religious adherents to become more devoted man. He concurs that all men essentially have the same goal, which is to become a real person. If a Christian he wants to be the real Christ in terms of character and if a Buddhist, he wants to be a real Buddha. The same if he is a Muslim, in that he wants to cultivate Muhammad's character in himself. In other words, all religions in Subud render to similar mystical needs. See Robert Lyle, *Subud* (England: Humanus, 1983) 91-3.

³² Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, *A Life within a Life: an Introduction to Subud*, ed. Dominic C. H. Rieu (London: Humanus, 1983) 65.

³³ Jacob Needleman, *The New Religions* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970) 104.

³⁴ Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 131.

in 1955, another one in Hong Kong, and towards the end of the same year Husein Rofé started initiating people in Cyprus. About half a year after moving to London in June 1956, Rofé organized a new Subud group in the city. He then invited Muhammad Subuh to visit him there.

In May 1957, Muhammad Subuh, together with his wife, made the journey to England. He stayed at Coombe Springs, where the brilliant Dr John Bennett was Director of the Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences. It so happened that Muhammad Subuh's presence at Coombe Springs coincided with an international gathering of the followers of Gurdjieff, who had died some years earlier. Many of his disciples, about 1,200 in number, were looking for a new master. A number of these people promptly joined Subud. When these new members returned home, Subud was spread around the world. Muhammad Subuh next traveled to Europe, California and Australia, visiting newly-formed groups in these regions. It wasn't until thirteen months after leaving Indonesia that he finally returned home.

On his return Muhammad Subuh decided to build an office for the secretariat at Cilandak – at that time a village on the outskirts of the capital, Jakarta, but now a suburb of the city – a *latihan* hall and a guesthouse for overseas visitors. Since then the compound has grown, and consists of a large, splendid new *latihan* hall and a large house for Muhammad Subuh and his family.

Subud rapidly expanded in the wake of these events, and there began a series of world congresses held every four years for its members: in 1959 the congress was held in London, in 1963 it was held in New York, in 1967 in

Tokyo, in 1971 in Cilandak, in 1975 in Wolfsburg, German, in 1979 in Toronto, and in 1983 in London.

Two important developments took place during the 1970s: both involved business enterprises which Muhammad Subuh undertook with the purpose of making Subud financially secure and of enabling it to fund further enterprises. All this had the ultimate objective of establishing charitable and welfare projects. The first of these involved the creation of a World Bank. Muhammad Subuh broached the idea to his startled listeners at the 1963 World Congress, but the main work on this complicated, and difficult, but finally successful enterprise took place between 1971 and 1974. The second enterprise was even more adventurous, and involved Subud members from all over the world in raising US\$ 14 million for the project. Subud members have built a hospital, a nursing home for the old, and an orphanage.

For some this involvement in business activities suggested that Subud had taken a material orientation rather than a spiritual one; this, however, was not the case. Muhammad Subuh firmly asserted that as devoted servants of God, people have two permanent duties: one is to worship God Almighty; the other is to use the heart and mind to work in this world to support our life.³⁵ Therefore, the ideas behind the establishment of those enterprises are still in accordance with divine and human concepts. This was not fully realized by many Subud members who, in face of Muhammad Subuh's insistence on this material orientation, spontaneously left Subud. They wondered whether it was right that the spiritual way be mixed up with money, large enterprises, and

³⁵ For more information about Muhammad Subuh's ideas on 'work,' see Muhammad Subuh, *A Life within a Life*, 155-65.

undertakings of various kinds, and feared that it would interfere with their spiritual well-being. These were reasonable question, but Muhammad Subuh looked at the issue differently. Philosophically speaking, he contended that the spiritual *latihan* of Subud is something of value for mankind and for the heart of man; it is a new kind of spiritual exercise and worship, and has appeared at a time when the mind of man is highly developed. Likewise, it is the will of God that even while earning our living and attending to worldly matters, and while being involved in material things, we should not forget to worship God because God is with us in all circumstances. Subud is indeed different from other sects where in order to have contact with the greatness of God, a man is usually obliged to isolate himself from people, abandon all comforts, and live in some place remote from others, and even, if necessary, refrain from marrying because such distractions impede one from attaining a high spiritual level. While this might have been the case in the past, our modern world puts different demands on individuals; it is necessary for one's inner being that one learns to worship God at the same time as one is working and earning a living.³⁶

Muhammad Subuh cites four main reasons for establishing such enterprises. The first is in order to encourage Subud members to sustain themselves by their own talent and ability. The second is to construct solid foundations for Subud's goal of supporting social activities and building public institutions such as hospitals and schools. The third reason to run business, according to Muhammad Subuh, is to earn and then share one's profit with the needy of the world. Subud, he says, is not only intended to make one feel in

³⁶ Muhammad Subuh, *A Life within a Life*, 165.

harmony with the worship of the One Almighty God, nor only to unite the feelings implanted within each of us, but also to live in this world in mutual love and affection, helping one another through a cooperative venture such as a World Bank. The most important reason, however, which is related to Subud's concept of 'work, is to enhance our commitment of worship. Enterprise is not something which leads men to neglect their duties as God's servants; on the contrary, it is a bridge whereby men use the material as a reminder always to remember God or to help men return to their God.³⁷

Generally speaking, these principles are not very different from the ones observed by Muslims or adherents of other religion; in other words, we cannot say that they are unique to Subud doctrine. As a Muslim, Muhammad Subuh may have been inspired by the Qur'ānic advice "But seek, the (wealth) which God has bestowed on thee, the home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this World: but do thou good, As God has been good to thee, seek not (occasion for) mischief in the land: For God loves not those who do mischief" (Q.28:77). In this verse, God counsels us to do what is best for our life in this world, meaning that we must work to achieve our goals.

C. Some Basic Concepts in Subud

To understand Subud doctrine it helps to have a knowledge of Islamic mysticism or *ṣūfism*. This Islamic brand of mysticism provides a metaphysics of the principle and nature of things, a cosmology concerning the structure of the Universe and its multiple states, a traditional psychology explaining the

³⁷ Muhammad Subuh, *A Life within a Life*, 165-73.

structure of the human soul to which is attached a psychotherapy of the profoundest order, and finally an eschatology concerning the final end of man, the universe and man's posthumous existence. Nevertheless, when compared to Subud doctrine, these teachings go far beyond what is contained in the primary source of Subud, i.e., Muhammad Subuh's talks and writings, which are perhaps not as complex or deep as one might expect. Having said this, we will discuss below Subud teachings concerning God and his attributes, and the concept of man and his pre-temporal existence in relation to God.

a. The Divine Concepts

"Although God is beyond the comprehension of human minds there is something that we can do in relation to Him, and that is surrender, and then we can know, not Him, but His power."³⁸ This fundamental expression of Muhammad Subuh's monotheism contains the two pillars of all Subud spirituality, namely the divine existence on the one hand and contemplative concentration on the other; or in other words: doctrine and method, or truth and way. The second element is expressed in the Subud spiritual exercise or *latihan kejiwaan*; for even though Muhammad Subuh says that "Subud is not a method and does not contain a method or a single way which we all have to follow,"³⁹ nonetheless, in certain aspects of this spiritual exercise man is expected to observe a particular set of rules, in the sense of loose obligation. Firstly man must demonstrate "an attitude of surrender, sincerity, acceptance

³⁸ Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, *The Growth of Subud* (London: Subud Publications International, 1969) 112.

³⁹ Muhammad Subuh, *The Latihan Kejiwaan of Subud*, 7.

and patience" in his life. Secondly, they have to worship Almighty God according to their own individual inner natures. If he is a Muslim, his *latihan* must conform to the way in which a Muslim worships or prays; the same applies to followers of other religions. Once they recognize this, they will be more conscious of God's existence.

According to the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, God is the Merciful, the Wise, the Generous, the Forgiving, the Living, the Hearing, the Avenger and so on. His Names epitomize the knowledge of Him that has been revealed to mankind; through them we can capture something of the Divine Nature. Muhammad Subuh to some extent acknowledges these Islamic ideas of God's attributes (*ṣifāt*, in Arabic). God, he says, "has no form, no colour, no time, no place, no nationality, no country,"⁴⁰ yet He subsists before the beginning. He knows, embraces and encompasses everything and He is Almighty.⁴¹ In addition, "God is All-knowing, All-just and All-wise,"⁴² and He knows a human being's needs, including the need to receive true guidance, so that he may be protected from error or from losing touch with the true human soul. Even though in most of his references he refers to God using abstract expressions like "the Great Life" or "the Life Force", being "the light and the guide within the individuality of

⁴⁰ Muhammad Subuh, *A Life within a Life*, 63

⁴¹ Muhammad Subuh, *A Life within a Life*, 70.

⁴² Muhammad Subuh, *Subud and the Active Life*, 112. See also his, *Subud in the World, Ten Talks Given by Bapak Muhammad Subuh at the Second World Congress of the Subud Brotherhood* (England: Subud Brotherhood, 1965) 109.

each of you,"⁴³ Muhammad Subuh occasionally uses personalistic terms like "the One who watches over you".⁴⁴

Furthermore, Muhammad Subuh states that the closeness of God to all men is nearer than anything that can be seen, anything that can be heard, or anything that can be perceived with the senses. The truth is that man is unable to see or be aware of God because his own knowledge and his own seeing impede him; he is unable to hear God accurately, because he is hindered by the physical limitations of his hearing. The same is true of all the other senses; therefore when one wants to feel His existence, one should try to think about Him. It is impossible for man to picture God, because God has no form, but man can reach a certain understanding of Him since he has been given the capacity to do so. This involves guiding one's thoughts in order that one can be enlightened by His existence, and be brought to a transcendent state which will grant one the ability to acknowledge God's power.⁴⁵ This concept does not differ in the main from the most basic concept of God in mystical theology, which speaks of a combination of immanence and transcendence. In relation to man, God is near and simultaneously far away, as expressed in the Qur'ānic

⁴³ Muhammad Subuh, *Subud and the Active Life*, 153.

⁴⁴ Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, *Susila Budhi Dharma* (Jakarta: Subud Indonesian Publication, 1957) 183. These expressions are better known by the term anthropomorphism (from the Greek *anthropos*- human being and *morphē*-form) which in the religious context means to ascribe human attributes (such as forms, acts and feelings) to spiritual entities, deities and God. In Islamic theological terminology, anthropomorphism corresponds to the term "*tashbih*" meaning assimilating or comparing God to man. For fuller explanation, see R.J.Z. Werblowsky, "Anthropomorphism," *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987) 316-7. See also, James Hastings, "Anthropomorphism," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955).

⁴⁵ Muhammad Subuh, *The Meaning of Subud*, 32.

passage often quoted by the *Ṣūfīs*: “God is nearer to you than your jugular vein” (Q. 50:16), while at the same time He remains the Lord and Creator of the universal, immanent and transcendent. “The sights do not reach Him” (Q. 6:103), but “whithersoever ye turn there is the Face of God” (Q. 2:109). God has “put signs into nature and into the human soul” (Q. 51:21), and it is necessary to see and to understand them.

Subud’s cosmological doctrines are not very complicated. In the very beginning, there was emptiness, silence, and the first vibration which radiated from the will of God.⁴⁶ Then, Muhammad Subuh states, there arose for the first time the so-called *nur ghaib* (I., the unseen light; from A. *nūr ghayb*) which is the light of life, the source of everything; this vibration and radiance, as it spread everywhere, created the light and heat of the sun, fire, air, water and earth. From these four elements there emerged the basic forms of life, starting from the material and proceeding to the vegetable, the animal, the human and others beyond. Subsequently all these forms divaricated spontaneously, growing together. All this appears to be based on the story of the Prophets and the messengers of God.⁴⁷

Elsewhere, Muhammad Subuh states that before the creation of the universe, there was nothing but God and emptiness. Then God created the first manifestation in the form of light, called “Nur”, the divine light. This was the “Nur Muhammad,” or the Light of Life. From this light arose the principal elements or essences which became earth, water, air, and fire; these all

⁴⁶ This emptiness and vibration is the same as the basic vibration that one feels in the Subud spiritual exercise, called the life within a life. See Muhammad Subuh, *The Latihan Kejiwaan of Subud*, 37.

⁴⁷ Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 133-4.

developed gradually and became denser and denser, coarser and coarser. Finally they coalesced into the universe in which we live and other planets.⁴⁸

The first human beings were Adam and Eve, existing in a state of original unity. This was a state of perfection, of growth – just like that of the unborn baby in a mother's womb. The primordial dialogue then occurred between God and Adam:

Adam, you must go down to the earth, and I will give you a companion like yourself – one of your own kind, only not male but female. You will exceedingly be happy there with your fellow human being your wife." And Adam answered, "Very well, I will obey your command, O God, only I have a question: Will I be left to live in the world forever?" "No," God replied "You will return to me. That is why, besides giving you all you require for your life, I am also giving you a way, a ladder, so that you can reascend to your original abode."⁴⁹

After that God created a physical body for Adam, a body with senses, a heart and mind, and all the forces necessary to survive in this world: vegetable, animal, human, and etc. Thus provided for, Adam found himself capable of living in this world and of adapting to his new home, and tried to forget about eternal bliss, his state of original unity. However, Adam and Eve still retained a divine potentiality, a Holy Spirit which helped them and their offspring to transcend to the eternal state.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Luqman McKingley, *Adam and His Children. A Brief History of Human Life. Excerpts from Talks by Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo* (Sydney: Starlight Press, 1992) 1.

⁴⁹ See Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 135.

⁵⁰ The most profound task of the *latihan kejiwaan*, Subud's primary spiritual exercise, is to utilize this divine potentiality so that man can unite with his God.

b. The Concept of Man

We have indeed created man in the best of moulds (*aḥsani taqwīm*)
Then We abase him (to be) the lowest of the low (*asfala sāfilīn*)⁵¹
(Q. 95:4-5).

The Qur'ānic verse cited above defines the situation of man in this world in a manner that is at once perennial and universal. Man was created in *aḥsani taqwīm* (A., the best stature) but then fell into a temporal condition of separation and withdrawal from his divine prototype, a condition which the Qur'ān calls *asfala sāfilīn* (A., the lowest of the low). And inasmuch as the situation described in this Qur'ānic verse pertains to the innermost nature of man, it is a permanent reality that he carries within himself.

Muhammad Subuh, in his understanding of man's condition is less in conformity with, but does not contradict, these Qur'ānic principles. He considers man to be the offspring of Adam and Eve, who had a human nature, but still retained a divine capacity to live in the world and to transcend it. The former is represented by *nafs* (A., passion), while the latter Muhammad Subuh identifies as the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Life Force that is free from the influence of *nafs* and which will remind man of his obligation to worship Almighty God.⁵² It was man's environment, however, that constantly affected his divine qualities in ways he did not even suspect. Man's nature is inevitably affected by the four principal forces – material, vegetable, animal, and human – that constitute him. Since our bodies, Muhammad Subuh asserts, are composed largely of physical

⁵¹ Ali, A. Yusuf, *The Holy Qur'ān, Text, Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Amana Corp, 1983) 1759.

⁵² Muhammad Subuh, *The Latihan Kejiwaan of Subud*, 36.

matter, we draw our strength from vegetable and animal nourishment.⁵³ So if man aspires to a higher state, he must dissociate his inner nature from the earthly realm, and not try to bring to earth states far beyond those corresponding to the present phase of material evolution.

Muhammad Subuh elucidates the human and divine capacities of man according to the following principles: the seven universal life forces; the four types of *nafs*; the four bodies of man; and the concept of *jīwa* (I., soul). The seven universal life forces that exist inside and outside man, he says, can be compared with the forces required in building a house; there we need the skills of many people, such as the laborer and foreman as well as the architect and engineer involved. What he means by this is that life as it really should be is developed in accordance with harmony or altruism. To live in this world is to harmonize these seven forces, to live with and respect one's fellow human beings, irrespective of race or nationality.⁵⁴

Man however is perpetually affected by the lower forces of his body, originating not only in himself, but also derived from his parents and all his ancestors.⁵⁵ These forces, four in number, are the essences of the four worlds: material, vegetable, animal and human. The essential quality of *roh raiwani* (I., the material or satanic force), the first of these lower forces, is indifference to enmity or hostility, just as a table has no relationship with or feeling for another

⁵³ Rofē, *The Path of Subud*, 96.

⁵⁴ Geels, *Man and Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 136.

⁵⁵ Muhammad Subuh, *The Growth of Subud*, 104.

table, oil conflicts with water, and so on.⁵⁶ If man is able to control in full and to guide this force, he will achieve a superior character; on the other hand, if lower force takes over a man's life, then the person develops within him or herself the qualities of animosity or antipathy. In other words, he or she becomes hard-hearted, dishonest, evasive, and worse.

The next level is *daya nabati* (I., the vegetable force), more powerful than any of the others in influence. Like that of the material force, the power of this vegetable force is constantly present in the human body, since a human being is a creature which consumes plants as food. The best way to identify the essential quality of this force conveyed by Muhammad Subuh is primarily to observe the plants' characteristics. Rice, for example, by nature needs a lot of water, and is short-lived, with a slender but hollow stalk. This means, according to Muhammad Subuh, that people who "eat food from it (rice) do not withstand suffering well, want only quick satisfaction and a sufficiency for their life, and lack the spirit to exert themselves to raise their standard of living."⁵⁷ Therefore, it is essential for man to control these qualities.

The *daya hewani* (I., animal force), which is the third level of the lower forces, has an even stronger effect on human beings, and its influence can be either positive or negative. The characteristics of different animals can be

⁵⁶ Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, *And Other Secret Things*. Talks about Subud 1980-1983, ed. Dominic C. H. Rieu (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 1985)

66. See also Ruspana, *Spiritual Education through Subud Soul Exercise and RM Muhammad Subuh's Philosophy* (Jakarta: Institution for Development of Human Soul Potential, 1990) 53-6.

⁵⁷ See Muhammad Subuh, *Susila Budhi Dharma*, 193; cf. Ruspana, *Spiritual Education*, 57-60. Muhammad Subuh, however, forgets the fact that rice is also a tree which symbolizes a humble character; retaining much knowledge but not being proud or arrogant.

reproduced by human beings through eating meat. Urban people who have consumed a great deal of meat from an assortment of animals, Muhammad Subuh contends, may find it difficult to detect and feel the characteristics of genuine feelings. Therefore, when such people feel a desire for something, they cannot tell which feelings are truly their own and which come from the influence of this animal force,⁵⁸ since each animal has various effects on men. Goats, for instance, prefer to live collectively or in herds, and can easily get lost, habits which can influence humans of all kinds.⁵⁹ The influence of cattle, on the other hand, is quite different, since cattle like to keep quiet and usually only eat grass. The influence of this on the feelings of human beings can have either a positive or good effect: "it makes him work hard and obey orders willingly"; it also gives him courage and leads to a moderate sexual activity.⁶⁰

The fourth level of the lower forces, i.e. the force of *daya jasmani* (i.e., the ordinary human being), acts in sexual union, an even "mightier" influence than the last.⁶¹ Through sexual relations, the positive and negative effects may appear between married couples and their beloved children as well as the society in which they live. The qualities of this human force are lovingness, kindness and generosity.⁶² Man's destiny, in fact, is to master these four types of forces which are present in the material world and keep them under the

⁵⁸ Muhammad Subuh, *Susila Budhi Dharma*, 241.

⁵⁹ Muhammad Subuh, *Susila Budhi Dharma*, 247. See also Ruspana, *Spiritual Education*, 60-5.

⁶⁰ Muhammad Subuh, *Susila Budhi Dharma*, 259.

⁶¹ Muhammad Subuh, *Susila Budhi Dharma*, 263.

⁶² Muhammad Subuh, *And Other Secret Things*, 67.

control of the Divine spirit. These four lower forces will, be If they are not controlled properly, obstacles in the way of a man worshipping God.

Besides the four lower forces, there are three higher forces (i.e., the rest of the seven forces) that have a better effect on human personality. The first is the *roh rohani* (I., the force of eternal world), the finer human soul also called by Muhammad Subuh as "*daya insanī*" (I., the force of the true human being). In order to leave this world and enter into the Real, man needs the *roh rohani*, but man can only contact this *roh* when he is no longer dominated by his *nafsu* (I., passion; from A., *nafs*). The other two forces are the *rahmani* (I., the force of the world of Messengers) and the *rabbani* (I., the force of being of category of Almighty God) levels. These three higher forces are the hierarchical form or continuation of spiritual life; thus to reach *rahmani*, we must complete the *rohani* first by freeing ourselves from the influence of thinking, desire and the heart. Muhammad Subuh points out that there is a dividing line between the lower forces, the realm of the *nafs*, and these three higher levels.⁶³

Another important concept in Subud, elaborated upon at length by Muhammad Subuh, is the concept of *nafsu* (I., passion), rendered to the concept of passion or the negative view of soul in *Ṣūfī* teachings,⁶⁴ of which there are four types. The first one is called *nafsu amara* (I., from A., *al-nafs al-ammāra*), assigned the colour red because it is identified with will, desire, and anger; it is also closely related to the material force, which man faces great difficulty in getting rid of, because this world consists of the elements earth, water, air and fire, the four material elements.

⁶³ See Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 138.

⁶⁴ See note 55 of the previous chapter.

The second type is called the *nafsu lawwama* (I., from A., *al-nafs al-lawwāma*), black in nature and color, and characterized as greed. This is due to the relationship between this type of *nafsu* and the *nabati* force, the vegetable life force. The competition between rice and grass can be observed in the field; after rice has been planted, blades of grass spring up all around. That the grass does not understand is no different from when one person does not want to understand another as long as his own stomach is filled. He is greedy for food. This *nafsu* actually impedes people from worshiping and obeying their God.

Next is the *nafsu supiya*, yellow in color, i.e., the color of spirituality which corresponds to the attraction between men and women. The passion of love and the desire to unite with the opposite sex play a significant role in this type of *nafsu*. When man is able to control his *nafsu supiya*, connected to the animal force, he will then achieve the *nafsu mutmainna* (I., from A., *al-nafs al-muṭma'inna*), a good or holy *nafsu* which is related to *daya jasmani* (I., the force of ordinary human being). In short, the nature and function of these four *nafsus* can be clarified: the *lawwama* is strong, the *ammara* acts blindly, and can not differentiate between good and evil, the *nafsu supiya* is the one that wants things, and the *mutmainna* surrenders itself.

Thus, the relation between the different *nafsus* and the lower forces is that they are usually intermingled, causing a negative or positive spiritual development. Possessing these four *nafsus* is essential, as human beings need them to strengthen their will and to enable them to perform their principal duty in this life, which is to work and worship God.

The last doctrine of *Subud* which must be grasped to ensure a proper understanding of its views on spiritual development and the concept of man is its teaching about the four bodies of man. Muhammad Subuh explains the doctrine by describing a pattern consisting of four circles. The outer one is man's physical body; the second circle represents the body of feeling and emotion; the third one is the body of understanding; and the last one represents the inner peace or the consciousness of inner feeling.⁶⁵ These four bodies of man may also fall under the pressure and influence of the lower forces, just as the four *nafsus* can influence man. Hence, man should be able to free himself, especially his inner feelings, from all kinds of negative influence. The way to acquire this goal according to the *Subud* sect is via the "training in the realm of the *jiwa*." This obviously means spiritual exercise. As Muhammad Subuh states, the feeling of longing for the divine presence and guidance is one of the ways to escape negative influence. This can be acquired through several steps: surrendering to Him; having *sabar* (I., patience); *tawakkal* (I., trusting in God); showing *patuh* (I., an attitude of submission) to God; and demonstrating *ikhlas* (I., sincerity).⁶⁶

The spiritual life or experiences of Muhammad Subuh, the development of the sect and the doctrines of both God and man can clearly be seen to have their roots either inside or outside Javanese culture, in Islamic mysticism or *ṣūfism* and other religious mysticism. The technical terms and principles used by Muhammad Subuh as founder of the sect, which are similar to these and

⁶⁵ Quoted by Geels from Muhammad Subuh talks, see Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 140.

⁶⁶ Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 142.

other religious tradition were apparently integrated into Subud's typical doctrines. We will therefore pursue our analysis of Muhammad Subuh's life and experiences as well as the movement's doctrines in order to grasp the similarity or difference between Subud and other mystical doctrines in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS: SOME MAJOR INFLUENCES ON SUBUD

A. An Analysis of Muhammad Subuh's Influences

As was pointed out in the preceding chapters, the rise of *aliran kebatinan* (i., mystical movements) may be seen as a Javanese cultural expression strongly rooted in the local psyche, meaning that its doctrines were a genuine product of the Javanese cultural heritage. Susila Budhi Dharma was one such mystical movement, founded by Muhammad Subuh, a man with strong roots in Javanese culture. However, prior to establishing the sect, Muhammad Subuh enjoyed many contacts with non-Javanese thinkers, and especially with a particular *Ṣūfī* master, which explains in part the blend of Javanese culture and Islamic mysticism apparent in Subud doctrines. This chapter represents an attempt to analyze those influences in order to ascertain the extent to which Subud, as one of *aliran kebatinan*, is either a product of Javanese culture¹ or Islamic mysticism.

Muhammad Subuh saw himself as a descendant of and heir to the tradition of Sunan Kalijaga (one of the nine *walis*, J., saints) and the legendary Panembahan Senopati. These figures were considered to be the ultimate sources of Javanese spiritual ideas. In various passages of the chronicle *Babad Tanah Jawa*, Sunan Kalijaga and Panembahan Senopati are portrayed as

¹ Some Indonesian Muslim scholars argue that the *aliran kebatinan* are pure expression of Javanese culture and reject the claim that they are rooted in Islamic teachings. See, for example, Rasjidi, *Islam & Kebatinan* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1967) and Hamka, *Perkembangan Kebatinan di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1971).

representatives of Allāh's will and miracle.² Before founding the Mataram Kingdom, Panembahan Senopati performed a long *tāpā* (J., a type of mental discipline) on Mount Merapi and on the shores of the southern ocean in search of guidance. In the course of his meditation, this founder of Mataram received a *wahyu* (I., revelation) in the form of a white ball of light, resembling a star or the moon which indicated to Senopati that God had decreed that he would become a great king and ruler. This was witnessed by his Juru Mantri. Afterwards, Senopati met with Sunan Kalijaga who reminded him not to rely on magical power and abandon the search for *takdir* (J., destiny; from A., *taqdīr*). If Senopati wished to become a great king of Mataram, he would be well advised to build wall around his city.³

The significance of this advice lies in Sunan Kalijaga's criticism of Senopati for practicing *tāpā* before having constructed the palace walls. According to Woodward, this meant that his practice was wrong because he was not enclosed by a *wadah* (I., container) of normative piety (*sharī'a*). The *sharī'a* is the *wadah* of court mysticism.⁴

The mystical tradition of Panembahan Senopati formed Muhammad Subuh's life, but he was also naturally influenced by the Javanese cultural environment in which he had been raised. His mother used to tell him of how a light had appeared when he was born, and of how volcanoes had erupted, all signs that he was destined to become something special. Later, the young

² Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1989) 152.

³ The full account of this dialogue can be found in S. Santoso, *Babad Tanah Jawa (Galuh Mataram)* (Surakarta: Citra Jaya, 1979) 156-58.

⁴ Woodward, *Islam in Java*, 154.

Muhammad Subuh received a *wahyu* (I., revelation; A., *wahy*) in a manner resembling that of his ancestor Panembahan Senopati. This *wahyu* was revealed on a decisive night in the mid-1920s when he noticed a ball of radiant white light descending towards and entering his body.⁵ This image of receiving *wahyu* is a typical Javanese form of legitimizing a ruler or someone special. Benedict Anderson points out that in the orthodox tradition the quest for power among the Javanese is pursued through yogaistic practices and extreme asceticism. Although these yogaistic practices in various parts of Java take different forms, including fasting, going without sleep, meditation, sexual abstinence, ritual purification, and sacrifices of various types, one central idea underlies them in that all are designed to focus or concentrate on the primordial essence. The best likeness that can be made in explanation of this concept is perhaps the image of the burning-glass or laser beam, where a narrow concentration of light creates an extraordinary outpouring of heat. The inward significance of such asceticism is in no sense self-mortification with ethical objectives in mind, but solely and singly the acquisition of power.⁶ Like other leaders of mystical movements, Muhammad Subuh often referred to his divine personal revelation in order to legitimize his messages and mystical power, especially since legitimization by means of democratic election is irrelevant in

⁵ See the explanation in chapter two, p. 43.

⁶ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990) 23-4. "The Javanese consider power as a concrete existential reality, which exists independently of its possible users. In contrast to Europeans, who consider power as an abstract secular aspect of a human relationship which has a heterogeneous source and no inherent limits and is morally ambiguous, the Javanese think of power as homogenous, constant, intangible, divine energy which animates the universe and is thus without inherent moral implications as such." See Anderson, *Language and Power*, 17-23.

the eyes of traditionally-oriented Javanese. For them power is an ascribed quality which is obtained through inheritance or by divine favor.⁷ In traditional Javanese societies the power of a leader is enhanced by keeping aloof from the people. Muhammad Subuh possessed all these things since childhood, when he was said to have clairvoyant powers that distinguished him decisively from other people.

Besides following in the spiritual footsteps of his ancestor Senopati, Muhammad Subuh also imitated another of his supposed forefathers, Sunan Kalijaga, who preached a blend of orthodox and mystical Islamic teachings. As a Muslim, he performed the stipulated daily prayers⁸ which in his opinion, purified human soul from the influence of *nafsu* (I., passion). He fasted during Ramaḍān and gave alms at the end of the month of Ramaḍān.⁹ Yet although he traveled to many countries around the world, he never performed the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca. In patterning himself after Sunan Kalijaga, Muhammad Subuh was careful to observe the duty of practicing the *sharī'a*. The esoteric (mystical) and exoteric (*sharī'a*) dimensions of Islam, according to him, must not interfere with each other: it is taught that they are complementary and mutually corroborative.¹⁰ Therefore, it cannot be argued that Muhammad Subuh was

⁷ Koentjaraningrat, "Javanese Terms for God and Supernatural Beings and the Idea of Power," in *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, ed. Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique and Yasmin Hussain (Pasir Panjang, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985) 290.

⁸ See Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, *A Life within a Life. An Introduction to Subud*, ed. Dominic C. H. Rieu (London: Humanus Limited, 1983) 13.

⁹ Muhammad Subuh, *A Life within a Life*, 45-56.

¹⁰ Husein Rofē, *The Path of Subud* (London: Rider & Company, 1959) 178-9.

merely a Javanese mystic, who neglected the importance of *sharī'a* in Muslim life. Moreover, the core of *sharī'a*,¹¹ which is, according to Aḥmad Sirhindī¹², not just a code of rules and regulations applying to external action, but also explains faith, *tawḥīd*¹³ (A., unity of God), love, trust, gratitude, patience, worship, *dhikr* (A., repetition of pious epithets), *jihād*¹⁴ (A., struggle in the path of God), *taqwā*¹⁵ (A., piety) and *iḥsān*¹⁶ (A., perfect performance of worship) was

¹¹ Ansari, *Sufism and Sharī'ah*, 75.

¹² He was a great seventeenth century Indian saint and religious reformer, born at Sirhind, now in the state of Punjab north-west of Delhi in 1564 A.D. He is well-known as a *Ṣūfī* who criticized the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and showed that it was incompatible both with the *sharī'a* and the experience of difference which the *Ṣūfī* ultimately realizes. The first task to which Sirhind addressed himself was to preach and popularize the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqa*. For more detailed information about the life of this *Ṣūfī*, see chapter one of Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Sharī'ah. A Study of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī's Effort to Reform Sufism* (Leicester, UK, The Islamic Foundation, 1986) 11-30.

¹³ Meaning is to believe and witness that God is one, and to fulfil the demands of that belief. In sufism it means the experience of oneness with God, and the belief or doctrine that Being is one (*waḥdat al-wujūd* or *tawḥīd wujūdī*). See Ansari, *Sufism and Sharī'a*, 14-6.

¹⁴ In technical language, the word means an "axerting" of one's own poser to fulfill a prescribed duty. The fulfillment of such duty will be recompensed with the reward of Paradise. *Jihād*, in *Ṣūfī* terms, means to struggle in the path of God in order to defeat the passions or *nafsu*. God says, "Struggle with your possessions and your selves in the path of God" (Q. 9:41); He also says, "They fight in the path of God; they slay and they are slain" (Q. 9:111). See Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Ch. 76, vol. 13, ed. 'Uthmān Yahyā (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-'Arabiyya, 1990) 329.

¹⁵ The root of the word has two interwoven senses: to fear and to protect oneself. The basic meaning in the Qur'anic context is to stand in awe of God, to fear the consequences of acting against His will, and to do everything in one's power to protect oneself from these consequences. The term implies observing the religion meticulously, sincerely, and with full presence of mind. *Taqwā*, therefore, is a human quality established in relationship to God. This is clear in any case, whether or not God is mentioned in the immediate context. See William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam. Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) 11-2

clearly acknowledged by Muhammad Subuh. He often emphasizes the terms 'surrender, patience, acceptance, and submission' in his talks. Surrender means to surrender to God, not to a human being. *Sabar* (I., patience), *tawakkal* (I., acceptance), and *ikhlas* (I., sincerity) are a manifestation of the surrender, and the attitudes, men should possess in order to attain good result in *latihan kejiwaan* (I., Subud spiritual practices).¹⁷

In view of his observance of daily religious activities and the formative influences in his life, therefore, Muhammad Subuh can be considered, if we use Geertz's classification of Javanese cleavage, neither a purely devout Javanese *santri* nor a pure *abangan*, but a combination of these two variants,¹⁸ in other words, an eclectic Muslim. An *abangan* essentially focuses on the his personal and mystical relation with "the One" or God, while at the same time generally ignoring the *shari'a*. His ritual system revolves around the *slametan* (J., ceremonial meal), whose purpose is to create a sense of *slamet*, i.e., "a state in which events will run their fixed course smoothly and nothing untoward will happen to anyone,"¹⁹ a here-and-now attitude in terms of socio-religious

¹⁶ Literally, *ihsān* means putting the good and the beautiful into practice. In Qur'anic usage, the term is not only an external and ethical good, but also an internal, moral, and spiritual good. Hence, "virtue" may suggest some of what it involves. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, 9-11.

¹⁷ Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, *And Other Secret Things*, ed. Dominic C. H. Rieu (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 1985) 19.

¹⁸ For a more detailed explanation of the differences between these two groups, see Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960) 126-30.

¹⁹ Koentjaraningrat, "The Javanese of South Central Java," in *Social Structure in South-East Asia*, Ed. G. P. Murdock (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960) 95.

practice.²⁰ On the other hand, the basic and most important rituals for the *santri* consist in the five daily prayers, fasting during *Ramadhān*, and *zakat fitrah* (I., almsgiving). From the *abangan* world-view Muhammad Subuh took his mystical outlook, while his concern for the *sharī'a* (A., Islamic law) is typical of the *santri* element in his character.

Another important consideration in evaluating Muhammad Subuh's intellectual formation is that before founding the *Susila Budhi Dharma* (Subud), he had come under the influence of an Islamic *ṭarīqa* (A., *Ṣūfī* order), the *Naqshbandiyya*. This order of dervishes, which had come first to Sumatra, later spread also in Central Java, so that in Muhammad Subuh's day there were to be found in Kedu, south of Semarang, no less than thirteen *Naqshbandī* sheikhs. We can be reasonably certain that the relationship of Muhammad Subuh to one of those sheikhs by the name of Abdurrachman had a direct influence on Subud in the form *Ṣūfī* teachings and methods. Martin van Bruinessen notes that in some areas of Java where branches of the *Naqshbandī* order have been established *aliran kebatinan* (I., the mystical sects) have been influenced by the order's teachings. Van Bruinessen further contends that some mystical sects such as *Panegestu* and *Subud* adopted such *Naqshbandī* teachings and methods as silent *zikir* (I., reciting God's names; from A. *dhikr*) and the breathing exercise, and combined both of them with Javanese traditions.²¹

²⁰ Niels Mulder, "Abangan Javanese Religious Thought and Practice," *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land en Volkendunde* 139 (1972) : 260-67.

²¹ See Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia: Survei Historis, Geografis dan Sociologis* (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1992) 216-8. Besides van Bruinessen, Warner Kraus has also provided a brief account of the spread of the *Naqshbandī* order which was first introduced in Sumatra by

B. Basic Concepts in Subud: Possible Influences from Javanese and Islamic Mysticism

As we pointed out before, while the rise of mystical movements may be seen as a reaction to the perceived threat of modernization to Javanese culture, they also represented an effort on the part of *abangan* groups to preserve Javanese spiritual ideas and.²² Much of this depended on the extent to which the founder of a given movement incorporated the elements of the tradition. The sources of this tradition are to be found in the teachings of Javanese classical literature, conveyed largely by means of the *wayang* (J., shadow puppet) stories as well as texts and versions of the *Dewa Ruci* (J., Holy spirit) story.²³ Javanese

the middle of the 19th century and had reached every corner of Java within twenty years. According to him, at the time the Naqshbandiyya in the Archipelago was a vehicle of the ongoing process of islamization on the one hand and of Islamic reformism at the other. Sociologically it was often the religious expression of the elite and in certain areas a strong force of communal integration. See Warner Kraus, "Some Notes on the Introduction of the Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya into Indonesia," in *Naqshbandis, cheminents et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman*, ed. M. Gaborieau, A. Popovic and T. Zarcone (Istanbul: Editions Isis, 1990) 691-706.

²² For the explanation about the rise of the mystical movements, see in chapter one of this thesis.

²³ As Geels points out that the Javanese Literature such as *Sĕrat Wedhatama*, *Sĕrat Wirid* and other Javanese books must have played a significant role in the first decades of the twentieth century and in the rise of nationalism and mystical movements due to its emphasis on Javanese cultural identity. Muhammad Subuh, he further says, was very much familiar with those Javanese texts which are also familiar among the *priyayi* (the aristocrat) and in *kebatinan* circles. Antoon Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1997) 185-6. Similarly, Koentjaraningrat states that Javanese books on religion and moral are widely read not only by religious specialists, spiritual leaders, and philosophers, or by intellectuals of the *priyayi* class, but also by over 20 per cent of the older generation of peasants in the villages, most of whom, although illiterate in the Latin script, are literate in

spiritual teachings or *kebatiran* (i., inwardness) ideas, therefore, refer to this Javanese literature which is preserved in various traditional composition, such as *Sĕrat Cabolĕk*²⁴ written by the court poet Yasadipura I²⁵ in the late eighteenth century, all of which are the product of a syncretism combining native animism and Hindu-Buddhism with an admixture of Islam.²⁶

Hindu-Buddhist religious concepts have had an influence on the indigenous Javanese belief probably from as early as the third or fourth century A.D., and are therefore deeply rooted in that culture. Islam – particularly its mystical expression – is thus a comparatively recent arrival in this heartland of Javanese civilization. After the fall of the capital of the Hindu-Buddhist Javanese empire of Majapahit, the communities and principalities in the interior of Java, although not completely immune to Muslim influence, were apparently able initially to preserve their pre-Islamic Javanese cultural tradition.²⁷ Moreover, the growing congruence of Muslim mystical ideas with the

Javanese script. Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985) 324.

²⁴ The *Sĕrat Cabolĕk* is a long poem consisting of 15 cantos (with one of the manuscripts representing a particular version of the poem even comprising 23 cantos), each of which contains an average of 30.8 stanzas of 18-65 lines. One version of the poem totals 709 stanzas. See Soebardi, *The Book of Cabolĕk. A Critical Edition with Introduction, Translation and Notes. A Contribution to the Study of the Javanese Mystical Tradition* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975) 7.

²⁵ Yasadipura I (died 1830 A.D.) was court poet during the reign of two Mataram Kings, i.e., Paku Buwana III (1749-1788 A.D.) and Paku Buwana IV (1788-1820 A.D.). His son, Yasadipura II, was also a court poet, who wrote such books as *Panitisastra Jarwa* (1819 A.D.).

²⁶ Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa: Transformasi Tasawuf Islam ke Mistik Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 1995) 64-5.

²⁷ Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, 319-20; and his, "Javanese Terms for God and Supernatural Beings and the Idea of Power," 286.

general Javanese world view over the course of almost two centuries was not total. Islam therefore did not cause major alterations in the Javanese way of life and outlook.²⁸ In the *Sērat Cabolèk*, for example, the author proposes the acceptance of Islam, on condition, however, that the Javanese consider the religion of Allāh and the *sharī'a*, or Muslim law, only as a formal guide, or as a *wadah* (I., container) for Javanese culture, while making their inner spiritual purification and perfection, as well as the attainment of the unity with their primary concern. This condition, according to Soebardi, shows that the ideas of poets such as Yasadipura I at the end of the 18th century prepared the way for the basically dualistic view of *Kejawēn* (J., Javanese) religion with respect to Islam. Islam had to be accepted, but only in its outward manifestation; the content and essence had to remain Javanese.²⁹

The question is whether the revitalization of the mystical Javanese ideas by many *aliran kebatinan* (J., mystical movements) including Subud in the post-independence era took the same form as it had in the time of Yasadipura I. In other words, did these mystical movements make Javanese mystical ideas their main concern and the Islamic law or *sharī'a* only a secondary and external one? It could be argued that it would depend on how far the leader of the movement understood the elements of Javanese and Islamic ideas. The result in fact varied from one movement to another. One mystical movement would adopt more Hindu-Buddhist than Islamic doctrines, while another would do the converse. In this section we will test this assumption on Subud's doctrines concerning God and man in general.

²⁸ For this argument, see chapter one of this thesis on section A.

²⁹ Soebardi, *The Book of Cabolèk*, 52-3.

a. The Concept of God

The most important source for the Javanese cultural concept of God is the very popular Javanese work, *Nawaruci* or *Dewa Ruci*, written in prose. It appears to have been written during the period of transition from Hinduism to Islam, using Hindu-Javanese mythology to present the *Ṣūfī* theory of the mystical path. It was put into its present form by Yasadipura I of Surakarta, the author of *Sērāt Cabolèk*, and occupies a prominent position in court literary and popular mythological traditions. The *Dewa Ruci* is a *lakon* (J., story),³⁰ Soebardi says, which not only sets out teachings which elaborate the relationship between man and God, and between the phenomenal world and

³⁰ The outline of the story is as follows: Bhima studies under a spiritual preceptor named, Drona who instructed him to search for the water of life and tells him that it is located in a hidden place that will require much effort to discover. There is a secret purpose behind this order, which is to destroy him, because he was very strong and a valiant warrior, and the protector of his country Amarta. The other *Pandawa* (Bhima's brothers) knew of Drona's evil and secret intention, attempt to dissuade him because they fear that Drona, who is the teacher of their enemies the *Kurawa* is trying to kill Bhima. Bhima, however, places absolute faith in his teacher and sets out on the quest. He encounters two ogres on Mount Candramuka who attack him. Bhima destroys them but fails to find the water of life. Then he plunges into the ocean, where he encounters a giant *naga* (I., snake). After a long struggle he kills it with his long thumbnail. Next, he reaches the very centre of the ocean and there comes face to face with a tiny god named Dewa Ruci, in appearance a tiny replica of Bhima himself. Dewa Ruci tells him to have faith and to enter his body. Bhima (who is huge) is amazed, but complies with Dewa Ruci's request. When he enters the miniature Bhima, he finds that it contains the entire world. Dewa Ruci then reveals the secret of union with God and orders Bhima to return to the world. Bhima states that he does not wish to return, but to remain in the state of union. Dewa Ruci replies that this is possible only in death. This brief story can be found in, S. P. Adhikara, *Cerita Dewaruci* (Bandung: Penerbit ITB Bandung, 1984); Ki Saswoharsojo, *Tafsir Kitab Dewarutji* (Jogjakarta: Lodjiketjil, 1966); A. Seno-Sastroamidjojo, *Tjeritera Dewa Rutji dengan Arti Filsafatnja* (Djakarta: Penerbit Kinta, 1967); also Soebardi, *The Book of Cabolèk*, 45-7; Woodward, *Islam in Java*, 193-4.

one's own self, but it also endeavors to explain what the ultimate goal of man's existence on this earth is, and how he may achieve it.³¹ Its mystical content, however, is more important than its ethical, and has had therefore its greatest impact on the spiritual life of the Javanese.

God is here symbolized as a very tiny being in the middle of the ocean. This little being, called Nawaruci or Dewa Ruci, instructed Bhima, the gigantic second brother of the five Pandawa heroes of the famous *Mahābhārata* epic, to enter his tiny body through the opening in his left ear; when after some hesitation Bhima managed to enter without any difficulty, he witnessed the universe inside the little dwarf. All at once he could behold the endless sky, the sun, the oceans, the endless space, the bright light, and then the colors white, red, green, and black. This image is interpreted as conveying the idea that God is the totality of nature, who can manifest himself as a small divine being, so tiny that He can enter any human being's heart at any moment, yet is in reality as wide as the oceans, as endless as space and represented in the colors which make up and symbolize everything that exists on earth.³²

In the course of several centuries, however, the mystical Dewaruci concept of God assumed two different variants. One is the pantheistic view of God, which visualizes Him as being magnificent, unlimited, and all-inclusive, incorporating the total universe, yet so compact, tiny, and essential that everybody who is only willing to try, can hold Him. The other is the monistic view of God, which visualizes Him as magnificent, but existent in all

³¹ Soebardi, *The Book of Cabolèk*, 48.

³² See Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, 327.

manifestations of the universe, including man, who is after all only a very humble little being among an immense variety of other things.³³

In some ways, this is very similar to Muhammad Subuh's conception of God. God is unity, the Great Life; being immanent in His creation, God encompasses the whole universe. God is utterly unknowable, but simultaneously man's inner guidance. However far the heavens may extend beyond the reach of man, God is still farther beyond them; and yet as close to us as are our heart, our mind, our eyes, and our ears, God is still closer. If man should try to find Him, He is so infinitely distant that it is impossible to reach Him no matter what amount of effort is exerted. If man should simply surrender to Him, however, God will be nearer than he can ever imagine.³⁴ Furthermore, Muhammad Subuh says, God is for mankind, mankind is for God, and the individual is for all mankind. God and mankind are one and the individual is one with the whole of mankind, the whole human race.³⁵

The above description can be characterized as a combination of transcendence and immanence. The two terms are derived from the Arabic terms *tashbīh* (A., immanence) and *tanzīh* (A., transcendence), which were for a long time used by Muslim theologians to refer to the comparability and incomparability of God to created beings in connection with the doctrines of anthropomorphism and corporealism. An *mushabbih* (A., anthropomorphist) or a *mujassim* (A., corporealist) of the old school is one who attributes to God

³³ Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, 328.

³⁴ Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, *Subud and the Active Life*, 3rd Ed. (London: Subud Publication International, 1984) 99.

³⁵ Robert Lyle, *Subud* (London: Humanus Limited, 1983) 99.

qualities which are analogous to those of men and other created beings.³⁶ A *munazzih* (A., transcendentalist) is one who holds that God is above all such qualities. The ideas of transcendence and immanence underwent a serious modification at the hands of Ibn 'Arabī,³⁷ who used them in a more philosophical sense. The assertion that God "hears" or "sees" or has "hands", etc., which anthropomorphists make, was not understood by Ibn 'Arabī to mean that God possesses "hearing" or "sight" or a "hand", etc., but rather that He is immanent in all that hears, sees or has hands.³⁸

It is common to relate the idea of the combination between immanence and transcendence to the concept of pantheism which basically consists of two kinds of interpretation. One form begins from the assumption that God is an absolute, infinite and eternal being, who is the source and ultimate ground of all that is, was, and will be. This gradually assumes a form of acosmism according to which the phenomenal World is but a passing shadow of the Reality which lies behind it.³⁹ Another form of pantheism is one which asserts

³⁶ See note 46 in chapter two of this thesis.

³⁷ His full name was Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-'Arabī al-Ṭā'ī al-Hātimī, better known as Muḥyī al-Dīn, "The Revivifier of the Religion," and al-Shaykh al-Akbar, "The Greatest Master." He was born on the 27th of Ramaḍān, 560 H. or August 7, AD 1165, in Murcia in south-eastern Spain. At the time of his birth Murcia was ruled by a brilliant commander of Christian descent, Muḥammad ibn Sa'īd ibn Mardaniṣh, who resisted but was finally defeated by the conquering Almohads. And it was in Damascus that the Shaikh died in 638/1240, leaving an indelible mark upon the whole spiritual life of Islam. A good English biography of Ibn 'Arabī is Claude Addas, *Quest For the Red Sulphur*, trans. Peter Kingsley (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993).

³⁸ A. E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Dīn-Ibnul Arabi* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1938) 19.

³⁹ Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy*, 54.

that the Essence of God or the Absolute is completely immanent in the World; God, so to speak, exhausts Himself in the World, so that transcendence is denied Him. However, Affifi argues that one may very well be a transcendentalist without being a pantheist, i.e., God may very well be assumed to have qualities and attributes comparable to those of human beings and physical objects and yet remain different from, and not in any way identical to, anything in creation.⁴⁰

The fact that Muhammad Subuh's concept of God is not much different from that of Ibn 'Arabī is insufficient proof that he was directly influenced by the latter. The reality is that the founder of Subud was much more inspired and profoundly influenced by Javanese works which owed a great debt to Muslim mystical writers, and particularly by the teachings of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Ibn 'Arabī (as we have seen) and Ibn 'Arabī's followers.⁴¹ It was the mystical doctrine of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī,⁴² a prominent Malay mystic, and that of Shams al-Dīn Pasai from Aceh which gave Javanese literature its Islamic hue. As Ricklefs points out, it is quite obvious that the teachings of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī and Shams

⁴⁰ Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy*, 19.

⁴¹ See S. Soebardi, "Santri – Religious Elements As Reflected in the Book of Tjenti," *Bijdragen toot de Taal-, Land- en Volkendkunde* 128 (1971) : 331-49. Simuh, *Sufisme Jawa*, 155-69. See also Mark Woodward, "The Slametan: Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam," *History of Religions* 28, 1 (1988): 54-89.

⁴² Al-Attas pointed out that this Malay Ṣūfī poet apparently lived and flourished in the period preceding and during the reign of Sultān 'Alā'u al-Dīn Ri'āyat Shāh of Aceh (1588-1604), and that he was most likely dead before 1607. See Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970) 12.

al-Dīn Pasai (d. 1630) went far beyond Aceh.⁴³ Furthermore, van Nieuwenhuijze asserts that Shams al-Dīn's mysticism in more than one respect "stands midway between the Indian and Javanese forms of Islamic mysticism."⁴⁴

Ḥamzah, whose teachings can be regarded as largely, if not entirely influenced by Ibn al-'Arabī,⁴⁵ conceives of Reality or God as having both aspects of transcendence and immanence, and takes care to assert repeatedly that God is not everything and all things in the sense of being an aggregation of existents, for in the *Ṣūfī* doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, or "Unity of Existence," there is no such thing as "aggregation of existents," since God is the only Existence.⁴⁶ This point was seized upon by later Javanese such as the writers of the *Sērāt Cabolèk*.

⁴³ M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia, C. 1300 to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981) 47.

⁴⁴ C. A. O. van Nieuwenhuijze, "Samsu'l-Dīn van Pasai," (Ph.D. dissertation, Leiden University, 1945) 239. Similarly, Johns found that some Malay mystical manuscripts, which in general are of the heretical pantheistic type of thought, may have been written by either Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī or Shams al-Dīn Pasai, flourished in Java where the local conditions including culture had an effect on the kind of teaching. However, Johns argued that the effect was not of primary importance. See A. H. Johns, "Malay Sufism as Illustrated in an Anonymous Collection of 17th Century Tracts," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 30, 178 (August 1957): 9-11.

⁴⁵ Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, *Some Aspects of Ṣūfism, As Understood and Practised Among the Malays*, ed. Shirle Gordon (Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1963) 23. See also Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī*, 14 and 25.

⁴⁶ Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī*, 34-5.

b. Conception of Man

We saw before that the doctrine of man in Subud consists in an image of the seven forces inside and outside man, the four types of *nafsu* (I., from A., *nafs*, the lower soul), the four bodies of man and the concept of *jiwa* (I., soul). There is a reciprocal relationship in the first two doctrines in that the four so-called lower forces have their counterparts in the four types of passions.⁴⁷ All these concepts, especially the fourfold division of passions, occur not only in the other mystical movements presented in chapter one above, but first and foremost in sufism, which in turn influenced the Javanese *Ṣūfī* literature. There is, however, a significant difference between the *Ṣūfī* doctrine, the Javanese adaptation and Muhammad Subuh's understanding of it. The concept of the passions, for instance, is usually identified by the Arabic word "*shahwa*" in most *Ṣūfī* writings, whereas in Javanese literature and Subud, it is rendered by the Javanese or Indonesian term "*nafsu*," (I., passion; from A., *nafs*)⁴⁸ taken from the negative tendency of the soul in *Ṣūfī* teachings.

"*Shahwa*" (A., Passion), a synonym for *hawā*, ("caprice"), which is the tendency in man to turn the rational soul away from divine guidance, in Ibn

⁴⁷ See previous chapter in section b.

⁴⁸ The term "*nafs*" as an Arabic word is usually translated as "soul" or "self" in reference *Ṣūfī* doctrines. However, in the post-Qur'anic literature, the word *ruh* which was broadly equivalent in meaning to the Latin *spiritus*, ("breath," "wind," and "spirit"), is closely connected to the term '*nafs*' and was often used interchangeably. In their Qur'anic uses, *nafs* and its plurals *anfus* and *nufūs* refer to the human self or person (Q. 12:54 and QS. 51:21), to Allāh (Q. 3:28, 6:12 and 20:41), in one verse to gods (Q. 13:16), and in some verses to the human soul (Q. 6:93, 6:130, 12:53, etc.). General discussion related to the term "*ruh*" and "*nafs*" is given by D. B. Macdonald, "The Development of the Idea of Spirit in Islam," *Acta Orientalia*, 9 (1931) 307-51. See also E. E. Calverley, "*Nafs*," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. 7 (1993) 880-84, and Michael E. Marmura, "Soul: Islamic Concepts," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, vol. 13, 460-65.

‘Arabī’s thought, represents internal and external forces affecting the human body. Human beings share passion, which is desire for food, sexual gratification, and all forms of pleasure, with other animals. This is an attribute that is not inherent to the rational soul, so it is contrasted with reason or intelligence.⁴⁹ Specifically, Ibn ‘Arabī delineated two types of passions which determine the quality of the soul:

The first is *‘arāḍiyya* (A., accidental). It is the passion which one must not follow, since it is false. Though it may have its benefits on some days, the possessor of reason should not follow it.... The second passion is *dhātīyya* (A., inherent), and it is incumbent upon him to follow it. For within it lies the *ṣalāḥ* (A., well-being) of his *mizāj* (A., constitution), since it is agreeable to his nature. In the well-being of his constitution lies the well-being of his religion, and in the well-being of his religion lies his felicity. However, he must follow this passion according to *al-mīzān al-ilāhī* (A., the Divine Scale) established by the Lawgiver, and that is the ruling of the established revealed Law.⁵⁰

The first kind of passion (*‘arāḍiyya*) is a sort of will which has an object sanctioned by the Law. As God says, “Then there succeeded after them a later generation who have neglected prayer and followed passions” (Q. 19:59). By contrast, the *dhātīyya* passion comprises the divine, spiritual and natural attributes, which are not subject to the *Shari‘a*, since this passion is guided by reason or intellect.

In Javanese as well as in Subud theory,⁵¹ on the other hand, *nafsu* (passion) is divided into four categories, each of which is associated with one of

⁴⁹ See William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) 339.

⁵⁰ Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Ch. 108, vol. 14, ed. ‘Uthmān Yahyā, 74.

⁵¹ See our explanation Muhammad Subuh’s concept of *nafsu* in chapter two, section b.

the physical elements and all of which are present simultaneously in the physical body of every human.⁵² Curiously, the theory of *nafsu* is one of the few aspects of Javanese mysticism concerning which there is nearly universal agreement. The *Sĕrat Wirid*⁵³ and *Sĕrat Cabolĕk*,⁵⁴ for instance, mention the following types of *nafsu*.

1. *Nafsu Amarah* – (J.; from A., *al-ammārah*) anger, symbolized by the color red, represented as a spirit, located in muscle tissue.
2. *Nafsu Aluhamah* – (J.; from A., *al-lawwamah*) greedy desire, symbolized by the color black, represented as an animal, located in the blood.
3. *Nafsu Supiyah* – (J.; from A., *ṣaffia*) the pure, good desire which wishes to destroy evil desire, symbolized by the color yellow, represented as a bird, present in bone marrow.
4. *Nafsu Mutmainah* – (J.; from A., *al-muṭma'innah*) the calm, peaceful and upright desire or the desire of tranquility, symbolized by the color white, represented as a fish, located in the breath.

These divisions roughly correspond to the three types of *nafs* (A., soul) representing fundamental tendencies or inclinations of the human being in *Ṣūfī* doctrines, which are in turn based on the Qur'anic terminology.⁵⁵ The three types of *nafs* represent the three main stages of human consciousness: *al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al-sū'* (A., the soul that "commands to evil") (Q. 12:53), *al-nafs al-lawwāma* (A., the "blaming" soul) (Q. 75:2), and *al-nafs al-muṭma'inna* (A., the soul "at peace") (Q. 89:27) with God. In the first stage, the soul dwells in the darkness of ignorance, forgetfulness, and misguidance, while by the third stage

⁵² Woodward, *Islam in Java*, 191.

⁵³ See Harun Hadiwijono, *Man in the Present Javanese Mysticism* (Baarn: Bosch and Keuning, 1967) 135-41.

⁵⁴ Soebardi, *The Book of Cabolĕk*, 194-5.

⁵⁵ See note 55 of the first chapter of this thesis.

the soul has been transmuted into the light of knowledge, remembrance, and guidance. The middle stage represents a struggle between the opposing forces that are frequently ascribed respectively to "spirit" and "soul."

It seems that the writers of Javanese literature adopted those concepts of *nafs* with only slight modification. Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī, for instance, whose influence on Javanese literature was so great, concurs in this matter with the *Ṣūfīs* generally. He distinguishes sharply between the *nafs* (A., soul), considered as man's appetitive or sensual 'self' (represented by *al-nafs al-ammāra* and *'al-nafs al-lawwāma*), and the spirit. The soul, however, when regarded as the spiritual self of man, is ultimately not distinct from the spirit. The *nafs al-lawwāma* (A., reproachful soul) is so called because it is still engaged in a struggle with the passions. After these passions have been vanquished, the soul is at peace and has achieved certainty. In this state the soul is regarded as man's spiritual self, which is expressed in the Qur'ān as *al-nafs al-muṭma'inna*; Ḥamzah calls this the soul that has returned to its fount of origin. It has become reintegrated in the spirit.⁵⁶

One aspect that Javanese writers, including Muhammad Subuh, adopted, was the terminology of *nafs* (referred to as *nafsu*). Moreover, Muhammad Subuh and others, such as the author of *Sērat Cabolēk*, saw *nafs* (A., soul), and especially the *nafs al-lawwāma* of sufism, as having a negative tendency to direct man away from God's guidance. The negative influence of *nafsu*, nevertheless, can be suppressed but never destroyed. Since *nafsu* directs the mind away from Allah and toward worldly desire, its total suppression requires an extended period of fasting together with total concentration, and the

⁵⁶ Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī*, 90.

realization of the goal of permanent mystical union in this life. To destroy the evil of *nafsu*, however, is virtually impossible.⁵⁷ It seems that the arguments are also known by other mystical teachers from non-Islamic backgrounds. Śrī Rāmakhrishna⁵⁸ who is regarded by many Hindus as a saint, for example, explained the passion's influence on men based on his mystical experience. He says,

On being asked when the enemies of man, such as lust, anger, etc., will be vanquished, the Master replied: "So long as these passions are directed towards the world and its objects, they behave like enemies. But when they are directed towards God, they become the best friends of man, for then they lead him unto God. The lust for the things of the world must be changed into the hankering for God, the anger that man feels in relation to his fellow man should be turned towards God for not revealing Himself to him. One should deal with all the passions in the same manner. These passions cannot be eradicated but can be educated."⁵⁹

The destruction of the physical body frees the soul from the influences of *nafsu*,⁶⁰ furthering spiritual progress. This view would appear to be related to the more general *Ṣūfī* theory that the attainment of mystical union is a form of "social death"⁶¹ and the view of heretical mystics, including the Javanese *wali*

⁵⁷ Woodward, *Islam in Java*, 178-9.

⁵⁸ He was a modern writer who called for serious consideration of the Hindu mysticism. He was a non-dualist Vedāntin, by nature a theist who saw God in all things. Rāmakhrishna often tried to put into words the feelings that welled up inside him. See Robert Charles Zaehner, *Mysticism. Sacred and Profane* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957) 130-33.

⁵⁹ Sayings of Śrī Rāmakhrishna as quoted by Zaehner. See Zaehner, *Mysticism*, 134.

⁶⁰ See Soebardi, *The Book of Cabolèk*, 46.

⁶¹ R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam. An Introduction to Sufism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975) 167.

Siti Jēnar, that death is to be courted as a step leading to the attainment of the highest spiritual goals.⁶²

Muhammad Subuh does not say anything about this mystical union. For him the true servant of God is one who cultivates the qualities of complete surrender, *ṣabr* (A., patience), *tawakkul* (A., trust in God) and *ikhlaṣ* (A., sincerity),⁶³ qualities fully articulated by the *Ṣūfī* writers who speak of the spiritual path. In her general description of the *Ṣūfī* spiritual path, Annemarie Schimmel depicts *ikhlaṣ* as "absolute sincerity" which consists in the giving-up of selfish thoughts in the service of God. Sincerity is a prerequisite before properly entering the mystical path that is *tawakkal* (I., trust in God, from A., *tawakkul*). A total trust in God implies self-surrender to Him, consisting finally in nothing less than union with God.⁶⁴

Another important station on this path is *sabar* (I., patience; from A., *ṣabr*). "Perfect patience", Schimmel further says, "is to accept whatever comes from God, even the hardest blow of fate."⁶⁵ *Ṣūfī* mystics, at no matter what the time or place, never tired of inventing new parables for this station. Only through patience does the fruit become sweet; only through patience can the seed survive the long winter and develop into grain, which, in turn, brings strength to the people who patiently wait for it to be turned into flour and bread.

⁶² Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975) 76.

⁶³ Muhammad Subuh, *Susila Budhi Dharma* (Jakarta: Subud Indonesian Publication, 1957) 183.

⁶⁴ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 108-17.

⁶⁵ Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 124.

The main goal to achieve in this spiritual path is to conquer the influence of passion, according to *Ṣūfī* teachings, or *nafsu*, according to Javanese and Subud doctrine, and to witness God. In Javanese literature the struggle against *nafsu* or the spiritual path is again most clearly illustrated in the *wayang lakon* (J., shadow play) *Dewa Ruci*. Here it is represented by the trials undergone by Bhima during his search of several days' duration for the water of life. Some scholars, for instance, interpret the battle between Bhima and the two ogres as a symbol of man's struggle to prevail over the passions aroused by the two senses of sight and hearing, as he strives to achieve the Perfection of Life.⁶⁶ Likewise, Bhima's victory over the giant monster in the depths of the ocean is interpreted as a symbol of man's victory over sexual passions. The monster here is regarded as a symbol of concupiscence.⁶⁷ In other words, Bhima's struggle to overcome the many obstacles during his search for the water of life is seen as symbolizing man's struggle to triumph over the desires and evil passions which reside in his heart.

From a mystical point of view, Bhima is thus seen in this *lakon* as a symbol of the Javanese mystics, who after practicing physical and mental concentration in order to conquer the temptations and obstacles confronting them on his mystical journey, eventually succeed in achieving the ultimate goal of life, i.e., union with God. Dewa Ruci is the ultimate mystical goal in Javanese religious tradition, attainable through the *pamorij Kawula Gusti* (J., the Union between Servant and Lord).⁶⁸ This can be achieved through the purification of

⁶⁶ Sastroamidjojo, *Tjeritera Dewa Rutji*, 19.

⁶⁷ Sastroamidjojo, *Tjeritera Dewa Rutji*, 22.

⁶⁸ Soebardi, *The Book of Cabolèk*, 48.

the body and soul from all that is evil and the subjugation of all desires that lead men astray, so that in the mystic consciousness nothing exists but God.

Now we turn to Subud doctrine concerning the nature of man which, according to Muhammad Subuh, is inevitably affected by the four principal factors: material, vegetable, animal, and human.⁶⁹ Muhammad Subuh's contention that the evil effect of *nafsu* (I., passion) results from the eating process⁷⁰ is well-known among *Ṣūfī* writers. The evil *nafs* (A., soul) which is often attributed to *Iblīs'* (A., Satan) presence in human bodies is mythically symbolized by the ingestion of food, one of the most basic and concrete human processes. A *ḥadīth* says, "truly Satan flows in man's very bloodstream." Al-Ghazzālī quoted this *ḥadīth*, and even expanded upon it by offering the explanation that *Iblīs'* presence in man's bloodstream is connected to the process of eating: "truly Satan flows in man's bloodstream; make narrow his pathways through hunger and thirst."⁷¹ The chief means for reducing the evil role of Satan are therefore fasting and sleeplessness. Like the early Christian monks who lived exclusively on the host, the Muslim saints considered hunger the best way to reach spirituality. To be empty of worldly food is the precondition for enlightenment. Man can receive the divine breath of inspiration only when he keeps himself hungry and empty. According to the later Naqshbandiyya and other moderate orders, the people who truly fast are those

⁶⁹ For a detailed explanation of this particular doctrine in Subud, see the previous chapter (chapter 2) of this thesis.

⁷⁰ Roḥē, *The Path of Subud*, 96.

⁷¹ See Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-ʿĀmirat al-Sharafiyya, 1908-09) 231-32.

who keep their minds free from the food of satanic suggestions and so do not allow any impure thoughts to enter their hearts.⁷²

In line with this concept, the idea behind the fasting in *Ṣūfī* teachings is to avoid the evil impact that food has on the human body, mind and soul: this is clearly elucidated by Muḥammad Subuh. Food produced from plants and animals, which represent either *daya nabati* (I., the vegetable force) or *daya hewani* (I., the animal force), respectively, may contribute to or influence the development of human character, body, mind and soul.

Another important concept of man in Subud is the concept of *jiwa* (I., soul), which appears to be closely related to the Sanskrit concept of *jiwa*, the *pramana* (S., soul) and *Suksma* (S., Universal Soul), which also occur in the Javanese work known as the *Sērat Cabolèk*,⁷³ as well as in other *suluk* Javanese literature, a compilation of mystical songs in Mataram Javanese metre, *Hyan Suksma* (S., the Exalted Soul), as the Divine Essence, constitutes the Divine Being, formless, invisible and to be found only in the hearts of those who are circumspect and vigilant. Man and the visible world are manifestations of the Divine Essence, whose manifestation in turn in man is called the *pramana*, which in fact is the 'cause of particular life', whereas *Hyan Suksma* is the 'source of life.' The *pramana* resides in man's body, but it is not subject to sensations such as sadness, happiness, hunger and thirst which are experienced by the body. Zoetmulder, who has studied the Javanese *suluk*

⁷² Schimmel gives a brief explanation of the function of fasting for some early *Ṣūfīs* in her, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 114-7.

⁷³ See canto VIII, 33-36, 72, 74 of this *sērat*, which is translated by Soebardi in, *The Book of Cabolèk*, 121-23, 131.

literature, describes *pramana* as the carrier of the (divine) life when it individualizes itself to form the life of a person. This explains its relationship with the body: it is itself independent of the body, and has no part in its actions and feelings which pertain particularly to the body. It is untouched by joy, sadness or pain. The body, however, is completely dependent on it and becomes powerless whenever the *pramana* leaves it.⁷⁴ Therefore, there is an abiding difference between the *pramana* and the body, like that between a climbing plant and the tree upon which it grows.

Similarly, Muhammad Subuh states, as quoted by Geels, that *kejiwaan* (I., soul) does not depend on the power of thought, but rather on the glory or the greatness of God, whose power envelops all, from the *jiwa* of matter to the *jiwa Rabbani* (I., Spirit of the Almighty), the *jiwa Ilofi* (I., the Great Life Force) and finally the *jiwa Roh Kudus* (I., the Holy Spirit).⁷⁵ Furthermore, It is through the *jiwa* that God mobilizes human beings to complete their work. This work is monitored by God, only it is disturbed if we put obstacles in its way by not controlling our *nafsu*. Just like *pramana*, the *jiwa* is always there, if only permitted to be active. It is the privilege of man to achieve the level of consciousness that enables the *jiwa* to be in touch with its universal source.

To sum up, Subud can be regarded as a doctrine originating predominantly in traditional Javanese literature which is Hindu-inspired and has been Islamized by *Ṣūfī* teachings particularly those of Ibn 'Arabī. On a larger scale, however, Subud may be seen as a mystical sect which emphasizes

⁷⁴ P. J. Zoetmulder, *Pantheism and Monism in Javanese Suluk Literature. Islamic and Indian Mysticism in an Indonesian Setting* (Leiden: Koninklijk Instituut Voor Taal-, Land-en Vokenkunde Press, 1995) 189-92.

⁷⁵ Antoon Geels, *Subud and the Javanese Mystical Tradition*, 141.

both the significance of both the exoteric (or *sharīʿa*) and esoteric (or spirituality) in its teachings and practices.

CONCLUSION

Java, which lies at the heart of the Indonesian Archipelago, is a region with a great cultural heritage, much of which derives from the Hindu-Buddhist heritage. Concrete examples of this include such phenomena as the shadow theatre and the *gamelan* orchestra. The Islamization of this area, therefore, never entirely succeeded in eliminating cultural traditions characterized by some "syncretic and mystical." Thus, Islam, in the form of *shari'a*, appears to have lacked legitimacy and cultural status, such that many Javanese still consider it as merely a formal guide or a *wadah* (I., container) for Javanese culture. In the meantime they continue searching for the spiritual life which best expresses the essential values and ideals of their culture.

The influence of the Islamic reformist movement initiated by al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh reached Indonesia in the person of K. H. Ahmad Dahlan, who founded the Muhammadiyah organization with the intention of purifying Javanese Islam of various pre-Islamic practices seen as mystical and syncretic. In comparison to other regions in Indonesia, such as Minangkabau, the efforts in Java were, on the whole, less than successful. This can be seen in the twentieth century burgeoning of *aliran kebatinan* (I., mystical movements) which reached a peak in the two decades following Indonesia's declaration of independence in 1945. Among the explanations offered for this phenomenon is that of the concern felt by the Javanese to maintain their cultural traditions, and the concurrent opportunity to do so.

One such mystical movement was Susila Budhi Dharma (Subud), founded in 1925 by Muhammad Subuh, a typical product of the Javanese cultural environment. Seeing himself as a descendant of the Mataram Senapati

Ingalaga and of Sunan Kalijaga (one of the nine *walis*, J., saints), Muhammad Subuh patterned himself after these two figures. The former inspired him to adapt the Javanese spiritual life, while the latter provided an example of how the *Shari'a* or Islamic law and mysticism could co-exist in society. Based on his religious activities and the formative influences in his life, therefore, Muhammad Subuh defies classification as either a devout Javanese *santri* (J., religious man) or as a pure *abangan* (J., non-religious man), to borrow Geertz's scheme. Rather he is a combination of these – in other words, an eclectic Muslim. Meanwhile, his contacts with a *Ṣūfī* master from the Naqshbandī order added another important influence to Subud. Van Bruinessen indicates, other mystical sects besides Subud also adopted such Naqshbandi teachings and methods as silent *zikir* (I., reciting God's names; from A., *dhikr*) and breathing exercises, combining them with Javanese traditions.¹

Muhammad Subuh regards God as a unity, as the Great Life. Being immanent in His creation, God encompasses the whole universe. These beliefs are consistent with what is found in Javanese literary classics such as the *Sérat Cabolèk* which is mostly concerned with the Javanese concept of God. The teachings found in these literary literature can be characterized as combining *tashbīh* (A., transcendence) and *tanzīh* (A., immanence), which earlier underwent serious modification at the hands of a famous *Ṣūfī*, Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240). The latter's ideas are surprisingly similar to those of Muhammad Subuh. However, it cannot be argued that the resemblance between their respective concepts of God means that Muhammad Subuh was directly was

¹ Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia: Survei Historis, Geografis dan Sociologis* (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1992) 216-8.

directly influenced by Ibn 'Arabī. The reality is that the founder of Subud was inspired and profoundly influenced by Javanese works which owed a great debt to Muslim mystical writers such as Ibn 'Arabī and his followers and especially al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). It was the mystical doctrines of Ḥamzah Fanṣūrī and Shams al-Dīn Pasai, which may be regarded as having been mostly influenced by Ibn 'Arabī, that gave Javanese literature its Islamic hue.

The concept of man in Subud is likewise derived from Javanese literature and is similar in a number of respects to general *Ṣūfī* teachings. One aspect that early Javanese thinkers, and Muhammad Subuh in turn, adopted was the terminology of *nafs* (A., soul; referred to Indonesian as *nafsu*), which is distinguished into three well-known types: the *nafs al-ammāra*, the *nafs al-lawwāma* and the *nafs al-muṭma'inna*. Muhammad Subuh and other Javanese writers, such as the author of *Sērat Cabolèk*, saw *nafsu* (I., passion) – as having in Sufism the quality of the *nafs al-lawwāma* – as having a negative tendency of directing man away from God's guidance.

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