



PRESERVING THE DEBUS AND MAWLID TRADITIONS IN THE BANTEN REGION

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Abstract

Historical records show that in the early 19th century, Banten became a center for scholars in the archipelago and even in Southeast Asia, particularly in the field of Islamic studies. The Bantenese culture, which appears simple on the surface, actually possesses a high level of complexity. This article presents a portrait of Bantenese culture by focusing on two main topics: the Debus tradition and the Panjang Mawlid tradition. The study finds that the diverse folk art performances in Banten, which have been passed down through generations, are inseparable from religious influences, especially Islam.

Keywords: Islam, Culture, Debus, Mawlid

Abstrak

Sejarah mencatat pada awal abad 19 banten menjadi pusat para ulama di Nusantara bahkan sampai ke asia tenggara khusus nya tentang keilmuan islam di budaya banten yang sederhana. Artikel ini mengtengahakan potret budaya banten dengan memfokuskan pada dua pokok bahasan yakni tradisi debus dan tradisi Panjang Maulid. Penelitian menemukan bahwa beragamnya pertunjukan kesenian rakyat banten yang berkembang secara turun temurun tidak terlepas dari pengaruh keagamaan, khususnya Islam.

Kata Kunci : *Islam, Budaya, Debus, Mulud*

1. INTRODUCTION

Theologically, Islam is a system of divine values and teachings. Sociologically, Islam represents a civilization, culture, and social reality within human life. The theological and sociological aspects of Islam continuously coexist throughout its history.

Michael C. William stated that economically and politically, Banten was relatively isolated in the 19th century. When Islam arrived in Banten, the local society already had a strong cultural foundation. Before the spread of Islam, Bantenese society adhered to prehistoric traditions, and during the early centuries AD, Hinduism also influenced the region.



After the arrival of Islamic civilization, Banten became a significant Islamic kingdom. The Islamization of Bantenese culture gave rise to unique cultural traditions, including Debus and Mawlid dhikr, which reflect the integration of Islam with local cultural expressions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This article employs a constructivist paradigm, which emphasizes that societal reality is a form of social construction. This approach is used to understand the realities of the Debus and Mawlid traditions. The study applies a qualitative method to explore natural phenomena and their relevance to Islamic teachings. Data were collected from both printed sources, such as academic books, research reports, theses, dissertations, regulations, and encyclopedias, and electronic sources, including journals and other digital publications.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Debus Tradition

Debus is a traditional performance art demonstrating body invulnerability. It is a prominent aspect of Bantenese folk art and widely enjoyed by the public as a rare and engaging form of entertainment. The term "Debus" originates from "dabus," meaning nail or pin, representing a performance where sharp objects are forcefully pierced into the performers' bodies. In Banten, there are several types of Debus, including Debus al-Madad, Surosowan, and Langitan.

Debus originated in the 16th century during the reign of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin (1532–1570) as a means of spreading Islam, which was introduced to Banten by Sunan Gunung Jati, a founder of the Cirebon Sultanate, in 1520. During Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa's rule (1651–1682), Debus served to motivate Indonesian warriors in resisting Dutch colonial forces, particularly the VOC traders. Historical accounts trace Debus to three main origins: creation by Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, influences from the Middle East (Al Madad), and teachings from the Rifa'iyah Sufi order in Aceh.

2. Mawlid Tradition

Initially, the term Mawlid referred to celebrations of the birth anniversaries of revered figures, both male and female, Muslim, Christian, or Jewish. Eventually, it became widely associated with the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. The first Mawlid celebration took place during the Fatimid era (established in 920 AD) under Shi'a practice. Muhammad Abdus Salam noted that Mawlid was introduced by Sufi al-Akkalun. Various terms are used globally, such as Maulid in Egypt, Zardah in Tunisia, Mausim in other Arab countries, and Huliyyah in Sudan. In the Banten Sultanate, the Panjang Mawlid tradition originally involved processions of gifts from Arab rulers but evolved to include food items such as instant noodles and coffee. The Saman dhikr became popular between 1927–1940, originating from the Acehese Sufi Sheikh Saman. The Saman dance, brought to Banten in the 18th century, was performed during Mawlid celebrations and later during other ceremonies such as circumcisions, weddings, and house blessings. Dhikr performances can last up to 12 hours, with 20–40 male participants responding in choral chants.

The Panjang Mawlid tradition, traced back to Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, also became a medium for social solidarity and charitable giving, such as collecting funds and goods for resistance against colonial powers or community projects.



4. CONCLUSION

The Debus and Mawlid traditions must be preserved, as they are increasingly rare in contemporary society. Islam and local culture remain vibrant, with the process of cultural Islamization evident in many regions, including Banten. Debus integrates cultural, mystical, and martial elements with religious recitations, while Mawlid dhikr combines religious devotion with communal and cultural practices. The Panjang Mawlid fosters social unity and charitable behavior, demonstrating successful integration of Islamic teachings with longstanding local traditions.

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