



Aristocratic Agency and Religious Transformation: The Role of Pajajaran Elites in the Islamization of Banten

Didin Saepudin*

*Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah
Jakarta, Indonesia
dinin.saepudin@uinjkt.ac.id*

Zubair

*Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah
Jakarta, Indonesia
zubair@uinjkt.ac.id*

Fahmi Irfani

*Ibnu Khaldun University Bogor
Bogor, Indonesia
fahmiirfani@fai.uika-bogor.ac.id*

Alfida

*Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah
Jakarta, Indonesia
alfida@uinjkt.ac.id*

Purpose

This study aimed to explain the role of the Pajajaran Kingdom's nobility in the Islamization process of Banten. It focuses on tracing how local elites contributed to the region's emerging Islamic identity and participated in the socio-religious transformation that accompanied the early spread of Islam.

Method

The research employed a qualitative, descriptive-historical approach. Primary sources — including manuscripts, chronicles, archival materials, and historical documents—were analyzed through textual examination and historical reconstruction to uncover the political, cultural, and religious dynamics linking Pajajaran nobles with key actors in Banten's Islamization.

Results/findings

The study finds that Pajajaran nobles played an active role in Islamization, not as marginal figures but as agents of transformation. Figures such as Syarif Hidayatullah, Maulana Hasanuddin, Ki Agus Jo, and Mas Jong used persuasive strategies grounded in Sufi values, facilitating broad acceptance of Islam. Their efforts consolidated Banten's position as a prominent Islamic sultanate in the Nusantara between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.

Conclusion

The findings reaffirmed that Islamization in Indonesia unfolded through peaceful and cultural means rather than religious hegemony. Future research is encouraged to investigate the contributions of other local actors within the wider Islamization networks of the archipelago.

Keywords

Banten, Pajajaran Elite, Islamization, Religious Transformation

*) Corresponding Author

Abstrak

Tujuan

Penelitian ini bertujuan menggambarkan peran bangsawan Kerajaan Pajajaran dalam proses Islamisasi di Banten. Fokus utamanya adalah menelusuri kontribusi elit lokal dalam pembentukan identitas keagamaan Banten serta keterlibatan mereka dalam transformasi sosial-religius sejak masa awal kedatangan Islam.

Metode

Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan historis kualitatif-deskriptif. Sumber primer meliputi naskah kuno, kronik, arsip, dan berbagai dokumen historis yang relevan. Melalui analisis tekstual dan rekonstruksi historis, penelitian menelusuri dinamika relasi politik, kultural, dan religius antara bangsawan Pajajaran dan tokoh-tokoh utama Islamisasi di Banten.

Hasil/Temuan

Penelitian menemukan bahwa elit bangsawan Pajajaran berperan aktif dalam proses Islamisasi, bukan sebagai pihak yang tersisih, tetapi sebagai agen transformasi. Tokoh seperti Syarif Hidayatullah, Maulana Hasanuddin, Ki Agus Jo, dan Mas Jong menerapkan pendekatan persuasif berbasis nilai sufistik, yang efektif menciptakan penerimaan luas terhadap Islam. Upaya mereka memperkuat posisi Banten sebagai kesultanan Islam berpengaruh di Nusantara pada abad ke-16 hingga ke-18 M.

Kesimpulan

Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa Islamisasi di Indonesia berlangsung melalui cara-cara damai dan kultural, melampaui teori hegemoni agama. Penelitian selanjutnya direkomendasikan untuk mengeksplorasi peran aktor lokal lain sebagai bagian dari jaringan Islamisasi Nusantara.

Kata kunci

Banten, Elit Pajajaran, Islamisasi, Transformasi Agama.

المخلص

الهدف

يهدف هذا البحث إلى توضيح دور نبلاء مملكة باججاران في عملية أسلمة بانتن، من خلال تتبع إسهام النخب المحلية في تشكيل الهوية الدينية للمنطقة، ومشاركتهم في التحول الاجتماعي-الديني الذي رافق الموجة الأولى لانتشار الإسلام.

الطريقة

اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً وصفيًا-تاريخياً. وقد جرى تحليل المصادر الأولية، بما في ذلك المخطوطات والحواليات والوثائق والأرشيفات التاريخية، من خلال القراءة النصية وإعادة البناء التاريخي للكشف عن الديناميات السياسية والثقافية والدينية التي ربطت نبلاء باججاران بالفاعلين الرئيسيين في أسلمة بانتن.

النتائج

أظهرت النتائج أن نبلاء باججاران أدوا دوراً فاعلاً في عملية الأسلمة، ليس بوصفهم أطرافاً هامشية، بل بوصفهم عوامل للتغيير. وقد اعتمدت شخصيات مثل شريف هدايت الله، مولانا حسن الدين، كي أغوس جو، وماس جون، أساليب إقناعية قائمة على القيم الصوفية، مما أسهم في تحقيق قبول واسع للإسلام وترسيخ مكانة بانتن كسلطنة إسلامية بارزة في أرخبيل نوسانتارا بين القرنين السادس عشر والثامن عشر.

الخلاصة

تؤكد النتائج أن الأسلمة في إندونيسيا تمت بوسائل سلمية وثقافية، بعيداً عن منطق الهيمنة الدينية. وتوصي الدراسة بإجراء بحوث لاحقة حول أدوار فاعلين محليين آخرين في شبكات الأسلمة عبر الأرخبيل.

الكلمات الرئيسية

كلمة رئيسية: بانتن، نبلاء مملكة باججاران، أسلمة، التحول الديني

INTRODUCTION

The Pajajaran Kingdom, established between the 14th and 16th centuries with its capital in Pakuan Pajajaran (present-day Bogor), represents one of the most influential Hindu polities in the Sundanese region. During its zenith, Hinduism and the indigenous *Sunda Wiwitan* belief system predominated, yet the gradual penetration of Islam through trade, *da'wah*, and social interaction began to reshape the religious landscape (Ekadjati, 2005). The kingdom itself was a continuation of the Sunda-Galuh polity, with Sri Baduga Maharaja—better known as Prabu Siliwangi—celebrated in both historical and literary traditions as a just and wise ruler (Lubis, 1998).

The northern coastal ports of Java, including Banten, functioned as vital nodes in international trade networks since the 14th century, facilitating Muslim merchants from Gujarat, Arabia, and Southeast Asia (Ricklefs, 2008). Accounts such as Tomé Pires' *Suma Oriental* describe Banten as a thriving entrepot exporting rice and pepper under the authority of the Sunda Kingdom (Cartesao, 1944). These mercantile interactions fostered the emergence of Muslim communities along the coast, whose socio-cultural presence laid the groundwork for subsequent political transformations (Pigeaud & de Graaf, 1976). By the 16th century, as Pajajaran's political influence waned, segments of the aristocracy embraced Islam, accelerating the Islamization of Banten.

The historiography of Islamization in Indonesia, and particularly in Banten, remains contested due to the scarcity of contemporaneous documentation (Azra, 2004). Earlier scholarship often emphasized peaceful diffusion through trade and proselytization, while more recent studies highlight the role of political consolidation and military intervention. Local chronicles such as *Sajarah Banten* (Pudjiastuti, 2010) and *Carita Parahyangan* (Atja, 1981) present divergent narratives, reflecting tensions between indigenous memory and external accounts (Faizin, 2023). These contrasting perspectives underscore the complexity of Islamization in the Sundanese region, where religious change was not a matter of spiritual conversion but also deeply intertwined with political legitimacy, social mobility, and cultural negotiation.

Despite this extensive body of scholarship, the specific role of Pajajaran's nobility in mediating the Islamization of Banten has not been sufficiently examined. Much of the existing literature either foregrounds mercantile networks or military conquest, leaving aristocratic agency underexplored. This gap is crucial, since the conversion of elite groups often determined the pace and legitimacy of religious transformation in premodern Southeast Asia. The aristocracy functioned as cultural brokers, mediating between coastal mercantile communities and inland agrarian populations, and their adoption of Islam carried a symbolic weight that extended beyond individual belief.

This study therefore seeks to re-examine the Islamization of Banten by situating Pajajaran's nobility within the broader socio-political dynamics of the 15th–16th centuries. By synthesizing mercantile, political, and aristocratic perspectives, the article aims to construct a more integrative and balanced understanding of Islamization in the Sundanese region. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates in Indonesian historiography, offering a nuanced account that bridges the divide between diffusionist and political-consolidation models.

To address the historiographical gap identified above, this study is guided by the following research questions: How did the Pajajaran nobility influence the process of Islamization in Banten; and in what ways did mercantile networks and aristocratic agency intersect to facilitate religious transformation in the Sundanese region? By engaging these questions, the article aims not only to reconstruct the historical trajectory of Islamization in Banten but also to contribute to comparative discussions on the role of elites in religious change across the Indonesian archipelago.

METHOD

The investigation of historical phenomena necessitates a systematic and methodologically rigorous approach, commonly referred to as the historical research method. This process unfolds through four interrelated phases: the identification and collection of relevant sources (heuristics), critical evaluation of the authenticity and reliability of those sources (source criticism), analytical interpretation of the data within its historical context, and the synthesis of findings into a coherent narrative (historiography). This historical research uses a qualitative-descriptive analytical research model. The theoretical framework uses Vilfredo Pareto's theory of elites (1916, XII), in which members of society with a relatively high level of influence are referred to as elites. In this study, the Pajajaran aristocracy occupies a high social layer.

This study employs a social history framework to examine a diverse corpus of sources, including manuscripts, colonial archives, and oral traditions. The social history approach facilitates the exploration of historical phenomena by foregrounding the lived experiences and societal dynamics of communities, encompassing various dimensions of human activity. Within this framework, two paradigms of social transformation are delineated: the evolutionary model of historical change and the force-based model. The research aims to critically interrogate these models to deepen the understanding of socio-historical processes. In line with Kuntowijoyo's assertion, historical inquiry is anchored in pursuing primary sources contemporaneous with the period under investigation, with written documentation serving as a pivotal medium through which historians construct and interpret the past (Kuntowijoyo, 1995).

RESULT/FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Aristocrats in the Social Structure of Pajajaran

The position of the nobles of Pajajaran is an elite class in Sundanese society. These nobles held power over the territory, became officials, and had influence in the social structure of society. Quoting Nina Lubis, that power in the tradition of the Sundanese people is when he is able to control *kabuyutan* (a place that is considered sacred) in this, context, a Sundanese king has been able to control *kabuyutan*. Therefore, as the traditional political elite, the noble elites are inseparable from the aspects of power (Lubis, 1998). Likewise, the involvement of the aristocratic elite in religion greatly determines the direction of the people's policies and beliefs. The response of the Pajajaran Kingdom to Islam in the early days of the spread of Islam was relatively conservative. The government of the Kingdom of Pajajaran keeps the Hindu and Sundanese identities of the Wiwitan. However, Islam flourished in coastal areas such as Banten and Cirebon which were not completely under the central rule of Pajajaran. The Islamization process in Banten, for example, would not be effective without the involvement of the Palace family. As for the public, the social structure of the Pajajaran Kingdom is divided into several main layers:

1) *Prabu* (the king), the supreme center of power.

He is considered the representative of the gods in the world and has absolute authority in government. The king was assisted by advisors and high government officials.

2) *Menak* (Aristocracy) under the king.

The aristocracy or the *menak* people occupied important positions. They come from royal families or blue blood descendants and usually hold high positions in government such as *Rakryan* (a high-ranking official or regional head), *Mantri* (the king's assistant in government affairs), *Tumenggung* (military or security leader), and Duke (a ruler of a region or small territory that is subject to the center).

3) *Pandita* (priests and Brahmins)

This group has an important role in religion and **education**. Although not politically noble, priests were respected as equals because of their spiritual

influence.

4) *Rahayat* (the common people)

The common people comprised farmers, traders, craftsmen, and fishermen. They were the backbone of the kingdom's economy, but had a lower social position.

5) *Abdi Dalem/Bawula* (Slave)

The lowest class in the social structure. They worked for nobles and kings, either as manual laborers, servants, or domestic workers.

The role of the nobles in the life of the Sundanese people plays a strategic role in maintaining socio-political stability in the Kingdom of Pajajaran. The role of the existence of these Menak elites is among:

1) Government and Administration

Nobles are entrusted with managing their territories, collecting taxes, and maintaining order in their domains.

2) *Military*

Some nobles are also commanders or leaders of royal forces who maintain security and expanding territory.

3) Power Intermediary

The nobility became the liaison between the king and the people, as well as the king's representative in the district.

4) Status and Cultural Symbols

They also serve as guardians of royal culture and traditions, including in customs, arts, and language.

The enduring social structure in question made up the foundational framework of Sundanese societal organization for several centuries. Despite the disintegration of the Pajajaran Kingdom in the 16th century, precipitated by the military incursion of the Banten Sultanate, the vestiges of its aristocratic system, including the use of honorific titles and hierarchical norms, persisted within Sundanese cultural practices well into the colonial era.

The Role of the Menak Elite in Islamization

The nobles of the Pajajaran Kingdom were known as *Menak* have a role in the Islamization process in *Tatar Pasundan*. Although they came from a Hindu environment, these *menak* later played a significant role in the Islamization process in Banten which was included in the territorial area of the Pajajaran Kingdom. Through religious conversion, political marriage, and the establishment of an Islamic sultanate, they helped encourage the spread of Islam in the Sundanese region. Their involvement proves that Islamization is not only a movement of the lower people or foreigners, but also part of the dynamics of the local elite.

It is recorded in the manuscript of *Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari* (Atja, 1986), the Menak that the first to embrace Islam was Raden Bratalegawa, he was the son of Mangkubumi Bunisora Suradipati. Linearly, the Bratalegawa nobility is the nephew of Prabu Maharaja Linggabuana who ruled in the Sunda Galuh kingdom and the grandson of Prabu Ragamulya. Raden Bratalegawa's initial contact with Islam occurred with Arab and Indian traders. Raden Bratalegawa himself was a merchant who often sailed far abroad. In his trading trips, he often interacted with the community of Arab, Persian, and Indian traders who had indeed embraced Islam. Later, Bratalegawa became interested in Islam and converted to Islam. After becoming a Muslim, he married a woman from Gujarat, India. To fulfill the fifth pillar of Islam, Bratalegawa performed the Hajj in Mecca. Upon returning to West Java, the Sundanese Tatars were known as Haji Baharuddin or Sheikh Maulana Safiuddin. He was the first Hajj figure from the Sundanese Tatar as well as the first Menak who later spread Islam and was known as Haji Purwa.

In his *da'wah*, Bratalegawa or Haji Purwa invited his brother-in-law, Prabu Niskala Wastu Kencana to embrace Islam, unfortunately the invitation was subtly rejected by the Prabu, but he was given permission to spread Islam in the area where he lived, namely Caruban is more widely known as Cirebon. So, it is not surprising that in Cirebon where

Haji Purwa lived, Islam became the initial center of spread in the Sunda region, including contributing to Islamization in the Banten region. The process of Islamization in Tatar Pasundan later became more intensive in coastal areas (Suherman, 1995, pp. 9–11). Some Pajajaran nobles who lived in coastal areas or areas that were more open to outside influences, such as Cirebon and Banten, chose to embrace Islam. Marriages between Hindu nobles and Muslim figures helped accelerate Islamization.

Before the massive Islamization process in Banten, it should be noted that the Cirebon and Banten areas, in the early days were part of the territory of the Kingdom of Pajajaran, were led by Pajajaran nobles who embraced Islam. This sultanate later became the center of *da'wah* and Islamic culture in West Java.

The impact of Islamization felt by the elite of the Pajajaran Nobles on the process of Islamization in Banten includes there was a cultural transition from Hinduism to Islam in the grassroots community. New Islamic centers such as Islamic boarding schools and mosques on the coast appeared. The process of spreading Islam or Islamization that occurred in Banten used a more gentle approach, without confrontation with the local community or coercion. In fact, the annexation of the territory did not occur to spread Islam. The Sufism approach is more colorful in the process of Islamization that occurred in Banten. The path of acculturation and venacularization makes it easier for people to accept Islam as a religion. In the end, the religious conversion that occurred in Banten from Hinduism to Islam became easier. The process of Islamization in Banten itself was started by Raden Rahmat or Sunan Ampel and then continued by Syarif Hidayatullah or Sunan Gunung Jati. This is told in the manuscript of *Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari Pupuh XVII* (Atja, 1986). The collapse of the Pajajaran Kingdom because of the attack of Banten (Islam) also accelerated the process of Islamization in the interior of Sunda.

The Role of the Pangeran Cakrabuana

Based on the *Babad Cirebon* (Cirebon Chronicle) (ANRI, n.d.), Pangeran Cakrabuana, Syarif Hidayatullah, and Raden Kian Santang are the three main figures who spread Islam throughout the land of Pasundan. All three are descendants of Sri Baduga Maharaja Prabu Siliwangi (Prabu Jaya Dewata). The family relationship of the three characters is very close. Pangeran Cakrabuana or Raden Kian Santang are the younger brothers. Meanwhile, Syarif Hidayatullah is the nephew of Cakrabuana and Kian Santang. Syarif Hidayatullah himself is the son of Nyai Ratu Mas Lara Santang, Cakrabuana's younger sister and Kian Santang's older sister. The role of Pangeran Cakrabuana in the process of Islamization in Banten plays a very important role, because the initial political foothold of the development of Islam in Banten began in Cirebon, in this case the role of Pangeran Cakrabuana. So, in the tradition of the people of Banten, Cirebon is the brother or uncle of Banten.

Pangeran Cakrabuana (or Walangsungsang), Rara Santang, and Raden Kian Santang were the children of Prabu Siliwangi from his marriage to Nyai Subang Larang, a daughter of Ki Gede Tapa, the ruler of Shah Bandar Karawang. In the manuscript of *Carita Parahyangan* (Atja, 1981), the marriage occurred when Prabu Siliwangi had not yet become the king of Pajajaran; he still holds the title of Prabu Jaya Dewata or Pamanahrasa and is only a subordinate king in the Sindangkasih (Majalengka) area, which is one of the territories of the Galuh Surawisesa kingdom (Kawali-Ciamis) ruled by his father Prabu Dewa Niskala. Meanwhile, the Sunda-Surawisesa kingdom (Pakuan/Bogor) was still held by his father's brother Prabu Susuk Tunggal.

Pangeran Cakrabuana, who was born in the Pakuan Pajajaran palace, should be projected to be the crown prince, as the successor of Prabu Siliwangi. However, the political dynamics between the elite of the noble *menak* that occurred at the Pakuan Palace said otherwise, the one who became the crown prince was Pangeran Sangiang on the day of the title of Prabu Surawisesa. Raden Sangiang himself is the son of Nyi Kentring Manik Mayang, the second wife of Prabu Siliwangi. In other words, he is the half-sister of Raden Walangsungsang. The main reason why Walangsungsang was not elected as the Crown Prince was because he was Muslim, while the Pajajaran Kingdom was a Hindu kingdom.

According to the Sundanese Babad manuscript of the *Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari* (Atja, 1986), this was the reason that made Raden Walangsungsang and his sister Nyi Lara Santang leave the Pakuan Palace and live in Cirebon to study the teachings of Islam to Sheikh Nurjati and Datuk Kahfi in Amparan Jati.

As the son of Sri Baguda Maharaja Prabu Siliwangi and the elite of Pajajaran, Pangeran Cakrabuana was given the territory of power by his father. The territory of power began from a hamlet settlement around the coast of Java, which then transformed into the center of one of the centers of government known as Caruban or Cirebon.

Besides studying Islam, Walangsungsang together with Ki Gedeng Alang Alang opened new settlements for Muslims in coastal areas. The new settlement began on starting on the 14th of Kresna Paksa, the month of Caitra, in the year 1367 Saka or coincided with the date 1st of Muharam, 849 Hijrah (April 8, 1445, AD). Then the new residential area was named Cirebon (Suherman, 1995, p. 14). This naming is taken from the Sundanese word or language, from the words "cai" (water) and "rebon" (shrimp calf, small shrimp, hurang). Indeed one of the livelihoods of the residents of the new settlement was to catch small shrimp to be used as a material for shrimp paste. The leader (Sunda: *kuwu*) of the new settlement is Ki Gedeng Alang Alang, while his vice is held by Walangsungsang with the title of Pangeran Cakrabuana or Cakrabumi. Several years after it opened, the new settlement, Cirebon, has become the most visited area by various ethnic groups. In 1447 AD, the population of the coastal city of Cirebon amounted to 348 people, comprising 182 men and 164 women. There were 196 Sundanese, 106 Javanese, 16 Andalas, 4 Peninsulars, 2 Indians, 2 Persians, 3 Sham (Damascus), 11 Arabs, and 6 Chinese. The religion embraced by all coastal residents of Cirebon is Islam.

For the sake of worship and Islamic teaching, Pangeran Cakrabuana then built a mosque named Sang Tajug Jalagrahan (Jala means water; *graha* means house), this mosque is the first mosque in the Sundanese Tatar and was established on the coast of Cirebon. This mosque is still preserved with the name of the Cirebon dialect becoming the Pejalagrahan mosque. Of course, this name change basically affects the reduction of its historical meaning. After establishing a settlement (Sundanese: *padukuhan*) just on the coast of Cirebon, the prince of Cakrabuana and Nyai Mas Lara Santang went to the holy land of Mecca to fulfill the fifth pillar of Islam. While in Mecca, Pangeran Cakrabuana and Nyai Mas Lara Santang met Syarif Abdullah, a ruler (sultan) of Egypt at that time. Syarif Abdullah himself, genealogically, is a descendant of the 17th generation of the Prophet Muhammad. During the meeting, Syarif Abdullah was attracted by the beauty of Nyai Mas Lara Santang. After completing the Hajj, Pangeran Cakrabuana received the title of Hajj Abdullah Iman, and Nyai Mas Lara Santang received the title of Hajjah Syarifah Muda'im. Furthermore, Nyai Mas Larasantang was married by Pangeran Cakrabuana to Syarif Abdullah.

The marriage between Nyai Larasantang and Syarif Abdullah gave birth to a descendant who would later become the most influential spreader of Islam in the Land of Banten, namely Syarif Hidayatullah or better known as Sunan Gunung Jati. The role of Pangeran Cakrabuana in the Islamization process in Banten can be said to be the initial gate of Islamization. Before the presence of Syarif Hidayatullah's *da'wah* to Banten, he was first welcomed and settled in the Kingdom of Cirebon. Pangeran Cakrabuana as the uncle of Syarif Hidayatullah gave privilege to support the *da'wah* of Sunan Gunung Jati in Banten and he even married his daughter (Nyai Pakungwati) to Sang Sunan. The support provided by the uncle, provides flexibility and ease of access for Syarif Hidayatullah to preach Islam in Banten. Because of this, it is worthy of Pangeran Cakrabuana to contribute greatly to the Islamization process in Banten.

The Role of Syarif Hidayatullah

As described above, when she finished performing the Hajj, Nyi Mas Larasantang was married by her brother (Walangsungsang) to Syarif Abdullah, an Egyptian city ruler from the al-Ayyubi clan of the Mamluk dynasty. The marriage between Syarif Abdullah and

Nyi Mas Larasantang gave birth to two sons Syarif Hidayatullah (Sunan Gunung Jati) who was born in Mecca in 1448 and Syarif Nurullah who was born in Egypt. Geologically, Syarif Hidayatullah is the grandson of Prabu Siliwangi, therefore Syarif Hidayatullah belongs to the noble family of Pajajaran. Including Maulana Hasanuddin who is the son of Syarif Hidayatullah, is the great-grandson of Sri Baduga Maharaja Prabu Siliwangi. In the *Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari* manuscript (Atja, 1986), it is told that Syarif Hidayatullah spread Islam in the Sundanese area, including Banten, which at that time was included in the territory of the Sunda Pajajaran Kingdom.

Before Syarif Hidayatullah spread Islam to the land of Banten, he first stopped at the Samudera Pasai Kingdom, after which he continued his journey to Cirebon. Arriving in Cirebon, Syarif Hidayatullah helped his uncle Pangeran Cakrabuana in spreading Islam. Besides that, he was married to Nyi Mas Ratu Pakungwati, the daughter of Pangeran Cakrabuana. The tradition of marriage that occurs within the Pajajaran noble family usually occurs only in the royal environment, between cousins. So that each family that is built still has a kinship relationship.

The presence of Syarif Hidayatullah or Sunan Gunung Jati has a significant role in the Islamization process in the Sundanese Tatars which includes West Java and Banten. It should be noted that in the early phase, the spread of Islam in Banten was started by Sunan Ampel (Raden Rahmat) but the development was not significant, Sunan Ampel experienced difficulties in Islamising the people of Banten. Shortly after that, Sunan Ampel returned to the Ampel Denta area of Surabaya. The lack of residents who convert is likely because Sunan Ampel is not a native of local residents. Only when Syarif Hidayatullah arrived in Banten and began to preach Islam in Banten slowly, Islam could be accepted by the people of Banten. Genealogically, Syarif Hidayatullah is an elite of direct descendants of Prabu Siliwangi, this status then makes it easier for Sunan Gunung Jati to spread Islam. In addition, the process of Islamization occurred in Banten using a cultural, persuasive approach to ethics (morals) and a sufism approach, this is what turned out to make people interested in embracing Islam. In fact, the Pajajaran dignitaries who felt attracted by the height of Syarif Hidayatullah's knowledge and morals, married his daughter named Nyai Kawunganten to Sang Sunan. From this marriage, two children were born, i.e. Ratu Winahon and Hasanuddin (Djajadiningrat, 1983). The spread of Islam in Banten cannot be separated from the role of Syarif Hidayatullah and his son Maulana Hasanuddin.

The Islamization process in Banten was even more massive when Syarif Hidayatullah was assisted by his son, Hasanuddin or better known as Prince Sabakingking. After Syarif Hidayatullah returned to Cirebon, the spread of Islam in Banten was handed over to Maulana Hasanuddin. It is told in *Sajara Banten* (The History of Banten), that Syarif Hidayatullah ordered Maulana Hasanuddin to continue the spread of Islam, and was assisted by two students, Mas Jong and Agus Jo. With the help of his students, Hasanuddin continued to try to Islamize the people in the interior of Banten, namely Mount Pulosari (Pudjiastuti, 2010).

In *Babad Banten* (The Banten Chronicle) it is said that after Sunan Gunung Jati returned to Cirebon, Islamization was continued by Hasanuddin throughout Banten, including combing the area of Mount Pulosasri, Mount Karang, Panaitan Island, and even to Ujung Kulon. After seven years of carrying out his duties, Syarif Hidayatullah returned to Banten and invited Hasanuddin to perform the hajj to Mecca (Djajadiningrat, 1983, pp. 123–124). The role of Maulana Hasanuddin and his followers in spreading Islam to the indigenous population of Banten greatly determined the sustainability of Islam in Banten, so that in the future Banten became an independent Islamic Kingdom. With his moral behavior and knowledge, Maulana Hasanuddin received a good welcome. Several Pajajaran dignitaries in Banten slowly followed him. Seeing the rapid development of Islam, both in the West and in the East (Demak Sultanate), it raises concerns for the Pajajaran Kingdom about the penetration of Islam in its territory. The king of Pajajaran adopted a policy including restricting Muslim merchants from visiting ports under the supervision of Pajaja-

ran and entering treaties and diplomatic cooperation, both in trade and politics with the Portuguese based in Malacca.

Vlekke also informed that in 1522 there was a partnership between the Portuguese and the Sunda Pajajaran Kingdom, where in that year, the Portuguese visited Pakuan as the capital of the Sunda kingdom of Pajajaran. According to Vlekke the position of the Sunda Pajajaran Kingdom was being threatened by the massive flow of Islamization (Vlekke, 2016, pp. 120–123). There had been a struggle between the rulers of the Java region, and the Portuguese interpreted the feud as a religious war between supporters and opponents of the dominance of the Islamic religion. The actions of King Pajajaran Prabu Surawisesa over his agreement with the Portuguese have actually muddy the atmosphere. The people of Pajajaran, the majority of whom have embraced Islam, have become unsympathetic. So, there was a people's resistance in the coastal areas led by Maulana Hasanuddin to oppose the agreement.

The Hindu–Buddhist aristocracy of Pajajaran, under the leadership of King Samian, was acutely cognizant of the expanding socio-political influence of Muslim polities in the archipelago, most notably the ascendant Demak Sultanate. This development was interpreted not solely through the prism of religious divergence, but as an existential challenge to Pajajaran's political sovereignty and territorial integrity. In response, King Samian sought to forge a calculated alliance with the Portuguese, positioning it as a counterweight to Demak's growing hegemony. This diplomatic maneuver echoed earlier precedents in Javanese statecraft, particularly the Majapahit kingdom's strategic engagement with foreign powers in Eastern Java to safeguard its geopolitical interests. (Nagazumi, 2010, p. 8)

Because of the diplomatic cooperation agreement between Pajajaran and the Portuguese has caused concern for the kingdoms of Demak and Cirebon, in 1526 AD, Sultan Trenggono from Demak sent Fatahilah to Cirebon to control Sunda Kelapa which was still under the rule of Pajajaran. This strategy was taken so that the Portuguese could not occupy the port of Sunda Kelapa (Ricklefs, 2008). Not long ago, in 1527 AD, the Portuguese came to Sunda Kelapa to realize the dream of establishing a fort at the mouth of the Ciliwung River in Sunda Kelapa port city. However, the Portuguese troops were repulsed by Fatahilah's troops. Before conducting an invasion of Pajajaran, the Demak troops led by Fatahilah, using a large ship, departed for Cirebon to ask for advice from Syarif Hidayatullah in planning an attack strategy on Pajajaran. According to the direction of Syarif Hidayatullah, the combined forces of Demak and Cirebon led by Fatahillah, Dipati Kelling, Pangeran Cirebon, and Dipati Cangkuang marched to Banten, and without experiencing much difficulty, which meant that this joint force could control the Banten area in 1525.

The success of the combined forces between Demak and Cirebon in controlling the Banten region, cannot be separated from the role of Maulana Hasanuddin. Thanks to the help of the indigenous troops led by Maulana Hasanuddin, Banten was controlled. To strengthen security in the newly controlled area, Maulana Hasanuddin was appointed as the Duke of Banten or Panembahan Banten with the center of government in Banten Girang. Under the determination of Maulana Hasanuddin's father, namely Sunan Gunung Jati Syarif Hidayatullah. The center of government in Banten Girang was then moved near the port which was later called Surosowan. The relocation of the capital of Banten itself occurred in 1526.

The Role of Ki Mas Jong and Ki Agus Jo

Ki Mas Jong and Ki Agus Jo were two central figures in the early spread of Islamization in Banten. These two characters are siblings. Mas Jong was the elder brother and Agus Jo was the younger brother, both of whom were the sons of Tumenggung Jaya Menggala who was then given the authority to power in the Banten region. Tumenggung Jaya Menggala himself was one son of Sri Baduga Prabu Siliwangi and part of the nuclear family of the Pajajaran Nobles. Therefore, Mas Jong and Agus Jo are the elites of the

Pajajaran nobility.

Mas Jong and Agus Jo were Islamized by Syarif Hidayatullah who later became his loyal disciples. The role of the two brothers Mas Jong and Agus Jo in the spread of Islam and the establishment of the Sultanate of Banten had an important role. As the elite of the nobles of Pajajaran, the position of these two brothers has an army in Banten, these two brothers are Tumenggung's children. Tumenggung was the Governor (at this time) an extension of the power of Pajajaran. The importance of the role of Mas Jong and Agus Jo as nobles who have contributed to Islamizing and establishing the Sultanate of Banten can be seen from their descendants who currently have special positions in modern Banten society. Descendants of Mas Jong and Agus Jo if boys are given the title "Entol", if women, are given the title "Ayu".

According to Wangsakerta in *the Rajyarajya Bhumi Nusantara Library* parwa III sarga I it is stated that: *Pajajaran sirna ing bhumi ing ekadaci cuklapaska Wesakhamasa sahar-sa Limangatus punjul siki ikanhg cakakala.* (Pajajaran disappeared from the face of the earth on the 11th of the bright part of the month of Wesaka in 1501 Saka" coinciding with the 11th of Rabiul Awwal of 987 Hijri, or May 8, 1579 AD) (Ruhiat, 2009). The history of Banten reports the departure of the Banten troops when they were about to attack Pakuan, in *Pupuh Kinanti* manuscript it is stated that: *Nalika kesah punika / ing sasih Muharam singgih/ wimbaning sasih laipsan/ dinten ahad tahun alif/ panikasakalanya/ bumi rusak rekeih iki* (the time of the departure / occurs in the month of Muharram / right at the beginning of the month / Sunday of the year of Alif / this is the year of the Saka / one five zero one) (*Kinanti, Pupuh XVI*, n.d.). The fall of the Pakuan fortress is known in the Banten manuscript. The manuscript reported that the fortress of Pakuan city could only be broken into after being opened from the inside by the commander of the Pakuan fortress guard who felt hurt, because he did not get a rank, he was two brothers Ki Mas Jong and Agus Jo, a confidant of Panembahan Maulana Yusuf.

At the time of the midnight attack, after the Pakuan gate opened from the inside, Ki Mas Jong and Agus Jo with special forces sneaked into the city. When they had entered the heart of Pakuan, Maulana Yusuf's troops conquered the capital of Pakuan, as well as ending the Pajajaran Kingdom. The fate of Pakuan and its inhabitants after being destroyed by Banten and Cirebon, no more news was heard, including from old manuscripts. An expeditionary force led by Sergeant Scipio, on September 1, 1687 found the remains of the Pakuan Palace, especially the seat raised (*stinggil*) of Pajajaran king still swarmed and guarded by many tigers. From this it is possible that the myth of the legend of the community emerged, that the Pajajaran warrior turned into a tiger (Abdurrahman, 2015, p. 25).

The end of the Pajajaran Kingdom (1482-1579) was marked by the bringing the sacred stone of *Palaka Sriman Sriwicana Batu Gilang* from Pakuan to Surosowan in Banten by Maulana Yusuf's troops. The stone was brought to Banten because political tradition required it, where King Pakuan was crowned on the stone. *First*, with the seizure of Palaka stone, it is no longer possible to crown a new king in Pakuan. *Second*, by owning the *Palaka Batu Gilang*, Maulana Yusuf is the legitimate successor of Pajajaran's power, because his great-grandmother is the daughter of Sri Baduga Maharaja Prabu Siliwangi. In *the Carita Parahyangan* it is narrated:

Sang Susuktunggal inyana nu nyieuna palangka Sriman Sriwacana Sri Baduga Maharaja diraja Ratu Hiji di I Pakwan Pajajaran nu mikadatwan Sri Bima Puntana Narayana Madura Suradapati, inyana Pakwan Sanghiyang Sri Ratu Dewata (Carita Parahyangan Dina Kwari, Pupuh XIX, n.d.)

(The Susuktunggal was the one who made the throne of Sriman Sriwacana for Sri Baduga, the Maharaja the queen ruler in Pakuan Pajajaran who resided in Sri Bima Puntana Naraayana Madura Suradipati, namely the palace of Sanghiyang Sri Ratu Dewata).

The word *palaka* generally means the seat for the king, it means the throne. In this case it is the throne where the Coronation is held, which is a special seat that is only used at the coronation ceremony. It was on top of Palaka in Kabuyutan that a future king was blessed by the highest priest. According to tradition, the throne was made of stone and polished so that it was smooth and shiny. The throne stone is called *Batu Pangcalikan* or Batu Ranjang, when it is equipped with cloth like ordinary halls. *Palangka Sriman Sriwacana* itself can currently be found in front of the former Surosowan Palace in Banten. Because of its shiny shape, the Banten people call it *Watu Gilang* which means shiny or radiant stone, the same as the word *Sriman*.

After the destruction of Pakuan, Panembahan Maulana Yusuf then launched his attack on Pulosari. Prabu Ragamulya Suryakencana and his loyal soldiers tried to fight with all their might, but in the end, Ragamulya Suryakencana and his followers died in Pulosari. With the bringing of *Palaka Sriman Sriwacana* and the death of Prabu Ragamulya Suryakencana, the Pajajaran Kingdom in Nusantara came to an end.

After breaking away from the Pajajaran kingdom, Banten is increasingly struggling with its economic development. The economic sector is renewed, the distribution relationship of goods from upstream to downstream is improved. The development of the city relies on political, defense and economic strength. Of the many kings of Banten who had a great contribution, even considered the main one in the development of the economy of Banten, was Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa. The policies he rolled out were not only centered on the city of Banten, but also the subordinate areas of Banten. He has a vision that Banten should not only rely on income from the sale of pepper, but also from other commodities. Therefore, he sponsored the construction of settlements outside the city of Banten which later became a new economic barn. Sultan Maulana Yusuf and other Banten leaders used local strategies like "gawe kuta baluwarti bata kalawan kawis" (gawe kuta baluwarti bata kalawan kawis) to deal with problems with trade, power networks, and Islamization. During the reign of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, this plan helped Banten reach its height of glory (Rismawidiawati et al., 2023).

Azra's claim that Islamization in the archipelago was not influenced by the religious hegemonies of the Middle East before the sixteenth century is supported by the significant contribution of Banten's aristocratic elites to the spread of Islam (Azra, 1996, p. 208). Additionally, Banten's Islamization differs from that of other Indonesian regions because it is typified by the supremacy of Islamic law over regional customs, which are combined with state and religious authority (Suleman et al., 2025). In contrast to Schrieke's perspective, the process took place apart from the local Christian-Muslim rivalry, where both groups actively sought new followers, frequently by using coercion (Schrieke, 1957, pp. 232–237). According to Azra (2013, p. 64), Islam, which was brought from Arabia by Sufi preachers, including the Pajajaran nobility, gained traction in coastal regions before making its way inland. For this reason, journalists frequently explain that most Indonesian Muslims are tolerant and moderate (Burhanuddin & Dijk, 2013, p. 11). As hubs of Islamic socio-political and cultural dynamics, Indonesian kingdoms and sultanates, including Banten, were instrumental in the process of Islamization. The Indonesian archipelago was united by an Islamic network that was introduced to rulers and the general public by ulama (Burhanudin, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The position of the Menak is an elite class in the Pajajaran society. They hold power over the territory, become officials, and have social influence in the Tatar Pasundan. Their involvement in religion greatly determines the direction of the people's policies and beliefs. As the elite of the Pajajaran Kingdom, the Menak had a very significant role in the Islamization process that occurred in Banten, through a soft cultural and traditional approach so that it is easily accepted by the people of Banten. The elite of the Pajajaran nobility such as Raden Bratalegawa or better known as Haji Purwa were people who contributed to the spread of Islam in the Tatar Pasundan, followed by Pangeran Cakrabuana,

Syarif Hidayatullah, Maulana Hasanuddin, Ki Mas Jong and Ki Agus Jo were prominent elite figures who had an important role in the Islamization in Banten to establish the independent Sultanate of Banten. This can be seen from their contribution and role in establishing the Sultanate of Banten. The Pajajaran Kingdom's response to Islam is relatively conservative. The Pajajaran government keeps the Hindu and Sundanese identities of the Wiwitan. So that the peak of the conservative attitude included the collapse of the Pajajaran Kingdom by the attack of the Sultanate of Banten who felt that they had the same rights as the heir of Sri Baduga's descendants, Maharaja Prabu Siliwangi.

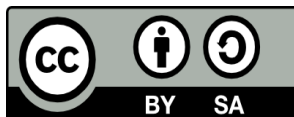
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, the National Library of Indonesia, and Banten Province Archives for their valuable support and access to resources. Special thanks are also extended to local historians, colleagues, and informants for their insights, as well as to family and friends for their continuous encouragement.

REFERENCES

- Abdurrahman. (2015). *Pakuan Padjajaran*. Bogor: Pustaka Amma.
- ANRI. (n.d.). *Babad Cirebon*. Jakarta. Br 36/PNRI.
- Atja (Ed. & Trans.). (1986). *Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari: Karya sastra sebagai sumber pengetahuan sejarah* (2nd ed.). Bandung: Proyek Pengembangan Permuseuman Jawa Barat.
- Atja (Ed.), Saleh Danasasmita. (Trans.). (1981). *Carita Parahiyangan: Transkripsi, Terjemahan dan Catatan*. Bandung: Proyek Pengembangan Permuseuman Jawa Barat.
- Azra, A. (1996). Islam di “Negeri Bawah Angin” dalam Masa Perdagangan. *Studia Islamika*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v3i2.811>
- Azra, A. (2004). *Jaringan ulama: Timur Tengah dan kepulauan Nusantara abad XVII & XVIII* (Ed. rev). Jakarta: Kencana.
- Azra, A. (2013). Distinguishing Indonesian Islam Some lessons to learn. In J. Burhanuddin & C. van Dijk (Eds.), *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting images and interpretations*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Burhanuddin, J., & Dijk, C. van (Eds.). (2013). *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting images and interpretations*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Burhanuddin, J., & Dijk, C. van (Eds.). (2018). Converting Belief, Connecting People: The Kingdoms and the Dynamics of Islamization in Pre-Colonial Archipelago. *Studia Islamika*, 25(2), 247–278. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v25i2.5682>
- Carita Parahyangan Dina Kwari, Pupuh XIX*. (n.d.).
- Cartesao, A. (Ed.). (1944). *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires and The Book of Francisco Rodrigues*. London: The Hakluyt Society.
- Djajadiningrat, H. (1983). *Tinjauan Kritis Tentang Sejarah Banten Sumbangan Bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Sejarah Jawa*. Jakarta: Penerbit Djambatan-KITLV.
- Ekadjati, E. S. (2005). *Kebudayaan Sunda* (2nd ed.). Pustaka Jaya.
- Faizin, S. J. F. (2023). Spices and Diplomacy of the Banten Sultanate with Foreign Kingdoms in the 16th- 19th Century. *Journal of Islamic History and Manuscript*, 2(2), 161–180. <https://doi.org/10.24090/jihm.v2i2.9362>
- Kinanti, pupuh XVI*. (n.d.).
- Kuntowijoyo. (1995). *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah*. Yogyakarta: Bentang.

- Lubis, N. H. (1998). *Kehidupan Kaum Menak Priangan 1800-1942*. Bandung: Pusat Informasi Kebudayaan Sunda.
- Nagazumi, Y. (2010). Imagined Link, Domesticated Religion: The State and the Outside Islamic Network in Banten, West Java, c. 1520–1813. In Yōko Nagazumi (Ed.), *Large and broad: The Dutch impact on early modern Asia essays in honor of Leonard Blussé*. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko.
- Pareto, V. (1916). *The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology* (A. Livingston, Ed.). New York: Dovef.
- Pigeaud, T. G., & De Graaft, H. J. (1976). *Islamic State in Java 1500-1700*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Pudjiastuti, T. (2010). *Sajarah Banten: Suntingan dan Terjemahan Teks KGB 183*. Jakarta: Perpustakaan Nasional RI.
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2008). *A History of Modern Indonesia since c.1200* (4th ed). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rismawidiawati, Handoko, W., Tabroni, R., Hamid, A. R., & Subair, M. (2023). “Gawe kuta baluwarti bata kalawan kawis”; Contribution of local knowledge to the expansion of the Banten Sultanate on the Nusantara spice route. *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia*, 24(3). <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v24i3.1654>
- Ruhiat, M. (Ed.), Mamat Ruhiat (Trans.). (2009). *Naskah Wangsakerta-Pustaka Rajya Rajya I Bhumi Nusantara, Transliterasi Teks dan Terjemahan*. Bandung: Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Jawa Barat Balai Pengelola Museum Negeri Sri Baduga Maharaja.
- Schrieke, B. J. O. (1957). *Indonesian Sociological Studies: Part Two, Ruler and Realm in Early Java*. Bandung: van Hoeve.
- Suherman, Y. (1995). *Sejarah Perintisan Penyebaran Islam di Tatar Sunda (Jawa Barat)*. Bandung: Penerbit Pustaka.
- Suleman, Z. Z., Tungkagi, D. Q., Suleman, Z., Kau, S. A. P., & Salleh, M. A. (2025). Negotiating Islamic Moderation: The Interplay of Sharia and Local Culture in Gorontalo, Minangkabau, and Banten. *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Syir'ah*, 23(1), 50–69. <https://doi.org/10.30984/jis.v23i1.3527>
- Vlekke, B. H. M. (2016). *Nusantara: Sejarah Indonesia*. Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.



© 2026 by Awalia Rahma, Nurul Hayati, Tati Rohayati
This work is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License (CC BY SA)

Received (09-03-2026)

Accepted (01-04-2026)

Published (15-04-2026)