



Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin: a new identity for nominal Javanese Muslims

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Abstract

This article discusses contemporary developments in Islam in Indonesia by specifically looking at Muslims living in rural Java. Whereas most studies examine urban Muslims and mostly define Islamization that leads to the emergence of the middle class and the so-called “conservative turn,” this article offers a brief discussion of the transformation of non-practicing Muslims or *abangan*. Through fieldwork in a remote village in Tulungagung, East Java, the article argues that the massive Islamization in contemporary Java has invited the *abangan* to construct their new identity of Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin. While the term “Nasionalis” refers to a modern ideological category, “Nahdliyin” represents a mode of religiosity that confirms local customs and traditions. Looking at their communal ceremonies, such as *yasinan-tahlilan*, this new identity has given the *abangan* a means to maintain their communal bond with their ancestral spirits on the one hand and community cohesion on the other. These communal activities are an amalgam of *santri* and *abangan* traditions with which the latter exercise their communal piety in the public space.

Keywords *Abangan* · Javanese Islam · Nahdliyin · Nasionalis · Nominal Muslim · *Santri*

Introduction

Over the last four decades, notably in the aftermath of the Communist failed coup in 1965, Indonesia has undergone massive Islamization. During that time, President Suharto relied heavily on religion to eradicate and eliminate the specter of atheistic Communism and all Indonesian citizens were forced to be affiliated with one of the state-recognized religions (Picard, 2011). This policy eventually meant the end of political currents (*politik aliran*) and led to an advance in the Islamic turn (Liddle,

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1996) and civil Islam (Hefner, 2000). Accordingly, due to the Islamization in the 1990s, also known as *santri*-fication (Barton, 2001) or *santri*-ization (Fealy, 2003), Islamic aspirations became more apparent in public life. In this decade, Indonesian Muslims, who previously were sidelined in the socio-political space, gained greater opportunities for vertical mobilization and became middle-class Muslims bringing to the surface the cultural codes of expression of their identity (Hasballah, 2000).

Opportunities that presented themselves in the wake of the Indonesian *Reformasi* (Reform) after the downfall of Suharto's New Order regime (1966–1998) paved the way for Islamization to work more extensively along the lines of the variation in Muslim practice in Indonesia (see Lukens-Bull & Woodward, 2021). Coinciding with the rise in media usage (Fakhruroji, 2018; Halim, 2018; Weng, 2018) and widespread Muslim televangelists propagation (Burhani, 2020), religious expressions found their way in and were disseminated through social media such as, to mention but some examples, collectively readings of the Qur'an (Nisa, 2018) and public alms giving (Kailani & Slama, 2020). These phenomena were not only confined to the male milieu but also present in the female sphere (Afrianty, 2020; Fuad, 2020) where wearing the veil became more prevalent (Jones, 2007; Smith-Hefner, 2007; Utomo et al., 2018), and so did the covering of the face (Nisa, 2012). Likewise and concurrently, Sufism gained greater momentum and eventually turned into a common phenomenon in urban communities and some adherents of Salafism surprisingly started to embrace Sufism (Howell, 2010). Simultaneously, this Islamization persuaded the Ba 'Alawis (claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad) to exert their religious influence by holding a wide array of commemorations of dead saints (*hawl*) (Alatas, 2014), *Majlis Zikir* congregations (Alatas, 2011; Rijal, 2020a, 2020b), and musical performances (Woodward et al., 2012) that attracted the people.¹

The opportunities the *Reformasi* offered prompted Indonesians to speak out in unprecedented levels, Islamism increasingly gained ground (Arifianto, 2019), and a long dormant Revivalist Islam did so as well (van Bruinessen, 2002). Apart from the demand for the formal integration of Islamic law into state law (Hosen, 2005), Salafi and Revivalist-leaning Islamic organizations—despite thus far remaining a minority within Indonesian Islam—have mushroomed in the form of organizations such as FUI (Forum Ulama Indonesia; Indonesian Forum for Ulama) (Munabari, 2018), HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia) (Muhtadi, 2009), FPI (Front Pembela Islam; Islamic Defenders Front) (Facal, 2019), MTA (Majlis Tafsir Al-Qur'an) (Zuhri, 2013b), and PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera; The Prosperous Justice Party) (Machmudi,

¹ Hadrami is of historical and contemporary importance in Indonesia. Hadrami (Yemeni) Arab communities have been residing in Southeast Asia for centuries. Their type of Islamic practice resembles that of traditional Indonesian Muslims, especially Nahdlatul Ulama, such as the veneration of *wali* (pl. *awliya'*; saints) and visits to their tombs. Some seminal Hadrami figures lead social movements that draws on the religious capital of their *sayyid* genealogy, with which attracted a sheer number of followings. Many Indonesians revere Hadramis because of their assumedly descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. It is estimated that there are more than 1 million Indonesian Hadramis. They are prominent in business, politics, intellectual, and religious life in the country. It indicates the increasing significance of Hadrami *sayyids* in contemporary Indonesia (see Woodward et al., 2012; Ho 2006; Alatas 2021).

2006).² These organizations brought along their media propagation such as publications (Watson, 2005) and radio broadcasts (Sunarwoto, 2013, 2016). Moreover, their propagation through educational institutions runs parallel with the traditionalist *pesantrons* (see Lukens-Bull, 2000; 2001; 2010) and Islamic institutions of higher education (Lukens-Bull, 2013). Their educational institutions subsequently incorporated a wide range of Islamic webs of higher education such as the Saudi-based LIPIA (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab; Institute for Islamic Studies and Arabic) (Jahroni, 2013; Suharto, 2018), Salafist *pesantrons* (Hasan, 2008; Bruinessen, 2008; Hasan, 2011; Wahid, 2014), and Islamic Brotherhood-inspired Islam Terpadu schools (Hasan, 2012; Suharto, 2018). All in all, Martin van Bruinessen (2013) discerned that the Islamization under consideration has driven Indonesian Muslims to a conservative turn.

It is worth to note that the assumption is that however more religious and conservative Indonesian Muslims currently are, the Islamization under discussion is largely seen as occurring in urban communities. Only a few cases demonstrate the presence of a similar phenomenon taking place in rural areas. Among others, a case in point is the shift in Islamic identity of some nominal Muslims in some villages in the hills of the Dieng Plateau in Central Java. They turned into Revivalist Muslims and took part in the Ambon Jihad (Hasan, 2006:169–70).³ Against the backdrop of the fact that Islamization in rural areas has received only scant scholarly attention, the present article attempts to examine the Islamization process in rural Java, especially that under the influence of Traditional Islam. I conducted fieldwork intermittently for four months in 2017 in Tanggunggunung, a remote area in Tulungagung Regency in the southeastern part of Java, which is within reachable distance from the campus where I work and where one of my students comes from who assisted me in gaining the trust of the community needed to answer my question as to how far Islamization has worked in this rural area. This article seeks to understand the people's point of view and to disclose what these Javanese people understand about themselves in the light of their vivid memories of, and their trauma about, the massacre of the Communists following the 1965 failed coup.

Abangan and the trauma of being a Communist

It is interesting to explore the community in Tanggunggunung in the southeastern part of Java due in part to the people possessing an identity that consists of two parts which they call Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin. This identity is a synthesis of the terms “Nahdliyin” and “Nasionalis.” While they call themselves Nahdliyin, which belongs

² None of the many Islamist parties that were founded in the Reform era has had a significant impact on elections. The PKS, for an instance, has abandoned much of its Islamist agenda (at least in public) due to lack of votes in elections. It turns out that the party has tried to embrace, rather than reject, local cultures (see Woodward et al., 2013), and now its leaders even participate in *yasinan-tahlilan* rituals which they once said were unacceptable and sinful un-Islamic innovations.

³ Muslim/Christian violence in Ambon in eastern Indonesia lasted from 1999 until 2002 (see Hasan 2006; Al Qurtuby 2016; Lukens-Bull and Woodward 2021).

to the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, a Muslim traditionalist organization inclined toward mystical Islam), they are proud to assert themselves as Nasionalis. “Nasionalis” is an emic term coined by the community to define itself, to indicate that the people identify themselves as nominal Muslims. Decades ago, they were mostly members—at least sympathizers—of the Communist Party of Indonesia (Partai Komunis Indonesia; PKI) and they were commonly identified as *kejawan* or *abangan*. Both designations are used interchangeably and point to nominal Javanese Muslims who are heedless in the way they practice Islamic rituals such as performing regular prayers, attending mosques, or fasting in the month of Ramadan. Apart from referring to non-devout Muslims, the term “abangan” also refers to non-standard and syncretistic Muslim expressions in Java that consists of layers of beliefs in indigenous animism. Many scholars referred to the Communist as *abangan*. One of them is Fritjof Tichelman (1980:230–47) who highlighted the relation between *abangan* and the Communist Party of Indonesia. Robert Cribb (2001:227; 2009:193), on the other hand, used *kejawan* instead of *abangan* to describe those among the poor and powerless to which the Communist Party appealed.

Before 1965, Tanggunggunung was a quiet area. The story has it that only a few families inhabited unequally scattered hamlets in the hills. Mbah Siar (54 years old) (2017) told the story he heard from his grandfather that in 1948, all of Tanggunggunung was jungle, except for some areas that were inhabited by a dozen families. Tanggunggunung was a dense forest, and almost no land was cultivated for agriculture and few resources were available. The people lived in poverty, and they were also geographically disconnected from other regions. In these circumstances, religious life was most likely simple. The majority of the people adhered to *kejawan* which reflect the total harmony between man, God, and nature (Sukadi, 2017).⁴ In this regard, “kejawan” is an expression of worshipping nature, trees, wells, rocks, forests, etc., which are considered manifestations of God. Before 1965, almost all the villages in Tanggunggunung had Danyangan (site for a guardian spirit). Those who were born in the 1920s–1950s told me that before 1965, the majority of the community professed *kejawan* along with Islam. It suffices to say that the majority of the community then fell under the category of *abangan*.

Before 1965, there were only 4 *langgars* in Tanggunggunung whose floors and walls were made of bamboo.⁵ *Langgars* were generally founded by *modins* (local religious leader) who were part of the local village governance.⁶ However, *modins* were hardly popular among the community, neither were *langgars*. By contrast, Danyangan persisted in almost every hamlet in Tanggunggunung, and villagers kept venerating their Danyang (guardian spirit). Despite the fact that Islam was their confessed religion, the very existence of Danyangan meant that it was a syncretic

⁴ For more discussion on the harmony between man, God, and nature, see Maarif (2014).

⁵ *Langgar* is a site for holding prayers, usually small in size, while a *masjid* is a larger one in which the Friday prayers are regularly performed.

⁶ As a local religious leader, a *modin* deals with the religious affairs of the community, leads religious rituals (see Arifin 2017:268–69), and serves as an informal marriage functionary at the village level (see Fauzi 2019:408).

society. The existence and disappearance of the Danyangans were the most important signs of the religious transformation within the community. The Tanggunggunung community members were syncretic Muslims, and the way they expressed Islam was mingled with an expression of beliefs rooted in traditions and customs that emphasize understanding of the nature of the Divine rather than the normative practice of Islamic rituals. It is unclear as to what they conceived of Islam as a religion. The concept of Islam at the time was likely unrelated to the normative piety of the religion. All the testimonies of the people presented that syncretism had gained ground in the community.

It is worthy to note that in the 1960s, there was nearly no group that fell under the category of *santri*. The term *santri* refers to individuals with personal piety who totally followed the Islamic tenets. In each village, only one or two persons did fall into the category of *santri*. Those who had *santri* leanings tended to belong to the families of the *modins*. Imam Syafi'i (2017), a former *lurah* (village head), pointed out that throughout Tanggunggunung there were only two families who performed the prayers and who participated in the Friday prayers in a neighboring region, some five kilometers below Tanggunggunung since the area had no mosque of its own yet. He further said that in Jenglungharjo village, there were only seven families who regularly prayed in a *langgar*. In other villages, such as Ngepoh, Tenggareja, and Ngrejo, the situation was the same. Even in Pakisrejo and Kresikan, *langgars* and *masjids* were only erected in the 1980s.

Nevertheless, the situation changed dramatically in the wake of the Communist failed coup in 1965, after which mass killings took place in the countryside where merely being *abangan* was sufficient reason for being murdered (Eickhoff et al., 2017:539).⁷ The purges and massacres of PKI members and sympathizers created an incessant trauma (Woodward, 2011b) and reinforced victim hierarchies due to stigmatization (Hearman, 2017).⁸ Among the communities, it is locally well-known that Tanggunggunung was a spot where the massacre took place.⁹ Some harrowing stories on the massacre still linger, some of which most likely exaggerated and partly mixed with rumors deliberately disseminated to cause terror and to create fear among the community. Some have even nearly become myths.¹⁰

Kasmadi (90 years old) is the only *santri* who related the story of the tragedy. He was a NU member who claimed to have saved many communists from the massacre. He was a veteran, having fought in the Sabilillah brigade in 1948 when the Allies Forces invaded East Java (Kasmadi, 2017). Kasmadi has never himself seen the slaughter which was believed by many had taken place before a military headquarter and at the intersection of the region. To date, the people believe the two sites are haunted, as are the very locations of the killings. At the intersection, all motorists

⁷ There is a similar story of the massacre that took place in Klaten, Central Java (see Wildan 2013:195).

⁸ For a further discussion on the massacre of 1965 and its impacts, see McGregor et al. (2018).

⁹ On the massacres in 1965 and the wiping out of the Communist remnants in South Blitar, East Java, in the following years, whereabouts Tanggunggunung locates, see Hearman (2010; 2012).

¹⁰ On how the New Order regime constructed myths justifying politicicide and legitimizing the military domination of Indonesian life, see Woodward (2011b).

and cars were hitherto to blow their horns as they passed by, which was believed could distract the wandering spirits of the victims. Alas, the fact has it that those who witnessed and were directly involved in the massacre—be it as perpetrator or victim—have passed away, and most of the remaining living population was not yet born at the time the events occurred.

According to Kasmadi (2017), most of the targeted Communists were not executed directly on the spot; rather, they were rounded up by the army and the Sakera (a name for a paramilitary in charge of the execution).¹¹ All the stories I heard during this study reveal that the method employed in the massacre was to kidnap a person from his home, carry him away, and execute him in a place nobody knew where it was exactly.¹² The story was told by a former village head, Saelan (82 years old) (2017), that his village suffered the highest number of victims and casualties. People called the village “*kampung wedok*” (female village) because nearly all the men were “taken” and never came back. Even the head of the village before Saelan was a victim himself, and as of now, has never returned home. While valid data are unavailable, the story has it that the number of victims is close to hundreds.

Most of the victims had been on a list of PKI members. The soldiers and the paramilitary used the list to apprehend anyone they suspected, even those who were allegedly only PKI sympathizers. Misconducts were said to have been committed by the army and the paramilitary. Persons on the list were mostly those who had received assistance from the Communist Party and knew nothing about their membership.¹³ They were innocent farmers who were struggling to survive under conditions of immense poverty. Indeed, there were local PKI figures in charge of recruiting new members. Based on a story of his father, Mbah Siar (2017) related that there were PKI figures who actively recruited members and conducted paramilitary exercises in the region. On a hill in a neighboring area, local residents could point to a location that was allegedly a hideout for PKI members. The local people called it Song Gogor.

Even though this study failed to find any person who witnessed the slaughter, the story that the killings took place in the region continues to pass from generation to generation. The 1965 massacre has subsequently become mingled with messages of terror that were deliberately spread to create fear under the New Order’s hegemony which used the 1965 event as a political tool.¹⁴ The mix of facts, myths, terror, and the hegemony of the New Order has led the people not to dare to pose questions. Those who are in their 50s and who never witnessed the event, such as Lameni (52 years old) (2017), called the massacre “*age matun*” (getting rid of parasites in the paddy fields). It means that a generation educated under the New Order

¹¹ The Indonesian army assumedly encouraged, shaped, directed, and facilitated militia groups and death squads to kill PKI members (see Melvin 2017; Robinson 2017; and Melvin 2018).

¹² For a comparison with other killings in East Java, particularly in Kediri and Bangil, see Hearman (2018, 68–111).

¹³ Similar events occurred in other parts of Indonesia (see Robinson 2018).

¹⁴ On the New Order’s propaganda as a political tool through defaming the Communist Party of Indonesia, see Wieringa and Katjasungkana (2019).

era conceived the massacre as a purge of “bad guys,” which comprised thieves, bandits, robbers, and so on.

The tragedy of 1965 is a turning point, and when someone falls victim to terrible terror, he/she has no choice but to flock to “a house of salvation.” This house could be a *langgar* or a *masjid*, which offered shelter for everyone to take refuge from the violent massacres that could indiscriminately target anyone (Robinson, 2018:123). Mosque attendance soared accordingly.¹⁵ The *langgars*, which up to then had been limited in number and were built in a simple way, became hubbubs. During 1965–1969, the need for *langgars* and *masjids* arose sharply. For this end, the *mod-ins* donated land to build *langgars* and *masjids* in order to accommodate the people. The number of *langgars* and *masjids* had exponentially increased in the upcoming years.

At the moment, the number of *langgars* and *masjids* exceeds the real need of the community. On average, each hamlet currently has dozens of *langgars* and *masjids*. Even in a small village, there may be as many as 4 mosques and 12 *langgars*. The explosion of the number of *langgars* and *masjids* consequently brought about a demand for religious preachers. Several *muballighs* (Islamic preachers) were brought in from neighboring areas. As of now, *muballighs* in Tanggunggunung originate from outside the region and eventually became residents because they married local women. Most of them were students of Kyai Badjuri of Campurdarat, among whom Kasmadi is the oldest. Thus, during the 1970s–1980s, the region witnessed the most rapid Islamization.

Robert W. Hefner (2011), after intensive fieldwork in Pasuruan and Malang in East Java, and in Bantul, Gunungkidul, Klaten, and neighboring areas in Central Java in search for an answer to the question “where have all the *abangan* gone?,” concluded that the number of non-standard Muslims, who decades ago constituted the predominant group had dwindled, diminished and collapsed due to the massive Islamization campaigns. Since the introduction of the trichotomy of the Javanese religious groups—*priyayi*, *santri*, and *abangan*—by Clifford Geertz (1976),¹⁶ these three categories have been in use to analyze Javanese society and its socio-political dynamics and the *abangan* have received ample scholarly discussion. The classification of “*abangan*” or “*kejawen*” as nominal Muslims has been thoroughly discredited. Indonesian scholars including Harsja W. Bachtiar (2014) and Koentjaraningrat (1985) never accepted it. Although the distinction between horizontal and vertical stratification, advanced by Koentjaraningrat, is a way of viewing Geertz’s concepts, it is open to confusion when one begins to specify the different types of vertical and horizontal alignments with which the three varieties of Javanese Islam interact (Cruikshank, 1972). Marshall Hodgson (1974) noted that Geertz’s work is marred by a major systemic error, because he identifies “Islam” only with what the school

¹⁵ In the aftermath of the 1965 event, the rise of mosque attendance similarly occurred in other parts of Java (see Hefner 1987, 541).

¹⁶ *Priyayi* are Javanese aristocrats; *santri* are practicing Muslims; and *abangan* are nominal or non-practicing Muslims.

of modern Shari'ah-minded Muslims happens to approve, and ascribes everything else to an indigenous background.

As far as the designation *abangan* is concerned, M.C. Ricklefs (2006:36), tracing the term *abangan* back to the 1850s as a corollary of newfound sea connections between Southeast Asia and the Islamic heartland of the Middle East, saw the concept of *abangan* as an outside scientific intervention rather than an emic category developed by the Javanese themselves, not least the wider meaning of *abangan* as a social group. Jochem van den Boogert (2015) is of the view that the term *abangan* might have been put to the surface by Christian missionaries¹⁷ in an attempt to Christianize the Javanese population rather than by the colonial power as previously perceived. Ahmad Najib Burhani (2017) suggests that the meaning of the term *abangan*, as well as *santri*, underwent diversification after Indonesian Islam had become more varied due to the arrival of so-called transnational Islam which partook in processes of the Islamization in the country. Masdar Hilmy (2018) argues that *abangan* has turned into a hybrid identity in the midst of increasingly Islamized Indonesia. Furthermore, as a result of the Islamization, most residents in Solo in Central Java, previously known as the bulwark of the *abangan*, have become followers of a Purist Islam or have become orthodox *santri* for their engagement in the puritan movement (Nashir & Jinan, 2018; Zuhri, 2013a, b) and even in radical Islamic groups (Wildan 2013a; b).

Meanwhile, in stark contrast to the above-mentioned views, the process of massive Islamization from 1965 to the 1980s in Tanggunggunung has produced a fascinating fact. Practicing the religion initially became stronger. However, mosque attendances started to decline once the situation had slid back to normalcy. The increasing number of mosques eventually had no profound impact on religious observances. All along, the people put emphasis on social rituals rather than on personal ones, and after several decades of Islamization this phenomenon has remained pretty much unchanged. The number of mosques is incommensurate with stronger personal piety. Instead, an increased number of mosques has nothing to do with practicing religion. Only few people observe their religion and came to fall under the category of *santri*; otherwise, the majority of the people remained nominal Muslims or *abangan*, which under the influence of traditional Islam, particularly Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), subsequently changed into Nasionalis-cum-Nahdliyin.

In religious orientations, Nahdlatul Ulama is the first and foremost identity of the community since it accords with the people's culture. Recently, the NU launched the concept of Islam Nusantara which emphasizes the symbiosis of Islam and Javanese culture, and to a lesser extent other Indonesian cultures (Azra, 2002; Woodward, 2017). The community declared that there is no acceptable religious organization other than the NU which, it says, represents true Islam. Apart from the fact that NU's Islam is deemed the most accommodative, the community also claims that it is the one and only "religion" that suits their religious leaning, which is full of mystic-laden rituals that connect them with their ancestral spirits. Accordingly, this largest

¹⁷ For a discussion on the proselytization of the Christian missionaries in the Dutch East Indies, currently Indonesia, see Kruithof (2014).

Indonesian Islamic organization has become the most popular in the community. In an interview with Pak Lameni (2017), a resident who works as a guard for the Forest State Corporation (Perhutani), he asserted that “*ingkang cocok kagem warga mriki namung NU, liyane NU mboten cocok*” (in this region, the “religion” that fits the residents is only the NU, others are not fitting). Virtually everyone in Tanggunggunung justifies and corroborates his remark.

For the community, the NU accommodates, and is in harmony with, the people’s customs. It is worthy to note that the people interpret the term “custom” in a more complex way than its academic usage. Custom could mean the legacy of the ancestors, old idealized wisdoms, the variety of regional arts that flourished in villages, *kejawan* beliefs, as well as habits that have become traditions in the community. Fact has it that previously not only the NU existed in the region but after decades of propaganda, Muhammadiyah and the Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia (LDII), merely got few followers and gained no wide support. It is said that these two Islamic organizations are too rigid and thus unfit for them. Meanwhile, the majority opts for the NU mainly because this Sufi-leaning organization accommodates, and is highly lenient in dealing with, a wide array of local customs (Marjono, 2017).¹⁸ However, surprisingly, the NU identity in its turn is confined and limited merely to particular socio-religious activities such as *yasinan-tahlilan* (a ritual for reading chapter 36, surah Yasin of the Qur’an along with a series of collective litanies usually held for commemorating a deceased person).

Similar to that of the Javanese community anywhere else, *yasinan-tahlilan* has become a remarkable characteristic of being Nahdliyin. For the Tanggunggunung community, the *yasinan-tahlilan* constitutes the most popular ritual compared to the Friday prayer and other Islamic rituals. The question arises, why is this so? Apart from the fact that *yasinan-tahlilan* is a way to make a bond with ancestral spirits and to restore symbolic communication between the living and the dead within the framework of respect and honor (Nasir, 2019), the ritual turns out to be popular mainly because it obliges all member of the community to participate. Not only is this religious activity part of the identity of being Nahdliyin, it simultaneously is a social ritual everyone “respects” more than the main rituals of Islam. Likewise, all religious rituals that accompany social ceremonies, such as circumcision, marriage, and death, are top priorities, which are celebrated and joined by all members of the community.

During my fieldwork, I noticed that religious life in Tanggunggunung reflected non observance of Islam. Only some congregators perform the collective Friday prayers. When Ramadan comes, everyone indeed joyfully welcomes this sacred month, during which they hold the ceremony of *megengan* (communal meals along with prayers) in the first days of the month. Strikingly enough, everyone conspicuously and publicly eats and drinks during the day of Ramadan when they are supposed to fast. Teaching the Qur’an for children (*Taman Pendidikan al-Qur’an*) is available in every village—if not every hamlet—but generally the course is not fully attended, mainly due to lack of compulsion from parents. Moreover, consuming

¹⁸ Pak Marjono is the current *lurah* of Tanggunggunung.

liquor appears to be common as well. Young people in the community have a drink, or at least a sip, either from traditional liquor or that of foreign products. This phenomenon is quite strange in comparison to the surrounding areas because Islam prohibits consuming alcohol.

Another striking phenomenon is the community's permissive attitude toward anything that is considered deviant by the Islamic standard of piety. Many forms of gambling such as lottery, roulette, domino, etc. are rife in this region. And above all, people prefer cockfights. In this area, cockfights are rampant and common. Arenas for the cockfights are scattered around the neighborhood. People are generally suspicious of the presence of foreigners in the arenas and hence, they hide the cockfights from outsiders, especially from the police since cockfights are illegal. Surprisingly, they see these permissive transgressions as a part of their Nasionalis identity. Without hesitation they affirm that being this permissive is what they assume is what a Nasionalis does. They conceive Nasionalis as a sort of acceptance of personal and social activities that transgress religious precepts. Thus, the Tanggunggunung community members use Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin to describe themselves as a nominal and non-practicing Muslims.

Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin as a new identity

The term Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin is used for a community with a socio-religious identity to affirm an "indifferent" stance toward Islamic observances. In such a community, no participation in the mass praying at the mosque should go unquestioned by other fellows. On the contrary, *yasinan-tahlilan* has become an important public space for measuring a person's piety. People may not take part in *Jum'atan*, but in case a person is not participating in *yasinan-tahlilan* he/she falls into social disgrace. One can even bet in gambles and drink as much as one likes, and no one should denounce it. However, being absent in a *slametan*, especially in *yasinan-tahlilan* ceremonies for the death, may be taboo.

Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin is a religious stance that emphasizes social rather than personal ritual. All along, *langgars* and *masjids* remain symbols of personal piety, and therefore people's visit to a mosque is by no means socially pious. By contrast, joining *yasinan-tahlilan* is considered a symbol of communal piety, which is more important than joining Friday prayers. Consequently, mosques were never fully attended during the Friday prayers, let alone for daily prayers, while *yasinan-tahlilan* are always fully packed. In each village, there are an average of 4 to 8 *yasinan-tahlilan* groups. Each group belongs to a certain category, and men have their own groups, and so have ladies (Syafi'i 2017).

Although social activities such as *yasinan-tahlilan* and *megengan*, and other rituals that accompany a celebration of circumcision, marriage, and death, expose a remnant of so-called "tradisi Jawa" (Javanese tradition), none of the community members accepts being dubbed *kejawen* or *abangan*. For them, *kejawen* points to those affiliated with spiritual organizations such as Penghayat Kaweruh Jawa Dipa and Kerokhanian Sapta Darma—to name a few—which do have followers in this region even if they are confined to Kresikan village and constitute a minority.

Furthermore, the people similarly reject identification as *abangan*, and their understanding of the term is incompatible with the academic usage since the term “*abangan*” has undergone a distorted interpretation, and refers to those who implicate in bad behavior such as stealing, robbing, drinking, and womanizing (Syafi’i 2017).

Categorizing the Tanggunggunung community with the use of any theories of Javanese Islam turns out to be inadequate. Geertz’s thesis of the Javanese trichotomy is no longer properly applied on the community. The trichotomy of *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* has no justification, neither in the system of religious belief nor in the polarization of society.¹⁹ In this community hardly any individual or social group belongs to a certain category and nobody is “true” *santri*, *abangan*, or *priyayi*. The inadequacy is partly because no single individual readily accepts this identification. Apparently, they seem close to the *abangan* or *kejawen* as Mulder (1983) put it, but the community simultaneously rejects the identification. Moreover, identification with Woodward’s category is inadequate as well. Meanwhile, identifying the community as having a mystic synthesis, as Ricklefs (2003) put it, is similarly insufficient. After all, it suffices to say that the *abangan* variant has disappeared in the community.

Thesis on *slametan*²⁰—in forms of *yasinan-tahlilan*—²¹ as a univocality, as Andrew Beatty (2004) put it, also has no justification in Tanggunggunung. The community needs no medium such as *slametan* to bind its collectivity. Despite the fact that being present at a *slametan* has become a sort of social obligation that allows no one to be absent, it is not in the sense of Beatty’s univocality. Furthermore, this virtually homogeneous society, which is currently in a transitional phase from traditional into modern, may anchor at best at the sociological theory advanced by Emile Durkheim who categorizes a society into having mechanic and organic solidarity. While he asserts that mechanic solidarity comes out of lacking a labor division and of a diversified function that prevails in the traditional society in which people tend to produce the same identity and to possess shared values as result of uniformity in working and functioning, the Tanggunggunung community nonetheless appears to have had an admixture of mechanic and organic solidarities with which social attachment is hardly based on one’s specialization, but rather on the function and the role of the community members who are mutually interdependent.²²

Nevertheless, assuming that the community is homogeneous in all respects, particularly in the social order of religion, is a premise that requires further investigation. The polarization is indeed there, with at least two characteristics with respect

¹⁹ For polarization in Java, see Ricklefs (2007; 2008).

²⁰ A *slametan* is a communal meal usually with the aims to reach well-being, prosperity, and safety in life (see van den Boogert 2017). For further reading on *slametan* among Suriname Javanese, see Khusen (2005).

²¹ The shift from *slametan* to *yasinan-tahlilan* ritual is in line with a new development in Java, in which the relation between culture and religion was conceptualized. *Slametan* underwent a significant shift. It was formerly known as part of *agama* (religion) and is currently referred to as belonging to *kebudayaan* (culture) (see Woodward 2011a, 2011b, 2011c).

²² A similar characteristic persists in a community in Kotagede, a Javanese old city in Yogyakarta (see Sirait 2016).

to practicing Islam. The first is “practicing-Nahdliyin” and consist of a handful community members who mostly occupy structural positions in the NU and those belong to families of *modins*. The second is “Nasionalis-Nahdliyin” that constitutes the main characteristic of the largest part of the community. It is of interest to pose the following questions: Why is it that the largest part of the Tanggunggunung community claims itself to be Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin? And what does it mean to be Nahdliyin? These questions serve as starting points to further look at how the processes of shifting identity from *abangan* to Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin are at work. Initially, the community’s option for the NU was to use it as a refuge from the threats of the massacre that was inflicted on the Communists following the 1965 failed coup.²³ This choice was a sort of a survival mechanism. Meanwhile, in recent years the choice is mainly due to NU’s flexibility in dealing with customs and traditions.²⁴

Hefner (2011) considered that the process of Islamization since 1965 has seen the *abangan* group dwindle, diminished and collapse. However, the dynamics that occurred in Tanggunggunung show a phenomenon of its own. The *abangans* have undergone a tremendous transformation, in which the majority of the community inwardly remains a leaning toward *abangan*, but outwardly presents itself with the *santri* identity and both blended into “Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin.” This term represents the mental situation of socio-religious life of the community as a compromise between religion and customs, or between nature and the *shari’a*, or between *santri* and *abangan*.

There are some individuals who have *santri* leanings, but they idealize Javanese wisdom. They are usually found among the *pinisepuh* (elders) and former *lurahs* who were fascinated by the various supernatural powers and tacitly display some symbols of Javanism or at least Javanese Islam. The *panakawan* (Javanese puppet characters of the servants of kings and prince) and Javanese adages are on display in their homes and hung next to various types of calligraphy in Arabic and Javanese script. Meanwhile, those who have *abangan* leanings tend to display their presence in the public sphere with a *santri* narrative, and they are inclined to speak in the *santri* idiom even though they are heedless of anything having to do with personal piety. A few persons ostensibly express their *abangan* leanings, and they largely belong to *dukun* (shamans) groups.

Although some pilgrimage sites, no less than three of which in Central Java, have become sites for heterodox rites among the *abangan* (Gottowik, 2018, 2020), the *abangan* identity in the Tanggunggunung community, however, was reflected in their belief in Danyangan. Notwithstanding the fact that currently nearly all Danyangan have been destroyed and almost nothing is left, to date three Danyangan sites remain intact and are well preserved in Tanggunggunung including: (1) Mbah Mlinjo, (2) Mbah Mergo, and (3) Petilasan Syekh Subakir. These remaining Danyangans are left because pertaining to Islamic promulgation, and people visit them to look for divine blessing, to sharpen their spiritual life, to seek magical power,

²³ On information on a wide range of the massacre, see Robinson (2018).

²⁴ For further reading on NU and local traditions, see Feillard (2011).

to become rich through spiritual means (Alatas, 2020, 67–68), to conduit transcendental communication (Hellman, 2013)²⁵ and visitors recite *yasin-tahlil* before they express their intentions. Hence, *yasinan-tahlilan* serves as the main ways to honor ancestral spirits through which the spirit receives their prayers and heavenly rewards. *Yasinan-tahlilan* is no longer rituals representing the *santris*. For the overwhelming majority of the nominal Javanese Muslims, however, they serve as a mean to stay in touch with their ancestral spirits.

Despite the non-existence of state-recognized religions in Tanggunggunung other than Islam, and obviously the whole community is Muslim, it is of interest to note that a large chunk of them pay less attention to practicing Islam. The Tanggunggunung community emphasizes communal rather than personal piety and any violations of its social rituals may have serious consequences, one of which borders on excommunication. Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin appears to be more a social than a religious identity. As the people identify themselves as Nasionalis, which subsequently turns into their most prominent identity, it reveals that the term deviates far from the general notion of nationalism.²⁶ They see Nasionalis as synonymous with lenient and flexible attitudes that oppose fanaticism. In this way, their anti-fanaticism manifests itself in an acceptance of all kinds of social dynamics. Apart from Nasionalis being synonymous with keeping away from any acts that disturb the social behavior that prevails in the community, Nasionalis also refers to the recognition of one's particular choice in religion and its practices.

Moreover, the term Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin is associated with harmonious social life that demands each person to engage in every socio-religious activity. Furthermore, the meaning of Nasionalis is closely linked to the accommodative stance in the community in line with customs and social habits. It means that everyone is responsible for maintaining social harmony. To this end, everyone has to have a high regard for customs, regardless whether they deviate from Islamic teachings or not. Cockfights, for instance, have become a common activity, and one should avoid to lash out to them for the sake of harmony. Anyone—particularly those with *santri* leanings who deliberately discredit the gamble by bringing it into conflict with religious teachings—is perceived as disturbing harmony. The same is true for drinking alcohol that accompanies *mantenan* (weddings) and *sunatan* (circumcisions) celebrations that no one is allowed to harass simply because any criticism of it is tantamount to harming harmony.²⁷

The Tanggunggunung community is hardly distinguishable from Javanese society anywhere else where harmonious social life is maintained. The process of Islamization that lasted for half a century has turned Tanggunggunung into a distinctive

²⁵ A number of Indonesians have experienced transcendental communication with ancestor spirits through pilgrimages to shrine and graves (see Hellman 2013). Indonesian Muslims have even invented saintly tombs, some of which are the graves of seven Muslim saints (*Wali Pitu*) in Bali (see Zuhri 2013a, 2013b; 2022) and several saintly tombs in Central Java (see Alatas 2020).

²⁶ For a general notion of nationalism, see Anderson (2006).

²⁷ A similar situation has appeared in the Muslim community of Madura, in which *blater* (*abangan*-like) and *santri* keep a harmonious life by avoiding attacking each other's traditions (see Pribadi 2018, particularly chapter 4 and 7, and Pribadi 2014).

community where the people treat the trauma of the 1965 tragedy in such a way that it has given the community a distinct model for harmony which manifests itself into Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin. Delving into the Tanggunggunung phenomenon made this research evaluate and question some scholars' assumptions on harmony as part of the nature of Javanese society. Their concept of harmony with the Javanese has a footing in the works of scholars such as Clifford Geertz (1976), Andrew Beatty (2004), Mark R. Woodward (1989:134–39), M.C. Ricklefs (2012:39–41), Robert W. Hefner (1985:72), as well as in the works of Indonesian scholars such as Koentjaraningrat (1985), Franz Magnis Suseno (1984:111–15), and Al Makin (2016). The Tanggunggunung case, however, shows otherwise.

Post 1965, the whole construction of the socio-religious consciousness of the Tanggunggunung community was built out of the trauma. Thus, there can be various ways to view harmony in the Javanese people since the Tanggunggunung community, as a case in point, shows that its harmony, as based on its trauma, is apparently fragile. By observing some cases of religious conflict in Tanggunggunung—and they did happen—this research found that the structure of harmony in the community—whether consciously or unconsciously—breaks easily. During my research in 2017, I found three cases of broken harmony which had occurred over the last ten years. The first was the misappropriation of Kaweruh Jawa Dipa in Kresikan Village in 2015 which has not been settled to date.²⁸ The second was the expulsion of Jama'ah Tarekat Assidiqiyah, in Mbolu Hamlet, Ngepoh Village, in 2007, and the third was the pressure inflicted upon a religious leader (this article hides his/her identity for various reasons) who allegedly practiced a ritual that was considered deviant.

It is of interest that all 12 Penghayat Kaweruh Jawa Dipa members lived and still live in the community where they actively take part in *yasinan-tahlilan*, and perform *Jum'atan* in the mosque during the Friday prayers and actively engage in religious social activities as well (Yatno, 2017).²⁹ The accusation leveled against Jawa Dipa as a heretic group spread out over the entire region due to a hate speech from a religious leader which was allegedly triggered by competition for personal popularity. At the moment the members of Jawa Dipa still suffer from this hatred and the intimidation leveled against them. The Jama'ah Tarekat Assidiqiyah who regularly performed collective rituals in Langgar Mbah Bakun has the same experience. Some religious leaders accused the Tarekat Assidiqiyah of engaging in unorthodox rituals and they expelled it from the region. Today, the Tarekat Assidiqiyah has no activities of in the area anymore (Tamba, 2017).

The aforementioned cases prove that harmony in Tanggunggunung appears to be flawed. The cases above provide convincing evidence that behind the current harmonious life, the community easily falls into conflict depending on its members'

²⁸ It is also important to note that many Muslims strongly oppose *aliran penghayat kepercayaan*, or simply *penghayat/kebatinan* movements partly because it may cause contestation and challenge existing religious power (see Smith 2014). This is the case with Sapta Dharma which was regarded as heretical and considered to be “un-Islamic” by most Javanese Muslims and its headquarters was attacked in October of 2008 (see Woodward 2011a).

²⁹ Yatno is a member of Jawa Dipa.

personal interests. Apart from self-interests, other causes that likely contribute into the fragility of the community include trauma, depression, fear, and repression brought about by the tragedy of the massacre of the Communist following the 1965 failed coup.³⁰ This tragedy has terrorized the people's minds and ever since has influenced the community as it continues to be part of its collective memories. Hence, the 1965 tragedy can serve as a catalyst in viewing the socio-religious dynamics of the Tanggunggunung community.

Harking back to the 1965 events and the impact it created are focal points to see how the processes of social-religious life within the community work, including the quest for the new identity of Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin. The community came to define the narrative of harmony according to its own definitions which lead to Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin as the best possible compromise. Their creativity in finding their compromised identity has turned the Tanggunggunung people into a distinct community, which indicates that they neither belong to the category of *abangan* nor meet the standards of being *santri*. As the community discovered its identity on its own, all the categories and variants of the Javanese people have lost their significance as explained in the people's own saying, "we are a mixed society" (Lameni, 2017).

Conclusion

The Tanggunggunung community is a good representation of the Islamization in rural areas of Indonesia, and of Java in particular. It represents the identity of nominal Muslims who successfully managed their fear and their trauma caused by the massacre of the Communist in the 1965 tragedy and transformed them into a new identity, that is, "Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin." The term "Nasionalis" represents their "indifferent" social-religious attitude toward Islamic teachings, while the term "Nahdliyin" stems from the consideration that the NU is the only religious organization that works in line with their customs and tradition. Their identity provides the community with a means to keep maintaining their bond with their ancestral spirits through the *yasinan-tahlilan* ritual. Thus, contrary to Hefner's suggestion (2011) that all non-standard Islam has collapsed, I assert that the so-called *abangan* or nominal Muslims, under sway of Traditional Islam, have shifted to Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin.

In the Tanggunggunung community, the category *abangan* has dissolved and disappeared since the category has undergone a shift to a new identity, in which the boundary between *abangan* and *santri* is blurry. The *yasinan-tahlilan* ritual no longer belongs to the *santri*; rather, it has become a way to express the communal piety of the *abangan*. The community has created its own public space to accentuate its identity through the *yasinan-tahlilan* ritual since *langgars* and *masjids* failed to act as public spaces for them. In the end, the identity of Nasionalis-*cum*-Nahdliyin reveals that *abangan* has indeed remained in their place as before.

³⁰ For more about the harrowing massacres, see Cribb (2002), Robinson (2018), and Pohlman (2017).

The Tanggunggunung community shows that, notwithstanding the fact that harmony is fragile, it creatively managed to adopt a new identity following the 1965 events. Meanwhile, questions related to the prevailing disrupted harmony in the community warrants further academic scrutiny.

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