

***BENDRONG LESUNG***  
**IN A VORTEX OF PIETY MOVEMENT IN**  
**BANTEN**

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**Abstract:** *This article examines efforts to preserve local culture by women in the city of Cilegon. The existence of the bendrong lesung art will be the object of research because the role of women looks so important in this art performance. Women with their bendrong lesung represent the values of strong religiosity. This article is the result of field research using a case study method with a feminist anthropological approach. The researchers used some data collection techniques such as observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. Bendrong lesung is one of the traditional arts performed by the people of the City of Cilegon, Banten. Historically, this art performance was held in a community tradition in welcoming the harvest as a form of gratitude and happy expression for the efforts that have produced good results. Bendrong lesung as a cultural product represents the social piety identity of women. On its development, women as the main actors have a high awareness of diversity. Thus, beside the identity of social piety that was born in the existence of this bendrong lesung, personal piety identity was also manifested by the players with symbols in the form of the use of the veil covering the genitals to replace the clothes kembangan. The existence of the bendrong lesung has witnessed how the piety movement was formed until now.*

**المخلص:** تتناول هذه المقالة الجهود المبذولة للحفاظ على الثقافة المحلية من قبل النساء في مدينة سيليجون. إن وجود فن اللتواء هو موضوع البحث لأنه في هذا الفن دور المرأة يبدو مهمًا جدًا. تمثل النساء مع غمازاتهن قيم التدين الكثيف. هذه المقالة هي نتيجة البحث الميداني باستخدام طريقة دراسة حالة مع نهج أنثروبولوجي نسوي. في تقنيات جمع البيانات، يستخدم الباحثون تقنيات تشمل الملاحظة والمقابلات المتعمقة (المقابلات

المتعمقة) والتوثيق. gnusel gnordneB هي واحدة من الفنون التقليدية لشعب مدينة netnaB nogeliC. تاريخيا ، أدرج هذا الفن في تقاليد المجتمع في الترحيب بالحصاد كشكل من الامتنان والتعبير السعيد عن الجهود التي أسفرت عن نتائج جيدة. تمثل gnusel gnordneB كمنتج ثقافي هوية التقوى الاجتماعية للمرأة. لدى تطورها ، تتمتع النساء بصفتهم الجهات الفاعلة الرئيسية بوعي عال بالتنوع. لذلك ، بالإضافة إلى هوية التقوى الاجتماعية التي ولدت في وجود هذا الانحناء ، ظهرت هوية التقوى الشخصية من قبل اللاعبين برموز في شكل استخدام الحجاب الذي يغطي الأعضاء التناسلية لاستبدال الملابس التوأمة. شهد وجود مدافع الهاون كيف تشكلت حركة التقوى حتى الآن.

**Abstrak:** *Artikel ini mengkaji tentang upaya pelestarian kebudayaan lokal yang dilakukan oleh kaum perempuan di Kota Cilegon. Eksistensi kesenian bendrong lesung akan menjadi objek penelitian karena dalam kesenian ini peran perempuan terlihat begitu penting. Kaum perempuan dengan bendrong lesung-nya merepresentasikan nilai-nilai religiusitas yang kental. Artikel ini merupakan hasil penelitian lapangan menggunakan metode studi kasus dengan pendekatan antropologi feminis. Dalam teknik pengumpulan data, peneliti menggunakan teknik-teknik diantaranya observasi, wawancara mendalam (indepth interview) dan dokumentasi. Bendrong lesung merupakan salah satu kesenian tradisional masyarakat Kota Cilegon, Banten. Secara historis, kesenian ini termasuk dalam sebuah tradisi masyarakat dalam menyambut panen sebagai wujud rasa syukur dan ungkapan bahagia atas jerih payah yang telah membuahkan hasil yang baik. Bendrong lesung sebagai sebuah produk kebudayaan merepresentasikan identitas kesalehan sosial kaum perempuan. Dalam perkembangannya, para perempuan sebagai pelaku utama mempunyai kesadaran akan keberagaman yang cukup tinggi. Maka, selain identitas kesalehan sosial yang terlahir dalam eksistensi bendrong lesung ini, identitas kesalehan personal juga terwujud dari para pemainnya dengan simbol berupa penggunaan jilbab penutup aurat menggantikan pakaian kewan. Eksistensi bendrong lesung telah menjadi saksi bagaimana gerakan kesalehan terbentuk sampai sekarang.*

**Keywords:** women's identity, piety movement, bendrong lesung, kewan, hijab.

## INTRODUCTION

*Bendrong lesung* is one of the arts performed by women. This art grows and develops as part of the manifestation of the local wisdom among the villagers of Gempol Wetan Pabean villagers, Purwakarta District, Cilegon City, Banten. This tradition is transformed from daily habits into seasonal traditions that only exist on certain occasions. Historically, *bendrong lesung* is a living tradition of the people of Cilegon - Banten, growing and developing across generation until now in the community.<sup>1</sup> About 20 years ago until now, this tradition is still often found, especially on certain events, such as weddings, circumcisions or other celebrations in the tradition of the Banten people at that time.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the closeness of women to the traditions that exist in the Gempol Wetan village community by exploring the cultural meanings in the *bendrong lesung* tradition, they also explore the meaning of religious symbols carried out by the community through religious institutions such as Majelis Taklim. This institution has its own parameters in an effort to increase the personal and social religiosity of women, through the deepening of the religious teachings and their practices which are very identical to the world of womanhood. Majelis Taklim then becomes identical with women, both in terms of the congregation (participants) or the components of the lessons. Majelis Taklim is considered not only as an option to strengthen religious identity but also as a place to reinforce the existence of religious women.<sup>3</sup>

This article attempts to examine the art of *bendrong lesung* in the vortex of the piety movement in Banten. The main focus of this paper is how is the process of religiosity in the art of *bendrong lesung*? what is the meaning of *bendrong lesung* from women perspective? And how does the art of *bendrong lesung* shape the construction of women's identities in society?

This article uses social construction perspective proposed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in order to explain the

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<sup>1</sup> Pranoto Hamidjoyo, dkk., *Sejarah Cilegon* (Cilegon: CV Panca Mandiri, 2008), 80–81.

<sup>2</sup> Nina H Lubis, dkk., *Sejarah Banten: Membangun Tradisi dan Peradaban* (Serang: Badan Perpustakaan dan Kearsipan Daerah Provinsi Banten, 2014), 138.

<sup>3</sup> Umdatul Hasanah, *Majelis Taklim Perempuan dan Perubahan Sosial Pada Masyarakat Perkotaan* (Magelang: PKBM Ngudi Ilmu, 2017), 155.

tendency to see reality as a social form.<sup>4</sup> This perspective was used to analyze the identity of women in the Gempol Wetan village, in a series of *bendrong lesung* art performances. Here, it will be seen how these performers try to shape their female identity, especially the formation and strengthening of their identity in the vortex of the piety and cultural identity of the people of Gempol Wetan village.

In general, this paper tries to look at the practice of *bendrong lesung* as a social symbol that is related to religious values that develop in the Gempol Wetan village. This study rejects the assumption that the stronger religious life that women have the weaker of their cultural contribution. In its development, the identity of women in the performing arts is represented on the practice of *bendrong lesung* art with all the attributes used, especially the use of the veil in the performing arts. Therefore, this paper will examine the art of *bendrong lesung* which the veil attribute is used as the identity of female piety, so that it can be identified how their religiosity is practiced and at the same time taking care of local art traditions.

### **BENDRONG LESUNG ART PRACTICES**

*Bendrong lesung* was created from the process of *nutu* (pounding rice) whose initial function was only used for entertainment purpose.<sup>5</sup> *Nutu* is another word used by the people of Gempol Wetan village for pounding rice activity using traditional tools, namely using pestle and mortar. Main actors of this activity are women. Considering this activity is quite heavy, only women who are old enough or who are already married are able to do this job.

The role of women seems to be very important in this context. Their role is not only confined to *nutu* activities but also before *nutu* was carried out, in which women take a major role in *nandur pari* process (backward planting rice) or planting rice, both in the pre-*nandur* period, *nandur* activities and post-*nandur* ones, even until the harvesting process was carried out.<sup>6</sup> After the harvest process, the next process is rice drying, which is called *memeh/ngepeh pari*.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter L. Berger dan Thomas Lucmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 3–5.

<sup>5</sup> Sodikin, Oktober 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Halimah, 19 Juni 2016.

Once the rice has dried, *menutu* or pounding rice is then performed by individuals or groups.<sup>7</sup>

The *nutu* process is carried out by the community to fulfill their daily needs. Rice as a staple food makes *nutu* an activity that is often carried out by the people of Gempol Wetan village. When a season for celebration or *selamatan* comes,<sup>8</sup> the demand for rice is increasing. Many mortars and pestles collected at the center of the village, and certainly needs a lot of energy from women to do this activity.<sup>9</sup>

The sounds from the pounding of a pestle to a mortar or the people of the Gempol Wetan village called it a *bendrongan* produce a distinctive instrument. Its voice spread throughout the village so that the sound produced by *bendrongan* pestle and mortar gives a sign to villagers that the next few days a celebration or *selamatan* will be held. Sacks of rice are prepared for *ditutu*. Men and women work together to help prepare the celebration or *selamatan*. After all the rice has been *ditutu*, in order to reduce their fatigue, women perform an entertainment by hammering pestle into mortars that have no contents. The Gempol Wetan villagers then call this entertainment as *bendrong lesung*.

The art of *bendrong lesung* as entertainment lasted long ago which was used for as an entertainment after a day of *menutu*, accompanying children to play during the full moon. As revealed by Muktillah:

*Zaman sengen, alu dan lesung diengge kangge nutu pari. Nah, seentas nutu diengge kangge bendrongan. Sing mengkoten situ kepireng memunian sing unik, terus diengge kangge hiburan lan*

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<sup>7</sup> Muktillah, Oktober 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Many *selamatan* done by the Nusantara community, especially the Javanese community since the past. Clifford Geertz in his work *The Religion of Java* identifies the concept of *selamatan* as a core ritual in Javanese culture and as a rite that has an animistic prototype intended to strengthen the solidarity of rural communities. Read Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), 10–15. In line with Greetz, Franz Magnis-Suseno also stated that *selamatan* is the most important religious rite in Javanese life. According to him, *selamatan* is held on all important events in human life, both during the transition period such as pregnancy, childbirth, circumcision, marriage, and death, or before or after rice harvest, before a major journey, after promotion, and so forth. see Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Jawa: Sebuah Analisis Falsafi tentang Kebijakan Kehidupan Hidup Jawa* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1996), 88–89.

<sup>9</sup> Muktillah, Interview.

*ngemedalaken pegel-pegel pas waktos wulan purname seentese sedinten megamel.*

“Long time ago, pestle and mortar were used for *nutu pari*. Well, after *nutu* is finished, it is used for *bendrongan*. From there came a unique sound, then it used for entertain and relieve fatigue during the full moon after a day of work”.<sup>10</sup>

The *nutu pari* process using traditional tools lasted until before modernization. The loss of function of traditional rice-stacking tools occurred after the milling machine was introduced to peasants at the village. The use of milling machines is considered more effective by the villagers than pounding rice using pestle and mortar. In other word they do not reject the introduction of the new machine.

*Nutu* activities in Gempol Wetan village lasted until the 1990s. On one occasion Arbaiyah said, that:

*Pas anak kule sing pertami lahir (1989), suare wong lagi nutu maseh sering kepireng, lan pas tahon-tahon seentese boten kepireng malih.*

“At the time my first child was born (1989), the voice of someone who was did *nutu* still often heard, and in the years that followed it was no longer heard”.<sup>11</sup>

That when the first child was born the sound produced from *nutu* is still often heard. This means that the modernization process of agriculture or the use of rice milling machines and rice plowing machines needs three decades to reach throughout villages in Cilegon City and Gempol Wetan village in particular. The sound produced by *bendrongan* from pestle and mortar generates its own crowd. The pestle and mortar are instruments that produce sounds contained values that reflect the identity of Gempol Wetan villagers.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Muktillah.

<sup>11</sup> Arbaiyah, Oktober 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Culturally, the performing arts in several parts of Indonesia also call the crowd a rite sound that is presenting a supralogical and existential dimension. A cultural case that cannot be seen simply, even though the sounds that resound are so crowded, noisy, noisy, noisy that seems not to be a state of origin that is presented often deafening. However, in a simple meaning, behind it there is meaning as being related to something broader than the common sense of ordinary human life. It is like connecting deeper or strengthening the fabric of human existence with the cosmos, as

The growth of several *bendrong lesung* interpretations in the perception of society is a basis for why women are still preserving it today. Most of the people may not really understand the meaning of this art. For women who are still doing it, the values that contained in every *ben drong lesung* process are strength and gratitude for the blessing of life from Allah *subhanahu wa taala*. If the women villagers do not preserve and practice the art tradition of *bendrong lesung* nowadays, they feel anxious and fear.

### **WOMEN'S IDENTITY IN PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS**

Performing arts that produce music from this instrument are diverse forms and characters of Indonesian music. This is certainly inseparable from the geographical situation and conditions as well as the long and varied history of Indonesia's growth and development. Performing arts produce music which is one branch of art that uses sound media as an expression of human feelings and psychological values that are considered the most ancient. Music begins to coincide with the birth human's civilization. Its development largely relies on the views, attitudes, lifestyles, and ways of work from the perpetrators as well as the influence of natural villages and communities in family, community and religious and patriotic.<sup>13</sup>

Currently, there are still many traditions in *Banten* that are trying to be redirected to "discover" their identity, which has been carried out seriously and intensely, through various studies, scientific forums, and various cultural festivals. Considering that *Banten* is a province with a relatively strong Islamic identity and coupled with a long religious history, it is not surprising that the variety of religious arts and culture in *Banten* are dominated by Islamic elements. In this case, it does not mean that in *Banten* there are no other religious arts and cultural elements, because in *Banten* there are also followers of other religions whose numbers are quite significant. However, it

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a practice of strengthening the awareness or outlook of life of local farmers. see Anton Rustandi Mulyana, "Azas Ludic dalam Keramaian Bunyi Ritus Ngarot," *Jurnal Seni Budaya* 9, no. 2 (2011): 165, <https://doi.org/10.33153/glr.v9i2.1391>.

<sup>13</sup> Edi Sedyawati, dkk., *Sejarah Kebudayaan Indonesia: Seni Pertunjukan dan Seni Media* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2009), 3–4.

is interesting that almost all elements of art, culture, and tradition declare themselves as part of the aesthetic expression of Islam.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, events in traditional performing arts are one of the cultural expression activities of the people that really need to be taken seriously. Art which is a part of human life has its own uniqueness in every nation in any part of the world. In Indonesia, the traditional art activities have been performed become a part of people's lives that are inseparable from the history and development of this country.<sup>15</sup>

Women as traditional actors have an important role, because traditional actors are one of the agents of acculturation of cultures to cultures that come from the outside. They are also likely to be recipients of the acculturation process. However, in general, traditions in Indonesia existed long before the Islamization. It seems that values brought along with the Islamization only tried to change the elements of local culture that are contrary to the Islamic teachings by incorporating Islamic cultural values into the existing traditional arts. Therefore, the role of women in tradition becomes very vital as the guardian of tradition as well as providing religious content to the tradition itself.<sup>16</sup>

These women have a role in the process of cultural change and shift. As tradition performers, women have passed down and inherited what they get from their ancestors or teachers in the form of formulas and techniques in the games and performance traditions. This means, that the performers of this tradition have a very large contribution in maintaining the originality of tradition, although in many ways its

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<sup>14</sup> Huriyudin, "Ekspresi Seni Budaya Islam di Tengah Kemanjemukan Masyarakat Banten," *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 12 (2014): 275–76.

<sup>15</sup> Almost all activities of this community are always involved with other activities as well, for example performing arts functioned with the disclosure of history, pleasure, natural beauty, accompaniment of ritual ceremonies, education, entertainment, and so forth. The role and involvement and various elements of society in the performing arts are very broad, all layers, as well as elements in the community that always participate in supporting the existence of the performing arts. As a result, performance art is acted on, created, developed, and maintained by the community itself. see I Made Bandem dan Sal Murgiyanto, *Teater Daerah Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1996), 19.

<sup>16</sup> Ayatullah Humaeni, *Akulturası Islam dan Budaya Lokal dalam Magi Banten* (Serang: Bantnologi, 2014), 145–46.

orientation has changed, becoming a fusion of traditional arts and culture of Islam.<sup>17</sup>

## HIJAB: MUSLIM WOMEN'S PIETY MOVEMENT CARING FOR TRADITIONS

The wearing of hijab in Indonesia can be divided into several waves. The first wave of wearing hijab was in the early 1980s. During this era, women who wore hijab were pioneers when they are in high school and as a symbol of resistance to the status quo.<sup>18</sup> The next wave was in the decade of the 90s. The form of the movement was no longer against the status quo, because the ban on the hijab has been removed. The wearing of the hijab was seen everywhere, although some organizations still do not allow their employees to use the hijab.<sup>19</sup> In the 2000s decade until now it can be said to be the use of the third wave of hijab. This wave was marked by the widespread use of hijab in Indonesia. In this period there was indeed an explosion of wearing hijab in Indonesia, with which the number of users rise dramatically along with the rapid development in models and trends.<sup>20</sup>

The history of the entry of the hijab into *Nusantara* was estimated between the 7th to 15th centuries, in line with the Islamization process brought by traders from Arabia, Persia, and India. In that

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<sup>17</sup> Humaeni, 146.

<sup>18</sup> Idi Subandy Ibrahim, "Pakaian Anda Menunjukkan Siapa Anda? Semiotika Fashion sebagai Komunikasi Artifaktual," dalam *Fashion sebagai Komunikasi* (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2011), xi. "publisher": "Jalasutra", "publisher-place": "Yogyakarta", "title": "Fashion sebagai Komunikasi", "author": [{"family": "Ibrahim", "given": "Idi Subandy"}], "issued": {"date-parts": [{"2011}], "locator": "xi", "label": "page"}, "schema": "https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"

<sup>19</sup> Clothing worn can symbolize the position or status in a group, showing strength or piety as well as the level of a person's participation in the group that he loves. This view is not limited to headscarves only, but clothing is related to magical-religious-universal conditions, even though that view is in line with the use of headscarves in Indonesia. There are groups of veil wearers who are very loose, dark in color, sometimes veiled like most women in Middle Eastern countries. There is also the opposite group, which uses the hijab combined with modern clothes or traditional clothes according to the area of residence. see Malcolm Barnard, *Fashion sebagai Komunikasi: Cara Mengomunikasikan Identitas Sosial, Seksual, Kelas, dan Gender* (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2011), 95.

<sup>20</sup> Dominic Strinati, *Populer Culture: Pengantar Menuju Teori Budaya Populer* (Yogyakarta: Jejak, 2007), xv.

period too, Islam developed rapidly with the establishment of Islamic-style kingdoms in *Nusantara*. Until the 19th century, hijab was widely used in Muslim based areas, such as in West Sumatra and Aceh indeed.<sup>21</sup> While in the socio-cultural context, some historians have different opinions regarding the wearing of hijab by women in *Nusantara*. In the Java island, for example, in the 19th century there were at least a few people who wore hijab. Women in some places in Java are limited to using a scarf attached to the head and wrapped around the neck. However, some opinions also revealed that this was the influence of the propaganda patterns carried out by the *Wali Songo* who were very tolerant and adaptive to the local culture.<sup>22</sup>

In the Islamic context, the obligation to wear the hijab does not stop at consensus, but the discussion reaches the issue of women's *aurat*. *Aurat* also raises many differences of opinion, especially about the limits allowed for women in showing their limbs. Some experts say, a woman's entire body is *aurat* so it must be covered. While

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<sup>21</sup> Tri Hermawan, "The Context of Woman's Clothes Verses and It's Influence on the Concept of Woman's Dressing (A Comparison of Four Indonesian Exegeses)," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2017): 19. where the explanation focuses on four Indonesian quranic commentaries made at different times; the classical dan medieval period. The four books are Turjuman al-Mustafid Interpretation, Qur'anul Karim Interpretation, Al-Nur Interpretation, and Al-Misbah Interpretation. This study is a qualitative research in which the data taken in this study are derived from some literatures or books. The results of the study reveal that the differences of commentaries are; Turjuman al-Mustafid regulated women to cover their whole body except face and palms, Quranul Karim required women not to be look like wanton women, Al-Nur told women to cover up their body and to wear a scarf on the head, while Al Misbah asked women to dress in a respectable manner (though not wearing jilbab

<sup>22</sup> Tri Hermawan, "The Context of Woman's Clothes Verses and It's Influence on the Concept of Woman's Dressing (A Comparison of Four Indonesian Exegeses)," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2017): 19. where the explanation focuses on four Indonesian quranic commentaries made at different times; the classical dan medieval period. The four books are Turjuman al-Mustafid Interpretation, Qur'anul Karim Interpretation, Al-Nur Interpretation, and Al-Misbah Interpretation. This study is a qualitative research in which the data taken in this study are derived from some literatures or books. The results of the study reveal that the differences of commentaries are; Turjuman al-Mustafid regulated women to cover their whole body except face and palms, Quranul Karim required women not to be look like wanton women, Al-Nur told women to cover up their body and to wear a scarf on the head, while Al Misbah asked women to dress in a respectable manner (though not wearing jilbab

some other experts say the opposite, that the face and palms are not *aurat*.<sup>23</sup>

The process of interpreting hijab into a more plural form of identity is heavily influenced by the process of globalization.<sup>24</sup> The wearing of hijab by Indonesian women is considered an effort to identify Indonesian Muslims with similar dress practices in other countries in the Middle East because the hijab were not previously known by the people of Indonesia. As a result of the globalization process, the meaning of the hijab which was originally a religious identity now becomes meaningful multi-identity. Among certain middle-class women, the wearing of hijab is not only a form of religious observance but also a symbol of modernity and piety identity at the same time. The hijab dress then becomes the identity of this group to distinguish their group from other women's groups from different social classes.

Historically, hijab have been known since before the birth of Islamic law. In fact it has been known in general that in hijab also is a part of the Jewish and Christian religious traditions.<sup>25</sup> However, in this context, the hijab will be seen from the aspect of the Islamic religion which is more interpreted as a symbol of piety. But this symbol of piety was not closed only in the narrow context of Islam, because it shows that how religious life in Indonesia could not be separated from cultural life.

Rachel Rinando defines piety with forms of obedience to Allah SWT such as obedience to God such as wearing hijab and holding fast to religion which is implemented in deeds for the good of society

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<sup>23</sup> Safitri Yulikhah, "Jilbab Antara Kesalehan dan Fenomena Sosial," *JURNAL ILMU DAKWAH* 36 (2016): 97.

<sup>24</sup> The hijab, which is not a native Indonesian culture, was present because of globalization, in some studies it was revealed that the veil and cloth that covered all parts of the body before the 1980s was another concept that entered the context of Indonesian society. see Lina Meilinawati Rahayu, "Jilbab: Budaya Pop dan Identitas Muslim di Indonesia" 14, no. 1 (t.t.): 146.

<sup>25</sup> It is undeniable that there are habits which first existed and developed before the arrival of Islamic civilization. Thus, it is natural that the teachings of Islam are also widely adopted from the laws and teachings that were previously and cannot possibly be separated completely from previous habits. In this context, the headscarf with different forms and names has a history older than Islam. For example in the Torah, the hijab is known as the tiferet, in the Gospels known as redid, zammah, re'alah, zaif, and mitpahat. See more complete Nasaruddin Umar, "Antropologi Jilbab," *Ulumul Quran* 5, no. 5 (1996): 36.

and the state.<sup>26</sup> Piety in the eyes of Allah is based on the attitude and obedience to Him and obedience to the husband by keeping themselves from slander when her husband is not home. Thus, the meaning of piety is religious piety and also social piety.

The process of interpreting hijab towards this piety identity is based on the motives and actions of women in understanding hijab as a symbol of Islam. Muslim women as caring for tradition are attached to women who still maintain and preserve tradition even though Islamic values are so identical. In Indonesia, cultural and religious identities are sometimes inseparable, so it is necessary to negotiate to defend the values contained in it.

In this context, wearing hijab in Indonesia affects peasant women who still practice and preserve tradition. Therefore, hijab undergoes its existence in human life, moves and develops in line with human needs. The hijab's life is not only in the religious space, but in various human social domains such as cultural life, psychology, economics, and so on.<sup>27</sup>

### ***BENDRONG LESUNG* EXISTENCE FROM KEMBAN TO HIJAB**

Gempol Wetan village community life has its own parameters in an effort to increase the experience and knowledge of women's religion, namely through the study of religious sciences and its actualization is very identical to the world of womanhood. One of them is *Majelis Taklim* which is identical with women. Like *bendrong lesung*, the *Majelis Taklim* community has become a new social class that is religious and womanhood, while *Bendrong Lesung* is a symbol of community harmony in the context of culture and womanhood.

The women of the Gempol Wetan village community with their strong religious life make *bendrong lesung* valued as a means of their cultural life. *Bendrong lesung* is not only an option to strengthen gender identity, but also a form of identity of women's piety in caring for tradition. In the context of women's religiosity in the Gempol Wetan village community, *Majelis Taklim* is an association

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<sup>26</sup> Rachel Rinaldo, "Envisioning the Nation: Women Activist Religious and the Public Sphere in Indonesia," *Oxford Journal, Social Science-Social Force* 4 (2008): 1781–1804.

<sup>27</sup> Yulikhah, "Jilbab Antara Kesalchan dan Fenomena Sosial," 102.

of women who have their own image, in which this activity is part of a piety movement that extends to a lesser extent.

The term pious has two meanings in the theological and sociological contexts. In addition to the form of piety in relation to obedience to Allah SWT, piety is also in the form of doing good deeds to fellow human beings or termed social piety.<sup>28</sup> Piety for women means *sholihah* which means goodness, the opposite of *fasad* or damage.<sup>29</sup> Al-Zujaz defines a pious person as someone who carries out whatever is required of him or her and fulfills human rights.<sup>30</sup> While Imam al-Tabari, defining piety is someone who is *istiqomah*, *istiqomah* (steadfastness) in religion and does good deeds.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 2: Women in Java pounding rice around 1915

(Source: [www.kitlv.nl](http://www.kitlv.nl))

Religious awareness of women is not only for personal safety, but also is felt by the benefit of the nearest village, family and community. Personal piety and social piety are a basic value of the *bendrong lesung* tradition. Personal piety is manifested by the

<sup>28</sup> Hasanah, *Majelis Taklim Perempuan dan Perubahan Sosial Pada Masyarakat Perkotaan*, 115.

<sup>29</sup> Ibnu Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab* (Beirut: Dar-al-Shadr, t.t.).

<sup>30</sup> Abu Hayyan Muhammad bin Yusuf bin Ali bin Yusuf bin Hayyan, *Al-Bahru al-Muhith*, Cet. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1993).

<sup>31</sup> Abu Muhamad bin Jarir ath-Thabari, *Jāmi' al-Bayān an-Ta'wīl ai al-Qur'ān*, Cet. 1 (Kairo: Dār Ibnu Jauzi, 2015).

players who wear hijab. In the Indonesian cultural tradition, relations between men and women are expressed in a way to dress that tends to be open and free, as well as during the *bendrong lesung* performance in the days before Islam entered and permeated in every realm of Gempol Wetan village community life.

*Sengen, wong wadon sing ngelakokaken kesenian niki ngenggo kelambi sing rade terbuke. Nggih pun iku cume ngenggo bebenteng atawe sewet lan selendang sing tikalongaken ning gulu atawe tigelibedaken ning weteng. Seniki, sampun ngenggo kelambi sing rade tertutup.*

“In the past, women who performed this art used open clothing. Namely only using *bebenteng* (long tie cloth) or *sewet* (sarong for women) and a sing scarf attached to the neck or tied to the stomach. Now, already using clothes that are closed.<sup>32</sup>

Freedom of dress makes *bendrong lesung* very synonymous with local culture of Indonesia. The use of *kemban* by women in the *bendrong lesung* tradition or similar arts is also still often found in several regions in Indonesia. However, when Islamic values began to influence in all aspects of community life, there is the *aurat* concept which is used as a reference for dress, especially by women.

As far as Islamic law is concerned, everything created by Allah SWT according to its nature. Likewise with humans, men and women are created having their own nature. Women’s nature is often used as an excuse to reduce the various roles of women in the family and society. Women are not required to wear clothes that tend to be open in accordance with Islamic law.<sup>33</sup> The use of hijab or veils, as well as using clothes that do not open *aurat*, develops in the Gempol Wetan village community.

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<sup>32</sup> Muktillah, Interview.

<sup>33</sup> Bahtiar Effendi, *Mutiara Terpendam: Perempuan dalam Literatur Islam Klasik* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2002), 1.



Figure 3: Woman sticking to her hijab at the commemoration of the Islamic holiday in the Gempol Wetan village, Cilegon City.

Hijab is one of the forms of modernity, with strong-attached Islamic symbols and is also identity of piety as a devout Muslim. Strengthening self-identity in the minds of Muslim communities is strengthening various aspects including religious and cultural aspects, through the practice and dissemination of Islamic values in various aspects of life. Religion is not merely an identity “name and identity card” but it has become a value that underlies social and cultural behavior. While for the people of Gempol Wetan village, religious identity is not only a personal value, but also social needs to be internalized and socialized in the public sphere. All too often, religious symbols are seen as important means in coloring public spaces, as one of the identity enhancers.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the *bendrong lesung* tradition is a form of strengthening the religious identity and cultural identity of the Gempol Wetan village community that is still sustainable.

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<sup>34</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, dkk., ed., *Islam di Ruang Publik: Politik Identitas dan Masa Depan Demokrasi di Indonesia* (Jakarta: CSRC UIN Jakarta, 2011). See also Khairunnisa, *Multikulturalisme dan Politik Identitas: Kontestasi Simbol-simbol Islam pada Ruang Publik di Kota Tangerang* (Tangerang Selatan: YPM, 2012).

## CONCLUSION

*Bendrong Lesung* is a tradition that grows and develops in Cilegon city, Banten. The art of simple music that only uses pestle and mortar as an instrument, was initially carried out by the local community in welcoming the harvest, but in its development this tradition was carried out only on a few occasions. Wedding reception is used as a venue for the performance of *bendrong lesung* by the people of Gempol Wetan village.

Historically, hijab was in fact known before the birth of Islamic law. In fact it also has been known in the Jewish and Christian religious traditions. In this context, hijab as a cultural product is reinforced with religious reasons for protection or benefit. The symbol of piety in the hijab is not only limited to the narrow context of Islam but it can also be cultural and tradition life.

The use of *kemban* by women during the performance of the *bendrong lesung* is also often seen in several regions in Indonesia. But when Islam began to penetrate in all aspects of community life, there was the concept of *aurat* used as a reference for dressing both for men and women. Hijab is one of the forms of modernity which represents the identity of piety as a devout Muslim. Therefore, for the woman villagers of Gempol Wetan, the art of *bendrong lesung* becomes a form of strengthening the religious identity and cultural identity.

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