

The Tale of the Venerable ‘Alī: Transmission, Development, and Changes of Persian *Hamza-nama* Narrative in the Central Javanese *Wayang Golek Cepak* Rod Puppetry

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Abstract

Wayang golek cepak as a *Pasisir* or northern coastal style of central Javanese rod puppetry, same as its *golek menak* counterpart in the southern coast of this island, have been always identified with its Islamic repertoires, rather than the more popular Hindu-originated *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* which became an integral part of the much widely recognized *wayang purwa* performances. Besides recounting the tales of 16th century Javanese Muslim saints (*wali sanga*) and local chronicles (*babad*), the *wayang golek*, both *cepak* and *menak*, were originally said to take the *Menak* tales as its main repertory. The *Menak* tales used in *wayang golek*, however, adapting a much loose form of the Persian epic *Hamza-nama*, which has been absorbed to Javanese literature through various ways. This article will try to trace the influences of *Hamza-nama* in this popular puppetry, studying the case of a performance with the story “*Sahabat Ali*” or “*Sayidina Ali*” in Pekalongan style *wayang golek cepak*.

Keywords: *Hamza-nama*; Islam; Java; rod puppetry; *wayang cepak*; *wayang menak*

1. Introduction

The world of *wayang* puppetry as a “national theatre” of Java -- borrowing Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles’ (1817) terminology -- is nearly identical with Hindu-derived *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* epics. Although it is said that some of Javanese *walis* using the medium to preach Islam, certainly in its esoteric *tasawuf* form rather than the stricter *fiqh jurisprudence* -- a method that will be much popular in later centuries -- but those Indian epics still prevails as its main themes. Nevertheless, the *Sĕrat Cĕnthini* text which composed around 1814-1815 AD in Java by Surakartan court poets --almost all of them were from *santri* or devout Muslim scholars origin -- claimed that these Hindu stories are only used for allegories, while the essential meaning on the *wayang* performances still refers to Sufistic values (see Kamajaya, 1985[VII]). While the ideas of the Islam-Hindu synthesis as the nature of modern *wayang* performances widely accepted in inland Java, particularly promoted by the *Kratons* or courts in this area, the “independent” regions of *Pasisir* (coastal Java) develop their own cultural statements, embracing the much explicit form of Islamic tales such as *Menak* and *Ambiya*, which dealt with the stories of Middle Eastern prophets, kings, and heroes, as the ideal role model for the Muslims, rather than Hindu kings and warriors which were viewed as *kafir* (infidels) by some parts of *Pasisir* Javanese Muslims, which

are more devout in *fiqh* compared with their inland fellows. This made the wayang golek with their Islamic stories (before the rise of Sundanese *wayang golek purwa* in mid-1800s) found their fertile locus in both northern and southern coasts of Java, which gained their political and cultural independence particularly after Javanese War (1825-1830 AD), where the Dutch colonial government dismissed their status as tributary *mancanagara* regencies to central Javanese *Kratons* (see Houben, 1994).

Albeit the fact that Kangjeng Ratu Pakubuwana, the queen consort of Pakubuwana I (1708-1719) herself that sponsored the translation and adaptation of *Menak* tales along with the other Islamic tales such as *Yusuf* (the Tale of Prophet Joseph) and *Iskandar* (the Tale of Alexander the Great) to the courtly Javanese literature (Sudewa, 1995; see also Ricklefs, 1998), the *Menak*-themed puppetry never been popular in the courtly artistic life. Traditional chronicles such as *Sastramiruda* recorded that the *wayang menak* was notorious for its reputation in bringing ill fate to their sponsors and aficionados, a thing that prevented Javanese kingdom during the reign of Pakubuwana II (1726-1742 in Kartasura; 1745-1749 in Surakarta) to adopt this *Pasisir* performance as courtly art (Sajid, 1971; Kusumadilaga, 1999). This belief prevails in Surakarta, but not in Yogyakarta since Hamengkubuwana IX (1940-1988) decided to adapt *wayang golek menak* stories in the form of dance drama (*wayang wong golek menak*) (Wijanarko, 1991). However, the *wayang golek menak* itself performed regularly in the *Kraton* for tourists' spectacle until today (2025), but never in ritual significance like *wayang purwa* does.

On the other side, the life of *wayang menak* in *Pasisir*, although being suppressed by the much popular performances such as spectacular format of *wayang purwa* or modern entertainments like *dangdut* music or pop concerts, still survived in the basis of their supporters. The former Urut Sewu region in Kebumen, particularly in Ambal and Mirit districts serves as the estuary of southern-style *wayang golek menak*; while in the north coast of Java, its *wayang golek cepak* counterpart still enjoyed a wide reception from its audiences, spreading vast from Batang regency in the easternmost to Subang in West Java as the westernmost locus of this performance. In 1950s to 1970s, there was also an enclave of *wayang menak* performance in Cimindi, Bandung, under the name of *wayang bendo*. But in the first quarter of this century, however, its popularity has drastically decreased. Both of this *wayang menak* style are expected to come from a single source: while Pekalongan *wayang cepak* puppeteers clearly recognize their relationship with larger *Menak*-based *wayang golek* culture in Tegal and Cirebon, Kebumen *wayang golek menak* puppeteers found their performance obscurely connected with Tegal in some cases. Bambang Suwarno, a Surakarta *wayang purwa* puppeteer and former apprentice of the late Sindu Jotaryono (d. 1980s), a prominent *wayang golek menak* puppeteer from Kebumen, claimed that before nowadays the performances used Yogyakarta-style *Bondhet Mataram* as musical repertoire for the first act, the older puppeteers would use *Bondhet Tegal* (Tegal-style *Bondhet* melodies) or *Bondhet Keningkiran* (interview November 2025). The late Sunarto Sindu, son of Sindu Jotaryono, also acknowledged this connection in the case of pointed *groda* crowns, which are similar to Tegal's *wayang cepak*, instead of the curvy one which much alike "courtly" style of *wayang purwa*. Hence, it could be temporarily implied that both Kebumen and Pekalongan style of *wayang golek menak* or *cepak* have been interconnected each other in the past, since they shared a common ancestor from the old cultural centre of *Pasisir* in Cirebon and Tegal, which has a long history back to the early development of Islam in 16th century Java (see Petersen, 1993; Sunarto, 2009).



Figure 1

Old Central Javanese Wayang Golek Puppets from Early 20th Century, the Collection of Museum Radyapustaka Surakarta.



Note. The pointed groda crowns of the first, third, and fifth wayang figures from the left, showing the traces of their Pasisir origin. The second figure from the left, however, has the curved groda as courtly Javanese wayang purwa. Photographed by Rudy Wiratama (2014).

The main repertoires of both *wayang golek menak* traditions in north and south coasts of Java are revolved around the *Menak* epic, a loosely adapted tales about the life and deeds of semi-legendary Amir Ambyah or Wong Agung (“the Great Man”) Jayengrana, who was partly based on historical Hamza ibn ‘Abdul Mutallib (d. 625), the paternal uncle of prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam, who was ardently supported this religion and martyred in the battle of Uhud. The tales themselves were not originally Javanese inventions, but sourced from Persian *Qissa-i Amir Hamza* or *Hamza-nama*, which made its way to Java through its 16th century Malay adaptation, and then absorbed to the local culture both in the form of *Pasisir* and courtly literary receptions produced in 17th to 19th century (Ronkel, 1895; see also Purbatjaraka, 1941). Apart from the critical reviews about its historicity, the *Hamza-nama* or *Qissa-i Emir Hamza*, later defined by Philippus van Ronkel as “the Amir Hamzah romance”, came into the audience as a result of complex intertwine between history of Islam in the prophet’s age (*sirah nabawiyah* or *tarikh*), epics adapted from Persian *Shahnameh*, the change and development of the later hagiography of 9th century rebellious Hamza (*Maghazi Hamza ibn ‘Abdullah*), and even some other romances developed in Persian environments such as the Alexander romance (*Sikander-nameh*) and others. The Javanese adaptation of Hamza-epic, called as *Menak*, according to Purbatjaraka and Ronkel, experienced a further development: a page from Malay *Amir Hamza*, can be adapted tenfold in its Javanese version, while the Malay version itself could be larger than the *dastan* version of Urdu and Persian language. This development not only changed the face of

the *Hamza-nama* to *Menak* that is closer to “Javanese” sense, but also accommodate the aspirations of the poets, while injecting the local fictional universe sourced from indigenous *Panji* to even Indic *Bharatayuda* into it, enriching the text in all aspects.

The adventurous life of legendary Hamza, as well as historical one, ended abruptly with his death (and also all of his remaining seventy comrades). While in canonical history it happened in the battle of Uhud, but the romance version has it happened in the great war between huge *kafir* armies of Sassanian Persian and *devs* with the Muslim warriors of Madinah, involving the aid from Muslim *jinns* under Qorayshi’s (in Javanese: Kuraisin or Purwaisin, the only daughter of Hamza) command. In the Javanese tradition, there were any report of the local *dhalang* (puppeteer) who dared to play this episode, since they are very frightened with the consequences (Petersen, 1993). They also argued that, according to the Sunni belief they embrace, the active presence of prophet Muhammad as the second main protagonist along with the venerated *sahaba* (companions) made the performance impossible, since the *ulama* (clergymen) prohibit them from doing so. Even Sindu Jotaryono himself reported by Sunarto never did the concluding stories from *Menak*, beginning with the *Jaminambar* episode, in which prophet Muhammad has born, to avoid his direct personification through any puppets. Interestingly, in the *pakēm* or handbook of each *dhalangs*, this episode has always been written. Sunarto himself declared that after the death of Jayengrana or legendary Hamza, there are still a part of *Menak* stories that categorized as *Menak Ngēsam* (literally means “the Levant Menak”), which took the settings in the Caliphate age, involving the offsprings of *Menak* heroes, a thing that Sunarto compared with *wayang madya* or *wayang gēdhog* as the performances of post-Mahabharata tales (Sunarto, interview 2020). However, the *Menak Ngēsam* stories are less popular, and there are only a few of the *wayang golek* puppeteers who recognized this genre. The other *dhalangs* of *wayang menak* use the other stories such as *Babad* (Javanese historical chronicle) or even improved stories (*Menakpang*) rather than the *Ngēsam* tales, to give variations for their audiences. A prominent senior *wayang golek* puppeteer from Kebumen, the late Ki Basuki Hendropriyatno, even performed the *sirah* version of the *sahabas* following the popularity of a Qatar television series *Omar* (2012) which was broadcasted in Indonesia. Thus, it broadened the perspective of *Menak* repertoire used in *wayang golek*, not only from legendary “history” based on Persian literature, but also from a much canonical history accepted by modern-progressive Muslims in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, in the northcoast Java, even that the performance of *Menak* stories diminished along with the rise of *Babad* tales as the preferred repertoire of *wayang golek cēpak* in the much syncretized *abangan* territories, the story of Baginda Ali (the Venerated ‘Ali), Sayidina Ali (Our Master ‘Ali), or Sahabat Ali (‘Ali the Companion) still enjoyed popularity as a choice for the performances held in *Lēgēna* or *Apit* (communal feasts between Shawwal and Dhu’lhijjah months) or other rituals involving *wayang golek menak* in the region of Batang and Pekalongan regencies. This *lakon* or repertoire, along with its variations, said to be passed orally for generations, despite of criticisms it received from the growing progressive Muslims, both from *Ahlussunnah waljama’ah* and Salafi Sunni sects. It recounted the heroic deeds of ‘Ali (ibn Abu Talib), cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad, and hence also a nephew of both legendary and historical Hamza from his paternal lineage. The synopsis of the *lakon* Baginda Ali could be sum up as follows:

The *kafir* king of Mesir (Egypt), Raja Kandak, who has the amulet *Kalarukmin*, which somehow came to his possession from the late Amir Ambyah after his death in Lakat, dreamed of his throne drowning in a severe flood came from the East. Then, he addressed an oracle to explain his odd dream, since Egypt has never experienced this kind of flood before. The oracle prophesied the fall of Egypt in the hand of a prophet came from Mecca, which located eastwards of this

kingdom. Enraged of the fact that the prophet came from an illiterate background from a small tribe in Arabia, Raja Kandak commanded two of his vassals, Isbandar and Iskiyan (or Taskin) to besiege Mecca and catch Muhammad, dead or alive. The army departed from Egypt and begin to attack the Holy City. Two of Muhammad's loyal generals, Umar and Usman, failed to stop the rampage of Egyptian army, retreats. A celestial beast, *pěksi burok* (literally means "the Buraq bird") enter the battle and vanquished a large number of Egyptian army. The commanders of Egyptians then bring the amulet *Kalarukmin*, caused *pěksi burok* to flee. The Muslim army seek for the new commander, but their strongest general, Ali, is laying sick in his residence, with his wife *dewi* Fatimah faithfully take care of him. The mysterious man then come to the presence of Ali, delivering the news about the retreat of Muslim warriors, while prophet Muhammad and Abu Bakar (usually the prophet not being portrayed directly), being surrounded and outnumbered by *kafir* army, took a shelter in an unknown cave. The enraged Ali then jumped off his bed, got his horse ready, and took his venerable sword *Dul-pakar* (*Dhu'l Faqar*) to the battlefield. With all of his bravery, Ali wiped out many *kafir* armies, although the later party deployed more and more reinforcements, which make Ali exhausted. He then noticed a house in the middle of battlefield, where an old woman is cooking a *jěnan* (porridge). Being hungry, Ali ask for the porridge from the old woman, who voluntarily give it to him. Ali tried to eat the hot porridge with full efforts, but never succeed. The old woman then suggested Ali to start eat the porridge from the side instead of the middle of the bowl. Ali found that the porridge is easier to eat and finished a full bowl of it. Inspired with the old woman's suggestion, Ali then attacked the *kafir* army from the outermost front, and finally he captured their generals. The amulet *Kalarukmin* then confiscated and presented as war booty to the prophet, while these three generals of *kafir* army surrendered and accept Islam as their religion (as retold by Aditya Sabda Anindhita, a *wayang golek* puppeteer from Pekalongan, in interview on 7th December, 2025)

This story of Baginda Ali, then, showed an intertwine between the *Menak* world, represented only by the appearance of ex-Amir Ambyah's amulet, *Kalarukmin*, with the *sirah* world represented by the portrayal of prominent *sahabas* of the prophet: Ali, Umar, Usman, and sometimes also Abu Bakar. In past times, even the prophet himself also portrayed in puppet, borrowing the figure resembling Vishnu-incarnated Prabu Rama from *Ramayana*. This practice, however, existed in the Sunni-dominated region of Pekalongan until 1970s, and abandoned after some of senior *dhalangs* or puppeteers embraced the more orthodox form of Islam and even performed *hajj* pilgrims to achieve the title "Ki Haji"-- two of them are the popular Haji Rochim and Haji Tori (Toriquir-Rahman)-- which made their societal level equal to Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul 'Ulama's "Kyai Haji" or Muslim preachers. This made these local *kyais* and even Hadrami-descent *habaib* able to access the puppetry environment and suggested some changes, include the prohibition of portraying the prophet, fixing the *wayang golek cěpak* performance to be fit and relevant with recent conditions of contemporary Islam practiced in the local surroundings. Despite of this drastic change in Pekalongan's society, the story of Baginda Ali survived, but also left them --the puppeteers, audiences, and *kyais*-- puzzled: Aditya, a young popular *dhalang wayang golek cěpak* from Doro district, Pekalongan, has ever asked by the *ulamas* about what literature used as the source of this rod puppet performance, since there is no stories resembling the events in this *lakon* in any *sirah* or *tarik* texts. Besides, the absence of Jayengrana and his popular comrades such as Lamdahur, Umar Maya, Umar Madi, or Maktal, made the *lakon* hardly connected with the series of *Menak* tales, and finally, out of distress, he can only replied that this *lakon* is the mixtures between "*Arab kaliyan Jawa*" (Arabic and Javanese) tales, without referring to any textual traditions.

Questions arise from this case, since there is a problem in solving whether this *lakon* is came from *Menak* tradition or else. These questions are concerning about (a) how does the story of Sahabat Ali connected both with Persian *Hamza-nama* and Javano-Islamic textual roots through its narrative concepts? (b) how is the transmission, developmental, and change process of the Amir-Hamzah romance-originated story to an independent *lakon* in the world of central Javanese *wayang golek cĕpak*? And last but not least, (c) what is the position of the *lakon* Sahabat Ali in the middle of the Central Javanese audience today?

This article will answer this problem through literary and performance approaches as an effort to detect the hypotetized influence of *Hamza-nama* and *sirah nabawiyah* or *tarik* texts in the *lakon*. This will also answer the other questions potentially rise from this problem, which is “how did this *lakon* eventually created” through the perspective of Javanese belief and *wayang* dramaturgy.

2. Discussions

Locating the Role of *Menak* and Ali in the *Menak* Text The earlier writers and scholars in the field of Javanology, beginning with Raffles in his famous work the *History of Java*, suggested that the influence of Arabic (or more appropriately: Islamic) literature to the Javanese language and poetry is depicted as “has made but little or no inroad to the language” and “exclusively confined to matters of religion” (Raffles, 1817), while in the other chapter he also cited the parts of *Jowar Manik* as an example of “modern Javanese romance” without noticing that the work came as the Javanese adaptation of Malay *Hikayat Jauhar Manikam*, which came from the Persian origin (see Pane, 1987). Raffles’ statement, however, not including the *Amir Hamzah* romance --or *Menak* in some Javanese contexts, as a prominent literary works of the age, compared with the *Bratayuda* and other *jarwa* texts that received lengthy highlights on Raffles’ writings.

Later prominent scholar such as MC Ricklefs, on contrary with the previous Western writers that less appreciated the Javanese Islamic literature, addressed the cross-cultural nature of the works from the Mataram era (1586-1677 AD) and still greatly appreciated in the early reign of Pakubuwana II (1726-1742 AD) of Kartasura (Ricklefs, 1998). He noted that some well-known literary works in this era, *Caritanira Askandar* (The Story of Alexander) and *Yusup* (the Story of Joseph) denotatively mentioned their foreign origins: from Arab or Persian to Malay world, then transmitted further to *Giri Kadaton* in coastal East Java, and finally brought into Mataram’s cultural landscape. The *Menak*, on the other hand, also bearing the similar indication. While some people can directly connect the Javanese name Amir Ambyah into Malay *Amir Hamzah* as identical with Persian-Urdu *Amir Hamza*, Purbatjaraka stated that deeper into the structure, the traces of the cultural translation from the Persian origin to Malay adaptation and then Javanese renderings still can be clearly found in the *Menak* texts, mainly in the Kartasura and Yasadipura versions (Purbatjaraka, 1941).

Apart from the discourse about how did the *Menak* narrative reached the heart of central Java, faraway from its Persian origin, the Javanese story of legendary Hamza almost has been started from the same point with its *dastan* counterpart: from retelling of the events regarding his birth in Mecca from the family of Abdul-Muntalip the son of *Bagendha* Asim (‘Abd-al Mutallib ibn Hashim), together with his paternal cousin Umar Maya, who will be a loyal comrade during his entire adventure in the future. Gifted with outstanding strength and martial skills, he gradually transformed from a single warrior to a respected warlord with many kings and knights as his comrades with the epithet Wong Agung Jayengrana or “The Victorious Great Man of the Battle”. His career increased until he attracted the attention of Zoroastrian king Nusirwan, the king of *Mĕdayin* (derived from “Mada’in”, Arabic rendering for Ctesiphon, Sassanid’s capital) himself,

who, despite giving his daughter Muninggar as Jayengrana's bride, refused to accept the offer of his son-in-law to embrace the so-called *Agama Ibrahim* ("Abraham's Religion"). He was eventually joined the campaigns of Muhammad the prophet, and ending his life with his martyrdom against the ambush of king Lakat and *Jěnggi*, who will be defeated in the future by the hands of Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, and practically also Hamza's nephew, who was seen as the ideal replacement from the later in the term of Muslim warriorhood (see Resowidjojo, 1941; Pritchett, 1991; also Petersen, 1993).

From the summary above, it can be implied that in the *Menak* world, there are two prominent protagonists serves as ideal example for Javanese-Islam knightly nobles (*satriya*), one of them is Hamza, along with his Javanese epithets Jayengrana or Wiradimurti (the Manifestation of Bravery), and the second is *Bagendha* (the Venerated) Ali, who is also recognized in the text as Ali Murtala (from the Arabic Murtadha or Persian Murteza which means "the Blessed One"). Jayengrana, bringing his Abrahamic faith, acted as a hero who paved the way for the last prophet. He "cleaned" this way with destroying the kingdoms of sorcery (in Persian *dastan* termed as *tilismat*, a word that further absorbed by Javanese of *Talsamat*), kingdoms of devils and cannibals (*běkasakan* and *buta*), and also minimizing the domains of the *kafir* rulers. The territory of Jayengrana's sovereignty, according to *Menak* text, spreading wide covering both historical and mythological realms such as *Sarandip* in Srilanka, *Jamintoran* in Central Asia, to *Parangakik* in Palestine and also China. However, the *padhalangan* or puppeteer's exegesis on this may be vary, since Sunarto Sindu also stated that the bizarre world of *Jaminambar* could be located in America, or the kingdom with robotic army of *Mukadam* (in the *Menakpang* or "branch" *Menak* story of *Rěngganis* romance) could be the present Japan (see Petersen, 1993). In the other hand, the brief presence of *Bagendha* Ali Murtala in the last volume of *Menak* text of Yasadipura and Malay *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* represented a continuum of Jayengrana's achievements in securing the Islamic "dynasty", while in the historical accounts the descendants of historical 'Ali (called as 'Alawy or *Ahlilbayt*) rarely achieved political supremacy while being oppressed by the ruling dynasty such as the Umayyads, or only positioned as a supernatural symbol by some other dynasties, without giving them access to the *Realpolitik*. Javanese belief viewed this differently, by placing Ali as their remote ancestor from the *paněngěn* (literally means "the right-side" genealogy). They also placed the Mahabharata heroes and Hindu kings as their ancestors from the *pangiwa* (literally means "the left-side" genealogy), which guaranteed the legitimacy of the Mataram dynasty from the all sides, surpassing the other lineages in the Javanese power contestation (Jaques, 2006; see also Padmasusastra's 1902 *Sajarah Dalěm*). Thus, it can be temporarily stated that in the *Menak* world, Jayengrana represents guardian of the past, while Ali Murtala viewed as the prophet's future successor, both in religious (*wahyu wilayah*) or political authority (*wahyu kukumah*), but not in the term of the prophethood (*wahyu nubuawah* or *nurbuwah*).

The Persian and Urdu *dastans* often modelled the character of Hamza from the other epic, who was the legendary version of Alexander the Great in *Sikandarnamah* text. In the *dastan* of Amir Hamza or *Hamza-nama* itself, Hamza also portrayed with the epithet *sikandar-e-tsaani* or "the Second Alexander", referring to the similarity of events experienced (in conquering the East and West hemispheres, or in Javanese known as *Masrikmahrib*, from Arabic words *masyriq* and *maghrib*) by the hero with this Parsi-Greek-Macedonian legendary monarch (Pritchett, 1991). Aside of this identification, van Ronkel argued that the story of legendary Hamza copied the biography of *Shahnameh*'s Rustam in many aspects, i.e. his encounters with various *divs* --which translated as *jin kafir* in both Malay and Javanese versions-- and also the abundant tales dealing with *razm* (warfare), *bazm* (luxuries), *tilism* (magic or sorcery), and *ayyari* (espionages), which



formed the entire typical Persian epic. While the fabulous Persian Rustam did not made his way to the interest of Javanese readers, except a brief mention of him in *Menak* as the ancestor of antagonist Kistaham (Gustahm in Persian), a general of Nusirwan, the legendary Alexander the Great (Askandar Dilkarnaeni) succeed in entering the realm of Javanese literature, given that his achievement as the *rajadiraja* (Malay) or *shahanshah* (Persian) is congruent with the idea of Javanese *susuhunan* (literally “one who must placed above the head”, or simply means “emperor”). The Javanese rendering of *Sikandarnamēh* itself, called as *Iskandar Jawi* or *Caritanira Askandar*, specially commissioned in 1729 by the queen dowager Kanjēng Ratu Balitar or Ratu Pakubuwana, consort of the late Pakubuwana I (1708-1719) to spiritually support the reign of his newly installed grandson king, Pakubuwana II (1726-1742 Kartasura; 1745-1749 Surakarta) who was also entitled as *susuhunan* instead of the Hindu-Javanese styled *prabu* like his shortly reigned father, Prabu Amangkurat Jawi or Amangkurat IV (1719-1726) (see Ricklefs, 1998). Jayengrana himself, entitled as Sultan, not Sunan, somewhat never destined as the progenitor of Javanese kings and nobles like Ali did, since the Persian *dastan* and Malay *hikayat* recounted about his total loss of sons and grandsons, as well as his comrades except ‘Amr ibn Umayyah (Umar Maya) before the battle of Lakat or Uhud. The Javanese *Menak* of Yasadipuran mentioned that Jayengrana, who shed his illustrious epithets and using the name *Sayidina* Ambyah during his *sahaba* period, only left an almost unpopular nine-year-old grandson named Sahid, who didn’t join the last *Menak* battle due to his underage condition (see *Menak Lakat* vol. 1). Events of his later life was never exposed after the death of his grandfather, as the focus of *Menak* shifted to Ali as “the second Hamza”. The other account on the later offspring of Hamza depicted in the *Menak Purwakandha* episode in a distant prophecy told by the hermit *Seh Tartus* or Kakim MahribinMaridin (the Wise Man of the West) to Isnaningsih, Jayengrana’s consort from Burudangin (in Malay: Barda’i or Azerbaijani origin), concerning the later’s defeat after blinded by Masrukakim, sorcerer of the antagonist Samasrawi or Matari Akbar. Tartus’prophecy was recorded on the 32nd canto of *Dhandhanggula* metre below:

33. malah ing dalu kongsi akèpi | alon umatur anèng ing marga | dhuh gusti dèn wingit anggèr
 | kula supênèng dalu | tinarima lampah sang dèwi | tulung prang tulung pangan | benjing-
 benjingipun | prapta ing kiyamat sugra | ratunipun raka paduka sang aji | Prabu Tasangsulngalam ||

34. angingoni turun Pusêr Bumi | malah salin sarengate pisan | panutup nabi turune | inggih
 ingon saking Rum | kang amanjing ing Mekah benjing | ing Rum dadi satunggal | tèmbe ratunipun
 | tan liyan kang darbe têdhak | amung kangjêng raka paduka sang aji | lawan têrah paduka ||

35. gilir-gilir datan wontên malih | sami rukun trahing raka tuwan | ingkang ngriyini ratune |
 Ngusmanjop tampinipun | praptanipun turun sang dèwi | dadose sapangandhap | ngratoni tanah
 Rum | amiji ingon mring Mèkah | duk samana pinacak Kakim Waridin | munggèng ing kitabira||

Translation:

33. Even in the night, he dreamed (because of the abundant aid from Burudangin to help the Arab army)| then he (Maridin) told (Isnaningsih) softly on the way| “Your Majesty, please keep it secret|for I have dreamed last night| that God pleased with your deed| helping Arab army with reinforcements and food| in the future| until the arrival of *kiyamat sugra* (“small apocalypse”, which is a monarch’s death)| the king will be still your elder brother| Prabu Tasangsulngalam||

34. [he will] fed the descendants from *Puser Bumi* (“the Centre of the Earth”, which is Mecca)| even after the change of the religion | to the descendant of the Last Prophet| still be fed by the Rum| who will conquer the Mecca in the future| [and] it will be united with Rum| and the kings| are certainly the offsprings|[who came] only from your elder brother the king| and also your progenies||

35. Both of them shifted time by time| they will be harmonious with each other| and the first to become king| will be Ngusmanjop, as he will receive [the boon]| he will come from your lineage| so until the generations| his progeny will rule the land of Rum| and supplying the food for Mecca”| then [the prophecy] was written by Waridin the Wise| into his book|| (*Yasadipura I, Menak Purwakandha* vol. II, Balai Pustaka Edition, 1935:67)

Although it is clear that Yasadipura's *Menak* emphasize the forthcoming of the future kings of Rum from Jayengrana's lineage through Isnaningsih, the Rum-Azerbaijani princess, but the indications are obscure: when Mahribin or Waridin or Maridin prophesied about the future of Tasangsulngalam, one of the comrades of Jayengrana, in the battle against Purwakandha, he stated that he will be the king of Rum or Burudangin after this battle. The future kings of Rum, who are the offsprings of Tasangsulngalam, will maintain a good relationship with the Meccans, and even the Rum will be a permanent ally and supporter of Muslims. Then in the distant future, the day will come for Ngusmanjop, a descendant of Jayengrana and Isnaningsih, to reign this long-established kingdom to continue this tradition. The name of Ngusmanjop itself was a strange and unpopular name in Islamic history, even in the Javanese renderings. But in the older published version of Yasadipura's *Menak* by Van Dorp (1929), the name Ngusmanjop written as Ngusman Jokan, which reminded us to the title Johan, “champion” in Malay (see vol. V: 289). Thus, if we read this epithet as Javanese spelling of ‘Utsman Johan (Uthman the Champion), so it could be an equivalent with Turkish *Osman-gazi*, which was an epithet of first Ottoman king, Osman I (1299-1323). Following this opinion, it is understandable that Javanese poets never placed Jayengrana as their king's *luluhur* or noble ancestors, because his actual role is as the *cikal-bakal* (founder) of a distant kingdom of Java, which is Ottoman Turkey as a continuation of semi-legendary Rum or *Ngěrum*. The Javanese tradition, which believed in the binary system of everything, viewed the existence of Rum as a “*sabrang Islam*” or non-Javanese Islamic entity “that should be there” to be a counterpart of the Islamic Javanese to keep the harmonious world both in *Masrik* and *Mahrib* realms. The Javanese *jangka* (prophecies) texts themselves also stated that the Rum kings will eventually come to Java before the end of time, to restore the harmony in Java after the “non-Islam non-Javanese” entities, named as *Nusapřnggi* or *Sřnggi* intervened the political life of Javanese and flipped the proper social order upside-down, against the Islam and Javanese values.

The role of ‘Ali, on the other side, reflected the other source for Javanese legitimacy on Islamic kingship. Through the line of Husain ibn ‘Ali, the second son of this fourth Rashidun caliph, the lineage connected to Javanese kings and nobles via his descendant Syekh Jumadil Kubra and then several *walis* from Walisanga. Different with Hamza with his worldly achievements, ‘Ali portrayed in the *Menak* text as a much esoteric depiction of a Muslim *satriya*. While he also has some vassals, two of them are Raja Kopah (king of Kufah, Iraq) and Raja Babil (king of Babil, Iraq), but he was never depicted in a glorious manner like Hamza or Jayengrana. Although the *Menak* text imagined the Javanese standards of *satriya* for ‘Ali, such as his noble residence with *dalěm kasatriyan* layouts, furnished with *kori* (gates), *pura* (castle), and other buildings, but the luxuries of the “*kraton Madinah*”, which is the residence of the prophet, his family, and his companions was no match with the Jayengrana's Kuperman or Nusirwan's Mědhayin. During the plot of *Menak Lakat* episode of Yasadipura's *Menak* (which the older *Menak Kartasura* didn't include), the significant role of ‘Ali increased: a sudden mention of mighty ‘Ali, compared with the other three sahabas which are Abu Bakar, Ngusman, and Ngumar as the *kadeyan* (companion) of the prophet, referred to a typical stratification of Javanese *Panji* texts, appeared in the conversation of the king Jěnggi with his vassal Bardanas. After the *Menak* text losing its central protagonist in the middle of second volume of *Menak Lakat*, then the position was suddenly replaced with the presence of Ngali Murtala, the cousin and son-in-law of

the prophet, and also an ancestor of both Arabian *auliya* (saints, sometimes rendered in Indic-Javanese style as *pandhita* or “priests”) and Javanese post-Hindu kings and nobles. The similar view on ‘Ali’s characteristics also found in the Persian and Malay versions of this Hamza-epic, but rather showed in different degrees: in the Persian manuscript of *Qissa-i Amir Hamzah* from Munich and Dresden collection, van Ronkel reported that no mention of ‘Ali as the main hero in the concluding part of this epic, since Qoraishah (Javanese Kuraisin) took the revenge of the last enemy of Hamza. In the Persian and Urdu version, the role of the last antagonist was attributed to the mother of Pur-e-Hind, an Indian prince who slain by Hamza in the last battle against Persian Hurmuz, son of Naushervan. Van Ronkel further noticed that there is a genuine Malay additions to the Hamza-epic, which could not be found in neither of two Persian *Qissa* manuscripts examined by him. The additions comprises more than one-seventh portion of Malay *Hikayat Amir Hamzah*, and mainly recounted about the last events of the epic, beginning from the journey of Badi’uz-Zaman (Javanese Iman Suwangsa) to Zemin Turan (Javanese Jamintoran), to the lengthy passages about the war in Zemin ‘Ambar (Jaminambar) and the last days of Hamza and his comrades. After the death of Hamza and his horse Ashqar-Diuzada (Javanese *Sĕkardiyu* or *Sĕkarduwijan*), then in the *tjaritera* (episode) number 91, the story about the ill ‘Ali appeared, adapted in Javanese *Menak* as the final episode of the epic, adding the marriage between him and Kuraisin, which entangled two branches of Hashimite legitimacy, laying a foundation for other *hikayats* such as *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyah* and so on.

Hence, in the Javanese *Menak*, the role of Jayengrana and Ali Murtala could be identified as a complementary on each other. Their roles on the *Menak* world, each deals with a different sides of Islam from Javanese eyes: while Jayengrana represents the past, legendary, and distant nature of Islam, which inevitably came from “*sabrang*” realm but not as a part of a demonized “*sabrang*” classifications in the other Javanese literary works, the figure of ‘Ali represents a more esoteric, spiritual, and ascetic side of Islam, in which Javanese believe as congruent with the Hindu-influenced *sĕkti* or opulent nature that an ideal *satriya* should be. This view also echoed on the *Wedhatama* as one of Javanese classic, where the figure of Mataram’s founder, Panĕmbahan Senapati (r. 1589-1601) was depicted not in term of his military success, but rather, Mangkunagara IV (r.1853-1881) as the text’s composer stressed the focus of this part of the didactic-moralistic text on the asceticism and esoteric path that Senapati took to achieve not only political triumph over his opponents, but also harmonious relationship with the other people (*amamangun karyenak tyasing sasama*). This Javanese idea, of course, is very popular as a major theme of *wayang* performances in all genres, in which the knights with ascetic qualities (*satriya pinandhita*) such as Arjuna or Rama considered as the most exemplary model for the contemporary nobles, rather than the others who depended on physical strength and temperamental nature such as Baladewa or Bhima, although the later were also highly appreciated.

This point of view led us to the further discussion about the forming of *lakon wayang golek cĕpak* about “the venerated ‘Ali” (Bagendha Ali) in the ecosystem of central Javanese rod puppetry, observed from the perspective of the Javanese symbolic interactionism and the more pragmatic *wayang* dramaturgy that will be explained below.

The *Lakon* “Bagendha Ali” Nowadays: Cultural Bargain in a Changing Society The story of Bagendha Ali that circulates on the environment of Javanese *wayang golek cĕpak* in coastal Pekalongan area -- in the middle of the increasing performances of *lakon babad* -- has proven to be a part of *Menak* stories, although many puppeteers who performed this were unaware about the source of the tale, while the other popular *Menak* stories such as *Menak Lare* or *Raden Iman Suwangsa* still enjoyed by northern coastal Java’s audiences with full consciousness of its Persian or Middle Eastern nature instead of local history. But in the other hand, the *Menak* characteristic

of this *lakon* has been diminished with the absence of key characters such as Jayengrana, Umar Maya, Umar Madi, or the antagonists duo Nusrwan and Patih Bestak, which made the audiences and even the puppeteers themselves hardly recognize (*pangling*). Nevertheless, the presence of the prophet (*Kanjeng Nabi*), his prominent companions (*sahabat*), and particularly the significant role of Bagendha or *Sayidina Ali* signifies the era of the post-*Menak* Islamic tales, which also recounted in the *Menak* edition of *Yasadipura I*.

Resowidjojo (1941) stated that there are at least two type of *Menak* texts published in the early 20th century Java. The first type, which stated as *Menak ingkang sampun limrah* (the “common” text of *Menak*) consists of eleven volumes, started from *Menak Lare* to *Menak Talsamat* (without *Menak Lakat*). The second type, which Resowidjojo addressed as *Menak Bale Poestaka*, published in twenty-four volumes, started with the pre-Hamza stories of *Menak Sarehas*, and ended with the *Menak Lakat*. The first *Menak* category, although not being mentioned in Resowidjojo’s Register, might be the Van Dorp’s edition which consisted of seven published volumes. The last reprint of Van Dorp’s version was preceding the *Bale Poestaka* edition almost a decade, while it was claimed by Tashadi (et.al., 1993) that the later version was also use the Van Dorp’s publishing source, and that both of these published editions *Menak* has been further “censored from religious contents by the Dutch”. Besides the “major” *Menak* texts distributed in the early 20th century Javanese reader sourced from *Yasadipura*’s rendition, there were also the other versions of *Menak*, from the Kartasura’s *Menak* from 1715 to mid 19th century *Menak Suryanglẽmbara* from Yogyakarta origin. Outside the Javanese *Kratons*’ scriptoria, *Menak* texts also produced in many regions other than Pasisir. Some *Menak* manuscripts came from peripheral Central and East Java with *wayang*-ized imagery, such as the British Library’s *Menak* (MSS Jav 45) from Grobogan, or the *wayang purwa*-style illustrated *Menak* manuscript from Mpu Tantular Museum, Sidoarjo (see Lutfi, et.al., 2019). Even in the 1980 interview with Pusat Kesenian Jawa Tengah (PKJT--Central Java Art Centre, now Taman Budaya Jawa Tengah or Central Java Cultural Park), Sindu Jotaryono, a popular *dhalang* of southern-style *wayang golek menak*, stated that he acquired his *lakons* from a *pegon* (Javanese-Arabic)-scripted manuscript of *Menak*, while two major versions aforementioned are both written in standard Javanese script (*aksara wyanjana* or *hanacaraka*) (the late Sunarto Sindhu stated that his *pakẽm* or handbook copied from Kedu region, in the heart of central Java). Therefore, this also indicates the existence of other variants of *Menak* in the Javanese contexts through various channels of transmission, implying the further narrative variations in each versions, that represented in the vast range of performances, including the *wayang* stories.

The story of *Sayidina Ali* itself showed the influence of *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* through the presence of Raja Kandak and his brother, Raja Isbandar (or Raja Bedr in *hikayat* version) as the antagonists of the story, with the presence of Ali as the main hero, replacing the deceased Amir Ambyah from the preceding *Lakat* episode. On the other hand, it also has a clear similarity with Javanese *Menak* narrative with the presence of mysterious old woman cooking the porridge, who turned out as the disguise of Gabriel, giving Ali the hint to overcome the massive Egyptian armies. The motif of ‘old woman cooking the porridge’, somehow also entered the memories of the Javanese through a similar folktale, altering the identity of Ali with Raden Mas Said (future Mangkunagara I), and the Raja Lakat and Jenggi’s alliance with the Dutch Company troops (*Kumpeni*), in the context of his guerilla 1749-1757 (Pranoto, 2000). This *wayang golek* story, however, also developed contextually in the changing cultural context of coastal Java with its strengthening *santri* culture, especially from the Nahdlatul Ulama movement. Some parts of this story, that once considered as *baku* (main, important), are forcibly eliminated, whether it has a

connection with *Menak* texts or not. The parts which are abandoned by modern *wayang golek* puppeteers are:

(a) The tale of Prophet's retreat: the classical *wayang golek* performances still recognized this part, which recounted the events directly happened after the ambush of Lakat and Jenggi that caused Ambyah's death. The prophet, being surrounded and outnumbered by the *kafir* army, retreated to a small cave with the accompaniment of his aide-de-camp Bu-Bakar or Abu Bakar (Abu Bakr as-Siddiq). There, the infidels who tried to search the Prophet once not expected that Muhammad will hide in the cave, but the house-lizards (*cecak*) giving them hint that he was inside. Being curious, one of an infidel throws a rock inside, causing one of Prophet's teeth to fall, but since there was any human sound from the cave, they convinced that nobody is residing inside, and they left. From that time, then there is a *sunnah* (tradition) of killing houselizards, for this reptile repeatedly betray the prophets since the time of Abraham (see Qushayri, 1975). The Prophet fainted, and Abu Bakar cried for all the misery they suffered. Gabriel came to the cave and told Abu Bakar about God's displeasure upon Muhammad's over-dependency to his uncle Ambyah, so He punished the Muslims with a bitter defeat. After Abu Bakar sent his repentance to God, Gabriel disappeared (*muksa*) with a message that the Muslims are forgiven, and He promised that they will be victorious in the next battle under Ali as the army's commander. The following story are same with the entire Yasadipura's version, minus the appearance of Kuraisin with her commanders (Asal-asil, Sadat-satir, etc.) from Ngajrak, the only *Menak* characters which survived until the end of the epic.

(b) The tale of Ali and the Moon: in the Pekalongan version of Sayidina Ali story, after Ali inspired by the old woman's suggestion on finishing the porridge from bowl's edge instead of its center, he immediately left her. The old woman then infuriated with Ali's act, and cursed him to experience a sorrow death, crushed by the earth. But Ali, on the other side, answered the curse with an oath, that after his death, his soul will reside on the full moon, then the *dhalang* narrates that Ali's words will become true, because his image always appear on the moon's surface every *purnamasidi* (full moon).

Both of those tales are abandoned nowadays by present *wayang golek* puppeteers from Pekalongan. The main factor of this change, was certainly a fear of blasphemy (*pelecehan agama*) in the *dhalang*'s circle if they keep them in the Sayidina Ali story's performance, as in those episodes, the Prophet and Ali did their own mistakes. However, the first tale was explicitly written both in Malay *hikayat* and Javanese *Menak* traditions, exhibiting the clear Persian *dastan* root that also recounted this event. The tale of the Prophet and Abu Bakar retreating into a cave and the fall of Prophet's tooth, according to the *sirat* or *tarik* tradition which are now widely studied along with the growing Islamic traditional orthodoxy through the development of *pesantren* (Islamic traditional school) and the role of *kyai* (Javanese Muslim clerics) and *mubaligh* (preachers), did not have any connections with the events around the death of "historical" Hamza. Instead, it dealt with the Prophet's journey to seek refuge from the Quraish-controlled Makkah to a more conducive Yathrib in the south --now called as Madinah-- which happened three years earlier (Razwy, 1995). The event of this refuge, known as *hijra*, followed by a decisive battle of Badr, in which seventy *sahabas* (companions) of the Prophet martyred and historical Hamza served as one of the prominent commanders, before a year later the battle of Uhud, which inspired the story of *Menak Lakat*, happened. In this first battle, which did not explicitly mentioned in any *Menak*, *hikayat*, and *dastan* traditions, Ambyah won, but he lost seventy of his subjects --who were formerly kings and knights from the realms of *Menak* universe. The similar number of the Muslim casualties from the Badr and first part of Ambyah's campaign shows the source of this tale, and it also signed the transition of the *Menak* to *Ambiya* universe, where the title of Jayengrana and

Wong Agung did not used again, but the Javanese *Menak* copyists, one of them was Yasadipura, uses the new, *sirat*-based name Sayidina Ambyah, as the other characters in this episode also bearing the same title instead of Javanese *Prabu*, *Raden*, or Malay-inspired *Raja*.

The martyrdom of seventy subjects of Ambyah, despite of its close similarity with the depiction of the battle of Badr, clears the narrative path of the main character, who shifted from legendary to historical context. All of the prominent characters from the *Menak* stories, such as Maktal, Umar Madi, and Lamdahur, vanquished in this episode, but they experience unwritten death beneath the layers of the Yasadipura *Menak* text, although their demise were explicitly recounted in its *hikayat* version. In the oral *wayang golek* stories from Kebumen, their death was considered to be happen in the Jaminambar episode, where almost all of Jayengrana's subjects dead with no bodies left during a brutal battle with cannibal troops of king Rabusamawati, except Lamdahur and Umar Maya, who are being forcibly excluded (in Javanese, “*dibanjut*”) from the *Menak* universe through the role of *Bagendha* Kilir (the mythological prophet Khidhr) as the text's *deus ex machina* (Rusiyanto alias Redi Siswoyo, interview 2025). Thus, this Kebumen version of Jaminambar episode also considered as a *lakon gawat* (“dangerous” story) that was believed to bring a bad omen both for the performers or the sponsor's family life.

The second tale dealing with the story of ‘Ali and his image on the full-moon, on the other side, while did not recognized in any *Menak* tradition, but dealing with both *sufi*-branch of Sunni sects and Shi'i beliefs. Although it is also not canonically stated in *Sunnah* tradition through reliable oral records (*hadith sahih*), but some *Sufi* orders, such as Naqshabandiyya -- which also widely spread in the basis of *Nahdliyyin* (the followers of Nahdlatul Ulama movement) in coastal Java, this tale was known partially in a different context: the statement of the “Ali's image on the moon” viewed in a symbolic term, where ‘Ali and the Prophet's hidden esoteric knowledge he inherited represented with the ‘black sphere of the moon’, and Abu Bakar (predecessor of Naqshabandiyya *sufi* masters or *Murshids*) represented the ‘white sphere of the moon’, not as ‘Ali's opposite but rather to complement the ‘full moon’, which represented the light of the Prophet (see the lyric of popular *qasida* entitled *Thala'al-Badr*, ‘the Rise of the Full Moon’). Meanwhile, the Shiite tradition, especially in South Asia, some of the Shi'i believe that every full moon, they can see the Arabic letters spelling his name. Two of this tales are less known in the present Pekalongan *wayang golek* puppeteers and audiences, but at least it showed indications of its changing society and their view about the *wayang golek* tales and its connection with the local Islamic context.

The changing society of Pekalongan's *wayang golek* audiences gradually become alienated from the *Menak* tales and its derivatives, as shown by the changes within the *lakon* Sayidina Ali itself. Besides they are not aware that this popular *lakon* came from a larger *Menak* corpus with some local changes, the *dhalangs* themselves, even they have a certain *pakem* or handbooks regarding this *lakon* in the old-fashioned style, choose to negotiate their performance to adapt with the religiously formalized society, so they don't need to have an open conflict with them, which could also led to the loss of both cultural and financial supports to guarantee the sustainability of this rod-puppetry traditions. Ditya Aditya (alias Sabda Anindhita, the stage-name he received after finishing his *nyantrik* or informal apprentice time in Solo, Central Java), the young *dhalang* who become a main informant of this case aforementioned above, preferred to cut some scenes that can raise serious criticism in the middle of his orthodox audiences. The scene of Abu Bakar and the Prophet, also the sequence of Bagendha Ali's vow, practically deleted from the performance, as well as the Prophet's depiction in a figure of noble refined king, due of the more strict values implemented in modern Muslim *santri*

Being spared from religious burden after cutting two controversial subplots above, the *lakon* Sayidina Ali or Sahabat Ali, then changed from a conclusive episode of lengthy *Menak* repertoires once enjoyed in the coastal Java to a mere fantasy tale came from the middle of nowhere, almost parallel with the *wayang purwa*'s *carangan* or "branch story" concept. It also means that this *lakon* is now considered as a regular repertoire (*lakon biasa*) which can be performed in secular events, even with the addition of the presence of stage comedians (*pelawak*), who often shared flirtatious jokes with the guest singers (*penyanyi bintang tamu*) or the troupe's female vocalists (*waranggana*), dancing and singing popular *dangdut* songs while the puppeteer take a short break before he begin to recount the story of Muhammad the Prophet and his companion again after this intermezzo.

This phenomenon shows us how did the *Menak* texts survived in the collective memory of Pekalongan's *wayang golek* environment, but at the other side it lost its core narrative along with the increasing interest of the much local *lakon babads*, which are closer to the modern viewer primordially. Nowadays, the range of *lakon babad* are expanding, not only in the term of canonic *babad* such as the story of Walisanga, kings of Majapahit and Mataram, and also some historical local figures who had a relationship with larger chronicles, such as Jaka Bahu from Pemalang or Martalaya from Tegal, both of them served as the loyal officers of Mataram during the era of Sultan Agung (1613-1645) and Amangkurat I (1646-1677). The further expansion of the *lakon babad* also recounted the stories about a particular village's founding fathers (*cikal bakal*), or minor heroes against Dutch or British colonial forces, such as the story of Rasmadi, a young village hero who attacked British garrison in Semarang. Those indicates two trends in the context of *wayang golek menak* or *cepak* in north coast Java: while on a side it abandoned the much *Kraton*-centered narratives due to the loose connection maintained by the Javanese regencies with the old palaces, as a result of decentralization policy by the Netherlands-Indies government post Java War (1825-1830) and also the effect of *Otonomi Daerah* (Regional Autonomy) implemented by the late President Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001), on the other side it also reflected the post-globalized situation of Muslim society in Java, along with the formalization of Islamic institutions motored by the local scholars, *kyai*, and organizations, which ensured an easier access to canonical version of *tarikh* or *sirat* texts to study then the old-styled renderings of Islamic legendary-history in the form of *hikayat*, *Ambiya*, or *Menak* genres, which in turn changed the perception about the events surrounding prominent figures in the beginning of Islam, such as the change in viewing the heroic Hamza simply as historical "Hamza ibn 'Abdul Mutallib" instead of South- and Southeast Asian favorite "Amir Hamzah" or "Wong Agung Menak Jayengrana", and also the changing perceptions on 'Ali as "the Successor" (*khalifah*) and "the Saint" (*wali*), which moved from esoterical context to a much denotative political terms, referring to his office in the last years of Rashidun caliphate (632-661). But even though, the hagiographic aspects of early prominent figures in Islam still prevails in a rather different way: while the traditional depiction of the *sahaba* ("companions", first-generation Muslims), *tabi'in* ("followers", the second generation), *tabi'i at-tabi'in* ("those who follows the followers", the third generation), or even the Prophet himself with all of his family (*Ahlil-Bayt*, "the Inhabitant of the House") became gradually unknown to the modern Javanese readers, the other narrative which glorify those figures, which came in the form of *Maulid* or *Qasida* texts, gained wider audience in this changing society. Some of them are the popular *Maulid al-Barzanji* and *Qasidat al-Burdah*, which is now regularly recited during some events dealing with rites of passages, replacing the position of *Macapat* texts containing the story of Yusuf (Joseph the Prophet), *Ambiya* (Stories of the Apostles), or even *Menak* tales and its derivatives such as *Renggani*s and the other *Menakpang* or *Menak baku* fragments.

As per the changing focus of the life of Javanese Muslims from an esoterical *sufi* and *tarekat* concerns to a more formalized aspects of the religion, the source of Islamic literatures also moved from the vibrant landscapes of Persian *dastans*, Malay *hikayats*, and Javanese *macapats*, towards the west to the Arabian classics of *sirat*, *tarikh*, *maulid*, and *qasidas*, which now also becoming core subjects in the studies of Islamic literature in major Indonesian universities. The scarcity of studies about the connection between *Nusantara* (archipelago) literature with the global encounters experienced through its development and the lack of multidisciplinary approach in viewing its influence in the social and cultural context, including the art and performance made it much understandable on why did the echoes of the once popular Persian *Hamzanama* faded away in the middle of the post-globalized Java today.

3. Conclusion

It can be clearly concluded that the *lakon* Sayidina Ali or Sahabat Ali in the Pekalongan-style *wayang golek cĕpak* was an excerpt from a larger *Menak* corpus, taking the place after the death of the main protagonist, Wong Agung Jayengrana, who was well-recognized both as historical Hamza ibn ‘Abdul Mutallib or the legendary Amir Hamzah. This episode of the Persian-Islamic epic, though sourced from the *dastan* version of *Hamzanama*, but also involved the Nusantara ingenuity in expanding the text, bringing the legendary battles between Amir Hamzah with the semi-fictitious *kafir* into the historical military campaigns involving Hamza during the Madinah reign of Prophet Muhammad (622-632), enriching the text with the presence of venerable ‘Ali bin Abi Thalib, which viewed not only in the Shiite but also in the part of traditional Sunni sects, mainly those who are related with the *sufi* traditions, as a legitimate heir of Muhammad’s esoterical knowledge, parallel with the concept of Javanese *satriya*, who is not only equipped with martial prowess as a part of his physical opulence (*kasĕkten lahir*) but also the spiritual virtues (*kasĕkten batin*) as a mean to reach the harmony of the cosmos.

The *lakon* Sayidina Ali, while losing its connection with literal *Menak* traditions as a result of the paradigm shifting of Javanese Muslims from a much esoteric form to a more institutionalized interpretation, proven itself to be a frame which also accommodates the changing society: in one side it must adapt with the emerging new class of Javanese *santri*, and in the other side it also have to fit the narrative with the nature of *wayang golek* in the northern coast Java as a part of secular performing arts. The forms of its adaptation, however, risking the loss of understanding about the *lakon* as a conclusive part which marked an end of a fantastic *Menak* era to a mysterious story that raised questions from its modern Muslim spectators, since they are unfamiliar with the *Menak* corpus as its hypogram or with the world of Persian-Malay-Javanese clique of Islamic literature.

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