



## Revelation is Unlimited: Divinely Inspired Speeches, “Testing” and the Spiritual Training in the Subud Movement

Asfa Widiyanto <sup>1,2</sup> ✉

<sup>1</sup> The University of Bamberg, Germany

<sup>2</sup>State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Salatiga, Indonesia

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### Abstract

The Subud Movement is one of the mystical movements which develop in the Indonesian archipelago. This movement originated from the spiritual experience of its founder, Muhammad Subuh Sumahadiwidjojo (1901-1987), in 1925. This paper is devoted to highlighting the nature of revelation in the Subud Movement. I will show that revelation is not a taboo in the movement and even becomes the legitimacy of leadership, in particular for the founder of the Movement. This can be observed most notably from the existence of divinely inspired talks, “testing” and the latihan kejiwaan (spiritual training) in the movement. In order to grasp more readily the nature of revelation in the Subud Movement, also provide an overview of the discourse of leadership and revelation in Javanese mystical tradition.

**Keywords:** *revelation; divinely inspired speeches; the latihan kejiwaan; testing; Subud Movement*

### INTRODUCTION

Mystical teachings have attracted many Indonesian people. The overwhelming and threatening process of Westernisation has drawn their attention to seeking things indigenous, which they consider to be of importance for the building of a national ethic. The emergence of the variegated Javanese mystical movements, mainly after Indonesian independence, indicates the effort to pursue and hold on to Javanese values (Simuh 1988; Hage 2006; Ulrich 2005). This phenomenon can also be seen as an antithesis to formalism within organised religion and its neglect of spirituality. At an extreme level, the emergence of mystical movements is an indication of their unwillingness to belong to an imported religion (Geels 1997, p.84; Amini 2009; Beck 2014; Genealogy 2013; Karim 2015), for instance Islam.

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mystical movements which develop in the Indonesian archipelago. This movement originated from the spiritual experience of its founder, Muhammad Subuh Sumahadiwidjojo (1901-1987) (from here on: Subuh or Pak Subuh), in 1925. Eight years later, he designated this experience as latihan kejiwaan (literally: spiritual training), which later became the centre of the Subud Movement’s spiritual practices. In 1947, the organisation of Subud was officially founded in Yogyakarta (Geels 1997, p.113-126).

This study employed a qualitative approach. The primary sources of the Subud Movement are available in Indonesian, English and Javanese . Data recorded from observations of and interviews with the ordinary adherents and leaders of the movement are also regarded as primary sources. This study cannot ignore previous studies on the Subud Movement. Such writings are treated

✉ Corresponding author :  
Address: Jl. Tentara Pelajar No. 2 Salatiga 50733,  
Indonesia  
Email : [asfa.widiyanto@gmail.com](mailto:asfa.widiyanto@gmail.com)  
Phone : +62-85641921753

as secondary sources for this research.

The works and talks of the founder, as well as the talks of Siti Rahayu Wiryohudoyo (the daughter of the founder as well as the current informal leader of the movement), constitute primary written sources on the Subud Movement. The writings of Ruspana are also treated as primary sources. Ruspana is a leading spiritual helper in Surakarta, Central Java, who has produced a number of writings on the Subud Brotherhood. I have picked out the Subud Movement in Surakarta as the subject and context of the research, and accordingly it is of importance to see how the beliefs and the teachings of the Subud Brotherhood are formulated by a spiritual helper who hails from Surakarta, and is now active in the branch of the Subud Movement in this city.

### **Leadership and revelation in Javanese mystical tradition: an overview**

In Javanese society, intuitive knowledge (*ngelmu*) is considered important. Those possessing such knowledge have the potential to acquire the "revelation" (*wahyu*, Arabic: *wahy*), a charismatic glow which is considered one source of power (Stange 1984, p.114), as the legitimacy of leadership.

It is worth noting that the term *wahyu* in Javanese covers such things as magical power (*kasekten*), literary inspiration (*wahyu kapujanggan*), prophecy (*nubuwwa*), divine inspiration (*ilham*), as well as a supposed divine mandate to rule in a certain area (*wahyu keprabon*).

Some notions covered by the term *wahyu* are exemplified in the Javanese idea of kingship. A king, particularly the founder of a dynasty, is supposed to obtain a celestial mandate to rule (*wahyu keprabon*). The existence of such a *wahyu* indicates that one's leadership is drawn from a higher source of protection. The people may witness a bright light flashing over the night sky which is considered an indication of the coming of this *wahyu*. The recipients of *wahyu* are believed to shine with a soft light stemming from the heart. These metaphors indicate a permeating identification of power and light in Javanese culture. Rulers are normal-

ly endowed with magical power enabling them to control their subjects (Mulder 1998, p.42). Due to this direct encounter with the divine, some of these rulers are receptive to literary inspiration.

As Stange (1986, p.93) points out, such a ruler is interested in a sort of *wahyu* which can serve as a source of temporal and spiritual authority. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that not all rulers obtain *wahyu*, and some who do may even lose it. This latter case may cause their rule to no longer be legitimate, and this will be indicated, for instance, by a decrease in wealth and the instability of the region (Woodward 1989, p.165). Similarly, the German scholar Max Weber (1864-1920) describes that if a person bestowed with charisma does not succeed in doing good for his subjects, he is inclined to suppose that God or some other extraordinary power has deserted his leadership (Bendix 1967, p.343; Wasner 2005).

In Javanese society in general, one possessing charisma is believed to have better chances of filling an important position in society. Such a person normally possesses a strong "inner-feeling" (*rasa*) resulting from practising mystical disciplines. The idea of "inner-feeling" itself, as Mulder (1998, p.144-146) indicates, underlies the possibility of personal experience and feeling as the ultimate touchstones for the truth. This mode of thought is based on the acknowledgment that there is always something implicit and non-rational within most phenomena and experiences.

We can see that the phenomenon of employing mystical practices for the sake of yielding potency and efficacy is not uncommon in Javanese society. The existence of charisma as a legitimation for leadership is present in most societies. However, the source of this charisma may differ from one society to another.

In Max Weber's view, veneration for revelation and total trust in the leader are among the signs of charisma (Bendix 1967, p.343). This suggests that the notion of revelation and charisma are in some ways connected. The prophets receive a revelation and are believed to possess charisma. Their

charismatic appeal attracts people to follow their messages. The “revelation” in the sense of a mandate to rule (which is apparent in Javanese culture) is identical to the charisma possessed by the political leaders. What is apparent in both notions of revelation and charisma is that they, from sociological point of view, are in some ways marked by recognition from a group of people. Literary inspiration, for example, (which is in Javanese culture likewise described as a “revelation”) is in some ways marked by recognition from the readers.

The Javanese notion of revelation is in line with the definition of revelation offered by some scholars of religion, namely, “a divine communication to human beings”. Such a definition allows them to incorporate distinct manners and levels of revelation (Denninger 1987, p.356). This definition stands in contrast to that in Islamic theology, for instance, in which the term *wahy* (revelation) is employed to designate a verbatim communication between God and the messengers or prophets. As for the communication of individuals, the term *ilham* (divine inspiration) is normally applied (Carpenter 1987, p.258).

In Javanese mystical tradition, the essential knowledge of a master should be derived from his own revelation, although he may also obtain knowledge from another master or from the literature. This sort of revelation gives him the potential to attract followers. The advanced mystics normally seek divine guidance, particularly on the origin and destination of life through meditation. It is worth noting, however, that not every accomplished mystic seeks to become a master (Mulder 1998, p.46-49).

Following the mystical path is considered to be an arduous undertaking. Accordingly, one needs to affiliate oneself with a master who is believed to have progressed along the path and who is keen to initiate other persons into his path (Mulder 1978, p.25-106). Nonetheless, the experience that one encounters along the path is individual.

In Javanese mystical circles, a master is not only supposed to act as a teacher for

his followers, but also to possess the characteristics of a father or patron. He should give them advice, assist them in solving their problems and should act as intermediary (or at least provide necessary explanations) between his followers and the unseen world (Mulder 1998, p.49).

The leader is believed to obtain his power from higher forces. Leadership in the Javanese mystical tradition can therefore be called charismatic; this sort of leadership plays a part in the embodiment of the vertical patronage mode in the organisation of a group or society. The leader benefits from having followers who acknowledge his influence, while his followers draw security from attaching themselves to him and his group. In some cases, the allegiance to the master or leader is stronger than that to the family (Mulder 1978, p.30-62). In this regard, we may observe the notion of religion as “exchange”.

In Javanese mystical circles, the founders of a mystical sect are assigned a special position. They are considered to be ordinary human beings who are granted the capability of serving as active channels of spiritual Gnosis for other people (Stange 1986, p.104). The appearance of a ball of light, which is at times also witnessed by the people, is believed to signify the coming of the revelation from God. This in turn attracts them to be initiated into the revelation. Stange (1986, p.93-94) points out that the revelation of the founders is at times believed to be comparable to the revelation of the prophets.

The Javanese mystical circle often employs the term *wahyu* to stress the originality of the spiritual receiving of the founders. Nonetheless, in their interactions with outsiders, they prefer to employ a less sensitive word such as *ilham* (divine inspiration), in order to avoid objections from orthodox Muslims (Stange 1986, p.92-93). Some leaders of the Subud Movement, for instance, prefer to signify the receiving of the founder as *ilham* or God’s grace in their communication with outsiders.

### **The notion of revelation in the Subud Movement**

According to the Subud Movement, the decision to grant someone a revelation (wahyu) depends solely on the hand of God. The wahyu itself is believed to be limitless (Subuh 1990, p.10-37). This signifies the possibilities of wahyu nowadays, which owes a great debt to Javanese tradition, in which the term wahyu covers such things as magical power, literary inspiration, prophecy, divine inspiration, as well as a supposed divine mandate to rule in a certain area. In Javanese mystical tradition, the wahyu can give legitimacy for a position as spiritual leader. Mulder (1998, p.46-47) points out that the advanced mystics are normally in search of divine guidance, particularly on the origin and destination of life through meditation.

In the Subud Movement, the latihan kejiwaan itself is regarded a gift from God, or in other words, wahyu, since it does not come out of one's own will (Ruspana n.d. (c), p.110-112). Pak Subuh is the first to have received this latihan. The notion of revelation is prevalent in Pak Subuh's explanations. That is why he highlights the experience of laylat al-qadr in the fasting month of Ramadan as a kind of wahyu.

The latihan is considered a distinct revelation received by Pak Subuh, which legitimates his position as a spiritual leader. This revelation is not subsumed under the framework of revelation obtained by another personage. There was a dispute regarding this between the founder of the Subud Movement and the Sumarah Movement. Pak Subuh claims that the revelation received by the founder of the Sumarah Movement is not a "self-standing revelation", but originates from the latihan of Subud Movement (Stange n.d., p.35-42).

The latihan of the Subud Movement is believed to be comparable to the receiving of the prophets and saints (Sumohadiwidjojo 1998, p.124). Pak Subuh at times designates the latihan as both haqiqa (spiritual reality) and wahyu. Pak Subuh described that now God has left His throne to grant the haqiqa among the people (Dewan Pembantu Pelatih Internasional 2007, p.6). This allows us

to infer that in the Subud Movement revelation is not the monopoly of the founder, though the revelation of the founder is distinct from those of the other practitioners of the latihan, as the revelation of the latter is mediated by the former.

### **The founder of the Subud Movement and the latihan kejiwaan**

When we sift through the autobiography of the founder of the Subud Movement Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo we come across the story of his quest for spiritual teachers. One of these teachers was the Naqshbandi master Sheikh 'Abd al-Rahman. It is said that the sheikh held Subuh's hands and uttered the words, "Grace, luck, revelation". Furthermore the sheikh said, "Since I met you, I [have known] that you are not on the same level [as I]. Accordingly it is inappropriate to learn from me. Your teacher should be the Prophet" (Sumohadiwidjojo n.d.). This can be considered as an acknowledgment of the spiritual talent of Subuh.

The founder of the Subud Movement related that he gained only a low level of schooling. He declared that what makes him different is that he was taught by God (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990, p.11-52), or in other words, His wisdom came to him. This may give the impression that he is not an ordinary person. Nevertheless he underlined that his entitlement to direct knowledge from God was most likely due to the virtues of his parents and forefathers. His mother, for instance, is said to have undergone a sort of purification before her marriage, when a bright light filled up her body. In addition, both of his parents are believed to be descendents of respected Islamic teachers (Rieu 1985, p.56; Jawahar 2012; Meyer 2006).

In the autobiography of Pak Subuh we encounter his story of purification. He relates that he was stabbed by a mysterious person. Soon after, the person inserted something into his bosom (Ruspana n.d.(b), p.17). This purification, which is believed to be precondition for the reception of his first revelation, is likewise considered to be a legitimation to his next position of spiritual leader.

In 1925 Pak Subuh began to receive his first revelation which lasted a thousand days, during which time he did not sleep. During this period, he was not only trained by God to perform Islamic prayers but also in various ways of worship as well as motions of other creatures (Rieu 1985, p.55; Schottmann 2011). This revelation later came to be called the latihan kejiwaan. As the originator of the latihan kejiwaan, Subuh was shown its working and purpose (Wiryo-hudoyo 1999a). The first revelation of Pak Subuh coincided likewise with the appearance of a ball of light which was also witnessed by others. Some of these people were later initiated into his spiritual path.

Pak Subuh's latihan during this period reveals the nature of latihan at the embryonic stage of the development of the Subud Movement. The latihan in this phase is marked by a several features, such as the light as a sign of the coming of God's power, the change of the movements of the latihan, and the effect of the latihan on others. Pak Subuh's latihan during this time can be perceived as a phase of "liminality" which marks a significant phase in Pak Subuh's spiritual career. During this period, he decided to quit his job. Afterwards, however, Pak Subuh reintegrated into his normal life with a new awareness of his being since he had encountered the latihan. The ascension of Pak Subuh in 1933 is considered the highest possible receiving of the latihan; accordingly Pak Subuh considers it to be a starting-point in disseminating the latihan.

The book *Susila Budhi Dharma* is considered to be an articulation of another revelation obtained by Pak Subuh (Longcroft 1990, p.55). This sort of revelation (which deals mainly with the diverging levels of soul and the purpose of the latihan kejiwaan) supports his main revelation, namely the latihan kejiwaan. From another angle, the *Susila Budhi Dharma* can be considered to be a product of literary inspiration (which is in Javanese usage also subsumed under the rubric "revelation"). Pak Subuh himself claimed that what he received in the *Susila Budhi Dharma* (2002) was distinct from mainstream Javanese poetic tradition

(Sumohadiwidjojo 1978). This likewise suggests that spiritual leaders such as Pak Subuh are receptive to literary inspiration.

Pak Subuh expounded that the latihan is believed to be unique and in accordance with one's inner self. Accordingly, he never instructed members of the Subud Movement to do anything particular during the latihan or to learn his language (Sumohadiwidjojo 1998, p.3-66). On another occasion, Pak Subuh insisted that the latihan of the Subud Movement is not identical with the spiritual knowledge of Pak Subuh. His aims were not to initiate the people into his knowledge, but rather to channel the people so that they could come into direct contact with God.

This indicates at least three possible implications. Firstly, it stresses the universalism of the latihan, independent of any cultural upbringing. Secondly, the latihan of the members cannot be modelled on that of the founder. Thirdly, there is no prescribed act during the latihan.

Pak Subuh maintained that he was neither a prophet nor the Messiah (Sumohadiwidjojo 1998, p.3-198). Elsewhere he stressed that he was not al-imam al-mahdi (Rieu 1985, p.33). Such designations, he argued, are solely in the hands of God (Sumohadiwidjojo 1998, p.3-198). Pak Subuh's statements were probably in response to the tendency to create a cult around Pak Subuh, especially during his lifetime (Bolt n.d., p.47).

Pak Subuh preferred to call himself a "guide" or "shepherd" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1998, p.3-192). On another occasion, he depicted himself as a pioneer who channels contact from God to the people and allows them to encounter the power of God directly (Dewan Pembantu Pelatih Internasional 2003, p.273). At times he advised the members of the Subud Movement to stand on their own feet (Bolt n.d., p.47).

One member of the Subud Movement concluded that Pak Subuh was al-imām al-mahdī. His argument was that knowledge of the soul can only be revealed to special persons by God. He then looked into the doctrines of Islam which allude to Pak Subuh's

position. In the end, he decided that the characteristics of Pak Subuh are close to those of al-imām al-mahdī as revealed by some prophetic traditions (hadith).

This particular member admitted that he made this supposition in order to relieve his doubts regarding the Subud Movement. As a strict Muslim, he was trained to believe that there was no truth outside the institution of religion, in particular Islam. In the meantime, however, he had felt the efficacy of the latihan of the Subud Movement. Therefore he was at pains to reconcile Islam and the Subud Movement. He asserted that he was among the few to analyse Islamic doctrines supporting the latihan and Pak Subuh's position. Another member made the simpler supposition that Pak Subuh was one of God's saints (wali). Such suppositions are normal if we consider the fact that the members come from a particular religious upbringing. Accordingly, they strive to analyse their respective religious doctrines which are supportive of Pak Subuh's position.

Some other members believe that Pak Subuh is among those who obtained a revelation from God. This sort of revelation – which is concerned in particular with the haqiqa (spiritual reality) – is deemed to be relevant for humanity today. This belief correlates to what Pak Subuh described about himself and his spiritual receiving.

Pak Subuh maintained that the latihan of the Subud Movement was complementary to the revelation received by the prophets. He describes it in this way: "Abraham was the sperm; Moses was the foetus; Christ was the child; Mohammad the young man. Subud is the adult". The Subud Movement introduces an autonomous relationship with God; it also enables a human being to see his own morality, so that he can receive what is right or wrong (Bolt n.d., p.36).

Pertaining to Subuh's position, Siti Rahayu Wiryohudoyo (b. 13 March 1928) (henceforth: Rahayu or Ibu Rahayu) highlights that "[w]e don't need to make any claims about Bapak, what we recognise is that Bapak is the father of all Subud members" (Wiryohudoyo 1999b). Subuh commonly

addressed the members of the Subud Movement [as] "children". The members address Subuh as "Bapak" (Indonesian for father) or "Pak Subuh". This shows the intimate relationship between the spiritual leader and the members of the Subud Movement.

The circle of the Subud movement prefers to designate Pak Subuh as "originator of the latihan kejiwaan" and "spiritual leader" rather than as "founder of the movement". The reluctance to designate him as the founder is most likely due to their unwillingness to identify the Subud Movement as a "new sect" (which brings negative connotations, especially in the Indonesia religious terrain). The latihan kejiwaan of the Subud Movement is supposed to be in line with the receiving of the prophets. The members of the Subud Movement favour the attributes of "originator of latihan kejiwaan" or "spiritual leader", since both refer to the main mission of Pak Subuh.

#### **Divinely inspired speeches of the founder**

The founder of the Subud Movement asserted that he never used a draft for his talks (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990, p.14-112). He maintained that he was only a channel, or, in other words, he only delivered his talks impromptu according to what he had received from God. Accordingly, he recommended the following attitude to the members of the Subud Movement: "[w]hen you listen to Bapak, try to prepare a place within you; a place that is ready to receive whatever God wills Bapak to say to you" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1992.vi).

There is no holy book which is believed to exert a single authority in the Subud Movement. What comes from the founder is of significance in discerning the course of the latihan and the Subud Movement. The latihan itself, however, is essentially an individual experience. This is in line with Pak Subuh's own explanation that his talks should not be viewed as a "fixed theory" but rather as an illustration on the working of the latihan.

Pak Subuh's talks comprise parts of his experience in the latihan, which will be un-

derstood by the members after they themselves have encountered them. In line with this, Ibu Rahayu explains that by reading Pak Subuh's talks, one learns about his journey and, if it is possible, witnesses some of the experiences which were encountered by Pak Subuh along his path. The explanations of Pak Subuh are believed to be able to calm members' thoughts, so that they can discern the working of the latihan (Wiryojudoyo 2006b).

Reading what has been left behind by Pak Subuh is necessary for the members of the Subud Movement, especially for spiritual helpers, so that they will be able to know the direction of the latihan. If they wait until they themselves undergo such experiences, it would probably take a long time (Wiryojudoyo 1999a). Ibu Rahayu argues that reading Pak Subuh's talks does not necessarily mean creating a cult around him. The respect for his talks is due to the fact that he was the first to receive the latihan (Wiryojudoyo 2003b).

Ibu Rahayu describes individuals who do not feel the necessity of sticking to Pak Subuh's advice (Wiryojudoyo 2003b, p.89). She argues that one may do so if one receives the contact directly from God without any link to the Subud Movement. However, if one receives contact that is channelled by Pak Subuh or his assistant, he has to stick to the guidelines of Pak Subuh (Wiryojudoyo 2000). The reluctance of some practitioners of the latihan to abide by the explanations of Pak Subuh is most likely due to their preference for the latihan, the main revelation received by Pak Subuh.

One adherent of the Subud Movement described the atmosphere of Pak Subuh's speeches as follows:

As the talk began, with Bapak talking in Indonesian, a palpable atmosphere descended on the hall not dissimilar to the feeling of latihan. Bapak's mellifluous voice would rise and fall. He would laugh and then sound serious. There was for me always a sense of magic, of being involved in something much greater than myself. There is no doubt in my mind that they didn't come from him but rather through

him. He certainly never used notes, yet the talks often went on for three hours or more and flowed fairly logically as if written, never rambling (Bolt n.d., p.34-35).

In addition to these divinely inspired speeches, Pak Subuh also delivered normal speeches. Dewan Pembantu Pelatih Internasional (2007, p.273) reveals the fact that Pak Subuh's welcoming address on the occasion of the fourth world congress of the Subud Movement in Jakarta is an instance of these normal speeches. Bolt (n.d., p.35) puts it as follows: "[h]e read from notes and his voice was totally different as he was, I am certain, being his normal, worldly self at that moment". This distinction correlates to Pak Subuh's explanation that one needs to distinguish between the two aspects of Pak Subuh, between being in contact from God and being an ordinary human.

In the circle of the Subud Movement, Pak Subuh's talks, which he received from God, are considered as revelation. These talks are a revelation which supports the main revelation, namely the latihan kejiwaan. Considering the significance of these speeches, a few members of the Subud Movement attempted to transcribe them, and this resulted in a considerable amount of collection. These talks are distinct from the Susila Budhi Dharma, which was put into writing by Pak Subuh himself. The Susila Budhi Dharma itself is considered to be distinct from his other books, since it originates from revelation. His other works, like Serat Djati Makna (Book of Essential Meaning) and Serat Uran-uran: Trikanda (Book of Songs: Three Sets of Admonitions), as Pak Subuh admitted himself, are to some extent influenced by the teachings of his previous teachers (Longcroft 1993, p.87-88).

Due to their nature of being "oral revelations", these talks convey the fullest meaning to the members of the Subud Movement who listen to the talks live. It is at times stressed that direct contact with the recipients of revelation provides an ambience enabling the audience to discern and feel the content of the talks. When the talks are transformed into writing, they cannot con-

vey the same degree of meaning as their former state of being "oral revelation".

### **The spiritual helper and the latihan kejiwaan**

The spiritual helpers (pembantu pelatih) are regarded as the key to the growth of the Subud Movement, as they are in charge of initiating new members into it. As a result, the spiritual helpers bear a heavy responsibility (Ruspana n.d.(a), p.17).

In the Subud Movement, the spiritual helpers (who are described as teachers) are to be examples for the members (who are described as pupils) (Ruspana n.d.(a), p.17). The illustration of the spiritual helpers as teachers is employed to emphasise their exemplary role, not in the sense that they teach the members the reality of latihan. The real teacher in the Subud Movement is, after all, the power of God. In line with this notion, Pak Subuh at times describes himself as cleaning service staff, preparing a room for the coming of the teacher, namely the power of God (Bolt n.d., p.38), which is the acting agent of the latihan.

In the circle of the Subud Movement, Pak Subuh is known as the spiritual leader (Ruspana 2002, p.121), and the spiritual helpers assist him in implementing some of his duties. This seems to be contradictory to another statement of Pak Subuh, which asserts that the leader and the trainer during the latihan are the power of God (Ruspana n.d.(a), p.17).

Ruspana, a spiritual helper of the Subud Movement, has offered a fascinating report on the nature of the relation between Subuh and spiritual helpers. He explained that the trainer is the power of God. However, at the concrete level God needs a mediator, namely Pak Subuh, to pioneer the latihan. To help spread the latihan, Pak Subuh as the spiritual leader is in need of helpers. The duty of the spiritual helper is not to assist in the working of latihan (which is dependent on God's grace), but rather to assist in the arrangement of the latihan. Although the latihan itself is a direct contact with the power of God, there are things related to the latihan that require the explanation of a spi-

ritual leader (Ruspana n.d. (b), p.129).

In the Subud Movement, spiritual experience is individual. The spiritual experiences revealed by some members of the Subud Movement, especially the spiritual helpers, are not to be followed blindly by the other members except when they themselves have come across them (Mangunsuharto 2002). The experiences of the spiritual helpers point towards two possibilities: a gift from God or an impact of purification. Believing completely in the experiences of the spiritual helper will lessen one's faith in his own spiritual advancement (Wiryohudoyo 1976). Another possible reason, as specified by Rahayu, is to minimise the confusion of the members as to whom they should follow if there is discrepancy among the spiritual helpers pertaining to their respective spiritual experiences (Wiryohudoyo 1998).

### **Initiation and the latihan kejiwaan**

In the Subud Movement, initiation or "opening", is essentially an oath of allegiance of a human being to God. It is the power of God which essentially initiates somebody into the Subud Movement. Therefore it does not matter if the one undergoing the initiation and the spiritual helpers adhere to differing religions (Sumohadiwidjo 1990, p.14-118). Accordingly, Rahayu asserts that the contact is from God, otherwise it cannot be channelled to people from different parts of the world and from distinct religious upbringing (Wiryohudoyo 2006a).

Although all those who have received the contact are potential channels for others, it is only a spiritual helper who is entitled to induct a person into the Subud Movement. If an ordinary member attempts to initiate somebody, the latter is not admitted. To Pak Subuh, it is not necessary for a spiritual helper to have reached a high level of spirituality before he inducts an applicant into the Subud Movement. The minimum requirement is that the spiritual helper be able to become a channel through which the contact from God flows (Sumohadiwidjo 1998, p.3-218).

This does not negate the cases in which those who underwent initiation could

not receive the latihan because the spiritual helper's lack of surrender led to their being unable to act as a proper channel for this contact. The degree and the success of the initiation depend somewhat on the quality of surrender of the spiritual helpers.

The Subud Movement is aware that the words "opening" and "to open" as well as the words "initiation" and "to initiate" necessitate the existence of subject and object. The object is certainly the candidate. The movement maintains, however, that the subject is God Himself. The spiritual helpers are depicted only as facilitators, so that the candidate can release himself from the influence of passions. Consequently he can receive contact from God.

The concept of "opening" in the Subud Movement includes at least two meanings. First, it serves as a rite of passage (rite de passage) ceremony, symbolising entrance and reception into a certain group or community. Accordingly, those undergoing this rite are permitted to participate in the communal latihan, which is only open to members of the group. Secondly, it acts as a rite through which the person is able to receive a vibration within his being as an indication of the encounter with contact from God. Such a condition is regarded as the state of latihan.

The spiritual helpers are considered to play a part in channelling the contact. Nonetheless, according to the practices of the Subud Movement, the spiritual helpers may not be arrogant, since the success of this process depends on the will of God. Accordingly, they must hold to the ethics that they should not claim that they personally open the candidate. Such haughtiness is considered irreverent, since, according to the brotherhood, the advancement of the candidate does not depend on spiritual helpers and his spiritual potential is not necessarily lower than the spiritual helpers. This spiritual potential would become manifest after the initiation. Pak Subuh himself underlines that he is only a transmitter of God's contact. It is possible that after receiving the contact this new adherent will advance quickly even better than Pak Subuh, and in that case Pak

Subuh cannot protest to God (Dewan Pembantu Pelatih Internasional 2007, p.123-124). A unique and egalitarian relationship between the spiritual helpers and the candidate is palpable in the Subud Movement.

In the Subud Movement, a spiritual helper may initiate a limited number of candidates in accordance to his capability to endure the burden which ensues from channelling the contact. It is in the framework of this consideration that Pak Subuh suggested postponing the initiation of those who are mentally sick. This is likewise suggestive that the ones performing the initiation may be affected by the condition of the initiated. For instance, if the initiated has learned some magical practices, the spiritual helpers will be hurt for some time (Sumohadiwidjojo 1998, p.3-200).

In the Subud Movement, a male candidate is not to be initiated by a female spiritual helper, even she is the wife of the candidate. In the initiation process, the candidate often generates body movements, which in certain cases may indicate the existence of sickness. These indications are at times unrecognisable by a person of the opposite sex; or it is unethical if the spiritual helper of the opposite sex indicates the sick parts of the applicant's body (Dewan Pembantu Pelatih Internasional 2007, p.119). This rule is mostly a matter of sex segregation which originates from Eastern values. Nevertheless, one can also see it from another angle; this rule allows the possibility of female spiritual helpers, which is remarkable in terms of gender equality.

#### **"Testing": a minor revelation?**

The process of "testing" is similar to that of latihan. The distinction between the two lies in their respective aims; the intent of testing is searching for an answer or to ascertain something, whereas that of the latihan is worshipping God (Ruspana 2001, p.1). Testing is normally performed in a shorter time than the latihan.

Pak Subuh provides hints pertaining to the procedure of testing:

The way to obtain a resolution or deci-

on about something suggested or put forward is to do latihan together. But before doing so the question is read aloud. You just read it out in an ordinary way. Do not remember it or think about it, then an answer may be obtained that is free from your will. In this way you will get an answer (Sumohadiwidjojo and Wiryohudoyo 2005, p.110).

To the leaders of the Subud Movement, testing is one of the practises of this movement, particularly in decision-making. Testing in the Subud Movement is believed to be simple and straightforward. Hence, they pay attention to the correct performance of testing so that it can achieve a reliable result (Ruspana 2001, p.8).

One adherent of the Subud Movement contended that she was astonished when Pak Subuh introduced testing as an alternative mechanism of decision-making. Pak Subuh asked the spiritual helpers to perform a testing on the nominees for chairman (Sumohadiwidjojo 1993, p.14). This testing occurred during Pak Subuh's lifetime, which implies that he provided an example enabling the spiritual helpers to possess testing experiences, particularly in making a decision.

The nature of testing performed by Pak Subuh is distinguishable from that of the other adherents of the Subud Movement; as the founder himself put it, "it is different for Bapak, for Bapak it is something spontaneous, automatic, but you, you still have to learn it, you still have to teach yourself" (Sumohadiwidjojo and Wiryohudoyo 2005, p.112).

What Pak Subuh did during the testing for advancement is similar to what he did during the testing prior to initiating an applicant into the Subud Movement; he emptied his mind, surrendering to God. In the meantime, he received from God through his mouth. He insisted that he should simply be an instrument of God to test the progress of the latihan of the members. During this state he uttered such phrases like "where is your head?" and "what is the use of the head?" (Sumohadiwidjojo 1998, p.3-202).

Pak Subuh at times held testing sessions after delivering talks, so that the audience could witness and experience something about the realities of what he alluded to during the speeches (Sumohadiwidjojo 1990, p.14-91). He once did a testing for members so that they would encounter the spiritual reality that the world cannot bear all the power of God, much less His essence (Sumohadiwidjojo 1976). Another instance is that Pak Subuh once performed a testing to experience the first prayer of the Prophet after his ascension. It is believed that the prayer of Prophet was not of his own will but his soul, which is identical with the state of latihan (Siregar 2000, p.25). He once performed a testing so that the person being tested experienced the essence of pilgrimage. This particular person revealed that the pilgrimage in essence is perfection of morality and spiritual calmness (Soehoed 200, p.151).

Pak Subuh insisted that he was the only person who was able to perform a testing with a large range of members, one hundred for instance. He transmitted contact from God to their souls at the same time. That is why they will receive something during the testing, even though they have not yet experienced the latihan before. Ibu Rahayu, on the other hand, does not dare to undertake such a testing, since it may imperil the members. Hence, she recommends spiritual helpers not to test more than five members at once (Wiryohudoyo 1991a).

Pak Subuh once commented on who is eligible to perform testing in one of his talks:

For the sake of order and regularity it would be right for testing to be done only by helpers. Once in a while, [as] long as it does not happen every time, a member is allowed to test, [as] long as he is accompanied or taken care of by helpers. Testing is not a special right of the helpers, but it is one of their responsibilities to serve their brothers (members) in this way when questions are put to them (Board of International Helpers 1971, p.87).

One member of the Subud Movement explained that performing a testing with a group of spiritual helpers can be revealing;

the spiritual helpers also receive something on behalf of the person being tested. The person being tested may consider his own receiving and the receiving of the spiritual helpers (Bolt n.d., p.57).

Pak Subuh recommended that the spiritual helpers practise the testing so as to gradually sensitise their own spiritual state and to know the answer to the problems (Sumohadiwidjojo 1967, p.45). They are to surrender in their testing so that the result will be in line with God's will, rather than with their own wish. It is believed that if there is doubt before testing, the result will be uncertain (Wiryohudoyo 1999a).

The forms of the indicated answer are many, correlating to the spiritual levels of those performing the testing. Those at the rudimentary level obtain the answer through their body movements, such as nodding or shaking their heads. Those at the next stage receive the answer through physical movements and the feeling of conformity/unconformity. Those at the next stage can attain the answer through understanding. Ruspana recounted his own experience as an example of this last level. Earlier he had taught university students, and one of these students posed a question that Ruspana could not answer. To cope with the problem, he stood relaxed asking for God's help to answer the question of the student. Unexpectedly, he took a chalk and wrote a diagram on the black board. Soon after he understood that the content of this diagram was an answer to the student's question (Ruspana 2001, p.5-10).

A spiritual helper may conduct a testing when the process of purification has penetrated at least into the body of feeling, so that he can receive the answer of the testing through his physical body. When the spiritual helpers doubt the purity of another spiritual helper they can ask an experienced spiritual helper to do a special testing for him in order to find out the level of his purity (Ruspana 2001, p.26). It also shows that not every helper is appropriate for or capable of testing.

It is suggested for those at the physical level to formulate questions as closed ques-

tions in order to obtain more precise yes/no answers. It is likewise better when one assumes that one's spirituality is at the physical level. (Ruspana 2001, p.8). One respondent related that the physical reaction indicating positive and negative answers during the testing varies from one person to another, and the person himself has to recognise the meaning of this reaction. Accordingly, the spiritual helpers usually perform a special testing for those have not experienced it before. This special testing is aimed to know what the reaction of the person is when he receives the positive answer in the testing, and the other way around.

It is believed that one can obtain a reliable result when the testing is free from the pressure from low forces (Sumohadiwidjojo and Wiryohudoyo 2005, p.117). The capability to perform testing, in the eyes of one spiritual helper, is the fruit of latihan. It is believed that when one's latihan advances, one can do a testing. Later on one will be able to obtain more a reliable answer in the testing.

Pak Subuh contended that testing was the heart of the experience in the Subud Movement. Hence he asserts that "without the experience of testing it is not possible to gain faith in our inner development" (Vitachie n.d., p.85). In the eyes of one spiritual helper, performing a testing to solve important problems will be of significance for the development of the Subud Movement. Such testing is suggested by Pak Subuh. Nonetheless, if most of the answers through testing are false, it will decrease the trust of the members in this institution, which in turn will weigh negatively on the development of the organisation of Subud (Ruspana 2001, p.28).

One spiritual helper explained that the result which the spiritual helpers strive to achieve during the testing is not rational truth but rather the spiritual truth. The coordinator of testing therefore does not need to ask for the consent of the floor pertaining to the result of the testing (Ruspana 2001, p.24). The result of a testing cannot be produced by rational consideration. This likewise reveals that the Subud Movement favours spiritual considerations over rational

considerations in making important decisions.

The testing carried out by Pak Subuh is considered to be the most authoritative. Since the death of the founder, most members of the Subud Movement hold the conviction that the testing of Ibu Rahayu exerts a certain degree of authority over the members, although not on the same level as that of the founder.

In the Subud Movement, testing as a basis of making important decisions is to be performed collectively. Nevertheless, as Pak Subuh believes, it is worth noting that the large number of the performers doing the testing does not guarantee its accuracy (Dewan Pembantu Pelatih Internasional 2007, p.182). It is believed that the reliability of the answer of testing does not depend on what forum it is performed in, but rather on its correct performance and the purity of the performer and, above all, the grace of God (Ruspana 2001, p.24).

This likewise demonstrates that the result of testing is relative, since it constitutes an attempt by a human being to approach the truth through the process of receiving what God reveals to his purified organs (Wiryohudoyo 1991a). Accordingly, the testing itself does not guarantee arriving at the truth. In addition, Ibu Rahayu argues that God is powerful and so can change whatever He wills (Wiryohudoyo 1999a).

A spiritual helper observed that during the period of 1947-1970, the spiritual helpers worked individually. There was even competition among the spiritual helpers. When a spiritual helper quickly advanced in his spirituality and revealed his spiritual experiences more than others, he would gain more sympathy from members. After the creation of the Board of Spiritual helpers, such competition has decreased (Ruspana 2001, p.14). It seems that Pak Subuh created the Board of Spiritual helpers in order to diminish the tendency towards an individual cult in the Subud Movement.

## CONCLUSION

According to the Subud Movement, the decision to grant someone a revelation (wa-

hyu) depends solely on the hand of God. The wahyu itself is believed to be unlimited. This signifies the possibilities of wahyu nowadays, which owes a great debt to Javanese tradition. The term wahyu in Javanese tradition covers such things as magical power (*kasekten*), literary inspiration (*kapujanggan*), prophecy (*nubuwwa*), divine inspiration (*ilham*), as well as a supposed divine mandate to rule in a certain area. In Javanese mystical tradition, the wahyu can give legitimacy for a position as spiritual leader.

The latihan kejiwaan which was received by the founder of the movement since 1925 is considered his main revelation. The latihan is considered a distinct revelation received by Pak Subuh, which legitimates his position as a spiritual leader. This revelation is claimed to be self-standing, not subsumed under the framework of revelation obtained by another personage.

In the circle of the Subud Movement, Pak Subuh's talks, which he received from God, are considered as revelation. These talks are regarded a revelation which supports the main revelation, namely the latihan kejiwaan. Due to their nature of being "oral revelations", these talks convey the fullest meaning to the members of the Subud Movement who listen to the talks live.

The concept of "opening" or "initiation" in the Subud Movement includes at least two meanings. Firstly, it serves as a rite of passage (rite de passage) ceremony, symbolising entrance and reception into a certain group or community. Accordingly, those undergoing this rite are permitted to participate in the communal latihan, which is only open to members of the group. Secondly, it acts as a rite through which the person is able to receive a vibration within his being as an indication of the encounter with contact from God. Such a condition is regarded as the state of latihan.

The process of "testing" is similar to that of latihan. The distinction between the two lies in their respective aims; the intent of testing is searching for an answer or to ascertain something, whereas that of the latihan is worshipping God. In this juncture,

testing can be regarded as “minor revelation”. In the Subud Movement revelation is not the monopoly of the founder, though the revelation of the founder is distinct from those of the rest practitioners, as the revelation of the latter is mediated by the former.

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