1. Introduction

Among ancient Indonesian heritages that have remained as the focus of attention from international researchers as well as Indonesians’ are ancient literatures. These various literatures emerged no less than 200 years ago have enriched the mosaic of knowledge of Indonesian cultural treasures. Thousands in tens of thousand of them which preserved domestic and overseas are Javanese ancient literatures. One of them is what so called *Sajarah Banten* (later will be termed as SB)

SB or also known as *Babad Banten* is a Javanese clasical literature with historical nuance. This work remains interesting that despite of the facts it is hand writting in Javanese character and language, revealing the cultures and history of Java; one could also discover the non Javanese substances in the text. The disclosure of such substances, typically related to the usage of Malay language, is common in Javanese texts especially ones from Javanese coastal areas. As SB is one of the Javanese coastal area literatures, the usage of Malay language topic could be seen from the text. Nonetheless, based on my study of the content of the text, I discovered another non Javanese matter which is worth discussing. That matter is letter reading ceremony. To have a better understanding of what and how the ritual is, we must equip ourselves with the comprehension of SB as a whole. Thus, the general information of the text will next be provided.

2. About The Manuscripts

2.1 General information

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2 *Babad* in Javanese language could mean cerita sejarah (historical story) (Gericke-Roorda, 1901: 758). Hoesein Djajadiningrat (in Sudjatmoko, 1995: 58) named it ‘local traditional historiography’, to point out the literatures originated from the center of authorities, such as the palace (*keraton*).
There are plenty of SB scripts available based on the information I gathered by tracing various Javanese manuscript catalogues and they reach up to 29 manuscripts. Most of them are preserved in domestic and overseas’ libraries. If we observe the width of text content, the 29 manuscripts contain of 36 texts divided into two main versions. Hoeesin Djajadiningrat (1913) mentioned them as Sajarah Banten Mayor and Sajarah Banten Minor whereas Pudjiastuti acknowledged as Sajarah Banten Besar (SBB) and Sajarah Banten Kecil (SBK). SBB version has 19 texts where SBK has 17 texts.

SB texts were mostly written in *tembang macapat*\(^4\), with few exceptions in *gancaran* (prose), using Banten Javanese with Javanese or *Pegon*\(^5\) (Arabic scripts for Javanese) scripts on European paper or *dluwang*\(^6\). The thickness varies among the texts. The SBB texts which narrated the story of Banten from pre Islamic, under Islamic era until the administration of Sultan Agung Tirtayasa had some 250-500 pages with 50-66 *pupuh* (chapters); meanwhile the SBK texts version which narrated the battles between Sultan Agung Tirtayasa against Sultan Haji had 45 average pages with 6-7 *pupuh* only.

In this discussion, the two non Javanese substances were only found in SBB texts. Therefore, the SBB texts version will be the basis of the study of SB. Nonetheless, since there are 19 SBB texts version to be studied, I will choose only one text to ease the discussion. LOr 7389 was picked because of the completion of its texts and colophon.\(^7\)

2.2 Summary of The Text

The SB text has two main parts. The first part contains the history of Islamisation and the founding of Banten Kingdom by Maulana Hasanuddin, the son of Sunan Gunungjati, Cirebon. The second parts tells more of Banten as a kingdom under the administration of Maulana Hasanuddin until Sultan Bupatih Abu Fatah who was known as Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (The sixth Banten Sultan). Here is the summary.

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3 This is due to several manuscripts contain more than one SB texts, such as LOr 7420 has three SB texts (See Pudjiastuti, 2000: 30)
4 Javanese clasical poem (see Arps 1999)
5 about pegon, see Ninie susasnti Yulianto & Titik Pudjiastuti (2001: 206--207)
6 Jvanese paper, made from skin of *glugu* (Javanese) or *saeh* (Sundanese) tree. See Pudjiastuti (2001: 189--194)
7 From its colophon, LOr 7389 was copied on Wednesday, 9 Ruwah Be year, 1144 H or Wednesday, 8\(^{th}\) February 1732 (See Titik Pudjiastuti, 2000: 77)
• After the death of Maulana Hasanuddin (The first King of Banten), his son Maulana Yusup succeeded him.
• Maulana Yusup (The second King of Banten) passed away and his son, Maulana Muhammad (Kanjeng Ratu Banten Surosowan) replaced him.
• In a battle against Palembang, Maulana Muhammad (The third King of Banten) met his death (and entitled Prabu Seda ing Palembang). His infant son was inaugurated as the new king and entitled Pangeran Ratu (Pangeran Abdullah Kadir)
• A number of significant events occurred during Pangeran Abdullah Kadir administration which were
  a. Pailir war (internal battle between Banten noblemen)
  b. The fall of Jaketra to the Dutch
  c. The expedition to Mataram and Jaketra
  d. Pabaranang incident (Banten won against the Dutch)
  e. The downfall of Ukur (Dipati Ukur rebellion against Mataram)
  f. The dispatch of delegation to Mecca. Mecca Sultanate bestowed Pangeran Abdullah Kadir a Sultan and changed his name into Sultan Abulmafakir Mahmud Abdukadir (The first Banten Sultan). The return of the delegations and the letter of Mecca Sultan were welcome with greatness ceremony.
  g. The dispatch of Banten delegations to Mataram
  h. Pagarage incident (the battle between Banten against Cirebon)
  i. Sultan Abulmafakir Mahmud Abdulkadir also known as Sultan Agung passed away and his grandson, Pangeran Dipati also known as Pangeran Ratu, the son of Sultan Abulma’ali Ahmad, replaced his position. Under his administration, there were several major events occurred:
   - The dispatch of delegations to Mecca to notify the death of The first Banten Sultan (Abulmafakir Mahmud Abdulkadir). Pangeran Dipati obtained a Sultan from Mecca Sultan and his name later on was known as Sultan Bupatih Abu Fatah
The battle between Banten against the Dutch. Peace came no less than one year after the battle.

The end

2. Non Javanese in SB Text: Letter reading ceremony

Upacara in Sanskrit means ‘method or work method’ (William, 1988: 213) whereas in KBBI (1993: 1108) means: (1) greatness signs, (2) utensils, sequence of acts or deeds bound to certain rules according to the customs or religions, and (3) acts or celebrations done or held in respond to significant events. Surat means written paper (KBBI, 1993:978)

The SB text contains a part of narration which depicts an event where the king along with his people is occupied in a ceremony. That event is kingdom’s ceremony held to welcome and recite the letter from Sultan Sarip Jahed, Sultan of Mecca. If the definitions of ceremony are to be linked with the SB texts, there will be a clear understanding that the appropriate meaning for the term is acts or celebrations done or held in respond to significant events. The Mecca Sultan letter was crucial to the Banten Sultan not only it came from a prominent and respected Moslem king but what more important was that the letter had political content where it showed the recognition of the existence of Banten as a kingdom. It was an official one as written from and to a king. In her book The Legacy of Malay Letter or Warisan Warkah Melayu (1994), Annabel Galop explained the matters pertaining to correspondence where every detail in letters, such as the letterhead, seal position, text position and envelope types, all have certain meanings and references about the position of both the sender and the receiver.

The ceremony to welcome and recite the letter in the SB texts is found in pupuh XL and XLII. This occasion happened during Pangeran Abdullah Kadir, the king of Banten, administration. It said that Pangeran Abdullah Kadir sent delegations to Mecca to inquire the meaning of three tarekat books as the properties of Banten. They were
The return of the delegations was welcome with a great ceremony. Here is the chronology of the letter ceremony and recitation:

1) *Pupuh XL (Dhandanggula)*: the ceremony preparation: 19 *pada* (verses)

   The king of Banten, Pangeran Abdullah Kadir, ordered Kiai Tumenggung Wiroutama to prepare the letter welcome ceremony by marvelously decorating the guests’ ships and carriages and kingdom’s gamelan.

2) *Pupuh XLI (Pamargengmangsah)*: the process of ceremony: 65 *pada* (verses)

   On the welcome day, the letter picker men and ship captain were ready in their finest uniforms. All the rifles, canons and gamelan were set up.

   The letter receiver official, Ki Pekih accompanied by several ministries already took seats inside the ship carrying trays. Gamelans were beaten incessantly as the ship reached the shore.

   Meanwhile in the terrain, the beautifully decorated letter carriage was set up nearby the seashore. The carriage would be marched by kingdom’s elder men. The armies and people were lined up along the streets and sea shore to merry and witness the letter welcome and recitation from Sultan of Mecca. While, Sultan Banten, his offspring and his son or daughter in laws seated in *Srimanganti* accompanied with other prominent guests.

   After the letter picker man arrived on the ship and received it, the guns were fired eleven times. The fires were answered the same from the kingdom fortress. The silence pause was soon to be filled with gamelan creating a loud and joyful crowd.

   As Ki Pekih received the letter, the ship moved closer toward the pier. Gun-salute greeted the groups. Ki Pekih was picked up and got on the carriage escorted with the noblemen. It headed to go around the fortress. Arriving in the center, the king of Banten, Pangeran Abdullah Kadir and his children got on the carriage. They were seated and waiting for the letter recitation moment. At the same time, all armies and high ranking officials were seated wanting to hear the letter recitation from Sultan Sarip Jahed from Mecca.

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8 The study of this tree *tarekat* books of Kesultanan Banten was done by Martin van Bruinessen in *Archipel* 50 (1995: 165-200)
Ki Pekih stood up still, eyes looking to the west and with a loud voice as the preacher read sermon he began to read the letter. It echoed everywhere.

3) *Pupuh XLII (Kinanthi):* the letter content: 28 pada (verses)

The content expressed Sultan Sarip Jahed’s, Sultan of Mecca respect and satisfaction of the king of Banten therefore he granted the king’s interest with Abraham’s (Moslem prophet) flag and *kiswah* cloth (*Ka’bah* black cover cloth). He also conferred a new name and sultan for the king of Banten, he is to be recognized as Sultan Abumafakhir Mahmud Abdulqodir) and his son called Sultan Abul Ma’ali Akhmad).

3. Closing

The letter reading welcome ceremony as depicted in the SB texts does not indicate the Javanese custom. This could be inferred from the texts showing how Sultan Pekih read the letter as a Moslem preacher reading his sermon on Friday prayer (*khotbah*). It is one of the rituals in Islamic tradition. Hence we will be confirmed this letter reading ritual is not a Javanese tradition.

The event of welcome ceremony and letter reading occurred during the administration of Pangeran Abdullah Kadir. Later he changed his name as Sultan Abulmafakir Mahmud Abdul Kadir upon the bestowal from Sultan of Mecca. Sultan Abulmafakir Mahmud Abdul Kadir was also recognized as Sultan Ageng Sepuh attributable to his efforts to enlarge Banten.

When exactly this ceremony took place? According to Guillot et al. (1990:10), Pangeran Abdul Kadir got the title sultan in 1638. So, we can estimate that letter reading ceremony occurred in the same date, that is 1638.

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