Subsequent paragraphs briefly introduce the Baduy people. The Baduy constitute an upland Sundanese community bound as jural and political community by ancestral commands (pikukuh karuhun). Those commands constitute the primary source for traditional governance and social control, as they were set out by the Baduy’ progenitor, regarded as the first god-human being on earth. As the Baduy believe to be immediate descendants of this very progenitor, they consider themselves to be the elder brethren of other peoples’ founding ancestors. In addition, they Baduy preserve the ways of the beginning of mankind as example for other cultures.

(…) each Baduy is always and everywhere obliged to protect ancestral tradition and to dedicate the totality of their life as service to the entire world (tapa). (Hasyim 2003: 173) The Baduy position themselves and their ancestral domain as “wiwitan polity”, the place of origin of all life and culture, and thus as living at and protecting the centre of the world. In their view, [several] human cultures originate from the Baduy, experience progress, decline and then will be returned to their origin. The negara (the states), shall experience progress, but at the same time, the purity at the beginning of culture must be preserved. (Faturohkman/Landmann 2012)

They live in a 5000 ha wide sacrosanct “ancestral domain” (tanah hak ulayat), which is protected by regional law, located in the Western part of Java (since 2010 the Province of Banten). Under their special rights, they govern their
ancestral domain somehow politically ‘free’. Today, they are estimated to number about 11,000 individuals. Until today, the origin of the Baduy people remains mysterious. There exists two general ‘refugee theories’ on the origin of the Baduy group, both with certain variations in content. Despite their difference with respect to the origin of the group, both theories converge on the Islamization of the western part of Java as trigger for the group’s retreat to the mountains. Those refugee theories are all fervently negated by the Baduy themselves. An alternative theory argues that the Baduy were probably already living in the area of the ancestral domain well before the Padjadjaran kingdom. According to this theory, the Baduy are a local people having been there long before the spread of Islam, and probably before the spread of Hinduism, continuously maintaining their tradition. This would fit with the preponderant view that the Baduy actually comprise the oldest Sundanese group – and with them being classified as Proto Malayo-Polynesian. However, none of those theories can be finally proven by now.

In the emic perception, they are in any case to be considered as of older descent than the surrounding Sundanese (Van Zanten 1995, Garna 1988, fieldwork Landmann 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012). Most likely they constitute a pre-historic Proto-Malayan or Malayo-Polynesian society which successfully maintains their ancestral tradition, as they display “Proto-Malay” genetics (Ardan 2008, Uddin 1999) and speak an archaic dialect of Sundanese language[1] (Garna 1988). The Baduy practice a swidden (slash-and-burn) agriculture system and subsistence economy. Interestingly, they are not allowed to use irrigation, to rear cattle or to domesticate four legged animals.

The Baduy community of villages displays a mandalic structure. (Ulumi 2010) Mandala refers actually to Hindu/Buddhist concept, in the Indonesian context, however, it indicates a spot, where faith is the central aspect of life and ancestors
are venerated. The Sundanese term is *kabuyutan* (- references
to the *kabuyutan* concept shall be found in ancient documents).
In consequence, the ancestral domain reflects the basic
pattern of a spatially and socially contextually coded *mandala*.

Spatially, the inner core and the sanctuary constitute the
*mandalic* center, surrounded by the two rings of the inner and
the outer Baduy settlements. Note, the Baduy are divided into
two sub-groups: an inner group settling in the core area of
the ancestral domain, in which a forbidden forest and a
pyramid sanctuary are located. The core area forms the most
elevated and most sacred spot, if placed in the larger context
of the western part of Java. The outer Baduy settle in a
“protective ring” around the inner group and core area.
Topographically, the core area and the lower protective ring
of outer villages around the elevated core are being
surrounded by lower level settlements, and the remaining area
of the western part of Java. The sanctuary is most likely an
archeological product of the old Malayo-Polynesian
architectural tradition (*pyramid*) to be found distributed all
over Southeast Asia and other parts of the world. The core
area and the sanctuary are regarded as *pusar jagad* (or center
of the world). Access to this sanctuary is restricted and
foreigners are forbidden to enter the core area of the
ancestral domain

Socially or religio-culturally, the sanctuary is the abode of
the ancestors and Lordship, and serves as the core from which
cosmic power or potency (*Tooker* 1996) is distributed
throughout the Baduy ancestral domain and in the emic view,
throughout the western part of Java (*Wessing*: 1977). The
sanctuary constitutes the point of infusion of cosmic potency
and the point where tapping into this potency (*Dellios* 2003)
is possible, and even necessary to maintain cosmic and social
order for receiving mundane fertility. This cosmic potency,
*Wessing* (1977) speculates, keeps everything going – the
sanctuary’s maintenance by the Baduy serves thus an indispensable social and cultural function for the Bantenese and Sundanese. In addition, accounts (Suputra 1950, van Zanten 1995, Ulumi 2010) and interviewees retell the magical powers of the Baduy. Often Indonesians (especially local and national politicians, artists and business people) conduct a “pilgrimage” to the three inner hamlets in the core region of the ancestral domain, to ask for success, wealth, children, or to consolidate political support. Baduy leadership figures have frequently, but discreetly, been involved in focal points of Indonesian national history.

Since early historical records, the Baduy occupy a very special position in pre-colonial, colonial, and Indonesian politics and society. Interestingly, the Baduy remember in their historical narratives a list of 33 “rulers and the leaders of the North” (Kurnia 2010). From the founding of the Banten settlement, to the Islamic State of Banten Sultanate (1500-1800), to Dutch colonization (1800-1945), and now under the Indonesian administration (1945-2012), the Baduy continue to maintain close relations with the rulers of the north. In consequence, the Bantenese Sultanate, Dutch colonial government and the Indonesian government have by and large adopted a “hands off” policy towards the Baduy (Wessing 1977; Hisyam 2003).

**Baduy as Proto Malayo-Polynesians**

There is considerable dispute over the area of origin of the speakers of the early Austronesian language phyla. The study of origins and a possible homeland of the speakers of Proto-Malayo-Polynesian posits two main models: first, the “out-of-Taiwan” model (Bellwood 1987, Blust 1984-85), second, the native to MSEA – Northwestern Vietnam” – or the eastern part of ISEA model (Solheim 1984, Oppenheimer 1999, 2001, Ishak 2007). The second model basically claims that the complex linguistic and cultural situation in the Western Malayo-Polynesian language groups does not correspond to a simple
model of incoming neolithic farmers replacing foragers. (Blench, no year, 129) This dispute cannot be discussed in depth here (for a recent discussion see Blench). The debate revolving around the two models is difficult to reconcile, as not enough archeological, linguistic, and genetic evidence has been provided. In addition, linguistic, genetic, and archaeological data at times disagree, and there are large gaps in archaeological records.

“[O]ne obvious way out of this dilemma would be to assume the exclusive forager model was simply not true, that there were vegiculturalists in ISEA prior to the coming of the Austronesians. Austronesian speakers simply assimilated them, and largely adopted their agricultural system. In this version of prehistory, early ISEA would have occupied by multiple distinct groups, including scattered foragers, settlers from the mainland in the west and “Papuans” in the more eastern regions.” (Blench, no year, 131)

This paragraph gives a brief summary of the history of the Western part of Java. Unlike in India, China, the Mediterranean area and Europe, a clear chronological periodization of Paleolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages is difficult to establish. Prehistoric Java (then part of Sundaland) may have been occupied by multiple groups since the Pleistocene having a “rich, complex interaction sphere prior to the Austronesian expansion”. (Blench no year, 132) Following three global super-floods at 12000 BC, 9000 BC and 6000 BC, Sundaland drowned and the people inhabiting the area were forced to migrate and move on. About 6000-5000 BC, Solheim II (1984-5) and Blench (no year) assume Austronesian speaking people to have already had developed extraordinary seafaring skills and a vast trading network. Blench argues for the “Austronesianisation of ISEA” (Blench no year, 132) -“the process whereby Austroasiatic, Papuan and other unknown languages and cultures were brought into the Austronesian fold” by a “powerful and innovative religious
ideology” which transformed local societies (Blench no year, 132, 143).

Finds of Buni pottery in West Java indicate that the area has been a long inhabited site and was part of a large trading centre and network at least 300 BC. In the 4th century, there is proof of the Tarumanagara polity. As elsewhere in the archipelago, court culture only seemed to be influenced by elements of Hindu tradition, whereas the population continued to perform old archipelagic shamanistic rites and practices belonging to the archipelagic religious tradition.

From the 7th to 10th century, there is no evidence for an established central authority among the scattered villages in the western part of Java. The last Vishnuite kingdom of West Java, Padjadjaran (1333-1579), covered at its height most of the western tip of Java, including Banten, and probably Cirebon and some areas to the east of it, even if these areas had already been Islamized. In 1579, Padjadjaran fell to Islamic forces of Banten. Thus the political and cultural shift in the 16th century led to a reconfiguration of religious and cultural traditions, but historic witnesses tell us of villages that had probably rejected both Hindu and Islamic influences and continued their ancient Sundanese lifestyle. Those villages in West Java most likely assimilated the Islamic elements with their shamanistic religion and worldview and continued to practice ancestor veneration as ever before. The Baduy ancestral domain certainly belongs to this category. During an annual ritual (Seba) agreed about in the 1550s following the demise of the Padjajaran kingdom, the Baduy enforce mutual bonds of recognition with lowland authorities, as they bring harvest and crop as tribute and express the loyalty of the Baduy community to the changing political lowland rulers.

Issues today
Today, they continue to advice lowland authorities on clean government, rule of law, and environmental protection in the hope their insights may contribute to a common good.

The unbroken continuity of their tradition may be attributed to subsequent facts:

1. they were regarded as fulfilling an important religious function for the lowland rulers;
2. their secluded lifestyle posed no threat to the lowland rulers;
3. the relative inaccessibility of their settlement area

Despite the small number of the group, they constitute an interesting case-study because

1. their origin remains mysterious
2. they adhere to a “megalithic lifestyle” and constitute a consecrated violence-free community
3. refusing Hinduization and Islamization, they practice an ancient faith of origin, a faith to which many Sundanese regardless their formal religion adhere
4. they adapted lowland Hindu or Islamic terms into their religious vocabulary to explain Baduy concepts according to the lowland major religion
5. they reinforce bonds with the lowland rulers since pre-Islamic times;
6. they are one among only three Indonesian sub-ethnic groups (out of 101, census 2000) acknowledged as indigenous by the Indonesian state

During the last 200 years, there has been done substantial research on the Baduy both by Indonesian and non-Indonesian researchers. In 1822, German biologist and medical employee in the Dutch Colonial Government, Carl Ludwig Blume, wrote the first European account on the Baduy. However, with the exception of Garna (1988, 1989) and Ulumi (2010), I found no accounts of a serious historical textual approach
investigating into written accounts to track possible references to the Baduy, as they are commonly regarded a somewhat bemusing cultural irregularity or “living antiquities” (cf Tricht 1929).

Today, the Baduy face several challenges related to issues as power conflict, health, expanding tourism, habitualization of money economy and discriminating national policies. Baduy knowledge and wisdom of water resources’ management, environment, traditional medicine, and mechanisms of alternative dispute resolution needs to be protected and preserved.

Basically, the Baduy inhabit their ancestral domain since pre-Islamic times and have always been granted special rights by lowland rulers. Only since the reformation area, the Baduy increasingly subjugated to discriminating practices by the regional and national government that threaten the group and their habitat. The two examples to be alleged are:

1.) A controversial 2010 Constitutional Court decision not to amend Act 1 Year 1965 on the Desecration of Religion retained the state policy of sponsoring six religions only. In this context, Act 23 Year 2006 on Identity Cards (KTP) rules that the citizens’ religion must be identified. This Act discriminates against people who do not affiliate themselves with one of the six approved religions. As local faith is not state approved, and all citizens must have a new KTP by January 2013, the column religion would be left blank in a Baduy KTP. As Agama Sunda Wiwitan is not considered a religion by the state, this causes social and civic discrimination on one side, but also a feeling of unrest among the Baduy. Supported by legal experts, they wrote a letter of protest to the Lebak district government and even requested the acknowledgement of their religion within the central Ministry of Religion in Jakarta. The letters have been unanswered by Juni 2012.
2.) The regional and central government gave a gas and petroleum exploration permit on the 3,977 km2 wide Rangkas onshore block to the Swedish Lundin company in 2011. Lundin operates since 2003 in Indonesia, and holds 51% interest, Australian-Indonesian Carnavon petroleum shares 25% and Australian Tap Oil Ltd has 24% interest. The process how this permit has been granted remains unclear. From 2010 until today drilling, 2D and 3D seismic acquisition activities have been observed frequently in the close vicinity of the Baduy ancestral domain which is located within the block. As explorations indicate the presence of an active petroleum system secured under attractive commercial terms, observers and the Baduy alike are very cautious now about the endangered legal status of the ancestral domain.

cf: http://wiwitan.org/2012/10/16/perusahaan-minyak-swedia-australia-incar-lahan-adat-baduy/

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