

Changes in Spatial Planning and the Destruction of City Identity: Lasem Case during 1970-1991

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Abstract

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This article aims to examine the factors and driving forces for Lasem City's spatial changes during 1970-1991. The changes were attributed to the New Order Government's policy regarding road infrastructure development to support the economy. In addition, there were policies during the New Order era which tended to discriminate against ethnic Chinese. These policies were carried out under the pretext of affiliation with communism among members of the Chinese community. This caused some Lasem residents to choose to abandon their Chinese identity. Data collection for this study employed the historical method consisting of four stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Based on research, the development agenda of the New Order era that failed to take into account the aspect of sustainability eroded the identity of the City of Lasem as a place teeming with cultural life.

Keywords: Lasem; Spatial Planning; City Identity.

Introduction

Lasem is an important city in the history of the Nusantara civilization. The port city was a key commercial hub during the Majapahit era up to the Japanese occupation. Because of that, Lasem had a sophisticated urban spatial structure of its time (Khamzah, 1920, pp. 53-54). Lasem as a port city has the characteristics of an open and plural society. Interaction between local residents and foreigners from various parts of the world has formed a culture of openness and mutual respect. Acculturation of various foreign cultures that have taken root in the lives of local people helped shape a new culture in Lasem. This culture eventually became the characteristic of regional culture. Consequently, Lasem became a place where foreigners felt at home and assimilation took place through a long and peaceful process.

The spatial pattern of Lasem City changed according to the orientation of the settlements of its inhabitants. Before the New Order era, Lasem had a city-oriented spatial pattern on the North Java coast highway (Pantura), the Lasem river, and the Daendels highway. However, during the New Order administration development policies were applied without regard to spatial and territorial patterns, resulting in various changes in city orientation due to the absence of Regional Regulations (Perda) on spatial and territorial planning in Rembang. City Spatial Planning was also based

on a top-down system, despite the requirement that development take heed inputs from the public (bottom-up approach).

After the 19th century, there was no significant development in the layout of the City of Lasem. In the mid-20th century, the City of Lasem could be said to have suffered a setback, one of which was caused by the New Order's policy which was considered to be unfavourable to the ethnic Chinese. In 1967 the government issued a Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 14 was banning all forms of activities containing Chinese elements. Hartono and Handinoto, 2006, p. 19).

Based on this background, there are several formulations of the problems raised in this study. First, Lasem City's spatial pattern between 1970 and 1991. Second, factors and forces that led to Lasem City's spatial changes. Third, the influence of Lasem City's spatial change on its identity as a cultural city.

Method

Data collection for this study employed the historical method. The historical research method aims to study and explore facts or experiences and past developments by trying to draw conclusions and try to make interpretations of data from these events (Kusmayadi, 2000, pp. 28-29). In this research, as a historical study, we used data collection techniques employed in historical writings: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation and finally historiography. Researchers also took oral interviews with Chinese figures that advocated assimilation including Sigit Witjaksono and Sie Hwie Djan, to produce a more comprehensive historical narrative from the perspective of the community itself (emik).

Profile of Lasem City

Lasem is a small city that is part of the Rembang Regency, Central Java Province. The city is located on the coast line of the North Coast of Java (Pantura). Geographically, Lasem is located about 12 km east of Rembang City, or about 110 km east of Semarang (Sulistiyono, et al., 2015, p. 36). Kecamatan Lasem has an area of 4,504 ha and is divided into 20 villages or kelurahan. Lasem is traversed by the Pantura highway which runs from west to east. The boundaries of Kecamatan Lasem are as follows: to the north bordered by the Java Sea, to the east bordered by Sluke Subdistrict, to the south bordered by Kecamatan Pancur, and to the west bordered by Kecamatan Rembang (Unjiya, 2008, p. 21).

Lasem is known as "Little China" and "City of Santri (Students)". It has earned the nickname the City of Batik. Batik-making home businesses in Lasem's Chinatown are mostly owned by ethnic Chinese who employ mostly indigenous people. Because batik production is dominated by ethnic, two batik motifs have emerged: Chinese and indigenous motifs. But in their development, the two motives influence each other. One example is its exquisite coloring technique with the use of striking and bold colors, creating a unique blend that results from the combination of Chinese and indigenous motifs (Maulany & Masrurroh, 2015, p. 1).

There are two settlement structures in Lasem. The first structure is Jatirogo Road connecting the regent's palace to the plaza and then towards settlements in the interior of Central Java. The second settlement structure is the river as the site of the jetty. The Chinese built their settlement on the east bank of the river along the jetty (Pratiwo, 2010, pp. 144-146). The settlement consisted of two parallel dirt roads, joined at the southern end and then called Dasun Road. This dirt road continues south along the east bank of the river that connects the settlement to the square. In Lasem there is a hill about two kilometers east of Chinatown and between them is dry land (Pratiwo, 2002, pp. 707-725).

Lasem City Spatial Patterns Before 1970

During the Japanese occupation (1942), Lasem did not experience significant development because it was only used as the subdistrict capital and no longer a district center. However, despite the lack of development, Lasem remained one of the six shipbuilding centers in Java run by the Japanese in the village of Dasun. In fact, the shipbuilding industry had existed since the Dutch colonial era. To support the production of Japanese warships in the village of Dasun, Japan decided to widen the roads leading to the shipyard, especially Dasun Road. The work resulted in the dismantling and cutting of several residential fences which blocked the road expansion project.

Furthermore, during the Old Order, development was focused on the economic aspect, with the aimed of transforming the colonial economy into a national economy. As a consequence, other aspects including socio-cultural did not get special attention. There was no significant public housing construction during this period as the unstable nature of the Indonesian government prevented much of development (Rahmah, 2017, p. 103).

The structure of settlements during the Old Order separated the indigenous community from the ethnic Chinese community, even though the settlement system (*wijkenstelsel*) was no longer adopted. However, at the same time, indigenous settlements in Lasem City also began to develop around Chinese areas. One of the reasons was the shift in the indigenous settlement area to the south, due to the destruction of economic facilities in Lasem City's north. Several factors contributed to Lasem City's economic slowdown, including the burning of the shipyard, which was the mainstay of the community's economy and the enactment of Government Regulation No.10 of 1959 forbidding Chinese citizens to conduct trading in rural areas or villages. Th regulation led to the gradual ruin of Lasem City's economy (Rahmah, 2017, p. 104).

One consequence of the regulation was the closure of the Sumbergirang Market after as the majority of the traders were ethnic Chinese. However, following the closure of the Sumbergirang Market, a new trade center called Jolotundo Market was built in 1959 at the the Lasem road leading to Jatirogo (Pratiwo, 2010). The presence of the new market led to shift community settlements to the south.

At the beginning of the New Order, the country struggled fiscally and economically, with monthly inflation reaching as high as 50%, resulting in worsening public services and infrastructure. The New Order government was unable to pay the country's debts because the value of imports was greater than exports. As a result, the government began to formulate short-term and long-term development plans through various improvement efforts, including introducing short-term and long-term programs. Short-term programs included economic rescue (July-December 1966), rehabilitation (January-June 1967), consolidation (July-December 1967), and stabilization (January-July 1980). After the economy stabilized, the government began adopting 25-year development programs to be carried out through the stages of the Five-Year Development Plan (Repelita), which began on April 1, 1969 (Revrisond, 1999, p. 2) . Programs drawn up by the government, both short-term and long-term, focused on the restoration of political and economic stability, and consequently, development had yet to reach the regions.

During the New Order era, Lasem was a small city under the Rembang Regency. At that time, the city began to suffer a developmental decline, as the continuing sedimentation of the Lasem River led to the demise of the shipyard industry. Following a guerrilla war against the Japanese army who occupied the northern part of Lasem, many buildings in the north (Soditan and Dasun villages) were destroyed.

In 1966, the New Order government issued a policy on the assimilation of the Chinese community into the local Indonesian culture. This resulted in many Chinese art forms such as the lion dance, *liangliong*, and *wayang potehi*, being banned by the local governments. Many Chinese schools were transformed into national schools and Chinese temples were abandoned and left vacant. During the New Order rule, road expansion projects in Lasem's Chinese neighborhoods led to the demolition of fences in front of houses belonging to ethnic Chinese.

Lasem City Spatial Patterns during 1970-1991

From the 19th century until the beginning of the 21st century, Lasem hardly experienced meaningful progress, and tended to suffer from stagnation and even environmental setbacks.

Similarly, in the post-independence era, Lasem did not enjoy any significant development either. The city's structure has remained the same, with only a slight change in land use in the city square which has transformed into a market and a sub-terminal. Around the north coast road (Daendels) there were more trade and lodging services. In addition, during the New Order era, many old Chinese buildings demolished and wall fences were torn down if they were deemed too high.

Between 1970 and 1991, the local government widened the Pos or Pantura Highway (Interview with KH. Zaim Ahmad Mahsum (Gus Zaim), July 16, 2018). In the 1960s, the Lasem pantura road originally had a width of 10 meters and a road body width of 6 meters, but in 1970 it was widened to 20 meters and finally in 1991 was expanded to 30 meters. The construction of these roads resulted in the demolition of many old buildings, including dozens of Indis and Chinese-style house that lost their

facades (Interview with K. H. Zaim Ahmad Mahsum (Gus Zaim), July 16, 2018). As a result, there was a perception that Lasem had lost its identity as a historic city full of valuable cultural heritage. Even though the construction of roads was intended to support economic activities and to make way for development, it will create problems if it is carried out without regard to its impacts. During the period, the government also widened Deandles Highway to 12 meters, resulting in the changed to the face of Lasem (Pratiwo, 2010, p. 160-162). The striking change to city identity was the transformation of the square into a market, which resulted in banyan trees being cut down to make way for shops.

In essence, building a city is not only building as infrastructure or roads as infrastructure facilities in the present, but also as a source of memories of the past and an arena for fantasizing into the future. Thus the number of ancient buildings that were destroyed, so also the memory that can be used as a reference for inspiration for the design of a quality new city. Therefore, both signs, symbols, warnings, landmarks and the like can be used to signify the authenticity of a city. Even though the sign or symbol is small, it is considered very meaningful. This is because the sign of the authenticity of the city as a reflection of the tangible heritage of the city (meaning material).

In 1982 the Indonesian state experienced a financial surplus. That is due to an increase in oil prices on the world market or commonly called the oil boom. From this incident, government policy was prioritized in the development of the industry by attracting foreign investors. The government is also doing infrastructure improvements to achieve these goals. The impact of the policy was strongly felt by the City of Lasem, which passed the arterial road that connects Jakarta and Surabaya.

Although it has undergone many changes. In 1990, still found ancient buildings with typical Chinese architecture. However, it is not located on the main / primary street of Lasem City, but enters a small road or alley which is better known as a tertiary road connecting the villages. On the contrary, along the northern coast of the City of Lasem. Many ancient buildings have lost their Chinese characteristics, almost all of which show modern buildings. It cannot be denied, the development of the north coast road as a national road that becomes the economic pulse influences the condition of buildings around the road. Many people change old buildings into modern buildings that are more functional as centers of economic activity, such as shops and stalls.

Entering the reform period (1998-present), there was a change in political policy from the central government towards the ethnic Chinese community, this was evidenced by the revocation of the Decree (SK) of Chinese Citizens by becoming ordinary citizens. The policy provides an opportunity for ethnic Chinese to develop their cultural arts. Many of the rituals and arts of Chinese culture are performed fearlessly, such as temple prayers, lion dance activities, and other Chinese holidays.

Changes in urban spatial planning certainly affect physical identity and non-physical identity. The concept of multi-territoriality proposed by Petcou and the global sense of place put forward by Massey, has become the main reference for identifying identity problems in urban life. The increasingly mobile nature of society causes a variety of socio-cultural, economic and political identities. In spatial contexts, this in

turn transforms the urban environment into a space for contestation and negotiation (Xinyue Ye, Xingjian Liu, 2010, pp. 102-103).

There are three ways that can generally be used to connect the physical environment with social relations and psychological processes, namely the physical environment as an independent variable in interpersonal processes. In addition, aspects of human behavior in the physical environment, for example, use of space, territorial behavior, use of the environment related to privacy, ownership and decoration or personalization of places, and so on (Coon and John O. Mitterer, 2008, p. 594).

The physical environment is also a place where psychological processes, relationships and behavior shape the people who live in the region. The physical environment is also part of the definition and meaning of phenomena that occur. In this physical environment, people interact, develop transactional relationships, until finally able to create various changes both physical and non-physical (Xinyue Ye, Xingjian Liu, 2019, p. 105).

Lasem is one of the cities with a large Chinatown on the north coast of Java and has grown rapidly since the 18th century (Handinoto, 2015, pp. 31-33). Architecture and interiors in some of the houses in Lasem that were built from the 18th century to the end of the 19th century, especially in the 1880s, remain intact (Lestari and Nara Setya Wiratama, 2019, pp. 91-100). In the mid-20th century, from 1940s to 1970s there was a major transformation in the Chinese houses in Lasem, mainly in the facade, decoration, and architectural styles. However, houses in Lasem had the same layout, such as the altar room which is used as a place to worship ancestors. In addition, the front (porch) and the back of the house served as places for social events, both private and public (Interview with Sigit Witjaksono, January 22, 2018).

The symmetrical form of the house plan in the Lasem Chinatown still holds the principle of harmonization of Yin-Yang, a testament to ethnic Chinese's ties to their customs and traditions. At the beginning of the 20th century, rich ethnic Chinese businessmen began to emerge and introduce renovations and home improvements. This resulted in the architectural change as houses became more modern thanks to the influence of Western architects (Indis architecture) (Rachmayanti, et.al, 2017, p. 279). Typically, the Chinatown areas on the north coast of Java were built along a river or seashore. Rivers or the sea becomes the direction of temples face. As a result, the oldest temples in the north coast of Java face rivers or the sea as the main means of transportation. After the Postweg Grote was built and became part of the main transportation facilities and infrastructure in Java, a change occurred in the cosmological orientation of the Chinese community, especially along the Central Java and East Java Pantura highways. They regard the Postweg as a new 'breath of life' (Pratiwo, 2002, p. 707).

Despite many physical changes, both in the temples and houses in Lasem Chinatown, the Chinese community of Lasem still maintain the spatial layout and the sacredness of the spaces in their houses (Interview with Djunaidi, February 17, 2019). Lay-outs of the houses still retain Chinese traditions. This can be seen from the

symmetrical composition of the houses which shows balance and harmony. Some other houses underwent transformations, including the shape of the front porches which look narrower, and the houses no longer function as dwellings. Houses were converted into batik-making workshops and exhibition halls (Interview with Sigit Witjaksono, January 22, 2018). The transformed houses were mostly located facing the Pos Highway and the streets nearby. The houses around Pantura (the Pos Highway) still maintain symmetrical shapes, but the shrines to worship the ancestors moved back.

After the 1965 riots and the issuance of Presidential Instruction No. 14 of 1967, Chinese cultural expressions, beliefs, as well as social and political life were severely restricted. This situation eventually led to the increasing marginalization of ethnic Chinese including those in Lasem and social schisms. They increasingly became secluded for security (Unjiya, 2012, p. 109) as the activities of ethnic Chinese were closely monitored. The government required fences in Chinatown to have holes to allow it to monitor the activities of the residents, on the pretext of avoiding activities affiliated with political organizations oriented towards communism (Interview with Djunaidi, 17 February 2019).

Discrimination by the New Order government under the pretext of affiliation with communism for the Chinese community caused some Lasem residents to choose to abandon their Chinese identity, especially as seen in the physical changes to houses that did not emphasize Chinese identity. Srikaya's writing form (Chinese calligraphy), which was the identity of Chinatowns, was also hidden by covering the writing using wood or removing it by carving and covering it with wood paste. The Lasem Chinese are very worried, this is because their residence is quite close to the access of the Pantura highway, so that at any time government officials can carry out unannounced inspections of their houses (Interviews with Yon Suprayogo and Sie Hwie Djan (Gandor Sugiharto), September 12, 2018).

Changes in the city's physical identity in Lasem became increasingly visible, especially in the 1980s. The city's strategic locations that were traversed by the Pantura highway saw the emergence of shophouses in the 1980s to 1990s. The shophouses were built directly facing the Pantura highway (Interview with Ernantoro, September 12, 2018). The Chinese community at that time saw the shophouses as investments to be passed down to their offspring. The construction of shophouses sometimes ignores the aesthetic side of the landscape and the harmony of urban design. On the other hand, there were few regulations related to urban planning. This led to ineffective law, especially with regard to infrastructure development that affects the environment in Indonesia (including Lasem). This led to uncontrolled construction of shop houses, especially in the City of Lasem (Kusno, 2012, p. 230).

The number of shops and commercial buildings in Rembang can be analysed in Table 1. It appears that Lasem had the highest number of shops and commercial buildings/shop houses after Rembang Regency. Even though Lasem is only a subdistrict city, its people's economy was growing rapidly. In fact, from 1977 to 1978 there was a surge in the number of stores, up to five times as many. This indicates that

changes in the necessities of life or human activities greatly affect changes in the physical form of the city.

Table 1. Number of Shops and Commercial Buildings in Rembang Regency
Year 1975 – 1979.

No	Sub-District	Year					Description
		1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	
1	Sumber	1	6	8	16	24	-
2	Bulu	0	1	1	3	6	-
3	Gunem	0	1	2	4	8	-
4	Sale	1	1	2	5	9	-
5	Sarag	12	12	16	27	52	-
6	Sedan	2	3	5	27	35	-
7	Pamotan	0	4	3	42	51	-
8	Sulang	2	4	5	22	40	-
9	Kaliori	2	3	6	16	30	-
10	Rembang	50	60	80	228	294	Wholesale
11	Pancur	0	2	2	9	16	-
12	Kragan	15	17	19	25	39	-
13	Sluke	0	1	1	15	19	-
14	Lasem	20	23	27	123	149	Wholesale
Total		105	138	177	562	772	

Source: Public Works Department Rembang Regency Year 1980-1981.

Urban settlements along Pantura (including Lasem) developed very rapidly, especially on land that was used as new housing in the 1990s. The government developed road sections to reduce the density of traffic within the city, especially those caused by buses and trucks. The ex-Grote Postweg road in Lasem still functions as the heart of the city (Pratiwo, 2002, p. 707). Therefore, public buildings or facilities emerged with modern facades to support the development of the heart of the city (Hestuadiputri, 2017). Some of these facilities include schools, administrative offices, and others. The emergence of modern facades was among the various architectural influences that has enriched Lasem.

The Effect of Spatial Change on Community Economy and Culture

The development of the Pantura Road in Lasem in the 1970s to 1980s brought changes in the social life of its people, both indigenous and ethnic Chinese. They preferred to use land transportation modes other than railroad (Nas, 2002, p. 155). The demise of train services was blamed on the operational efficiency of trains. Instead, the Pos Highway that connects Lasem and other areas supported people's mobility. Motor vehicles became easier to find than trains after the Pantura Road was constructed. (Interview with Kasmiadi, Employee of PT. KAI Persero DAOP IV), March 3, 2019). Before the 1970s trains were widely used to transport agricultural and forest products

as well as people traveling from Lasem to other cities in Central and East Java. The trains also served routes to West Java in 1970 and connected the Lasem area with Surabaya. The construction of the train services was partly attributed to the existence of a sugar factory and intended to facilitate the transportation of crops. In addition, this route was also built to connect large ports located in the North Coast of Java (Telaga Bakti Nusantara Team, 1997, p. 37).

In 1979, the economic activity of the people of Lasem was remained supported by the trains, which arrived twice a day. The train served the Rembang-Bojonegoro and Rembang-Jatinegoro routes. At that time the railway routes were crowded with passengers due to economic activities that connect the regions (Interview with Ernantoro, 3 March 2019). Although initially the train service was intended for the transportation of goods, but as the economy developed in Lasem, passenger carriages were introduced. The railway line that passed through the Lasem station was managed by the Semarang IV Regional Operational Bureau (PJKA). As other land transportation modes developed, the Lasem route was abandoned in February 1989 (Nas, 2002, p. 163). The Lasem railroad was neglected as the government focused its attention on road construction (Interview with Kasmiadi, March 3, 2019).

The construction of the Pantura road which divided Lasem Chinatown also changed the city's physical identity, especially in the economic field. Trade relations between Lasem and other regions in Java began to develop after the Pantura road was built. Commercial traffic increased compared to the railroad period (Interview with Sie Hwie Djan (Gandor Sugiharto) 12 September 2018). Many inter-city bus (AKDP) and inter-province (AKAP) routes transited or passed through Lasem, and the Lasem bus terminal was one of the stops for buses from Semarang (Interview with Abdul Mukhidz, February 12, 2019).

The opening of transportation access to and from Lasem through the Pantura Road also changed the socio-cultural aspect. People from other areas began to visit Lasem. Despite the nickname "Little China", Lasem was not homogenous culturally. It was a meeting of various cultures. Not only did the ethnic Chinese community in Lasem socialize with other ethnic groups, but also established close relations with indigenous Javanese natives and santri (religious Muslim groups). People in Lasem socialized by *jagong gayeng* (hanging out) in coffee shops (Azis, 2014, p. 119).

There were differences between in the ethnic Chinese community in Lasem City and those in Singkawang, Sumatra, Maluku and Makassar. The majority of Chinese people in Lasem use Indonesian or local Javanese dialects to communicate. They also play an important role in linguistic and cultural transformations in the Javanese community in general. Meanwhile, ethnic Chinese communities outside of Java often use Chinese dialects (Hwa-your Mandarin, Hokkien, Khek (Gek), Teo Chiu, or Cantonese) as *lingua franca* and prefer to use Chinese names.

Lasem is also often called "Little China," "City of Muslim Intellectuals," "City of Knowledge," and "City of Batik." According to historical records, it used to be a large port and trade center, especially for the Chinese people. For centuries, immigrants

from China interacted with local Javanese communities and settled there permanently, leading to the natural process of interethnic acculturation. Cities along the North Coast of Java have a long history of different, unique and contextual Chinese communities (Widodo, 2015).

One important data set that can be used to find the process of interethnic acculturation between indigenous Javanese and indigenous people, especially throughout the Pantura region, the use of personal names. A study conducted by Widodo on the development of personal names in Semarang Regency, including Rembang (Central Java), showed strong evidence of inter-ethnic acculturation. Widodo points out that the relationship between personal names and ideology, names as a form of personal expression, cultural tastes, social phenomena, and various other phenomena today in society are becoming increasingly plural. In addition, the diversity of ethnic groups, traditions and customs is also reflected in the names used by the Chinese community in Central Java (Widodo, 2015).

Conclusion

The remnants of the glory of Lasem as an important city and metropolis of its time are timeless. Some supporting infrastructure was built, including the Pos Project or Daendels Highway (1808-1809). Meanwhile, during 1909-1910 the Rembang-Lasem railroad stretching 13.10 km and a railway line were built.

During the Japanese occupation (1942), Lasem did not experience significant development, after it ceased to be the center of the regency administration and only served as the sub-district capital. Although it hardly underwent development, Lasem remained one of the six shipbuilding centers in Java by the Japanese, located in the village of Dasun, which had existed during the Dutch colonial era and the reign of Lasem Kingdom. In subsequent developments, significant transformations took place in Chinese houses in terms of facades, decorations and architectural styles.

In addition, the development of the Pos or Pantura Highway from decade to decade has an effect on the physical identity of the city. During the New Order period, the Pos or Pantura Highway Lasem were widened in 1970 and 1991. On the other hand, anti-Chinese discriminatory policies introduced during the New Order government under the pretext of affiliation with communism forced some Lasem residents to renounce their Chinese identity.

Changes in the city's physical identity in Lasem became increasingly visible especially in the 1980s as shops and commercial buildings were built. This was in line with the idea of shop houses as an index of economic prosperity and economic progress of ethnic Chinese in an area. The strategic location of the Lasem area, being traversed by the Pantura Highway led to the emergence of shophouses in the 1980s to 1990s along the road. The construction of shophouses sometimes ignored the aesthetic side of the landscape and the harmony of urban design. On the other hand, there were few regulations relating to urban planning.

Changes to the layout of the City of Lasem had an impact on its identity as a civilized city. This is because Lasem is a city that has experienced a long series

transformations. However, events during the New Order era have tarnished the history of spatial planning in Lasem. It is therefore imperative that a city's spatial planning integrate historical elements to avoid disorientation with its past.

The Lasem case is an examples of mistakes in policy-making on spatial planning. It is hoped that in the future, Lasem will be built by paying attention to the city's long history. Errors in handling the spatial layout of a city will not only change its physical identity, but also have an impact on human activities, namely social, economic and cultural life.

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List of Informants

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KH. Zaim Ahmad Mahsum (Gus Zaim)
Sie Hwie Djan (Gandor Sugiharto)
Sigit Witjaksono
Yon Suprayogo