



**Performing Ritual, Sustaining Ways of Knowing:
Historicizing Labuhan as Javanese Knowledge and Archive, 1750s–1830s**

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Image source: National Library of Indonesia,
Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul (KBG 943),
by Th. Pigeaud, 1932

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INTRODUCTION

On 8 February 1921 (28 Jumadilawal Alip 1851 in Javanese Calendar), or ten days after his father abdication, the Crown Prince of the Yogyakarta court, Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Adipati Anom Hamengku Negara Soedibya Rajaputra Narendra Mataram,¹ ascended the throne as Sultan Hamengku Buwono Senapati Ing Ngalaga Abdurrahman Sayiddin Panatagama Kalifatullah ingkang jumeneng kaping VIII (henceforth, Hamengku Buwono VIII).² Attended the coronation were the Dutch *Resident* of Yogyakarta, Petrus Willem Jonquière (in office 1919–1924), and Paku Alam VII (r. 1906–1937).

The following day, the new Sultan dispatched four different delegations to four locations to perform a courtly ritual called Labuhan. These sites were Parangkusumo beach and Mount Merapi in the south and north borders of Yogyakarta respectively as well as Mount Lawu and Dlepih forest in the administration region of Mangkunegara court. At the sites of ritual, the processions prayed and delivered the offerings to thank the spirits inhabiting the places and to ask for the Sultan's and the country's health.³ The ritual would be performed every year on the anniversary of the coronation.

At present day, the same ritual is still performed in part of the series of courtly ceremonies related to the *Jumenengan Dalem* (the coronation) and the *Tingalan Jumenengan Dalem* (the anniversary of the coronation) of Yogyakarta. The official website of Yogyakarta states that the ritual was performed as a form of soul-purification and gratitude to God Almighty.⁴ However, compared to the performance of Labuhan in 1921, there are at

¹ The title can be literally translated into “The wise prince who uphold of the country of Mataram”

² “The upholder of the realm, the commander in the battlefield, the most merciful, the religious lord who regulates the religion, the God's caliph VIII”

³ Soedjana Tirtakoesoema, “De Verjaring van den Verheffingsdag van Z.H. den Sultan van Jogjakarta (Tingalam Pandjenengan)”, *Djawa* 13, 1 October 1933, p. 372-382

⁴ See the information of *Labuhan* on the official website of Keraton Yogyakarta here <https://www.kratonjogja.id/hajad-dalem/2-hajad-dalem-labuhan/>, accessed on Wednesday, 14 October 2025

least two striking point observable: the first is the different purposes of the ritual in 1921 and today; the second is the locations of the ritual. Whereas in 1921 the offerings were said to be intended for the spirits of the sites, today it has become more general. Moreover, two of the sites were in another court's administrative area. These small differences display the transformation of the elements of the ritual. In other words, it demonstrates that the ritual is subject to change, thus, considering the ritual as a static cultural event would be incorrect. Moreover, the ritual also is never limited to a cultural procession only. More than that, it is an expression of power and agency. It also embodies the epistemic practice of Javanese people. I argue that Yogyakarta's Labuhan is a ritual that has undergone transformations over time and the first shift coincided with the establishment of the court.

Research Questions and Frameworks

This study approaches the Labuhan ritual as a form of Javanese knowledge and archive. It seeks to question the transformation of Labuhan in the period of turmoil in the 1750s–1830s. The period is crucial for Javanese history because it saw the essential political, social, and intellectual transition in the central Javanese courts. The kingdom of Mataram was divided into Surakarta and Yogyakarta with the Dutch intervention in 1755 after a series of civil war. Following that, the Javanese had to admit that they would never be politically united. At the dawn of the 19th century, the influence of the deteriorating VOC in Java would only be replaced by the more powerful and forceful European colonial empires.⁵ Amid the changes, the ritual not only functioned as a cultural tradition but also as the Yogyakarta court's political assertion. I also seek to demonstrate that the ritual, through the embedded geo-cosmological knowledge, served as a Javanese archive that is crucial for both Javanese intellectual tradition and of the scientific investigation of the European scientists in the following period.

⁵ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792*, p. 668-669

The production of knowledge of Java and Javanese culture has been richly studied over centuries, but the present study will specifically engage with the discussion of the cultural and intellectual transformation of Javanese people in the period of late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century. The work of Soemarsaid Moertono on the Javanese state and statecraft from the 16th to 19th century, followed by the study of the political scientist and the historian Benedict Anderson on the same topic, provides initial understanding of the idea of Javanese power.⁶ Both analyses posit that the Javanese knowledge was closely related to political aspects. While it was true to certain point, both scholars seem to apply the longue durée approach developed by the French historian Fernand Braudel that causes the tendency of static condition of Javanese power and culture. Indeed, in his foreword to the Indonesian version of Moertono's book, the historian Peter Carey notices that Moertono was influenced by the perspective of B.J. Schrieke, the Dutch sociologist who posits that the Javanese society in 1700 was not much different from it was in 700.⁷

On the contrary, some researchers have shown that both Javanese knowledge and power were subject to political, cultural, and intellectual changes. The study of the historian Kenji Tsuchiya, for example, displays the influence of Dutch colonialism to the Javanese language in nineteenth century that in turn constructed the idea of “modern” Indonesia in the following century.⁸ However, five years later, the historian Nancy K. Florida warns that the

⁶ Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century*, Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1981. This study was first published by the Cornell Modern Indonesia Project in 1968. In his memoir, Benedict Anderson admitted that Moertono's work has been the inspiration for his famous article, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture”, in Claire Holt (ed.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972. See Anderson's statement of Moertono's study in *A Life Beyond Boundaries*, London: Verso, 2016, pp. 114-117. This information is cited from the historian's Peter Carey foreword in the Indonesian version of *State and Statecraft in Old Java*; see Soemarsaid Moertono, *Negara dan Kekuasaan di Jawa Abad XVI-XIX*, Jakarta: KPG, 2017, p. xv

⁷ Carey, “Pengantar”, in Soemarsaid Moertono, *Negara dan Kekuasaan di Jawa Abad XVI-XIX*, p. xix

⁸ Kenji Tsuchiya, “Javanology and the Age of Ranggawarsita: An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Javanese Culture”, in Takashi Shiraishi (ed.), *Reading Southeast Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1990, pp. 75-108

19th century Dutch project's consists several biases as it also influenced the construction of Javanese culture that suitable for colonial benefit.⁹

By examining Yogyakarta's Labuhan, this thesis shows that Javanese knowledge (and knowledge about Java), along with the dimension of power in it, was indeed subject to change. To investigate this, I specifically follow the anthropologist John Pemberton's proposal of the shift of the concept of Javanese culture in the form of courtly ritual. Pemberton suggests that the idea of Java has continuously transformed since 1745, when the court of Mataram was moved from Kartasura to Surakarta.¹⁰ This relocation was taken place after Susuhunan Paku Buwono II (r. 1726–1749), with the help of the VOC, crushed the rebellion of Raden Mas Garengi (Sunan Kuning), one of the grandsons of Amangkurat III (r. 1703–1708), who claimed the throne.¹¹ The moving of the *keraton* was said to restore the stability—or, more precisely, *to project an image of stability*. Pemberton asserts that it was precisely at this moment when the Javanese turned into more indirect expressions of power.¹²

Ten years after the *keraton* moved, Mataram was officially divided into two courts: Surakarta and Yogyakarta. Ricklefs suggests that it marked the permanent disintegration of Java. It transformed not only political but also cultural and intellectual trajectories of Javanese people. At the same time, the increasing power of the colonial empires gave weight to the transformation as well.¹³ In this context, Labuhan as Yogyakarta's courtly ritual adjusted to function both as Javanese knowledge and archive. This study argues that the Labuhan ritual was also transformed in and through the period of turmoil. Here, the ritual

⁹ Nancy Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, p. 25-39

¹⁰ John Pemberton, *On the subject of "Java"*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 70

¹¹ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792*, p. 61

¹² Pemberton, *On the subject of "Java"*, p. 37

¹³ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792*, p. 670

became a form of Javanese “self-reflexivity”, a term borrowed from the historians Tony Day and Craig Reynolds to show the response of Javanese people in time of crisis.¹⁴

However, notwithstanding the transformation, the embodied geo-cosmological understanding in Labuhan remained and became a potential field of production of knowledge. In this respect, Labuhan was a form of archive that recorded knowledge in its process of formation. I examine Labuhan as a Javanese ritual archive, following the concept of ritual archived offered by the Nigerian historian Toyin Falola.¹⁵ He suggests that acknowledging rituals as archives provide the access to comprehend the history of the communities with limited or no written materials. The elements of the ritual, such as the objects and the prayers, potentially offered valuable narrative of the people’s way of knowing. I also approach Labuhan as an embodied archive, from which performances recorded different information, and through which repertoire of performance provided various interpretations for the participants. I engage with the frameworks of embodied archives suggested by the scholars of performance studies, Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider.¹⁶ While Taylor centers the repertoire of performances in general and posits that repertoire can record events as archive does, Schneider, who focuses on the theatrical performances, argues further that repertoire is the archive itself. Both scholars emphasize the bodily experience of preserving information.

This study aims to introduce Labuhan as a Javanese epistemic practice that was capable of producing and preserving knowledge. This, therefore, has twofold suggestions: it foregrounds the Javanese way of knowing and offers it as a potential source of the decolonized

¹⁴ Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds, “Cosmologies, Truth Regimes, and the State in Southeast Asia”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Feb. 2000, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 1-55

¹⁵ Toyin Falola, “Ritual Archives”, in Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 703-728

¹⁶ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Duke University Press, 2003 and Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Arts and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, London: Routledge, 2011

historical narrative. Labuhan, along with the narrative of Nyai Roro Kidul as its rationale,¹⁷ has rarely been approached through the lens of Javanese knowledge production. They rarely treated as a historical source, let alone recognized as an archive that documents Javanese knowledge.

Previous Studies on Labuhan

This study is the first to historicize Labuhan as a Javanese epistemic practice. Previous studies of Labuhan mostly investigated the ritual from the anthropological and ecological lenses. The first category treats the ritual purely as a Javanese tradition, in relation to Nyai Roro Kidul, the spirit queen who said to rule the Southern Ocean of Java. The studies from this category are written either in early 1900s or 1980s.¹⁸ On the contrary, the second category is a relatively novel discussion of Labuhan as a form of vernacular disaster management.¹⁹

However, this thesis is by no means the first to approach Labuhan and the narrative of Nyai Roro Kidul as a historical source as the historian Anthony Reid and the political geologist Adam Bobbette have attempted to do so. Seeking proof of a tsunami on the southern coast of Java in 1600s, Reid approaches the Nyai Roro Kidul story as a promising record of the disaster. Connecting the story to two Javanese written texts called *babad*, he

¹⁷ J.J. Ras, “The genesis of the Babad Tanah Jawi; Origin and function of the Javanese court chronicle”, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 143 (1987), No. 2/3, p. 349

¹⁸ See Tirtakoesoema, “De Verjaring van den Verheffingsdag”, p. 372-392; Lucien Adam, “Het vorstelijke offer aan den Lawoe”, *Djawa* 20, 1 January 1940, p.107-118; B. Soelarto, *Upacara Labuhan Kesultanan Yogyakarta*, Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Departemen Pendidikan dan kebudayaan, 1980/1981; Cécile Bigeon, “Labuhan: Rite royal du kraton de Yogyakarta célébré sur la plage de Parangtritis”, *Archipel*, volume 24, 1982, pp. 117-126; Sri Sumarsih, Suhatno, Maharkesti, *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1989-1990

¹⁹ Septian Aji Permana, Dewi Liesnoor Setyowati, Achmad Slamet, Juhadi, “Community Rituals in Facing Volcanic Eruption Threat in Jawa”, *Komunitas: Internasional Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture* 9(1) 2017, pp. 29-36

resumes that the queen is presumably the embodiment of a tsunami that affected the politics of the Mataram court at that time.²⁰

Bobbette, meanwhile, demonstrates that Nyai Roro Kidul has unrecognizably influenced and facilitated the advancement of twentieth-century geological and volcanological science. He argues that the route of the procession of Labuhan in Merapi had facilitated the path that was followed by the European geologists when they investigated the volcano.²¹ In his other work, Bobbette extensively explains the connection between Javanese geo-cosmological knowledge and the investigation of some Dutch earth scientists in the twentieth century, like Reinout van Bemmelen and Johannes Umbgrove, stimulated their thinking, and helped them contributing to the modern theory of geology.²²

The works of Reid and Bobbette enable a new approach to examine Javanese knowledge. They show that Nyai Roro Kidul is more than a myth or a tool of legitimization; it is Javanese way of understanding and documenting their life and surroundings. While Reid completely centers the Javanese sources and explores the indigenous way of thinking, Bobbette, on the other hand, primarily relies on the reflection of Dutch geologists who conducted their investigations in Java in the twentieth century, and surprisingly makes little effort to engage with Javanese sources beyond the story of Nyai Roro Kidul. Consequently, instead of highlighting Javanese knowledge, he continues to emphasize Western-centered geological narrative.

This thesis follows these exemplary works while intervening in the existing gaps of research to bring Javanese knowledge to the forefront. It especially explores Javanese way of thinking underlying the imaginary connection between Nyai Roro Kidul, Yogyakarta

²⁰ Anthony Reid, "Two hitherto unknown Indonesian tsunamis of the seventeenth century: Probabilities and context", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 47(1), February 2016, pp. 88-108

²¹ Adam Bobbette, "Processions: How the Spiritual Geographies of Central Java Shaped Modern Volcano Science", *Indonesia* 113 (April 2022), p. 54

²² Adam Bobbette, *The Pulse of the Earth: Political Geology in Java*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2023, pp.1-19

sultans, and Labuhan by examining and comparing the elements of the ritual, Javanese written materials, and the colonial archives. It is also essential to engage with the oral traditions of the court as most Javanese texts, so Florida informs, were meant to be performed aurally to the audience, who not only listened to but also made sense of them.²³

Sources and Methodology

I primarily engage with *Babad Tanah Jawi*, by far the most extensive written source of Javanese court history as it presents not only important events but also the genealogies of the rulers since the Mataram era until the 1770s.²⁴ This is highly relevant for our discussion which explores the relationship between Labuhan, Nyai Roro Kidul, and the Yogyakarta rulers as the successors of Mataram dynasty. I use Surakarta's version of *Babad Tanah Jawi*, popularly known as *Major Babad*, for practical reasons as several transliterated versions of this *babad* are available. The *babad*, as the philologist Edwin Wieringa points out, was the product of centuries-long constant writing and rewriting.²⁵ Wieringa also suggests that the final version of Major Babad, which is believed to have been completed in 1836, was actually copied the 1788 version.²⁶ The Major Babad of Surakarta, which is currently preserved in the Leiden University Library as LOr. 1786, is a copy of the *babad* has been made by C.F. Winter under the supervision of Paku Buwono VII.²⁷

I particularly use the transliteration of Balai Pustaka, which is accessible online on the Sastra Jawa website,²⁸ a database of digitized Javanese manuscripts organized by Yayasan

²³ Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future*, p. 11-14

²⁴ Willem Remmelink (ed.), *Babad Tanah Jawi – The Chronicle of Jawa: The Revised Prose Version of C.F. Winter Sr*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2022, p. xv

²⁵ E. Wieringa, "An Old Text Brought to Life Again; A Reconsideration of the 'Final Version' of the *Babad Tanah Jawi*", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 155 (1999), No. 2, p. 244

²⁶ Wieringa, "An Old Text Brought to Life Again, p. 248

²⁷ Wieringa, "An Old Text Brought to Life Again, p. 256

²⁸ *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Batavia: Balai Pustaka, 1939-1941, retrieved from https://www.sastra.org/katalog/judul?ti_id=1024, accessed on Sunday, 14 December 2025

Sastra Lestari (Yasri), an Indonesian literary foundation that focuses on the conservation and preservation of the manuscripts from the Indonesian archipelago, especially Java.²⁹ I also use the English translation of the *babad*, translated and edited by Willem Remmelink, that is from the revised prose version of C.F. Winter Sr. (KITLV Or 8).³⁰ I also engage with a Javanese manuscript called *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul* (KBG 943) that is part of the compiled manuscripts on various knowledge, currently preserved in the National Library of Indonesia under the reference code KBG 943.

In addition, I make use of the records of VOC and other European empires especially to demonstrate the transitions in the court of Yogyakarta in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For this purpose, I particularly engage with the archives of the VOC post in Yogyakarta and the early nineteenth-century reports and edicts. In Chapter III, I use the twentieth-century ethnographic materials about the Labuhan ritual to explore the interpretations of the ritual.

The dichotomy between Javanese and colonial sources is employed here for analytical convenience. While both are extremely valuable, studying them needs special approach. As the premodern historian Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan asserts, the narrative in the Javanese sources is not to be treated straightforwardly as written chronological facts as they usually contain layers of expression of cultural experiences. These sources are generally the result of re-copying and re-compilation over time; thus, it is essential to understand their historiography to obtain precise analysis.³¹ On the other hand, the historians Ricardo Roque and Kim A. Wagner posit that colonial sources also contain biases that require their users to approach

²⁹ See the profile of the Sastra Jawa website, <https://www.sastra.org/>, accessed on Sunday, 14 December 2025

³⁰ Remmelink (ed.), *Babad Tanah Jawi – The Chronicle of Java*

³¹ Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan, “Portent of Power: Natural Disasters throughout Indonesian History”, *Indonesia*, Number 113, April 2022, p. 12

them critically by various reading methods, namely along the grain, against the grain, and cross-cultural encounters.³²

In general, it is important to question the context of the creation of both Javanese and colonial sources, such as why and for what purpose they were created. For example, the *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul* (KBG 943), that I particularly use in Chapter III, despite being written in Javanese script, was actually part of the plate album of Yogyakarta, supposedly written by Th. Pigeaud and created or compiled on the request of the Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (KBG/The Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences) under J.L. Moens in 1932. Why the album was composed in Javanese script and for what purpose it was intended need to be explored further.

In this study, I neither intend to comment on the validity of these sources nor to claim that they are free from political bias. Moreover, it is crucial to note that the present *babad*, manuscript, and Labuhan itself are courtly products, reflecting the perspective of those in power rather than broader collective understanding of Javanese knowledge. Additionally, the term “Javanese people” in this study also mostly refers to the people in the 18th and 19th-century Javanese courts and, thus, the Javanese elites.

Research Outline

This study is separated into three chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter questions the political situations in late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. In this chapter, I approach Labuhan as a form of power assertion of the court. Moreover, this chapter seeks to demonstrate the background that influenced the transformation of Labuhan in the period of 1750s–1830s.

³² Ricardo Roque and Kim A. Wagner, “Introduction: Engaging Colonial Knowledge”, in Ricardo Roque and Kim A. Wagner (ed.), *Engaging Colonial Knowledge: Reading European Archives in World History*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 1-32

The second chapter discusses the transformation of Labuhan as a form of Javanese geo-cosmological knowledge. It asks what Labuhan was as well as when, where, and why it was performed to historicize the origin of Labuhan and to display the shifts of Labuhan. Furthermore, it aims to demonstrate both what had disappeared and what remained from Labuhan in the present period.

The last chapter examines Labuhan as a form of Javanese ritual and embodied archive. It asks how the geo-cosmological knowledge preserved in Labuhan got re-produced and re-interpreted by various groups of people. Depending on how they perceived it, Labuhan serves different layers of knowledge. For the people of Java, Labuhan was their knowledge of the world they live in; meanwhile, it was valuable knowledge for the scientific observation of European scientists.

CHAPTER I

SETTING THE STAGE FOR LABUHAN IN YOGYAKARTA

After a series of wars in the first half of the eighteenth century, Susuhunan Pakubuwono, Pangeran Mangkubumi, and Raden Mas Said had agreed to stop the conflict with the help of the VOC as a kind of mediator.¹ This resulted in the separation of Mataram into two independent political entities, namely Surakarta and Yogyakarta in 1755. Two *keratons*² then became three when Mangkunegara was established in 1757. All claimed to be the rightful heir of Mataram.³ The consequences of the split, according to the historian Merle Ricklefs, extended not only to the political situation and the relationship among the independent realms themselves, but also to the interaction with the European people in the upcoming years.⁴

Moreover, the division did not only result in political changes in Java but also in cultural and intellectual aspects. Throughout 1750s–1830s, the existence of Surakarta and Yogyakarta particularly redefined the traditional Javanese values of power, forced each of them to reorganize their administrative matters, and pushed them to reproduce Mataram's heritage to claim the position as its legitimate successor. Moreover, the arrival of several European colonial empires brought a new dynamic and prompted other changes in the Javanese *keratons*. In this chapter, I will set the background that had transformed Labuhan from Mataram's courtly ritual to one of the most important processions in Yogyakarta.

¹ M.C. Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792: Sejarah Pembagian Jawa*, Yogyakarta: Matabangsa, 2002, p. 576

² *Keraton* means royal palace or court in Bahasa Indonesia. See Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/keraton>, accessed on Thursday, 9 October 2025

³ Vincent J.H. Houben, “The Position of the Mangkunegara within the Partitioned Political Structure of Central Java”, in C.D. Grijns and S.O. Robson (ed.), *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation*, Dordrecht: Foris Publications, 1986, p. 180

⁴ Rickel, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 657-671

This chapter begins with a brief ethnographical introduction of Labuhan performed by the *keraton* of Yogyakarta at the present time. Then, it goes back to the eighteenth-century Mataram on the brink of its downfall to explain the concept of power in Javanese culture as interpreted by the historians Soemarsaid Moertono and Benedict Anderson. It proceeds with the description of Mataram's division in 1755 to display how the *keraton* of Yogyakarta was founded and how it survived the constant political changes in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At the same time, it describes the cultural and intellectual consequences of the political changes at that period to complete the fundamental settings of the performance of Labuhan.

To Cast Away Negativity and To Be Grateful Through Labuhan

At present days, Labuhan refers to a yearly ceremony conducted by the *keraton* of Yogyakarta to celebrate and commemorate the enthronement of the Sultan. The word Labuhan derives from “*labuh*” or “*nglabuh*” in Javanese, meaning to cast away, put away, or wash away. To perform Labuhan is to release or cast away all negative elements or misfortunes.⁵ However, the ritual not only symbolizes soul-purifying but also gratitude to the supernatural powers that helped the founding fathers of Mataram established his political supremacy in Java in the sixteenth century.⁶ In this sense, the performance of Labuhan by the Yogyakarta *keraton* indicates that the court seeks to connect itself to the Mataram dynasty. Nevertheless, in contemporary times, Labuhan has come to embody various meanings not only for the court but also for the spectators. For instance, some perceive Labuhan as an understanding of environmental knowledge of Mount Merapi.⁷ The political geologist Adam Bobbette even

⁵ See the information of *Labuhan* on the official website of Keraton Yogyakarta here <https://www.kratonjogja.id/hajad-dalem/2-hajad-dalem-labuhan/>, accessed on Wednesday, 14 October 2025

⁶ Anonymous, *Makna Ritus dan Upacara Ritual di Kraton Yogyakarta*, Jakarta: Departemen Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Direktorat Jenderal Nilai Budaya, Seni dan Film, 2005, p. 103

⁷ Septian Pertama, Dewi Setyowati, Achmad Slamet, Juhadi, “Community Rituals in Facing Volcanic Eruption Threat in Java”, *Komunitas: International Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture* 9(1) (2017), pp. 29-36

goes further by displaying Labuhan's contributions to the formation of Western geological theories as the route of the ritual had enabled the Dutch scientists to conduct field observations in Mount Merapi.⁸

The symbolization of casting or washing away negativity is performed by releasing or putting the *uborampe* (Javanese word of offerings) to some designated places. The *uborampe* varies depending on the location.⁹ The reason for this difference, and whether it reflects the relative importance of the ritual sites, was never stated by the *keraton*. However, from further analysis in Chapter III, it becomes evident that the offerings reflected the relationship between the spirits of the sites and the Yogyakarta *keraton*. The *uborampe* are always prepared a day before the ritual by the royal families and are kept overnight at Bangsal Sri Manganti in the palace of Yogyakarta.¹⁰ One interesting part of Labuhan's *uborampe* is that only in Parangkusumo beach on the southern coast of Yogyakarta the procession presents special offerings called *Lorodan Busana Dalem*, consisting of the Sultan's used clothes, clipped nails, trimmed hairs, and the used flower offerings for the court's heirloom, Kyai Ageng Plered.¹¹ This action is compelling when one understands the importance of Parangkusumo and the background story about the relationship between Panembahan Senopati and Nyai Roro Kidul. In *Babad Tanah Jawi*, one of the most prominent extant written sources in Java,¹² Parangkusumo and the southern coast of Yogyakarta (Mataram) was the setting when

⁸ Adam Bobbette, "Processions: How the Spiritual Geographies of Central Java Shaped Modern Volcano Science", *Indonesia* 113 (April 2022), p. 61

⁹ See the complete list of the offering objects in Appendix 1.

¹⁰ Sri Sumarsih, Suhatno, Maharkesti, *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1989-1990, p. 41

¹¹ Sumarsih et.al., *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, p. 41-42

¹² I use Surakarta's version of *Babad Tanah Jawi*, famously known as Major Babad, which was written in nineteenth century. The final version of Major Babad was supposedly from 1836. However, to which version it derived from is still a subject to debate. Edwin P. Wieringa, a scholar on Indonesian philology and Islamic studies, suggests that the Major Babad was taken from the 1788 version. See E. Wieringa, "An Old Text Brought to Life Again; A Reconsideration of the 'Final Version' of the *Babad Tanah Jawi*", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 155 (1999), No. 2, p. 248

Senopati received his *wahyu*¹³ to become the king of Mataram and encountered Nyai Roro Kidul for the first time.¹⁴ Further explanation on this matter will be given in the next chapter.

There are two kinds of Labuhan: *Labuhan Alit* (Small Labuhan) and *Labuhan Ageng* (Great Labuhan). The distinction between these two lies in the sites and the recurrence of the ritual. Firstly, both rituals are conducted at three locations, namely Parangkusumo Beach on the Indian Ocean coast, Mount Merapi, and Mount Lawu. However, in Labuhan Ageng, the procession also visits Dlepih Kahyangan Forest in Wonogiri. Therefore, there are three locations in Labuhan Alit and four in Labuhan Ageng. Secondly, Labuhan Alit is a yearly occasion, while Labuhan Ageng is performed once in eight years in Javanese calendar. This eight-years cycle is called *windu* and consists of the years of *Alip, Ehe, Jimawal, Je, Dal, Be, Wawu*, and *Jimakir*.¹⁵

Since the establishment of Yogyakarta in 1755, except for a few alterations, Labuhan has always been performed in relation to the enthronement of the Sultan. The *keraton* customarily conducts Labuhan a day after the enthronement or annually on its anniversaries. In this sense, Labuhan is an exclusive ritual to the court family and ordinary people are not allowed to perform it although they are still permitted to follow several stages of the processions.¹⁶ Although there has been no clear explanation about the reason for this exclusivity, it is presumably that the history of Labuhan and its relation to the assertion of power of the Sultan are behind it. However, before discussing how power influences Labuhan through its schedule and locations, which I will be delved into in the next chapter,

¹³ Soemarsaid Moertono explains the term *wahyu* refers to a substance which graced kingship in Javanese view. See Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century*, Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1981, p. 56

¹⁴ *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Canto 32, Batavia: Balai Pustaka, 1939-1941, retrieved from https://www.sastraweb.org/katalog/judul?ti_id=1024, accessed on Monday, 10 November 2025; See also Willem Remmelink (ed.), *Babad Tanah Jawi – The Chronicle of Java: The Revised Prose Version of C.F. Winter Sr*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2022, p. 51-54

¹⁵ B. Soelarto, *Upacara Labuhan Kesultanan Yogyakarta*, Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1980/1981, p. 39

¹⁶ Sumarsih et.al., *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, p. 33

it is crucial to first understand how the eighteenth-century Javanese idea of power has been discussed by the scholars focusing on Javanese culture and society.

The Javanese Concept of Power

In his 1968 study of Javanese state and statecraft, the Javanese historian Soemarsaid Moertono explores how Javanese rulers were supposedly ruled within the idea of power in Javanese culture. Moertono consults the Javanese written sources to build his arguments while also employing the approach of the Dutch sociologist on analyzing the Javanese kings in an integrated manner. In this sense, he argues that a ruler was the center of a Javanese state.¹⁷ Around four years later, the political scholar and historian Benedict Anderson published an article explaining the Javanese idea of power, building on an argument similar to Moertono's.¹⁸ Later in his memoir, Anderson admits that Moertono's work has inspired him.¹⁹

Both scholars agree that the Javanese idea of power differs from the European conception. Anderson posits that, in Javanese culture, power referred to intangible abilities called *kesakten*, which has no equivalent to any Western term. The power existed and animated the universe, from where the possible users could obtain—or gather—mainly through the practice of ascetism and concentrating.²⁰ Similarly, Moertono characterizes Javanese kingdoms as profoundly sacred as the magic-religious concepts played a highly critical role in every aspect of life. Not only justifying and strengthening the monarch, but they also defined the roles and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled.²¹ This implies

¹⁷ Soemarsaid Moertono, *Negara dan Kekuasaan di Jawa Abad XVI-XIX*, Jakarta: KPG, 2017, p. 2

¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture”, in Claire Holt (ed.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972, pp.

¹⁹ Cited from Peter Carey foreword in the Indonesian version of *State and Statecraft in Old Java*; see Moertono, *Negara dan Kekuasaan di Jawa Abad XVI-XIX*, p. xv

²⁰ Anderson, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture”, p. 7-9

²¹ Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 2

that the Javanese did not make separation between the living (organic) and the non-living (inorganic) as they all possessed and potentially became the source of power for the others. Therefore, people who intended to obtain power could concentrate and gather their own power as well as the power from surroundings.

Javanese people believed that someone holding power possessed certain criteria, such as being able to concentrate, receiving *wahyu* (divine radiance), or reflecting *teja* (radiance) from the face or body.²² As the center of Javanese power was the ruler, not everyone could assume the role.²³ The position of ruler usually was reserved for those of legitimate descent and spiritual authority. In this sense, Anderson mentions the condition that the Javanese ruler could be recognized by the people. First, if the person was the first ruler of a dynasty, he had to receive *wahyu*—thus, the spiritual authority. Second, the new ruler was required to associate himself with the residue of the previous fallen dynasty—hence, proving his legitimate genealogy.²⁴ In this sense, *wahyu* and rightful lineage were essential to the continuity of the Javanese dynasties, including the Yogyakarta court. This is why in courtly Javanese sources like Babad Tanah Jawi several parts were dedicated to demonstrating genealogies. In the Javanese view, this was not merely a way to seek legitimization, but rather to draw upon the power of previous dynasties. Legitimation itself was the very source of power.

Moreover, Moertono deems a Javanese state as a replica of the cosmic order that its balance should be maintained through his dominance.²⁵ The balance of cosmic order, the harmony called *tata tentrem*, was the aim of the Javanese governance.²⁶ In Anderson's analysis, the concept of *tata tentrem* influenced how Javanese people understood history. Influenced by the idea of power of *kesakten*, Javanese tended to believe that history was a

²² Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture", p. 16-17

²³ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 4

²⁴ Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture", p. 25

²⁵ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 4

²⁶ Moertono defines *Tata* as the formal order, while *Tentrem* as the psychological order (peace and tranquility of heart). See Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 38

series of “cosmological oscillation between periods of concentration of power and periods of its diffusion”.²⁷ Both phases of concentration and diffusion were needed, yet the period when power was concentrated regarded as more essential. In addition, the task of the ruler is to maintain the concentration of power in order to achieve *Tata Tentrem*, which can be obtained by various ways. Conducting the ritual of Labuhan, like other rituals, comes into this purpose of concentrating power.

The Javanese view of power also affected their understanding of administration. Moertono shows that during the period of Mataram, the state was divided into three territorial divisions, namely *negara* (the capital), *negaragung* (the core region), and *mancanegara* (and *pasisir*, the outer region).²⁸ Apparently this division followed an older concentric system called *mandala*, which was commonly encountered in Southeast Asian kingdoms.²⁹ A Javanese *keraton* (*microcosmos*) was deemed as a replica of the state (*macrocosmos*), hence, the core of the kingdom.³⁰ Not only was *keraton* significant from a cosmological perspective, but it serves as the center of political power.³¹ The Sultan’s influence was the strongest in the *negaragung* and it relatively weakened the further one moved from the *keraton*. Anderson cleverly equates the power of the Javanese kings with the fading radiance of a lamp with increasing distance.³²

The shrinkage of the Sultan’s influence on his kingdom borders is inevitable. Moreover, due to constant changes of power, signs marking permanent political entities were impossible to create. Instead, Javanese people relied on the natural boundaries consisting of rivers, mountains, mountain ranges, forests, or even a single giant tree.³³ These features, although

²⁷ Anderson, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture”, p. 20-21

²⁸ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 112

²⁹ Ofita Purwani, “Javanese cosmological layout as a political space”, in *Cities* 61 (2017), p. 76

³⁰ Pierpaolo De Giosa, “Urban Symbolism in Yogyakarta: In Search of the Lost Symbol”, in Peter Nas (ed.), *Cities Full of Symbols: A Theory of Urban Space and Culture*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2011, p. 87; Purwani, “Javanese cosmological layout”, p. 76

³¹ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 111

³² Anderson, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture”, p. 35

³³ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 114

somewhat vague to the modern context, were quite effective for Javanese people. They, as Moertono asserts, also played important roles in the Javanese ecological ideal of state territory as expressed in *wayang*³⁴ play.³⁵ In the context of Labuhan, natural boundaries as ecological knowledge become central, as I will explore further in Chapter III.

As the Sultan and *keraton* were at the core of Javanese state, one has to understand how power is perceived in order to comprehend the courtly intellectual product like Labuhan. Several aspects of power in Javanese understanding have been laid here, however, were subject to changes. While it is true that the Javanese *keratons* in the later period attempted and claimed to preserve the intellectual heritage of Mataram, their acts would be severely disturbed by the foreign influence that became gradually stronger after the eighteenth century. In the following sub-chapter, I will explain the division of Mataram in 1755 that was followed by several political and cultural changes in Java until 1830. This vital episode in Javanese history sets the final stage of the preparation of Labuhan.

Establishing and Legitimizing Yogyakarta

In 1755 Mataram was partitioned into two political authorities: Surakarta and Yogyakarta. Through negotiation in Giyanti (supposedly in contemporary Jantiharjo, Karanganyar, Central Java—not far from Surakarta), the conflicting parties agreed to divide Mataram's land into two equal proportions. Pangerang Mangkubumi obtained 53.100 *cacahs*³⁶ or half of *nagaragung*, which included Mataram (Yogyakarta), Pajang, Sukowati, Bagelen, Kedu,

³⁴ Wayang is a Javanese puppet shadow play. For the example of the study of Javanese wayang, see Laurie J. Sears, *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1996

³⁵ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 114

³⁶ Peter Boomgaard proposes that the concept of *cacah* in Java covers three different meanings. First, it refers to a household consisting of 4-6 persons. Second, it was a unit for taxation. Last, it was a term referring to a certain piece of arable land. Cited from Abdul Wahid, "From Revenue Farming to State Monopoly: The Political Economy of Taxation in Colonial Indonesia, Jawa c. 1816-1942", Dissertation at Onderzoek Instituut voor Geschiedenis en Cultuur, Universiteit Utrecht, 2013, p. 29; See also Ricklefs' argumentation on *cacah*, Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 672

and Bumigede. In the *mancanegara*, he obtained 33.950 *cacahs* in Madiun, Magetan, Caruban, half of Pacitan, Kertosono, Kalongbret, Ngrowo (Tulungagung), Djapan (Mojokerto), Jipang (Bojonegoro), Teras-Karas, Selo, and Grobogan.³⁷ By signing of the Giyanti treaty on 13 February 1755, Pangeran Mangkubumi ascended as the first sultan of Yogyakarta with the title Hamengku Buwono I and his children inherited the right to the throne.

Two days later, a formal ceremony was held in Jatisari (a village in present-day Sukoharjo) symbolizing reconciliation and acknowledgement of both courts. Nicolas Hartingh, the Governor of Java Northeast Coast, represented the VOC in the negotiations between Pakubuwono III and Mangkubumi. In his lengthy report to the governor general of the VOC in Batavia, he described the course of the event in Jatisari, an exceptional situation where two former rivals sat together on the equal position as Javanese kings. In the meeting, Pakubuwono III presented a *keris*³⁸ called Kyai Kopek to Hamengku Buwono I.³⁹ That action was interesting because, in Javanese culture, handing over one of a *pusaka* (heirloom) means transferring the power possessed by the object.⁴⁰ Ricklefs asserts that the Javanese written sources seemed to consider the background of the *keris* as a symbolization of the division of Mataram and how it had been arranged. The *keris* itself was said to once be the possession of Sunan Kalijaga, who had helped the establishment of Mataram in the sixteenth century and from whom the kings of Mataram sought their genealogy. How Mataram was

³⁷ Baha' Uddin and Dwi Ratna Nurharjarini, "Mangkubumi the Architech of Yogyakarta", *Patrawidya*, Vol. 9, No. 1, April 2018, p. 77

³⁸ *Keris* is a typical Javanese man's weapon that also symbolizes its owner's power. See D.G. Stibbe, *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indie* Vierde Deel, 'S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1921, p. 677-680; Alan G. Maisey, "The Journey of the Javanese *Keris*", in Jared Kemling (ed.), *The Cultural Power of Personal Objects: Traditional Accounts and New Perspectives*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2021, pp. 105-117

³⁹ The National Archives of the Netherlands (NA), 1.04.02 Inventaris van het archief van de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), 1602-1795 (1811), No. 2865, Batavia's ingekomen brievenboeken: secrete stukken uit Sumatra's Westkust, Bengalen, Java's Oostkust, Malabar, Surat, Coromandel, Ceylon, Ternate, Makassar, Palembang

⁴⁰ Moertono gives an eloquent on *pusaka* in relation to the power of a Javanese ruler. See Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 65-66

built around two centuries earlier, therefore, became the became the proper precedent for how it was divided in the eighteenth century.⁴¹

The meeting in Jatisari concluded the formal separation of Mataram into two *keratons*. Now there were two Javanese kingdoms at the same time. It was not unfamiliar situation in the history of Java; there had been conflicts that divided the kingdom, but there was always somebody who reunited them again. Thus, many Javanese believed that the split of Surakarta and Yogyakarta was also impermanent and that one of them would eventually unite the kingdom.⁴² However, in 1757, the kingdom was split again into three parts with the establishment of the court of Mangkunegara led by Raden Mas Said.⁴³ The division inevitably led to the unspoken competition for the most legitimate successor of Mataram. This political turmoil consequently incited cultural and intellectual changes in the central Javanese *keratons*.

The anthropologist John Pemberton notes in his book that the shift of politics that provoked the re-adjustment of the idea of “Java” had been started even a decade before the kingdom was formally divided. In 1745 Paku Buwono II moved the capital of Mataram from Kartasura to Surakarta, which was located just ten kilometers away from the old *keraton*, in a grand procession showcasing the king and his queen as royal couples with all the *keraton* heirlooms.⁴⁴ This, as Pemberton asserts, expressed “a significant shift in what now would be called political strategy” as Paku Buwono II used courtly ritual as a metaphor for his manifestation that would actually not occurring: a harmonious and well-ordered kingdom. Starting from this point of time, the concept of Java in Surakarta shifted into something that was *supposed to happen* (while it might not). Pemberton asserts that this transformation, in

⁴¹ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 119

⁴² Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 123

⁴³ Houben, “The Position of the Mangkunagara”, p. 181

⁴⁴ John Pemberton, *On the subject of “Java”*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 32

turn, favored ritual as a form of power expression of the Javanese court, in this case Surakarta.⁴⁵

While Pemberton emphasizes that this transformation was a response of the Dutch influence in Java, similar dynamics did not necessarily occur in the Yogyakarta *keraton* at least until the turn of the nineteenth century. While it is true that the newly established Yogyakarta *keraton* also adopted the traditions of Mataram and adjusted them to fit into their concept of Java, this can be seen as the attempts of seeking legitimization as the rightful successor of Mataram, instead of as a response of the Dutch political intervention. Here, I am inclined to Ricklefs suggestion to approach the eighteenth-century political changes in Java as an internal conflict among Javanese powers, instead of the Javanese vis-à-vis the VOC, who actually only played intermediary roles. Moreover, Ricklefs warnings not to generalize the situation in the Javanese courts and their perspectives toward the Dutch are especially beneficial.⁴⁶ After the division of Mataram, Ricklefs suggests that the newly established Yogyakarta, compared to Surakarta, was in greater need of legitimization as the successor of Mataram.⁴⁷ It was especially true because Surakarta was considerably older than Yogyakarta and, following Pemberton's analysis, already adapted their Javanese-ness earlier. Several attempts were performed by Hamengku Buwono I to prove the linkage of his *keraton* to the previous dynasty of Mataram, not only in the form of physical construction but also intellectual adaptations.

The first effort of Hamengku Buwono I was the construction of his capital city. After opening a village located in the former royal forest called Beringan between the rivers of Code and Winanga—not far from the site of previous capitals of Mataram in Kotagede and Plered,⁴⁸ Hamengku Buwono I meticulously designed his new capital, which he named

⁴⁵ Pemberton, *On the subject of 'Java'*, p. 37

⁴⁶ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 577

⁴⁷ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 292

⁴⁸ Baha' Uddin and Nurharjarini, "Mangkubumi", p. 79

Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat.⁴⁹ First phase of the *keraton* construction, consisting of the Sultan and his family's residence named *Prabayeksa*, finished in 1756. Following the completion of Prabayeksa, other parts of the *keraton* were finalized; *Siti Hinggil* and *Bangsar Pagelaran* in 1757, *Regol Donopratopo* and *Bangsar Kamagangan* respectively in 1761 and 1763, the Great Mosque in 1771, the surrounding forts in 1777, and *Bangsar Kencono* in 1792.⁵⁰ Ricklefs particularly deems the first Sultan as an admirer of grand buildings. It is indeed true that the Sultan was known as the architect of magnificent constructions in his *keraton* complex. One important and interesting example in his palace is the *Taman Sari*, an exquisite park with ponds to the south and west of the *keraton*. While it is true that the beauty of *Taman Sari* was perhaps primarily intended for the Sultan's entertainment, one had to note that several features at the water complex were particularly dedicated to Nyai Roro Kidul. *Taman Sari*, therefore, reflected the Sultan's effort to legitimate his rule within the Mataram lineage by establishing connection to Nyai Roro Kidul, who possessed crucial role in the history of Mataram.⁵¹

Furthermore, the connection between the newly built Yogyakarta and Nyai Roro Kidul was not only embodied in *Taman Sari*. From the layout of the *keraton*, Yogyakarta appeared to be constructed following the old Javanese cosmological arrangement that consisted of hierarchical circles and axes called *mandala*,⁵² that has been mentioned above. The *keraton* was considered as the microcosmic that was the center of and the medium to the macrocosmic,⁵³ which was often symbolized with the natural features around the *keraton* and

⁴⁹ Ricklefs proposes that the name Ngayogyakarta derives from Sanskrit "Ayodya" (referring to the capital city in the epic Ramayana) which is Ngayodya in Old Javanese. Hence, he indicates pre-Islamic traditions to the Yogyakarta court. See Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 125

⁵⁰ Baha' Uddin and Nurharjarini, "Mangkubumi", p. 84; The Indonesian archaeologist Inajati Adrisijanti, though, proposes different period of the completion of buildings in the *keraton*: Prabayeksa and Siti Hinggil Lor were completed in 1769, the Great Mosque in 1773, and Panggung Krapyak in 1788. See Inajati Adrisijanti, "Kota Yogyakarta Dan Beberapa Kota Pendahulunya", *Berkala Arkeologi*, 18(2), 1998, p. 25

⁵¹ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 130-131

⁵² De Giosa, "Urban Symbolism in Yogyakarta", p. 87

⁵³ Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 4

connected through the axes.⁵⁴ The Yogyakarta *keraton* relies on the north-south axis, reflected in the imaginary line between Mount Merapi and the Southern Ocean of Java, while the east-west axis is absent. This is not the case with Surakarta that possesses all axis.⁵⁵ It is especially fascinating to investigate the relationship of these axes to the Labuhan as the ritual sites marked the difference between the cosmological axes of the *keraton* of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Further exploration on this matter will be discussed in the following chapter.

The second effort to link Yogyakarta to Mataram was through the writing and rewriting of the courtly manuscripts. As the year 1774 approached, the Javanese attempts at reunification shifted toward adjustments that revealed their acceptance of separation. They were preparing to become more independent. What is with this specific time? It is because the Javanese believed in a prophetic political periodization, mentioning that a Javanese dynasty would rule only for a hundred years. The year 1774 coincided with the year 1700 in the Javanese calendar. It would be the time for a dynasty to fall. Moreover, three years later, a new dynasty would be expected to arise. This period often preceded with the natural disasters that displayed the power of nature, for example a volcanic eruption. This belief corresponds to Anderson's theory of power dispersal that also influenced Javanese view on continual history.⁵⁶

However, the unideal situation in Java at that time was rather problematic to fit in with the traditional prophetic belief. Ricklefs explains how each *keraton* sought to comprehend this situation by maintaining its own survival.⁵⁷ In Yogyakarta, the court had such an interesting method to perceive and document odd circumstances: it produced many manuscripts. The most influential among them was *Serat Surya Raja*, the oldest book in the *keraton* of Yogyakarta and, for that reason, the only book to be regarded as a *pusaka*.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Purwani, "Javanese cosmological layout", p. 76

⁵⁵ Purwani, "Javanese cosmological layout", p. 78

⁵⁶ Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture", p. 20, 27

⁵⁷ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 231-268

⁵⁸ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 295-296

Moreover, the book was not only a comprehension of the situation but also a manifestation of how the *keraton* attempted to create a solution to the incomprehensible conditions around the period of 1774-1777 (1700-1703 in the Javanese calendar). It reflected the necessity of the Yogyakarta *keraton* to legitimize itself in the approaching end of the Javanese era.⁵⁹

Another important literary work at the time of Hamengku Buwono I was the Babad Tanah Jawi of Yogyakarta version, which Ricklefs calls as *Babad Kraton*. Considered as the oldest and complete version of *Babad Tanah Jawi*, the manuscript is in the possession of the British Museum (now British Library) under the code Add. MS 12320. Its story begins with Adam and the mythological history of Java and ends with the fall of Kartasura in 1742. Babad Kraton was written in Yogyakarta in 1777 by Raden Tumenggung Jayengrat, a son in law of Hamengku Buwono I. It consists of over 1.400 very large pages and is one of the looted manuscripts from the *keraton*, taken by the British when they plundered Yogyakarta in 1812. Although it is older, Ricklefs asserts that it was improbable that the Surakarta texts derive from this version since the relationship between two *keratons* had not allowed them to have such collaboration. He assumes that the texts of both *keratons*, however, came from the same original but no longer extant material dating from the period before the division of Mataram in 1755.⁶⁰ This particular work precisely relates to the attempt of legitimization through lineage as Babad Tanah Jawi begins with the genealogy of the Mataram rulers.

The third and last effort of legitimization was through the adoption and reproduction of court performances and rituals. While there are many examples of this kind of legitimization, one interesting performance presenting here is the sacred dance called *Bedhaya*. In the court tradition, the nine-person dance was said to be created by Sultan Agung (r. 1613 – 1645), the grandson of Panembahan Senopati and the greatest king of Mataram. The creation of the dance was closely related to Nyai Roro Kidul, to whom it was dedicated. In the Surakarta

⁵⁹ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 292

⁶⁰ M.C. Ricklefs, "A Consideration of Three Versions of the Babad Tanah Djawi, with Excerpts on the Fall of Madjapahit", *Bulletin of SOAS*, Volume 35, Issue 2, June 1972, p. 290

keraton, the goddess was present in the litany of the dance, which reflected the passion and love of the Nyai to her original lover, Panembahan Senopati.⁶¹ In Yogyakarta, on the other hand, *Serat Babad Nitik* notes the dance's motive of creation.⁶² Even though deriving from the same court dance, Bedhaya in Surakarta and Yogyakarta developed into two different performances. In Yogyakarta, the most sacred Bedhaya is called *Bedhaya Semang*. As it was said to be "begun again" in the reign of Hamengku Buwono I,⁶³ it is assumed that the Sultan had appropriated the Mataram dance and performed it in his *keraton* as part of its tradition.

In the same context of Bedhaya, Labuhan performed by the Yogyakarta *keraton* can be seen as an attempt of legitimization through the adaptation of a courtly ritual. Previous studies of Labuhan have noted that the ritual, especially the one which performed at Parangkusumo Beach, was performed in relation to Nyai Roro Kidul.⁶⁴ Even though there is no written evidence of the history of Labuhan, the philologist J. Ras asserts that the ritual derives from an older ritual in the Mataram period and the story of Nyai Roro Kidul is its *raison d'être*.⁶⁵ If his argument is true, the adoption of Labuhan by Hamengku Buwono I was indeed a form of legitimization. However, as the present day Labuhan is not only performed at the southern coast of Yogyakarta, it shows that the ritual perhaps has also experienced some transformation. I will provide further explanation on this matter in the next chapter.

After 1777, the attempts to reunite Java had completely vanished. Culturally, all *keratons* by some means successfully managed to act like they are the sole successors of Mataram. Administratively, more adjustments were made to facilitate the fact that there were three separate *keratons*. Conflicts between *keratons* now were solved through formal treaties,

⁶¹ Nancy Florida, "The Bedhaya Ketawang: A Translation of the Song of Kangjeng Ratu Kidul", *Indonesia*, Apr., 1992, No. 53, p. 24

⁶² Jan Hostetler, "Bedhaya Semang: The Sacred Sance of Yogyakarta", *Archipel*, volume 24, 1982, p. 131

⁶³ Hostetler, "Bedhaya Semang", p. 135-136

⁶⁴ See, for instance, Cécile Bigeon, "Labuhan: Rite royal dua kraton de Yogyakarta célébré sur la plage de Parangtritis", *Archipel*, volume 24, 1982, pp. 117-126

⁶⁵ J. Ras, "The genesis of the Babad Tanah Jawi; Origin and function of the Javanese court chronicle", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 143 (1987), no. 2/3, p. 353

not by show of forces anymore.⁶⁶ This marked a new era in Java and, at the same time, prepared the *keratons* for the other powerful authorities that would arrive soon. By the nineteenth century, the three Javanese *keratons* were facing another series of changes that would diminish their power.

The Arrival of Colonial Power and the Continuous Changes

From the 1770s to the dawn of the nineteenth century, the political situation in the central Javanese *keratons*, especially Surakarta and Yogyakarta, was rather bizarre. On one hand, each *keraton* sought to legitimize itself as the heir of Mataram while simultaneously pretending that the other did not exist. On the other hand, several attempts to reunite the *keratons* were occasionally executed. Perhaps the most famous effort of this was the plot devised by the Susuhunan of Surakarta, Paku Buwono IV (r. 1788–1820), which caused the VOC concern due to his growing closeness to religious groups right after his ascension to the throne. Ricklefs eloquently describes the event which almost initiated another internal conflict in Java in 1789–1790 as the Susuhunan directly opposed the succession of Yogyakarta in his vision to reunite Java. The issue escalated fast until the VOC Governor of Java Northeast Coast at that time, Jan Greeve, had to travel to the *keratons* to solve this problem. When it failed, Yogyakarta, Mangkunegara, and the VOC were forced to collaborate to press the Susuhunan. This dangerous event was solved when the Susuhunan decided to hand over some of his religious allies to the VOC.⁶⁷ As Ricklefs asserts, this particular crisis proved the Javanese, particularly Yogyakarta, inclination to remain separated.⁶⁸

The death of Hamengku Buwono I in 1792 marked a new political era in Yogyakarta. Although being known as a hot-tempered and hasty man, the first Sultan became more

⁶⁶ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, pp. 659-662

⁶⁷ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, pp. 493-526

⁶⁸ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 526

moderate toward the VOC in his last years.⁶⁹ Indeed, compared to Surakarta's Susuhunan, Yogyakarta's first sultan was rather straightforwardly unfriendly to the Dutch in general.⁷⁰ However, his successor, Hamengku Buwono II, displayed the hostility to the VOC even when he was still a crown prince. Both Ricklefs and the historian Peter Carey suggest that the rule of the second Sultan was said to be distinct from the first one and it would cause multiple hardships in the Yogyakarta *keraton* in the following years.⁷¹ Carey even mentions that Hamengku Buwono II was an ineffective and arrogant ruler, who happened to be in an unfortunate moment resulting from the misunderstanding of the weakness of Dutch while there was a revolutionary in Europe.⁷² Carey's statement might be true if we see his political moves in early nineteenth century almost got the Yogyakarta *keraton* removed. In this episode of political turbulence that was directly influenced by the presence of the European authorities, I argue in the following chapter that Labuhan lost its original purpose.

The first three decades of the 19th century saw the arrival of different European colonial empires to the island of Java, starting with the Franco-Dutch government in 1808, the British in 1811, and the Dutch in 1816. While the position of the VOC was more like intermediary role in the internal conflict of the Javanese courts,⁷³ the actions taken by these new colonial governments display that they saw the *keratons* as colonial subjects. Those moves directly affected not only the political but also cultural and intellectual conditions in Surakarta, Yogyakarta, and Mangkunegara although in different degrees.

⁶⁹ The National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia (ANRI), Arsip Yogyakarta (1724-1903), No. 388, Memorie Van Rhijn, door Resident Van Rhijn aan zijn opvolgen Wouter Hendrik van IJsseldijk over de gesteldheid van Sultans Hof en de staat van Compagnie 13 september 1786

⁷⁰ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 578

⁷¹ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 563; Peter Carey, "The Origins of the Java War (1825-30)", *The English Historical Review*, Jan. 1976, Vol. 91, No. 358, p. 54. In his other work, Carey shows how the inefficient administration of the Yogyakarta *keraton* under the second Sultan reflected in the tax-paying system, see Peter Carey, *The Power of Prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the end of an old order in Java, 1785-1855*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2008, p. 60-66

⁷² Carey, "The Origins of the Java War", p.54

⁷³ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi*, p. 575

The Ceremonial Edict imposed by Herman Willem Daendels, the Franco-Dutch governor-general, for example, took different effect in Surakarta and Yogyakarta due to the dissimilarity of the Susuhunan and the Sultan's receptions. The new governor-general was from a military background and heavily influenced by the spirit of revolution that was sweeping Europe at that moment.⁷⁴ It was perhaps due to the latter upbringing that he ostracized the Javanese *keratons* and saw them both as “potential rivals” and “dubious allies in the event of an enemy attack”.⁷⁵ The edict he released on 28 July 1808 for the courts in Surakarta and Yogyakarta adjusted government officials’ etiquette when participating in court ceremonies or coming across a Javanese monarch or his relatives in public space. For instance, the Dutch officials, now called ‘ministers’, were allowed to use the *payung*⁷⁶ when they attended court ceremonials and were not allowed to yield when they came across a monarch on a public road.⁷⁷ To the Javanese, Daendels’ edict represented a direct affront to their political and cultural order. The Sukarta *keraton* reluctantly accepted the new regulation, but Hamengku Buwono II sternly opposed it.⁷⁸ The disagreement of Yogyakarta resulted in a crisis, followed by a revolt of Raden Rangga Prawiradirdja, the *bupati wedana* of Madiun, in 1810.⁷⁹ It also caused the deposition of Hamengku Buwono II on Daendels’ demand, handing over the keraton administration to his son, the Crown Prince of Yogyakarta, who was to rule as prince regent.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Yogyakarta also lost the important financial control of the annual rent payments (*strandgeld*) over its *pasisir* area.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Carey, *The Power of Prophecy*, p. 157

⁷⁵ Carey, *The Power of Prophecy*, p. 159

⁷⁶ *Payung* is an umbrella. However, in cultural context, it refers to a gilded parasol which symbolizes a noble status. See Arnout van der Meer, *Performing Power: Cultural Hegemony, Identity, and Resistance in Colonial Indonesia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020, p. 23

⁷⁷ “Reglement voor het ceremonieel, in acht te nemen door de residenten bij de hoven te Soerakarta en te Djokjokarta, 28 Julij 1808”, see J.A. van der Chijs, *Nederlandsch-Indisch Plakaatboek 1602-1811*, Volume 15, Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1896, pp. 63-65; Van der Meer, *Performing Power*, p. 26-27

⁷⁸ H.W. Daendels, *Staat der Nederlandsche Oostindische Bezittingen, onder het bestuur van den Gouverneur-Generaal Herman Willem Daendels in de jaren 1808-1811*, ’s Gravenhage, 1814, p. 94

⁷⁹ Carey dedicates a whole chapter to describe the revolt of Raden Rangga Prawiradirdja III in 1810, remarking him as “the old order’s last champion”. See Chapter VI of Carey, *The Power of Prophecy*, pp. 205-259

⁸⁰ Carey, *The Power of Prophecy*, p. 264

⁸¹ Carey, “The Origins of the Java War”, p. 56

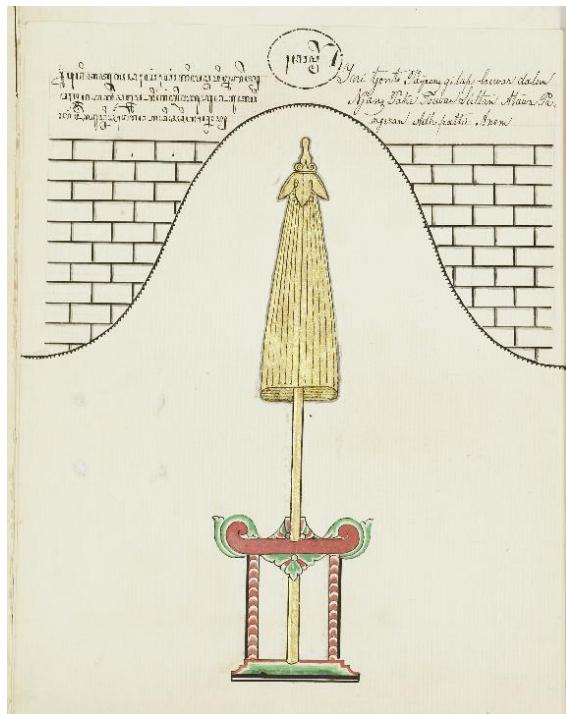


Figure 1. *Payung gilap* (gilded parasol) for the Sultan or the Pangeran Adipati Anom (Crown Prince) of Yogyakarta,

by J.H. Maronier, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967

Source: Digital Collections Leiden University Library, KITLV 37B120,

<http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:857030>

This depressing political situation for the Yogyakarta *keraton* continued when the British handed over the baton of colonial power to the Dutch in 1816. In Yogyakarta, the strong political and economic presence of the colonial authority and several internal conflicts in the *keraton* generated socio-economic crisis that, as Carey asserts, reflected in the growing messianic movements in the countryside.⁸² In the cultural aspect, the reign of the Governor-General Baron van der Capellen, for instance, gave major blow to the central Javanese keratons as he issued new regulations to systematically appropriate the bupati's position and its traditional status to legitimize Dutch colonial authority in 1820. The decree modified the responsibilities, ranks, and titles of the bupati, including their designated symbols of power.⁸³ In 1824, the government released another decree regulating the position of bupati

⁸² Carey, *The Power of Prophecy*, p. 480

⁸³ *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1820 No. 22, Resolutie van den Gouverneur-General in Rade van den 9den Mei 1820 no. 6, waarbij gearresteerd wordt een reglement op de verplichtingen, rangen en titels der regenten.

concerning their pomp and retinue.⁸⁴ Through these regulations, the colonial government integrated indigenous bureaucrats into their system while acknowledging their status and restoring their traditional rights and responsibilities. They positioned the bupatis, the first person among the indigenous people, under the Dutch residents, who would provide them counsel and treat them as “younger brother”.⁸⁵ The historian Arnout van der Meer deems the regulations as a colonial reinterpretation of *kawula-gusti*⁸⁶ relationship and the foundation of dual administration in colonial Indonesia.⁸⁷

However, the regulations issued by the regime of Van der Capellen initially only took effect in the regencies under the Dutch control. The Java War (1825-1830), ignited by one of the Yogyakarta princes, Pangeran Diponegoro, the oldest son of Hamengku Buwono III. The war was the result of a long period of bleak and arduous situation which had started since Daendel’s era. On 9 December 1822, Hamengku Buwono IV died and his son, a three-year-old, ascended the throne. At the end of the same month, only a week after the coronation of the baby-Sultan, Mount Merapi erupted violently. Pangeran Diponegoro took this event as a precedent of a changing era and decided to withdraw himself from the court’s affairs several months later.⁸⁸ The last great war on Java broke out in mid-1825. The war, however, ended with the defeat of Pangeran Diponegoro in 1830.⁸⁹ Carey asserts that the Java War was important for the Javanese because it was the first war that broke out at the *keratons* primarily over social and economic problems rather than merely dynastic one, reflecting their wish to

⁸⁴ *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* 1824 No. 13, Resolutie van den Luitenant Gouverneur in Rade bij afwezendheid van den Gouverneur Generaal van den 24sten Februarij 1824 no. 3, houdende intrekking van de titel, rang en regten, toegekend aan de Regenten, Radin of Maas Ingebei, bij het reglement, gearresteerd bij resolutie van den 9den Mei 1820 no. 6, (staatsblad no. 22); en daarstelling van een reglement op de titels, rangen, de staatsie en het gevolg der inlandsche ambtenaren op het eiland Java, aan de regenten ondergeschikt zijnde.

⁸⁵ Heather Sutherland, *The Making of a Bureaucratic Elite: The Colonial Transformation of the Javanese Priyayi*, Kuala Lumpur: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979, p. 10

⁸⁶ Kawula-gusti refers to the traditional Javanese ideal perception on the relationship between a ruler (gusti) and the ruled (kawula). See Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, p. 14

⁸⁷ Van der Meer, *Performing Power*, p. 31

⁸⁸ Carey, “The Origins of the Java War”, p. 68, 70

⁸⁹ Carey, *The Power of Prophecy*, p. 677-699

return to the era before the arrival of colonial powers.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, as Ricklefs added, the effort was in vain and only showed how intense the grip of colonialism in Java was.⁹¹

After the Java War, the Javanese rulers in Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Mangkunegaran, and Paku Alaman remained in control of their respective domains; however, their political power was severely limited. Their territories were reduced: Surakarta and Yogyakarta together ruled the area between and to the south of Mount Merapi and Mount Lawu.⁹² Yet, as many scholars have shown, the political maneuvers of the Javanese courts found their way through other means. The historian Kenji Tsuchiya, for example, displays the flourishing production of literary materials in Surakarta in the period had influenced the construction of modern Indonesia in the twentieth century.⁹³ The historians Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds also demonstrate that the Surakarta keraton produce the remarkable *Serat Centhini*, which captured various Javanese knowledge in and disseminated them in the Javanese way of thinking.⁹⁴

However, it is essential to note that the flourishing knowledge generation on cultural and intellectual aspects in this period can also be seen as the on-going transformation of the identity of Java. Whether this was an action undertaken by the Javanese *keraton* itself in response to European power, as Pemberton suggests,⁹⁵ or one directly shaped by colonial authority, as historian Nancy Florida shows, a wide-spread transformation of the idea of Java occurred in the present period. It is also important to situate this thriving cultural and

⁹⁰ Carey, “The Origins of the Java War”, p. 52

⁹¹ M.C. Ricklefs, *Sejarah Indonesia Modern 1200-2008*, Jakarta: Serambi, 2008, p. 257

⁹² Vincent J.H. Houben, *Kraton and Kumpeni: Surakarta and Yogyakarta 1830-1870*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994, p. 5

⁹³ Kenji Tsuchiya, “Javanology and the Age of Ranggawarsita: An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Javanese Culture”, in Takashi Shiraishi (ed.), *Reading Southeast Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1990, pp. 75-108

⁹⁴ Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds, “Cosmologies, Truth Regimes, and the State in Southeast Asia”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Feb. 2000, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 1-55

⁹⁵ Pemberton, *On the subject of “Java”*, p. 69

intellectual creation within the broader context of colonial knowledge production, which reflected the colonial agenda.

In this context, we can also see an important cultural move in Yogyakarta in the period of Raffles. Notwithstanding the damage that had been caused by the reign of Raffles, for instance, the British period provided important steppingstone for the exploration of Javanese archaeological sites as it enabled a more extensive local and global interest which would eventually promote the rising awareness on the archaeological care, not only in Java but also in the Netherlands. It also opens the fact that the process of archaeological knowledge production at multiple Javanese sites at that time involved a broader transnational network of knowledge production.⁹⁶ More than archaeology, Raffles also devoted considerable amounts of attention to Javanese culture and literature, as revealed in his monumental work *The History of Java*. It would be inaccurate to claim that he was the first person to demonstrate such curiosity and investigate it, but his book is widely regarded as the first comprehensive and systematic study on the subject.⁹⁷ Yet, one has to bear in mind that such exploration also carried political agenda of the regime.⁹⁸ The same case occurred to Labuhan as a Javanese ritual performed by the keraton of Yogyakarta in this period.

Epilogue: Labuhan as a Power and Legitimation

The political changes in the former area of Mataram in 1750s–1830s laid the foundation of the cultural and intellectual transformation in the Javanese *keratons*. The unforeseen division of Mataram in 1755 proved to be permanent, but it was only the beginning of further

⁹⁶ Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff, *The Politics of Heritage in Indonesia: A Cultural History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, p. 34-35

⁹⁷ Nancy Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, p. 23

⁹⁸ Bloembergen and Eickhoff, for instance, show that the British archaeological explorations in Java in early 1800s had become “part of a political reform programme”. See, Bloembergen and Eickhoff, *The Politics of Heritage in Indonesia*, p. 36-37

unanticipated alterations with the arrival of European powers in the nineteenth century. While all *keratons* attempted to maintain the traditional aspects to legitimize themselves as a rightful heir of Mataram, Yogyakarta particularly in greater need of such legitimacy than Surakarta. Hamengku Buwono I constructed of buildings dedicated to Nyai Roro Kidul, adapted Mataram's culture, and linked his lineage to Mataram's dynasty not only to legitimate his rule but also to absorb the great power of his predecessors.

The arrival of the European colonial authorities complicated the political situation in the central Javanese *keratons*. Their direct involvement in court life caused not only political but also cultural and intellectual transformations. In Yogyakarta *keraton*, the miscalculated political movement by Hamengku Buwono II brought the court to great conflict with both Daendels and Raffles. The aftermath of these reigns, along with social, economic, and political declines in Yogyakarta, led Pangeran Diponegoro to start the Java War in 1825. When the war ended in 1830, the situation in the central Javanese *keratons* was never the same as it was before the nineteenth century. Yet, in such unstable condition causing constant transformations following the division of Java, Labuhan was still performed by the Yogyakarta *keraton*. Moreover, the ritual also transformed into a different version. The following chapter will discuss how and to what extent the transformation of Labuhan has taken its place.

CHAPTER II

LABUHAN AS JAVANESE GEO-COSMOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

In the previous chapter, we explored the political transformation in the Javanese *keratons* from the mid eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century that incited cultural and intellectual changes in these courts in general. In that setting, this study investigates Labuhan closely to see how those changes affected the ritual. This chapter specifically engages with the discussion of Javanese knowledge embodied in the Labuhan ritual and how it shifted in the period of changes at the end of 18th century to the beginning of 19th century. I contend that Labuhan was (and is) a form of Javanese geo-cosmological understanding that crystallized how the people perceived their landscape. I argue here that despite the transformation of the sites and purpose of Labuhan in the political turmoil in the 1750s–1830s, the geo-cosmological knowledge in Labuhan remains.

In his work, the anthropologist John Pemberton displays how the concept of “Java” was subtly and continually constructed in the *keraton* of Surakarta through the performance of rituals, processions, and ceremonies that became a new form of Javanese power since 1745.¹ While the political developments in Yogyakarta were rather different from those in Surakarta, I draw on Pemberton’s idea to question how Labuhan evolved into a new form of power assertion by the Yogyakarta *keraton*, articulated through the geo-cosmological understanding crystallized in the ritual.

This chapter starts with questioning the Javanese geo-cosmological knowledge in Labuhan by examining the sites and the purpose of the ritual. Here, I mainly consult the narrative of *Babad Tanah Jawi*, along with the court oral tradition, to show the significance of this knowledge to Javanese culture. By engaging with the Javanese source, I aim to

¹ John Pemberton, *On the subject of “Java”*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 37

demonstrate the Javanese way of thinking. It is an essential part of exploring Labuhan as *Babad Tanah Jawi* was (and is) the underlying reason for the Labuhan performances. The chapter then proceeds with the analysis of why and how Labuhan transformed from the end of eighteenth century to the beginning of nineteenth century. It aims to demonstrate that Labuhan initially functioned as both an exercise of power and a form of knowledge before shifting into a renewed version of ritual.

Performing Labuhan, Maintaining Power

In 1994, the anthropologist John Pemberton eloquently suggests that the court of Surakarta deliberately created and adjusted the concept of “Java” that became more symbolic in response to the increasing power of the Europeans. Pemberton studies royal weddings to show that the Javanese people turned into more indirect expressions to assert their power.² Following Pemberton’s perspective, the historians Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds situate the *Serat Centhini* text in the period of transformation and examine its textual elements. Their analysis displays how the Javanese courts, in this case Surakarta, produced and presented their knowledge in their own methodology that can be also read as a form of power assertion in the time of crisis.³ These examinations on the transformation of the idea of Javanese knowledge and identity provide the framework to explore the first shift of Labuhan: from a single ritual at Parangkusumo to a cluster of rituals performed at four sacred sites. In consequence, not only that the sites of the ritual expanded from one to four, the purpose of the ritual also shifted. When it was previously performed to maintain the kinship with the spirits that became the sources of power, the *keraton* now conducted Labuhan to symbolically re-asserted its realm.

² See the first three chapters of Pemberton, *On the subject of “Java”*, pp. 28-147

³ Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds, “Cosmologies, Truth Regimes, and the State in Southeast Asia”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Feb. 2000, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 1-55

We begin by questioning the meaning of Labuhan. The Javanese word ‘*labuh*’ or ‘*nglabuh*’, from which Labuhan’s name derives, refers to the action of throwing something into water.⁴ The water element in Labuhan suggests that the ritual was originally performed near a body of water. However, it is curious to notice that from the four sites of Labuhan, only Parangkusumo at the southern coast satisfy that criteria. Then, why was Labuhan performed at the other sites as well? The answer to this question is apparently complex, as it reveals the worldview of the Yogyakarta *keraton*, which is also crystallized Javanese geo-cosmological knowledge. We need to first understand why Labuhan was performed at Parangkusumo before delving deeper into the other sites.

It was no coincidence that the ritual was performed at the specific beach of Parangkusumo. The Southern Ocean of Java was said to be the realm of Nyai Roro Kidul, a spirit queen feared and revered by the Javanese people, especially those living along the southern coast.⁵ True identity of this goddess is still unclear, but previous scholars investigating her agreed that there was a connection between the spirit queen and the ritual performed on the southern coast of Java. Cécile Bigeon, who published an ethnographic article about Labuhan in Parangtritis⁶ in 1982, for example, mentions that the ritual was

⁴ See J.F.C. Gericke and T. Roorda, *Javaansch-Nederduitsch Woordenboek*, Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1847, p. 452. See also the official website of the Yogyakarta *keraton*, <https://www.kratonjogja.id/hajad-dalem/2-hajad-dalem-labuhan/>, accessed on Sunday, 7 December 2025

⁵ See the discussion on Nyai Roro Kidul, for instance, in Roy E. Jordaan, “The Mystery of Nyai Lara Kidul, Goddess of the Southern Ocean”, *Archipel*, Volume 28, 1984, pp. 99-116 and Robert Wessing, “A Princess from Sunda: Some Aspects of Nyai Roro Kidul”, *Asian Folklore Studies*, 1997, Vol. 56, No. 2, pp. 317-353

⁶ Parangtritis is the beach beside Parangkusumo. These two beaches constitute a long sandy beach on the southern part of Bantul Regency in contemporary Yogyakarta; therefore, they are often referred interchangeably. However, the *keraton* of Yogyakarta usually uses Parangkusumo and the location of Sela Gilang, the stones were said to be the meeting location of Nyai Roro Kidul and Panembahan Senopati, is in the court sites named Cepuri Parangkusumo. See the official website of the Yogyakarta *keraton*, <https://www.kratonjogja.id/hajad-dalem/2-hajad-dalem-labuhan/>

dedicated to the Nyai.⁷ Furthermore, J.J. Ras, the philologist focusing on Javanese literature, suggests that Nyai Roro Kidul was the *raison d'être* of Labuhan.⁸

The significance of Labuhan at Parangkusumo stems from the site's fundamental role for the history of Mataram, the fifteenth- to eighteenth-century Javanese kingdom that preceded the courts of Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Mangkunegara, and Paku Alam. According to *Babad Tanah Jawi*, the most extensive extant Javanese source written in early nineteenth century, Parangkusumo was the place where Panembahan Senopati, the founding father of Mataram, first encountered Nyai Roro Kidul. In Canto 32 of the *babad*, the narrative describes how a star fell from the sky to Senopati when he was sleeping on a stone at Lipura (present-day Bambang Lipuro in Bantul, Yogyakarta). Believing that the star was a kind of revelation (*wahyu*) for him to be the king of Java, Senopati headed east to River Umpak where he encountered an *olor*⁹ that then carried him to the mouth of the river. From there, Senopati walked eastward and stopped at a stone where he chose to meditate. The powerful energy he released during the meditation was said to create turbulence beneath the ocean, forcing Nyai Roro Kidul to rise to the surface of the water and investigate the cause herself. Discovering that Senopati was behind the disturbance, she appealed to him to stop and, in return, promised to support him and his descendants in becoming the rulers of Java. The story continues with Senopati visiting the Nyai's underwater palace, where he made love with her and stayed for three days before returning to Mataram.¹⁰

The narrative of the marriage of Panembahan Senopati and Nyai Roro Kidul provides both legitimization to the existence of the Mataram dynasty and the rationale of the

⁷ Cécile Bigeon, "Labuhan: Rite royal du kraton de Yogyakarta célébré sur la plage de Parangtritis", *Archipel*, volume 24, 1982, pp. 117-126

⁸ J.J. Ras, "The genesis of the Babad Tanah Jawi; Origin and function of the Javanese court chronicle", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 143 (1987), No. 2/3, p. 349

⁹ Jordaan identifies *olor* as a type of eel or a sea serpent. Furthermore, he connects this *olor* to the suggestions that Nyai Roro Kidul has a snake-like appearance. See Jordaan, "The Mystery of Nyai Lara Kidul", p. 108

¹⁰ *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Canto 32, Batavia: Balai Pustaka, 1939-1941, retrieved from [Babad Tanah Jawi, Balai Pustaka 1939-1941](http://www.balairung.nl/1939-1941), accessed on Tuesday, 9 December 2025; See also Willem Remmelman (ed.), *Babad Tanah Jawi – The Chronicle of Java: The Revised Prose Version of C.F. Winter Sr*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2022, p. 51-54

performance of Labuhan at Parangkusumo. Coming back to the water element in the word ‘*labuh*’, it seems that Labuhan was originally performed in relation to this fundamental relationship. While there is no record of exactly when Labuhan began to be conducted, the Javanologist J.J. Ras suggested that it dated back to the time of Panembahan Senopati himself, referring to his first meeting with the spirit queen and his coming to the throne.¹¹ *Babad Tanah Jawi* and other Javanese sources traditionally dated both events in 1535 or 1540 in Javanese calendar (1613 and 1618 CE respectively). However, these years were most likely incorrect as Sultan Agung, the grandson of Senopati, ascended the throne in 1613 CE.¹² The other Javanese texts that provide more reliable chronological information, namely *Babad Sengkalaning Momana* and *Babad ing Sangkala*, mentions that in 1618 CE was the time when Sultan Agung moved his *keraton* from Kotagede to Karta.¹³ Regardless the confusion around the date, it is clear that Labuhan is an old ritual from the Mataram period. Moreover, the southern coast of Java was already a popular destination for those who seek to practice ascetism in early nineteenth century. For example, the historian M.C. Ricklefs shows that Pangeran Diponegoro, who waged war with the Dutch colonial government in 1825, had been regularly visited the southern coast to meditate prior to the war. From his account, the

¹¹ J.J. Ras, “The genesis of the Babad Tanah Jawi; Origin and function of the Javanese court chronicle”, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 143 (1987), No. 2/3, p. 350

¹² Anthony Reid, “Two hitherto unknown Indonesian tsunamis of the seventeenth century: Probabilities and context, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 47(1), February 2016, p. 102

¹³ It is important to note here that both present sources are from the same genre of *sengkala* (meaning ‘chronogram’ in Javanese). Ras cites *Babad Sengkalaning Momana* (KITLV, Cod.Or. 257), a manuscript preserved in Leiden University Library. The description of the library catalogue states that it is a copy of manuscript possessed by the Royal Batavian Society (*Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap*) that contains important events in Javanese history. The original manuscript is dated 1865. See Ras, “The genesis of the Babad Tanah Jawi”, p. 350; H.J. de Graaf, *Babad Sangkala Ning Momana*, 1940, retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3575214>; and the manuscript catalogue in Leiden University Library, https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl/permalink/31UKB_LFU/1knc4sp/alma990030188430302711. On the other hand, M.C. Ricklefs investigated, edited, translated, and published his analysis on *Babad ing Sangkala* (IOL Jav.36(B)) preserved in the British Library. The code IOL refers to the Indian Office Library, London. Ricklefs states that the translated *Babad ing Sengkala* is only one of several texts from the sengkala genre in the library, which is part of the Javanese manuscripts collection made by Colin Mackenzie during his period of duty in Java from 1811 to 1813. It is, Ricklefs suggests, part of the plundered manuscripts from the Yogyakarta *keraton* in 1812. For further discussion on the text, see M.C. Ricklefs, *Modern Javanese Historical Tradition: A Study of an Original Kartasura Chronicle and Related Materials*, London: SOAS, 1978

prince appears to visit several sites on the southern coast, such as Song Kamal, Gua Langse, and Parangkusumo, in early 1800s.¹⁴

The significance of Parangkusumo, in relation to Nyai Roro Kidul, was also reflected in the offerings of Labuhan at the beach. Aside from the textiles for the queen and her attendants that were cast away to the sea, the Yogyakarta *keraton* also prepares several worn clothes as well as clipped nails and trimmed hair of the Sultan that were collected for a whole year. These special offerings were buried at the foot of Parangkusumo stones (Sela Gilang).¹⁵ I will explore further on the offerings of Labuhan in the following chapter.

Up to this point, we can infer that Labuhan initially referred to Mataram's ritual at Parangkusumo dedicated to Nyai Roro Kidul and it was performed to maintain the respectful kinship between the Javanese kingdom and the non-human beings that provide them power. By performing Labuhan at the southern coast, Yogyakarta attempted to retain the old kinship of Mataram with Nyai Roro Kidul. This was, therefore, an act of maintaining power inherited from the remnants of the previous dynasty, one of the sources of power for a new Javanese ruler, in the words of political scholar Benedict Anderson.¹⁶ This move was inevitable as the spirit queen was an essential ally, if not a family member, of Mataram. However, how about the other sites of the contemporary Labuhan? Since when and why did Labuhan begin to be performed at the other sites, namely Mount Merapi, Mount Lawu, and Dlepih?

¹⁴ See M.C. Ricklefs, "Dipanagara's Early Inspirational Experience", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 130 (1974), No. 2/3, pp. 227-258

¹⁵ Bigeon, "Labuhan", p. 120-121

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture", in Claire Holt (ed.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972, p. 25

Adding Sites of Ritual, Incorporating Power

The only available source about the beginning of Labuhan's performance at the three other locations was the court oral tradition. From the interview to several royal family members conducted by B. Soelarto, the author of ethnographic documentation of Labuhan in 1979, the Yogyakarta *keraton* believes that Labuhan has been performed at all four sites since the reign of Hamengku Buwono I (1755–1792), the first sultan of Yogyakarta.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the oldest written materials that include the four Labuhan sites dated from early twentieth century.¹⁸ In other words, Yogyakarta's Labuhan as a cluster of rituals was certainly started to be performed at four sites before the 1900s, but the exact timing is unknown. If we take the court tradition into account and combine it with the fact that older sources always refer to Labuhan as a ritual performed only at Parangkusumo,¹⁹ we can assume that a transformation of Labuhan occurred in the first years of Yogyakarta's establishment. But why did the first Sultan feel the need to add three more sites? To answer this, it is important to examine why the other three locations of Labuhan, namely Mount Merapi, Mount Lawu, and Dlepih forest, were essential to the Yogyakarta *keraton*.

Mount Merapi appears multiple times in *Babad Tanah Jawi*. However, the most significant and relevant narrative was about its contribution to the establishment of Mataram. In Canto 36, the *babad* explains how the volcano helped the army of Mataram defeated Pajang's troops in Prambanan:

“[...] The wind and lightning raged, the splinters of wood scattered everywhere, all signs had appeared, heavy rain poured down mingling with the wind, the sign that the army of *jin* [spirit] had arrived.

¹⁷ B. Soelarto, *Upacara Labuhan Kesultanan Yogyakarta*, Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1980/1981, p. 28, 144-145

¹⁸ See, for instance, Soedjana Tirtokoesoemo, “De Verjaring van den Verheffingsdag van Z.H. den Sultan van Jogjakarta (Tingalan Dalem)”, *Djawa*, 1 oktober 1933, pp. 372-392

¹⁹ Aside from the narrative of Babad Tanah Jawi, see, for example, the reports of Matthijs Waterloo, the *Resident* of Yogyakarta, to Nicolaus Engelhard, the Governor of Java's Northeast Coast in Semarang, in late 1805 about the performance of Labuhan by the Sultan of Yogyakarta, Hamengku Buwono II, at Parangkusumo. Peter Carey, *The Power of Prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the end of an old order in Java, 1785-1855*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2008, p. 141 n. 41

In between the shouts in the sky, the rumble sounded like the sky was collapsing, like all mountains were exploding, every sound rose in uproar, in between the slopes of Merapi, the noise burst, the crater roared, ash rained down, large stones and gravel tumbled, landslides swept across the path.

Many great stones are scattered, together with the landslide to the Umpak river, fell into the stream [of the river] [...]”²⁰

With the help of the spirits of Mount Merapi, so the *babad* tells, the troops of Pajang were defeated. This resulted in the mounting of Pangeran Benowo to the throne as the last king of Pajang. After his death, Mataram under the rule of Panembahan Senopati took over the hegemony of central Java.²¹ To remember and appreciate this support, the Yogyakarta *keraton* performs Labuhan in Mount Merapi for the residing spirits, such as Kyai Sapujagad, Mpu Rama, and Mpu Ramadi.²²

While the reason for the performance of Labuhan in Parangkusumo and Merapi can be traced in *Babad Tanah Jawi*, it is rather challenging to do so for the two other locations. Oral tradition in the Yogyakarta *keraton* believe that Mount Lawu is the home of the spirit called Sunan Lawu. The true identity of this spirit is still debatable. Some people considered him the soul of Brawijaya, the last king of Majapahit who, according to *Babad Tanah Jawi*,²³ vanished and ascended to heaven.²⁴ Some others regarded Sunan Lawu as the spirit of Brawijaya's son.²⁵ Either way, it seemed that Mount Lawu is crucial for the Yogyakarta *keraton* because of its relation to Majapahit. In this sense, Hamengku Buwono I followed his predecessor in Mataram to connect with previous great dynasty. However, it is curious to see

²⁰ Author's translation on *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Canto 36; Compared to Remmelink (ed. and trans.), *Babad Tanah Jawi*, p. 60

²¹ *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Canto 37-39

²² Sumarsih et.al., *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, p. 50; See also <https://www.kratonjogja.id/hajad-dalem/2-hajad-dalem-labuhan/>, accessed on Friday, 17 October 2025

²³ *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Canto 14 on the fall of Majapahit and the rise of Demak, retrieved from [Babad Tanah Jawi, Balai Pustaka 1939-1941](https://www.kratonjogja.id/hajad-dalem/2-hajad-dalem-labuhan/), accessed on Wednesday, 26 November 2025. See also Remmelink (ed. and trans.), *Babad Tanah Jawi*, p. 17

²⁴ Soelarto, *Upacara Labuhan Kesultanan Yogyakarta*, p. 26-28

²⁵ Lucien Adam, “The royal offerings on Mount Lawu”, in Stuart Robson (ed.), *The Kraton: Selected essays on Javanese courts*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003, p. 265

how negotiations over cultural traditions allowed Yogyakarta to access the area that was formally under the administration of other courts.

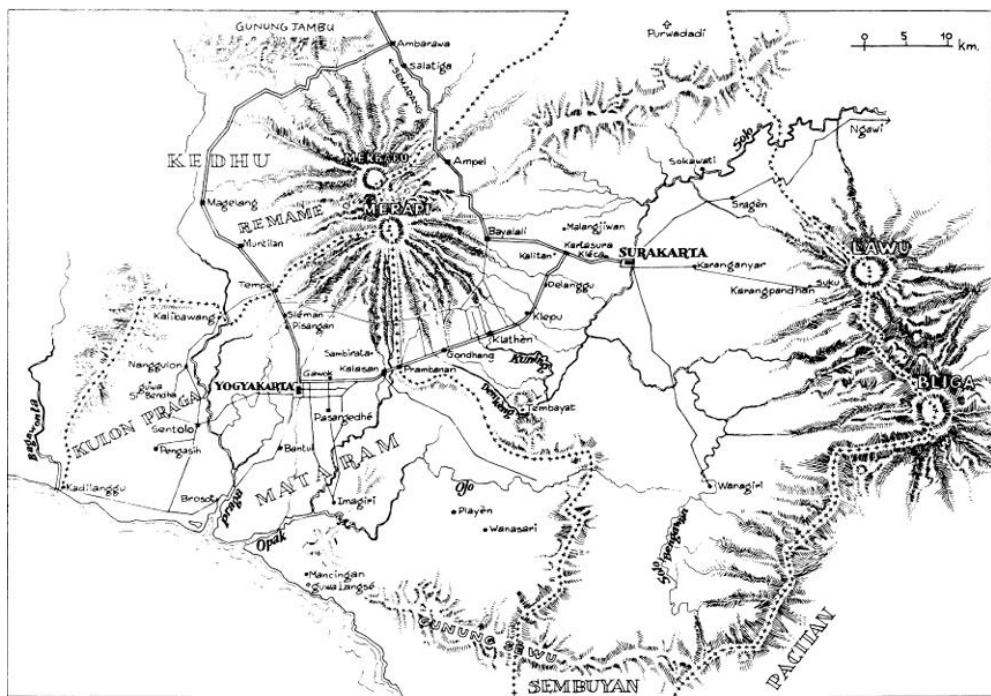


Figure 2. Map of the region of Yogyakarta and Surakarta (without Mangkunegara and Pakualam). No date.

Source: Vincent Houben, *Kraton and Kumpeni: Surakarta and Yogyakarta 1830-1870*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994, p. 12

The fourth site, a forest called Dlepih, offers a more interesting background. This location is said to be a significant place of three important figures in Yogyakarta's history: Panembahan Senopati, Sunan Kalijaga, and Hamengku Buwono himself. Dlepih, that consists of several sacred spots, witnessed these people meditated and interacted with the spirits of the forest.²⁶ Instead of *Babad Tanah Jawi*, the importance of Dlepih was explained by *Serat Centhini*, an early nineteenth-century Javanese text containing vast Javanese knowledge on various subjects.²⁷ The spirit of the forest, named Ratu Widanangga who

²⁶ Sumarsih et.al., *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, p. 52-53

²⁷ *Serat Centhini* was completed in 1814. The authorship of this remarkable manuscript is rather unclear, but Soebardi, citing Poerbatjaraka, suggests that it was most likely the result of rewriting, modification, and extension carried out by several authors at the command of the Crown Prince of Surakarta, who later became Paku Buwono V (1820–1830 CE). See Soebardi, "Santri-religious elements as reflected in the Book of Tjentini", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 127 (1971), No. 3, p. 332. In their article, Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds discuss

inhabited the Jatha cave, was said to be the daughter of Nyai Roro Kidul and was taken as wife by Panembahan Senopati just like her mother.²⁸ This story indicates that Mataram (and the successors) would like to display an extremely close relationship with Dlepih by marrying the ruler of the spirit realm at that place. In the next chapter, however, we will learn that even the name of the spirit would rather be more problematic than we expected.

It is evident that all sites of Labuhan possess great historical significance to Mataram. Similarly with the ritual at Parangkusumo, by performing Labuhan at the three other sites, the Yogyakarta *keraton* aimed to sustain the old relationship between the Mataram dynasty and the spirits of these locations. Although it was still unclear when exactly the other three sites were incorporated into the Labuhan ritual, we can be sure about the reason: they were part of the Javanese attempts to maintain harmony among humans and especially between humans and non-humans. In this respect, I suggest that Labuhan was a form of *slametan*, the ritual which the anthropologist Clifford Geertz called “the center of the whole Javanese religious system”.²⁹ Geertz argues that *slametan* was conducted to wish the state of *slamet*, reflected in the phrase “*gak ana apa-apa*” (there is not anything), or “a state of being that is at once ideally incidentless and religiously neutral”, to borrow Pemberton’s elaboration.³⁰ I define *slamet* as a condition of being neutrally static and peaceful, and *slametan* is performed to celebrate the state of *slamet* as well as to ask for the unchanging fortune. Indeed, the Labuhan ritual was part of a court *slametan* to celebrate the Sultan’s enthronement or to commemorate its anniversary called *Tingalan Jumenengan Dalem* (The Anniversary of the

how the knowledge written in the *Serat Centhini* reflects the response of the Javanese courts, primarily Surakarta, to the political and cultural transformation in Java in early nineteenth century. See Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds, “Cosmologies, Truth Regimes, and the State in Southeast Asia”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Feb. 2000, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 1-55

²⁸ Cited from the translation of *Serat Centhini* by Clara Brakel, ““Sandhang-pangan” for the Goddess: Offerings to Sang Hyang Bathari Durga and Nyai Lara Kidul”, *Asian Folklore Studies*, 1997, Vol. 56, No. 2, p. 276-277

²⁹ Geertz observes the *slametan* in Mojokuto, a small town in east central Java (present-day Kediri), where he spent several years to conduct field research in 1950s. See Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 1976, p. 11

³⁰ Pemberton, *On the subject of “Java”*, p. 15

Sultan's Coronation). Its performance was always preceded by a *slametan* called *sugengan* the night before.³¹

The *slametan* before the performance of Labuhan was an obligation. In several letters from late 1805, the chief of the Dutch officials in Yogyakarta, Matthijs Waterloo, reported to Nicolaus Engelhard, the governor of the North-East Coast of Java, about three visits of Hamengku Buwono II to Parangkusumo beach to perform Labuhan. The second Sultan had to repeat the procession as the offerings on the first ritual were carried back by the tide supposedly because he did not hold *slametan* before performing Labuhan. Meanwhile, at the second ritual, Nyai Roro Kidul "refused" the ritual because she was offended by the arrogance of the Sultan who insisted to stand on the coast with his gold *payung*.³² This interesting experience of Hamengku Buwono II aligns with the statement of Geertz's informant on the reason of *slametan*: it "protects you against the spirits"³³—even though the spirit is your own wife! It also displays the purpose of the *slametan* to maintain harmony, particularly between human and non-human beings. In this sense, therefore, Labuhan itself was a form of *slametan* as its performance was to maintain the very relationship.³⁴

It is also interesting to observe that Javanese people, as reflected in *Babad Tanah Jawi*, incorporate non-human beings not only as vital parts of life that provide spiritual power, but also as part of the family. The Javanese also believe that spirits and humans share the same ancestry, but spirits inhabited the world before humans. This is why in Java some people

³¹ See the official website of the Yogyakarta keraton, *Tingalan Jumenengan Dalem* <https://www.kratonjogja.id/hajad-dalem/6-tingalan-jumenengan-dalem/>, accessed on Thursday, 11 December 2025

³² *Payung* refers to the gilded parasol which symbolizes a noble status in Javanese culture. See the discussion on this interesting event in Carey, *The Power of Prophecy*, p. 141 n. 41

³³ Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, p. 14

³⁴ See, for example, Soebardi, "Santri-religious elements", pp. 331-349 and Tony Day and Nancy Florida, "A Sufi Traveler on the Road in Nineteenth-Century Java", *Philological Encounters* 9 (2024), pp. 60-95. For the discussion on mysticism in Java, see Niels Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life in Contemporary Java: Cultural Persistence and Change*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1978

called the spirits “*penguasa*” or the owner of the place.³⁵ There is also a tendency to regard these spirits as older and more venerated than humans, as seen in the names given to them, such as Kyai Sapu Jagad (the spirit of Mount Merapi) and Susuhunan Lawu (the spirit of Mount Lawu). Furthermore, the practice of naming and personifying objects or spirits in Javanese culture also reveals that the people in Java interpret the relationship between humans and nonhumans as a mode of kinship that sustains relational connections beyond the boundaries of species or even entities. This perspective is not exclusive to the Javanese. In his article, the scholar of Islam and Muslim societies in South and Southeast Asia Teren Sevea displays similar act in the Malay Peninsula.³⁶ While the cross-species kinship provides potential solutions for environmental problems,³⁷ it primarily demonstrates indigenous worldview.

However, as Pemberton notes, the old idea of *slametan* as a universal practice for general purpose shifted to a state-centered stability and order. While initially referring to the dynamics in the Indonesia’s New Order era, Pemberton suggests that the shift gradually began in 1745 when Paku Buwono II moved his *keraton* from Kartasura to Surakarta, marking the beginning of a new era of central Javanese court.³⁸ Ten years after Paku Buwono II moved the *keraton* from Kartasura to Surakarta, Yogyakarta was established. Did a similar dynamic of adjusting the identity of “Java” through courtly ceremony also happen in Yogyakarta? If we look at Labuhan, it appears to be the case.

³⁵ Robert Wessing, “A Community of Spirits: People, Ancestors, and Nature Spirits in Java”, *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 2006, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 18-20

³⁶ Teren Sevea, “Decolonizing Nature-as-Subject and Restoring Nonhuman Voices: Interspecies Keramat Communities”, in Marieke Bloembergen, Susie Protschky, Faizah Zakaria (ed.), Round Table: Decolonizing ‘Nature as Subject’: Sites, Histories, and Legacies of Environmental Knowledge Production in Indonesia, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 181 (2025), pp. 82-85

³⁷ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016

³⁸ Pemberton, *On the subject of “Java”*, p. 14-16

Continuing Ritual, Re-Asserting “Power”

Central to Labuhan was the geo-cosmological knowledge that covered both physical and meta-physical realm of Mataram. This constituted not only the geopolitical but also the spiritual boundaries. When Hamengku Buwono I established Yogyakarta and constructed the capital, he incorporated these elements into his own realm notwithstanding the misalignment. This was because Mount Lawu and Dlepih forest were situated within the administrative domain of the Mangkunegaran. In the context of the 1750s-1830s Java, this act was rather bizarre. On one hand, all central Javanese *keratons* were competing to legitimize themselves as the rightful heir to Mataram while simultaneously ignoring the others and finalizing the permanent division. On the other hand, some royal family members were harboring ambitions to reunify Java. Paku Buwono IV of Surakarta (r. 1788–1820) was a perfect example of this case. During his reign, he started crisis in attempt to reunite the *keratons* twice; in 1789-1790 and in 1815.³⁹ Both failed as the political situation tended to maintain the division. At the same time, colonial power that became increasingly evident also played vital role in maintaining the disintegrated Javanese courts for their own benefit. It was indeed a period of turbulence. Yet, Labuhan managed to be performed during that time. Why was it so?

The concept of “self-reflexivity”, as displayed by Pemberton and Day and Reynolds in their works, was helpful to examine this phenomenon. While gradually solidifying the administrative division by creating regulations concerning the lands,⁴⁰ each *keraton* also defined their own “Javanese” identity by regulating the court traditions.⁴¹ Literatures were continually written in their traditional forms although their contents expressed various novel

³⁹ For the description of the first event, see M.C. Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792: Sejarah Pembagian Jawa*, Yogyakarta: Matabangsa, 2002, pp. 493-517, for the second event, see Peter Carey, “The Sepoy conspiracy of 1815 in Java”, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 133 (1977), No. 2/3, pp. 294-322

⁴⁰ Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792*, p. 661

⁴¹ Pemberton, *On the subject of “Java”*, p. 53

approaches to comprehend the situation.⁴² Knowledge were disseminated in the Javanese method that often could not be understood by the colonial authorities.⁴³ In this sense, I suggest that Labuhan, adopted from the old ritual from Mataram period, was performed not only to maintain the relationship with the spirits as source of power, but also to preserve the knowledge within it. Despite losing its original purpose as the ruler's power assertion through the marking of political and spiritual boundaries, the ritual became a new form of power exercise that carried Javanese knowledge. All these modifications were made, drawing on Day and Reynolds' wording, "to induce self-reflexivity about being 'Javanese' at a time of cultural and political crisis".⁴⁴

The Sultan of Yogyakarta continued to perform Labuhan not simply because he wanted to, but more likely because he was obliged to do so. Although its political significance had diminished by the disintegration of Mataram and the increasing influence of colonial power, Labuhan was still an essential element that constituted the spiritual relationship in the Javanese geo-cosmological understanding. It shaped the Javanese worldview as reflected in its purpose to maintain the harmony between human and non-human beings. Moreover, even though the concept of harmony was also modified to fit in into the situation of turbulence, as Pemberton shows through the metaphor of the Javanese royal wedding,⁴⁵ Labuhan crystallized the geo-cosmological knowledge in its annual performance.

A brief comparison with Surakarta's rituals provides more illustrative explanation on this matter. At present time, the Surakarta *keraton* performed similar ritual as Labuhan called *Kiblat Sekawan*. "Kiblat Sekawan" can roughly be translated as "Four Sacred Focal Points". It refers to four sites of ritual that represent four points of compass bordering the geo-cosmological realm of Surakarta: Mount Lawu in the east, Krendowahono forest in the

⁴² For example, see Ricklefs' discussion on the writing of *Serat Surya Raja* by the crown prince of Yogyakarta (later became Hamengku Buwono II) in 1774 CE in attempt to legitimize the establishment of Yogyakarta using the 100-year cycle in Javanese culture. Ricklefs, *Yogyakarta di Bawah Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792*, p. 285-361

⁴³ Day and Reynolds, "Cosmologies, Truth Regimes, and the State in Southeast Asia", p. 30

⁴⁴ Day and Reynolds, "Cosmologies, Truth Regimes, and the State in Southeast Asia", p. 39

⁴⁵ Pemberton, *On the subject of "Java"*, p. 53-54

north, Mount Merapi in the west, and Parangkusumo in the south. The ritual is performed annually in the month of Suro, the first month in the Javanese calendar.⁴⁶ Thus, Kiblat Sekawan can also be seen as a form of gratitude in welcoming the new year that is distinct from Labuhan in Yogyakarta. Nonetheless, both embodies the geo-cosmological landscape of each *keraton*. Furthermore, Surakarta also recognized a ceremony at the Southern Ocean of Java in relation to the enthronement of a new ruler called Labuhan. However, instead of Parangkusumo, the sites were Brosot Praga, in present-day Kulon Progo, not far from Parangkusumo, and Pulo Bandhung in Cilacap, Central Java. In an 1890 manuscript, Raden Ngabei Hardjapradata, a member of the Surakarta *keraton*, reports the procession of this ritual. On the enthronement day of the new Susuhunan, *keraton*'s officials would go to these locations to cast away the offerings and seek the *wijayakusuma* flower.⁴⁷ Interestingly, Hardjapradata also listed Krendowahono forest (instead of Dlepih), Mount Merapi, and Mount Lawu as the sites of Surakarta's Labuhan.⁴⁸ It seems that the Surakarta *keraton* performs two similar rituals with distinct purposes. Or, perhaps, they were once the same rituals but have currently functioned as two different ones?

While further explanation of the perplexity of the courtly rituals in Surakarta is needed, it is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is curious to note that there are close similarities between the rituals in Surakarta and Yogyakarta. They almost certainly originated from the same ritual related to Nyai Roro Kidul, but at certain point began to transform independently in line with the cultural trajectories in each *keraton*. Nevertheless, despite the slight differences, the rituals in both Yogyakarta and Surakarta functions as the same *slametan*

⁴⁶ See the documentary of the Kiblat Sekawan ritual at Mount Merapi on the official Youtube channel of the Surakarta *keraton*, <https://youtu.be/hCsMREnPKkI?si=dibXK6vISvaHRfwM>, accessed on Wednesday, 26 November 2025

⁴⁷ Clara Brakel, ““Sandhang-pangan” for the Goddess”, p. 270. The historian Ghamal Satya Mohammad explores the flower of *wijayakusuma* (*Pisonia sylvestris*) which holds special status in Javanese culture due to its rumor that it can revive the dead. See Ghamal Satya Mohammad, “Widjojo Koesoemo Between Tradition and Science”, 1830-1930, BA Thesis Leiden University, 2014, p. 2, retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/39609680/Widjojo_Koesoemo_Wijaya_Kusuma_Between_Tradition_and_Science_1830_1939, accessed on Wednesday, 26 November 2025

⁴⁸ Clara Brakel, ““Sandhang-pangan” for the Goddess”, p. 272

and aimed for the same *slamet* for the keratons. Moreover, looking at the emphasis on the significance of Nyai Roro Kidul, it is not an overstatement to say that the rituals in both Surakarta and Yogyakarta derived from an old ritual in the Mataram era that transformed into renewed assertions of the geo-cosmological knowledge of the respective courts while also maintaining the old connections with the once-powerful spirits inhabiting the sites of ritual.

Epilogue: Labuhan as Knowledge

In the last part of his book, Pemberton visits Lawu to see the remnants of old Javanese cosmology.⁴⁹ There, he witnesses the encounter between the youngsters who enjoy the mountain as natural feature and the ascetic practitioners who see the mountain as spiritual monument.⁵⁰ This experience, in my opinion, illustrates Labuhan in the 1750s–1830s. As a part of the old remnants, it embodies how the Javanese understood their political and cosmological landscape. The performance of Labuhan, from a single ritual at Parangkusumo to a cluster of rituals at Parangkusumo, Merapi, Lawu, and Dlepih, displayed its purpose of maintaining old relationship with the spirits of these natural features as well as the assertion of power of the Sultan. However, in nineteenth century, only the cosmological aspect remains as the sites became politically and administratively more irrelevant to the Javanese *keratons*. The Labuhan ritual, in this sense, had undergone transformation in its sites and its purpose in response to the political turbulence in the Yogyakarta *keraton*.

To suggest that there was a shift in Yogyakarta's version of Labuhan means recognizing a form of “cultural self-reflexivity” in response to the European colonialism. It also means acknowledging the indication that there was a process of transformation in the practice of knowledge in the *keraton*, as Pemberton suggests in his book, although what occurred in Yogyakarta might have been different from the one in Surakarta. However, it does not mean

⁴⁹ Pemberton, *On the subject of ‘Java’*, p. 271

⁵⁰ Pemberton, *On the subject of ‘Java’*, p. 275

that I suggest generalizing the similar dynamics happened in all central Javanese courts. Neither does this study suggest that a shift in Labuhan represents the entire adjustment in the idea of Java and being Java in the Yogyakarta *keraton*. Instead, this study displays an example of approach to explain how the Javanese people maintained their production of knowledge while also using it as a form of exercise of power in the period of turmoil. The following chapter will discuss how the knowledge crystallized in Labuhan influenced various groups of people and enabled various interpretations to the participants of the ritual.

CHAPTER III

LABUHAN AS A JAVANESE ARCHIVE

The exploration of Labuhan in the previous chapter allows the conclusion that the ritual crystallized Javanese geo-cosmological knowledge, reflected in the sites of ritual. This knowledge cannot be separated from the aspects of power as the ritual also functioned as a form of power exercise of the Yogyakarta *keraton*, reflected in the time of ritual. Furthermore, political alterations in the *keraton* from the end of eighteenth century to early nineteenth century transformed the ritual by giving new dimensions to its sites and purposes. In other words, previous chapter situates Labuhan as a subject to human activity and their perception of knowledge. This perspective follows the pattern of several previous works on the ritual which mostly focuses on its cultural, environmental, and disaster-related significance.¹ However, by treating Labuhan merely as a subject, we dismiss the possibility that the ritual also actively influences the humans interacting with it.

Up to this point, there are at least three studies that have situated Labuhan, along with the narrative of Nyai Roro Kidul as its underlying reason, as an actor in the framework of knowledge creation. The first two are the historian Anthony Reid's works in 2012 and 2016 that explore the possibility of treating the narrative as a symbolization of a major tsunami on the southern coast of Java.² The third work is an article written by the political geologist

¹ Previous studies on the Labuhan ritual, for example B. Soelarto, *Upacara Labuhan Kesultanan Yogyakarta*, Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Departemen Pendidikan dan kebudayaan, 1980/1981; Cécile Bigeon, “Labuhan: Rite royal deux kraton de Yogyakarta célébré sur la plage de Parangtritis”, *Archipel*, volume 24, 1982, pp. 117-126; Sri Sumarsih, Suhatno, Maharkesti, *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1989-1990; Septian Aji Permana, Dewi Liesnoor Setyowati, Achmad Slamet, Juhadi, “Community Rituals in Facing Volcanic Eruption Threat in Jawa”, *Komunitas: Internasional Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture* 9(1) 2017, pp. 29-36

² See Anthony Reid, “Historical Evidence for Major Tsunamis in the Jawa Subduction Zone”, Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 178, National University of Singapore, <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/201202-WSP-178.pdf> and “Two hitherto unknown Indonesian tsunamis of the

Adam Bobbette exploring how the processions of Labuhan at Mount Merapi, and its connection to Nyai Roro Kidul in the southern coast of Java, enabled the European scientists to understand the connection between the volcano and the ocean.³ I will delve into these three seminal works in the explanation.

While those are great examples of Labuhan as an actor in the knowledge generation, they leave a research gap that can be explored more: treating the ritual as a form of Javanese archive that is able to store knowledge. To address this gap, this study approaches Labuhan as an archival agent by engaging with the concept of ritual archives proposed by the African historian Toyin Falola and the idea of embodied archives that has been emerging in the study of performance arts.⁴ This chapter questions how the ritual actively recorded and preserved Javanese geo-cosmological knowledge while also enabled the production of bodies of knowledge from various interpretations of different groups of people. It aims to introduce Labuhan as a form of archival practice in Java.

This chapter opens by outlining the theoretical framework of ritual and embodied archives. It explores the motivations behind these ideas and their relevance for analyzing Labuhan. It proceeds to examine the forms of knowledge that were enabled by the performance of Labuhan concerning the geo-cosmological understanding that was preserved in and through the ritual. In nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the performances of Labuhan gave birth to several interpretations of the elements of the ritual, such as the offerings and the sites. I argue here that both features of Labuhan enabled the

seventeenth century: Probabilities and context”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 47(1), February 2016, pp. 88-108

³ Adam Bobbette, “Processions: How the Spiritual Geographies of Central Java Shaped Modern Volcano Science”, *Indonesia* 113 (April 2022), pp. 51-66

⁴ For the concept of ritual archives, see Toyin Falola, “Ritual Archives”, in Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 703-728. For the study of performance arts in relation to archive, memory, and history, see, for instance, Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Duke University Press, 2003; Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Arts and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, London: Routledge, 2011; and Linda C. Haviland, “Considering The Body as Archive”, in Bill Bissell and Linda C. Haviland (ed.), *The Sentient Archive: Bodies, Performance, and Memory*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2018

production of various interpretations on the study of geography, relationality, and ecology. This chapter, however, will only provide preliminary explanations on these bodies of knowledge, opening the possibility of further investigation.

Contextualizing Labuhan as a Ritual and Embodied Archive

In his foreword to the Indonesian edition of Jan Vansina's *Oral Tradition as History*, the Indonesian historian Bambang Purwanto poses a question about the implication of the absence of a written tradition for historiography.⁵ This issue is highly relevant to the production of history in the Indonesian archipelago, where many communities generate their knowledge with minimal or no written tradition at all. Oftentimes, the lack (or even absence) of written materials results in the marginalization of such communities in the Indonesian historiography.⁶ While this study discuss neither oral tradition nor historiography, it exactly emerged from this kind of academic debate: the systemic exclusion of non-written intellectual tradition. This study, however, moves and extends the discussion into the realm of knowledge preservation and its generative capacity through a system called archive.⁷

Many scholars have displayed how the archive became an instrument of colonial empires to build and bolster their domination on indigenous people.⁸ Recordkeeping, which

⁵ Bambang Purwanto, "Belajar dari Afrika: Tradisi Lisan sebagai Sejarah dan Upaya Membangun Historiografi bagi Mereka yang Terabaikan", in Jan Vansina, *Tradisi Lisan sebagai Sejarah*, Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak, 2014, p. xxxii-xxxiii

⁶ Purwanto, "Belajar dari Afrika", p. xxxiv

⁷ This study follows Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida's ideas of the archive, which both understand it as a neutral entity but as a system of power that shapes what can appear as knowledge. In this sense, the archive does not simply preserve materials. It also sets the limits of what can be said, remembered, or recognized as truth. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. by Alan Sheridan Smith, New York: Pantheon Books, 1972; Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996

⁸ See for example Ann Laura Stoler, "In Cold Blood": Hierarchies of Credibility and the Politics of Colonial Narratives", *Representations*, Winter, 1992, No. 37, Special Issue: Imperial Fantasies and Postcolonial Histories, pp. 151-189; Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, especially Part Two of Colonization of the Archive, pp. 61-123; Tony

was based on the writing of textual reports, became the central practice of colonial administration, creating paper trails that can be traced through an elaborate coding system.⁹ The reliance on written materials, in turn, created layers of biases toward non-written traditions, endorsing what is allowed and disallowed to be mentioned in history. The Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot provides eloquent example of this practice on the Haitian Revolution in the end of eighteen century.¹⁰ In this sense, the archive was far from neutral as it was developed to cater “specific informational needs of institutions and bureaucracies”.¹¹

Upon inheriting the colonial administrative and archival system, postcolonial states often continue to uphold the biases. In Indonesia, the adoption of Dutch archival system in Indonesia is evident in the implementation of the *Handleiding voor Het Ordenen en Beschrijven van Archieven* (Manual for Arrangement and Description of Archives), a text-centric method of archival arrangement, for creating the archival inventories in the National Archives of Indonesia (ANRI).¹² This results in the marginalization, or even the erasure, of the communities with non-textual traditions in the Indonesian archives,¹³ especially in state-owned archival institutions. Thus, those who do not possess written records do not have place in the archive and history.

Situations like this is not unique to Indonesia; Toyin Falola has also observed them in Nigeria. From his examination, he proposed the concept of ritual archives as a way to include communities for whom writing is not a fundamental practice and to resist the “epistemic

Ballantyne, “Archives, Empires and Histories of Colonialism”, *Archifacts*, April 2004, pp. 21-36. On the use of colonial archival materials in the production of history in colonial era, see Charles Jeurgens, “The untamed archive: History-writing in the Netherlands East Indies and the use of archives”, *History of the Human Science* 26(4), pp. 84-106

⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance”, *Archival Science* 2: 2002, p. 98; Charles Jeurgens and Michael Karabinos, “Paradoxes of curating colonial memory”, *Archival Science* (2020) 20, p. 209

¹⁰ M.R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995, see especially the third chapter, “An Unthinkable History”, pp. 70-107

¹¹ Jeurgens and Karabinos, “Paradoxes of curating colonial memory”, p. 201

¹² Raistiwar Pratama, “Archives and the Archipelago: The Influence of Dutch *Archivistiek* on Indonesian Archival Practices”, Master Thesis in Faculty of Humanities, University of Leiden, 2017, p. 50, retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/52209>, accessed on Friday, 28 November 2025

¹³ Here I use the word “archives” to refer to the archival institution.

violence” produced by the colonial paradigm that determines what is legitimate to count as knowledge.¹⁴ In his view, ritual archives are vast conglomeration of elements of ritual that document and speak to the religious experience and practices, allowing the people who engage with them to understand various bodies of knowledge they preserved, which constitute and shape both visible and invisible world.¹⁵ Furthermore, Falola posits that ritual archives demand their investigator to approach them through their own methodologies and perspectives; thus, by understanding the way of thinking of their creators.¹⁶ Given this, the framework of ritual archives can be perfectly employed to scrutinize Labuhan as a form of archive in Javanese culture.

Labuhan has rarely been considered as a historical source in Indonesia, let alone recognized as a site of knowledge preservation, because archival institutions continue to operate within colonial construction of the archive that exclude ritual practices.¹⁷ Furthermore, the exclusion of Labuhan as an archival site reflects the omission of indigenous epistemic practice, which in turn undermines the credibility of the knowledge it produces and preserves. However, as Falola emphasizes, “just as we live in different parts of the world, we can also engage in different ways of thinking.”¹⁸ Therefore, it will only lead into failure if people attempt to understand Labuhan as an archive but do not engage with the Javanese way of thinking, such as the significance of *laku* and *rasa*, behind it. The term *laku* refers to the action of applying knowledge into practice,¹⁹ while *rasa* means the intuitive feelings that are an essential instrument to comprehend knowledge.²⁰

¹⁴ Toyin Falola, *Understanding Colonial Nigeria: British Rule and Its Impact*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025, p. 3-24; Falola, “Ritual Archives”, pp. 705

¹⁵ Falola, “Ritual Archives”, p. 703

¹⁶ Falola, “Ritual Archives”, p. 706

¹⁷ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, p. 52

¹⁸ Falola, “Ritual Archives”, p. 714

¹⁹ Reno Wikandaru, Shely Cathrin, Erwinskyah Satria, Dian Rianita, “Critical Analysis of Javanese Epistemology and Its Relevance to Science Developments in Indonesia, *Humaniora* Vol. 32, No. 3 (October 2020), p. 209

²⁰ Niels Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life in Contemporary Java*, Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1978, p. 15. More explanation on the logic of *rasa* Javanese culture, see Paul Stange, “The Logic of Rasa in Java”, *Indonesia*, Oct. 1984, No. 38, pp. 113-134

Due to the *laku* and *rasa* involving in Labuhan, it is also relevant to approach the ritual with the concept of embodied archives that have been elaborated by the scholars of performance arts in the past decades. The performance studies scholar Diana Taylor, in her groundbreaking book *The Archive and the Repertoire*, positions the performative practices vis a vis the archives in European perspective, which rely on written texts and narratives.²¹ By studying various kinds of performance in the Americas, Taylor means to refer the word “performance” not only to the art performances, but also to all actions in broader context that involving the embodied practice, such as spoken language, dance, sports, ritual.²² She suggests that the repertoire of these performances stores and transmits knowledge through the embodied memory. Furthermore, she asserts that “the live performance can never be captured or transmitted through archive” due to its live conditions while the archive is perceived as the remains of past.²³

In response to Taylor’s idea, Rebecca Schneider, who is also a scholar on performance studies, posits that the dichotomy between the archive and the repertoire that Taylor makes precisely retains the bias in the idea of archive as she suggests that writing is not an embodied act.²⁴ In Schneider’s view, the archive is the performance itself through the selection of what can remain and disappear, or what “*will have* (retroactively) remained” in her words. In this sense, Schneider portrays history as the repeated act of securing memory; to make it stay alive in the performances via bodily experience. Schneider suggests that body has the capability to record: “the same detail of information can *sound, feel, look, smell, or taste* radically different when accessed in radically different venues via disparate media”.²⁵ This view engenders the idea that the bodily performance is not just an archival method; it is the system of archiving.²⁶

²¹ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, p. 3

²² Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, p. 19

²³ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, p. 20-21

²⁴ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p. 107

²⁵ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p. 104

²⁶ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p. 107-108

It is interesting to note that the concept of *laku* in Javanese epistemology also emphasizes the bodily experience of producing and transmitting knowledge.²⁷ In the nineteenth-century Java, *laku* was seen as a process of practicing knowledge as a knowledgeable person was required to not only have a good empirical analysis but also reflected their knowledge in their attitude and behavior.²⁸ Moreover, the involvement of performance and senses in embodied archives relates to the idea of *rasa*, an essential Javanese instrument of generating knowledge, which people can activate through continual practices and through which people cultivate the sensitivity required to achieve the highest level of knowledge.²⁹ Both *laku* and *rasa* are important elements in Javanese epistemic practice, as reflected in the narratives of how prominent Javanese figures consistently perform ascetic practices and possess the ability to communicate with non-human agencies. In *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Panembahan Senopati is depicted as frequently visiting sacred places and interacting with the spirits that inhabit them.³⁰ In the context of Labuhan, the annually performed ritual records bodily experiences not only of the performers (the *keraton* and the processions) but also of the spectators. Through the performance of Labuhan, all the participants re-enact and reproduce the knowledge embedded in the ritual while practicing *laku* and cultivating their sensitivity to *rasa*.

Before exploring the bodies of knowledge that allowed to be generated and recorded in the performances of Labuhan, it is essential to present here the investigation on Anthony Reid and Adam Bobbette's works. As I mentioned earlier, the present works of both scholars have enabled groundbreaking approaches in interacting with Javanese sources. While the term "Javanese sources" usually leads us to think about written texts, such as *babad* and *serat*,

²⁷ Wikandaru et.al., "Critical Analysis of Javanese Epistemology", p. 209

²⁸ Wikandaru et.al., "Critical Analysis of Javanese Epistemology", p. 212

²⁹ Mulder, *Mysticism & Everyday Life in Contemporary Java*, p. 15-16

³⁰ See, for example, *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Canto 61, where he is depicted to regularly meet Nyai Roro Kidul, retrieved from [Babad Tanah Jawi, Balai Pustaka 1939-1941](https://www.balai-pustaka.go.id/1939-1941/babad-tanah-jawi), accessed on Saturday, 29 November 2025. See also Willem Remmelink (ed. and trans.), *Babad Tanah Jawi – The Chronicle of Java: The Revised Prose Version of C.F. Winter Sr. (KITLV Or 8)*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2022, p. 97

Bobbette and Reid daringly explore more abstract materials: the ritual of Labuhan and the narrative of Nyai Roro Kidul.

New Approaches to Javanese Sources

Although it might not have been their intention, Reid and Bobbette contributed to the debate on the “archival turn”, to borrow Ann Stoler’s term, which concerns a shift toward understanding the archive within a broader context of knowledge production.³¹ This shift involves examining the power dynamics of archives not only as collections of documents but also as institution and system that constitutes what is recognized as knowledge.³² Moreover, through their approaches to Labuhan and Nyai Roro Kidul, both scholars demonstrate perfect instances of the concept of ritual and embodied archive.

I shall begin with Bobbette’s work that centers Mount Merapi, one of the sites of Labuhan. Its continual presence in various Javanese intellectual products proved that the mountain was important for the people inhabiting the surrounding area. For them, the mountain was not only sacred but also an essential part of the respected spiritual realm. The central Javanese *keratons* often linked the mountain’s activities with significant changes in the court.³³ Labuhan was performed at the mountain in relation to this respectful relationship. In nineteenth century, European scientists added a new body of knowledge of

³¹ Stoler, “Colonial Archives”, pp. 87-109

³² Jeannette A. Bastian, “Moving the margins to the middle: reconciling ‘the archive’ with the archives”, in Fiorella Foscarini, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mak, and Gillian Oliver (ed.), *Engaging with Records and Archives: histories and theories*, London: Facet Publishing, 2016, p. 7-8

³³ See, for example, how *Babad Tanah Jawi* illustrates the passing away of Panembahan Senopati: “[...] Mount Merapi rumbled, as well as the ocean, and the west wind blew fiercely, with light drizzles, the king has been summoned [by God] [...]” (author’s translation). *Babad Tanah Jawi*, Canto 62, retrieved from [Babad Tanah Jawi, Balai Pustaka 1939-1941](http://www.balai-pustaka.go.id/1939-1941), accessed on Wednesday, 3 December 2025

Merapi as their growing interest in geology and volcanology brought them to do fieldwork in the mountain.³⁴

Yet, it was only in early twentieth century, after the fatal eruption of Mount Kelud in East Java, that the colonial government paid close attention to the potentially disastrous volcanoes, including Merapi, at which foot they built an observatory hut not far from the Labuhan location at Umbulharjo. Bobbette asserts that the shelter represents the presence of colonial-state scientists in the remote area of the mountain, which could only be accessed via the Labuhan route. Moreover, through this particular route as well that George Kemmerling, the head of the Volcanological Survey of the Netherlands Indie, conducted fieldwork and ascended Merapi accompanied by local assistants. He later noted the possible connection between Merapi and the Indian Ocean as he argued that the volcano's activity might be affected by the commotion under the sea.³⁵ Furthermore, Bobbette concludes, Kemmerling's view made its way into the discussion of the geological theory of plate tectonics in 1960s, which was a further development of the continental drift theory proposed by Alfred Wegener in 1912.³⁶

In Wegener's view, there was only one big continent called "Pangea" during the Carboniferous era. It then began to break up and move horizontally during the Cretaceous or early Tertiary era. He analogized the continent like ships floating upon a heavier material that formed the sea floor.³⁷ The theory became the subject of debate for decades until there was new strong evidence on the movement of continents in early 1960s. At present day, this explanation is called the theory of plate tectonics, which was the reformulation of the continental drift theory and display direct connection between the ocean and the volcanoes

³⁴ Bobbette, "Processions", p. 52. See also his argument on this matter in Adam Bobbette, *The Pulse of the Earth: Political Geology in Java*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2023, p. 52-79

³⁵ Bobbette, "Processions", p. 55-56

³⁶ Bobbette, "Processions", p. 61-64

³⁷ Henry Frankel, "The continental drift debate", in H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr. and Arthur I. Caplan, *Scientific controversies: Case studies in the resolution and closure of dispute in science and technology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 204

through the theory of seafloor spreading proposed by Henry Hess.³⁸ This theory, Bobbette assumes, is aligned with the Javanese understanding on the connection between Mount Merapi and the Southern Ocean of Java, which is reflected in the performance of Labuhan in Yogyakarta. Thus, the procession contributed to the construction of Western geology through the Dutch scientists who examined Merapi via Labuhan's route.³⁹

What is interesting in Bobbette's approach started with the acknowledgement of the Javanese role in Western knowledge production. While he mentions that it was the local assistants who transmitted the story about the link between Merapi and Nyai Roro Kidul to Kemmerling, what matters to our discussion is the fact that the story was highly likely told when they ascended Merapi via Labuhan's route. In this respect, Bobbette unintentionally suggests that Kemmerling also encountered elements of both ritual and embodied archive of Labuhan: its route and its participants. Bobbette has successfully displayed a perfect example of the re-interpretation of Labuhan which in turn contributed to broader research on geological sciences. The Javanese ritual, through its route, has enabled a group of people (the Dutch scientists) to access the knowledge stored in one of its features. Then, it triggered a new understanding which formed additional bodies of knowledge, and the chain of intellectual effect of Labuhan would continue.

Looking more closely, Bobbette's approach is important for understanding how a form of ritual and embodied archive functions. The repertoire of the performance of ritual records relevant information about the history, the process, or even the purpose of the ritual. As the archive, repertoire is also concerned with the future; it records so that people can investigate it again.⁴⁰ In the context of Labuhan, its performance by the *keraton*, for instance, was not intended only to remember the historical significance of the sites but also to *renew* the same importance. Meanwhile, for the spectators, the re-enactment of the ritual provides a vast area

³⁸ Naomi Oreskes, *The Rejection of Continental Drift: Theory and Method in American Earth Science*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 267

³⁹ Bobbette, *The Pulse of the Earth*, p. 61

⁴⁰ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p. 108

open to interpretations. If we look closely at Bobbette's analysis, for example, it is important to note that the article emphasizes the axis between Merapi and the Indian Ocean. Whose interpretation is this? Perhaps it was the local assistant, which most likely part of the Yogyakarta *keraton*, who gave the information to Kemmerling, who wrote that in his account. Or perhaps it was the re-interpretation of Bobbette. Either way, the highlight on the north-south axis curiously replicates the geo-cosmological knowledge that *was intended* to be preserved in Yogyakarta's version of Labuhan. This, in turn, clearly demonstrates how Labuhan, as a Javanese archive, also functions as a system for selecting information from which the audience can form their interpretations based on their interests. Here, Kemmerling chose to interpret the link between Merapi and the ocean as a form of geological connection while the Javanese understood it as a kinship, as I will explore further later.

Now, we shall move to Reid's work that concerns the Indian Ocean through the narrative of Nyai Roro Kidul. While many of both Indonesian and non-Indonesian scholars have recognized the significance of Nyai Roro Kidul in the Javanese history, Reid is the first who attempted to approach it from a totally new perspective. He turns the intangible narrative into a tangible material to display the possibility for reconstructing an "unrecorded" historical event. Reid's argument began with a probability of past major tsunamis in the Java subduction zone in a 2012 working paper.⁴¹ It was a rather complicated topic because the conventional sources for the research on maritime and disaster history in Indonesia heavily relied on the Dutch records, who was more active and interested in the profitable trading routes. This caused Reid to turn to Javanese materials, such as *Babad Tanah Jawi* and *Babad ing Sangkala*. While both are important sources for constructing Javanese history, Reid argues that the latter material provides more accurate information on dates as it is "relatively free of the mythic elements of the other tradition".⁴² His argument follows the assertion of

⁴¹ Reid, "Historical Evidence for Major Tsunamis in the Jawa Subduction Zone"

⁴² Reid, "Historical Evidence", p. 5

the manuscript's modern editor, M.C. Ricklefs.⁴³ In this material, he found a chronogram that displays a potential tsunami on the southern coast of Mataram in the year of 1540 in Javanese calendar (March 1618 to February 1619).⁴⁴

In the succeeding article published in 2016, Reid explores this topic further. Not only does he provide additional evidence on his argument, but he also argues that there is possibility that Nyai Roro Kidul was a Javanese way to perceive tsunami. To explore this, Reid investigates the rationale behind the narrative of the spirit goddess. He notes that the queen possesses enormous influence on Javanese culture thanks to her alliance with the sultans of Mataram.⁴⁵ To Reid, the narrative of Nyai Roro Kidul cannot be ignored or merely treated as a myth; it indicates something. Upon connecting the emergence of the story to the Javanese chronicles, like *Babad Tanah Jawi* and *Babad ing Sangkala*, Reid concludes that there was a major event happening on the southern coast of Java that affected the Mataram keraton in 1540 Javanese calendar (1618 CE). While the courts traditionally believed that this year was the beginning of Panembahan Senopati's rule, it was actually the reign of his grandson, Sultan Agung, that coincided with the move of the Mataram *keraton* from Kotagede to Karta. Given this, Reid suspects that there was a major tsunami that year which forced Sultan Agung to reorganize his kingdom.⁴⁶

The works of Reid are highly relevant for this thesis for two reasons. First, it is evident that he considers the narrative of Nyai Roro Kidul as a historical source. However, in my opinion, what he has done is more than that. By exploring the story, Reid also interacts with the epistemic practice in which the Javanese people produce and preserve relevant information regarding their history. This leads us to the second reason, that is Reid has approached the narrative as a Javanese archive. He attempts to grasp how and why Nyai Roro

⁴³ See the discussion on the *Babad ing Sengakala* in M.C. Ricklefs, *Modern Javanese Historical Tradition: A Study of an Original Kartasura Chronicle and Related Materials*, London: SOAS, 1978

⁴⁴ Reid, "Historical Evidence", p. 1-5

⁴⁵ Reid, "Two hitherto unknown Indonesian tsunamis", p. 99-101

⁴⁶ Reid, "Two hitherto unknown Indonesian tsunamis", p. 104-108

Kidul was essential for the Javanese before investigating it as a source, comparing it to another materials, and employing it in his argumentation. This aligns with the proposal of Falola that the way of treating a ritual archive must begin with exploring the indigenous system of thought.⁴⁷ However, it does not mean that we should look at the ritual archives as an exclusive and self-contained because, as Bobbette's work displays, they are open to various interpretations.

Furthermore, through their approaches, Bobbette and Reid have demonstrated that Labuhan and the narrative of Nyai Roro Kidul, which was its rationale, are capable of producing and preserving geological knowledge as well. From the procession of Labuhan at Mount Merapi, Bobbette suggests that the European scientists interpreted geological theories.⁴⁸ Moreover, Reid proposes that the Mataram court in the Sultan Agung era perceived the geological force of tsunami as a powerful spirit goddess of great importance in Javanese history.⁴⁹

The following sub-chapters will explore how the re-enactment of Labuhan enabled the production of forms of knowledge to various groups of people who perceive their own interpretation of the ritual by examining the elements of the ritual, such as the sites and the offerings, and comparing them to the later documentations about Labuhan. Since its adaptation by the Yogyakarta *keraton* in 1750s, Labuhan has experienced several transformations. It was not a tradition that merely persisted and was non-influential. In reality, Labuhan actively affected the human performed and attended it, allowing them to interpret the ritual in their own perspective. I divided this sub-chapter into three parts to reflect how the offerings and sites of Labuhan allowed the generation of spatial, relational, and ecological knowledge. While the interpretation of Labuhan as an archive continue to be produced to the contemporary period, I will limit my explanation to the form of knowledge

⁴⁷ Falola, "Ritual Archives", p. 705-706

⁴⁸ Bobbette, "Processions", p. 61

⁴⁹ Reid, "Two hitherto unknown Indonesian tsunamis", p. 107

that was created until the first half of twentieth century, with a brief exception on the rather contemporary ecological understanding.

Spatial knowledge in Labuhan

In the previous chapter, I have shown how Labuhan served as a Javanese geo-cosmological understanding. It embodied the knowledge of the Javanese people, or more precisely the Javanese courts, on their landscape, both physical and meta-physical. I also suggest the spatial knowledge in Labuhan transformed along with the development of the ritual when Hamengku Buwono I adopted the old version of it at the end of eighteenth century. Furthermore, through the performances of Labuhan, the knowledge transformed and was interpreted further.

Present-day Labuhan is performed at four sites: Parangkusumo beach at the southern coast of Yogyakarta, Mount Merapi, Mount Lawu, and Dlepih forest. Oral tradition in the Yogyakarta *keraton* believes that the ritual sites remain the same from the era of Hamengku Buwono I to the present period.⁵⁰ However, when we delve into written materials that described the ritual, it becomes apparent that some elements of the sites have changed as well. This sub-chapter explores three early twentieth-century sources about Labuhan. The first two materials are articles in the journal of *Djåwå*, written by Soedjana Tirtakoesoema, a translator at the Java Institute in Yogyakarta who witnessed Labuhan in 1921,⁵¹ and Lucien

⁵⁰ The interview conducted by B. Soelarto to the several royal family members of the Yogyakarta *keraton* revealed this belief. See B. Soelarto, *Upacara Labuhan Kesultanan Yogyakarta*, p. 28, 144-145

⁵¹ Soedjana Tirtakoesoema, “De Verjaring van den Verheffingsdag van Z.H. den Sultan van Jogjakarta (Tingalam Pandjenengan)”, *Djawa* 13, 1 October 1933, pp. 372-392. Java Institute (in Dutch, *Java Instituut*) was established in 1919 following the Congress for Javanese Cultural Development a year prior. In his summary dissertation, the historian Adrian Perkasa, who examined the Java Institute, mentions that the purpose of the institution was “to promote knowledge and understanding of Javanese culture through congresses, exhibitions, discussions, publications, and other activities. One of the publications of the Java Institute was the journal of *Djåwå* which became the platform for the twentieth-century Javanese intellectuals to articulate their thought. Hosein Djajadiningrat, the first Indonesian to obtain doctorate, was the leader of the Java Institute from its foundation to its official closing in 1959. See Adrian Perkasa, The cultural network: Javanese imaginings of

Adam, the resident of Madiun (in office 1934-1938) who wrote the article based on his interview with the Javanese court officials.⁵² The third one is a manuscript entitled *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul* (henceforth, *Serat Nglabuh*).⁵³ It was a part of the plate album of Yogyakarta, written by Th. Pigeaud and created or compiled on the request of the Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (KBG/The Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences) under J.L. Moens in 1932. Before I explain in detail, it is important to note that the texts on Labuhan are not the record of the ritual. Instead, I categorize them as the records of the interpretations—or the performative traces, borrowing Schneider's words—on Labuhan that were produced from the archive, which was the performance itself.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, these texts give valuable insight of the interpretation on the performances of Labuhan.

In his article explaining the performance of Labuhan in the enthronement of Hamengku Buwono VIII in 1921, Tirtakoesoema mentioned that, on 29 April 1921, at least 19 *keraton* officials were dispatched to bring the offerings to Mount Lawu and Dlepih. First, they took the train from Yogyakarta to Surakarta, from where four of them continued the journey to Lawu via Karangpandan and Tawangmangu (in present-day Karanganyar, Central Java) and to Dlepih via Wonogiri (in contemporary Central Java) by car.⁵⁵ Compared to the previous procession, the journey to both sites prior to 1921 was more difficult. Lucien Adam, the resident of Madiun (1934-1938) who wrote an article about Labuhan at Lawu and Dlepih in 1938, mentions the details of the route: The retinue from Yogyakarta took train to

Indonesia, 1918-1966, Dissertation at Leiden University Institute for Area Studies (LIAS), 2025, p. 270, retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4246744>, accessed on Wednesday, 17 December 2025

⁵² Lucien Adam, "Het vorstelijke offer aan den Lawoe", *Djawa* 20, 1 January 1940, pp. 107-118. This article has been translated and published in English by Stuart Robson, see Lucien Adam "The royal offerings on Mount Lawu", in Stuart Robson (ed. and trans.), *The Kraton: Selected essays on Javanese courts*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003, p. 265-266.

⁵³ National Library of Indonesia, *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul*. This manuscript illustrates the Yogyakarta's Labuhan at four sites although the title says *Pasisir Kidul*, which can be translated to the southern coast. It is part of the compilation of Javanese manuscript on various knowledge, that is currently preserved in the National Library of Indonesia under the reference code KBG 943.

⁵⁴ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, p. 102

⁵⁵ Tirtakoesoema, "De Verjaring van den Verheffingsdag," p. 377

Surakarta, where they spent a night at the Kepatihan, the area in *keraton* designated for the ministers/*patih*, as they were supposed to be received by Chief Minister of Surakarta.⁵⁶ The next day, they went to Karangpandan with horses. There, they spent another night before going to Tawangmangu on the foot of Lawu, where they spent three nights. Then, they rode to Blumbang to hand over the offerings to the *jurukunci* (guardian) of Lawu.⁵⁷ Adam notes that the Yogyakarta delegates' task ended here as they were not expected to bring the offerings to Arga Dalem, one of the tops of Lawu, following a fatal journey at the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁸

In the fatal journey, supposedly happened around fifty years before Adam wrote his article, nineteenth members of the procession vanished at Mount Lawu while delivering the offerings. The sole survivor of the incident, Raden Ngahebi Windurejasa, told that before ascending the mountain, the retinue had been advised not to call out and disturb anybody as well as to make sexual joke. This advice was somehow ignored when some of the men in the delegation encountered nine beautiful young women on their journey. The men called the women, causing them to run away. After that, a very thick mist came with a strong wind followed by heavy rain. Soaking wet, the procession proceeded to Argo Dalem, where they delivered the offerings and spent the night. Nineteen men out of twenty got ill that night and only one survived.⁵⁹ Connecting incidents on mountain to the supernatural is not uncommon in Java, even in the present day, as mountains and forests are believed to be the dwellings of the spirits.⁶⁰ Humans who ascend mountains thus regarded as visitors and are expected to behave as guests in someone else's home. This understanding emphasizes the Javanese knowledge of their landscape that includes not only the physical but also meta-

⁵⁶ Adam, "Het vorstelijke offer aan den Lawoe", p. 108

⁵⁷ *Jurukunci* can be best translated to the custodian or guardian. They are the *keraton* official (*abdi dalem*) whose task is to guard the of the sacred place. For the list of the offerings of Labuhan at Mount Lawu, see Appendix 1.

⁵⁸ Adam, "Het vorstelijke offer aan den Lawoe", p.107

⁵⁹ Adam, "Het vorstelijke offer aan den Lawoe", p. 107-108

⁶⁰ Robert Wessing, "A Community of Spirits: People, Ancestors, and Nature Spirits in Java," *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2006), p. 28

physical realm. Moreover, this story of fatal incident also embodied the warning to the next delegation; that even the delegation of Labuhan, who supposedly going to give offerings, could be punished if they disturbed the spirits.

However, different information is given in *Serat Nglabuh* regarding several small details. Instead of three nights, the manuscript says that the Yogyakarta's retinue spent two nights in Tawangmangu; the first night was for resting, while the second night was for conducting prayers asking for safety. From there, they climbed to Argo Dalem accompanied by the *jurukunci* of Lawu. The entourage then rested in Cemara Sewu for an hour before ascending to Patenggik, where half of the journey marked. It is curious to note that from Tawangmangu to Patenggik, the retinue were not allowed to use any sexually explicit language. However, as soon as they arrived at Patenggik, the *jurukunci* would permit (and even encourage!) them to speak vulgarly until they reached Cakra Srengenge, where a large stone with a sun illustration was located. From there, the obscene talk ended because “the road and the ground to Argo Dalem are flat for approximately one *pal*”.⁶¹ In Argo Dalem, the entourage prayed, delivered the offerings, and stayed the night before ascending the mountain and going back to Yogyakarta the next day.⁶²

From the comparison of the texts above, it becomes evident that each performance of Labuhan served as a different experience and produced distinct interpretations for different people. The dissimilar information on the detailed locations, for instance, shows that the informants who contributed to the text writing might have different experiences when they performed Labuhan. In this context, it is necessary to notice that Adam obtained the information of his article from the *keraton* officials, who were Raden Tumenggung Natanagara, the minister (*patih*) of the Chief Minister of Yogyakarta, and Raden Mas

⁶¹ *Pal* is a Javanese measurement for length. 1 *pal* = 1.507 meter. It derives from the Dutch word *paal* which means ‘milepost’. It likely refers to the distance between two mileposts in the Dutch colonial period. See for example the toponymy of Palmerah, a district in the modern-day Jakarta. Kees Grijns, “JABODETABEK place names”, in

Kees Grijns and Peter J.M. Nas (ed.), *Jakarta – Batavia: Socio-cultural essays*, Leiden: KITLV Press, 2000, p. 220

⁶² *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul*, p. 39-49; Notes that the manuscript gives detailed names of places along the route of Labuhan at Mount Lawu, such as Cemara Sewu, Patenggik, Cakra Srengenge, and many more.

Tumenggung Sarwaka Mangunkusuma, Regent-minister of Mangkunegara VIII.⁶³ Meanwhile, such information was not available in *Serat Nglabuh*. There is the possibility that Pigeaud, the writer of this manuscript, observed Labuhan himself; nevertheless, I am leaning toward the idea that he had assistance for collecting the writing materials from others.



Figure 3 and 4. Illustration of Yogyakarta's Labuhan delegation to Mount Lawu. The left image displays the *keraton* officials who were arriving at the Surakarta train station, whereas the right image shows when they performed Labuhan for Sunan Lawu at Argo Dalem, Mount Lawu.

Source: The National Library of Indonesia, *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul* (KBG 943), written by Th. Pigeaud, 1932.

The texts also bolster the argument that Labuhan transformed how Javanese people perceived their landscape, especially the sacred sites. Following the route of the procession at Lawu (and the other sites of ritual as well), we can identify the spots that were deemed important for the Javanese. For example, the texts mention several places where they spent the nights before ascending the mountain, called *pesanggrahan*, a word that indicates a royal resting house or retreat place. These places were considered sacred, and the remnants of the sacredness still invites people to visit although their function and meaning often change over time.⁶⁴ The identification of sacred sites is also a means by which the Javanese recognize and mark their landscape, therefore, the mention of those places in the route of Labuhan

⁶³ Adam, "Het vorstelijke offer", p. 107

⁶⁴ David B. Kuncoro, "The Right to Freedom of Religion in the Semedi Ritual at Pesanggrahan Langenharjo", *JoLSIC Journal of Law, Society, and Islamic Civilization*, Volume 11 Number 1, April 2023, pp. 37-47

demonstrates that the ritual itself was a form of geographical knowledge generation and preservation.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that *Serat Nglabuh* includes the description of the *jurukunci* of Lawu suggesting that the retinue spoke sexually explicit language at specific points along the route. Although the reason for this act is not written in the text, we can presume that it was deemed necessary to do so at that certain location. Perhaps they can scare ghosts or bad spirits. Or perhaps swearing or saying bad words was helpful to make the retinue focus as the path from Patenggik to Cakra Srengenge was a dangerously narrow mountain ridge. However, Adam's article suggests that saying bad words at the mountain caused the fatal accident concerning the procession at the end of nineteenth century.⁶⁵ These differences precisely show the capability of Labuhan as an embodied archive that remains in the form of unique interpretations.

Lastly, one might also not miss noting that the texts about Labuhan presented in this chapter were produced in the context of colonial knowledge making or, more precisely, within the system that defined what was important to be knowledge under colonial rule. Not only because of two out of three writers happened to be a European, but it is also important to question the underlying reason of why there was a need to "document" the ritual in a textual form, both in Javanese script and in article published in a Dutch-oriented journal. In this sense, we have to be aware of the possible frames within the colonial cultural construction, both intended or unintended, embedded in the texts. Such framing might easily lead to the conclusion that the texts are the archives of the ritual. It potentially perpetuates the assumption that archives are inherently written, which in turn results in continual neglect of indigenous epistemic practice, in which Labuhan operates.

⁶⁵ Adam, "Het vorstelijke offer", p. 107

Knowledge of Kinship and Ecology in Labuhan

Not only did geo-cosmological knowledge in Labuhan embodied the understanding of geographical landscape, but it also expressed the relational dynamics between humans as well as between humans (the *keraton*) and non-human beings (the spirits of Labuhan's sites). This perception clearly indicates court-centrism as it was result of knowledge production within the *keraton* walls written in courtly texts. However, as the historian Nancy Florida suggests, writing tradition was not the only epistemic practice in Java. The formation of *babad* in the sung *macapat*⁶⁶ text allowed information to be transmitted not only to the readers but also to the *listeners*.⁶⁷ To bring this into our discussion, the performance of Labuhan can be understood as a way in which courtly knowledge was disseminated beyond the court because certain stages of the ritual were open to spectators. At these stages, the elements of ritual, such as the offerings and prayers are visible, enabling the interpretation of the crystallized knowledge in Labuhan.

In the previous chapter, I have discussed that Labuhan embedded the perception of both physical and meta-physical world. All sites of Labuhan possess historical significance to the Yogyakarta *keraton* as the spirits inhabiting these places were believed to help Panembahan Senopati, the founder of Mataram, from whom the Sultans of Yogyakarta sought their genealogy.⁶⁸ This constituted the dimensions of power in Labuhan as these spirits also served as the source of power. However, looking from another perspective, the respectful relationship between the *keraton* and the spirits of the sites of Labuhan can also be seen as an effort of maintaining harmony between the macro and microcosmos, which was the task of the Javanese ruler. In this sense, Labuhan was a form of *slametan* ritual conducted

⁶⁶ Macapat is the poetic form, written in certain structures and meant to be sung. This form is mostly used in Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Balinese, and Sasak texts. See Chapter 4 of Dick van der Meij, *Indonesian Manuscripts from the Islands of Java, Madura, Bali, and Lombok*, Leiden: Brill, 2017, pp. 243-313

⁶⁷ Nancy Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, p. 11-14

⁶⁸ Sumarsih et.al., *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, p. 43

by the Yogyakarta *keraton* to ask for *slamet* (state of unchanging safety and fortune).⁶⁹ Looking at the timing of Labuhan at the Sultan coronation or its anniversary, we can assume that it was the ritual to thank for and ask for the *slamet* of the Sultan and the *keraton*. Looking at the sites of ritual, it was performed to maintain the *slamet*, resulted from the harmony between humans as well as between humans and non-humans.

Furthermore, while Bobbette has demonstrated the contribution of Labuhan to geological studies, the act of acknowledging non-human agencies as family members also reveals Javanese contributions to recent ecological discussions. This view joins other indigenous understandings from all over the world that embrace the relationship with non-human beings. The scholar of Islam and Muslim societies in South and Southeast Asia Teren Sevea, for example, points out similar act of making kin to the sacred animals in Malay Peninsula and other area of Southeast Asia.⁷⁰ The idea of multispecies kinship proposed by Donna Haraway, a professor emerita of the History of Consciousness and Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, offers a fundamental approach to thinking about solutions to environmental problems.⁷¹ Placing non-human beings within a relationship of respect or kinship encourages us to see humans as only one part of a larger ecosystem, a perspective that offers more sustainable and relational approaches to contemporary environmental issues. In this context, acknowledging Labuhan as the ritual to maintain respectful kinship between humans (the *keraton*) and non-humans (the spirits of Labuhan's

⁶⁹ *Slametan* (in Low Javanese/Ngoko) refers to a Javanese event to ask for *slamet*, usually involving cooking certain dishes and praying. The *keratons* use the word *wilujengan* (in High Javanese/Kromo) to refer to the same event. On *slametan*, see Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 1976, p. 11. On the concept of *slamet*, see Pemberton, *On the subject of "Java"*, p. 14

⁷⁰ See the discussion in Teren Sevea, "Decolonizing Nature-as-Subject and Restoring Nonhuman Voices: Interspecies Keramat Communities", in Marieke Bloembergen, Susie Protschky, Faizah Zakaria (ed.), Round Table: Decolonizing 'Nature as Subject': Sites, Histories, and Legacies of Environmental Knowledge Production in Indonesia, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 181 (2025), pp. 82-85

⁷¹ Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008 and *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016

sites), that was revealed through the offerings and prayers, can be seen as an essential step to seeking the solution of environmental challenges in Java.

The performance of Labuhan began with the preparation of the *uborampe*, the Javanese word of offerings. All things for the spirits (see Appendix 1) at each site were prepared along with the cooking of *slametan* dishes, such as *apem* (Javanese pancake).⁷² The preparation stage was completely exclusive to the court as it was not accessible to public.⁷³ The prepared offerings were immediately separated according to the sites.

The varieties and different numbers of offerings inform us about the significance of the sites and, especially, the spirits with whom the Yogyakarta *keraton* made kin. The number of offerings for Nyai Roro Kidul at Parangkusumo exceeded the others, demonstrating a greater significance and stronger relationship. In addition, the *keraton* also prepared special presents called *Lorordan Busana Dalem* for the spirit queen. The present consisted of the used clothes, clipped nails, and trimmed hairs of the Sultan, and the used flower offerings for the court's heirloom, Kyai Ageng Plered, which was collected for a year.⁷⁴ At Parangkusumo the procession cast away the offerings to the sea and buried the special present at the beach while the offerings for other sites were just put away at the locations. This special treatment for Nyai Roro Kidul was essential as the queen possesses the highest position of all spirits. After all, she was the eternal wife of the sultans of Mataram and its successors. The offerings of Mount Lawu, Dlepih, and Mount Merapi followed respectively.

⁷² *Apem* is a round-pancake made from rice flour, sugar, and water. The batter of *apem* has to be rested overnight. Cécile Bigeon, “Labuhan: Rite royal du kraton de Yogyakarta célébré sur la plage de Parangtritis”, *Archipel*, volume 24, 1982, p. 121

⁷³ Sumarsih et.al., *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, p. 57

⁷⁴ B. Soelarto, *Upacara Labuhan Kesultanan Yogyakarta*, p. 42



Figure 5 and 6. *Abdi dalem* cast away the offerings and buried the special presents at Parangkusumo.

Source: The National Library of Indonesia, *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul* (KBG 943),

written by Th. Pigeaud, 1932

The offerings were delivered to the sites by the *keraton* officials (*abdi dalem*) from various ranks. At this stage, present-day Labuhan is observable for public. Several accounts of the Dutch official observing the ritual, as Lucien Adam did, shows that the phenomenon of laypeople joining the processions of Labuhan was not a novel trend. Yet, the audience might become bigger since the public considered the ritual a tourist attraction, a topic which needs to be explored further.

Upon arriving at the sites of ritual, the procession burned incense and greeted the spirits that were intended to receive the offerings. From these greetings, there were at least two observable elements: the names of the spirits and their status in the kinship with Yogyakarta. On this matter, the texts about Labuhan surprisingly show different information. Take the spirit of Widanangga in Dlepih forest for example. *Serat Nglabuh* listed the spirits of Dlepih as Nyai Roro Kidul and her servant, Kyai Widanangga.⁷⁵ Soedjana Tirtakoesoema, a former translator in Yogyakarta,⁷⁶ writes in his article that the spirit of Dlepih was Kyai Oedanangga, which in similar pronunciation with Widanangga.⁷⁷ Yet, Clara Brakel, citing the nineteenth-century Javanese manuscript *Serat Centhini*, identifies Widanangga as a female spirit and was

⁷⁵ *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul*, p. 5, 7

⁷⁶ Robson, *The Kraton*, p. 373

⁷⁷ Tirtakoesoema, “De Verjaring van den Verheffingsdag”, p. 378-379

the daughter of Nyai Roro Kidul.⁷⁸ The relationship of these spirits with the *keraton* also varied, but the processions mentioned the Sultan as the grandchild (*wayah*) of the spirits.⁷⁹ If we look at the narrative of Nyai Roro Kidul, then, it becomes curious that Hamengku Buwono VIII addressed himself as the grandson of the queen and not as her husband. From when and why the Sultan of Yogyakarta started to position themselves as the grandson of Nyai Roro Kidul was unidentified. Nonetheless, the offerings and greetings prove that the performance of Labuhan at the four sites of ritual renewed the kinship with the spirits inhabiting the places, in whichever relation they had. The shift of the reference of the spirits reveals that the knowledge stored in Labuhan has indeed transformed.

While the offerings and greetings of Labuhan displayed the kinship with the non-human agency, the processions of the ritual demonstrated the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. As the ritual exclusively performed by the *keraton* on the name of the Sultan, Labuhan was prepared behind closed doors inside the palace. Many people were involved in the ritual, from the preparation to the performance. In the preparatory stage, royal family members and *abdi dalem* arranged the offerings and other paraphernalia. Later at the delivery, the *abdi dalem* from certain ranks were dispatched to the sites. Serat Nglabuh, for instance, gives detailed information on the *abdi dalem* who delivered and performed Labuhan at Mount Lawu. It says that the prepared offerings from the *keraton* were first given by a *bupati kliwon*, which was the highest regular rank of *abdi dalem*, to a *lunah*, the third rank officials, who would bring the offerings to Siti Hinggil, the elevated terrace of the palace.⁸⁰ At the sites of ritual, public joined the processions and attended the performance of the ritual as spectators. The orderliness of Labuhan shed light on the ritual's function as a form of maintaining harmony where all the participants understood their positions and responsibilities. Moreover, each performance of the Labuhan was an individual experience

⁷⁸ Clara Brakel, ““Sandhang-pangan” for the Goddess: Offerings to Sang Hyang Bathari Durga and Nyai Lara Kidul”, *Asian Folklore Studies*, 1997, Vol. 56, No. 2, p. 276-277

⁷⁹ See, for example, *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul*, p. 19

⁸⁰ *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul*, p. 23

for every participant of the ritual. Their bodies recorded and remembered the experience, which in turn generated different interpretations. Ultimately, the spectator-accessible performance of Labuhan became an important site where courtly knowledge reached beyond the court itself.



Figure 7. Bupati Kliwon (left) handed over the offerings of Labuhan to Lurah Suranata (right).

Source: The National Library of Indonesia, *Serat Tata Cara Nglabuh ing Pasisir Kidul* (KBG 943),
written by Th. Pigeaud, 1932

Epilogue: Labuhan as an Archive

In explaining Labuhan as both ritual and embodied archive, I do not imply that Labuhan was influence-free. Instead, the ritual was influenced by political, cultural, and intellectual changes affected Labuhan, as I have shown in the previous chapters. Nonetheless, I suggest that the ritual simultaneously possesses the ability to generate knowledge and shapes the perspective of its participants. By giving some examples of what bodies of knowledge can be observed in Labuhan, I contend that it produces and preserves information through the repertoire of performances and the elements of ritual.

Moreover, what I would like to emphasize in this chapter is the significance of Labuhan as an archive to not only the writing of Indonesian historiography, but also to comprehend the epistemic practices of the people on the archipelago. I stress that understanding the

indigenous practices of knowledge is necessary to investigate why and how Labuhan functioned. In this regard, by shifting our perspective to read along, in Ann Stoler's phrasing, indigenous epistemologies, we can re-enact the Javanese thinking when they performed Labuhan while also re-interpreting the meanings of the ritual and allowing Labuhan works perfectly as an archive. This approach, I believe, is applicable to the other indigenous epistemic practices in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on analyzing an annual Javanese ritual called Labuhan, performed by the Yogyakarta court in the period of the 1750s–1830s. It proposes that the ritual was not only a cultural tradition, but also the court’s political assertion as well as Javanese knowledge and archive. This study is the first to historicize Labuhan as Javanese epistemic practice when the previous studies mostly analyze the ritual through anthropological and ecological lenses. Whereas the first category, that comes from the 1900s and 1980s, treat Labuhan purely as a cultural tradition, the most recent research in the second category treats the ritual in relation to disaster management. However, this study is by no means the first to approach Labuhan as a historical source since the political geologist Adam Bobbette and the historian Anthony Reid have performed it in their own works. Following the groundbreaking approaches of both scholars, this study provides a preliminary examination of Labuhan as a form of Javanese embodied and ritual archive that preserved geo-cosmological knowledge in its production.

In Chapter I, I explore the concept of Javanese power as proposed by the historian Soemarsaid Moertono and Benedict Anderson to point out the dimensions of power in Labuhan. I also describe the political, cultural, and intellectual changes in the 1750s–1830s, the period of turbulence that shaped not only the Javanese geopolitical landscape but also the idea of Java and being Javanese. In this period, the Yogyakarta court was established and Labuhan underwent its first transformation.

I explore further about the transformation of the ritual in Chapter II, where I propose that the first ruler of Yogyakarta, Hamengku Buwono I, had adopted Labuhan and modified it into a new version of Yogyakarta’s ritual. This appropriation simultaneously infused new meanings to the ritual as it transformed from a single Mataram’s ritual performed at Parangkusumo in relation to Nyai Roro Kidul, the spirit ruler of the Southern Ocean of Java,

to a cluster of Yogyakarta's rituals performed at four sites in relation to the spirits of each location that possessed historical significance to Mataram. In this sense, the performance of Yogyakarta's Labuhan embodied gave new dimension to the geo-cosmological knowledge perceived by the Yogyakarta court, which constituted both its physical and meta-physical realm.

In Chapter III, I provide several examples of pilot study of Labuhan as Javanese embodied and ritual archive, following the idea of bodily experience of the performance studies scholars Diana Taylor and Rebecca Scneider and the framework of ritual archives offered by the historian Toyin Falola. I examine the embedded geo-cosmological knowledge that was reflected in the rationale behind its performance and its elements, such as the sites, offerings, prayers, and processions, and compared them to several texts about Labuhan written in early twentieth century. I show that over time the performances of Labuhan provided vast field for various interpretations that were distinct from one another, depending on the multiple variables.

To give an example, approaching Labuhan as a ritual archive reveals Javanese ecological understanding. Analyzing the elements of Labuhan, such as its offerings and prayers provides information on the kinship between the Yogyakarta court and the spirits inhabiting the sites of the ritual—which comprises Javanese geo-cosmological understanding. The act of making kin to the spiritual power of natural features may offer possible solutions to environmental problems as the practice teaches people to treat nature with respect. It also reflects an understanding that humans are embedded within a broader ecosystem and therefore not the sole species whose existence matters. This topic needs special exploration as this study only provides preliminary research on approaching a ritual as an entrance to Javanese way of thinking and its possibilities to contribute to contemporary issues.

Analyzing these features certainly allows us to access not only information about them but also Javanese way of thinking and the historical setting in which the ritual was performed.

Given this, the ritual is a form of living archive that provides understanding of the production of Javanese knowledge and its transformations over time. It also reveals that understanding Javanese epistemic practice requires comprehension of their way of knowing. Attempting to examine how Javanese people produced their knowledge without situating it within their own epistemic practices would only result in epistemological biases. This study shows that Labuhan is not a mere cultural tradition; it is power-saturated system in the Javanese epistemic practice that constitutes what knowledge is.

In this respect, this research also contributed to the discussion of Javanese knowledge production, proposing that the Yogyakarta court constructed a new idea of Javanese identity through Labuhan in response to the crisis occurred in Java in the 1750s–1830s. This proposal goes along with the suggestions of the anthropologist John Pemberton, who posits that the Surakarta court had refashioned the concept of Java since 1745, and of the historians Tony Day and Craig J. Reynolds, who propose that Javanese people in Surakarta court continued to produce and disseminate knowledge in their own methods as a form of self-reflexivity. While both scholars emphasize the European interventions in the cultural and intellectual changes in Surakarta, the transformation of Labuhan in Yogyakarta shows that similar dynamics also occurred in Yogyakarta.

The investigation in this study reveals that the shift of Labuhan was incited by the combination of internal political turmoil and increasing influence of European power in the central Javanese courts. In this sense, this study slightly differs from the historian Merle Ricklefs' proposal in his study of the first Sultan of Yogyakarta, that the Dutch intervention in the eighteenth-century central Javanese courts merely played role as an intermediary. The Dutch intervention, although it might be less apparent in Yogyakarta than in Surakarta, was still strong enough to transform the idea of Java and being Javanese in both courts. However, the initial proposal requires further investigation as great number of sources on this matter have not been consulted by this study because of time limitation. For

example, I have not adequately explored the colonial archives from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to address the reflection of the changes in the Yogyakarta court.

This research shows that there remains considerable scope for further exploration of knowledge production in and about Java if we reorient our analytical view from an outside-in to an inside-out perspective. By situating a Javanese ritual within Javanese epistemic practices, we read along the grain, as Ann Stoler phrases it, of indigenous epistemologies. This move not only results in centering indigenous practices of knowledge but also allowing the possibility of creating decolonized historical narrative of knowledge.

Furthermore, shifting the perspective and centering indigenous practices of knowledge enables us to think beyond the Western-centric frameworks. One substantial example, that is highly relevant for our discussion, is the issue of the availability of sources. Colonial reliance on written materials created more biases toward non-written traditions, resulting in the marginalization and even the erasure of the communities with non-textual practices. Yet, as I have shown in this research, engaging with indigenous epistemic practice offers extensive possibilities of sources that can highly be valuable to write about communities whose intellectual traditions are not fully, or not at all, based on written methods. By acknowledging that the ritual and human bodies are capable of producing, recording, and preserving knowledge, the perspective of narrating history therefore can be expanded.

It is essential to note, however, that this approach is more challenging than it seems. After all, it is not only a matter of shifting perspective; it is also about reframing our way of thinking while simultaneously constructing the logic behind indigenous epistemic practices—that might be substantially different from what we are currently exercising. Furthermore, the debate on subjectivity on memory and the ephemerality of performance persist in questioning the capability (and thus validity) of non-written materials to preserve knowledge. Moreover, like colonial archives, embodied and ritual archives also possess their

own biases as they functioned within a system that selects what is allowed and not allowed to be knowledge, in Jacques Derrida's idea of archive.

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APPENDIX 1.

List of *Uborampe* (Offerings) of Labuhan in Parangkusumo, Merapi, Lawu, and Dlepih

(Compiled from: Sri Sumarsih, Suhatno, Maharkesti, *Upacara Tradisional Labuhan Kraton Yogyakarta*, Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1989-1990 and the official website of the Yogyakarta keraton <https://www.kratonjogja.id/hajad-dalem/2-hajad-dalem-labuhan/>)

UBORAMPE PARANGKUSUMO					
Before 1986 (unclear)		1986		Present time	
Pengajeng (to Nyai Roro Kidul)	Pendherek (to the retinue of Nyai Kidul)	Pengajeng (to Nyai Roro Kidul)	Pendherek (to the retinue of Nyai Roro Kidul)	Pengajeng (to Nyai Roro Kidul)	Pendherek (to the retinue of Nyai Roro Kidul)
Sinjang cindhe	Sinjang poleng	Sinjang cangkring	Sinjang poleng	Sinjang cindhe abrit	Sinjang poleng
Sinjang cangkring	Sinjang teluh watu	Semekan solok	Sinjang teluh watu	Sinjang limar	Semekan solok
Semekan gadhung	Paningset biru tua	Semekan gadhung	Semekan dringin	Sinjang cangkring	Semekan gadhung mlati
Semekan gadhung mlati	Paningset merah	Semekan gadhung mlati	Semekan songger	Semekan solok	Semekan songer
Semekan jingga	Semekan	Semekan jingga	Semekan pandan binenthot	Semekan gadhung tepen	Semekan dringin
Semekan papasan mateng	Kemenyan	Semekan udaraga	Semekan podang ngisep sari	Semekan gadhung mlati tepen	Semekan pandhan binenthot
Kemenyan	Konyoh	Semekan banguntulak	Semekan banguntulak	Semekan jingga tepen	Semekan podhang ngisep sari
Konyoh	Minyak wangi	Kain mori, consisting of kemenyan, ratus, minyak, dan param (konyoh)	Singep moti	Semekan udaraga tepen	Semekan banguntulak
Minyak wangi	Ratus	Yatra tindhuh		Semekan banguntulak	Semekan teluh watu
Ratus	Payung				Kuluk kanigara
Yatra tindhuh	Yatra tindhuh				Kuluk pethak
					Songsong gilap
					Gelaran pasir sinasapan mori

				Sela, ratus, lisah konyoh
				Yatra tindhuh

LORODAN BUSANA DALEM PARANGKUSUMO	
1986	Present time
Kenaka	Sinjang
Rikma	Surjan
Beberapa potong pakaian	Udheng
Songsong bekas	Lancingan panjang
Layon sekar Kyai Ageng Plered	Lancingan lebet
Layon sekar biasa	Rasukan hem
	Kaos
	Rikma and kenaka
	Layon sekar Kanjeng Kyai Hageng [Plered]
	Layon sekar

UBORAMPE MERAPI		
Before 1986 (unclear)	1986	Present time
Sinjang cangkring	Sinjang cangkring	Sinjang limar
Sinjang poleng	Sinjang kawung kemplang	Sinjang cangkring
Sinjang gadhung	Semekan motif gadhung	Semekan gadhung
Semekan motif gadhung	Semekan motif gadhung mlati	Semekan gadhung mlati
Semekan motif gadhung mlati	Semekan motif banguntulak	Paningset udaraga
Semekan motif papasang mateng	Paningset udaraga	Kambil wathangan
Semekan motif banguntulak		Ses wangen
Yatra tindhuh		Sela, ratus, lisah konyoh
Kemenyan		Yatra tindhuh
Konyoh		Dhestar daramuluk
Minyak wangi		
Ratus		

UBORAMPE LAWU			
Before 1986 (unclear)			
Pengajeng kasepuhan	Pendherek kasepuhan	Pengajeng kaneman	Pendherek kaneman
Sinjang limar	Sinjang cangkring	Semekan gadhung mlati	Sinjang cangkring
Semekan gadhung mlati	Semekan gadhung	Kampuh poleng	Sinjang kawung
Kampuh poleng	Semekan dringin	Dhestar banguntulak	Sinjang teluh watu
Dhestar daramuluk	Semekan songer	Paningset jingga	Paningset jingga
Paningset jingga	Semekan teluh watu		Kemenyan
	Semekan jingga		Konyoh
			Minyak wangi
			Ratus
			Yatra tindhuh

UBORAMPE LAWU			
1986			
	Pengajeng (to Susuhunan Lawu I aka Prabu Brawijaya V)	Pendherek (to Susuhunan Lawu II aka Raden Gugur)	
	Kampuh poleng	Sinjang cangkring	
	Dhestar daramuluk	Sinjang gadhung	
	Paningset jingga	Sinjang telut watu	
		Semekan dringin	
		Semekan songer	

UBORAMPE LAWU			
Present time			
Pengajeng kasepuhan	Pendherek kasepuhan	Pengajeng kaneman	Pendherek kaneman
Sinjang limar	Sinjang cangkring	Semekan gadhung mlati	Sinjang cangkring

Semekan gadhung mlati	Semekan gadhung	Kampung poleng ciut	Semekan gadhung
Kampuh poleng ciut	Semekan dringin	Dhestar banguntulak	Semekan dringin
Dhestar banguntulak	Semekan songer	Paningset jingga	Semekan songer
Paningset jingga	Semekan teluh watu		Semekan teluh watu
	Semekan jambon		Semekan jambon
	Songsong pethak seret praos		Songsong pethak seret praos
	Sela, ratus, lisah konyoh		Sela, ratus, lisah konyoh
	Yatra tindhuh		Yatra tindhuh

UBORAMPE DLEPIH		
Before 1986 (unclear)	1986	Present time
Sinjang udaraga	Sinjang limar	Sinjang limar
Sinjang lurik sekar mindi	Sinjang lurik kepyur hitam	Sinjang lurik kepyur
Sinjang lurik kepyur	Sinjang lurik perkutut pethak seret abrit	Sinjang perkutut pethak seret abrit
Paningset dringin	Semekan dringin	Semekan solok
Paningset songer	Semekan songer	Semekan dringin
Paningset gadhung	Semekan solok	Semakan songer
Kemenyan	Kemenyan	Sela, ratus, lisah konyoh
Konyoh	Konyoh	Yatra tindhuh
Minyak wangi	Minyak wangi	
Ratus	Ratus	
Yatra tindhuh	Yatra tindhuh	

APPENDIX 2.

List of Terminologies

<i>Abdi dalem</i>	: Javanese court officials
<i>Apem</i>	: Javanese pancake made from rice flour, sugar, and water
<i>Dhestar daramuluk</i>	: Traditional male head covering in <i>daramuluk</i> motif
<i>Gelaran pasir sinasapan mori</i>	: White ceremonial ground fabric
<i>Jurukunci</i>	: Custodian/guardian of the sacred places in Java
<i>Kambil wathangan</i>	: Coconut
<i>Kampuh poleng</i>	: Ceremonial fabric in <i>poleng</i> motif
<i>Kaos</i>	: Shirt
<i>Kenaka</i>	: Fingers' nails
<i>Keraton</i>	: Royal residence or palace
<i>Keris</i>	: Javanese dagger
<i>Kesakten</i>	: Javanese spiritual power
<i>Konyoh/lisah konyoh</i>	: Traditional balm
<i>Kuluk kanigara</i>	: Traditional Javanese male headgear in dark colors, usually used for wedding
<i>Kuluk petbak</i>	: Traditional Javanese male headgear in bright colors, usually used for wedding
<i>Labuh/Nglabuh</i>	: Casting/washing away something
<i>Labuhan</i>	: Ritual to cast or wash away offerings
<i>Laku</i>	: Practicing knowledge
<i>Lancingan lebet</i>	: Inner pants
<i>Lancingan panjang</i>	: Long pants
<i>Layon sekar</i>	: Flower offerings that have been used for the heirlooms
<i>Lorodan Busana Dalem</i>	: Special offerings for Nyai Roro Kidul, buried in Parangkusumo beach
<i>Minyak wangi</i>	: Perfume
<i>Olor</i>	: mythical fish or eel
<i>Pal</i>	: Javanese measurement for length, 1 pal = 1.507 meter
<i>Paningset dringin</i>	: Traditional waistcloth in <i>dringin</i> motif

<i>Paningset gadhung</i>	: Traditional waistcloth in <i>gadhung</i> motif
<i>Paningset songer</i>	: Traditional waistcloth in <i>songer</i> motif
<i>Paningset udaraga</i>	: Traditional waistcloth in <i>udaraga</i> motif
<i>Patih</i>	: Javanese minister
<i>Payung</i>	: Umbrella
<i>Pesanggrahan</i>	: Royal resting house or retreat place
<i>Pusaka</i>	: Heirloom
<i>Rasa</i>	: Intuitive feelings to comprehend knowledge
<i>Rasukan hem</i>	: Javanese male shirt
<i>Ratus</i>	: Incense
<i>Rikma</i>	: Hair
<i>Sela</i>	: Stone
<i>Semekan banguntulak</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>banguntulak</i> motif
<i>Semekan dringin</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>dringin</i> motif
<i>Semekan gadhung</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>gadhung</i> motif
<i>Semekan gadhung mlati</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>gadhung mlati</i> motif
<i>Semekan jambon</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in red color
<i>Semekan jingga</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in brown color
<i>Semekan pandan binenthot</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>pandan binenthot</i> motif
<i>Semekan papasan mateng</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>papasan mateng</i> motif
<i>Semekan podang ngisep sari</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>podang ngisep sari</i> motif
<i>Semekan solok</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>solok</i> motif
<i>Semekan songer</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>songer</i> motif
<i>Semekan songger</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>songger</i> motif
<i>Semekan udaraga</i>	: Traditional breastcloth in <i>udaraga</i> motif
<i>Sinjang</i>	: Traditional long fabric to cover lower part of the body, usually the <i>batik</i> cloth
<i>Sinjang cangkring</i>	: Long fabric in <i>cangkring</i> motif
<i>Sinjang cindhe</i>	: Long fabric in <i>cindhe</i> motif
<i>Sinjang limar</i>	: Long fabric in <i>limar</i> motif
<i>Sinjang lurik kepyur</i>	: Long fabric in <i>lurik kepyur</i> motif
<i>Sinjang lurik kepyur hitam</i>	: Long fabric in black <i>lurik kepyur</i> motif

<i>Sinjang lurik perkutut pethak seret abrit</i>	: Long silk fabric in <i>lurik perkutut pethak seret</i> motif
<i>Sinjang lurik sekar mindi</i>	: Long fabric in <i>lurik sekar mindi</i> motif
<i>Sinjang poleng</i>	: Long fabric in <i>poleng</i> motif
<i>Sinjang teluh watu</i>	: Long fabric in <i>teluh watu</i> motif
<i>Slamet</i>	: State of unchanging safety and fortune
<i>Slametan</i>	: Ritual to celebrate and ask for <i>slamet</i>
<i>Songsong gilap</i>	: Ceremonial umbrella, gilded parasol
<i>Sugengan</i>	: Ceremony to celebrate the coronation of the Sultan of Yogyakarta
<i>Surjan</i>	: Javanese male upper garment
<i>Teja</i>	: Divine radiance
<i>Jumenengan Dalem</i>	: Coronation of the Sultan of Yogyakarta
<i>Tingalan Jumenengan Dalem</i>	: Commemoration of the Sultan of Yogyakarta coronation
<i>Uborampe</i>	: Labuhan's offerings
<i>Udheng</i>	: Traditional male head covering
<i>Wahyu</i>	: Revelation
<i>Wayah</i>	: Grandchild
<i>Wilujengan</i>	: High Javanese word for <i>slametan</i>
<i>Yatra tindhibih</i>	: Money in the Labuhan's offerings