# MAKING ART IN EARLY MODERN JAVA (16th-19th c.): A NEW READING

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By day and night, read with care and diligence
All the venerable laid-by works
That they may be exemplars
Of the language of the heart, be not deceived

If you lack the time, read then every night
If by night alone
Study with utmost loving care
Feel their meaning and their intent

Bring out their sense, dare to try to comprehend
If confused
Or if they seem too simple.

Mas Ronggasasmita
*Suluk Martabat Sanga* (1815)

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DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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**ABSTRACT**

Conventional interpretations of Javanese art during the early modern era (16th-19th century) present an understanding of modes of visual expression as representing a dichotomy between an Islamic style and a style linked with earlier Hindu-Buddhist times (around 5th-15th c.) known as the *jaman buda* (*buda* era). Scholarly attempts to reconcile the chronological divisions of the two periods of history with recognisable continuities in the island's traditions of making art have often invoked concepts of 'syncretism' or 'synthesis'. This subsequently has reinforced the assumption that Javanese art, created on the peripheries of the Muslim world, is somehow less authentically representative of Islamic cultural expression than that found in the religion's heartlands.

This study presents a new reading of Javanese art making through the contextualisation of art practices within the wider sphere of Islam in Java during the early modern era. It argues that 'syncretism' and 'synthesis' presuppose disjunctions, discontinuity, and hybridity, which do not reflect the productive fusion that took place in early modern Java at the religious, cultural, and intellectual levels. This remarkable amalgamation of Islamic and pre-Islamic practices, beliefs, and perceptions is examined in this study through five central themes that became core elements defining Javanese aesthetic sensibility and Java's artistic identity. These are: talismanic images in woodcarving; geometric patterns appearing in textiles; arboreal motifs in sculpture and architectural ornament; figurative depiction in the shadow-puppet theatre; and imported East Asian ceramic and Indian trade textile designs. Each element is examined within the broad cultural context that is informed by the co-joined relationship of the visual arts to Javanese literature and performance traditions.

The dissertation also argues that, over three centuries, Javanese artists valued multi-valency, ambiguity, and balance as aesthetic devices. It was the continual adjustment of these devices, also found occurring in textual and theatrical narratives as well as oral traditions, which created a sophisticated fusion of pre-Islamic art and the new styles. In doing so, the artists articulated the shared spiritual values of Islam as it was understood in Java during the period. These spiritual values manifested in beliefs in the mystical power of certain images, such as geometrical diagrams and

arboreal motifs, the talismanic properties of calligram and zoomorphic forms, and the iconography of the shadow puppet theatre.

The early modern era commences at the beginning of the 16th-century with the ascendancy of Muslim polities along Java's northern *pesisir* (coastal) region over the inland Hindu-Buddhist *mandala* state of Majapahit. Their strategic geographical location between the Indian Ocean and South China Sea maritime networks contributed to the cosmopolitan milieu of the emporium polities, such as Demak, Cirebon, and Banten. The period ends with the Dutch military victory in the Java War (1825-1830) and the subsequent imposition of the European colonial administration that continued until 1942.

During the intervening three hundred years, rich local traditions of Islam, deeply influenced by Sufi and *buda* spiritual practices, flourished on the island. Concurrently, Java's reputation for cultural prestige and religious piety spread widely among littoral societies in the region of modern-day western Indonesia and Malaysia. Until today, the art of Java's early modern era continues to be a significant influence on the batik, puppetry and wood carving traditions that are regarded as epitomising the heritage of Indonesia's national culture.

The study focuses on visually-oriented artworks and is based on a deep analysis of objects found in international museums and private collections, as well as at heritage sites in Indonesia, with reference to historical accounts, primary literary sources, and theatre narratives. It acknowledges that the Javanese terms *kagunan* (beautiful skilled work) and *adiluhung* (nobly sublime), which have been associated with the concept of art in contemporary Indonesian discourse, are comparatively recent in their usage. However, they do underscore the profoundly visual nature of Javanese society both in contemporary and historical times. The five themes are examined in sequence with an accompanying appendix illustrating the works of art, referenced in the study, in a time-line positioning Javanese aesthetic trends in the early modern era.

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To Mas Muh, who has so enthusiastically and faithfully supported me, *matur nuwon ingkang kathah tumrap sampean.*

NOTE TO THE READER

1. The thesis follows the University of Adelaide's 'Thesis by Publications' format.
2. The published/to be published Chapters have been re-formatted for the purposes of the thesis document to ensure consistency for the reader. Some repetition in the footnote referencing is the result of the original publication contexts.
3. Modern-day Javanese and Bahasa Indonesia spellings have been utilised as many of the words are now used interchangeably by native speakers of the languages.
4. Diacritics are only applied when directly referencing Old Javanese textual material. For example, *Rāmāyaṇa* refers to the 10th-century literary poem (*kakawin*) version of the epic, while *Ramayana* refers to the story as understood by Indonesians today.
5. Indonesian adaptations of Arabic words have been utilised although the Arabic with diacritics have been retained in some contexts. Examples of the former include the Indonesian *lahir* for the Arabic *zahir*, and *al-Isra wa al-Miraj* for *al-Isrāʾ wa al-Miʿrāj*.
6. Credit line abbreviations in the text, object captions and photographs are AGSA (Art Gallery of South Australia), NGA (National Gallery of Australia), NGV (National Gallery of Victoria), NMI (National Museum of Indonesia), V&A (Victoria and Albert Museum), BKI (Bijdragen tot de Taal-. Land- en Volkenkunde) and KITLV (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies).

# INTRODUCTORY STUDY

Introduction – Aims and Method

Understanding Java and its Art

# 1. INTRODUCTION – AIMS AND METHOD

**The exhibition *Crescent Moon* and the core issue.**

In 2005, in my role as Curator of Asian art at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, I presented the exhibition *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art and Civilization of Southeast Asia* (Fig. 1.1−4).[1] The exhibition, including 168 works of art from Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Thailand, India and China, dating from the 14th- to early-20th-century, is recognized as the first major international exhibition specifically dedicated to art produced by or for Muslim peoples in Southeast Asia.[2] A surprising total of forty-seven works of art – almost one third of the exhibition's content – originated from the island of Java.[3] Stylistic elements seen in an additional sixty objects from adjacent islands testify to Java's significant role in defining the archipelago's aesthetic history.[4]

**Fig. 1.1.** *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art and Civilization of Southeast Asia* exhibition, 2005, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Photograph: AGSA.

[1] James Bennett, ed., 2005, *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art and Civilization of Southeast Asia* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia). The exhibition dates were: Art Gallery of South Australia 10 November 2005-29 January 2006; National Gallery of Australia 23 February-28 May 2006.
[2] 'Faith in Islam's Beauty', *The Australian* 10 November 2005, and 'Another Islam' *The Advertiser*, 5 November 2005.
[3] The twenty-seven lenders included Indonesia: National Museum of Indonesia, National Library of Indonesia, Kraton Kasepuhan, Museum Sonobudoyo, Jakarta Textile Museum, Bayt Al-Qur'an & Museum Istiqlal, Museum Prabu Geusan Ulun; Malaysia: Department of Antiquities & Museums, National Museum of Malaysia, National Library of Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, History Museum of Malaysia, Sarawak Museums Department, University of Malaysia's Museum of Asian Art, Abdullah bin Ibrahim (*dalang* Dollah Baju Merah); Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum; Brunei Darussalam: Brunei Darussalam Museums Department; Australia: National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, National Gallery of Victoria, Powerhouse Museum, Australian Museum, University of Western Australia's Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Michael Abbott QC, Collin McDonald QC, anonymous private lender.
[4] Ann Kumar, 2015, *Java and Modern Europe: Ambiguous Encounters* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire and New York: Routledge Press), 27.

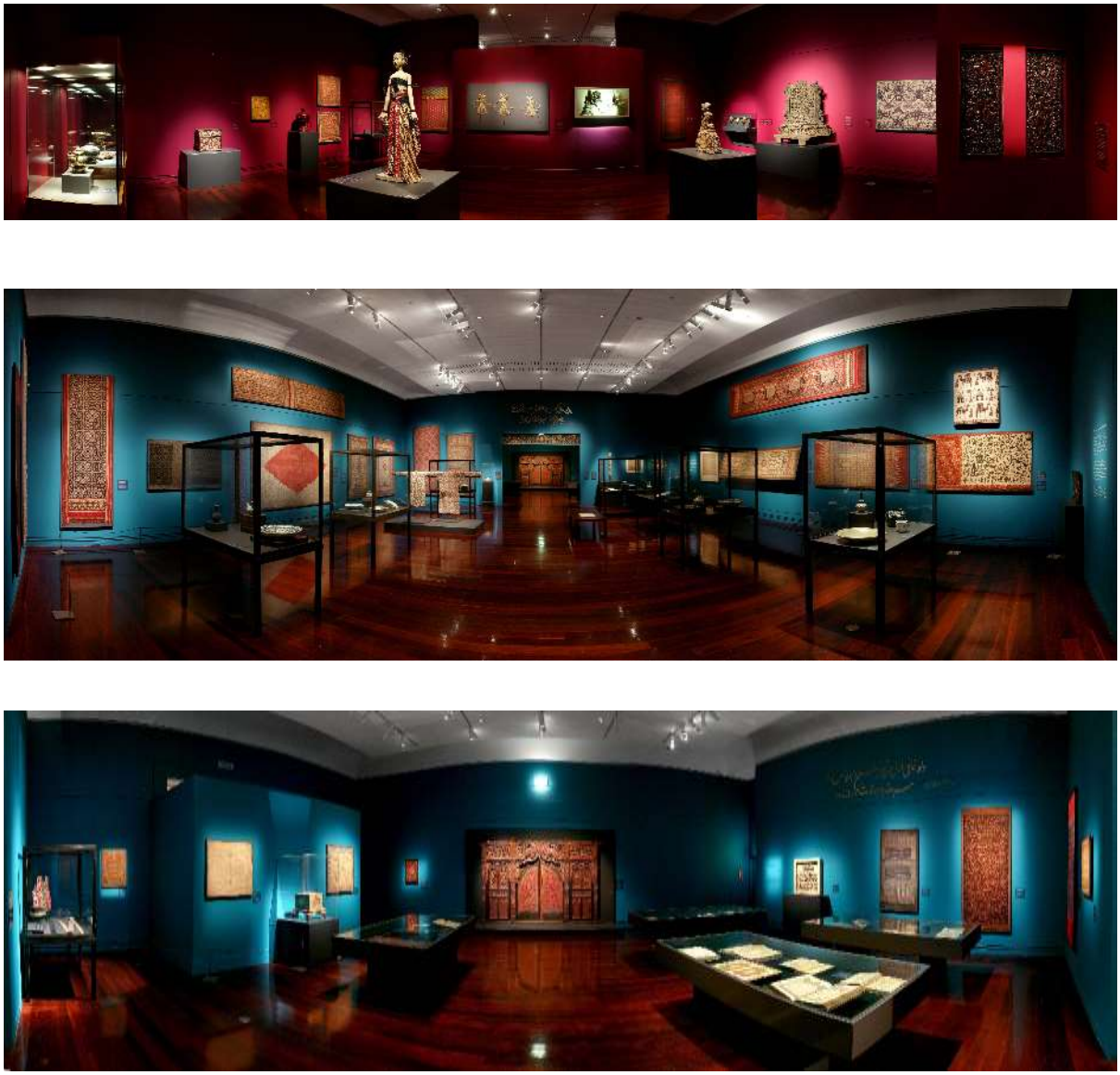

**Fig. 1.2–4.** *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art and Civilization of Southeast Asia* exhibition, 2005, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Photograph: AGSA.

*Crescent Moon* prompted a range of responses, including surprise, from Muslim and non-Muslim visitors about the Javanese objects. The *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets) (Fig. 1.5) and *wayang topeng* (dance masks) (Fig. 1.6) made for performances in Central Javanese courts, appeared unrelated to more widely accepted notions of Islamic art. Decorative motifs, such as the mythic *naga* serpents and *garuda* birds, whose origins date back to pre-Islamic Indic Hindu and Buddhist cosmologies, were similarly perplexing to viewers accustomed to the vocabulary of ornament typically featured in Middle Eastern and South Asian Islamic art

exhibitions.[5] The perceived disconnect between Indonesia's Islamic heritage and art produced elsewhere in Islam was epitomized by the comment on *Crescent Moon* by Stefano Carboni, Metropolitan Museum of Art, quoted in the *New York Times* (16 March 2006):

> The show was probably more a cultural experience than an artistic one …Islamic art should feature calligraphy in Arabic form, geometric and arabesque patterns.[6]

**Fig. 1.5.** Panji Asmoro Bangun (Panji Awakening to Love) from *Cerita Panji* (*Tales of Panji*), *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1875-1900, Surakarta, Central Java, leather, pigment, gold leaf and horn; National Gallery of Australia (73.584). Photograph: NGA.

[5] In *Crescent Moon*, the 19th-century Yogyakarta dance masks depicted Kuda Narawangsa, Bhuta Cakil and Jatayu from the *Ramayana* (National Museum of Indonesia). Three shadow puppets from the Mangkunegaran Palace, Surakarta, depicted characters from *Cerita Panji* (National Gallery of Australia). Three 20th-century Kelantan shadow puppets of the *pohon beringin* (*gunungan*), Prince Rama and a *raksasa* (giant) from the Malay *Hikayat Seri Rama* also featured in the exhibition (Collection of Abdullah bin Ibrahim (*dalang* Dollah Baju Merah)).

[6] 'Southeast Asia Too is on the Map of Islamic Art' <www.nytimes.com/2006/03/16/arts/design/southeast-asia-too-is-on-map-of-islamic-art>, accessed December 2020. The article's author, Jane Perlez, observes that at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 'Indonesian textiles are placed with Oceanic art, and the Chinese export porcelain with Islamic inscriptions that flooded Southeast Asia is shown as Asian art, not Islamic art.' Perlez erroneously attributes the exhibition to the National Gallery of Australia not the Art Gallery of South Australia with my role as curator.

**Fig. 1.6.** Jatayu, King of the Birds, from *Ramayana*, *wayang topeng* dance mask, 1875-1900, Yogyakarta, Central Java, wood, pigment, metal, gold leaf, gemstones, 21.5 x 15.5 x 16.0 cm; National Museum of Indonesia (22255.3). Photograph: AGSA.

Over the past sixteen years since *Crescent Moon*, the need for a new language to conceptualize the relationship of Javanese historical art to Islam has become increasingly apparent to me in curatorial terms through numerous exhibitions and displays I have subsequently presented at the Art Gallery of South Australia.[7] The challenge to identify different ways of thinking about Javanese art goes beyond museum exhibition methodologies to rethinking how we approach the shared history of objects created during the early modern era.[8] Our understanding of art from the period is replete with lacunae and inconsistencies. With few exceptions, artifacts that have been preserved in museum and private collections lack thorough documentation recording their history, including names, dates, local provenances and the context for their creation and use. In reconstructing their stories, nuanced insight is required in order to avoid resorting to the old hierarchies of meaning based on periods and styles. Sensitivity is also an essential requisite to appreciate the dynamic, often variable, role of spirituality and its relationship to art in Javanese society whose heterogeneous belief systems are only broadly understood by outsiders. Moreover, we need to eschew misconceptions that Islamic art is trans-cultural and universalist in expression

[7] The major Art Gallery of South Australia exhibitions and accompanying catalogues featuring Javanese art are *Treasure Ships: Art in the Age of Spices* (2015) and *Beneath the Winds: Masterpieces of Southeast Asian Art from the Art Gallery of South Australia* (2011). The displays have included *No god but God: Art of Islam* (2019), *Love from Damascus: Art of Devotion in Islam* (2018), *'Ilm: Art and Knowledge in Islam* (2017), *More Ink than Ocean: Art of Writing in Islam* (2015), *Paradise on Earth: Flowers in the Art of Islam* (2014) and *Noble Shadows: Ancestral Art of Indonesia and Australia* (2013).

[8] For a critique of the 'periodization' of the early modern era in the historiography of Islam, see Samer Akkach, 2021, 'Neo-Eurocentrism and Science: Implications for the Historiography of Islamic Art and Architecture', *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 10(1): 203-215.

as assumed in the *New York Times* review of the *Crescent Moon* exhibition.

**Aims and Significance**

This study aims to enhance our understanding of Javanese art produced in the early modern period through a contextualization of these practices within the wider environment of Islam. It addresses diverse media, including wood sculptures, textiles, ceramics, metalwork, manuscripts and performance artifacts, held in museum and private collections, both in Indonesia and overseas. Wendy Shaw, historian of Islamic art, observes that so often the presentation of such objects in exhibition displays and research 'force difference into the straight jacket of our imagination'.[9] Her conclusion is that rather than conventional presentations 'demanding speech from objects and intuition from viewers', we need a new 'lexicon of intrinsic meanings through which to engage with, not simply observe, worlds illegible to the modern viewer'.[10]

In seeking to identify this new lexicon, the dissertation proposes an alternative analysis to the long-held 'two types of views regarding Islam in Java: syncretism and acculturation'.[11] The use of these terms is problematic in Javanese studies due to the over simplification of history through the supposition of some kind of pre-existent cultural purity before the arrival of Islam.[12] Recent scholarship has underscored the extent Javanese society reshaped Indian Buddhist and Hindu religions from their initial arrival on the island in the early centuries of the first millennium CE.[13] Seen against this historical background, expressions of Islam in Javanese visual arts represent a long established pattern of fusion as an authentic mode of expression. The increasing questioning of purist religious categories, such 'Islam' or 'Hindu', in Middle Eastern and South Asian studies, over the past decade supports this reading.[14]

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[9] Wendy Shaw, 2019, *What is Islamic art? Between Religion and Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2.
[10] Shaw, 2019, 14-15.
[11] Agus Salim, 2013. 'Javanese Religion, Islam or Syncretism: Comparing Woodward's *Islam in Java* and Beatty's *Varieties of Javanese religion*', *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Studies*, 3 (2), 225.
[12] Finbarr B. Flood, 2009, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounters* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), 5, notes the uncomfortable nature of such metaphors with their biological references that betray their 'roots in nineteenth-century scientific discourses on race, within which… cultural mixing (like racial miscegenation) was generally frowned on as an uneasy, unnatural and unstable state of affairs'.
[13] For a discussion of the integration of autochthonous spiritual traditions with Indic Hindu-Buddhist beliefs in architecture in Java, see Imran bin Tajudeen, 2017, 'Śāstric and Austronesian Comparative Perspectives: Parallel Frameworks on Indic Architectural and Cultural Translations Among Western Malayo-Polynesian Societies', in Andrea Acri et al., ed., *Spirits and Ships: Cultural Transfers in Early Monsoon Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute), 470-514.
[14] Flood, 2009, 12.

Aesthetic intermixtures are reflected in the visual preferences of the early modern era that were not bounded by sectarian belief-systems. Instead, motifs, symbols and media were shared, re-cycled, copied and re-purposed, across religious, ethnic and geographical boundaries.[15]

The study challenges essentialist interpretations of Javanese art epitomized by A.N.J. Th. Van der Hoop in *Indonesische Siermotieven: Ragam-ragam Perhiasan Indonesia: Indonesian Ornamental Design* (1949).[16] Hoop references the ethnographic theory of *elementargedanken* (elementary ideas), formulated by the ethnologist Adolf Bastian (1826-1905), through proposing that certain common motifs in Indonesian visual arts underscore a deep prehistoric unity existing in the region's art predating the arrival of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.[17] This 'stratigraphic' model conjures the metaphor of indigenous culture as the bedrock over which historical accretions have successively accumulated like sediment.[18] Here, Islamic art is regarded as a thin and comparatively recent 'veneer' – Islam having only become ascendant in Java in the 16th-century.[19]

The perception of Javanese art styles evolving through a series of stratigraphic layers has informed much Indonesian scholarship which often references the concept of local genius, introduced by H.G. Quaritch Wales in his 1948 paper 'Cultural Change in Greater India'.[20] Local genius is defined as the indigenous pre-disposition to proactively select or modify and reshape elements from introduced foreign cultures

[15] Peter Lee and Alan Chong, 2016, 'Mixing Up Things and People in Asia's Port Cities', in Peter Lee et al. eds., *Multicultural Emporiums of Asia, 1500-1900* (Singapore: Asian Civilizations Museum), 36. The authors here describe hybrid objects as 'objects that do not belong to any orthodox cultural category, that are made by craftsmen from diverse ethnicities for customers from equally diverse communities' (37).

[16] A. N. J. Thomassen a Thuessink van der Hoop, 1975, *Indonesische Siermotieven: Ragam-ragam Perhiasan Indonesia: Indonesian Ornamental Design* (Jakarta: Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap von Kunsten En Wetenschappen). First published in 1949 and reprinted in 1975 under the auspices of the Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan, DPK, Jakarta.

[17] Hoop, 1975, 9. Bastian's *elementargedanken* subsequently inspired Karl Jung to expound the theory of the archetype.

[18] Daud Ali, 2009, 'Connected Histories? : Regional Historiography and Theories of Cultural Contact Between Early South and Southeast Asia', in R. Michael Feener and Terenjit Sevea, eds., *Islamic connections: Muslim societies in South and Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies), 15.

[19] Robyn Maxwell, 1990, *Textiles of Southeast Asia: Tradition, Trade and Transformation* (Canberra: Australia National Gallery) reveals the influence of this model in the chapter order.

[20] Ni Made Ruastati, 2011, 'The Concept of Local Genius in Balinese Performing Arts', *Mudra*, 26 (3), 242. H.G. Quaritch Wales, 1951, *The Making of Greater India: A Study in South East Asian Cultural Exchange* (London: Bernard Quaritch), 17, defines local genius as 'the sum of the cultural characteristics which the vast majority of a people have in common as a result of their experiences early in life.'

or religions.[21] As the historian of Southeast Asian architecture, Imran bin Tajudeen, underscores, Wales was among the first scholars to suggest a perspective on Indonesian art history 'that does not fix the "constant features" of local culture as an immutable essence' but understood culture as always transformative in response to foreign – and local – changes.[22] Sarah Weiss in her study of the evolution of *wayang* music speaks of 'layering' as representing a process of change that may have been a dynamic that has been maintained for centuries in Java.[23] Here she is not alluding to cultural 'stratigraphy' but to the degree through which the continuous fusing of past and present idioms represents a distinctly Javanese aesthetic dynamic. The resulting multiple contemporaneous forms, seen in the visual arts as well as in *wayang* music, are an outcome of traditions that allow the layering of new styles and interpretations onto older forms 'without their obliteration or obsolescence'.[24]

**Fig. 1.7.** *No god but God: The Art of Islam* exhibition featuring Javanese art alongside works of art from elsewhere in the Islamic world, 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Photograph: AGSA.

This dissertation responds to the curatorial challenges raised by *Crescent Moon*, and subsequent AGSA 'intervention' exhibitions, such as *No god but God: The Art of Islam* (2019) (Fig. 1.7), where Javanese works of art were displayed alongside art

[21] Edi Sedyawati, 1990, 'The Making of Indonesian Art', in Jan Fontein, ed., *The Sculpture of Indonesia* (New York: Harry N. Abrams), 99.
[22] Tajudeen, 2017, 507.
[23] Sarah Weiss, 2006, *Listening to an Earlier Java: Aesthetics, Gender and the Music of Wayang in Central Java* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 6.
[24] Weiss, 2006, 6.

from around the Islamic world.[25] These exhibitions highlighted the increasing need to re-think the 'meanings, validity and relevance of categories that were once delineated by conventional racial, religious, and geographic or cultural references'.[26] In re-evaluating conventional readings of historical Javanese art, the study crosses the dividing lines that have defined our understanding of Javanese aesthetics and their relationship to Islam while seeking to avoid a Eurocentric 'emphasis on commonalities and the flattening of the topographies of difference'.[27] In doing so the dissertation is mindful of the salutary warning by the anthropologist, Robert Hefner, in his study of Tenggerese Hindu people and Islam in Java:

> In understanding the significance of a tradition…there can be no detour around society or history. Differences of social position, biography and cognition all affect people's experience. Rather than ignoring these things by collapsing them into a single concept or stereotyped meaning, our task is to disentangle them, and learn more of their complexity.[28]

**Method – Sources and Interpretive Tools**

Shaw declares, 'The problem with understanding a culture different from our own is that its answers rarely match our questions…all of us moderns, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, become foreign to Islam's pasts'.[29] For art historians, the foreignness of Java's past is especially apparent when recognizing the extent traditional art practices, so often assumed to define that past, reveal themselves to be far more recent.[30] The use of 19th- and 20th-century traditions to interpret earlier art styles, although sometimes insightful in their results, needs to be circumspect even when these traditions are 'now what is thought of as Javanese'.[31] A late-15th- to mid-17th-century

[25] An 'intervention' is a curatorial methodology where objects from differing chronological and conceptual frameworks are displayed together. *No god but God* included 130 works of art encompassing twelve hundred years and originating from Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, northern Africa, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, India, China and Australia. See <https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/no-god-god-art-islam/>, accessed April, 2021.
[26] Samer Akkach, 2002, 'On Culture' in Samer Akkach (ed.), *De-placing Difference: Architecture, Culture and Imaginative Geography* (Adelaide: CAMEA, University of Adelaide), 184.
[27] Akkach, 2018, 99.
[28] Robert W. Hefner, 1985, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 20.
[29] Shaw, 2019, 103.
[30] Marc Benamou, 2010, *Rasa: Affect and Intuition in Javanese Musical Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 34.
[31] Benamou, 2010, 34.

batik textile (Fig. 1.8) and two 17th-century rod puppets (Fig. 1.9) display elements whose direct continuity with more recent Javanese styles is difficult to precisely map. Javanese works of art from the early modern era do not simply 'stand for themselves'. [32] They are the manifestation of ideas and beliefs, whose changes over three hundred years we are only beginning to understand in a comprehensive manner.


**Fig. 1.8.** Waist-wrap or scarf garment, preserved as a ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom (*mawa* or *ma'a*) [detail], Java, found in West Central Sulawesi, c14 date 1484-1663, cotton, dyes, hand batik, 60.0 x 197.0 cm; Kahlenberg Collection. The *nitik* (miniature square dots in each shape) batik technique suggests this textile was made in Java. Photograph: Barnes and Kahlenberg, 2010.


**Fig. 1.9.** Two unidentified characters, *wayang klitik* rod puppets, 17th-century, Java, leather, wood, traces of pigments, 59.0 cm high: National Museum of Denmark (HA-2). The age of these puppets are confirmed by their provenance in a European collection since the 17th-century. Photograph: Levenson, 2007.

[32] Eva Ch. Raabe et al., 2009, 'Art and Context', in Achim Sibeth, ed., *Being Object: Masterpieces from the Collections of the Museum of World Cultures, Frankfurt/Main* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag Tubingen), 11.

Java during the early modern era produced an astonishingly rich corpus of texts whose under-utilized status in visual art studies ironically evokes the archaic term *lepiyan* or 'venerable laid-by works'.[33] This philological material offers the potential to contribute to the re-positioning of our gaze. In the field of cultural anthropology, the importance of primary texts for the study of local variants of trans-cultural religion in Java is well recognized.[34] Nevertheless, Islamic art studies generally make limited use of primary sources with just a few exceptions and the sources are often only anecdotally referenced to illustrate an argument.[35] Elizabeth Lambourn, writing more than a decade ago in the context of Indonesian Islamic epigraphy, remarked that 'it would seem fair to say that, as far as existing and available literature is concerned, the separation between visual and textual fields of inquiry remains prevalent'.[36] The need to overcome the 'disciplinary compartmentalization and parochialism' in Javanese and Malay cultural studies is especially relevant for the field of visual arts.[37]

Farouk Yahya, in his comprehensive 2016 survey of illustrations in Malay divination manuscripts, notes the importance of the relationship between image and text in his material. He highlights the extent that this factor 'sheds light on the inter-relationship between religion and pre-Islamic traditions, regional factors, patronage and links to other cultures'.[38] Yahya addresses examples mostly dating from the 19th-century but his observation is pertinent to the wider field of Javanese art scholarship. A critical familiarity with historical texts provides a unique picture into how the Javanese understood the world in which art was an integral part. The 'creative use of written sources and archival documents' enriches 'object studies by providing insights into the biographies of artifacts, as well as the production of associated value and meaning'.[39] Certainly this approach correlates with the historical Javanese understanding of the role of literature for readers and listeners. Nancy Florida, in her

[33] Nancy Florida, 1995, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 2, f.n.2, defines *lepiyan* as designating 'a written text which is no longer read, but been laid aside (folded up) to be preserved.'
[34] Mark Woodward, 2010, *Java, Indonesia and Islam* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer), 30.
[35] Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu, eds., 2017, *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, Volume 1 (Hobokenm, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell), 22.
[36] Elizabeth Lambourn, 2008, 'Tombstones, Texts and Typologies: Seeing Sources for the Early History of Islam in Southeast Asia', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 51: 25.
[37] Andrea Acri and Verena Meyer, 2019, 'Indic-Islamic Encounters in Javanese and Malay Mystical Literature', *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 47(139): 278.
[38] Farouk Yahya, 2016, *Magic and Divination in Malay Illustrated Manuscripts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill), 18.
[39] Flood and Necipoğlu, 2017, 28.

translation of *Babad Jaka Tingkir* (Chronicle of the Youth from Tingkir), describes this understanding as being a process of engagement to 're-inscribe' the text through which multiple meanings are drawn from the writer's 'modes of signification'.[40] Evidence for these complexities are apparent in the narratives of *babad* (chronicles) and *serat* (stories). Like the *suluk* (mystical poems), *tutur* (religious and philosophical treatises) and *primbon* (divination texts), the literature encapsulates local Islam in Java. The compositions are the outcome of the dynamic interaction of Javanese culture with Received Islam, and are equal in sophistication to the core canonical corpus of Universalist and Essentialist Islam.[41]

The scrutiny of references to objects in Javanese historical literature enables us to gain insight into subject-object agencies where stylistic fusions are a key element in the creative process. These sources are especially significant because no Javanese canonical texts specifically analyzing the philosophy or theory of visual art production have survived from the early modern era. Various handbooks, generically titled *Kawruh Dhuwung* (Knowledge of the *Keris*) (Fig. 1.10), that discuss the physical and mystical properties of daggers exist from the 18th-century or earlier.[42] *Suluk* mystical poetry is a rich source of references to the *wayang* theatre.[43] The short esoteric *Serat Prawan Mbathik* (Song of the Maiden Making Batik), attributed to the 1613-1645 reign of Sultan Agung, describes the steps in creating batik as an analogy to the religious experience.[44]

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[40] Florida, 1995, 6.
[41] Woodward, 2010, 42.
[42] T.E. Behrend, 1996. 'Textual Gateways: The Javanese Manuscript Tradition', in Ann Kumar and John H. McGlynn, eds., *Illuminations: The Writing Traditions of Indonesia* (Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation), 186.
[43] Matthew Isaac Cohen, 2012, '*Suluk Wujil* and Javanese Performance Theory', *Performing Islam* 1: 1
[44] Nanny Sri Lestari, 2013, '*Serat Prawan Mbathik*: Suatu Kajian Filosofi Jawa dalam Proses Membatik', in Irmayanti Meliono, ed., *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Indonesian studies (ICSSIS): Ethnicity and Globalisation, Yogyakarta* (Depok: University of Indonesia), 282-291. My appreciation to Muchammadun for translating the arcane Javanese text for me, personal communication, February, 2021. This *serat* is also sometimes referred to as a *suluk*, personal communication, Nia Fliam, January, 2020.


**Fig. 1.10.** Folio depicting *keris* blade types and *pamor* (damascene) patterns from *Kawruh Dhuwung* (Knowledge of the *Keris*) album, c.1800, Surakarta, Central Java; National Library of Indonesia. Photograph: Behrend, 1996.

*Babad Jaka Tingkir*, written between 1829 and 1840s, contains a long, somewhat amusing, tale of the painter Jaka Prabangkara, a story apparently well known both in Central Java and the *pesisir* (coastal region), a commonly used term for the island's northern littoral.[45] The poem speaks to the transcendental nature of the aesthetic experience and its *semu* (ambiguities) where life emerges from the surface of an image 'at the very moment the same surface apparently disappeared':[46]

> His artful portraits
> Seemed as if they'd speak for themselves
> Of air (*semu*) his drawings seemed as not
> Crafted of paper and ink.[47]

The extent this poem reflects responses to Javanese *wayang beber* narrative paintings of which only several examples survive is uncertain (Fig. 1.11).[48] It cannot be discounted that the *Babad*'s unknown author was alluding to Western modalities of mimetic art as large private collections of European paintings are already recorded in Batavia in the first decades of the 17th-century.[49]

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[45] For an account of the *pesisir* versions, see Matthew Cohen, 2005, 'Traditional and Popular Painting in Modern Java', *Archipel* 69: 5-38. See Chapter 2 following for a further discussion of *pesisir* culture.
[46] Florida, 1995, 295.
[47] Florida, 1995, 129, canto VIII:6.
[48] Ardus M. Sawega, 2013, 'Sejarah Wayang Beber dan Cerita Panji', in Ardus M. Sawega, ed., *Wayang Beber: Antara Inspirasi dan Transformasi* (Solo: Bentara Budaya Balai Soedjatmoko), 23-32.
[49] Michael North, 2010, 'Production and Reception of Art Through European Company Channels in Asia', in Michael North, ed., *Artistic and Cultural Exchanges Between Europe and Asia, 1400-1900*. (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, and New York: Routledge Press), 94-95. A Dutch merchant who died in


**Fig. 1.11.** *Cerita Panji* (Tale of Prince Panji) from *wayang beber* scroll painting [detail], before 1852, Central Java, paper, pigment, ink, wood batons, 71.0 x 289.0 cm (complete); Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (360-52560). Photograph: Jessup, 1990.

Many of the contents of the chronicles known as *babad* are drawn from semi-legendary histories as a principal purpose for composing the texts was to supernaturally influence the present through retelling the past.[50] The opening stanza of *Babad Jaka Tingkir* declares that the work was '…*malyar dadya pusaka*' (composed as a magic talisman).[51] *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Chronicle of the Land of Java) survives in a number of 18th-century versions likely representing two textual traditions.[52] As the *Babad Tanah Jawi* stories were principally intended to validate dynastic and spiritual lineages, the narrative focus is on actions and words rather than settings or objects. Nevertheless, episodes such as the humiliation of the renowned religious teacher and puppeteer, Kyai Ageng Sela, ancestor of the Mataram rulers, stripped naked when his waist wrap *cinde* garment became entangled in a bush, are relevant to art studies. They raise questions about the role of Indian luxury textiles in 16th-century Javanese religious culture.[53] Especially as the term *cinde* in early times

1627 left 28 paintings including works identified as 'Chinese paintings.' The adventures of Jaka Prabangkara take him to China where his art becomes famous.

[50] Shelley Errington, 1979, 'Some Comments on Style in the Meanings of the Past', in Anthony Reid and David Marr, eds., *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Heinemann Education Books), 26.

[51] Florida, 1995, 4.

[52] The origin, date and circumstance of creation of these texts are uncertain. See J. Ras, 1987, 'The Genesis of the *Babad Tanah Jawi*: Origin and Function of the Javanese Court Chronicle', *BKI* 143(2-3): 343-356, and others for the ongoing debate around these matters.

[53] H.R. Sumarsono, trans. and ed., 2014, *Babab Tanah Jawi: Mulai dari Nabi Adam Sampai Tahun 1647. Disusun oleh W.L. Olthof di Belanda Tahun 1941* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Narasi), 90-91. *Kyai* is the Javanese honorific title for a highly respected religious teacher.

could mean either of two distinct textile types, silk double-ikat *patola* (Fig. 1.12) from Gujarat or floral chintz (Fig. 1.13) from southern India, both popular in Java.[54] In seeking to contextualize art with the broader social histories we need be wary of a selective approach to 'historiography that seeks to combine these disparate sources to produce a single historical narrative'.[55] Yet, the re-appraisal of objects though referencing them in textual sources enables us to move beyond 'art historical oculocentrism' and discover in Java what has been called the 'period eye'.[56]

**Fig. 1.12.** Ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom (*patolu*), with elephants and tigers, 1850-1900, Gujarat, India, found in Bali, Indonesia, silk with dyes, double-ikat weaving, 100.0 x 336.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (747A75). A Mangkunagaran Palace photograph, dated c.1924, depicts a Surakarta prince and family in Central Java seated in front of a *patolu* with a similar motif.[57] Photograph: AGSA.

**Fig. 1.13.** Jacket (*baju*), with floral chintz design, 1700-1750, Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu & Andhra Pradesh), India, and garment assembled in Indonesia, cotton, mordant painted dyes, 81.5 cm (collar to hem); Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC, Art Gallery of South Australia (20083A51). Photograph: AGSA.

[54] Ruurdje Laarhoven, 1994, *The Power of Cloth: The Textile Trade of the Dutch East India Company* (*VOC*) *1600-1780*. Doctoral thesis, National University of Australia. Appendix A, 20-21. The word *cinde* in Java today means either the Gujarati woven *patolu* (pl. *patola*) or batik designs imitating their patterns.
[55] Thomas M. Hunter, 2007, 'The Body of the King: Reappraising Singhasari Period Syncretism', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 38(1): 28.
[56] Shaw, 2019, 57. See Astri Wright, 1994, *Soul, Spirit and Mountain: Preoccupations of Contemporary Indonesian Painters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 7, for her reference to Michael Baxandall's term 'the period eye' in the context of Indonesian art.
[57] Illustrated in John Guy, 1998, *Woven Cargoes: Indian Textiles from the East* (London: Thames and Hudson), 88, plate 106.

Denys Lombard asserts the value of most cultural artefacts in the Indonesian archipelago has historically been primarily been based on their miraculous powers and not on their aesthetic qualities.[58] The most detailed references to works of art in historical texts occur where objects are attributed with magical qualities, known as *sekti* (*sakti*) that influenced the fate of individuals or communities.[59] An example is the heirloom *keris* dagger named Kaki Kanta Naga, owned by the founder of the Cirebon sultanate, Sunan Gunung Jati and described in several versions of *Babad Tanah Sunda* (Chronicles of the Land of Sunda).[60] The *Babad* recounts how the weapon first appeared in the form of a gold *naga* statue in the possession by the *buda* King of Galuh whose Sundanese kingdom was overthrown by Gunung Jati around 1482. The design of Kaki Kanta Naga as a weapon is unknown but the honorific name suggests the blade was in the shape of a *naga* like many heirloom daggers (Fig. 1.14). However, the precise appearance of its physical features is irrelevant as the mere invocation of the object in a text as mystically compelling as the *Babad* imbues the lost *keris* with the potency of actuality.

**Fig. 1.14.** Royal *keris* with blade in shape of a *naga* serpent wearing a crown on its head, 17th-century, Bima, West Nusa Tenggara, nickel, iron, gold, diamonds, semi-precious stones, 51.0 x 130.0 cm; Gift of Geoffrey Jacket-Jones in memory of his brother Frank, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2008 (20082A4). Photograph: AGSA.

[58] Denys Lombard, 2018, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya Kajian Sejarah Terpadu Bagian 1: Batas-Batas Pembaratan* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama), 262.
[59] James J. Fox, 1997, 'Sunan Kalijaga and the Rise of Mataram: A Reading of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* as a Genealogical Narrative', in Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street, eds., *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society: A Festschrift in honour of Anthony H. Johns* (Leiden: Brill), 190.
[60] Pangeran Suleiman Sulendraningrat, ed. and trans., 1984, *Babad Tanah Sunda, Babad Cirebon* (Cirebon: Publisher not stated), 82, 92. See Tan Zi Hao, 2019, *History, Memory and Islam through the Animal: The Zoomorphic Imagery in Cirebon*, Doctoral thesis, National University of Singapore, 96-98, for a comprehensive discussion of the *naga* keris in the context of Islamic serpent imagery.

**Literature Review**

The key sources of research for this study include primary historical sources, Indonesian and European scholarship, museum and art gallery exhibition publications, and surveys of public and private art collections. The sources, often closely inter-related, ensure a comprehensive approach to understanding Javanese art during the early modern era and the relationship between an Islamic style and that of the earlier Hindu-Buddhist era.

Two key studies published late in the period of this doctorate's research nevertheless succinctly articulated many of the theoretical issues with which I had been grappling from the perspective of both a scholar and curator. Shaw's *What is 'Islamic Art'? Between Religion and Perception* offers a refreshing analysis of the potential for new approaches to reveal deeper insights in a field defined by the problematic term 'Islamic art'. While her discussion nowhere engages Southeast Asia, Tajudeen's recent paper *Carving an Epistemological Space for Southeast Asia: Historiographical and Critical Engagements* directly addresses regional issues. His principal focus is architecture yet by implication the author also speaks to the challenges facing art history studies. This is most notable in his comments regarding the extent that Islamic and non-Islamic 'cultural complexes and their material production and systems of meaning existed in parallel and interacted across space and time with different combinations'.[61] Southeast Asian studies have a long history of negotiating theoretical tensions between 'world' and 'local' perspectives.[62] The notion of 'localisation', that the historian Oliver Wolters first fully articulated forty years ago is forcefully restated by Tajudeen.

An understanding of the broader cultural context in pre-modern Java is facilitated through the study of primary sources that offer significant insights into Javanese perceptions of the interface between art objects and spiritual beliefs. This includes Hindu-Buddhist texts composed in Old Javanese from the late-9th- to early-16th-century such as *Gaṇapati Tattwa*, *Smaradahana* (Dharmaja), *Porusādānśānta* (Tantular), *Deśawarnana* (Prapanca), and *Tantu Panggelaran*. A series of papers by Jiří Jákl and Tom Hoogervost has demonstrated the contribution of philological

[61] Imran bin Tajudeen, 2021. 'Carving an Epistemological Space for Southeast Asia: Historiographical and Critical Engagements', *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 10(1): 224.
[62] Tony Day, 1986, 'How Modern was Modernity, How Traditional was Tradition in Nineteenth-Century Java?', *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 20(1): 1. See O.W. Wolters, 1982, *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: ISEAS), 52-53.

expertise to interpreting the material culture of the texts.[63] This enables a more informed appreciation of Hindu-Buddhist Javanese society and the relevance of this information to the timespan following the ascendancy of Islam. This is especially so as versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* and *Arjuna Wiwāha*, among other poems, continued to be in circulation in Java during the Islamic period. Following the ascendancy of Islam, *Suluk Wujil*, *Serat Manik Maya, Sasana Sunu* (Yasadipura II) (1760-1844) and other mystical texts similarly provided understanding into the materiality of objects and their agency seen from the perspective of Javanese spiritual practices. Chronicles such as the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, *Babab Tanah Sunda,* and *Babad Jaka Tingkir,* as well as the *Serat Centhini*, enable insight into the Javanese worldview during the time of their composition. Early colonial era accounts of Java record many aspects of art production from the perspective of the outsider. Although commonly critiqued for their orientalist prejudices and inaccuracies, T.S. Raffles' *History of Java* and John Stockdale's *Island of Java: And Its Immediate Dependencies*, among others, nevertheless systematically sought to document art and craft practices about which knowledge would otherwise have been lost.[64]

In the vast field of Dutch East Indies Javanology, journals such as *Djawa* and *Oudheidkundig Verslag* (Archaeology Report), regularly published in the decades preceding World War II, are key resources for historical information. As likewise is the photographic documentation, now available in digital online collections of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land, en Volkenkunde and Tropenmuseum (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen). Encyclopaedic publications, epitomised in the compilation of batik motifs assembled through cross-cultural collaboration between the Dutch scholar J. E. Jasper (1874-1945) and the Javanese painter Mas Pirngadie (1875-1936), preserve visual information and associated aural histories concerning traditions that are now largely forgotten. In the discipline of literary studies and translations, the research and translations of Javanese scholars Supomo Suryohudoyo, Soewito Santoso and Boechari have facilitated access to primary textual sources relevant to the visual arts and Islam in the early modern era. Likewise the scholarship of Dutch academics, notably Petrus Josephus Zoetmulder, Theodore

[63] For example, Jiří Jákl and Tom Hoogervost, 2017, 'Custom, Combat, and Ceremony: Java and the Indo-Persian Textile Trade', *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 103: 207-235.
[64] Florida, 1995, 23, observes the prior role of Dutch scholars, such as François Valentijn (1666-1727), forming the basis for Raffles work.

Pigeaud, and Gerardus W. Drewes, is seminal and are further informed with studies by many historians. Ricklefs's publications over fifty years have transformed our understanding of Java and Islam and provided a meticulously documented historical framework for research into the visual arts of the early modern era.

Major scholarly studies addressing various media that have been referenced include works by Bambang Irianto, Ruth Barnes and Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, Robyn Maxwell, Justine Boow concerning textiles; *dalang* Ir. Sri Mulyono, Bernard Arps, Matthew Isaac Cohen, and Ward Keeler about the shadow-puppet theatre; Moehamad Habib Mustopo, Hélène Njoto, Tan Zi Hao for sculpture; Farouk Yahya, Ali Akbar, Annabel Teh Gallop, and Tim Behrend concerning illuminated manuscripts. In the field of Javanese archaeology, the writings of Uka Tjandrasasmita, Hassan Ambary, Edi Sedyawati, Inajati Adrisijianti, Jan Wisseman Christie and John Miksic are important reference points.

The focus of this dissertation is objects, thus equally important resources for a comprehensive overview of the topic are exhibition catalogues and collections. The presentation of works of art in exhibitions, and their complementary or contrasting methods of display, challenge our understanding of past histories and the nature of aesthetic influences. Jessup's 1990 landmark exhibition and publication *Court Arts of Indonesia* (New York Asia Society) whose selection of objects, while ahistorical, featured definitive Javanese works of art from the early modern era. Two other significant exhibitions whose contents have been a formative influence in the questions they have raised for this study are *Archipel: Indonesia Kingdoms of the Sea* (National Museum of Indonesia) and *Sari to Sarong: Five hundred years of Indian and Indonesian Textile Exchange* (National Gallery of Australia).

The Indonesian collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, with which I have worked firsthand for the past nineteen years, consists of over one thousand objects in diverse media that form a fundamental reference point. Other major collections of Javanese art, that have been an important source for ideas and research, are the National Gallery of Australia (Canberra), National Museum of Indonesia (Jakarta), Textile Museum of Jakarta, Museum Sonobudoyo (Yogyakarta), Museum Kambang Putih (Tuban), Asian Civilisations Museum (Singapore) and Tropenmuseum (Amsterdam). Among the many private collections in Indonesian and overseas that I inspected in the course of research, the extensive Indonesian

collections of Michael Abbott AO QC, held privately and in public institutions around Australia, have made a significant contribution to this study.

**Theoretical Framing**

During my research into the Islamic context of Javanese visual arts in the early modern period, the three aesthetic modes of balance, multi-valency and ambiguity emerged as significant stylistic markers. It is the continual adjustment of these devices, also found at work in textual and theatrical narratives, during the early modern era that created a sophisticated fusion of Islamic and *buda* styles. *Buda* being the Javanese historical term for the pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist period that is discussed more fully in the following section *Religious and Cultural Framing*. Furthermore, they encapsulate the elusive 'world feeling' (*weltgefühl*) that Claire Holt identified in Javanese art in her pioneering 1967 study *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and change*.[65]

The concept of balance (*timbangan*) permeated Javanese cultural systems, including the visual arts.[66] Its discussion here cannot be separated from recognition of the significance of the relationship between Islam and *buda* in the early modern era as implying cosmological balance. Their symmetry is defined in descriptions of Islamic lines of descent on the 'right' (*panengen*) and the *buda* on the 'left' (*pangiwa*) in royal genealogies recorded in Central Javanese texts dated to the mid-to late-18th-century.[67] *Buda* is presented as a 'necessary counterpoise' to Islam in describing the ancient reign of Wisnu in the land of Java:

> For he was made to counterweigh the religion
> Of Islam in Arabia.[68]

[65] Claire Holt, 1967, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press), 6.
[66] The extent that the notion of balance (*timbang*) pervaded all aspects of the Javanese worldview is the example of the Central Javanese description of provinces forming 'balance' to the core region which was the seat of the ruler. For example, *Bang wetan* was the 'eastern balance', meaning 'eastern province', see Florida, 1995, 98.
[67] Bernard Arps, 2019. 'The Power of the Heart That Blazes in the World', *Indonesia and the Malay* world, 47(139): 316, references several texts including the Yogyakarta *Babad Kraton* (1777-1778). He notes that Islam is considered existing prior to the *buda* lineages. Ricklefs, 2006, 171, cites a composition by Pakubuwana II (1711-1749) describing Arabic and Javanese literature as a person's right and left eyes. The imagery of 'right' and 'left' also extends into the grouping of characters in the shadow puppet theatre.
[68] Arps, 2019, 316.

Visual balance is an enduring theme in Javanese textiles as evident in the extensive documentation of geometric *ceplokan* batik and weft-ikat patterns compiled by the Dutch Resident A.D. Cornets de Groot in Gresik, East Java in 1822 (Fig. 1.15).[69] The remarkable similarity of many of the designs to modern-day Central Javanese batik is testimony both to the geographical distribution of certain styles across the island and continuities in some aesthetic fashions. In viewing de Groot's selection it is important to recognize that Western scholarship has often regarded the batik patterns as 'simply decorative and repetitive' and consequently to 'devise categorizations that radically simplify' them.[70] In Javanese ontological thought, it is the complexities of their decorative elements, not their simplification, that convey the *wadah* (container) or *wadag* (corporeality) for whatever *isi* (contents) or *rasa* (feeling) is contained within each motif.[71]

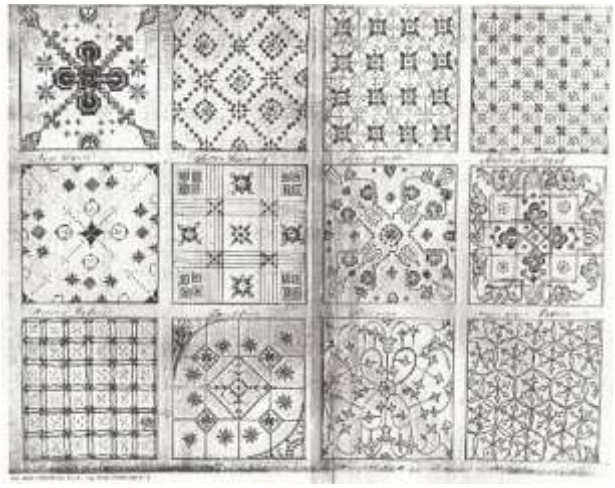

**Fig. 1.15.** *Ceplokan* batik patterns recorded by A.D. Cornets de Groot in Gresik, East Java, in 1822. Photograph: www.fusami.com/newpage14.

Multi-valency and ambiguity, found when looking beneath surface appearances, has a long history in Java.[72] A significant referent in defining the role of these two

[69] Fusami Ito, n.d. *Javanese batik: Changing motifs and techniques*, 12, reference 1-4. <www.fusami.com/newpage14>, accessed January 2021.
[70] Philip Kitley, 1992, 'Ornamentation and Originality: Involution in Javanese batik', *Indonesia* 53: 2-3.
[71] Justine Boow, 1988, *Symbol and Status in Javanese Batik* (Perth: University of Western Australia), 88.
[72] Judith Becker, 1993 *Gamelan Stories: Tantrism Islam and Aesthetics in Central Java* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona State University), 20. The author suggests that the origins of this may date back to the influence of Tantric philosophical thought from medieval north India in Java. The Tantric system

elements in the visual arts is the term *semu* that generally means 'to seem like' or 'to be coloured by'.[73] Florida describes it as the 'merely glimpsed perceptible dimension of the concealed …a subtle sign which points to something other than what it is'.[74] The complexities of the word's connotations are manifest in her previously cited translation of the *Babad Jaka Tingkir* where *semu* is rendered as 'air'. Among the associated meanings of the cognate *pasemon* are 'face' or 'facial expression'. Thus *pasemon* represents 'a kind of epistemologically constructed "mask" which reveals insofar as it appears to conceal'.[75] The awareness of these concepts enables a more subtle reading and appreciation of many aspects of Javanese art including the meanings of patterns in batik, the use of simulacra images and the characterisation of physical depictions of *wayang* figures. Significantly, the early-19th-century *Serat Centhini* (Story of Centhini) declares that a pre-requisite for uncovering hidden spiritual knowledge is the ability to solve a complex riddle (*wangsalan*).[76] The use of multiple levels of interpretation in Javanese mystical traditions recognizes that the more 'inner' the meaning then the more powerful is it.[77] It ought be noted, however, that the extent to which the interpretation of such meanings was widely discussed or analysed is not known with certainty as also unknown is the degree to which this extended to the visual arts. The early 17th-century *Kidung Candhini* (Poem of Candhini) describes the *Suluk Wujil* (Song of the dwarf Wujil) as 'meant to provide a model of hidden symbols'.[78] In doing so, *Suluk Wujil* 'models an important split between artistic production and exegesis defined along lines of gender and class, and space'.

Conceptual balance also forms the key element in multi-valency through suggesting a counterpoise between the seen and unseen manifesting as *lahir* (outer) and *batin* (inner). A nuanced intimation of the presence of these concepts is evident in the 17th-century Cirebon translation of the Gujarati Sufi text *Al-Tuhfa al-mursala ilā rūh al-nabī* (The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet). The Javanese translator

taught multiple interpretations in the context of literature where there existed conventional (*abhidhā*), secondary (*lakşana*) and suggested meanings (*vyañjanā*) or resonances.

[73] Laurie Sears, 1996, *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 7, citing Poerwadarminta (1937).

[74] Florida, 1995, 274.

[75] Forida, 1995, 276.

[76] Soewito Santoso, trans. and ed., 2006, *The Centhini Story: The Javanese Journey of Life Based on the Original 'Serat Centhini'* (Singapore: Marshal Cavendish Editions), 58.

[77] Becker, 1993, 9.

[78] Cohen, 2012, 4.

introduces the *wayang* characters Batara Wisnu and Prabu Kresna, as a symbol of mystical unity, not found in the original Arabic version.[79] The *lahir* element may be interpreted as the translator's likely allusion to the canonical puppet play *Kresna Duta* (Krishna as the Ambassador) that was well known to audiences of his day.[80] The *batin* is the truth that the two characters indeed have always been one, and not separate as they appear on the shadow screen, because Kresna is none other than the avatar (*titisan*) of the god Wisnu.

**Limitations and Contributions**

In 2017, John Miksic and Geok Yian Goh observed that 'the question of Southeast Asia's Islamic art has not been seriously addressed'.[81] The authors subsequently continue, with specific reference to the Javanese *pesisir* style, 'its numerous references to pre-Islamic art and incorporation of Near Eastern, Indian and Chinese motifs, has great potential for future research'. Moehamad Habib Mustopo's 2001 *Kebudayaan Islam di Jawa Timur: Kajian Beberapa Unsur Budaya Masa Peralihan* (Islamic Culture in East Java: A Study Concerning Several Aspects of Culture in a Time of Change) is a largely unrecognised pioneer Indonesian publication that sought to analyse East Javanese visual arts of the early modern era through integrating the discussion of various art media with a textual approach. Most recently, studies by Farouk Yahya, Hélène Njoto and Tan Zi Hao, have investigated Javanese art through the combination of aesthetic, cultural and historical considerations, and mark new developments in the field.

The gaps in understanding Javanese art of the early modern era are a result of the vagaries of time, the absence of thorough documentation in museum collections, lack of direct access by art historians to the vast opus of Javanese language texts that

[79] Anthony Johns, 1965, *The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet* (Canberra: The Australian National University), 35, canto 1-12, see also106, fn.12. Batara Wisnu is 'Lord Vishnu' and Prabu Kresna (King Krishna) of Indian Hindu traditions.

[80] See Sudarsono, 2012, 'Garap *Lakon Kresna Dhuta* dalam Pertunjukan Wayang Kulit Purwa Gaya Surakarta: Kajian Tekstual Simbolis', *Harmonia* Vol.12 No.1, 75-86.The plot concerns Kresna's attempts to negotiate peace between the Pandawa and Korawa clans on the eve of the catastrophic Baratayuddha war. Both the *Suluk Wujil*, composed in 1607, and another early Cirebon text, *Suluk Kadresan,* attributed to Ibrahim Asmara, grandfather of the *wali* Sunan Bonang, reference this particular puppet story as a symbol of mystical truth. See Cohen, 2012, 19-23, cantos 90-98, and G.W.J. Drewes, 1968, 'Javanese Poems Dealing With or Attributed to the Saint of Bonan', *BKI* 124(2): 225, verse 37.

[81] John N. Miksic and Geok Yian Goh, 2017, *Ancient Southeast Asia* (London and New York: Routledge Press), 542.

are notorious for their linguistic complexities, and the very few contemporaneous accounts by the artists, patrons and audiences.[82] There has been extensive research into the Central Javanese court arts of the modern era, conventionally referred to as the *adiluhung* (beautiful sublime), and increasingly the art of the *pesisir*, but Andrew Beatty tersely observes, 'In truth, we simply do not know what the mass of Javanese thought or did in earlier periods...'.[83]

Until today there is still only a very elementary understanding of the stylistic chronology covering the early 16th- to early-19th-century. The dating of the Banten sultanate crown (Fig. 1.16), possibly the era's most iconic object, ranges from the 16th-century up to 1832, and still awaits forensic research.[84] The small numbers of radiocarbon-14 tests that have been completed on wood objects and textiles (Fig. 1.17) have produced dates that are unexpectedly much older than previously estimated by art historians.[85] They suggest a much wider program of testing would greatly enhance our understanding of the art of the period. This is particularly significant because numbers of early Javanese textiles have been discovered, over the past thirty or more years, on the other islands of Indonesia to where they had been exported and subsequently preserved for centuries as *pusaka* (ancestral heirlooms). However, it must also be noted that the study of Javanese art in the early modern era may never be dependent on a chronological approach, unlike European or East Asian scholarship for the same period, due to the previously mentioned reasons.

[82] The most startling example of our lack of knowledge is the complete absence of surviving Indian trade textiles from Java, unlike the numerous examples preserved in other parts of the archipelago, yet historical evidence and batik styles suggest the imported cloths were ubiquitous in Java during the early modern era.

[83] Andrew Beatty, 2012, 'Kala Defanged: Managing Power in Java Away from the Centre', *BKI* 168(2-3): 190. See also Hans Antlöv and Jörgan Hellman, 2005, 'Introduction: Images of Java in Academic Discourses', in Hans Antlöv and Jörgan Hellman (eds.), *The Java That Never Was* (Münster: Lit Verlag), 6-9.

[84] Helen Jessup, 1990, *Court Arts of Indonesia* (New York: The Asia Society Galleries), 215, dates the crown to 18th-century. Retno Sulistianingsih and John Miksic, 2006, *Icons of Art: National Museum of Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bab Publishing), 146, dates it to 16th-century while Intan Mardiana Napitupulu et al., 2017, *The Maritime Legacy of Indonesia* (Jakarta: National Museum of Indonesia), 172, dates it 'before 1832 [presumably the date the object entered the collection after the Dutch destruction of the Banten sultanate], circa 1700'.

[85] See Ruth Barnes, 2010, 'Early Indonesian Textiles: Scientific Dating in a Wider Context', in Ruth Barnes and Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, *Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles: The Mary Hunt Kahlenberg Collection* (Munich: Delmonico Books, Prestel Publishing), 34-45.

**Fig. 1.16.** Crown of Banten, dated 1526-1832, gold, rubies, diamonds, emeralds, pearls, enamel work, 16.5 x 19.3 cm; National Museum of Indonesia (E587). Photograph: AGSA.

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**Fig. 1.17.** Javanese *dodot perada* (gilded waist-wrap court garment), with *tambal-tambalan* (patchwork) motif [detail], preserved as a ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom, collected in Palembang, South Sumatra, c14 dated to 17th-century, cotton, indigo with applied gold, hand batik, 272.0 x 169.0 cm; Private Collection. Photograph: Barnes and Kahlenberg, 2010.

This study seeks to contribute to the appreciation of Islamic art in Java at a time when there is an increasing loss of Java's cultural heritage. The commercialization and mass production of traditional arts and crafts, many of whose origins date back to the early modern era, obscures their significance in articulating Javanese spiritual values from that period. Social changes have meant that oral traditions, known as *dongeng wong biyen*, or 'stories inherited from the people of old', are being rapidly forgotten or have already vanished.[86] These accounts, often informing aesthetic

[86] Rens Heringa, 1997, 'Dewi Sri in Village Garb: Fertility, Myth and Ritual in Northeast Java', *Asian Folklore Studies* 56, 359, notes the stories' power were believed to reside in their form as spoken

practices, were closely connected to *abangan* sacred sites and/or ritual events and included *wayang* narratives and the symbolism of batik patterns. Nowadays textile artists are no longer aware of what many motifs meant to previous generations and often look to their immediate world to explain meanings.[87] In recent decades there has also been the destruction of notable objects and sites associated with historical mosques and the mausoleums of Sufi saints, and palaces.[88] Popular discourse about Javanese history is increasingly influenced by Islamist groups who seek to replace the most Islamic forms of Javanese culture, that embody a fusion with the *buda* past, with what are considered to be the *sunnah* or social practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.[89] Moreover, this is occurring at a time in an increasingly urbanized Indonesia where the concept of 'Java' is more and more linked to a distant agrarian past that is perceived as largely irrelevant for today's city-dweller.[90]

Adrian Vickers protests against scholars who 'want to see a 'pure' Javanese world prior to the coming of Europeans' and he justifiably argues 'why not see Europeans …as part of the process by which manifestations of Javanese culture came into being?'[91] A self-imposed limitation of this present study is the absence of discussion of the role of art produced in Batavia (Jakarta), established by the VOC as their Asian headquarters in 1619, in the development of a Javanese style. Among the diverse mixed-race communities populating the port emporium were Javanese ateliers dominated by artists from various regions and villages.[92] These craftspeople produced works to the tastes of their VOC patrons while courts around the island imitated many aspects of European fashion in dress and decorative arts, including furniture (Fig. 1.18).[93] However, the examination of Batavian art styles, merging Eastern and

narratives and this would be lost if they were written down verbatim. See Quinn, 2019, for an extensive account of contemporary Javanese Muslim groups seeking to expunge traditions regarded as 'non-Islamic'.

[87] Maxwell, 1990, 26.

[88] Examples include the destruction, through neglect, of the carved *gapura* doors and *kalpataru* column at Sendang Duwur Mosque, Ponorogo, the illegal demolition of a 17th-century pavilion in the courtyard of the mausoleum of Sunan Bonang, Tuban, and the unsympathetic 'restoration' of the royal retreat of Sunyaragi in Cirebon.

[89] Woodward, 2010, 6.

[90] Ibid, 18.

[91] Adrian Vickers, 2019, ''Malay Identity': Modernity, Invented Tradition and Forms of Knowledge', in Timothy P. Barnard, ed., 2019. *Contesting Malayness: Malay Identity Across Boundaries* (Singapore: NUS Press), 44.

[92] Bruce W. Carpenter, 2009, *Javanese Antique Furniture and Folk Art: The David B. Smith and James Tirtoprodjo Collections* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet), 34.

[93] The rod puppet originally entered the AGSA collection as depicting 'Kapten Tack', the VOC military officer, François Tack (c.1650-1686) who was dramatically assassinated at the Mataram court precipitating a political crisis, although this identification needs further research. The bulging eyes,

Western fashions, perhaps more closely aligns with that of other great port cities of the early modern era, such as Goa, Columbo, Macau and Nagasaki.[94]

**Fig**. **1.18.** A courtier dressed in European-fashion jacket and hat, *wayang klitik* rod puppet, 1931, Central Java, wood, leather, pigment, gold leaf, 53.0 cm (height including handle); d'Auvergne Boxall Bequest Fund 2013, Art Gallery of South Australia (20131A9). Photograph: AGSA.

Any discussion of Javanese art inevitably touches upon the complex aesthetic value known as *rasa*. The subject has been extensively discussed elsewhere in the context of the arts and mystic traditions.[95] It is enough here to note that the Indonesian/Javanese word *rasa* originated from the Sanskrit term meaning the juice or extract of a plant, hence implying the best or finest part of something. In the Indian context it refers to 'the state of heightened awareness evoked by the contemplation of a work of art'.[96] Laurie Margot Ross, in her study of Cirebon mask traditions, cites the subtle difference in the Javanese meaning of *rasa* is the emphasis on feeling in the

protruding nose and pink complexion are often associated with caricatures of Europeans but they also appear on ogres and other characters of differing temperaments. He wears the aristocratic gold *sumping* ear ornament suggesting the puppet represents a courtier or royal adviser, his features and expression implying a churlish and treacherous nature.

[94] For further discussions of this international style see Jan Veenendaal, 2014, *Asian Art and Dutch Taste* (The Hague: Waanders Uitgevers Zwolle, Gemeentemuseum Den Haag) and Peter Lee et al., 2016.

[95] See Sunardi, 2009,'Konsep Rasa Estetik Nuksma dan Mungguh dalam Pertunjukan Wayang Purwa Gaya Surakarta', in Timbul Haryono, ed., *Seni dalam Dimensi Bentuk, Ruang, dan Waktu* (Jakarta: Penerbit Wedatama Widya Sastra), Benamou, 2010, Weiss, 2006, Becker, 1993, and Boow, 1988.

[96] Vidya Deheija, 2000, *Indian Art* (London: Phaidon Press), 20.

heart, an attribute she identifies as a Sufi interpretation.[97] The term was utilised in early Javanese texts to translate the Arabic *sirr* as meaning the most subtle and hidden elements within a person's being.[98] *Tantu Panggelaran* describes the bleak primordial conditions of the first humans on Java, where *rasa* was absent. The unknown author uses the word *rahasanya* to create a double entendre with the Sanskrit homonym *rahasya*, meaning a 'secret' or 'mystic doctrine':

> Yet without homes were male and female, naked in the forest, seeking shelter for their bodies. They produced nothing, and there were no cultural traditions. They were without loincloth, no sarong, scarf, sash, courtly robe, waved hair and headdress. They uttered sound without speech, without knowing the essential truth [*rahasanya*].[99]

The role of individual artists, craft-persons, and studio-workshops (*sanggar*) in determining stylistic shifts across the island awaits further research although enough evidence may never be available to accurately map such localized expressions of artistic agency in the early modern era. Historical records imply Indonesian archipelago societies were dynamic and constantly engaging new aesthetic trends and fashions. This is documented in the Dutch and British accounts of the Indian cloth trade where popular preferences for particular patterns and colors seasonally changed from year to year, often leaving frustrated merchants with unsold stock.[100] Nevertheless, elsewhere, the force of tradition was strong in the visual modes of expression. Javanese art practices sought to connect seen and unseen realms and it was understood that invoking 'sacred or traditional elements brings into play great and potentially dangerous powers'. [101] The artist knew that he or she was handling 'venerable subject matter that is not the product of his personal artistic inspiration …[but] a culturally shared expression which is renewed and recreated for the audience'.[102]

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[97] Laurie Margot Ross, 2016. *The Encoded Cirebon Mask: Materiality, Flow and Meaning Along Java's Islamic Northwest Coast*. Leiden: Brill, 169. Weiss, 2006, 105, proposes 'the idea of *rasa* as a continuum connecting deep mystical understandings to the surface sensations of bodily experience is extremely useful in trying to understand the multiple aspects of *rasa*'.
[98] Paul Stange, 1984 'The Logic of Rasa in Java', *Indonesia* 38, 113-134.
[99] Mary Zurbuchen, 1979, 'Weaving the Text in Old Javanese', in F.B. Naylor, ed., *Austronesian Studies* (Michigan: Michigan Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies), 289.
[100] Barbara Andaya, 1989, 'The Cloth Trade in Jambi and Palembang Society During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Indonesia* 48: 35.
[101] Zurbuchen, 1979, 295.
[102] Ibid. 296.

**Thesis Structure and Layout**

The thesis follows the University of Adelaide's *Thesis by Publication* format. It is structured around the discussion of five major themes, representing published and to be published essays. The thesis begins with a two-part introductory study presenting *Aims and Method* and *Understanding Java and its Art*. The subsequent chapters include:

**Chapter 1.** 'Talismanic Seeing: The Induction of Power in Indonesian Zoomorphic Art.' (Forthcoming in Samer Akkach (ed.), *Nazar: Vision, Belief and Perception in Islamic Cultures* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

Javanese depictions of animals or birds in zoomorphic forms (simulacra) or as Arabic texts (calligrams) are now largely regarded as decorative in Indonesia and a common viewpoint is that they are an expression of the response to religious restrictions surrounding the picturing of living beings. However, historically, the significance of visual similitudes was based foremost on their magical power and not their aesthetic orthopraxy.[103] The presence of vegetal simulacra in early Hindu and Buddhist temple reliefs in Central Java, like the *pasemon* allusions incorporated into magically powerful *kakawin* poetry of the period, document the long Javanese practice of utilising visual ambiguity to convey talismanic protection. Its continued presence in art following the ascendancy of Islam reflects the heritage of these earlier practices, interpreted in the context of Sufi mystical practices, notably Shaṭṭāriyya, and not its abnegation.

**Chapter 2**: 'ʿIlm or fashion? The question of the identity of the batik designs of Java.' (Published in Samer Akkach (ed.), *ʿIlm: Science, Religion, and Art in Islam* (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Press, 2019), 157-180.

Textile arts had an important role around the Islamic world as a vehicle for conveying style, as well as influencing aesthetic values and fashion, across geographical and temporal distances.[104] Contemporary Indonesian interpretations view the geometric

[103] Lombard, 2018 (1), 262.

[104] Lisa Golombek, 1988, 'The Draped Universe of Islam', in Priscilla P. Soucek, ed., *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic world* (University Park, Penn, and London: Pennsylvania State University Press), 34. Golombek, citing Oleg Grabar (undated), observes much of the Muslim world acquired its aesthetic judgement through textiles.

*ceplokan* motifs of Javanese batik as a definitive example of artists expressing knowledge of *tawḥīd* (Oneness of God).[105] Nevertheless, the chapter presents evidence for a long history of geometric patterns in Javanese art dating back to Hindu and Buddhist temples erected in the 8th- and 9th-century. The popularity of *ceplokan* motifs following the ascendancy of Islam, and their association with spiritual values, are traced to their relationship with the designs of the *buda* times. *Ceplokan* are a reminder that 'textiles do not represent discrete instances of historical or cultural change' but several sources of patterning may contribute to a cloth.[106]

**Chapter 3**: 'The Shadow Puppet: A Southeast Asian Islamic Aesthetic.' (Published in Christiane Gruber (ed.), *The Image Debate: Figural Representation in Islam and Across the World* (London: Gingko, 2019), 173-193.

The Javanese shadow puppet (*wayang kulit*) is among the most often recognised figurative image found in the arts of the Indonesian archipelago and is commonly acknowledged as an embodiment of Javanese cultural values.[107] The significance of the theatre in early modern Java is documented in its association with the saintly *wali songo* (nine friends of God).[108] References to *wayang* symbolism occur in many Islamic mystical texts although Cohen notes the complex relationship between *wayang* and Islam varied at different times and with different participants.[109] The chapter proposes the puppet character of the *buda* hermit, Begawan Abiyasa, may be interpreted as a representation of the Sufi sage, and explores related visual imagery alluding to hermetic traditions as it occurs at the mausoleums of saints and in other aspects of the *wayang* theatre.

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[105] Gulru Necipoğlu, 2015, 'The Scrutinizing Gaze in the Aesthetics of Islamic Visual Cultures: Sight, Insight and Desire', *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic world,* 32(1): 25, nevertheless notes that Savafid and Ottoman categorizations of the visual arts identify geometric ornament as just one among 'seven fundamental modes of decorative design'.

[106] Maxwell, 1990, 27.

[107] Sudarto, 2002, 171, states '*Bicara tentang esensi budaya Jawa dapat dirumuskan dalam satu kata 'wayang'* (Discussion about the essence of Javanese culture may be formulated in the one word *wayang*).

[108] P.J. Zoetmulder, 1971, 'The *Wayang* as a Philosophical Theme', *Indonesia* 12: 89. Carey, 1974, 8, citing D.A. Rinkes, 1912, 'De Heiligen van Java V: Pangeran Panggoeng, Zijne Honden en het Wayangspel,' *TBG*, 54: 145, reports the 16th-century Javanese saint Sunan Kalijaga is said to have told the Sultan of Demak, 'The *wayang* stands then for all mankind, [and] the puppeteer is to be compared with Allah, the creator of the Universe…'

[109] Matthew Isaac Cohen, 1997, *An Inheritance From the Friends of God: The Southern Shadow Puppet Theatre of West Java, Indonesia.* Dissertation, Yale University, 404, subsequently states that 'there are no simple conclusions one can draw about how *wayang* and Islam interrelate.'

**Chapter 4**: 'The Sacred Tree: Arboreal Imagery and Place Symbolism in the Art of Lampung and Java.' (To be published in Samer Akkach and John Powell (eds.), *Numinous Fields: Perceiving the Sacred in Nature, Landscape, and Art* (forthcoming).

The close association of Islamic art with botanical subjects is testified in one of the earliest English accounts of Java, published in 1811, which describes the ruined Mantingan Mosque as possessing such beautiful carvings of foliage 'that the art and ingenuity of the Javanese of those times excites our admiration.'[110] The sacred tree motif, commonly described as the Tree of Life, is the quintessential botanical subject in Java and its cultural diaspora in the archipelago, notably Lampung. The chapter discusses arboreal motifs on two early Lampung wood sculptures that display remarkable similarities to contemporaneous Javanese carving styles and highlight the extent Java formed a key cultural referent in *pesisir* littoral societies.[111] This chapter explores the arboreal motif as a *pasemon* visual metaphor, suggesting the sacred tree alludes to places of encounter in the landscape where temporal and spiritual power merges.

**Chapter 5**: 'Bountiful cargoes: Asian trade ceramics and their engagement with Islam.' (Published in Art Gallery of South Australia, *The Discerning Eye: The Hunter Collection* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2021), 98-133.

East Asian, Vietnamese and Thai trade ceramics document the extent that the tastes of Islamic markets, exemplified by Java, influenced the potter's choice of designs featuring floral and geometrical themes. The foreign ceramics consequently provide important insight into the aesthetic milieu of Javanese society during the early modern era and Java's participation in the global narrative of Islamic art. Immense numbers of wares, dated from 16th- to 19th-century, retrieved from shipwrecks and shards excavated at sites, such as the former sultanate palace in Banten Lama, document the extraordinary local demand for the utilitarian trade wares.[112] The foreign ceramics, additionally including European glazed earthenware, were also used to decorate mosques and the mausoleums of *wali* saints, such as Sunang Gunung Jati (Cirebon)

[110] John Joseph Stockdale, 1995, *Island of Java: and Its Immediate Dependencies, 1811, with an Introduction by John Bastin* (Singapore: Periplus Editions), 178.
[111] Adrian Vickers, 1993, 'From Bali to Lampung on the Pasisir' in *Archipel* 45: 55.
[112] See M.Th. Naniek Wibisono, ed., 1993, *Banten Pelabuhan Keramik Jepang* (Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional).

and Sunan Bonang (Tuban), and attained an elevated status as sacred heirlooms (*pusaka*) in the Cirebon, Solo and Yogyakarta sultanate palaces.[113]

**Appendix I:** *Object stylistic analysis*

An accompanying appendix illustrates all the works of art, referenced in the study, in a time-line that seeks to form the basis for mapping a tentative chronology of styles in Java in the early modern era.

[113] T. Volker, 1954, *Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company: As Recorded in the Dagh-Registers of Batavia Castle, Those of Hirado and Deshima and Other Contemporary Papers 1602-1682* (Leiden: E.J. Brill), 22, notes a Dutch journal of the 1598-1600 voyage to the East Indies also reports two mosques at Banten had walls inlaid with porcelain.

# 2. UNDERSTANDING JAVA AND ITS ART

## Conceptualising Java

An understanding of how Javanese people conceptualized Java and Javanese-ness during the early modern era necessitates us forgetting 'imagined geographical-artistic continuities within modern national territorial boundaries' (Fig. 1.19).[114] We are looking at a very different physical and demographic environment from that of today when Java's population now numbers around 141 million inhabitants.


**Fig. 1.19.** Administrative districts of Java 1832-1866. WEST JAVA: Bantam (Banten), Batavia (Jakarta), Buitenzorg (Bogor region), Preanger Regentschappen (Bandung and other regencies), Krawang (Karawang), Cheribon (Cirebon). CENTRAL JAVA: Tagal (Tegal), Banjoemas (Banyumas), Bagelan, Kedoe (Kedu), Djogjakarta (Yogyakarta), Soerakarta (Surakarta), Samarang (Semarang), Japara (Jepara), Rembang. EAST JAVA: Patjitan (Pacitan), Madioen (Madiun), Kediri, Soerabaja (Surabaya), Pasoeroean (Pasuruan), Probolinggo, Besoeki (Besuki), Banjoewangi (Banyuwangi), Madoera (Madura). Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-the-administrative-divisions-from-1832-to-1866-for-Java-Cribb-2010>

It is difficult to be statistically certain but Java's 15th-century population likely consisted of around only 3 million people with more than half living along the north coast.[115] Three centuries later, in the decade before the Java War (1825-1830), the island's population probably had increased slightly to about 3.5 million persons although in the intervening period there had been significant fluctuations due to war, famine and pandemics.[116] The majority of the inhabitants in the late-18th-century may

[114] Flood and Necipoğlu, 2017, 10.
[115] Peter Carey, 1996, 'The World of the *Pasisir*', in Rens Heringa and Harmen C. Veldhuisen, eds., *Fabric of Enchantment: Batik from the North Coast of Java* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art), 21.
[116] Koentjaraningrat, 1989, 4. Indicative of the wide variations in demographic estimates for Java in the early modern era is the different figure of seven million inhabitants for c.1830 proposed by Florida, 1995, 56. Nevertheless, even this number is vastly below Java's current population.

have lived in inland Central Java.[117] Most settlements during the intervening period were surrounded by sparsely inhabited countryside and separated from neighboring centers by extensive tracts of densely forested countryside although considerable land clearing commenced in the late-18th-century. Nevertheless, the landscape was probably similar to jungle-covered Sumatra or Borneo in the early 20th-century. Communication along navigable rivers or by sea was the preferred option.[118] The difficulties of cross-country travel, virtually impossible in the wet season, contributed to a strong sense of independent local identity and the development of rural art traditions of which little evidence survives today.[119]

Java is home to three linguistic groups with a long history of separate and blending cultural identities, traditions and spiritual practices. Ethnic Javanese people live in the central and eastern parts of the island while Madurese people inhabit the adjoining Madura Island from where there has been continuous migration to East Java since at least the 13th-century.[120] The western portion of Java is homeland to the Sundanese people.[121] Ethnic groups from the neighboring islands, notably Malays, Balinese, and Makassan and Buginese from South Sulawesi, settled and intermarried on Java. Overseas immigrants also arrived from mainland Southeast Asia, East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, and these settlers, usually from mercantile backgrounds, merged with local communities. Today, the Javanese, Sundanese and Madurese peoples are often collectively referred to as Javanese.[122]

Terracotta depictions of foreigners, some in the guise of caricatures, found at the site of the Majapahit capital in East Java are witness that a Javanese sense of cultural or racial 'otherness' already existed in the 14th- and 15th-century.[123] Yet self-

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[117] Peter Carey, 2007, *The Power of Prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the End of an Old Order in Java, 1785-1855* (Leiden: KITLV), 39.

[118] The significance of water, and water transport, is testified in classical Malay texts which use the formulaic phrase *anak sungai dan teluk rantau* ('confluents, bends and reaches') to describe the political dependencies of a kingdom, see P.Y. Manguin, 2002, 'The Amorphous Nature of Coastal Polities in Insular Southeast Asia: Restricted Centres, Extended Peripheries', *Moussons*, 5: 74.

[119] Carey, 2007, 12.

[120] Lawrence Husson, 1997, 'Eight Centuries of Madurese Migration to East Java', in *Asia and Pacific Migration Journal*, 6(1): 80.

[121] Pierre-Yves Manguin and Agustianto Indradjaja, 2011, 'The Batujaya Site: New Evidence of Early Indian Influence in West Java', in Pierre-Yves Manguin et al., eds., *Early Interactions Between South and Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Exchange* (Singapore: ISEAS), 114, notes the oldest surviving evidence for the use of the term Sunda appears in an Old Malay language stone inscription, dated 932.

[122] For a Sundanese perspective on Sunda's historical relationship with ethnic Javanese, see Fachry Ali, 2016, 'Sunda–"Java" and the Past: A Socio-Historical Reflection', *Insaniyat: Journal of Islam and Humanities*, 1(1): 33-40.

[123] Hilda Soemantri, 1997, *Majapahit Terracotta Art* (Jakarta: Ceramic Society of Indonesia), 118-123.

awareness of ethnicity among the Javanese may have only become pronounced during the Mataram Period (1587-1755) as a reaction to the escalating presence of the Dutch, as well as Guangdong and Fujian Chinese, immigrant communities. John Pemberton traces ethnic identity as subsequently evolving in Central Java through cultivation of the *cara Jawi* (Javanese way) in contradistinction to *cara Walandi* (Dutch way).[124] By the early 19th-century, there was a strong consciousness that to be Javanese was to be Muslim. This belief is testified in the declaration in *Serat Centhini*, 'Already embracing this Holy Religion is every blade of grass in the land of Java, following the Prophet who was Chosen'.[125]

Pangeran Dipanagara, during the Java War (1825-1830), demanded European prisoners both convert to Islam and dress in Javanese garments.[126] The captives were permitted to speak only Javanese and not the Malay lingua franca that Dipanagara described as the 'language of chickens which no ruler in Java wished to hear'.[127] Ironically, there has been a long history of outsiders viewing Javanese identity as interchangeable with that of the *Melayu* (Malay), the other majority group of the western archipelago and this continues today.[128] *Mirrors of Beauty: Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia Guide*, published in Kuala Lumpur in 2020, subsumes Java under the rubric of the Malay world.[129]

R. Anderson Sutton, in his study on Javanese *gamelan*, notes that the difficulties in using the term 'regions' in connection with the cultural geography of Java are due to its vagueness and suggestiveness of some halfway state between community and the nation state.[130] Clifford Geertz simplistically divides the island into four main segments, Sunda West Java, Central Java, the *pesisir* north coast and East Java.[131] In a more nuanced approach, Koetjaraningrat recognizes the role of local cultural

[124] John Pemberton, 1994, *On the Subject of "Java."* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press), 65-66.
[125] M.C. Ricklefs, 2012, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to Present* (Singapore: NUS Press), 10. See also M.C. Ricklefs, 2014, 'Rediscovering Islam in Javanese History', *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 21(3): 410-411.
[126] Carey, 2007, 619.
[127] Carey, 2007, 109.
[128] For a discussion of this history, see Adrian Vickers, 2019, ''Malay Identity': Modernity, Invented Tradition and Forms of Knowledge,' in Timothy P. Barnard (ed.) 2019, *Contesting Malayness: Malay identity across boundaries* (Singapore: NUS Press), 25-55.
[129] Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia, 2020, *Mirrors of Beauty: Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia Guide* (Kuala Lumpur: IAMM Publications), 172-173, 175-176.
[130] Sutton R. Anderson, 1991, *Traditions of Gamelan Music in Java: Musical Pluralism and Regional Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2.
[131] Geertz, 1963, 42-43.

diversity, formed by the landscape's geography, in defining distinct territories, such as the *pesisir* framed by the Java Sea and inland mountains, and Banyumas and Bagelen in the Serayu River basin.[132] Nevertheless, local perceptions that historical regional arts are recreated in contemporary *budaya daerah* (regional culture) need to be regarded circumspectly as they may not accurately represent their progenitors from earlier times.

The name Java likely originated from the Sanskrit toponym Yavadvīpa, translated as 'Island of Barley'. It was used in Java from the first millennium until the late 15th- to early-16th-century where the term appears in the *Tantu Panggelaran* (Founding of the World).[133] Stone and bronze inscriptions of the pre-Islamic era speak of Yavadvīpamandala, meaning 'the mandala of Yavadvīpa'.[134] John Miksic and Geok Yian Goh suggest 'orbit' may be a more appropriate translation for mandala whose original Sanskrit meaning is a 'circle'.[135] Whichever way mandala is translated, the term here primarily identifies the space where there existed a network of relationships between the ruler and his subjects rather than a geographic location defined by specific boundaries.[136] The Malay proverb *dimana raja, disitu kerajaan* (where the king is, there is the kingdom) is equally applicable to Java.[137]

The mandala is sometimes linked to the ancient indigenous Javanese *moncapat* concept that defined connections between villages.[138] The Javanese compound word *monca*, meaning 'beyond' or 'outside', and *pat* (*papat*) or 'four' implies a relationship of equilibrium around a central node. Etymologically, the word *pat* is embedded in Bahasa Indonesia terms like *tempat* (place) and *rapat* (meeting).[139] The conceptualized configurations of the circular mandala and *moncapat* widely

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[132] Koentjaraningrat, 1989, *Javanese Culture* (Singapore: Oxford University Press), 21.
[133] Miksic and Goh, 2017, 213. The term *dvīpa* can also mean 'land', 'region' or 'continent'. Barley is unknown in Java so that the term here may apply to another grain. See also Zurbuchen, 1979, 293.
[134] S. Supomo, 1995, 'Indic Transformation: The Sanskritization of *Jawa* and the *Javanization* of the Bharata' in James J. Fox and Darrell Tryon, eds., *The Austronesian: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Canberra: ANU E-press), 291-313.
[135] Miksic and Goh, 2017, 241.
[136] Ali, 2019, 6, critiques theories of the mandala-state as being 'couched in the apparently relativist language of post-war ethnography, tended to reinforce older Orientalist and colonialist ideas of civilizational stasis.'
[137] Hussin Mutalib, 2000, 'Islamic Malay Polity in Southeast Asia', in Mohd Taib Osman, ed., *Islamic Civilisation in the Malay World* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka), 10.
[138] See Danielle Geirnaert-Martin, 1983, 'Ask Lurik Why Batik: A Structural Analysis of Textiles and Classifications (Central Java)', in Jarich Oosten and Arie de Ruijter, eds., *The Future of Structuralism: Papers of the IUAES-Intercongress , Amsterdam, 1981* (Gottingen: IUAES and Edition Herodot), 155-198.
[139] Denys Lombard, 2018, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya: Bagian 3: Warisan kerajaan-kerajaan konsentris* (Jakarta: Gramedia), 118.

reverberate, through various iterations, in the Javanese worldview and aesthetics. Both saints and rulers were described with titles embodying their axial status at the center of the cosmos.[140] The concepts extended into the Javanese reckoning of time through incorporating divinatory connections to the five-day week (*pasaran*) where the center and four compass directions have their congruent correspondences in the elements, days, colors, kinship relations and occupations.[141] The four elements were associated with each individual's four esoteric birth siblings (*dulor mpat*) – placenta, blood, amniotic fluid and vernix coating - and were symbolically incorporated into the bodily movements of Islamic daily ritual prayer from at least the late 16th-century.[142] These ideas articulate Javanese correlations between the microcosm (*bhuana alit*) and macrocosm (*bhuana agung*). Javanese describe the understanding of the hidden hermeneutic knowledge contained within these correlations as *ngelmu*.[143]

Thongchai Winichakul observes that 'the materiality of the human world can be imagined in more than one way …operating in different domains of human conception'.[144] Javanese viewed the cardinal points, marked by a north – south (*lor-kidul*) and east – west axis (*wetan-kulon*) axis as especially significant.[145] During the early modern era, every major Islamic palace (*kraton*) on the island was built on a south-north alignment.[146] The idealized view of the mandala-state attained its most complex expression in the Mataram sultanate (1587-1755). The kingdom was notionally divided into three concentric circles unrelated to physical topography.[147]

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[140] *Babad Jaka Tingkir*, XII, 21-23, describes each of the Javanese *wali songo* (nine saints) as a *wali kutub* (axial saint) with different ranks, for example Sunan Bonang is 'the Axis of Piety', Sunan Giri is 'the Pious Pillar of Axial Saints', Sunan Gunung Jati is 'The Alternate Axial Saint' and so forth, see Florida, 1995, 156. Since 1727 the Surakarta rulers have held the title 'Pakubuwono' (Nail of the Cosmos) while a minor principality established in Yogyakarta 1812 is called 'Paku Alam' (Nail of the Realm) which is also the dynastic title.

[141] Paschalis Maria Laksono, 1990, *Tradition in Javanese Social Structure: Kingdom and Countryside* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press), 67. They further intersect with the 30-week (*wuku*) calendar with each week displaying equally complex different, attributes. See Kumar, 2015, 147-156.

[142] S.C. Headley, 2000. '*Sembah/*Salat: The Javanisation of Islamic Prayer: The Islamisation of Javanese Prayer', in S.C. Headley and David J. Parkin. eds., *Islamic Prayer Across the Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge Press), 172, cites Drewes (1978) translation of two palm leaf manuscripts whose texts 'could well date back to a period still earlier than the end of the sixteenth century' (208, fn.1).

[143] Boow, 1988, 88.

[144] Thongchai Winichakul, 1997. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of the Nature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 21, 30.

[145] Many Javanese today continue to use the four cardinal points to describe locations, such as furniture in a room or objects on a table, in situations where non-Javanese would speak of 'left' or 'right'

[146] Hamid Akasah, 2006, *Menelusuri Lokas Bekas Keraton Demak* (Semarang: CV Cipta Adi Grafika), 19, notes that this assumption for the Demak palace is conjectural as its precise location is now unknown.

[147] Paschalis Maria Laksono, 1990. *Tradition in Javanese Social Structure: Kingdom and Countryside* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press), 62-63. At the center was the seat of the ruler (*kraton*

The idea of the hub and the periphery, as a Javanese conceptualization of the inhabited landscape, implies a relationship centered on interconnectedness and balance, also elements that appear as aesthetic devices in the visual arts. The extent that designs and motifs were intended as symbolic references to the mandala-state and *moncapat* is uncertain.[148] However, the Dutch scholars G.P. Rouffaer and H.H. Juynboll recorded a geometric *ceplokan* batik pattern in 1914 imagined as representing 'the *susuhunan* [Surakarta sultan] with his eight councilors, the ruler in the center, the others radiating around him'.[149]

From the mid-19th-century a contrived antithesis, promoted by Central Javanese *priyayi* aristocracy and the European colonial administration, differentiated the 'pure Java' of the Dutch inland *vorstenlanden* (principalities) from the cosmopolitan *pesisir*. The former were regarded as *halus*, meaning 'refined', while the later was *kasar*, or uncivilized, literally 'coarse'.[150] This dichotomy may not have existed in the 17th-century prior to the Dutch domination of Java when twenty of Mataram's forty-eight provinces were located on the *pesisir* seaboard and were an important source of the kingdom's wealth. The multiple manifestations of Javanese identity and Javanese-ness are most apparent in the *pesisir*.[151] Kumar defines Cirebon as 'one of the most intellectually challenging of Java's regional cultures' being at once more 'Islamic', 'more Sinicised' and closer to ancient Majapahit traditions of architecture and ritual than the Central Javanese principalities.[152]

Ricklefs commences the opening of *Mystic synthesis in Java* with the statement that the island is 'one of the world's great boundary crossing societies'.[153] The openness of Java's societies to traversing cultural frontiers and accepting new ideas and art forms, negotiating their adoption or adaptation in a sophisticated manner in

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*nagara*), surrounded by the appanages (*nagara agung*) and then the outlying districts (*manca nagara*). Bagoes Wiryomartono, 2016, *Javanese Culture and the Meaning of Locality: Studies on the Arts, Urbanism, Polity and Society* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books), 58, records four differing concentric divisions with the *manca negara* being foreign lands.

[148] Weiss, 2006, 56, asserts the emphasis in modern scholarship on this Javanese model of power reflects the construction of Central Javanese male-ness conceding to the colonial world. It is unknown if female batik makers ever read the geometric configurations of *ceplokan* patterns as 'male'.

[149] Cited in J.E. Jaspers and Mas Pirngadie, 1916, *De Inlandsche Kunstnijverheid in Nederlandsch Indië III: De batikkunst* (Netherlands: Van Regeeringswege Gedrukt en Uitgegevan Te 'S-Gravenhage Door De Broek & Kunstdrukkerij, Mouton & Co), 144, as '*de soesoehoenan metzijn acht Najaka's (Rijksraden), één in het midden, acht er stralend om heen*.'

[150] Heringa, 1997, 56, 356.

[151] Vickers, 2019, 53.

[152] Kumar, 2015, 42, fn.88.

[153] Ricklefs, 2006. 3.

order to create new fusions, has been a distinguishing feature of its history. Maritime links were central to the formation of Javanese aesthetic identity during the early modern era. It was along inter-island shipping lanes that Javanese art forms, such as the *wayang* theatre, and commodities like batik textiles (Fig. 1.19), were exported to other parts of the archipelago and their artistic influences broadened beyond the island's littoral zones. The inter-island connections radiated from three *pesisir* hubs: Gresik-Tuban extending to Madura and Lombok, Demak-Japara-Kudus to South Kalimantan, and Cirebon-Banten to Lampung and South Sumatra.[154]

**Fig. 1.20**. Ceremonial cloth (*mawa* or *ma'a*), 1800-1825, Java, found in South Sulawesi, cotton, dyes, batik, 86.0 x 240.0 cm; Conserved with the assistance of Tom Dixon, National Gallery of Australia (2006.711). This Javanese textile, made as a waist-wrap garment for utilitarian wear, was exported to South Sulawesi in the early 19th-century where it was subsequently preserved as a sacred heirloom. Photograph: NGA.

Java was strategically located in the Southeast Asian archipelago between the Indian Ocean and the Cham or East Sea, more recently known as the South China Sea (see Appendix II map). During the early modern era, it was a major consumer of imported Indian trade textiles, whose styles influenced Javanese batik designs, and high-fired ceramics that were globally trafficked along international shipping routes. In a reciprocal fashion, Javanese textiles were sent to the Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh) for Indian artists to copy and these Indian versions (Fig. 1.20) were then traded into the Indonesian archipelago to be sold alongside locally manufactured cloths. This practice is first recorded in Dutch and English sources in 1602 but it is likely to have commenced earlier.[155] The Dutch United East Indies

[154] Koentjaraningrat, 1989, 21.
[155] Traude Gavin, 2010, 'Triangle and Tree: Austronesian Themes in the Design Interpretation of Indonesian Textiles', in Barnes and Kahlenberg, 2010, 228. *Sejarah Melayu* (History of the Malays) describes how the last sultan of Melaka sent his envoy, Hang Tuah, to south India to purchase floral cloths copied from Hang Tuah's own designs. The date of this reported voyage was around 1500.

Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, abbreviated as the VOC) introduced Javanese batik into Japan where the textiles became known as *sarasa*.[156] Daud Ali notes that it has been Indian Ocean studies, 'with its emphasis on the integrating factor of sea trade, that has most helped to redraw some of the boundaries of geo-historical enquiry'.[157] It was along the seasonal monsoon routes of the Indian Ocean that Islam entered the Indonesian archipelago.

**Fig. 1.21.** Javanese court waist-wrap garment (*dodot*), with 'dagger' (*parang*) design, 1775-1825, Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh), India, found in Indonesia, reportedly southern Sumatra, preserved as a ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom, cotton with dyes, mordant hand-painting, 206.0 x 159.0 cm; Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC, Art Gallery of South Australia (20083A45). This same style of Javanese *parang* motif has been found on 19th-century Javanese batik textiles from Cirebon. Photograph: AGSA.

## Religious & Cultural Framing

The early 19th-century English writer John Crawfurd recorded the use of the term *buda*, not 'Hindu-Buddhist' that appeared then unknown, by the Javanese 'when asked what religion they possessed before Islam they reply *agama buda'.*[158] The phrase *agama buda* tempts literal translation as the 'Buddhist religion'.[159] Theodore

[156] The Japanese term *sarasa* was applied to both Indian floral chintz and Javanese batik, reflecting their almost 'symbiotic' relationship. My appreciation to Maria Wronska-Friend for sharing her ongoing research into Javanese batik in Japan during the Edo Period (1603-1868), personal communication, February, 2021.
[157] Ali, 2019, 8.
[158] John Crawfurd, 2013. *History of the Indian archipelago: Containing an Account of the Manners, Arts, Languages, Religions, Institutions and Commerce of Its Inhabitants, 1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 220.
[159] G. Drewes, 1966, 'The Struggle between Javanism and Islam as Illustrated by the *Serat Dermagandul*', *BKI*, 122(3): 334, fn.2, suggests the alternative nomenclatures 'pre-Islamic' or 'Hindu-Javanese' for the period as Shivaism and Visnuism, as well as Buddhism, was followed in Java.

Pigeaud proposes the term *buda* may originate from the perception of the newly converted Muslims that the elaborate esoteric rituals of Tantric Buddhism were the most defining feature of the old religion.[160] Nevertheless, during the early modern era, *agama buda* came to imply 'the whole range of Indic-Javanese cultural elements where were perceived as pre-Islamic' as well as the remnants of earlier autochthonous belief systems.[161] Its temporal frame is called the *jaman buda*, combining the Arabic *zaman* meaning 'era', with the Sanskrit *buda*. Nineteenth-century Javanese literature often uses wordplay on *buda* and its homonym *budi* to which latter term Ricklefs attributes a range of meanings including mind, intellect, reason, and genius.[162]

The Javanese historical understanding of the island's spiritual identity prior to the arrival of Islam challenges the conventional bipartite division between Hindu-Buddhist (c.5th – 15th-century) and the early modern era in Java (16th - c.1830 century).[163] Narratives in Javanese *babad* chronicles confirm the introduction of Islam was not regarded as a decisive disconnection with the past but formed part of the 'ineluctable patterns of Javanese history'.[164] Muslim and *buda* polities existed side-by-side until the fall of Blambangan in East Java's salient in 1768 while many outlying areas continued to follow pre-Islamic beliefs well into the 19th-century and more recent times. Spiritual continuities were maintained through the fusion of old and new elements, even in circumstances where 'adherents of Islam and adherents of pre-Islamic religious life regarded themselves as occupying separate realms'.[165]

The division between Hindu-Buddhist and Islam originated in early 19th-century European orientalism but has been accepted by both Indonesian and non-

[160] Theodore G. Th. Pigeaud, 1962, *Java in the 14th century: A Study in Cultural History. The Nagara-krtagama by Rakawi Prapanca of Majapahit, 1365 AD* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), 172.
[161] Barbara McDonald, 1986. *Old Javanese Literature in Eighteenth-Century Java: A Consideration of the Processes of Transmission* (Clayton, Vic: Monash University), 40. Quinn, 2019, 82, describes its use today as 'catch-all term that doesn't just encompass Buddhism and Shivaite beliefs but a kaleidoscope of primal religious remnants.'
[162] M.C. Ricklefs, 2007, *Polarising Javanese society: Islamic and other visions (c.1830-1930)* (Singapore: NUS Press), 45, f.n.35, 181.
[163] Intan Mardiana Napitupulu, et al. (eds.), 2017, *Archipel: Kingdoms of the Sea* (Ghent: Snoeck Publishers), 5, replaces 'Classic' with Pre-Modern (1st-15th centuries), Early Modern (16th-18th centuries) and Modern (19th-century to present day). Miksic and Goh, 2017, 13-14, divides Southeast Asian art styles into Early Classic (600-900 CE), Late Classic (1200-1400 CE) and Modern (1600-today) with the period commencing with the spread of Islam identified as Post-Classic.
[164] M.C. Ricklefs, 1972, 'Consideration of Three Versions of the *Babad Tanah Djawi* with Excerpts on the Fall of Madjapahit', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 35 (3), 295.
[165] M.C. Ricklefs, 2014, 'Rediscovering Islam in Javanese History', *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 21(3): 404.

Indonesian scholars for almost two centuries.[166] The separate identities became enshrined in the establishment of the Archaeological Service in the Dutch East Indies (Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië) in 1913 that was organised into four divisions: Prehistory, Classic, Islamic, and Epigraphy.[167] Ali has critiqued these categories where there is 'a persistent identification of 'ancient' with 'Hindu-Buddhist', and "medieval" with Muslim'.[168] Here the use of the term 'classic' is especially problematic as it implies a cultural or aesthetic ideal that inevitably is followed by decline or decay. By contrast, the appropriation of the indigenous term *buda* makes possible a reassessment of the aesthetic relationship between pre-Islamic art and art of the early modern period in Java. A defining feature of the island's aesthetic practices has been their 'substantive traditionality' that is 'regarding patterns inherited from the past as valid guides'.[169]

The practice of incorporating carved stone fragments that survived from the *buda* era into Islamic sacred and secular spaces is found widely in Java. A Hindu *yoni* pedestal, displaying a *naga* head, is placed inside the 1721 mausoleum of Kyai Tumenggung Pusponegoro in Gresik. Its dimensions testify that the mausoleum building was erected after the pedestal was installed beside the grave and the pedestal was not a later addition or afterthought. Several other stone sculptures in the adjoining graveyard, including one inscribed with the date 1286 saka (1364), suggest the cemetery was founded on the former location of a Śiwaite temple.[170] *Buda* sites and their remains were revered as sacred (*kramat*). Dipanagara (1878-1855) erected a meditation platform at his Tegalreja country estate using an assemblage of *yoni*, which he referred to as his *sela gilang* or 'shining stone' so recognising its magical power.[171] Elsewhere, surviving images of *buda* deities acquired new lives as the *petilasan*, or 'traces', of local ancestors or the pantheon of spirits that dwelt in

[166] For a critique of these early perspectives see Syed Muhd Khairdudin Aljunied, 2004, *Raffles and Religion: A Study of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles' Discourse on Religion Amongst the Malays* (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press).
[167] Miksic and Goh, 2017, 542.
[168] Ali, 2019, 2, notes the continued association of ancient India with 'Hindu glory' and medieval India with 'Muslim decline.'
[169] Edward Shils, 1981, *Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 22.
[170] Hasan Muarif Ambary, 1986, 'Epigraphical Data from 17th-19th Century Muslim Graves in East Java', in C.D. Grijns and S.O. Robson, eds., *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation: Papers from the Fourth European Colloquium on Malay and Indonesian studies, Held in Leiden in 1983* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications), 31. This practice continues today as evident in Bulujowo village cemetery, Tuban, which is located directly on top of a Hindu-Buddhist *candi* although ample room exists around the site to inter the deceased away from the temple ruins.
[171] Carey, 2007, 86, fn.60.

mountains, caves or trees (Fig. 1.21).

The wide variability in Javanese perceptions of the past is evident in the concurrent practice of quarrying old ruins to recycle the stone blocks or the discarding of Hindu-Buddhist sculptural reliefs, recorded by Thomas Stamford Raffles and other 19th-century European observers.[172] Attitudes and beliefs, just like art styles, were contextualised according to local histories and communal experiences that differed from village to village, district to district, and from the coast to inland regions. Nevertheless, the preservation of and reverence for *buda* fragments at many sites provides a tangible physical analogy to the continuing presence of *buda* imagery and symbolism in diverse visual arts media.

The re-instatement of the term '*buda* era' into discussions about Javanese art is not to propose that just because Javanese sources 'did not recognize such categories as 'Hindu', 'Indic', tantric' etc., …they must be modern abstractions or fictitious constructs'.[173] Rather it means we can discard the misperceptions associated with implied compromised or derivative art styles, inherent in the terms 'syncretism', 'synthesis' and 'acculturation', typically used to explain the boundary crossings between the Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic aesthetic practices.[174] The word *buda* exists as a potent reminder that 'art does not consist of only material, form and colour, but also movement, memory and language'.[175]

[172] Sarah Tiffin, 2016, *Southeast Asia in Ruins: Art and Empire in the Early 19th Century* (Singapore: NUS Press and Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland), 103-104.
[173] Acri and Meyer. 2019, 279, fn.4.
[174] Flood, 2009, 5. Hélène Njoto, 2018, 'Mythical Feline Figures in Java's Early Islamization Period (Fifteenth to the Early Seventeenth Centuries): Sinitic and Vietnamese Imprints in *Pasisir* Art', *Arts Asiatiques* 73: 42, introduces the nomenclature 'imprint' as an apparent alternative to 'influence', the latter term presumably implying syncretism or synthesis. While I initially used the term 'syncretism' in my 2019 essay *ʿIlm or fashion? The question of the identity of the batik designs of Java* (Chapter 2), subsequent research confirmed to me that 'fusion' is a far more accurate description of the relationship between *buda* and Islam in the early modern era.
[175] Percival Tirapelli, 2006, *Arte Indigena: Do Pré-Colonial a Contemporaneidade* (São Paulo), 14, cited in Raabe et al. in Sibeth, 2009, 11.


**Fig. 1.22.** 14th-century deification stele with features of the Hindu god Harihara in the residential gardens at Kediri, East Java, 1866-1867, photograph by Isidore Kinsbergen, albumen print, 27.5 x 20.5 cm, Rijksmuseum (RP-2005-159-63). The extraordinary position of this *buda* statue ingrown in an ancient *beringin*, a tree species regarded as sacred, surely ensured the local population regarded both the stele and tree as *keramat* (sacred). The stele is a posthumous 'portrait' statue of a Kediri or Majapahit ruler deified after death. Photograph: www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection.

**Contemporary Java.**

Java has long been regarded as a location that is marginal to the center of Islam although trends in art history discourse over the past decade increasingly focus on the identities of the periphery.[176] Ironically, this has occurred at a time within Indonesia when the rise of conservative and literalist interpretations of Islam are resulting in the 'Arabization' of sections of Javanese society.[177] Movements to 'reform' the practice of Islam in Java date back to the 19th-century. They represent the most decisive religious transformation to occur on the island since the 1500s when *pesisir* Muslim mercantile communities commenced religious expansion across the island.[178] The movements gained momentum in Java from the 1980s onwards. Today normative religion has become an influential presence in the cultural arena, including historical studies and museum practices, in Java as elsewhere in Muslim Southeast Asia. It is reflected in the widespread perceptions among scholars and laypersons of a pronounced historical division between the temporal chronologies of the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. The recurring controversies surrounding definitions of *adat* (custom) and *agama* (religion) have widely impacted on perceptions of cultural

[176] Avinoam Shalem, 2012, 'What Do We Mean When We Say 'Islamic art' A Plea for a Critical Rewriting of the History of the Arts of Islam', *Journal of Art Historiography* 6: 3.
[177] George Quinn, 2019, *Bandit Saints of Java* (Leicestershire, UK: Monsoon Books), 375.
[178] See Ricklefs, 2007, particularly chapter 3 'The Diverging Worlds of Pious Islam', 30-83.

heritage, as well as popular understanding of *tradisi* (tradition), in the visual and performing arts.[179] As Mark Woodward observes, followers of Javanese mystical *kejawen* practices and art forms with strong ritual elements, whether court *bedoyo* or folk *reog* dances, now often are compelled to accept the designation 'Javanese culture' to 'avoid antagonizing orthopraxy, and especially modernist and Islamist, Muslims'.[180] The tendency to condense the complex narratives of Java's past into a single strand, reflective of observant Islamic values, underscores the need to reframe discourse around Java's historical visual arts away from simplistic exegesis.

The historian of Java, Ann Kumar, has warned against generalizations when referring to the Javanese 'mind' or 'worldview'.[181] Nevertheless, today there is a widely shared perception among all levels of contemporary Javanese society regarding what constitutes Islamic art. For many Indonesian people, Islamic art is primarily understood to be the Qur'anic calligraphy – either reproduced in traditional craft media (Fig. 1.22) or mechanically printed – displayed in homes, or the Middle-Eastern style architectural ornament featured on recently constructed mosques (Fig. 1.23). Indigenous art forms, such as shadow puppetry and dance masks, are almost never widely regarded as representing an Islamic aesthetic even when these artifacts appear as symbols epitomizing old Java.[182]

[179] See Kees van Dijk, 1995, 'The Study of Islam and *Adat* in Java', in Hans Antlöv and Jörgen Hellman, eds., *The Java That Never Was* (Münster: Lit Verlag), 133-156.
[180] Mark Woodward, 2010, 6. Koentjaraningrat, 1989, 317, describes *kejawen* (*agama Jawi* or 'Javanese religion') as a 'manifestation of Javanese Islam [that] represents an extensive complex of mystically inclined Hindu-Buddhistic beliefs and concepts, syncretically integrated in an Islamic frame of reference.'
[181] Ann Kumar, 1979, 'Javanese Historiography In and Of the 'Colonial Period': A Case Study', in Anthony Reid and David Marr, eds., *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Heinemann Education Books), 204. Kumar is specifically discussing Javanese *babad* literature but her comments are also applicable to the visual arts.
[182] This general perception in the Indonesian community occurs in tandem with a circumscribed discourse interpreting *wayang kulit* as quintessentially Islamic within Javanese circles of practitioners, connoisseurs and scholars of the art form. For examples of these interpretations, see Masroer Ch. Jb. 2015, 'Spiritualitas Islam dalam Budaya Wayang Kulit Masyarakat Jawa dan Sunda', *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 19(1): 38-61, and Sudarto, 2002, 'Interelasi Nilai Jawa dan Islam Pewayangan', in A.O. Darori Amin, ed., *Islam dan Kebudayaan Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Gama Media), 171-184.

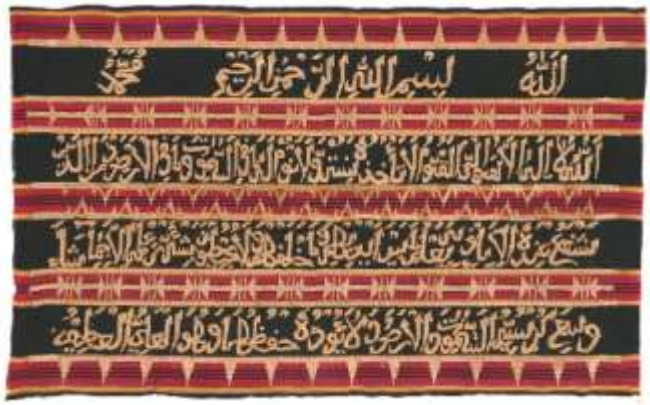

**Fig. 1.23.** 'Verses of the Throne' (Qur'an 2: 255) (*kain bersurat*), 1975-2000, Lampung, cotton, dyes, gold metallic threads, plain weave and couching, 68.0 x 98.0 cm; Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC, Art Gallery of South Australia (20063A38). The decorative hanging is made in the color scheme and technique of a Lampung woman's ceremonial tube skirt (*tapis*). Photograph: AGSA.

**Fig. 1.24.** Muhammadiyah mosque in Lamongan, East Java, 2016. Photograph: James Bennett.

Prior to the rise of observant Islam in the last decades of the 20th-century, the vast majority of Muslims in Java expressed their faith through observing the Five Pillars of Islam, supplemented with Sufi practices combined with elements of autochthonous beliefs. They were known collectively as *wong abangan* (red people).[183] Since around 1850, a schism has begun to emerge in Javanese society between the *abangan* and followers of a strict normative Islam previously called *wong putihan* (white people) but now commonly referred to as *santri*, meaning a 'religious student'.[184] George

[183] Quinn, 2019, 377-376, citing Ricklefs (2012), estimates that in the mid-1950s heterodox *abangan* number 60-90% of Java's population whereas by the first years of twenty-first century the groups had reversed with observant *santri* now accounting for around 90%.

[184] M.C. Ricklefs, 2006, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Norwalk, CT: Eastbridge Publications), 6. The author (9, fn.7) notes that Clifford Geertz misused the term *santri* in his seminal *The Religion of Java* (1960) as it originally did not refer to the entire social category of non-*abangan* Muslims. Nevertheless, such has been the influence of the anthropologist's writing that the term *santri* has now become a common label for devout Muslims in Indonesia.

Quinn's *Bandit Saints of Java* describes the differences – often blurred – between *santri* and *abangan* as symbolized in the dichotomy of the mosque and saint's grave.[185] The mosque, with its formal architectural orientation towards Mecca, represents Islam defined by scriptural authority, written doctrines and a certain style of religious exclusionism. The saint's grave, many of which are important pilgrimage destinations for devout Javanese Muslims, even amongst the *santri*, embodies a heterodox understanding of Islam. While the cult of reverencing deceased saints is widespread in the Islamic world, the Javanese emphasis on these practices is distinct to elsewhere, even in the Indonesian archipelago.[186]

**Fig. 1.25.** Outer walls of the mausoleum of Sunan Gunung Jati, 1600-1800, Cirebon, West Java. Photograph: AGSA.

The Javanese sites are notable for their imprints of the Hindu-Buddhist past and indigenous spiritual traditions where the saint's grave merges with *pundhen* sacred sites commemorating village progenitors (*cikal bakal*) and territorial spirits (*dhanyang*). The graves, whether the magnificent Cirebon mausoleum of Sunan Gunung Jati (d.c.1568) (Fig. 1.25) or a humble village burial site, invoke local histories and narratives referencing miraculous events from ancestral times.

The sectarian implications of the terms *santri* and *abangan* are comparatively recent yet they are a significant referent in understanding the visual arts of Java in the early modern era. At that time, *santri* referred to young religious scholars who wandered the countryside seeking instruction from different teachers and scholars. The picaresque adventures of the heroes and heroines related in the early 19th-century

[185] Quinn, 2019, 372-375. The author cites Robert Hefner (undated) as a source for this model.
[186] Henri Chambert-Loir, 2002, 'Saints and Ancestors: The Cult of Muslim Saints in Java', in Henri Chambert-Loir and Anthony Reid, eds., *The Potent Dead: Ancestors, Saints and Heroes in Contemporary Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 139-140.

*Serat Centhini* reveal that *santri* expressions of belief were once far from orthodox.[187] The choice of the authors of *Serat Centhini* to use the text as a vehicle for an encyclopedic compendium of information about Java, including references to the visual arts, suggests the extent the arts were regarded as integral to *santri* narratives.[188]

The aesthetic practices and spiritual traditions, the performative rituals and mythic accounts of the *abangan* provide a window through which we are able to view the distant world of the past. The historian Merle Ricklefs describes Javanese Islam during the early modern era as embodying a 'mystic synthesis', a term he uses closer to the meaning of 'fusion' rather than syncretism, between Islam and preceding traditions. He identifies Javanese Islam as displaying 'three specific characteristics within the capacious boundaries of Sufism'.[189] These are the sense of identity that to be a Javanese is to be Muslim, observance of the Five Pillars of Islam and a belief in the unseen realm of ancestral Javanese spirits. It is no coincidence that the finest expressions of 16th-century Islam in Javanese art survive at the *pesisir* mausoleums of the saints Sunan Giri (d.1506), Sunan Drajat (d.1522) and Sunan Sendang Duwur (d.c.1561). The contributions of the artists and patrons to the creation of these monuments signal the close relationship between art and heterodox spirituality in Java over the next three hundred years. The grave complexes represent a distinctly local and highly ornate carving style that lasted for a remarkably brief period and is not found elsewhere, such as at the comparatively austere mausoleums of Sunan Ampel (d.1481) and Sunan Tembayat (a.f.16th-century). It is a reminder of the extent that aesthetic fashions varied both regionally and temporally during the early modern era,

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[187] Nancy Florida, 2019, 'Shattariya Sufi Scents: The Literary World of the Surakarta Palace in Nineteenth Century Java', in R. Michael Fenner and Anne Blackburn, eds., *Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southeast Asia: Comparative Perspectives* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 159, identifies the authors as a team of court-poets led by Ronggawarsito and Pakubuwana V who commissioned the work in 1815 while still the crown-prince. See also S.C. Headley, 2000. '*Sembah*/Salat: The Javanisation of Islamic Prayer: The Islamisation of Javanese Prayer', in S.C. Headley, and David J. Parkin, eds., *Islamic Prayer Across the Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge), 174, 208, fn.5. Much of *Serat Centhini* is a recension of *Kidung Candhini* (Song of Candhini) that may have been composed in the first two decades of the 17th-century. The *Kidung* places far greater emphasis on spiritual asceticism, such as meditation in mountain caves, than referencing Quranic quotes as found in the later *Serat Centhini*.

[188] Tony Day and Will Derks, 1999, 'Narrating Knowledge: Reflections on the Encyclopaedic Impulse in Texts from Indonesian and Malay Worlds', *BKI* 155(3): 310, suggests the authors of *Serat Centhini* may have been aware of the encyclopedic compilations by Enlightenment scholar administrators, such as T.S. Raffles.

[189] M.C. Ricklefs, 2014, 'Rediscovering Islam in Javanese History', *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 21(3): 410.

a period of great social, political and economic upheaval on Java.

When I first travelled to Indonesia in 1979 to study shadow-puppet making, I lived at the house of the *abangan* master-craftsman, Partorejo, on the edge of Surakarta. The Javanese descriptors of *pande* (capable artisan) and *wong guna* (person of skill) for a maker of Partorejo's status convey intimations of spiritual mastery as well as reference the concept of *kagunan* that implies the creation of a beautiful work of great skill or benefit.[190] It was the Surakarta poet and philosopher, Ronggowarsito (1802-1873), who was influential in defining *kagunan* and the Javanese term subsequently informed the modern Bahasa Indonesia word *seni rupa*, meaning 'visual art'.[191] Several contemporary Indonesian writers have argued that neither the English term 'visual art' nor *seni rupa* accurately convey *kagunan* with its nuanced overtones of intelligent endeavour and the 'outpouring of the senses which produce beauty'.[192] Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, the term 'art' appropriately encompasses both Javanese and Indonesian taxonomies.

At Partorejo's studio I was introduced to the carving of the intricate openwork motifs, such as *mas-masan* (gold-like), *inten-intenan* (jewel-like) and *patran* (leaf) that form the silhouettes of the painted puppets and represent their physical features (Fig. 1.25). This Javanese preference for many small balanced elements 'linked in a net-like relationship' subsequently also became apparent to me in textile patterns during 1992-1993 when I was making batik at Brahma Tirta Sari Studio in Yogyakarta.[193] Since then I have repeatedly observed the complexity of these aesthetic connections, both within individual works of art and across categories of media, including also woodcarving and metal wares.

The word *wayang* derives from 'shadow' and several Javanese writers propose

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[190] Moelyono, 1997, 'Seni Rupa Kagunan: A Process,' in Jim Schiller and Barbara Martin-Schiller, eds., *Imagining Indonesia: Cultural Politics and Political Culture* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Centre for International Studies), 124-125.

[191] Jim Supangkat, 2015, 'Dark Side of Art Development: Reflection on Indonesian Art', 3. Available at <www.asianarthistories.com/pdf/JS_lecture_lasalle>, accessed April 2021.

[192] Jim Supangkat and Sanento Yuliman, 1987, 'Seni Rupa Sehari-hari Menentang Elitism' in Jim Supangkat, Sanento Yuliman & Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru, *Katalog Pameran Proyek I: Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi* (Jakarta: Taman Ismail Mazurki). Available at< www.archive.ivaa.online.org/files/uploads/texts/>, accessed March 2021, non-paginated. The authors refer to Poerwadarminta's *Dictionary of High Javanese* for the definition of *kagunan* as *wudar ing pambudi nganakke kaendahan – gegambaran, kidung, ngukir-ukir* (an outpouring of senses which produces beauty – images, songs, carvings).

[193] Monni Adams, 1970, 'Symbolic Scenes in Javanese Batik', *Textile Museum Journal* 3(1): 33, discusses the batik patterns seen in the Laweyan workshops near Partorejo's house in Surakarta.

the *wayang* theatre originated in ancient ancestor worship.[194] Solichin (2016) connects the word for puppets to the homonyms *hyang* or *dhyang* meaning 'ancestors'. If the carved figures of heroes and heroines, sages, villains, ogres, and *panakawan* clowns that were awaiting completion in Partorejo's workshop only hinted at the potential for animation as flickering shadows, there was another immediate reminder that the spirit realm was never far away in the *abangan* world in which he lived and created those art forms. Each Thursday evening, before the Jumat (Friday) prayer day, Partorejo's wife strategically placed small clusters of rose petals on squares of banana leaf around the house and yard, as offerings to the unseen realm.[195]

**Fig. 1.26.** Raden Premadi (Prince Arjuna as a young man), *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, Partorejo (d.c. 1982), 1980, Surakarta, Central Java; Private collection. Photograph: Muchammadun.

Java's art practices are suffused with a consciousness of the ancestral past as a source of spiritual power, a characteristic shared among many Austronesian societies in the Southeast Asian archipelago.[196] This consciousness ensured certain purposefulness in the ways Javanese communities understood objects made both in their own time and those that survived from preceding generations. Among the works of Javanese art featured in the *Crescent Moon* exhibition was a Madurese *jawi* manuscript, dated 1917, whose origin was a rural *pesantren* (religion school) (Fig.

[194] James R. Brandon, ed., 1972, *On Thrones of Gold: Three Javanese Shadow Plays* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), 2. See also Solichin, 2016, *Tokoh Wayang Terkemuka* (Jakarta: Yayasan Sena Wangi), 4, and Moebirman, 1973, *Wayang Purwa: The Shadow Play of Indonesia* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pelita Wisata).
[195] A weekly Javanese domestic ritual that was common until the late-20th-century but now almost vanished due to the influence of normative beliefs.
[196] See Robyn Maxwell, 2010, *Life, Death and Magic: 2000 years of Southeast Asian Ancestral Art* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia).

1.27). The book's lurid cartoon-like drawings illustrate the sufferings of Hell in a folk-style far removed from the elegant *wayang* figures depicted in Central Javanese court illuminated manuscripts (Fig. 1.28).[197] The text was likely intended for recitation when commemorating the miraculous flight of the Prophet through the heavens as far as the Throne of God on the night of Al-Isra wa al-Miraj. The *pesantren* school recitations, graphically enumerating the horrors of Divine Judgement, are occasions of great emotional intensity, sometimes bringing the listening audience to tears.[198]

**Fig. 1.27.** Sufferings of hell, folio from *pesantren* manuscript, 1917, Madura, East Java, European paper, ink and pigment; Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC, Art Gallery of South Australia (20073A22). Photograph: AGSA.

**Fig. 1.28.** Parley at the Kurawa court, double folio from *Serat Dewi Ruci* manuscript, 1886, Yogyakarta, Central Java, European paper, ink, pigment, gold leaf, 33.7 x 21.0 cm; Presented by the Friends of the Gallery Library in memory of Tina Wentcher, National Gallery of Victoria (AS29/1982). Photograph: NGV.

[197] See Annabel Teh Gallop, 2005, 'Islamic Manuscript Art of Southeast Asia', in Bennett, 2005, 176.
[198] Ali Akbar, personal communication, 2005.

On one page of the *pesantren* manuscript, an unknown student has added a Bahasa Indonesia inscription alongside a drawing of a clenched fist, a symbol of *kateguhan* (spirited tenacity) in Java (Fig. 1.29).[199] The words are drawn from the idealized sentiments of Indonesia's 1945 founding constitution and were possibly written during the country's bitterly fought War of Independence (1945-1949) or in response to witnessing the violent collapse of social order accompanying the anti-communist purges of 1965-66:

> *Dengan rahmat Allah yang maha kuasa didorongkan oleh keinginan luhur*
>
> By the grace of God Almighty, and impelled by noble desire [200]

Perhaps we will never know if this drawing and the accompanying inscription were simply a doodle without intentional meaning or conveyed the preoccupations of a young man's innermost thoughts and aspirations in a time of civil strife. Nevertheless, they are potent reminders that art in Java is always intimately linked to the era and environment in which it is made.

**Fig. 1.29.** '*Dengan rahmat Allah*…' folio [detail] from *pesantren* manuscript, 1917, Madura, East Java, European paper, ink and pigment; Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC, Art Gallery of South Australia (20073A22). Photograph: AGSA.

[199] *Kateguhan* in Javanese is *keteguhan* in Bahasa Indonesia. The inscription and drawing are upside down to the text that is Madurese language written in *jawi* script, mixed with some Arabic, and remains untranslated due to the difficulties of identifying a scholar with expertise in archaic Madurese *jawi*.
[200] My appreciation is expressed to Muchammadun for pointing out that this sentence is a direct quote from the third paragraph of the UUD 45: 1945 Indonesian Constitution Preamble, personal communication, January 2021. The full text is: *Atas berkat rahmat Allah Yang Maha Kuasa dan dengan didorongkan oleh keinginan luhur, supaya berkehidupan kebangsaan yang bebas, maka rakyat Indonesia menyatakan dengan in kemerdekaanya* (By the grace of God Almighty and impelled by the noble desire to live a free national life, the people of Indonesia hereby declare their independence).

# CHAPTER 1

Talismanic Seeing:

The Induction of Power in Indonesian Zoomorphic Art

Forthcoming in Samer Akkach (ed.), *Nazar: Vision, Belief and Perception in Islamic Cultures* (Leiden: Brill Press, 2021).

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# Talismanic Seeing:

# The Induction of Power in Indonesian Zoomorphic Art


## Abstract

The depiction of animals or birds embedded in vegetal, rock, and cloud shapes (simulacrum) or as Arabic texts (calligram) is commonly seen as one of the defining features of Islamic art in Java from the 16th century to the present. Contemporary Indonesian popular belief states that zoomorphic and calligram devices are a response to religious restrictions surrounding the picturing of living beings. Nevertheless, Javanese art tradition documents a long history of viewing similitudes as conveying talismanic power through techniques of visual and textual concealment. The development in zoomorphic and calligram imagery in the Islamic period reflects the continuity in the adaptation of earlier Hindu-Buddhist era practices rather than their abnegation.

This chapter explores perceptions of apotropaic power conveyed by a unique Arabic calligram, that is, a *tolak bala* (repelling disaster) talismanic image associated with the Sufi traditions of Cirebon, West Java. The image is widely assumed to represent the Hindu elephant-headed deity, Gaṇeśa, but, to followers of the Shaṭṭāriyya Order in Indonesia, it depicts a being known as the *Malekat Lindhu* (Earthly Angel). The surprising evolution of this Sufi calligram in Java may be located within the long history of Gaṇeśa's changing identity, as Batara Gaṇa, before the arrival of Islam. A significant element contributing to this history is the depiction of elephant simulacra, often conveying talismanic overtones, in Cirebon art. Central to the power of the Earthly Angel talisman is the mystical belief in the possibility of viewing divine truth veiled behind external forms and the magical power that is invoked through the pictorial conflation of image with the sacred word.


## The Talisman of the Earthly Angel

The Earthly Angel (*Malekat Lindhu*) is a remarkable Sufi talisman, linked in particular with the Shaṭṭāriyya Order, in the form of an Arabic calligram that appears to be unique to the region of Cirebon, a former sultanate and city in West Java. Nowadays the accepted interpretation of the calligram is that it depicts the Hindu elephant-headed Gaṇeśa.[201] The worship of Gaṇeśa was introduced to Southeast Asia, direct from India where he originated, around the 8th-century and continued until the ascendancy of Islam in the 16th-century. From that time onwards Gaṇeśa became widely known as Batara Gaṇa (Lord Gaṇa) in Javanese tradition, and the shadow

[201] Amir Gozali, 2011, 'Kaligrafi Arab dalam Seni Lukis Kaca Cirebon', *Brikolase*, 3(2): 91, typically described a glass painting of the Earthly Angel by R. Sugroto as a 'Ganesha *srabad* taken from the religious mythology of Hinduism.' For further examples of the identification of the image as 'Hindu' see Paramita R Abdurachman, ed., 1982, *Cerbon* (Jakarta: Yayasan Mitra Budaya Indonesia & Penerbit Sinar Harapan), 106; Hilda Soemantri, ed., 1998, *Indonesian Heritage: Visual Art* (Singapore: Archipelago Press), 25; David Irvine, 2005, *Leather Gods and Wooden Heroes: Java's Classical Wayang* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Times Editions), 214; Yustina Intan Wulandari, Ira Adriati and Irma Damajanti, 2012, 'Analisis Estetis Lukisan Kaca Cirebon Tema Semar dan Macan Ali', *ITB Undergraduate Journal of Art and Design* 1(1): 7.

puppet theatre subsequently re-imaged the god as a courtly sage character dressed in a floral chintz jacket and turban.[202] Nevertheless, the scholar of the West Javanese puppet theatre, Moh Isa Pramana Koesoemadinata, has noted the Shaṭṭāriyya Order's account of the Earthly Angel differs greatly from the narratives associated with Gaṇeśa in Indian Hinduism. Shaṭṭāriyya tradition describes him as a being who 'originally crawled from the earth and was able to achieve heavenly spirituality'[203].

The Earthly Angel calligram depicts Gaṇa viewed frontally and displaying four-arms with two hands holding customary Śaivite ritual implements. This depiction maintains elements of Gaṇeśa's original Indic-Javanese iconography but contrasts with the puppet theatre's depiction of Gaṇa in profile and with two-arms.[204] The combination of imagery derived from the Hindu religion with Arabic text testifies to the intriguing history of interaction between Islam and earlier aesthetic traditions in Java. In its apotropaic role, the Earthly Angel underscores perceptions of talismanic power amongst Sufi-orientated communities.

The Earthly Angel calligram is definitively depicted on a *tolak bala* (repelling disaster) panel, assumed to date from the mid- to late-19th-century, from Cirebon in the collection of Singapore's Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) (Fig. 2.1). The panel's dimensions and the consummate carving with gilding suggest it was made for display in a palace context.[205]

The complex iconography includes several motifs that date earlier than the ascendency of Islam in Java. Nevertheless, these references to the visual semiotics of

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[202] To avoid confusion between the Indian and Javanese identities of the god, which displayed distinctly local characteristics, discussion of Gaṇeśa in the Javanese context uses the term Gaṇa. Teeuw, A. et al., 1969, '*Siwaratrikalpa' of Mpu Tanakun: An Old Javanese poem, its Indian source and Balinese illustrations* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), 152, fn.31 notes the name Gana already appears in Old Javanese sources. Reference to the god in the Indian context maintains the use of Gaṇeśa.

[203] Koesoemadinata, personal communication, 27 September 2017. The Angel's name *Lindhu* means 'earthquake' in Javanese and, by implication, movement from the earth as in the Shaṭṭāriyya account of his origins.

[204] Kanjeng Madi Kertonegoro, 2009, *The Javanese and Balinese Wayang Figures of Gods and Goddesses* (Ubud: Daya Putih Foundation), 81, illustrates the puppet in courtly form. Mahrus El-Mawa, n.d., *'Melting pot' Islam Nusantara melalui Tarekat: Studi Kasus Silsilah Tarekat Syattariyah di Cirebon.* Available at <www.academia.edu/3129633/Melting_Pot_Islam_Nusantara_melalui_Tarekat_Studi_Kasus_Silsilah_Tarekat_Syattariyah_Di_Cirebon>, 15, notes historical evidence that local Shaṭṭāriyya schools in Java and Sumatra had limited contact with one another which may also partly explain the apparent uniqueness of the Earthly Angel imagery to the Cirebon region. Accessed 12 April 2018.

[205] A remarkably similar *tolak bala* panel, featuring the coat-of-arms of the Kacirebonan Sultanate, hangs on the main wall in the principal reception pavilion of the Kacirebonan Palace and faces the *kraton* entrance.

a distant past are presented in a medium that only became fashionable in historically recent times. The panel's gold leaf and red cinnabar pigment testifies to the influence of the 19th-century tastes of immigrant Chinese communities, some of who converted to Islam, on the art of north coast Java.[206] The use of gold resonates with perceptions in the wider Islamic world where the precious metal was attributed with talismanic power due to its rarity, value, and symbolic connotations.[207]

**Fig. 2.1** Talismanic panel (*tolak bala*) depicting the Earthly Angel calligram, 1850-1900, Cirebon, West Java, wood with gold leaf and pigment, 71.9 x 45.5 cm; Asian Civilisations Museum (2000.5571). Photograph: Asian Civilisations Museum.

[206] The popularity of this style of gilding derived from middle-late Qing dynasty (1644-1912) decorative trends. Gilded furniture was fashionable earlier than this date in Java, as apparent in 17th-18th century Batavian furniture, but the panel's visual interplay between the gold and red ground suggests a 19th century Chinese aesthetic.

[207] Christiane Gruber, 2016, 'From Prayer to Protection: Amulets and Talismans in the Islamic World', in Francesca Leoni et al., *Power and Protection: Islamic Art and the Supernatural* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum), 35.

Until today, Shaṭṭāriyya interpretations of the spiritual significance of the Earthly Angel calligram are largely held to be restricted knowledge. [208] Nevertheless, Indonesian academics, artists, and the general public alike regard the reading of meaning in symbols, such as those appearing on the ACM panel, as an important mechanism for appreciating the country's aesthetic heritage. There are complex reasons for this perception but its roots can be traced to the consolidation of Javanese cultural identity around the royal courts during the 19th- and early-20th-century Dutch colonial period. It was this court environment that subsequently engendered values of 'educated refinement as a primary aesthetic'.[209] Among cultural practitioners today the ability to interpret the nuanced symbolic languages of the Javanese arts is understood as testimony to an individual's insightful connoisseurship and usually draws upon religious or moral qualities.

Such a style of interpretation is the West Javanese art historian Bambang Irianto's *Makna Simbolik Batik Keraton Cirebon* (Symbolic Purposes of Cirebon Palace Batik), first composed in 2011, which references diverse media.[210] *Makna Simbolik* thus provides a relevant portal for appreciating the ACM calligram while avoiding too great an emphasis on symbolic readings that may sometimes appear contrived.[211] The connection between some elements of the *tolak bala* panel and Cirebon batik motifs is apposite as the likely place of its creation was the village of

[208] M.C. Ricklefs, 2018, *Soul Catcher: Java's Fiery Prince Mangkunagara 1 (1726-95)* (Singapore: ASAA Southeast Asia Publications Series), 20-23, discusses the controversy surrounding the secretive nature of Shaṭṭāriyya esoteric knowledge in the Mataram court of Central Java in the early 18th century, which had links with the Cirebon sultanate. He observes that the influential saint and scholar 'Abd al-Rauf al-Singkili (c.1615-93) cautioned 'against sharing esoteric knowledge with those who are inadequately prepared for it' (p.21). Oman Fathurahman, 2008, *Tarekat Syattariyah di Minangkabau: Teks dan Konteks* (Jakarta: Prenada Media Group, École française d'Extrême-Orient, Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat (PPIM), UIN Jakarta, KITLV), 30, notes the emphasis on hidden practices in Shaṭṭāriyya doctrine where certain instructions may only be received directly from a teacher (*shaikh*). See Tommy Christomy, 2008, *Signs of the Wali: Narratives at the Sacred Sites in Pamijahan, West Java* (Canberra: ANU E-Press), 126, for a further discussion of secrecy surrounding contemporary Sufi teachings in West Java.

[209] Sarah Weis, 2006, *Listening to an Earlier Java: Aesthetics, gender and the music of the wayang in Central Java* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 12.

[210] The writer thanks Benny Gratha, Textile Museum of Jakarta, for kindly providing access to the Museum's photocopy of the 2011 manuscript that was subsequently published as H.R. Bambang Irianto and Sally Giovanny, 2015, *Makna Simbolik Batik Keraton Cirebon* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish).

[211] It is pertinent to remember, while appreciating Iranto's study, that Justine Boow observed Central Javanese batik makers do not refer to *arti* (meaning) but *sifat*, an Arabic loan word in Indonesian for 'characteristic,' 'nature' or 'quality' in their reading of motifs. See Justine Boow, 1988, *Symbol and Status in Javanese Batik* (Perth: Asian Studies Centre, University of Western Australia), 91.

Trusmi, famous for refined batik patterns and now part of Cirebon city.[212] Both the production of wood *tolak bala* and batik customarily were male occupations in Trusmi and it is very possible that the unknown carver of the ACM panel was also accomplished in the graphic art of dyed wax-resist textiles.

The Earthly Angel on the ACM panel holds in his two upper hands a Middle-Eastern sabre and an implement that local informants describe as a mirror or bludgeon but may represent a *jogan* fan considered one of the attributes of royalty in Southeast Asian sultanate courts.[213] Both accoutrements display Islam's Declaration of Faith. The two lower hands hold a Śaivite scalpel and skull-cup. The Earthly Angel stands on a mountain peak that Irianto describes as a multivalent allusion both to the Seven Levels of Being (*Martabat Tujuh*) of Shaṭṭāriyya doctrine and human desires.[214] The peak's boulder on which the figure stands may be understood to represent the highest state of peace attained through piety and obedience to God (*mutmainah*).[215]

The panel shows fragrant pandanus palms (*pandanus amaryllifolius*) growing on ancillary mountain peaks flanking the Earthly Angel and forming the Cirebon motif known as 'stone and pandanus' (*sela pandan*).[216] The pandanus appears on an early-18th-century Gaṇa *tolak bala* panel, discussed further below, as well as undated gravestones at the mausoleum of the revered Muslim saint of West Java, Sunan Gunung Jati. 'Stone and pandanus' creates a visual metaphor for power through combining notions of invincibility (rocks) with the sweet scent of good deeds that testify to firm faith (fragrant pandanus). The mountains on the ACM panel are formed with the popular Cirebon art motif known as *wadasan* or 'like broken coral rocks' (*wadas*). *Wadasan* is none other than a vertical version of the other well-known Cirebon art motif that is *megamendung*, meaning 'overcast sky' or clouds.

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[212] Hasan Muarif Ambary, 1998, *Menemukan Peradaban: Arkeologi dan Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional), 173. Calligram wood panels were also once carved in Yogyakarta, Surakarta and Palembang but the creation of *tolak bala* in this form is almost extinct today.

[213] My appreciation to Tan Zi Hao for conveying the interpretations of the mirror by Made Casta and bludgeon (*gada*) by Erik North, via the late PH Yusuf Dendrata, personal communication, 21 September 2019.

[214] Irianto, 2011, 142, interprets a batik cloth depicting a small pavilion on top of a similar *wadasan* mountain as symbolizing *insan kamil* or the 'perfect man'. A close synergy exists between the mountains depicted on the cloth and on the carved panel. Christomy, 2008, extensively discusses *Martabat Tujuh* in the West Javanese context.

[215] Irianto, 2011, 142, lists the other *nafsu* as (1) greed which is the lowest level in the development of a human (*amarah*) (2) learning to listen to the voice of his conscience and so seeking to resist his carnal desires (*lawamah*) (3) reaching the purity of perfect harmony (*sufiah*).

[216] Achmad Opan Safari, personal communication, 5 March 2018.

There is a small gateway at the foot of the central mountain, on the ACM's panel, crowned with a stylised one-eyed *kala* monster face. The cyclops-like visage is an apotropaic device that similarly appears as a vegetal simulacrum on Hindu-Buddhist era temples and on the 16th-century mausoleums of Javanese Muslim saints (*walī*). Caves, reminiscent of the dwelling places of religious hermits, are depicted on the slopes of the mountains. They also feature as a recurring element in landscape depictions in late Hindu-Buddhist era terracotta sculpture and subsequently in north coast *pasisir* art in the following centuries, such as on the wood facade of the mausoleum of the Sufi saint Sunan Drajat at Lamongan. The use of actual caves, often man made, as locations for spiritual practices dates back to the earlier Hindu-Buddhist period and are testified in the numerous surviving examples found around Java as well as neighbouring Bali. On Drajat's mausoleum, the cave motif appears as a mountain with wings, apparently alluding to the celestial *garuda* bird. On the ACM *tolak bala* the wings have transformed into the shape of the actual cave entrances

The heads of *garuda* birds, in the form of cloud simulacra, flank either side of the Earthly Angel figure. In the centre of the upper part of the panel, the 'overcast sky' motif, combining horizontal and vertical configurations, suggests the complementary union of *lahir batin*. Here a striking visual focus is an irregular circular cavity physically recessed into the panel, bringing to mind a mosque's mihrab. The same circular device features at the centre of a late 19th- to early-20th-century man's head cloth (Fig. 2.2), from Cirebon, encircled by the Declaration of Faith and vegetal simulacra representing feline creatures. Present-day Cirebon observers call this creature the *macan Ali*, literally meaning 'tiger of Ali' but commonly translated into English as the 'lion of Ali' in accordance with the nomenclature used in the wider Muslim world.[217]

[217] Farouk Yahya, 2020, 'Calligrams of the Lion of ʿAlī in Southeast Asia' in Liana Saif, Francesca Leoni, Matthew Melvin-Koushki, Farouk Yahya, *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice* (Leiden and Boston: Brill), 473.

**Fig. 2.2.** Man's head cloth, with feline creatures as vegetal simulacra, 1875-1900, Cirebon, West Java, cotton, natural dyes, hand batik, 86.0 x 84.0 cm; Jakarta Textile Museum (025.1). Photograph: AGSA.

The batik's centre circle suggests the *modang* motif, a plain geometric field seen at the centre of Javanese *dodot* and *kemben* wrap garments and said to represent a mirror.[218] The Indonesian textile scholar, Judi Achjadi, interprets the head cloth's circle as 'a reference to the cosmos, and the concentration of protective power in that spot'.[219] The cavity appearing on the ACM panel is likewise intended to avert disaster, complementing and enhancing the *tolak bala* power of the Earthly Angel calligram.

**Seeing and Meaning in the Earthly Angel Calligram**

While the term *tolak bala* today in Indonesia commonly refers to Islamic supplicatory prayers requesting divine protection, or activities such as ritual feasts (*selametan*), the use of the term for the ACM panel highlights its purpose to supernaturally avert calamities and diseases through the power of a pictorial device combining image and text. For this intention, such talismanic images were customarily hung in entry spaces,

[218] Robert Wessing, 1986, 'Wearing the cosmos: Symbolism in Batik Design', *Crossroads: An interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 2(3): 64-66.
[219] Judi Achjadi, 1998, *The Jakarta Textile Museum* (Jakarta: Jakarta Textile Museum), 76. The decoration of batik head cloths often conveyed talismanic meaning due to the Javanese belief in the sacredness of the head.

often the forecourt pavilion, in old Javanese houses.[220] They also feature in the medium of glass-paintings that became popular in Cirebon over the last one hundred years. Javanese students of mystical practices, known as *kebatinan*, and shaman-healers (*dukun*) particularly favour hanging such paintings in their homes.[221] Nevertheless, as Matthew Cohen observes in his essay on the foundations of painting traditions in modern Java, paintings on glass in domestic settings were not necessarily always perceived to have magical power.[222]

The Earthly Angel is one among a diverse group of subjects depicted in Cirebon calligrams, using Arabic or Javanese *pegon* script, in various different media. Often the text is re-configured and stylised to such an extent that only the calligrapher can decipher it.[223] Alternatively, it may be interpreted in the broadest terms as alluding to Quranic phrases such as the *basmala* and the Declaration of Faith. The Arabic calligraphy is often written without the diacritic marks as their absence is believed to enhance the potency of the text.[224] The most popular calligram, both in Java and elsewhere in the Islamic world, is the leonine creature known in Indonesia as the *macan Ali*. The Malaysian scholar, Farouk Yahya, has comprehensively examined the Middle-Eastern origin of this calligram and its various iterations in Southeast Asia.[225] There are also Javanese calligrams featuring characters from the Indic *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* epics that reflect Java's Hindu-Buddhist past, and are unique in the Islamic world. The subjects particularly favoured in glass painting include Batara Guru (Śiva) and Semar, the clown wizard. Their iconographies specifically reference

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[220] Gozali, 2011, 82, states that Earthly Angel paintings were generally hung in pairs. This is reminiscent of the placement of *dwarapala* guardians, usually Mahakala and Nandisvara, at the entrance to temples in the Hindu-Buddhist era. Southeast Asian cultures view gateways and doors as entry points where malign spirits might enter. See Huism Tan 2007, 'Qur'anic inscriptions on woodcarvings from the Malay Peninsula', in Fahmida Suleman, ed., *Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions: Selected Proceedings from the International Colloquium London 18-21 October 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies), 207.

[221] Matthew Issac Cohen, 2005, 'Traditional and Popular Painting in Modern Java', *Archipel* 69(32): 34.

[222] Cohen, 2005, 34. Nevertheless, Anissa Rahadiningtyas, personal communication, 20 August 2018, has perceptively observed that the transparency of glass, with its ability to reflect and refract light, makes the medium an apposite symbol for the mystical realm.

[223] The contemporary glass-painter Safari has a repertoire of 50 *srabad* motifs including six versions of the Earthly Angel. *Pegon* script is the Javanese language written with Arabic characters.

[224] For use of talismanic charms (*jampi*) lacking diacritics on the inside of Cirebon masks see Laurie Margot Ross, 2016, *The Encoded Cirebon Mask: Materiality, Flow and Meaning along Java's Islamic Northwest Coast (*Leiden: Brill), 210. This type of text is referred to as *Arab gundul* ('bald' Arabic) and is considered an older and more potent script.

[225] Yahya, 2020, 454-526.

the shadow puppet theatre with the features drawn in profile and displaying the accoutrements associated with each character.

The contrasting appearance of the Earthly Angel with those images referencing puppet characters suggests it has a singular lineage in the history of Cirebon calligrams. Contemporary Indonesian commentators often seek to eschew any association of the calligrams with religious belief by explaining them merely as wall decorations whose popularity is due to their uniquely Cirebon art style (*khas Cirebon*).[226] Indonesia's largest conservative Muslim organisation, Muhammadiyah, generally forbids the use of talismanic devices, including *tolak bala*.[227] At a time now when many ultra-conservative and literalist Muslims in Indonesia regard Sufi practices with suspicion, there is a common assumption among the former 'to view mysticism as a refuge for pre-Islamic beliefs'.[228]

The Earthly Angel is known as a *srabad*, a term familiar today only among the older generation of court elites and adepts of mysticism. Tan Zi Hao, in his extensive research into Cirebon zoomorphic imagery, documents the multiple local explanations for the word's origin.[229] The interpretations (*kereta basa*) reflect a Javanese predilection for word play, punning and acronyms where meanings may as much conceal as reveal. Among the ciphers, Tan cites an explanation that *srabad* is the 'compound between the Arabic *sirr* (secrecy) and Javanese *babad* (chronicle, tale)' implying 'the secret relationship between the self and God.'[230] Another explanation, popular since the 1970s, describes the word as an acronym for *mingser abad*, meaning 'moving away from the era'.[231] It references the time of transition from the Hindu-Buddhist to Islamic period during the 16th-century. The West Javanese artist Kuswa Budiono identifies the definition of *srabad* as specifically referring to the subject of

[226] Abdurachman, 1982, 109, describing Cirebon's glass-painting calligrams appears impelled to justify their existence by noting that mystical 'scraps of paper bearing sentences in Arabic letters are often seen above the doors of houses…in almost every other city in Indonesia.'
[227] The other major Indonesian Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, accepts the use of talismans. Martin van Bruinessen, 1990, 'Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the Pesantren Milieu: Comments on a new collection in the KITLV Library', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 146, 2/3de Afl. : 262, observes that for the majority of Indonesian Muslims 'the mystical-magical dimension remains an integral part of the Islamic heritage.'
[228] Ross, 2016, 3. This attitude reflects the influence of 21st-century Wahhabi Salafis but outside the major urban centres of Indonesia, even 'strict' Muslims privately circumvent many Wahhabi restrictions especially if they conflict with local traditional practices.
[229] Tan Zi Hao, 2019, *History, Memory and Islam through the Animal: The Zoomorphic Imagery in Cirebon*. Unpublished doctorate dissertation (Singapore: National University of Singapore), 160-163.
[230] Tan, 2019, 161.
[231] The term is said to have originated from Teja Suprata, Safari, personal communication, 5 March, 2018.

hybrid animals, whose appearances are inspired by the famous 16th-century chariots, *singhabarwang* in the Kasepuhan Palace and the *paksinagaliman* in the Kanoman Palace, Cirebon.[232] Both royal vehicles take the form of chimera-like monsters variously merging the features of an elephant, *garuda* bird, *naga* serpent, *barong* lion and elephant. The notion of hybridity – whether in the transition between religious epochs or in creatures with supernaturally composite appearances – likewise occurs in the merging of image and text in the Earthly Angel calligram.

**Induction of Power in the Calligram**

Talismans can exist in many different forms in Islam.[233] Whether the object's intention is to be seen, or alternatively kissed, rubbed, or even produced as philtres to be consumed, visibility is always an important aspect of its efficacy unlike miniature amulets or the whispered charm.[234] However, power is perceived as inducted into the calligram through the concealment of its essence, that is, the meaning of the religious text. Annemarie Schimmel, scholar of Sufism, observed that the intention of sacred scripture, from early times, has been 'concealed under the cover of metaphors lest the power of the real be broken'.[235] Acknowledgement of the sacred power is reflected in the process of the production of Cirebon calligrams. Just as when a calligrapher copies the holy Quran, the artist may perform ritual fasting, prayer, and recitation of the names of Allah when creating the *tolak bala* image.[236]

The occult significance of letters from the Arabic alphabet in the Javanese and Malay world is testified in the *Daqāʾiq al-ḥurūf* (Hidden Implications of Letters/Sounds) composed by the 17th-century Acehnese scholar and Shaṭṭārriyya

[232] Kuswa Budiono, 2002, 'Makna Lukisan Kaca Cirebon', *Wacana Seni Rupa: Jurnal Seni Rupa & Desain*, 2(5): 8.
[233] The English word 'talisman' has a derivation in the medieval Arabic *tilsam* whose meaning also included 'amulet' and 'incantation', <etymoline.com.word/talisman>, accessed 3 February 2019.
[234] Gruber, 2016, 33, observes the terms 'amulet' and 'talisman' are often used interchangeably but amulets are typically small objects made from durable media, like metal or gemstone, while talismans are made from less permanent material, like paper or parchment, or, as in the case of Cirebon calligrams, wood, glass and cloth. Ross, 2016, 160, notes the Cirebon practice of whispering spells to ensure their efficacy. This represents another form of 'concealment'.
[235] Annemarie Schimmel, 1994, *Deciphering the Signs of God: A Phenomenological Approach to Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 116. The prophylactic power of the Qur'an's text as an object is testified in the use of miniature copies worn or carried as amulets.
[236] The contemporary glass-painter, Safari, says he fasts for three days after receiving a commission to make a calligram. The creation of particular calligrams requires specific spiritual practices, such as reciting repetitive prayers seeking permission from God, and His divine names ten thousand times, when painting a calligram of the word Allah, personal communication, 5 March 2018.

adept ʿAbd al-Ra'uf. It is a commentary on two lines of verse by the great Sufi master Ibn ʿArabī (1165-1240):

> We were lofty letters/sounds unuttered
> held latent in the highest peaks of the hills.[237]

*Daqāʾiq al-ḥurūf* presents an orthodox interpretation of Ibn ʿArabī's text yet al-Ra'uf was certainly familiar also with the writings of the Indian Shaikh Muhammad Ghawth Gwalior (d.1563).[238] Among them is *Jawāhir-i khamsa* (Five Gems), which Gwalior composed in 1549. This work contains elements similar to the yogic practices taught by Hindu gurus with whom Gwalior had close contact. It also includes the discussion of the esoteric power of the letters of the Arabic alphabet and the spirits who preside over them. These concepts parallel Hindu teachings regarding sacred letters, known as seed-syllables (*bijaksara*), found in India and also early Java.[239] Gwalior adopted such techniques of Hindu yoga in formulating parts of the Shaṭṭāriyya *dhikr* practice. Among the eminent students of ʿAbd Ra'uf, after his return to Aceh in 1661, was ʿAbdul Muhyi who later would become the leading figure in the subsequent transmission of Shaṭṭāriyya teachings to West Java. Muhyi may have had a close connection to the Cirebon court as later oral traditions record his marriage to a Cirebon princess.[240]

Belief in the occult was an important factor in the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia. In the specific context of Javanese thought, power was seen as an intangible energy pervading the cosmos so that there is 'no sharp division between organic and inorganic matter, for everything is sustained by the same invisible power'.[241] The concept of the fundamental unity existing between a talismanic object and its power is expressed through the paradigm of *lahir batin,* that is, the unity of the 'outer' and the

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[237] A.H Johns, 2009, 'Reflections on the Mysticism of Shams al-Din al-Samatra'i (1550?-1630)', in Jan van der Putten and Mary Kilcline Cody, ed., *Lost Times and Untold Tales from the Malay World* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press),159.

[238] Azyumardi Azra, 2004, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern 'Ulamā in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: Allen & Unwin and University of Hawai'i Press), 83.

[239] Fathurahman, 2008, 30.

[240] Ismail Fajrie Alatas, 2019, 'A Hadrami Sufi Tradition in the Indonesian Archipelago: The Itineraries of Ibn Yahya (1794-1849) and the Tariqa 'Alwiyya', in R. Michael Feener and Anne Blackburn, eds., *Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southern Asia: Comparative Perspectives* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 131.

[241] Benedict Anderson, 1972, 'The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture', in Claire Holt, ed., *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, (Jakarta & Kuala Lumpur: Equinox Publishing), 7, is here referring to Central Javanese culture, and his writings generally tend to sideline the significance of Islam in the Javanese context, but this observation is relevant to Cirebon worldview.

'inner'.[242] This invokes *tawḥīd* as the core of both exoteric and esoteric knowledge in Islam. The great Indonesian religious teacher of the 18th-century, ʿAbd al-Ṣamad al-Palembani, spoke of the 'knowledge of hidden things (*bāṭin*) that is named the *taṣawwuf* of knowledge'.[243] In the realm of Javanese arts, *Babad Cirebon* (Cirebon Chronicle), dated around 1820, identifies the shadow puppet performance, *barongan*, mask and *ronggeng* dances as metaphors for the four stages of mystical practice, where each of these stages 'begins with concealment and concludes with revelation'.[244] The scholar of Javanese literature, T.E. Behrend, interprets the act of decoding the Arabic texts hidden within the calligram's figural image as 'a metaphor for the mystic quest of finding Allah amid the display and splendour of creation'.[245]

The reconfiguration of a visual image into the stylised shape of calligraphy, often barely legible, elicits the Sufi idea that the merging of the manifest with the hidden conveys special significance.[246] Behrend's observation alludes to the 'process of mystical unveiling (*kashf*) that was particularly upheld in Shaṭṭāriyya circles'.[247] Annemarie Schimmel might have been speaking of the experience of the observer looking at Javanese *tolak bala* when she wrote: 'for when the Word is indeed of Divine Origin, humankind can never completely discover all the possible meanings which it contains'.[248]

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[242] Ngurah Nala, 2009, *Aksara Bali dalam Usada* (Surabaya: Penerbit Paramita), 167, speaking of Balinese Hinduism, describes talismanic letters gaining their power through the unseen realm (*niskala*) manifesting in the visible object (*sekala*).

[243] Hiroko Kushimoto, 2012, 'Preliminary Mapping of the Tasawwuf Texts in the Malay World: Hidaya al-Salikan and Some Related Texts', in Kawashima Midori, ed., *Comparative Study of Southeast Asian Kitabs* (2): *Papers on Tasawwuf and Fatwa Texts Presented at the Sophia University Workshop on May 20, 2012* (Tokyo: Institute of Asian Cultures, Sophia University), 5. Abd al-Samad lists this as the third of three types of knowledge obligatory for all Muslims. The first is knowledge of Tawhid (*ilmu usulddin*) and the second is knowledge of the law (*syarak*) that is *ilmu fiqh.*

[244] Ross, 2016, 10-11; D.A. Rinkes, 1996, *Nine Saints of Java (*Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute), 129-33.

[245] Timothy E. Behrend, 1996, 'Textual Gateways: The Javanese Manuscript Tradition', in Ann Kumar and John H. McGlynn, eds., *Illuminations: The Writing Traditions of Indonesia* (Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation), 128. The concept of *lahir* (Arabic: *zahir*) *batin* pervades art forms throughout the Islamic world of Southeast Asia. Boow, 1988, discusses its significance in Central Javanese batik; Ross, 2016, likewise in Cirebon mask traditions. Malay *pantun* poems are structured such that the first couplet is the 'skin' (*kulit*) and the second couplet is the 'content' (*isi*), Virginia Hooker, personal communication, February 2018.

[246] An analogical practice is the Javanese custom of inserting hidden pins, preferably gold or silver, known as *susuk*, beneath the skin - often the face - to gain magical powers, such as in love or business. Refer Ross, 2016, for an extensive discussion of *susuk* in the context of Cirebon's dance masks.

[247] Gülru Necipoğlu, 2015, 'The Scrutinising Gaze in the Aesthetics of Islamic Visual Cultures: Sight, Insight and Desire', *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World*, 32(1): 43.

[248] Schimmel, 1994, 119, observes 'a revelation that is fully understood would not be a true revelation of the unfathomable Divine being.'

**The Earthly Angel and Shaṭṭāriyya teachings**

The Middle Eastern origins of Shaṭṭāriyya are obscure but the order was likely introduced to India by ʻAbd Allāh Shaṭṭārī (d. 1485) from where it rose to prominence in the 17th-century and spread to Southeast Asia at this time.[249] The teachings are closely based on those of Ibn ʿArabī with its attention to the doctrine of *lahir batin*.[250] Wherever Shaṭṭāriyya, with the mystical doctrine of the Seven Levels of Being, spread throughout the Muslim world it became 'domesticated' alongside existing intellectual and spiritual traditions.[251] The order's success lay in the ability to engage local court cultures. In Surakarta and Yogyakarta, Central Java, this included both aristocratic men and women practitioners during the 18th- and early-19th centuries while all four palaces in Cirebon became centres of *taṣawwuf* learning.[252] Indeed, the practice of mysticism continues to be so pervasive in that city and surrounding region that local adepts sometimes just speak of 'Cirebon wisdom' (*ilmu kacirebonan*).[253]

As previously observed, Shaṭṭāriyya, amongst all the Sufi orders, expressed the most interest in the Indian Hindu yogic tradition. It incorporated elements of the tradition into its practices through oral teachings and commentaries such as *Bahral Hayat* (The Pool of Nectar) compiled by Gwalior.[254] *Risāla-i Shaṭṭāriyya* (The Shaṭṭāriyya Treatise) composed by Bahāʾ al-Dīn Shṭṭārī (d. 1515) includes a chapter specifically addressing the 'methods of the yogis'.[255] Shaṭṭāriyya might have found a sympathetic reception in Javanese courts because of their own rich heritage of pre-Islamic Indic mysticism. The Indian text *Sāradā Tilaka Tantra* (*Tilak* of Saraswati Tantra), attributed to the 9th-century sage Laksmana Desikendra, describes Gaṇeśa manifesting as a seed-syllable letter and seated on lotus throne in the form of the Sanskrit alphabet.[256] In the Old Javanese text *Gaṇapati Tattwa* (Truth of Gaṇapati),

[249] Carl W. Ernst, 2005, 'Situating Sufism and Yoga', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 15(1): 30.
[250] Christomy, 2008, 147. Refer to this author for a complete discussion of Shaṭṭāriyya in West Java.
[251] Tommy Christomy, 2001, 'Shattariyyah Tradition in West Java: the Case of Pamijahan', in *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies,* 8(2): 64-65, presents the example of Shaṭṭāriyya's engagement with India's Moghul rulers who granted recognition to Shaṭṭāriyya as one of official Sufi orders of the empire.
[252] Ricklefs, 2018, 20-21, 297-298, discusses Shaṭṭāriyya practice at the Kasultanan Yogyakarta and Kasunanan Surakarta. The four Cirebon palaces (*kraton*) are Kasepuhan (1447), Kanoman (1677), Kaprabonan (1696) and Kacirebonan (1807).
[253] Christomy, 2008, 93. Refer El-Mawa, n.d., for the *silsilah* of the Shaṭṭāriyya teachers associated with Cirebon's courts and Islamic schools (*pesantren*).
[254] Ernst, 2005, 29. Gwalior translated the rendition in Persian from an Arabic translation of the lost Sanskrit work *Amritakunda*. Ernst critically explores suggestions of syncretism between Sufism and Hindu yogic practices in his comprehensive article.
[255] Ernst, 2005, 30.
[256] Arthur Avalon, ed., 1982, *Śāradā Tilaka Tantra* (New Delhi: Motilal Banasidass), 33.

Śiva expounds a similar esoteric doctrine to his son Gaṇa. Śiva contrasts his teaching with the practices of ordinary people who worship the deity 'in a piece of stone' and provides complex instructions on how to envisage deities as letters within the body.[257] *Serat Manik Maya* (Tales of Manik Maya), compiled in the 18th-century with elements drawn from earlier pre-Islamic sources, links the individual letters of the Javanese alphabet to specific Hindu deities, such as Śiva and Viṣṇu.[258]

Ross proposes that the significant presence of Shaṭṭāriyya in Cirebon during the 19th-century, despite the decline of the order in the heartland of Islam, may have been a result of its 'Indic orientation, which was deeply resonant in Java'.[259] Despite the orthodox Islamic religious teachings contained in some early Indonesian texts, and the writings of scholars like 'Abd al-Ṣamad Palembani, the idea that Islam and Jawa's Hindu heritage were contradictory was 'unlikely to have occurred with much urgency to the Javanese court elite' of that period.[260] Significantly, Theodore Pigeaud, in his commentary on Mpu Prapañca's *Deśawarṇana* (Descriptions of the Regions) (1365), notes the convention in Islamic Java of referring to the religion of the past simply as *agama buda*. Although translated literally as 'Buddhist religion', this was a 'catch-all' term encompassing Śaivite Hinduism as well as a kaleidoscope of indigenous

[257] Sudarshana Devi Singhal, 1958, *Ganapati-Tattwa: an Old Javanese Philosophic Text* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture), 3-4. Contemporary Balinese observers state that the Indonesian word *rerajahan*, meaning talismanic diagrams with letters, derives from the sacred letters drawn on the physical body of the king (*rajah*). My thanks are expressed to I Ketut Bawa and I Made Maduarta for this information, kindly conveyed through Jean Howe, personal communication, 27 September 2018.

[258] Stuart Robson, 2011, 'Javanese Script as Cultural Artefact: Historical Background', *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 45(1&2): 13. Stephen C. Headley, 2004, *Durga's Mosque: Cosmology, Conversion and Community in Central Java* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies) presents a discussion of the *Serat*. He notes the phrase *manik maya* may be translated as 'made of jewels' but it is also an appellation for Batara Guru among many other meanings.

[259] Nancy K. Florida, 2019 'Syattāriyya Sufi Scents: The Literary World of the Surakarta Palace in Nineteenth-Century Java', in R. Michael Feener and Anne Blackburn, eds., 2019, *Buddhist and Islamic Orders in Southern Asia: Comparative Perspectives* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), documents the vibrancy of Shaṭṭāriyya-inspired mystical poetry in Central Java court circles although she does not imply its popularity was directly connected to Java's past Indic heritage. By contrast, Peter Carey, 2007, *The Power of Prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the End of the Old Order in Java* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 114, somewhat harshly describes Shaṭṭāriyya in Java, by the early 19th century, as 'degenerate, serving as a receptacle for many old fashioned mystical teachings'. Ross, 2016, 134, cites research suggesting the influence of Shaṭṭāriyya only began to decline in Cirebon by the end of the 19th century which is around half a century later than Florida, 2019, 172, records occurred in Central Java. It is possible that a reinvigoration of the Earthly Angel imagery was related to the rise in popularity of glass painting in the mid 20th-century.

[260] M.C. Ricklefs, 1974, *Jogjakarta Under Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792: A History of the Division of Java*, (London: Oxford University Press), 82; refer also to M.C. Ricklefs, 2006, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the early Nineteenth Centuries* (Norwalk: East Bridge) for discussion of orthodoxy and syncretism in early Javanese Islam.

ancestral beliefs.[261] Pigeaud suggest that this reflects the degree to which deities, such as Gaṇa, continued to be remembered in popular consciousness as 'belonging to the Java of all times'.[262] By contrast, Islam quickly expunged almost all evidence of the highly ritualistic practices of the Javanese variant of Vajrayana Buddhism.

The Shaṭṭāriyya name Earthly Angel suggests the imprint of Gaṇa's earlier role in Hindu yoga practices where the elephant-headed god corresponds with the earth element.[263] Indian tantric texts assign Gaṇeśa to the lowest chakra of the body's six centres of psychic energy and equate him with the kundalini energy whose awakening leads to spiritual perfection.[264] The Shaṭṭāriyya narrative of the Earthly Angel arising from earth to achieve 'heavenly spirituality' remarkably resembles this mystical process. The Earthly Angel's subsequent identification as a tutelary spirit (*danyang*) reflects a wider historical pattern in Java whereby Hindu deities transformed into ancestral beings of semi-divine status. The popular belief in an extraordinary complex spirit world, incorporating earlier deities, like Dewi Sri (Lakshmi), remained commonplace in Java until the 20th-century. This is reflected in some of the prayers of Shaṭṭāriyya groups in West Java today that are a mixture of Islam and incantations from the 'teaching of the ancestors (*kabuyutan*)'.[265]

**Batara Gaṇa in the Pre-Islamic Era**

The Earthly Angel's transition from an Indic elephant-headed god into a Sufi calligram may be contextualised through the changing Javanese identity of Gaṇa over the span of one thousand years prior to the ascendancy of Islam. Museum collections and art history publications conventionally reference Indian iconographic tradition when describing the Javanese images as Gaṇeśa 'god of knowledge and remover of

[261] George Quinn, 2019, *Bandit saints of Java* (Burrough on the Hill, Leicestershire: Monsoon Books), 82.
[262] T. G. Th. Pigeaud, 1962, *Java in the 14th Century: A Study in Cultural History: IV Commentaries and Recapitulation* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff), 255, links this expunging to the complexities of Majapahit *sraddha* mortuary rites, with their strong Buddhist elements, that conflicted with Islamic burial prescriptions.
[263] S.K. Ramachandra Rao, 1992, *Gaṇeśa – Kosha: Being an Encyclopaedia of Gaṇeśa, Also Containing Original Sanskrit Texts Relating to Gaṇeśa* (Bangalore: Kalpatharu Research Academy), 92, notes medieval Indian Tantric texts prescribe Gaṇeśa icons to be made in clay after which they were ritually disposed. The use of this impermanent medium is a reminder Gaṇa was depicted in a variety of materials of which stone sculpture only survives today in Java.
[264] Rao, 1992, 90-91. Javanese stone reliefs and textual references document the existence of yoga practices in the Hindu-Buddhist period. Indian Tantric texts equate the Gaṇeśa's coiled trunk with the coiled kundalini. The coil symbol also occurs in inscriptions connected to the elephant headed god in Java.
[265] Christomy, 2008, 113.

obstacles'.[266] The Indonesian art historian, Edi Sedyawati, however, has documented the numerous other names by which the deity was known in the pre-Islamic era when both Hindu and Buddhists revered Gaṇa.[267] The other names suggest the varying roles, extending beyond a single generic identity, reflecting the complex development of religious practices in Java.[268] They include Gaṇapati, Gajendrawadana, and Durmaka, or 'disfigured face,' in reference to his elephantine features.[269]


**Fig. 2.3.** Standing Gaṇa, 1200-1300, Karangkates, Malang, East Java, stone, 269.0 cm high. Photograph: Helmi, 2003.

[266] Retno Sulistianingsih Sitowati and John N. Miksic, 2006, *Icons of Art: National Museum of Jakarta*, Jakarta: (Bab Publishing Indonesia), 119, description of 8th century Gaṇa image from Candi Banon, Central Java.

[267] The medieval Buddhist poem, *Porusādānśānta* (The Man-Eater Subdued), where the exorcised demon Gajawaktra manifests as a demonic form of Gaṇa, documents the cult of the god in Javanese Buddhist circles. In medieval India, both Jain and Buddhist devotees also worshiped the Hindu god Gaṇeśa as do Sikhs.

[268] P.J. Zoetmulder, 1974, *Kalangwan: A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff),
297, documents the local Javanese deviations from Indian stories associated with Gaṇeśa. Despite the deity's popularity, he notes there is no evidence of the existence of the Gaṇapatyas, one of the five orthodox sects of Indian Hinduism, on Java.

[269] Edi Sedyawati, 1994, *Ganesa Statuary of the Kediri and Singhasari Periods: A Study of Art History* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 139 fn.53, observes that *Smaradahana* lists nine different names for the elephant-headed god, none of them being Gaṇeśa. While the diverse nomenclature may also reflect the metrical demands of *kakawin* poetry they undoubtedly testify also to the many nuanced local ways the deity was perceived.

Both sculptural and literary evidence testify that Gaṇa was among the most popularly worshipped gods in Java and his multiple identities as protector/tutelary guardian/tantric deity may have established the prototypes for his subsequent transformation into an Islamic talismanic image.[270] The majority of surviving stone images of Gaṇa occurs in Central and East Java although the god was likewise revered in West Java.[271] Solitary statues have been found situated in locations perceived to be sacred or significant at sites as geographically distant as Panaitan Island on the extreme southwest tip of West Java and on the slopes of Java's highest mountain, Semeru in the island's east (Fig. 2.3). Their presence at these sites documents the deity's special role as protector under names such as Winayaka, 'seeing far and near in the day and in the night'.[272] The talismanic powers attributed to Gaṇa are hinted in the presence of a miniature standing elephant-headed god at the base of the blade of the famous Knaud keris, dated 1342.[273] Until today on the neighbouring Hindu island of Bali, Gaṇa talismans are utilised as protection against all kinds of threats and perils.[274]

Sedyawati proposes that two distinct identities for Gaṇa appear to begin to evolve during the Kediri-Singasari periods (11th- to 13th-century) in Java.[275] These identities pre-figure the subsequent personification of the Earthly Angel as a *tolak bala* that has the power to repel evil. Epic poems produced for royal circles emphasise the god's wrathful aspects and ability to vanquish enemies.[276] Mpu Dharmaja's

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[270] Zoetmulder, 1974, 297. Sedyawati, 1994, 5, cites Krom (1924) that Gaṇa statues outnumber surviving images of Durga and Agastya by a ratio of 22:5:2.

[271] The oldest surviving inscription, documenting the presence of Hinduism in Java, are the Tarumanagara inscriptions, including the Telapak Gajah stone featuring the carved footprints of Indra's elephant, in Bogor, West Java. Denys Lombard, 2018, *Nusa Jawa Silang Budaya: Jilid 1 Batas-batas Pembaratan* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama), 35, suggests the influence of Indian religions in West Java was more limited than elsewhere on the island. His conclusion is on the basis of the few surviving stone artefacts but it is salient to remember that perishable wood may have been the preferred carving and building medium in densely forested West Java, as historically it was in Kalimantan and Sumatra. Pigeaud, 1960, Vol.2, 36, explains the absence of references to West Java in Prapañca's *Deśawarṇana* as a reflection of the political sensitivities following the 1357 war between Majapahit and Sunda.

[272] Natasha Reichle, 2007, *Violence and Serenity: Late Buddhist Sculpture from Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 182. Ann R. Kinney et al., 2003, *Worshipping Siva and Buddha: The Temple Art of East Java* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 151, Sitowati and Miksic, 2006, 119; Sedyawati, 1994, 105.

[273] See 'Kling van een kris bekend stand als de kris van Knaud – *Keris buda*', available at <http://collectie.wereldculturen.nl/default.aspx?lang>, accessed 3 October 2018.

[274] Nala, 2009, 169, emphatically declares 'Hindu people on Bali have chosen the goddess Sarasvati as the symbol of knowledge, not Gaṇeśa or Gaṇapati.'

[275] Sedyawati, 1994, 162

[276] Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer, 2000, 'Skulls, Fangs and Serpents: A New Development in East Javanese Iconography', in Wobke Lobo and Stefanie Reimann, eds., *Southeast Asian Archaeology*

*Smaradahana* (Burning of Smara, God of Love), composed in the early-12th-century as a eulogy to the Kediri monarch Kameśwara, depicts Gaṇanjaya, or Victorious Gaṇa, as a divine warrior displaying a frightening appearance as if 'about to destroy the world'.[277] Pauline Scheurleer, scholar of Javanese art, theorises that the development of this aspect of Gaṇa's identity may have been a result of the 'myth of a local fierce deity adapted to Javanese court tradition' although the wrathful emanation of Gaṇa was likewise worshipped in India.[278] This suggests the possibility of a historical precedent for the Earthly Angel's role as a tutelary spirit in Cirebon's Shaṭṭāriyya cosmology.

*Korawasrama* (Struggle of the Kauravas), a Javanese late Hindu-Buddhist period sequel to the Indian *Mahabharata* epic that relates the ongoing conflict between the Pandawa and Korawa brothers, describes Gaṇa as the 'prime ancestor, before which many people make curses and take oaths, so that all their wishes maybe granted'.[279] Scheurleer identifies the presence of skull iconography on a number of East Javanese Gaṇa statues as derived 'from the important role of the skull in ancestor worship throughout the archipelago'.[280] These characteristics are significant given the subsequent importance of both oath taking and ancestor reverence in Javanese Islamic courts, such as at Cirebon.

The latest known visual depiction of Gaṇa in a Hindu context is a stone relief at the 15th-century temple of Sukuh, Central Java, contemporaneous with the establishment of Islam on Java (Fig. 2.4).[281] The Portuguese traveller, Tomé Pires,

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*1998: Proceedings of the 7th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Berlin, 31 August – 4 September 1998* (Hull: Centre for South-East Asian Studies, University of Hull), 190, interprets this as part of a general Javanese trend towards the 'demonization' of supernatural beings – a reference to Tantric Buddhist and Hindu deities appearing in their wrathful (*krodha*) aspect.

[277] Sedyawati, 1994, 137-159, provides a translation of *Smaradahana*, cantos 28-37, describing the magical power of Gananjaya (Victorious Gaṇa) as a divine warrior.

[278] Scheurleer, 2000, 194. Rao, 1992, 50. Tantric images, such as the monumental 14th-century West Sumatran statue of the ruler Adityavarman, holding a skull cup, wearing a textile decorated in a skull pattern and standing on a lotus throne in the form of skulls, may have resonated with local archipelago populations where ritual head-hunting was practiced until recent historical times.

[279] Reichle, 2007, 184. Zoetmulder, 1974, 129, tentatively dates the prose composition to the post-Majapahit period; Sedyawati, 1994, 162; Kinney, et al., 2003, 152. A statue, from Surabaya in East Java, dated 14th- to 15th-century now in the National Museum of Indonesia (Inv. No.199), depicts standing Gaṇa flanked by two jars with flowering lotus. The presence of the jars and lotus on Majapahit mortuary figures is usually associated with deceased royalty enshrined as deities.

[280] Quoted in Reichle, 2007, 184.

[281] Jan Fontein, 1990, *The Sculpture of Indonesia* (Washington: National Gallery of Art), 175, cites dates found on inscriptions at the site that cover a time-span 1416-1459. The assessment of the Sukuh sculptures as representing a 'naive' style, as proposed by Made Wijaya, 2014, *Majapahit Style*

writing in the first decades of the 16th-century, estimated there were around fifty thousand ascetics (*tapas*), similar to those depicted at Sukuh Temple, on the island. Significantly, Pires describes the close interaction between the Muslims and ascetics on the north coast of Java: 'And these men are also worshipped by the Moors, and they believe in them greatly; they give them alms; they rejoice when such men come to their houses'.[282] The respect of the coastal Muslim communities for the Śaivite practitioners likely arose from long familiarity. Muslim graves, the earliest dated 1368-9, are found in the environs of the Majapahit capital at Trowulan, East Java and indicate the presence of Muslims at the Hindu-Buddhist court.[283] The devotees of the two faiths almost certainly recognised similarities between Sufi and yogi doctrines, the latter are recorded in texts such as *Ganapati Tattwa* that address 'searching for unification with the deity'.[284]

The remote location of Sukuh Temple high on the slopes of Mt. Lawu, its esoteric imagery, sometimes overtly sexual, and terrace design, reminiscent of prehistoric *punden* sanctuaries, have led to scholarly interpretation that the site exemplifies the re-emergence of indigenous belief systems that predated Hindu-Buddhism.[285] Nevertheless, as Jo Grimmond suggests in her 2012 study of the temple, a close reading of temple's images removes the site's significance from the megalithic realm and locates it in the mainstream of Javanese Hindu art.[286] The important Gaṇa

(Denpasar: Yayasan Beringin Berapi), 129, ignores the consummate carving of the Gaṇa relief and the variety of sculptural styles at Sukuh documenting several generations of artists working at the site.

[282] Quoted in Ricklefs, 2006, 11. Pires description of the ascetics evokes the mendicant practices of Buddhist monks with their 'begging bowls' seen in Theravada Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia today.

[283] M.C. Ricklefs, 2001, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c.1200* (California: Stanford University Press), 5.

[284] M.C. Ricklefs, 1993, *War, Culture and Economy in Java 1677-1726* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin), 11, Lydia Kieven, 2013, *Following the Cap-Figure in Majapahit Temple Reliefs: A New Look at the Religious Functions of East Javanese Temples, Fourteenth to Fifteenth Centuries* (Leiden: KITLV), 85, referencing Zoetmulder (1965). See also Bernard Arps, 2016, *Tall Tree, Nest of the Wind: The Javanese Shadow-play 'Dewi Ruci' Performed by Ki Anom Soeroto: A Study in Philology* (Singapore: NUS Press), 465, fn.138 in his commentary on the mystical shadow play *Dewi Ruci*, where the hero Bima seeks the 'whence and whither of being.' Arps notes that the Qur'an speaks of the idea 'that God creates and recalls His creatures' while the 14th century Javanese poem *Arjunawijaya* by Mpu Tantular describes Śiva as the 'whence and whither of all humankind.'

[285] Typical of this viewpoint is Nigel Bullough, 1995, *Historic East Java: Remains in Stone* (Singapore: ADLine Communications), 97, 'these structures reflect ancient religious concepts predating the arrival of Hinduism …which saw a resurfacing of indigenous Javanese beliefs and customs.'

[286] Jo Grimond, 2012, 'Mountains, forests and water: A new approach to the study of the Javanese temple complex of Sukuh', in Alexandra Haendel, ed., *Old Myths and New Approaches: Interpreting Ancient Religious Sites in Southeast Asia* (Melbourne: Monash University), 138. The author makes no mention of the Gaṇa image in her discussion of the Sukuh, a temple she believes was closely connected to the cult of holy water (*amrita*).

relief at Sukuh temple, albeit puzzling in the precise interpretation, represents an expression of the most up-to-date trends in Śivaite Tantric practices, as understood by its followers, rather than a return to an ancient ritual past. [287]


**Fig. 2.4.** Gaṇa and the forging of the sacred keris, 1400-1500, Sukuh Temple, Karanganyar, Central Java. Photograph: Helmi, 2003.

The temple's Gaṇa stands naked on one leg before a metal-smith's workshop where a dagger is being ritually forged. The god holds a dog that has led several scholars to conclude the site was sacred to the Javanese Kalang people, originally an outcaste semi-nomadic class, who claimed descent from a dog.[288] Kalang identity resembles the non-conformist vagrant *vrātya* practitioners of Indian Vedic tradition whose patron deity was Gaṇeśa.[289]

The long association of Gaṇa with the power of oaths resonates with other narrative reliefs at the site, such as the *Sudamala* (The Exorcism of Durga) story whose theme is deliverance from a curse.[290] The expression of the god's role as protector is alluded to in other Sukuh reliefs of ithyphallic demonic figures displaying

[287] Stanley J. O'Connor, 1985, 'Metallurgy and Immortality at Candi Sukuh, Central Java', *Indonesia* 39: 60. Fontein, 1990, 175, correctly questions O'Connor's assumptions of a connection to the Ganacakra ritual although O'Connor's conclusions about the Tantric connection appear accurate.
[288] Wijaya, 2014, 126-129. Alternatively, O'Connor, 1985, 62, points to the 'King of the Dogs' who performed nocturnal Tantric rituals in charnel grounds in Tibetan accounts and a later arcane Central Javanese *kraton* dance. A contemporary *kejawen* interpretation is that the dog symbolises loyalty and ancestry (*keturunan*) with the relief intended to be read simultaneously as the chronogram 'Elephant in priest's turban-biting-dog' (*Gajah-wiku-anahut-buntu*), Agung Harjuno, personal communication, March, 2018.
[289] Rao, 1992, 10-11.
[290] Fontein, 1990, 175, see also Kinney et al. 2003, 275.

the same unusual hopping pose as Gaṇa.[291] The figures evoke the prophylactic Tantric guardians performing ecstatic dances at Bahal Temple complex at Padang Lawas, North Sumatra, dated 11th- to 13th-century.

The explicit sexual symbolism of some of the images at Sukuh may not have appeared at that time so 'entirely unacceptable to Islam'.[292] *Serat Centini* (The Tale of Centini) describes the picaresque adventures of several religious students, who are identified as practitioners of Shaṭṭāriyya, around the 1630s. They encounter heterodox 'religious students of ecstasy' (*santri birai*) who recite *dhikr* before abandoning themselves to all manner of sexual licentiousness.[293] The term *birai*, meaning in Javanese 'to be in love' or 'mad about', is likely related to the name of the Hindu-Buddhist Tantric wrathful deity, Bhairava, and the mystical trope 'becoming a Bhairava' as a description of untrammelled antinomian states occurs in Sufi texts into the 19th-century.[294] Stanley O'Connor, in his definitive essay on Sukuh Temple, reports traces of Tantric rites that could still be found in the Surakarta Palace, situated not far from Mt. Lawu, in the early 20th-century.[295] He cites an account of an ithyphallic court dance, known as the 'drunken elephant', which apparently included hopping steps just as seen on the Sukuh relief.

The last major surviving Hindu-Buddhist religious text from Java, *Tantu Panggelaran* (Founding of the World), written sometime between 1500 and1635, the period after the ascendancy of Islam, includes extensive references to Gaṇa.[296] The

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[291] See Herwig Zahorka, 2003, 'The *palang* design on ceremonial Indonesian textiles and its cultural-historic backgrounds represented with archaeological monuments and the purpose to use those penis inserts today', in National Museum Indonesia, *The International Conference on the Diversity of Nusantara Ikat Weaving*: *Cisarua, West Java, September 15th-17th 2003* (Jakarta: Proyek Pengembangan Museum Nasional), 38, plates A & B. Fontein, 1990, 175, proposes that the relief depicts Gaṇa flying as a heavenly messenger although an earlier Hindu-Buddhist iconographical convention, such as found at Borobudur Stupa, depicts flying deities with bent legs kneeling rather than standing upright. Neither Fontein nor O'Connor comment on the presence of other figures displaying similar stances at Sukuh.

[292] Jacques Dumarçay, 1991, *The Temples of Java* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 87.

[293] M.C. Ricklefs, 2007, *Polarising Javanese Society: Islamic and Other Visions* (Singapore: NUS Press), 36-37. Among the locations where the *santri birai* secretly gathered in the nineteenth century was Mantingan whose famous mosque is discussed here.

[294] Andrea Acri, 2019, 'Becoming a Bhairava in 19th century Java', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 47(139): 288.

[295] O'Connor, 1985, 62. Hints of Vajrayana Buddhist symbolism, particularly images of embracing 'mother-father' (*yab yum*) deities, is suggested in a contemporary East Javanese account of Adam, representing the Void (*sepi*), and Hawa, representing desire (*hawa napsu*), documented by Beatty, 1999, 169. Kate O'Brien, 2008, *Sutasoma: The Ancient Tale of a Buddha-Prince* (Bangkok: Orchid Press) cogently presents literary evidence for the practice of Tantric sexual yoga in medieval Java.

[296] Stephen C. Headley, 2000, 'Javanese Cosmogonies and Muslim Cosmographies: An Encompassing Knowledge?', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 28(82): 284, suggests 'Founding of the World' as an

text relates how the deity was appointed the guardian of the eastern portal of the cosmic mountain Mahameru. Although Sedyawati notes Gaṇa is not a major character in the Javanese shadow puppet theatre, the renowned Cirebon glass painter Rastika (1942-2014) evokes this ancient guardian connection in his depiction of an Earthly Angel calligram on a Cirebon *gunungan* that symbolises the cosmic mountain (Fig. 2.5).[297] The Earthly Angel's presence on the *gunungan*, a puppet displayed at the commencement of performances and regarded as possessing talismanic significance, echoes the placement of *tolak bala* panels at building entrances. Its position is centred in vertical alignment with the cosmic tree that forms the puppet's mountain shape. This references the *axis mundi* implied in the Earthly Angel's alternate name, Pillar of the Universe (*Sangga Buana*), who is said to exist as a 'spectral manifestation' and directional guardian dormant beneath the Kasepuhan Palace's ceremonially important north *alun-alun* square.[298]

**Fig. 2.5.** *Gunungan* depicting Earthly Angel calligram, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet [detail], Rastika (1942-2014), c.2005, Cirebon, leather parchment, pigments and gold paint. Photograph: Moh Isa Pramana Koesoemadinata.

*Tantu Panggelaran* offers a further intriguing hint of a historical connection between the worship of Gana in pre-Islamic times and the imagery of the Earthly Angel. The text mentions a location called Medang Gaṇa (*medang of Gaṇa*) among

appropriate English title for *Tantu Panggelaran* while acknowledging the complexities of translating the Javanese title with its Sanskrit etymology.

[297] Sedyawati, 1994, 173, ft.39.

[298] Tan, 2019, 118.

the 'countries' established on Java by the gods.[299] Medang Gaṇa was a semi-legendary Hindu-Buddhist kingdom in West Java whose name in the 17th-century became transformed into Sumedang, an important centre of Shaṭṭāriyya practice not far from Cirebon.[300] Contemporary local Sufi tradition identifies the Earthly Angel, in the form of Gaṇa, as the 'guardian of the land of Cirebon' (*danyang bumi Cirebon*) suggesting a forgotten connection with the region's ancient kingdom bearing his name.[301]

**Talismanic images: From the Hindu-Buddhist into the Islamic era**

The use of Arabic script to form the Earthly Angel calligram is prefigured by an earlier visual practice in Java, before the advent of Islam, where creatures attributed with special talismanic powers are depicted not as calligrams but in zoomorphic forms known as simulacra. These devices first appear in stone relief sculptures at 8th- to 9th-century Buddhist and Hindu temples in Central Java and include vegetal lions carved on terrace cornerstones at the Borobudur stupa (Fig. 2.6) and *garuda* antefixes at *candi* (temple) sites such as at Suntan, Cangkringan.[302]

Even after the development of a new range of decorative motifs in temple art in the East Javanese period (11th- to 15th-century), *kala* monster faces continued as vegetal simulacra located above entrances similar to earlier Central Javanese monuments.[303] The placement of the imagery in the magically liminal locations of

[299] Quoted in Sedyawati, 1994, 174. The etymology of the toponym *medang* is uncertain but likely related to the Indonesian *medan* meaning 'field'. *Tantu Panggelaran* describes how Batara Sri established Medang Gana and it was later the dwelling place of a ruler who was the incarnation of Kamadewa the god of love. The connection between Kama and Gaṇa may be more than coincidental as the *Smaradahana* is dedicated to Kama and prominently features the story of Gaṇa who 'developed his manner of loving with various acts' (Canto 37:14).

[300] <westjavakingdom.blogspot/2011/07/kerajaan-medang-jati>, accessed 2 April 2018. The kingdom was also known as Medang Jati.

[301] Safari, personal communication, 5 March 2018

[302] The antefix is in the collection of Prambanan Archaeological Museum, Klaten, (Inv. No: BG388). Klokke, 2000, 91-96 discusses the stylistic development of antefix vegetal ornament but Fig. 7 diagrams, drawings based on actual stone reliefs, do not appear to recognize the antefixes were intended to be read as simulacra.

[303] Marijke J. Klokke, 2000, 'Ornamental Motifs: The Stylistic Method Applied to Ancient Javanese Temple Art', in Wobke Lobo and Stefanie Reimann, eds., *Southeast Asian Archaeology 1998: Proceedings of the 7th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists, Berlin, 31 August – 4 September 1998* (Hull: Centre for South-East Asian Studies, University of Hull), 88-89, 96. The longevity of *kala* simulacra in Java is testified in an early 20th-century Yogyakarta batik cloth depicting the monster face in vegetal form illustrated James Bennett, 2011, *Beneath the Winds: Masterpieces of Southeast Asian Art from the Art Gallery of South Australia* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 104-105.

doorways and cornerstones attests to the lasting belief in simulacra possessing prophylactic power.[304]

**Fig. 2.6.** Architectural antefix depicting a lion as a vegetal simulacrum, 780-820, Borobudur Stupa, Magelang, Central Java. Photograph: James Bennett.

Support for this proposition is found in literature of the Hindu-Buddhist period where zoomorphic imagery in the form of the metaphors and similes became essential elements of poetic expression.[305] The relationship of the literary devices to architectural simulacra is underscored by the perception that the creation of poetry was analogous to erecting a temple. Hence the words of the text contained talismanic power.[306] The opening lines of the *Sumanasāntaka* (Death by the Sumanasa Flower) declare:

[304] The unambiguously ithyphallic rampant lions on the terrace corners at the slightly older Ngawen Temple, not far from Borobudur stupa, support the interpretation of lions as prophylactic as do the guardian lion statues currently installed at the east entrance of the stupa. The Ngawen lions were later repeated on the base of the Śaivite Kidal Temple in Malang, built around 1248 and the oldest surviving stone temple of the East Javanese period, refer John N. Miksic and Geok Yian Goh, 2017, *Ancient Southeast Asia* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), 472.

[305] Zoetmulder, 1974, 214, proposes that the devices reveal a basic element of Old Javanese thinking, 'the unity of the cosmos and the interrelatedness of everything in it.' This foreshadows the teaching of Tawhid introduced with Islam. Edi Sedyawati, 2006, *Budaya Indonesia: Kajian Arkeologi, Seni dan Sejarah* (Jakarta: PT Rajagrafindo Persada), 148, states that land forms and natural phenomena, such as clouds, that assume appearances resembling living creatures in Javanese poetry, are a literary trope derived from Indian Sanskrit *mahapoma* textual conventions.

[306] Peter Worsley et al., 2013, *Mpu Monaguna's 'Sumanasāntaka': An Old Javanese Epic Poem, Its Indian Source and Balinese Illustrations* (Leiden: Brill Press), 25. See also S. Supomo, 2006, 'The Sanskritization of *Jawa* and the Javanization of the *Bharata*', in Peter Bellwood, James J. Fox and Darrell Tryon, eds., *The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*' (Canberra: ANU Press), 309, ft.10.

The deity who is the supreme god of the poet's writing board is the essence of written characters…

He is given illusory form through unceasing meditation in order that he descends into this temple of books (*candi pusaka*).

Stuart Robson, scholar of Javanese literature, proposes that the Old Javanese term *palambang*, often applied to literary compositions, is directly related to the Modern Javanese *pralambang*, meaning 'secret or deep'.[307] A closely related concept is *pasemon* that refers to an 'allusion' or 'metaphor'. The Javanese root word *semu* means 'to seem like' or 'to be coloured by'.[308] *Pasemon* is commonly associated with literature but also it is a key aesthetic device in Javanese visual arts. There is a long tradition in Indonesian texts, spanning the Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic periods, where concealment is seen as a metaphor or source of spiritual power.[309] A famous poem, attributed to the 16th-century Sufi saint Pangeran Panggung, narrates one definitive episode of disguise in the *Serat Panji* (Tale of Panji), which is set in Hindu-Buddhist Java but became widely popular throughout the Islamic period.[310] On this occasion the hero, appearing in the masquerade of a puppeteer, is a metaphor for the presence of God manifest in the world but unrecognised. The same romance cycle presents Prince Panji in a variety of other disguises that contribute to enhancing his spiritual charisma.[311] The complex multivalent nature of reality, where the same image can simultaneously convey diverse meanings, like hidden *pasemon* allusions, is the essence of both simulacrum and calligram in the visual arts.

The references in medieval Javanese poetry to elephant simulacra are especially tantalising considering the subsequent frequency of the motif in Cirebon art and the development of the Earthly Angel calligram. Mpu Tantular's 14th-century allegorical poem *Porusādānśānta* (The Man-Eater Subdued), also known as *Sutasoma* after the name of the hero, describes a seashore scene where an elephant-shaped boulder was 'being washed over by waves… furiously spouting up sea water as if trumpeting, its

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[307] Stuart Robson, 1995, *Deśawarṇana (Nāgarakṛtāgama) by Mpu Prapañca* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 11, proposes that medieval Javanese literary texts, and this may also be applied to contemporaneous visual arts, created 'a bridge between the observable world and an inner truth.' This concept resonates with the Islamic notion of *lahir batin.* See also Helen Creese, 1998, *Pārthāyana*; *The Journeying of Pārtha: An eighteenth-century Balinese kakawin* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 30.

[308] Laurie J. Sears, 1996, *Shadows of empire: Colonial discourse and Javanese tales* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 7, cites Poerwadarminta (1937) for this definition.

[309] Creese, 1998, 37.

[310] Johns, 1965, 17.

[311] Creese, 1998, 37.

truck raised upwards to the sky'.[312] Elsewhere, *Pārthāyana* (The Journeying of Partha) recounts how the protagonist finds an 'elephant rock' from which 'poets in aesthetic rapture cast themselves in the waves'.[313] The presence of the simulacra in those locations implies that the power of the zoomorphic imagery is also associated with fraught or dangerous transitional zones in the landscape not unlike their visual placement in contemporaneous temple architectural schema. The seashore, for example, may be viewed both as land and sea, as a place of pleasure and danger, of arrivals and departures.[314]

**Fig. 2.7.** *Elephant as a vegetal simulacrum*, 1559, Mantingan Mosque, Jepara, Central Java; Tropenmuseum (TM-60054170). Photograph: Tropenmuseum.

The earliest surviving elephant simulacrum in an Islamic context is at the mid-16th-century Mantingan Mosque in Jepara, Central Java.[315] The mosque's veranda features a unique set of sixty-eight carved stone medallions, including a vegetal simulacrum of an elephant (Fig. 2.7). Although the setting of these stone medallions has been much altered by several past restorations, the sophisticated carving of the

[312] O'Brien, 2008, 96, canto 85.11.
[313] Zoetmulder, 1974, 369.
[314] Worsley et al., 2013, 638, discusses the debate by characters in *Sumanasāntaka* (Canto 35-36) regarding the relative merits of the seashore (*pasir*) compared to mountains (*wukir*). The beauty and delights of the seashore are praised as providing an appropriate location for erotic adventures, nevertheless, the heroine feels unsafe there. Among its melancholy sights is 'a ruined temple tower…(where) pitifully a statue of the god Gaṇapati lay fallen on the sea's edge. Washed by the waves, his eyes brimmed with water as if he wept.' (Canto 35:2).
[315] Hasan Muarif Ambary, 2003, 'Arkeologi dan Kajian Islam Indonesia', *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 1(2): 117, proposes zoomorphic devices in the visual arts became especially associated with the development of the Sufi tradition of forest recluses in north coast Java in the 16th-century but provides no further evidence for this conclusion.

medallions, suggests the choice of subjects was not arbitrary or intended to be merely decorative.[316] The elephant appears alongside a panel depicting the simulacra of a monkey with a crab (Fig. 2.9) as well as a variety of talismanic 'endless knot' configurations and auspicious floral designs. Today, Javanese wood carvers refer to zoomorphic simulacra and calligrams, as *ukiran memet* or 'difficult (hidden) carvings'.[317] This is a reference to the disguise of the subject with floral/vegetal ornament or script and it is closely related to the term *candra sangkala memet*, meaning hidden chronograms depicted as visual images and also associated with talismanic powers.[318] A *sangkala* chronogram above Mantingan's mihrab commemorates the date of the mosque's construction in 1559 with an enigmatic Hindu reference.[319]

Restoration of the mosque in 1978-1981 revealed hidden reliefs at the back of the stone medallions, depicting figurative scenes from the *Ramayana* epic, with selected faces disfigured. It seems likely the reliefs originate from an earlier Hindu temple that was built on the same site as a *makara* sea-monster architectural fragment is also found in the adjoining graveyard. The incorporation of the reliefs into the mosque structure may be related to the notional absorption or subversion of power associated with the pre-Islamic order and not merely as re-cycled building materials that were fortuitously available.[320] When the Islamic era simulacra and *Ramayana* reliefs are read together as a single totality they become an expression of *sirr* where truth may be found concealed behind outer appearances.

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[316] The restorations, including the apparent re-ordering and reported dispersal of some of the medallions, means much further research is required to substantively confirm their intended significance. Nevertheless, the notion that the combination of zoomorphic simulacra, 'endless knot' and floral motifs represents an established sculptural convention, conveying talismanic significance, is supported by the same three types of imagery appearing on the Lampung *lawon kori* pair of door, carved in the Javanese style, discussed in Chapter 4.

[317] B.A. Soepratno, 2004, *Ornamen Ukir Kayu Tradisional Jawa: Ketrampilan Menggambar dan Mengukir Kayu (2)* (Semarang: Effhar), 26.

[318] Chronograms that record dates concealed in the form of visual or textual riddles are associated with talismanic powers in many parts of the Islamic world. However Dick van der Meij, 2017, *Indonesian Manuscripts from the Islands of Java, Madura, Bali and Lombok,* (Leiden: Brill), 354, notes that *candra sangkala* rarely appear in Javanese Islamic theological texts despite being an important part of the island's literary tradition, as exemplified in the 1895 Cirebon manuscript *Layang Sumeraping Kangge Wangun Candrasengkala* (Explanation about How to Make a Candra Sangkala).

[319] The ambiguous chronogram is 'appearance-Brahman-colour-essence' (*rupa-brahmana-warna-sari*) for 1559, refer Hasna Anindyta, 2017, 'Pengaruh kebudayaan Cina terhadap arsitektur Masjid Mantingan', in *Seminar Heritage IPLBI* (Bandung: Institut Teknologi Bandung), 208.

[320] Richard M. Eaton, 2001, *Essays on Islam and Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 94-132, analyses patterns of temple desecration both by Muslim and Hindu rulers in India, proposing they were intended to subvert conquered centres of power rather than being ideologically driven by religious doctrines forbidding figurative images.

The only surviving sculptural depiction of an elephant simulacrum from the pre-Islamic period is a relief at the 13th-early to 14th-century Buddhist temple of Candi Jago, Malang (Fig. 2.8). It depicts an episode from *Pārthāyana* where the hero Arjuna gazes across a lake in which there is 'one rock completely covered by roots, [it] looked like an elephant with a trunk', and beyond to the pavilion of Kama, the god of love.[321] Significantly, the Mantingan panel likewise depicts the elephant standing in water, surrounded by lotus lilies, suggesting the carver may have been referencing *Pārthāyana* that was certainly still remembered in the 16th-century.


**Fig. 2.8.** Arjuna sees the elephant-shaped stone in the lake, from *Pārthāyana* narrative relief, 1275-1350, Candi Jago, Malang, East Java. Photograph: Helmi, 2003.

This relief raises the possibility that the panel depicting the monkey and crab simulacra may also intentionally convey a textual allusion. The most obvious claimant is the *Rāmāyaṇa* episode where Hanuman the monkey king, while building the land bridge to Lanka to rescue Princess Sita, encounters a hostile crab that he catches with his tail. This story is found in the Malay *Hikayat Seri Rama* (History of Prince Rama) that was known in Java since the 8th-century as is evident in the famous *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs at the Prambanan Śaivite temple complex.[322] The choice of the subject from the famous Malay text for the mosque's decoration may also have had a political subtext. The female-ruler of Jepara, Ratu Kalinyamat (d.1579),

[321] Creese, 1998, 267, canto 34, stanza 9. The appearance of the same trope in this much later Balinese version of the story testifies to the enduring nature of the imagery.
[322] Roy Jordaan, 2011, 'The Causeway Episode of the Prambanan *Rāmāyaṇa* Reexamined', in Andrea Acri, Helen Creese and Arlo Griffiths, eds., *From Laṅkā Eastwards: The Rāmāyaṇa in the Literature and Visual Arts of Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 167.

commissioned the Mantingan mosque and lies buried in the adjacent mausoleum. During Kalinyamat's lifetime, the kingdom formed an alliance with Malay forces to stage several unsuccessful naval expeditions against Melaka in an attempt to liberate the former Malay sultanate from Portuguese occupation.

**Fig. 2.9.** Monkey and crab as vegetal simulacra, 1559, Mantingan Mosque, Jepara, Central Java; Tropenmuseum (TM-60054169). Photograph: Tropenmuseum.

Both the *Pārthāyana* and *Rāmāyaṇa* epics continued to be considered mystically powerful following the rise of Islam in the 16th century. *Pārthāyana* leads into the *Arjuna Wiwāha* story where Arjuna performs ascetic penances and acquires a powerful weapon as a boon from Siva with which to destroy the demon Niwātakawaca that is wreaking havoc on the world. Until today, it is still considered among the most mystically potent of the *wayang* stories. *Rāmāyaṇa* tells the story of the avatar Rama, with the aid of Hanuman, defeating the ogre king Rahwana who is likewise wrecking havoc on the world.

Beyond these similarities, perhaps there is a further underlying conceit that connects the Mantingan panels and this involves the theme of water. Arjuna has to pass the lake – represented by the elephant/lotus simulacrum - to reach the pavilion of the god of love. Hanuman has to cross the sea – implied by the crab simulacrum – to rescue Rama's beloved from Rahwana. The relief on the reverse side of the elephant panel also depicts the subject of crossing water (Fig. 2.10).[323] Three figures look out

[323] The figurative relief aligns horizontally to the vertical elephant simulacra on the front of the stone panel. The combination of vertical and horizontal axies, seen also in the clouds on the ACM panel, is regarded as symbolic of the interconection of *lahir batin* in Java today.

over water, including Rama, in likelihood surveying the straits of Lanka across to the farther shore that is Rahwana's kingdom. A dwarf *panakawan* servant, his grotesque features un-defaced like the other figures, fishes with one arm irreverently raised high exposing his arm pit in disregard of the protocols of behavior in the presence of social superiors. They stand beneath two closely intertwined trees whose foliage forms a one-eyed *kala* monster simulacrum and that perhaps serve as a metaphor for the inseparable loyalties of the two heroes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The inclusion of the *panakawan* dwarf, a character often regarded as possessing occult powers, and the supra-natural trees implies that this is no ordinary scene but represents a potent spiritual moment. The significance of crossing/entering water is as a symbol of mystical initiation or empowerment that has long been current in Java.[324] It occurs most notably in the *Dewi Ruci* story where Bima enters the ocean to discover the 'whence and whither of being' of Sufi doctrine.


**Fig. 2.10.** Three figures, including Rama, standing by water, from *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative relief, reverse side of elephant simulacrum panel, presumably 1400-1500, Mantingan Mosque, Jepara, Central Java. Photograph: Napitupulu et al., 2017.

[324] It is perhaps more than just coincidental that the Kasepuhan Palace, Cirebon, preserves two pre-Islamic panels – the only surviving examples of Majapahit figurative wood carving and said to originate from Mantingan– depicting the story of Sri Tanjung in which the motif of water has a significant role symbolising spiritual purification. See Bennett, 2005, 128-129, fig. 70.

Early Javanese Islamic devotional poetry, such as *Suluk Wujil* (Song of the dwarf Wujil), dated 1607, repeatedly describe mystical experiences in terms of analogies found in pre-Islamic literature and performance practices.[325] The two visible simulacra and the hidden relief medallions installed in the threshold space of the mosque's veranda may allude to the idea of the spiritual journey/struggle involving the conquest of the lower *nafs*, represented by the demon Niwātakawaca and Rahwana. Only through achieving this victory can the devotee arrive at spiritual gnosis that is symbolized at Mantingan by the worshipper passing through the veranda and entering within the sacred space of the mosque itself.

A notable example of a man-made 'elephant rock' is found at Cirebon's royal garden retreat of where there is a composite stone simulacrum sculpture of an elephant which formerly stood in water (Fig. 2.11). The elephant is a carriage in which the sultan, perceived as the penultimate Sufi sage, reportedly sat to meditate.[326]

**Fig. 2.11.** Elephant, with raised trunk, as stone simulacrum, c.1741, Sunyaragi, Cirebon, West Java, stone, coral and stucco. Photograph: James Bennett.

Sunyaragi, meaning Place of Stillness, is said to have been constructed in 1741 and to be the gravesite of an unknown Chinese Muslim saint (*wali*).[327] The complex is

[325] For example, see Matthew Cohen, 2012, '*Suluk Wujil* and Javanese Performance Theory', *Performing Islam*, 1(1), 13-34.
[326] Another simulacrum rock sculpture at Sunyaragi features the hero Bima and a serpent, referencing an episode in the *Dewi Ruci* story where Bima travels into the ocean to seek the 'whither and whence of being.'
[327] Denys Lombard, 2010, *Gardens in Java* (Jakarta: École française d'Extrême-Orient), 11, 20. Current site guides do not mention the saint's grave although a ruined ground structure, clearly suggesting a Chinese tomb but simply signposted as 'Chinese monument' (*monumen Cina*), is located in a prominent position in the gardens.

a fantastic artificial landscape replicating the Javanese conceptualisation of the world as the 'mountain and sea'. There are miniature-shaped mountains and caves, built from natural coral limestone rocks, which originally were located in an artificial lake called Segara or the Sea.[328] The jagged rocks used to create Sunyaragi, including the elephant simulacrum, evoke the Cirebon *wadasan* motif such as seen on the ACM panel depicting the Earthly Angel.

The association of *wadasan* with spiritually charged or magical landscapes is further suggested by the presence of the motif in the form of miniature-mountains through which the winged *barong* lion appears to travel on the Singhabarwang carriage. Lion and elephant simulacra appear as *wadasan* carved on undated gravestones at the Mausoleum of Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon (Fig. 2.12).

**Fig. 2.12.** Gravestone with elephant heads as *wadasan* simulacra, undated, possibly 1900-1750, Mausoleum of Sunan Gunung Jati, Cirebon, West Java. Photograph: AGSA.

Tommy Christomy, historian of Shaṭṭāriyya practice, notes the multivalent reference to coral rocks (*karang*), in the West Javanese mystical term 'knowledge of

[328] Timothy E. Behrend, 1984, 'Kraton, Taman, Mesjid: A Brief Survey and Bibliographic Review of Islamic Antiquities in Java', *Indonesian Circle, School of Oriental and African Studies Newsletter* 12(35): 39. The lake, like the other water features, is now dry due to neglect and environmental degradation.

*karang*' (*ilmu karang*).[329] The metaphor implies the adept's invulnerability attained through the harnessing of supernatural powers. The depiction of the pachyderm simulacra in these various settings, including a mosque, royal retreat and mausoleum, over the time span of several centuries, implies the zoomorphic image conveyed significant meanings related to spiritual potency and power. It provides the historical context for the appearance of elephant-headed Gana as a calligram in Cirebon art.

**Earthly Angel Calligram from an Early Islamic Simulacrum.**

The oldest known surviving image of Gaṇa as a *tolak bala* talisman probably is a carved wooden panel, attributed to the fourth Cirebon sultan, Panembahan Girilaya (1601-1677), now preserved in the Kasepuhan Palace, but tentatively dated early-18th-century (Fig. 2.13).[330]

**Fig. 2.13.** Talismanic panel (*tolak bala*) depicting Gaṇa riding elephant as vegetal simulacrum, attributed to Panembahan Girilaya (1601-1677), 1650-1700, Cirebon, West Java, wood with traces of pigment; Kasepuhan Palace Museum, Cirebon. Photograph: AGSA.

[329] Christomy, 2008, 57-58. The word *karang* also refers to the name of a district in Tasikmalaya regarded as a centre of spiritual power in pre-Islamic times and the location of Pamijahan where the Shattariyyah saint Abdul Muhyi chose to live and die. Today Pamijahan is one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Java, attracting hundreds of thousands of Indonesian Muslims each year to visit there.

[330] Panembahan Girilaya is the posthumous name of Panembahan Adiningkusuma who was executed by his father-in-law Susuhunan Amangkurat I and subsequently buried at Giriloyo village near the Mataram royal mausoleum at Imogiri, Central Java. Fathurahman, 2008, 20, records the existence of an old Shaṭṭāriyya manuscript preserved in Giriloyo. Its presence there may not be coincidental.

The panel depicts a vegetal simulacrum of Gaṇa, wearing a priest's turban and holding a long bull-hook, riding an elephant. Both figures are drawn in profile view, reminiscent of a shadow puppet. The attribution to Girilaya may contain an element of truth, especially as the wood's patina and traces of white priming pigment imply considerable antiquity.[331] The direct involvement of Cirebon's court circle in the arts is well documented and the commissioning of talisman images was once the activity of the palace or individuals with royal connections.

The panel suggests that the old associations of Gaṇa with protection in battle continued into the Islamic period. Gaṇa's bull-hook is as much a lance as goad and the elephant still evoked connotations of warfare in the early18th-century despite the increasing use of firearms.[332] Another contemporaneous image of Gaṇa, as a chronogram for 1720, appears on a stone pillar at the mausoleum of the aristocrat Tumenggung Pusponegoro, adjoining the grave of the Sufi saint Sunan Gresik (d.1419) in Gresik, East Java (Fig. 2.14).[333]

**Fig. 2.14.** Chronogram (*sangkala*) in the form of Gaṇa crossing the sea, 1720, Makam Pusponegoro, Gresik, East Java. Photograph: James Bennett.

[331] Tan, 2019, 143, fn.183, records that the 19th-century painter, Raden Saleh, dated the panel to 1528 while Sm. Subroto and Parsuki, 1983/1984, *Album Seni Budaya Jawa Barat* (Jakarta: Proyek Media Kebudayaan), 66, claim that the year 1720 is written in Arabic in the Gaṇa figure.
[332] The importance of elephants in the Javanese courts is documented in the names Palimaan (Place of the Elephants) in Cirebon and Kali Gajah Wong (Man and Elephant River) in Yogyakarta that local tradition remembers as the place where the sultan's elephants bathed.
[333] Hasan Muarif Ambary, 1986, 'Epigraphical Data from 17th-19th Century Muslim Graves in East Java', in C.D. Grijns and S.O. Robson, ed., *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation: Papers form the Fourth European Colloquium on Malay and Indonesian Studies, Held in Leiden in 1983* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications), 26, reads the image of Gaṇa, resembling the style of a shadow puppet, as holding an arrow over the sea and forming a chronogram for 1720, the year before Pusponegoro died.

Both Girilaya and Pusponegoro lived in times of turbulent conflicts. Prince Girilaya was actively involved in the disastrous Pacirebonan War (1650) between the Cirebon and Banten sultanates while Pusponegoro led forces in the Surabaya War that ravaged East Java during 1717-1719.[334] The associations of Gaṇa with victory in battle may have continued in circles where the Sufi angelic-being could be perceived as a metaphor for the devotee's inner struggle to conquer the lower self in order to achieve the highest gnosis.

Several aspects of the Girilaya panel document the initial stage in the development of the *tolak bala* and the aesthetics of Cirebon art as it is known today. The panel shows Gaṇa riding his elephant beneath clouds formed by the *megamendung* motif that also appears on the ACM panel.[335] Palace oral histories and batik makers attribute the invention of *megamendung* to Walangsungsang, also known as Pangeran Cakrabuana (r.1447-1479).[336] It is said the prince was inspired to create the motif after seeing the reflections of clouds in the water with which he was about to perform ritual ablutions before Islamic prayer.[337]

In the panel's sky are cloud simulacra of flying birds that appear again as more naturalistic depictions in a later *tolak bala* panel of the Earthly Angel riding the Lion of Ali (Fig. 2.15). The carver has portrayed the birds with wings that are calligrams for the Ninety-nine Names of Allah. This panel is one of an identical pair that includes a dating of 1827-1837 on the reverse side with an enigmatic inscription referring to the seven birds.[338] A contemporary Cirebon interpretation reads the birds as representing the heron that flies between continents and symbolises individuals (*ahli saliq*) who have chosen separation from the world in order to embark on the

[334] Ricklefs, 1993, 169.
[335] Bruce Carpenter, 2009, *Javanese Antique Furniture and Folk Art* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet), 36, observes the *megamendung* is 'inevitably described as Chinese in origin, even though similar motifs are seen in purely Hindu-Buddhist art.' Certainly the cloud motifs on the Girilaya panel appear closer to the Majapahit style than contemporaneous depictions in Chinese decorative arts.
[336] Irianto, 2011, 145. According to one account, Walangsungsang was the founder of the batik village of Trusmi, now part of Cirebon, and also called Mbah Kuwu as the founder of Cirebon's dance mask tradition, refer Ross, 2016.
[337] The simple delineation of *megamendung* on the panel suggests we are viewing an early version of the motif. Today there are two varieties of cloud motif: *mega mendung* (heavy overcast skies foreshadowing rain) and *mega sumirat* (cloudy skies in hot weather) (Safari, 2010, 314).
[338] K.C. Crucq, 1932, 'Houtsnijwerk met inscripties in de kraton Kasepoehan te Cheribon,' *Djawa* 12, 9. My appreciation is expressed to Farouk Yahya for providing me with an English translation of Crucq's paper, personal communication December 2020. According to Crucq, the reverse inscription reads *manoek pipitoe njata goena/pamoertine apa doedoe ning manoesja* and is translated as 'the seven birds represent what is forbidden for men'. Nevertheless, this translation is questioned by a Javanese colleague and requires further research.

mystical journey in quest of God.[339] The birds also allude to the Cirebon proverb: 'The flying heron reaches the place of the water spinach (*kangkung*)'.[340] The *kangkung* representing the devotee who has emptied his/her mind of worldly distractions to become in essence like the plant's hollow stem.

**Fig. 2.15.** Talismanic panel (*tolak bala*) depicting the Earthly Angel riding the Lion of Ali (*Macan Ali*) as calligrams, 1827-1837, Cirebon, wood with gold leaf and pigment; Kasepuhan Palace Museum. Photograph: AGSA.

It is uncertain exactly when the talismanic image of Gaṇa as a simulacrum transformed into the calligram of the Earthly Angel. This had already occurred by the 19th-century when Cirebon commenced to develop a 'full-blown tradition of true figural calligraphy'.[341] A Cirebon manuscript copy of *Serat Panji Jayalengkara* (Story of Panji Jayalengkara), dated 1851, features various calligrams including both

[339] My appreciation is expressed to Achmad Opan Safari for his extensive commentary on this symbolism, personal communication, 5 March 2018; For a discussion of *ahli saliq* refer 'Salik dan Suluk – Kebenaran Hakiki', available at <alhakiki.tripod.com/hakiki025.html>, accessed 20 April 2018.
[340] *Kuntu manglayang anggakdi panggalihing kangkung,* Safari, personal communication, 5 March 2018.
[341] Behrend, 1996, 199.

the Earthly Angel, identifiable by the rooster's claw feet, and a four-legged elephant (Fig. 2.16).

**Fig. 2.16.** Earthly Angel and birds as calligrams, double-folio from *Serat Panji Jayalengkara* manuscript. 1851, presumably Cirebon, West Java, ink and pigment on paper; Sonobudoyo Museum. Photograph: Museum Sonobudoyo.

The composite physical features, which a contemporary Cirebon adherent of Sufi practice ambiguously interprets as expressing the mysticism (*taṣawwuf*) of the artist, also is found on the ACM panel and serves to emphasis the image's apotropaic power through hybrid appearances.[342] Similar claw or talon like-feet appear on several icons of Gaṇeśa documented by Ramachandra Rao in his comprehensive study of the god's worship in India.[343] The meaning of the Javanese letters comprising the *Serat Panji Jayalengkara* calligrams is deliberately illegible but the Earthly Angel drawing creates the *memet* chronogram for the date of its composition in 1851 and reads 'There is no elephant as big as a hill'.[344] The Angel's one-legged pose is reminiscent of the hopping Gana, likewise depicted facing a miniature mountain, on the relief at the 15th-century Sukuh temple.[345] The chronogram also includes a

[342] Safari, personal communication, 5 March 2018.
[343] Rao, 1992, 264-266. Rao identifies the claws as tiger legs while acknowledging their significance is unknown.
[344] Timothy E. Behrend, 1989, *Katalog Naskah Naskah Museum Sonobudoyo Yogyakarta* (Yogyakarta: Museum Sonobudoyo), 320, interprets the chronogram as 'There is no elephant as big as a hill' (*Oranana-gajah-saprawata-anak*). Behrend, 1996, 199, illustrates two exquisite bird calligrams from the same manuscript that are incorrectly assigned to the *Serat Selarasa* (1835).
[345] My appreciation is expressed to Virginia Hooker for pointing out this similarity, personal communication, Febuary, 2019. For contemporary Javanese *kejawen* spiritual practitioners, the mountain on the Sukuh relief is complimented by a wave, beneath Gaṇa's left foot, that together

diminutive heron, standing directly below the Earthly Angel, and on several other pages there are individual waterbird calligrams holding vegetal forms in their beaks. Their presence suggests the manuscript illuminator's intentional reference to the Shaṭṭāriyya proverb of the heron and water spinach symbolising the search for spiritual truth. The subject, like the Earthly Angel calligram, does not apparently illustrate any episode in the *Serat Panji Jayalengkara* that is a romance. Rather, the calligrams seek to imbue the manuscript, both as a narrative text and as an object, with talismanic power. The extent that Shaṭṭāriyya teachings spread outside court circles into the wider community, both Javanese and non-Javanese, at this time is documented in a handwritten colophon in the manuscript recording its sale by a Chinese named Oey Tek Nyi Jioe Te Kian on 27 June 1881.

The exceptionally esoteric significance of the Earthly Angel precluded its use as a batik garment motif but by the end of the nineteenth century Cirebon and other north coast Java batik centres were manufacturing quantities of batik cloths featuring a variety of bird calligrams.[346] Typically, these are head cloths and ceremonial drapes, both forms of textile that serve talismanic purposes of protection (Fig. 2.17).[347]

**Fig. 2.17.** Man's head cloth, with birds as calligrams, 1900-1940, north coast Java, cotton, indigo, hand-stamped batik, 90.0 x 91.0 cm; Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC, Art Gallery of South Australia (20124A19). Photograph: AGSA.

symbolises the Javanese concept of cosmic unity or 'sea and mountain' (*sagara wukir*). Agung Harjuno, personal communication, March, 2018.

[346] Ross, 2016, 211, notes evidence of this is the use of Arabic script in *jampi* charms inscribed on the back of Cirebon dance masks which appears to have increased around the beginning of the 20th century.

[347] See Fiona Kerlogue, 2001, 'Islamic Talismans: The Calligraphy Batiks', in Itie Van Hout, ed., *Batik: Drawn in Wax*, Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 134-135 for an extensive discussion of talismanic batiks.

The batik bird calligrams sometimes appear remarkably similar to Ottoman *ṭughra*, although it is uncertain how familiar the makers were with the monograms, and the production of the cloths may simply reflect a broadening perception of the importance of Arabic script in talismans. Flying birds as devolved zoomorphic images, derived from the *megamendung* cloud motif, feature in the borders of another finely batiked Cirebon head cloth (Fig. 2.18). Four earth-bound *kala* monster faces appear as simulacra utilising the *wadasan* stone motif. They compliment the symbolism of the airborne creatures and face towards the head cloth's empty *modang* centre that embodies Achjadi's 'concentration of protective power'.

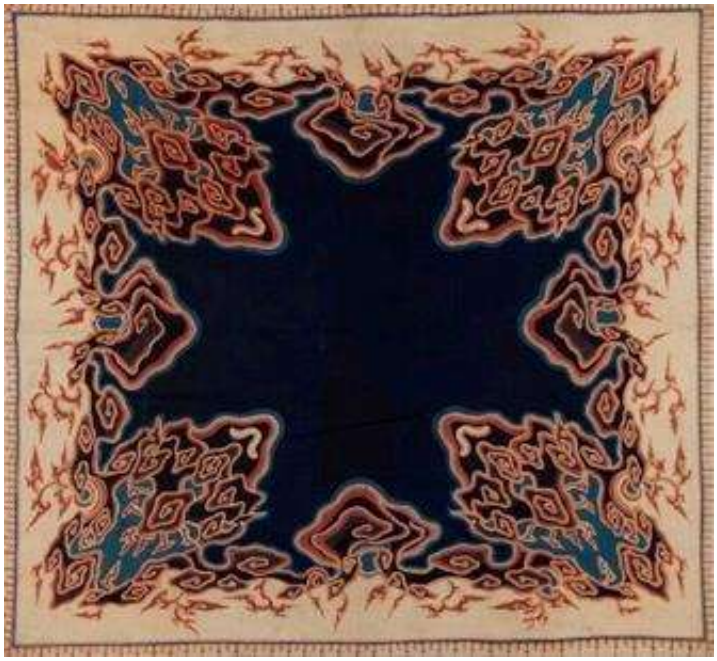

**Fig. 2.18.** Man's head cloth, with bird and *kala* simulacra, 1880-1925, Cirebon, West Java, cotton, natural dyes, hand batik; Tropenmuseum (RV-Liefkas-608). Photogaph: Tropenmuseum.

The bird simulacra, with accompanying the vegetal motifs, on this head cloth are depicted in highly attenuated forms yet they appear to evoke the heron and water spinach of the Shaṭṭāriyya proverb. Tan draws attention to repeated references in *suluk* devotional poetry to images of *lebur* and *luluh*, meaning 'to dissolve or to melt away'.[348] Rather than representing extreme figurative stylistisations, he interprets such Cirebon's simulacra as representing the dissolution of the boundaries between self and the divine essence.

[348] Tan, 2019, 132.

## Conclusion

The history of zoomorphic simulacra in Java, dating back over twelve hundred years, suggests there has been a long-held belief in the talismanic power of visual ambiguity dating from the Hindu-Buddhist era. The evidence is seen in numerous early temple reliefs and supported by medieval Javanese poetry where literary metaphors, evoking visual simulacra, appear in texts that were themselves regarded as mystically talismanic. The cultural currency attributed to the potency of concealment continued to be important following the rise of Islamic court cultures in the sixteenth century and is testified in imagery found across a diverse range of media, both visual and textual. The Islamic association of the imagery with talismanic power may be understood in the context of the mystical paradigm of *lahir batin* that is so important in Javanese sensibility and in Sufism. This history explains the longevity of belief in the prophylactic role of the deity Gaṇa that arose during the Hindu-Buddhist era and continued after the arrival of Islam in Java. Rather than being a response to Islamic religious restrictions against figurative depiction, the transformation of the elephant-headed god into the Earthly Angel calligram sought to enhance his prophylactic potency by disguising him in Arabic script revered for its sacred nature.

Today, largely due to the influence of literalist and normative interpretations of Islam, the talismanic implications of Cirebon calligrams and related zoomorphic images are increasingly being displaced by a secular emphasis on their role as expressions of aesthetic identity in the arts of West Java. In Indonesia they are recognised nationally as examples of a distinctive regional art style that has developed out of an extraordinarily rich aesthetic heritage and as one reflection of the diversity of the country's many ethnic traditions.[349] Nevertheless, for contemporary Shaṭṭāriyya students of Sufism, the Earthly Angel serves to 'remind the viewer of the essence of mystical teachings contained in Islamic texts and as a symbol of their identity as followers of *taṣawwuf*'.[350] Here the visual power of Gaṇa resides in the continuing visibility of his image as this unique Cirebon *tolak bala* calligram that appears in a range of contexts, including the magnificent examples of carved wooden panels still

[349] I Gede Arya Sucitra, 2015, 'Transformasi Sinkretisma Indonesia dan Karya Seni Islam', *Journal of Urban Society's Arts* 2(2): 97.

[350] Safari, 2010, 317. As Cohen, 2005, 34, notes, such images in Java have become 'an artful way to project one's identity.'

found in several royal palaces in Cirebon and Singapore's Asian Civilisations Museum.

# CHAPTER 2

## ʿ*Ilm* or Fashion?

## The Question of the Identity of the *Batik* Designs of Java

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This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper.

Signed

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# ʿ*Ilm* or Fashion?

# The Question of the Identity of the *Batik* Designs of Java


## Abstract

Southeast Asian scholars of Javanese textiles commonly interpret geometric batik motifs, generically known as *ceplokan*, as visual expressions of ʿ*ilm* specifically referencing the teaching of *tawḥīd.* This interpretation is especially popular over recent decades among local Muslim commentators as it emphasises the apparent religious orthodoxy of batik that is prized as a national art form in Indonesia and Malaysia, and has been recognised for inclusion on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (2009).

The paper investigates the long history of *ceplokan* which is among the most popular category of designs and whose origins date back to the pre-Islamic Early Classic Period (c. 700-900 CE) in Java. It examines whether the geometric motifs developed as a conscious response to ʿ*ilm,* or rather represent a process of cultural negotiation by which older Hindu-Buddhist textile designs were reinterpreted in the context of the new dress fashions that emerged following the ascendency of Islam in Java in the 16th-century. *Ceplokan* patterns became particularly admired in the Javanese sultanates that nurtured Islamic identity through the promotion of ʿ*ilm* and wider participation in the international world of Islamic culture. In this context, imported India textiles, featuring similar geometric designs, were a contributing factor to the development of the batik style now closely identified with Javanese aesthetics. The spiritual values that became associated with the court production of batik patterns, notably *ceplokan*, ensured the textile art form acquired a unique significance leading to its modern day interpretation as an expression of ʿ*ilm.*


## *Tawḥīd* and *Ceplokan*

In 2012, the Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia presented an exhibition of the batik collection of the anthropologist Ann Dunham (d. 1995), mother of the former United States president, Barack Obama. Dunham assembled the collection of around thirty-two 20th-century textiles, mostly long wrap cloths (*kain panjang*) and tube skirts (*sarong*), while living in Java for several decades from 1967. Among the works exhibited in *Ann Dunham's Legacy: A Collection of Indonesian Batik* in Kuala Lumpur were examples of central Javanese and north-coast Javanese geometric *ceplokan* and related *kawung* patterns. The Malaysian scholar Sheila Yussof, in her subsequent 2014 review of the Dunham exhibition, notes the collection includes 'geometric patterns (which tend to be the earlier designs)… such as the *parang* and *kawung* designs and the *sharīʿa*-compliant design like *ceplok*'.[351] The popularity of the three categories of batik pattern, especially *ceplokan* and *kawung*, is evident in

[351] Yussof, Sheila Ainon, 2014, 'The Politics, Art and Science of Batik', *IAIS Malaysia Bulletin on Islam and Contemporary Issues* 20: 14.

their widespread use for commercially printed textiles and decorative arts in Indonesia and Malaysia today. Her reference to *sharīʿa* acknowledges a common perception that their geometric formalism, almost invariably lacking naturalistic imagery, avoid the risks leading to the idolatry of representation and thus is 'strictly Islamic'.[352]

Yussof's observation is symptomatic of the tendency, over recent decades, among Malaysian and Indonesian scholars seeking to locate Southeast Asian Islamic art history within the perceived boundaries of orthodox doctrinal knowledge, often through specifically referencing *tawḥīd* (divine unity). The rise of religious nationalism in Malaysia and Indonesia has deeply influenced contemporary discourse surrounding the region's aesthetic identity, and especially the history of batik that is claimed as a national art form by both Malaysia and Indonesia where its historical heartland is found in Java.[353] The First National Cultural Congress, held in Kuala Lumpur in 1971, sought to directly equate Malay art forms with Islam.[354] The Indonesian emphasis on the significance of knowledge of *tawḥīd* in art is highlighted in the 1995 curatorial manifesto of Jakarta's Islamic Arts Festival, *Istiqlal II* that included contemporary batik. It states art is intended as a 'service to God… a realisation of the oneness, the unity, of God'.[355] The Malaysian art historians Raja Fuziah, Raja Yun Uda, and Abdul Rahma Al-Ahamdai define the evolution of the archipelago's Islamic art traditions as guided by knowledge of specific principles whose 'core consciousness is Tawhid, or the unity of Allah'.[356] Their colleague,

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[352] Rens Heringa, 1996, 'The Historical Background of Batik in Java', in Rens Heringa and Harmen C. Veldhuisen, eds., *Fabric of Enchantment: Batik from the North Coast of Java from the Inger McCabe Elliot Collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art), 180. JE Jaspers and Mas Pirngadie, 1916, *De Inlandsche Kunstnijverheid im Nederlandsch Indië III: De batikkunst.* (Netherlands: Van Regeeringswege Gedrukt en Uitgegevan Te 'S-Gravenhage Door De Broek & Kunstdrukkerij, Mouton & Co.), 132, record only one *ceplokan* figurative motif that is *Tjeplok grameh latar ireng* (Gourami fish on a black background). They note the popularity of this motif in Indian and Persian Islamic art.

[353] There have been distinct differences in the unfolding dynamics of religious nationalism in Malaysia and Indonesia. In Malaysia, this commenced as a politically-driven movement whereas in Indonesia it was neither state-directed nor identified with one particular ethnic group but was a growing response to the global resurgence of Islam from the mid-late 1970s. For an overview of batik in this religious-political context see Marshall Clark, 2013, 'Cultural Politics: Batik and Wayang in Indonesia and Malaysia', *The Asian Arts Society of Australia Review* 22(1): 13-15.

[354] Nirajan Rajah, 2001, 'Insyirah Al-Sadr: The Art of Sulaiman Esa in Petronas Gallery', *Insyirah: Lukisan Sulaiman Esa dari 1980 hingga 2000* (Kuala Lumpur: Petronas Gallery), 33.

[355] WM Abdul Hadi et al., 1995, 'Pengantar Tim Curator (Curators' Comments)', in *Seni Rupa Kontemporer Istiqlal: Istiqlal Contemporary Art* (Jakarta: Yayasan Festival Istiqlal), 12: 'Dalam tradisi Islam, seni adalah sarana ibadah. Semua bentuk ibadah adalah realisasi tauhid, penyaksian dan pembuktian bahwa Tuhan itu adalah satu.'

[356] Raja Fuziah Raja Yun Uda and Abdul Rahma Al-Ahamdai, 2000, 'Malay Arts and Crafts: Islamic Inspiration in Creativity,' in Mohd Taib Osman, ed., *Islamic Civilisation in the Malay World* (Kuala

Othman Yatim, chose a *ceplokan* textile from the southern Philippines to illustrate his proposition that the choice of geometric motifs was a conscious decision by Muslim artists in that it 'helps strengthen the teaching of Tawhid… [as] they symbolise an eternal continuity depicting the characteristics of Allah which has no beginning or end'.[357] The Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia's *The Message and the Monsoon: Islamic Art in Southeast Asia* (2004) exhibition catalogue further suggests that 'the discouragement of figural representation resulted in the highest level of artistic creativity'.[358] The exhibition's focus on non-figurative works of art, including various *ceplokan* textiles, implies that the heritage of Islamic art in the region was inextricably linked to knowledge of these doctrinal strictures.

The use of geometric patterns in the Indo-Malay world, however, does predate the arrival of Islam. There is evidence of *ceplokan* motifs being already present in Javanese art of the early Hindu-Buddhist period between the 7th- to 10th-centuries. This suggests knowledge of doctrines like *sharīʿa* and *tawḥīd* had little direct influence on their formative development.[359] The retrospective application of theological terms to historical styles avoids the vexing issue of establishing precise dates for the evolution of geometric styles in batik. Ironically, such an approach detracts from understanding the seminal role of *ceplokan* in defining Southeast Asian Islamic aesthetics whose heritage is testified in the Anne Dunham collection. An examination of the history of *ceplokan* batik reveals this heritage is not so much inspired by a conscious desire to articulate orthodox theological knowledge, but was a manifestation of a complex and nuanced cultural dialogue during the 16th- to 18th-

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Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka & The Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture), 285.

[357] Several scholars have thoroughly analysed how *tawḥīd* came to occupy a 'central position' in the interpretation of geometrical designs; see in particular Othman Yatim, 1995, *Islamic Arts* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka), 5; and Gülru Necipoğlu, 1995, *The Topkapi Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture: Topkapi Palace Museum MS H.*1956/*Gülru Necipoğlu; with an Essay on the Geometry of the Muqarnas y Mohammad al-Asad* (Santa Monica, CA: Centre for the History of Art and Architecture). This commenced in late-19th-century European Orientalism and was later widely promotion in publications associated with the World of Islam Festival, launched in 1976, greatly influencing the scholarship of Southeast Asian art historians and contemporary artists, such as Sulaiman Esa (Malaysia) and AD Pirous (Indonesia).

[358] Dzul Haimi Mohd. Zain, 2005, 'The Art of Nusantara: The Southeast Asian Frontier of Islam' in Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia, *The Message and the Moonsoon: Islamic Art in Southeast* Asia (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia), 34-39.

[359] The general history of *ceplokan* and *kawung*, which are among the earliest and most widely distributed patterns known to artists, is outside the scope of this chapter. A Harappan storage jar, dated 2,700-2000 BCE, in the National Museum of India collection, is probably the oldest surviving representation of *kawung*. *Ceplokan*-like geometric patterns appear in diverse media all over the Muslim world, most notably in 15th- to 16th-century Anatolian style carpets.

centuries Islamic period in Java and its cultural diaspora throughout the Indo-Malay archipelago.[360] Central to this dynamic was the influential role of commercially imported Indian textiles, commonly displaying *ceplokan*, so prized by the sultanate courts for wear and exchange as trade goods.

**Definitions of *Ceplokan***

The Indonesian batik scholar Judi Achjadi defines *ceplokan* in its simplest form as 'the effect created by dropping the contents of an egg in a frying pan or motifs that assume a similarly round shape… constantly repeated… [and] often set within squares'.[361] The Javanese word is intended to be onomatopoeic, imitating the sound of something being dropped or plunked down.[362] The repeated round shapes in *ceplokan* typically assume the appearance of flowers drawn from above in a star or rosette configuration with four or eight points.[363] An elegant *sarong*, depicting two classic variants of *ceplokan*, from the Javanese north coast batik centre of Indramayu, features in the Dunham collection (Fig. 3.1).

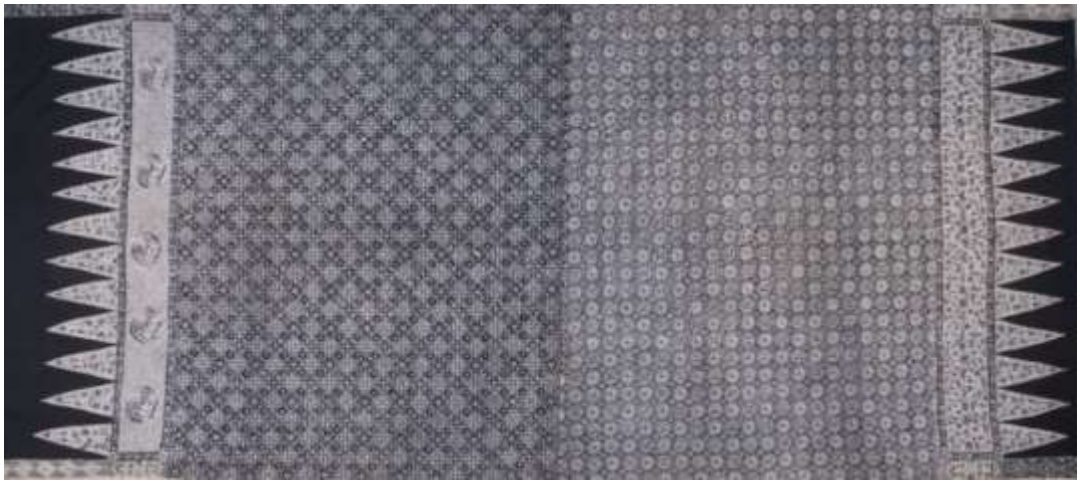

**Fig. 3.1.** Tube skirt (*sarong*), with two contrasting variants of *ceplokan* in a configuration known as 'morning-evening' (*pagi sore*), 1900-1960, Indramayu, West Java, wax-resist batik on cotton, 104.0 x 250.0 cm; Anne Dunham Collection. Photograph: Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia.

[360] Refer James Bennett, 2005, 'Islamic Art and Civilisation in Southeast Asia', in James Bennett et al., *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art and Civilisation of Southeast Asia* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 32, for a discussion of the widespread vogue among Muslim elite circles throughout the Indo-Malay archipelago, for adopting the Javanese court fashions in the visual and performing arts.
[361] Judi Achjadi, 2011, *The Glory of Batik: The Danar Hadi Collection* (Jakarta: Bab Publishing House), 34.
[362] My appreciation is expressed to Emeritus Professor Virginia Hooker for sharing her email correspondence (11 April 2016) on the subject with Professor George Quinn, Australia National University. Professor Quinn cites the onomatopoeic use of the Javanese word in *endhog ceplok* (fried egg) and *keplok-keplok* (clap hands or applaud).
[363] A. Steinmann, 1947, 'Batik Designs', *CIBA Review* 58: 2114.

*Ceplokan* encompass a diverse array of pattern-types whose boundaries often defy precise categorisation. The batik designer Iwan Tirtaamidjaja observed the interlocking quatrefoil *kawung* pattern may be considered a type of *ceplokan* but 'because of its great antiquity and striking severity… has become regarded as a separate type of batik design'.[364] Another important related family are the *ganggong* motifs, named for their resemblance to a certain species of freshwater marsh plant and featuring a star or cross 'with its points drawn out into long coils like the stamens of a flower'.[365] There is also the western Indian double-ikat woven *patola* recreated in batik *cinde* designs where the batik imitation of the weave is known as *nitik*. A magnificent Yogyakarta *cinde* cloth in the Dunham collection incorporates around twenty-six different versions of *ceplokan* and *kawung* in *nitik* style.[366] The Dutch East Indies scholars, J.E. Jasper and Mas Pirngadie, in their pioneer 1916 study of batik, also categorise *tambalan*, a batik motif imitating patchwork cloth stitched in triangular patterns, as *ceplokan.*[367]

Despite contemporary readings of the geometric patterns, such as those proposed by Yussof and Yatim, it is telling that there are only two references to Islam in the 139 *ceplokan* motif names recorded by Jaspers and Pirngadie. The motif *Goerit wesi latar ireng* (Gurit wesi on a black background) is described as gaining its title from the name of one of the heroes in the Javanese romance, *Serat Menak* (Tale of Menak). The story-cycle recounts the adventures of Amīr Ḥamza, uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, and was once popularly performed in the Javanese rod-puppet theatre. The second example, *Cinde kenanga latar ireng* (Ylang-ylang flowers on a black background), is also titled 'Allah's nine *wali* of the blessed island of Java, one

[364] N. Tirtaamidjaja, 1966, *Batik: Pola dan Tjorak* (Jakarta: Penerbitan Jambatan), 25. Among Javanese batik makers the *kawung* design is often described as inspired by the shape of a split *areca* palm nut that was once commonly chewed with betel leaf as a mild stimulant. Jan Wisseman Christie notes a Central Javanese inscription, dated 877, listing a *luir mayang* textile pattern and this may refer to the *areca* blossom: 1993, 'Ikat to Batik: Epigraphic Data on Textiles in Java from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Centuries', in Marie-Louise Nabholz-Kartaschoff, et al. eds., *Weaving Patterns of Life: Indonesian Textile Symposium 1991* (Basel: Basel Museum of Ethography), 20, This suggests the possibility that the pattern's name alludes to a very early version of *kawung* or *ceplokan.*

[365] Tirtaamidjaja, 1966, 25

[366] Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia, 2012, *Anne Dunham's Legacy: A Collection of Indonesian Batik* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Arts Museum of Malaysia), 94-95. The textile is published upside-down.

[367] Ruth Barnes and Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, eds., *Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles: The Mary Hunt Kahlenberg Collection* (Munich: Delmonico Books, Prestel Publishing), 124, illustrate the earliest surviving *tambalan* batik cloth, which is radiocarbon-dated to the seventeenth century. James Bennett and Rusty Kelty, eds., illustrate an 18th-century Indian trade-textile version of the design: 2015, *Treasure Ships: Art in the Age of Spices* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 224. According to one Javanese tradition, the magical patchwork jacket, named Antakusama, miraculously fell down from heaven through the roof of the Great Mosque of Demak.

in the centre and the other eight radiating around him'.[368] Other additional titles listed for this *ceplokan* version of an Indian woven *patolu* motif include the 'Wheel of faith with eight spokes', an apparent allusion to the Buddhist *dharmacakra*, and 'Vishnu's *cakra* with eight rays'.

The alternate names for the Ylang-ylang flowers design testify to the extent to which Islam and earlier Hindu-Buddhist identity shared the same tradition in the popular imagination of batik makers and wearers until the 20th-century. The distinct four-pointed configuration that is a definitive element of *ceplokan* motifs led many 20th-century batik scholars to adopt the pre-Islamic Javanese term *mancapat* (outer four) to describe them.[369] The scholar of Southeast Asian textiles, Robyn Maxwell, encapsulating the views of much Dutch scholarship, proposes the star/rosette motifs of such *ceplokan* reflect an ancient preoccupation with the Hindu-Buddhist ritual orientation of *mandala* aligned to the four cardinal points.[370] Scholars of Malay-Indonesia archipelago art since the 19th-century have evoked the 'layer cake' model to describe the accumulative processes by which different foreign influences, including Islam, overlaid a unique indigenous artistic identity.[371] The evocation of *sharʿīa*-compliance and *tawḥīd* by Yussof and previously cited scholars may be understood as seeking to counter this history of depreciating the significance of Islam in the cultural heritage of Malaysia and Indonesia.

[368] Jaspers and Pirngadie, 1916, 144.
[369] Early 20th century Dutch structuralist anthropologists, including J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong and W.H. Rassers, first appropriated the term in an attempt to rationalise diverse Javanese classificatory systems. It originally referred to the territorial stratification of villages.
[370] Robyn Maxwell, 1990 (2003), *Textiles of Southeast Asia: Tradition, Trade and Transformation* (Canberra: Australia National Gallery), 200-203; Veronique Degroot, 2012. 'Temples and Landscapes in South Central Java', in Alexandra Haendel, ed., *Old Myths and New Approaches: Interpreting Ancient Religious Sites in Southeast Asia* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing), 131-32, proposes a more complex picture, as epigraphical evidence suggests 'two perceptions of space were challenging one another' in early Javanese Hindu-Buddhist society. One was the imported Indian perception of the east/south/west/north cardinal directions and the other was an indigenous Javanese dualistic viewpoint emphasising east/west and north/south. Moreover, John Miksic warily notes the actual meaning of the word *mandala* changed greatly from the early Javanese Hindu-Buddhist period to the later Majapahit era: 2012, 'Life Among the Ruins: Habitations: Habitation Sites of Trowulan' in Alexandra Haendel, ed., *Old Myths and New Approaches: Interpreting Ancient Religious Sites in Southeast Asia* (Clayton: Monash University Publishing), 159.
[371] James Bennett analyses the evolution of the 'layer cake' model and doctrinal approaches, here typified by Yussof and Yatim, in Indonesian and Malaysian art scholarship: 2010, 'Islamic Art in Southeast Asia', in Jan Van Alphen, ed., *A Passage to India* (Brussels: Bozar, Centre for Fine Arts), 149-168. The historical foundations for the 'layer cake' can be found in T.S Raffles *The History of Java* whose theme was the lost greatness of Java's pre-Islamic past: 1988 (Singapore University Press).

### *Ceplokan* and *Sharīʿa*

The earliest apparent Javanese reference placing *ceplokan* in the context of *sharīʿa* law is the didactic text, *Sasana Sunu,* composed in the 1820s by the poet aristocrat, Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II. It exhorts the elite younger generation to adhere to *sharīʿa* in their daily lives at a time when the Islamic faith is neglected.[372] Part Five of *Sasana Sunu* instructs the reader to choose appropriate batik designs and warns it is *ḥarām* (unlawful) to wear fabric depicting living forms. Instead, Yasadipura advises, there are many *ceplok dedaunan* (*ceplokan* with foliage motifs) and other patterns from which to choose.

Yasadipura was certainly aware of the popularity of *ceplokan* among the Arab *kauman* communities in Java, such as Kampong Kauman located near the Great Mosque and *kraton* (palace) in Surakarta, Central Java, where he lived. The communities consisted largely of Hadrami immigrants who were widely respected for the religious authority derived from their *sayyid* (descendants of the Prophet) ancestry. They were also successful merchants and were actively involved in batik manufacture. Geometric patterns, often imitating imported Indian *patola,* were produced and worn by Indo-Arabian *kauman* wives and devout local women in accordance with Islamic precepts. The popularity of the patterns extended beyond textiles to the use of European-manufactured tiles to create *ceplokan* floor mosaics in the early-20th-century mansions of wealthy merchants in *kauman* centres, such as Kota Gede, Yogyakarta. The batik scholar Fiona Kerlogue, commenting on a cloth imitating a *patolu* pattern created by batik-makers of Arab descent in Pekalongan, notes its appearance is evocative of ceramic tiles decorating Middle East mosques.[373]

When *Sasana Sunu* advises the reader to wear batik *ceplokan* and imported Indian *patola,* Yasadipura II does not specifically cite *tawḥīd* but differentiates these designs to batik 'made in the present era' in the Indonesian translation of the text.[374]

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[372] Rens Heringa, 1996, 'The Historical Background of Batik in Java', in Rens Heringa and Harmen C Veldhuisen, eds., *Fabric of Enchantment: Batik from the North Coast of Java from the Inger .McCabe Elliot Collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art), 62; My appreciation is expressed to Jahfar Shareef for pointing out the same *patola* motifs occur as mosque decoration in the Malabar communities of Kerala, India, many of whom were also comprised of Arab traders married to local women, personal communication November 2016. The textile motifs are also documented appearing in Hindu temple frescoes of the same period in south India.

[373] Fiona Kerlogue, 2004, *The Book of Batik: Featuring Selections from the Rudolf G. Smend Collection* (Singapore: Archipelago Press), 45.

[374] Andhika Utama, 2011, 'Terjemahan Teks Serat Sasana Sunu'. *Jawa Ampuh Blog*, <http://jawaampuh.blogspot.com.au/2011/01/terjemahan-teks-serat.sana.sunu>, accessed 22 June 2016.

The time-honoured use of *ceplokan* imbued the designs with an inherent superiority over the fashionable trends of batik made in the degenerate era when the author lived under the *kāfir* (infidel) Dutch occupation of Java. The implicit suggestion is that the prestige of *ceplokan* derived foremost from their antiquity. Yasadipura II, familiar with the genealogies of the Central Javanese royal houses, extending back to the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit dynasty that ended around 1500, would have understood antiquity as contiguous with the pre-Islamic ancestral past.

### *Ceplokan* in the Hindu-Buddhist Period and the Arrival of Islam

The oldest known depiction of *ceplokan* motifs in Indonesia are decorative reliefs found at the Buddhist temple of Candi Sewu, erected around 782, in Central Java (Fig. 3.2). The reliefs appear to replicate textile hangings and the art historian Hiram Woodward proposes the designs may be based on imported Chinese woven silks.[375] As well as two basic geometric configurations, a third *ceplokan* design consists of a striking three-dimensional representation of square compartments each containing a flower. This evokes the stone *peripih* boxes, whose consecrated offerings included gold foil flowers, interred beneath the sanctuary foundations of Javanese Hindu and Buddhist temples. The probability that *ceplokan* possessed spiritual significance during the early Hindu-Buddhist period has been supported by the art historian Mary-Louise Totton in her analysis of decorative imagery on the Loro Jonggrang temple, adjacent Sewu at Candi Prambanan, whose construction commenced under a century later in 850. Here carved representations of *ceplokan* textiles appear on the walls of the Siva *garbhagriha* (womb chamber) sanctuary and in the spiritually potent threshold space of the vestibule.[376] The continuing ritual significance of the geometric motifs is testified in their frequent appearance in Hindu-Buddhist sculpture in subsequent centuries. Images of deities dated c. 1300 from Candi Singosari in Malang, East Java, include Durga, wearing *ceplokan*, slaying the demon Mahisha and the temple guardians, Nandisvara and Mahakala, dressed in *kawung* wrap cloths.

[375] Hiram W Woodward, 1977, 'A Chinese Silk Depicted at Candi Sewu', in K.L. Hutterer, ed., *Economic Exchange and Social Interaction in Southeast Asia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan), 233-243.
[376] Mary-Louise Totton, 2005, 'Cosmopolitan Tastes and Indigenous Designs – Virtual Cloth in a Javanese *candi*', in Ruth Barnes, ed., *Textiles in Indian Ocean Societies* (London: Routledge), 119.

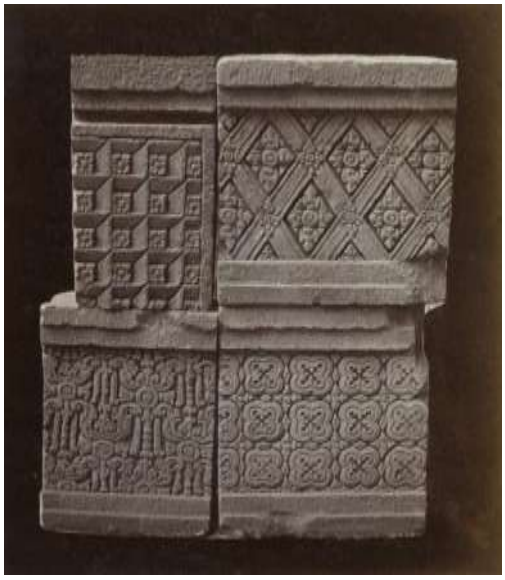

**Fig. 3.2.** Carved stone panels based on textile patterns, found at Candi Sewu temple, Central Java, erected c.782, documented in 1865 photograph; Museum Volkenkunde (1403-3792-25). Photograph: Museum Volkenkunde.

The lasting presence of *ceplokan,* following the gradual ascendancy of Islam in the 16th-century, is a reminder that use of notional terms, like 'Hinduism', 'Buddhism' and 'Islam', to define art forms is 'problematic because each of these terms implies a wide disparity… in practices and beliefs'.[377] The continuity of the motifs may be understood through examining the complex, sometimes contradictory, processes by which Javanese society negotiated the arrival of the new religion at a time of expanding international trade. The initial spread of Islam into Southeast Asia was largely peaceful, and the phenomena of gradual conversion resulted in the host societies fostering a 'Muslim progeny with strong pre-Islamic cultural and religious roots'.[378] The Portuguese observer Tomé Pires in 1515 recorded the important role of Muslim foreigners, often from merchant backgrounds, in establishing the Javanese sultanates, whose multicultural populations further nurtured the dynamic of syncretism. The historian Merle Ricklefs suggests the question surrounding the establishment of their Islamic identity is 'more one of Javanisation than

[377] Angelo Andrea Di Castro, 2012, 'Graves, Trees and Powerful Spirits as Archaeological Indicators of Sacred Spaces', in Alexandra Haendel, ed., *Old Myths and New Approaches: Interpreting Ancient Religious Sites in Southeast Asia* (Clayton: Monash University Press), 239.
[378] Peter Riddell, 2003, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian World: Transmission and Response* (Singapore: Horizon Books), 101.

Islamisation'.[379] This process is typically seen in the utilisation of Hindu-Buddhist architectural elements in early Javanese mosques and saints' tombs.[380]

The conversion to Islam was not always a process of seamless syncretism. In his survey of the history of batik in Indonesia, the great Javanese batik artist and connoisseur K.R.T. Hardjonogoro observes that 16th-century Java experienced a 'spiritual and cultural revolution of great intensity'.[381] In some circumstances it required the abrupt abandonment of pre-existing art traditions that did not resonate with the new beliefs. *Serat Dermangandul*, a satiric polemic written around 1879, possibly by a Christian Javanese, speaks of the early burning of non-Islamic texts, 'otherwise the Javanese would not have converted to Islam till after a thousand years'.[382] This revisionist account of the spread of Islam in Java nevertheless is supported by almost the complete disappearance of Majapahit literature on the island by the end of the 16th-century. The changing cultural landscape is evident in the widespread destruction of pre-Islamic places of worship with their associated iconography. Renovations of the 16th century Mantingan Mosque in Jepara, Central Java, in 1978-1981, revealed the recycling of stone reliefs, depicting the *Ramayana* epic, apparently from a Hindu temple.[383] The *Ramayana* figures had been deliberately defaced and their reverse sides finely carved with the non-figurative decoration for which the mosque is justly famous today.

The continuity of indigenous elements of material culture, including textiles, was ensured through their re-conceptualisation within narratives of Islamic piety, while maintaining selected references to the pre-Islamic ancestral past.[384] For

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[379] Merle Calvin Ricklefs, 2001, *A History of Java since c.1200* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 16.

[380] See Uka Tjandrasasmita, 1984, *Islamic Antiquities of Sendang Duwur* (Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional); Moehamad Habib Mustopo, 2001, *Kebudayaan Islam di Jawa Timur: Kajian Beberapa Unsur Budaya Masa Peralihan* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Jendela); and Wijaya, Made, 2014, *Majapahit Style* (Sanur: Yayasan Beringin Berapi).

[381] See K.R.T. Hardjonogoro, 1980, 'The Place of Batik in the History and Philosophy of Javanese Textiles: A Personal View', in Mattiebell Gittinger, ed., *Indonesian Textiles: Irene Emery Roundtable on Museum Textiles 1979 Proceedings* (Washington DC: The Textile Museum), 232-242.

[382] Quoted in S Supomo, 1997, 'From Sakti to Shahadah: The Quest for New Meanings in a Changing World Order', in Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street, eds., *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society: A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns* (Leiden: Brill), 224; Merle Ricklefs describes the anonymous author referring to the destroyed Majapahit books as 'the honoured *Buda* heirlooms': 2007, *Polarising Javanese Society: Islamic and Other Visions (c.1830-1930)* (Singapore: NUS Press), 204.

[383] Replicas of the carved stones depicting the *Ramayana* epic were cast in fiberglass during the restoration project and are now stored in the Ronggowarsito Provincial Museum, Semarang, Central Java.

[384] The re-conceptualization of pre-Islamic sacred sites as locations for the veneration of Muslim saints is comprehensively discussed in Henri Chambert-Loir, 2002, 'Saints and Ancestors: The Cults of

example, the 18th-century compilation *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Chronicle of the Land of Java) lists the rice goddess Dewi Sri, whose Sanskrit name testifies to her Hindu-Buddhist origins, as an eighth generation descendant from the Quranic Adam.[385] 19th-century Javanese sculptures of Dewi Sri, the tutelary consort of the Mataram sultans, and her incestuous brother, Mas Sadono, depict them clothed in the attire of the Mataram sultanate (1587-1755). Their dress testifies to a shift in Javanese clothing fashion that accompanied increasing religious and economic links with wider Muslim world of the Middle East and South Asia.[386] *Ceplokan* appear as patterns, usually batik, on long wrap cloths worn by the Dewi Sri and Mas Sadono, who are known as *loro blonyo* (the inseparable couple). *Ceplokan,* such as the *jelamprang* motif, also feature as an Indian woven *patola* silk wrap worn by Dewi Sri.

The paired sculptures were customarily installed in the ceremonial wedding chamber, known as *petanen*, literally meaning 'the place of the farmer', in an aristocratic Javanese house. The decoration of the ritual space typically included imported *patola* draped from pillars and wooden screens painted in imitation of stacked *patola* textiles, featuring a diverse variety of *ceplokan*.[387] The prominent display of *ceplokan* in the *petanen*, venerated for its association with fecundity and spiritual potency, evokes the use of *ceplokan* decoration at the Hindu and Buddhist sanctuaries of Loro Jonggrang and Sewu temples around one thousand years earlier in Central Java. The ritual significance of the woven *patola* with their geometric patterns reflects the wider status of foreign textiles traded into the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. The Indian cloths are inextricably interwoven with the history of *ceplokan* in Javanese and Malay batik of South Sumatra, and exerted a profound contribution in the development of an Islamic aesthetic in Southeast Asia.

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Muslim Saints in Java', in Henri Chambert-Loir and Anthony Read, eds., 2002. *The Potent Dead: Ancestors, Saints and Heroes in Contemporary Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 132-140.

[385] James J Fox, 1997, 'Sunan Kalijaga and the Rise of Mataram', in Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street, eds., *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society: A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns* (Leiden: Brill), 189.

[386] James Bennett, 2011, *Beneath the Winds: Masterpieces of Southeast Asian Art from the Art Gallery of South Australia* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 34-35, plate 10. For other typical examples of *loro blonyo*, see Helen Ibbitson Jessup, 1990, *Court Arts of Indonesia* (New York: The Asia Society Galleries), 29, Fig.3/No. 146; 58, Fig.38. The new Muslim elements of dress include the *kuluk*, derived from the Ottoman fez, worn by Sadono.

[387] Bennett, 2011, 34, fn 6; Bruce W Carpenter, 2009, *Javanese Antique Furniture and Folk Art: The David B. Smith and James Tirtoprodjo Collections* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet), 45, illustrates a painted screen that he describes as representing stacked *patola* cushions.

### *Ceplokan* in Indian Trade Textiles

Until the late 18th-century, brilliantly dyed Indian cloths were the most sophisticated textile manufacture known, and their international popularity ensured their currency as a major product of exchange in Indian Ocean maritime commerce, specifically in the Southeast Asian spice trade. The importation of the textiles into the archipelago achieved its zenith during the 16th to 18th centuries, which was a period marking the ascendancy of powerful Islamic sultanates, such as Demak and Banten. Unlike the naturalistic flowers-and-foliage *chintz* sent to Europe, geometrically patterned configurations feature prominently in the cloth cargoes destined for Southeast Asia. Their definitive role in the historical development of Indonesian batik practice is documented in the comparison of a trade textile (Fig. 3.3) produced in the 17th-century in Gujarat, the first region in India to embrace Islam, with a batik cloth (Fig. 3.4) from Jambi, South Sumatra, dated around two centuries later.

*Ceplokan* patterns appear in Gujarat trade textiles during the medieval period and were widely traded across the Islamic world, as testified by cloth fragments found at Fustat, Egypt.[388] The patterns display close similarities with Gujarati Islamic architectural ornament, notably the magnificent *jali* window screens at the mosque of Sayyid ‘Alam, erected in 1412 in Ahmedabad. These may have intentionally referenced textiles rather than being the source of their inspiration. The mosque’s combination of Islamic and Hindu architectural elements is a reminder that some of the earliest examples of *jali* screens in the form of *ceplokan* appear at 11th-century Hindu temples in Karnataka. The Indian architectural historian, M.A. Dhaky documents *ceplokan* stone screens that flank the doorway to the *garbhagriha* chamber, a ritually potent location like occurs at Candi Prambanan, Central Java, at the Galagesvara temple at Heggere, Tumkur.[389] The continuing imitation of draped cloth in stonework features at the 1442 tomb of Ahmad Shah, Ahmedabad, which may also have been carved by Hindu craftsmen. The decorative reliefs imitate the geometric designs of the woven *patola*, and their dye-printed copies, for which the region is renowned.[390]

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[388] John Guy, 1998, *Woven Cargoes: Indian Textiles from the East* (London: Thames and Hudson), 42-43.

[389] Madhusudan Amilai Dhaky, 2005, *The Indian Temple Traceries* (Gurgaon: American Institute of Indian Studies, Centre for Art and Archaeology), 195, pl. 336. The author also illustrates another example at the contemporaneous Candramaulīśvara temple at Unkal, Karnataka.

[390] Illustrated in Guy, 1998, 44, fig.49.

**Fig. 3.3.** Ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom, with rhombic geometric motif [detail], 1600-1650, Gujarat, India, found in Indonesia, hand batik and block printed mordant dyes on cotton, 77.0 x 420.0 cm; Gift of Michael and Mary Abbott through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation, Art Gallery of South Australia (963A10). Photograph: AGSA.

**Fig. 3.4.** Shoulder cloth or wrap garment, with rhombic geometric motif, 1880-1920, Jambi, South Sumatra, hand batik on cotton, 91.0 x 203.0 cm; The Abbott Gift 2000 through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation, Art Gallery of South Australia (20004A108). Photograph: AGSA.

Figures, wearing garments featuring *ceplokan* and *kawung*, appear around the same time on a group of textiles exported from the Gujarati workshops to the archipelago market.[391] The figures are sometimes referred to as Jain women due to

[391] Robyn Maxwell, 2003, *Sari to Sarong: Five Hundred Years of Indian and Indonesian Textile Exchange* (Canberra: National Gallery of Victoria), 130; Robert J Del Bonta, 2013, 'Three folios from a Śvetāmbara *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*' in James Bennett, ed., 2013, *Realms of Wonder: Jain, Hindu and Islamic Art of India* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 28, fig.12; Ruth Barnes, 2006, 'Indian Textiles for Island Taste; the Trade to Eastern Indonesia,' in Rosemary Crill, ed., *Textiles from India: The Global Trade* (Oxford: Seagull Books), 107, suggests the figurative cloths were primarily produced for the Indian market, although their surviving presence in eastern Indonesian collections suggest the cloths likely were also used in Java through where they were commonly traded.

their stylistic similarity to contemporaneous Jain illuminated manuscripts from western India. The exceptionally long cloths, often measuring over five metres in length, possibly were intended as hangings in the style of the modern day Balinese *ider-ider* valances that decorate temple pavilions during Hindu festivals. The Gujarati figurative textiles completely disappeared from fashion in the early 17th-century. The stylised portrayals of the women in the last phase of production could reflect changing attitudes to figurative realism in the archipelago market that was increasingly conscious of its Islamic identity. It may be more than coincidence that Javanese performance tradition attributes changes to the design of *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets), at this same time, as the adoption of Islam. The saintly Sunan Giri (d. 1506) is said to have ordered the creation of less-naturalistic puppets in order to circumvent Islamic proscriptions against figurative realism.[392]

By the 17th-century, there was a major shift in Indian export production to the Coromandel Coast, modern-day Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, within the cultural and political sphere of the Deccan sultanates, notably Golconda. The Deccan sultanates shared many similarities in dress with the northern Indo-Persian Mughal courts but with a preference for locally manufactured mordant- and resist-dyed textiles.[393] The Indian block-printing expert Eiluned Edwards observes how the extravagant patronage of textile production in the milieu of the courts was matched by their equally prodigious consumption for purposes of wear, decorating architectural spaces and royal encampments, ceremonial gift-giving, and paying tribute taxes.[394] Nevertheless, the patterns of surviving Deccan fabrics document little evidence of the styles, most notably the geometric designs, exported into the Malay-Indonesia archipelago. An exception is the miniature portrait, dated c. 1675, of Sultan Abu'l Hasan Qutb Shah, last ruler of the Qutb Shahi dynasty (Fig. 3.5). The Golconda sultan is painted wearing a floral rhombic pattern remarkably similar to a cloth length of the same period found in Indonesia (Fig. 3.6).

[392] James R Brandon, ed., 1972, *On Thrones of Gold: Three Javanese Shadow Plays* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), 6.
[393] Rosemary Crill, 2015, *The Fabric of* India (London: V&A Publishing), 123.
[394] Eiluned Edwards, 2016, *Imprints of Culture: Block Printed Textiles of India* (New Delhi: Niyogi Books), 65.

**Fig. 3.5.** Portrait of Sultan ‘Abu’l Hasan Qutb Shah wearing a Coromandel coast style skirt cloth, c. 1675, Golkonda, Telangana, India, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 22.1 x 14.2 cm; San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, San Diego (1990.491). Photograph: San Diego Museum of Art.

**Fig. 3.6.** Ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom, with floral chintz motif [detail], 1700-1725, made in Coromandel Coast, India, and traded to Indonesia, cotton, natural dyes, mordant painting, batik, 405.0 x 115,0 cm; Conserved with the assistance of Brian O’Keefe AM and Bridge O’Keefe, Gift of Michael and Mary Abbott 1988, National Gallery of Australia (1988.1612). Photograph: NGA

The Indian names of the numerous geometric designs in the trade textiles appear to be unrecorded, and it is unlikely contemporaneous observers regarded them as

representing a single collective category of patterns. Ruurdja Laarhoven in her definitive study of Indian trade textiles lists seventy-nine varieties of Indian textiles, exported by the Dutch Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (United East Indies Company, hitherto referred to as the VOC) during the 17th- to early-18th-century, with several names implying the presence of geometrical patterns.[395] Double-ikat silk *patola* from Gujarat are among the most numerous Indian trade cloths featuring *ceplokan* to survive in Indonesia, both as double-ikat lengths and mordant dye-printed cotton copies. The woven *patola* continued to be exported until the 1930s to the Dutch East Indies, where Central Javanese palaces valued their use in court dance costumes, ceremonial trousers, and drapes.

Laarhoven notes VOC records list *sarasa*, *chintz*, and *tapi* as displaying floral patterns, such as specified in a 1682 Dutch order from Batavia (Jakarta) to Coromandel Coast factors.[396] However, the references to floral patterns do not necessarily always imply the *chintz* manufactured for the European market. Both schematic and naturalistic depictions of flowers feature in a wide variety of textiles. It is probable the obviously recognisable subject of flowers prompted the naming of designs rather than their geometric structure that may have appeared of secondary significance to the viewer. The art historian and curator, John Guy, classifies the *jelamprang* batik motif, found in Indian *patola* and their dye-printed imitations traded by the VOC, as geometric although the common Javanese name for the motif refers to the blossom of a magnolia species.[397]

VOC records most clearly referencing geometric patterns are the *telpocan* produced on the Coromandel Coast. Laarhoven describes it as 'a *chintz* cloth with a special pattern embellished with gold leaf' and *tapi telpocan* featuring a 'circular or cruciform patterned gold leaf, the ground red or black'.[398] *Telpocan* is also written *tjeplok*, as in the Javanese and Indonesian *ceplokan*, in VOC sources and most certainly refers to a Javanese batik design. The earliest reference to *tjeplok* is a Dutch textile trade report from 1603 describing the pattern as like 'round thalers or other

[395] Ruurdje Laarhoven. 1994. 'The Power of Cloth: The Textile Trade of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) 1600-1780', doctoral thesis, National University of Australia, Appendix A.
[396] Laarhoven, 1994, 19.
[397] Guy, 1998, 91. The design is also known in Java as *cakar ayam*, literally 'hen's claw', due to its perceived resemblance to the marks made by a hen scratching in the dirt.
[398] Laarhoven, 1994, 65-6

crosses'.[399] Jaspers and Pirngadie record a Javanese batik *kawung* motif, under the *ceplokan* category, with the remarkably similar name of *kawoeng pitjis latar poetih* (small coins on a white background *kawung*). The authors describe its distinguishing feature to be 'small crosses'.[400]

The presence of Javanese nomenclature in VOC commercial orders suggests the close relationship between the Indian and Javanese textiles, even to the application of gold leaf to *kawung* in the style of Javanese *prada* and Malay *telepok* gilding practices. There is ample evidence that Indian producers were directly replicating examples of cloths shipped for that purpose from Indonesia during the 17th- to 18th-centuries. The present writer has documented several Indian textiles, copied from Indonesian prototypes, in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia.[401] These include a Coromandel Coast imitation of a batik *dodot* wrap garment displaying a *parang* pattern in the Cirebon style. As Maxwell declares, there were 'many and varied… creative responses that the interplay between Indian and Indonesian textiles evoked'.[402] Such was the resulting hybrid style that modern day Indian observers are often unable, or surprised, to identify the Indian origins of trade cloths produced for the Southeast Asian markets. Their response indicates the extent that firsthand knowledge of Javanese and other Southeast Asian textile fashions influenced the Indian workshops.

**Indian *Ceplokan* in the Javanese Courts**

The Indian textiles traded to Indonesia survive today because they were preserved as ancestral heirlooms (*pusaka*), most commonly in non-Islamic contexts. The treasured fabrics were only exposed for public display during ceremonies associated with rites of passage. Yet, many of the same styles of imported textiles were the garments of choice for both daily and ceremonial wear among the aristocrats and *orang kaya* (wealthy merchants) in the archipelago's Islamic courts during the 16th- to 18th-centuries. In 1705 the VOC councillor, Cornelis Chastelein, reported that numerous members of the Javanese nobility wore Indian cloth while commoners wore cotton

[399] Quoted in Itie Van Hout, 2001, 'Batik on Batik: A Wayang Story as a Record of Batik Design,' in Itie Van Hout. *Batik: Drawn in Wax* (Amserdam: Royal Tropical Institute), 143.
[400] Jaspers and Pirngadie, 1916, 153.
[401] Bennett, 2011, 116-117, pl.51, 124-123, pl.55.
[402] Maxwell, 2003, 143.

'painted in their own style and called Batex'.[403] The niche market value placed on the imported textiles is documented in the lavish gold leaf decoration that was locally applied to numerous *sembagi* garments, featuring *ceplokan,* preserved in Malay heirloom collections.[404]

Indian copies of the voluminous Javanese court garment, known as *dodot* or *kampuh*, were produced in a variety of dimensions, often extraordinarily large.[405] The garments, with their distinctive rhombic or circular centre fields, commonly display geometric *ceplokan* unlike later 19th-century Central Javanese batik versions that typically utilise borders with foliage designs known as *semen* or *lung-lungan*.[406] The wear of these garments was not restricted exclusively to Javanese ethnicity but was once widespread among the archipelago's Islamic societies. Indian *dodot* with geometric motifs have been preserved in Lampung, a southern Sumatran region formerly under the suzerainty of the powerful Sundanese emporium sultanate of Banten (1526-1813).[407] Javanese dress was donned in the Malay courts of Palembang and Jambi while 19th-century historical annals from Lombok describe Sasak 'chiefs and princes' wearing *dodot* in the presence of the ruler.[408] The Javanese *Babad Sengkala* (c. 1632) even records a Dutch delegation wearing *adodottan batik* (batiked dodot) at the Mataram court of Sultan Agung.[409]

The 17th- to 18th-century period marked the growth of sophisticated indigenous batik making traditions in Java, as well as South Sumatra, that eventually replaced the imported cloth. It is often tellingly impossible to differentiate the Indian or local origin of textiles depicted in Javanese figurative art of the 18th- to 19th-

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[403] Quoted in Harmen Veldhuisen, 1993, *Batik Belanda 1840-1940: Dutch Influence in Batik from Java: History and Stories* (Jakarta: Gaya Favorit Press), 22. The possible exception is Mataram, during the 17th-century, which was locked in a deadly economic and political struggle with the VOC who were the major venders of Indian textiles.

[404] Illustrated in Bennett and Kelty, eds., 2015, 162-163, also 318, cat. no. 230.

[405] According to levels of language *Dodot* is *ngoko* Javanese and *kampuh* is *krama inggil* language (AN Suyanto, 2002, *Sejarah Batik Yogyakarta*, Yogyakarta: Rumah Penerbitan Merapi, 33); Indian *dodot* in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia include one typical textile measuring 199.0 cm by 303.0 cm.

[406] Illustrated in Bennett and Kelty, eds., 2015, 157, cat. no. 212.

[407] Robert J Holmgren and Anita E Spertus, record that present-day Lampung informants have no memory of the heirloom cloths ever being worn although 19th-century *tampan*, known also as 'ship cloths', depict figures wearing the voluminous garment: 1991, 'Is Geringsing Really Balinese?' in Gisella Völger and Karin v. Welck, eds., *Indonesian Textiles Symposium 1985* (Cologne: Ethnologica), 59.

[408] Bennett, 2011, 116.

[409] G.P. Rouffaer and H.H. Juynbool 1914, *De batik-kunst in Nederlandsch-Indië.* 1, 427-428, cited in Homgren and Spertus, 1991, 74, fn 6. The authors propose that the Javanese likely referred to Indian, as well as local, wax-resist cloths as 'batik'.

centuries so symbiotic was their stylistic relationship. Cornets de Groot, a Dutch official posted in Gresik, documented thirty-six designs in his 1822 account of Javanese batik production and the majority represent *ceplokan* found also in Indian examples.[410] The batik historian, Itie Van Hout, notes the resemblance of these designs to garments depicted on *wayang* figures in an unusual c. 1850 batik *sarung* in the Tropenmuseum collection. Geometric patterns are predominantly worn amongst characters of the upper or middle status.[411] This relationship between *ceplokan* and social rank also appears in the British Museum's collection of ninety rod-puppets, assembled by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles during his time in Java (1811-16).[412] The depiction of a Javanese bridal couple, apparently of aristocratic status and both wearing *ceplokan*, in Raffles' *History of Java* (1817) further underscores the connection. The bride's garment is the *jelamprang* pattern often associated with the dress of the *loro blonyo* rice goddess Dewi Sri and the decoration of the ritual wedding chamber, evoking notions of fertility as previously discussed.

### *Ceplokan* as Aesthetic Sensibility

To understand the extent *ceplokan* batik may have nurtured an Islamic art style, as understood by Indonesian and Malaysian commentators, it is necessary to examine the religious environment in which batik developed within the context of Islamic court culture. *Hikayat Isma Yatim* (Story of Isma Yatim), a Malay text dating from the middle of the 17th-century, was likely written to instruct the pious well-born reader in appropriate behaviour where the knowledge of courtly arts was considered an essential ingredient.[413] The unknown author describes the refined hero as being an accomplished poet, musician, and textile artist.[414] The aristocratic connection between batik making and religious devotion is documented in Cirebon, West Java. Panembahan Trusmi (Ki Kedeng), a princely student of the 15th- to early-16th-century Sufi heretic martyr, Siti Jenar, and follower of the saintly Sunan Gunung Jati,

[410] Veldhuisen, 1993, 29.
[411] Van Hout, 2001, 136-145.
[412] Anthony Forge, 1989, 'Batik Patterns in the Early Nineteenth Century', in M Gittinger, ed., *To Speak with Cloth* (Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History), 100, 104.
[413] Vladimir Braginsky, 2004, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature: A Historical Survey of Genres, Writings and Literary Views* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 401.
[414] P.P. Roorda van Eysinga, ed. 1821, *Hikayat Isma Jatiem*, Batavia, Lands Drukkerij (in Jawi) 2-11 cited in Braginsky, 2004, 401. Tirtaamidjaja (1966, 19) observes the courtly association of music and batik in the Javanese world is apparent in some of the oldest Mataram gamelan melodies that bear the titles of batik patterns including *kawung*.

is attributed as the founder of a mystical guild of batik artists.[415] The Panembahan's grave in Cirebon continues today to be a destination for pilgrimages by batik artists.[416]

*Hikayat Isma Yatim* may be describing an idealised situation because women were the chief producers of fabric with Cirebon a marked exception. A member of a Dutch East Indies Company mission in 1656 reported observing thousands of women engaged in batik production in the Mataram *kraton*.[417] The report, while certainly some exaggeration, may reflect an outsider's impression of the very important practical and symbolic roles of women in Central Java where only females surrounded the ruler in his inner court.[418] As in later practice, aristocratic women likely engaged only in the key activity of drawing the designs with hot wax on cloth, a task requiring refined skills and critically determining the quality and status of the cloth. Young girls first learnt designs through the elementary tasks of waxing the reverse side of patterned cloths (*nerusi*) or applying the wax in-fills (*tembok*) to blank areas of the designs drawn by skilled senior women. On completion of the batik work, the cloth was subsequently sent to low-class male artisans outside the palaces for the laborious specialist work of dyeing and wax removal.

The court women may have sung devotional lyrics as they communally created batik together, similar to a recent custom in Central Java.[419] Their expression of faith certainly extended to recitations of the Quran. The emphasis on textual knowledge in Islam inspired the patronage of religious scholarship regarded as an act of piety. The most notable personage in this field is Ratu Pakubuwana (d. 1732), who was the wife, mother, and grandmother of three successive Mataram rulers. The queen was responsible for the composition and/or recension of three major texts that were

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[415] *Tempo* magazine (25 June 2005). The memory of Panembahan Trusmi is annually celebrated by local batik artists in the Ganti Welit ceremony held at his grave site.

[416] According to Kraton Kasepuhan accounts, another Cirebon aristocrat, Panembahan Ki Dalem Sepuh, designed the extraordinary state carriage known as *Singabarwang* in the mid-16th-century. The carriage's carved ornament testifies to the designer/maker's close familiarity with the cloud-like *wadasan* rock pattern of Cirebon batik or perhaps the batik pattern is derived from carved ornament.

[417] Cited in Fiona Kerlogue, 1997, 'Batik Cloths from Jambi, Sumatra', doctoral thesis, University of Hull, 19.

[418] Sarah Weiss, 2006, *Listening to an Earlier Java: Aesthetics, Gender and the Music of Wayang in Central Java (*Leiden: KITLV Press), 60. The mystical significance of the presence of female energy at the kingdom's heart of power almost certainly imbued the core female activity of making batik with deep meaning.

[419] Justine Boow, 1988, in *Symbol and Status in Javanese Batik* (Perth: Asian Studies Centre, University of Western Australia) observes 'singing *macapat* [when making batik] was considered a suitable educational and morally uplifting activity for the women of the house while the men attended the mosque.'

regarded as possessing talismanic power for the wellbeing of the kingdom.[420] Ratu Pakubuwana was almost certainly schooled in the art of batik making from a young age, yet the Jaspers and Pirngadie's 1916 inventory of *ceplokan* titles suggests it was unlikely that even such an accomplished believer interpreted textiles designs in the context of mainstream theological teachings. An important feature of Javanese and Malay court culture is the notion of hidden knowledge. *Hikayat Isma Yatim* enumerates the qualities of a perfect woman as including the six perfections of faith in Allah, nevertheless, the text declares, 'As concerns the last two perfections (*maʿrifat* and *tawḥīd*), I must keep silence about them, because they are secret ones'.[421]

Justine Boow, in her seminal *Symbol and status in Javanese batik* (1988), records that late-20th-century Central Javanese batik-makers emphasis the character, or *sifat*, of a design rather than its meaning (*arti*). The use of the Arabic loan word *sifat* 'placed the interpretation of batik designs within an Islamic aesthetic and religious tradition'.[422] Boow observes many patterns are seen as mystically powerful and their creation may even be surrounded by certain taboos. Nevertheless, individual Javanese interpretations of the patterns are highly idiosyncratic and personal, often intended to reflect the commentator's own cultural expertise and refinement through familiarity with courtly values, rather than the patterns being read as a means to 'communicate, or express, the nature of an external reality.'[423]

The cloistered religious environment in which court women produced batik before the 20th-century inevitably may have influenced the choice of designs, although there is a general lack of primary textual evidence as to how batik-makers read their creations in early times. The batik scholar, Rens Heringa, noting this absence may be a result of Javanese social dynamics, proposes 'knowledge regarding the deeper meaning of art is attributed to men… the manufacture of textiles, a female task, was considered unworthy of description in written texts'.[424] This was compounded with a remarkable sense of the power of historical continuity. Arbitrary innovation or its extensive verbalisation in aesthetic practice was not privileged over

[420] Merle Ricklefs, 1998, *The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java: History, Literature and Islam in the Court of Pakubuwana II* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press) is a comprehensive study of the life and times of the Ratu at the Mataram court and the three texts, *Carita Iskandar* (Story of Alexander the Great), *Carita Yusuf* (Story of Joseph) and *Kitab Usulbiyah*, all produced in 1729.
[421] Quoted in Braginsky, 2004, 403.
[422] Boow, 1988, 91.
[423] Boow, 1988, 88. For an extensive discussion of issues related to the question of meaning in Central Javanese batik in the late 20th century, see this author's monograph.
[424] Heringa, 1996, 33.

the faithful act of transmitting ancestral traditions, such as time-honoured *ceplokan*, that were believed to be supernaturally or ritually significant.[425] The internalisation of complex free-hand drawn motifs, like the time-honoured *ceplokan*, through repetitive practice ensured the unity of the *zāhir* (external) and *bāṭin* (internal) aspects of existence as understood by Javanese textile artists and connoisseurs. The dual aspects, represented by intuitive knowledge and perfected technique, were considered essential to creating the ceremonially potent cloths, such as *ceplokan*.

Knowledge of Islam was especially meaningful within the environments of Javanese palaces that were imbued with the practice of Sufi mysticism. Spiritual power was focussed around the presence of the ruler who represented the tangible manifestation of the *wahyu* (blessing) of Allah on earth. In the late 18th-century, the Surakarta and Yogyakarta courts issued a series of edicts listing certain batik as restricted motifs only permitted for wear by the sultan and surrounding kin. The lists cite *ceplokan* alongside other designs, such as the winged *Garuda ageng* and vegetal *semen* with their naturalistic references, suggesting that the geometric patterns, while revered, did not occupy a uniquely exclusive status at that time in Central Java. On 2 April 1769, the Surakarta court forbade non-royal persons from wearing the *jelamprang* pattern.[426] An undated Yogyakarta decree likewise forbade both the wearing of *kawung* and *sembagen huk* whose name suggests a pattern associated with imported Indian *sembagi* cloths. The edicts were not addressing material issues of sumptuary excess but the inappropriate use of patterns that were recognised as embodying unseen mystical forces. The contemporary Yogyakarta batik artist, Agus Ismoyo, speaking from an informed familiarity with the philosophy of Yogyakarta court batik traditions and Javanese mysticism, interprets *kawung* as symbolising pockets of hidden knowledge.[427]

### *Ceplokan* as Spiritual Expression

The intricate and time-demanding practice of making batik has always been associated qualities of patience and perseverance, virtues repeatedly praised in the

[425] Ricklefs, 1998, 34, observations regarding spiritual values in the Mataram court, during 17th- to 18th-century, is particularly relevant for understanding probable attitudes to batik practice.
[426] Jaspers and Pirngadie, 1916, 144; the forbidden (*larangan*) motifs were subsequently adopted by batik makers working outside the palace environment and whose clientele were non-aristocrats. It became known as 'merchant batik' (*batik sudagaran*) as opposed 'palace batik' (*batik keraton*).
[427] Agus Ismoyo and Nia Fliam, personal communication with the author, May, 2011.

Quran and Hadith. Present day Yogyakarta batik makers often repeat the admonition *Harus hati tenang* (The heart must be calm). Heringa cites an early Islamic treatise that presents batik making as 'a metaphor for the spiritual maturation of a woman'.[428] The circumstances attributed to the invention of *truntum*, one of the most classic and simple variants of *ceplokan*, testify to the close link drawn between women's batik making and pious religious virtues (Fig. 3.7).[429]

The story is recounted in a unique anonymous Javanese manuscript titled *Mula bukane ana jarik truntum* (The origin of the *truntum* pattern) preserved in the archives of Museum Radya Pustaka, Surakarta. Kanjeng Ratu Beruk (c. 1703-1763), consort of the Susuhunan of Surokarta, Pakubuwono III, was so upset at neglect by the ruler that she spent her days patiently making batik while nightly contemplating the stars in the heavens as her only companions. The Radya Pustaka manuscript observes 'perhaps her exercise was meditational, because the lady's pain was great: her husband Sri Sunan had rejected her'.[430]

One day the Susuhunan passed the queen at work and was so moved by the beauty of her new batik design, worked with such patience in the face of hardship – a quality deeply valued in Islam – that love was renewed. The queen subsequently named the design *truntum* that means 'to grow'. Hardjonogoro interprets it to mean 'the budding of love' and notes 'in contemplative practice of batik, Kanjeng Ratu Beruk found a certain mercy, felt contact with the life force, mover closer to her Creator, and obviously this vitality shook the soul of Sri Sunan'.[431]

[428] Heringa, 1996, 33. Clifford Geertz records the East Javanese metaphor 'drawing a batik design on the heart' (*mbatik manah*) for a mystical experience: 1960, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 287.
[429] Fig 7 illustrates an example of *truntum* motif not unlike the background configuration in Hardjonogoro's own *truntum* motif known as 'Butterflies' [*Kupu-kupu*] illustrated in nwww Rupii, 2015, < http:// rupipitruntum.blogspot.com.id>, accessed 31 March 2016. The classic version of *truntum* usually displays radial lines connecting the flower/star motifs.
[430] Hardjonogoro, 1980, 229-230. Hardjonogoro appears to identify Kanjeng Ratu Beruk as wife of Sunan Paku Buwono III.
[431] Heringa, 1980, 33.

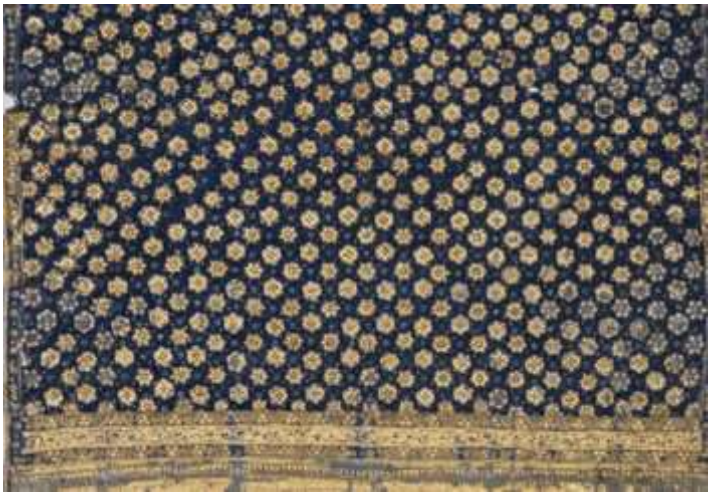

**Fig. 3.7.** Ceremonial cloth, with *truntum* motif [detail], 1880-1900, Java, probably north coast region, gold leaf applied in Bali, cotton, dye, wax resist batik and gilding, 80.0 x 181.0 cm; Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (20133A61). Photograph: AGSA.

There are various readings of the origin of the name *truntum.* One version attributes the name to the Javanese phrase *teruntum-tuntum,* meaning 'grow again', while another version says it derives from the word *tumaruntum*, meaning 'guiding', a third interpretation relates the name to *tentrem* meaning 'peaceful'.[432] While the account clearly draws a connection between the appearance of the stars in the night sky and Ratu Beruk's design, the same motif is often equated with flowers. The antiquity of *truntum*-like motifs is documented in Gujarati resist-dyed fragments retrieved from medieval sites in Fustat, Egypt, whose designs Ruth Barnes, historian of Indian trade textiles, describe as eight-petal rosettes.[433] The religious associations of the rosette design have continued until today in the Muslim world. Kerlogue records that in modern-day Jambi batik making traditions, flower motifs were called 'stars' because they were a reminder of the Garden of Paradise in the heavens above.[434]

[432] 'K. Ratu Kencana', 2015, *Geni*, available at < http//wwwgeni.com/people/K-Ratu-Kencana> accessed 3 April 2016; Rupii, 2015; Kusuma Dewangga, 2013, 'Behind Batik's *Truntum* Motif', *TNOL Asia,* <http://www.tnol.asia/arts-culture/19374-behind-batiks-truntum-motif.html>, accessed 25 June 2016.
[433] Ruth Barnes, 1997, 'Indian Block-Printed Textiles in Egypt: The Newberry Collection in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford: Blue and White Textiles', *Jameel Online Centre*, <jameelcentre.ashmolean.org/collection/7/10236/ 10323>, accessed14 Aril 2016.
[434] See Kerlogue, 1997.

**Fig. 3.8.** Wrap cloth (*kain panjang*), with 'creating tranquility'(*ciptoning*) motif, 1975-2000, cotton, dyes, batik, 122.0 x 206.0 cm; The Abbott Gift 2000 through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation, Art Gallery of South Australia (20004A28). Photograph: AGSA.

The seminal influence of early local and imported geometric designs on Javanese Islamic aesthetic tradition is conclusively documented in a 20th-century *kain panjang* pattern whose antecedent is the rhombic *ceplokan* configuration first seen at the 8th- century Buddhist temple of Candi Sewu. The wrap-cloth displays the Yogyakarta court pattern known as *ciptoning* (creating tranquillity) (Fig. 3.8).[435] Set within the repeated diamond-shaped lozenges is a *wayang* couple, representing the ideal lovers Arjuna and Sembhadra whose experience of romantic perfection presents a poetic analogy to the blossoming flowers featured in Javanese rhombic *ceplokan* of the early Hindu-Buddhist era and the 17th-century cloth pattern worn by Sultan Abu'l Hasan Qutb Shah. The rhombic borders consist of the *parang* design that the much-revered Sultan Agung (r. 1613-1645) of Mataram is said to have conceived while practising religious austerities on Java's south coast. Achjadi interprets *ciptoning* as expressing the hope that 'the wearer will become a person able to guide others on attaining nobility of character and to point out the right road' to Allah.[436]

[435] *Ciptoning* may be considered one of a generic group of motifs, often associated with wedding rituals, known as *sido mukti* meaning 'continuously prospering'. The writer's experience speaking with Central Javanese batik connoisseurs suggests there is considerable debate whether *sido mukti* are *ceplokan* or not. Boow, 1988, 122, describes a similar Yogyakarta batik and documents four different names for the same design.
[436] Judi Achjadi, 2014, *The Jakarta Textile Museum* (Jakarta: Indonesian Heritage Society), 128.

## Conclusion

The immense diversity of batik *ceplokan* known today derived their fundamental origins from basic geometric elements found in textile motifs dating to the Hindu-Buddhist period on Java. The spread of knowledge of Islam, from around the 16th-century onwards, resulted in makers and wearers seeing the old designs with new eyes. Their fashionable appeal was enhanced by the replication of geometric designs in popular imported Indian textile. This continuing diversification of *ceplokan* in the new religious context ensured a close association with Islamic identity. Both the Museum Radya Pustaka manuscript, 'The origin of the *truntum* pattern', and the symbolism of *ciptoning* testify to *ceplokan*'s association with Muslim religious values. This association arose through the special circumstances attributed to their original creation or the perceived talismanic powers of patterns that ensured the wearer possesses the inner moral qualities necessary for the wellbeing of others. There is little evidence from the past that *ceplokan* textiles were created as a conscious expression of *sharīʿa*-compliance or knowledge of *tawḥīd*. Nevertheless, the blessed qualities of inner growth, calm, and submission to guidance, to which patterns like the *truntum* and *ciptoning* allude, are all attributes of spiritual maturity still valued today in Java's Muslim culture.

# CHAPTER 3

The Shadow Puppet:

A Southeast Asian Islamic Aesthetic

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# The Shadow Puppet:
# A Southeast Asian Islamic Aesthetic

**Abstract**
The Javanese shadow puppet (*wayang kulit*) is among the most widely known figural images found in the arts of the Indonesian archipelago and is commonly acknowledged as an embodiment of Javanese aesthetic traditions. The significance of the theatre in Java's early modern era is documented in accounts associating its origin with the 16th-century *wali songo* saints and the numerous references around the theatre in Islamic mystical texts, notably *suluk* poems. Nevertheless, the connection between *wayang kulit* and Islamic visual art traditions has been largely overlooked in scholarship that since the late-19th-century commonly emphasized the Indian foundations of the two major epic cycles of the *Mahabarata* (The Great Bharata) and *Ramayana* (Rama's Journey) or focused on contemporary performative aspects of the theatre.
The chapter proposes that the puppet character of the *buda* hermit, Begawan Abiyasa, appearing in stories inspired by the *Mahabharata* cycle may be interpreted as representing the spiritually powerful presence of the Sufi sage who engaged the unseen world while offering guidance to his students, just as described in Javanese literary traditions. An evaluation of his significance as ruler-become-sage offers the possibility to inform our understanding of visual themes appearing in early *pesisir* pictorial art and in the architectural schema present at the mausoleums of several Javanese saints.

## The Javanese shadow puppet theatre

It is in the realm of the Javanese puppet theatre known as *wayang kulit,* translatable as 'leather shadows', that a figurative art tradition developed which uniquely expresses the aesthetic heritage of the Islamic world of Southeast Asia. The finely carved, flat leather figures, gilded and richly painted, depict stylised human and non-human characters and form the focus of nightlong performances staged by a single puppeteer (*dalang*) who also directs the gamelan orchestra accompaniment (Fig. 4.1).[437] Customarily, the audience is separated according to the sexes: The male guests watch the performance from the puppeteer's lamp-lit side of the screen while women view the shadows. This performance convention may date from the ascendancy of Islam in the 16th-century, as on neighbouring Hindu Bali all the audience views the puppets as shadows on the screen, likely reflecting an older theatrical tradition. The plays,

[437] Today three forms of the theatre are current: the traditional all-night 'classical' performance (*klasik*), contemporary-interpretative performance (*garapan sedalu*), and condensed performance lasting around two hours (*padat*). The shadow puppets are conventionally described in English as carved from leather (*kulit*) but the thin translucent buffalo hide is technically parchment. There are several types of Javanese puppets including *wayang golek* (rod puppets) and *wayang klitik* (flat wooden rod puppets imitating *wayang kulit*).

improvised around established plot conventions, combine drama, romance, philosophical dialogue and slapstick humour through the dynamic interaction of 'dramaturgical, literary, musical, choreographic and iconographic elements.'[438]

**Fig. 4.1.** A *wayang kulit* shadow puppet performance accompanied by a gamelan orchestra, Blora, Woodbury and Page, photograph, Central Java, Indonesia, 1862-1872; Tropenmuseum (TM-6002262669). Photograph: Tropenmuseum.

The diverse varieties of characters appearing in *wayang kulit* articulate many of the spiritual and cultural values of the 16th- to 18th-century. This period is marked by the rise of the Muslim sultanates on Java. The puppets' personae range from handsome knights to hideous giants, from elegant divinities to bumbling, grotesque clowns, portrayed through a complex language of visual symbolism (Fig. 4.2). Every aspect of each puppet's appearance – the facial features and style of dress, physiognomy, body colour and dimensions – reflects Javanese cultural and aesthetic notions of refinement (*halus*) and roughness (*kasar*), of which the shadow puppet theatre is considered a defining expression.[439] Central to the depiction of puppets is the degrees of figurative stylisation associated with the qualities of *halus* and *kasar*. The scholar of Javanese literature, Tim Behrend, has observed 'the less formally human a character appears, the more fully human he or she actually is in moral

[438] Matthew Isaac Cohen, 1997, *An Inheritance from the Friends of God: The Southern Shadow Puppet Theatre of West Java, Indonesia*, unpublished PhD thesis, Yale University, xxviii.
[439] Paul Stange, 1977, 'Mystical Symbolism in Javanese *Wayang* Mythology', *The South East Asian Review* 1(2): 111.

terms.'[440] According to the Javanese perspective, the highly stylised features of the *halus* heroes indicate their acquired qualities of cultural refinement and spiritual wisdom. By contrast, more obvious hints of naturalism are likely to appear in the depictions of *kasar* giants, demons and animal puppets, reflecting their proximity to the untamed world of nature.

**Fig. 4.2.** Prince Kresna (Krishna), *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1819, Java, pigment and gold leaf on carved leather, horn, 78.0 x 20.0 cm; Tropenmuseum (RV-264-89). Photograph: Tropenmuseum.

The long popularity of the puppet theatre is recorded in old Javanese chronicles (*babad*) and oral traditions. The semi-legendary accounts of the activities of 16th-century Sufi holy men, known collectively as the *wali songo* or 'nine friends of God', are replete with references to their engagement with the puppet theatre.[441]

[440] Tim E. Behrend, 1996, 'Textual Gateways: The Javanese Manuscript Tradition', in Ann Kumar and John H. McGlynn, eds., *Illuminations: The writing traditions of Indonesia* (Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation), 1185.

[441] The nine *wali songo* are customarily listed as Maulana Malik Ibraham (d.1419), Sunan Ampel (1401-1481), Sunan Giri (b.1442), Sunan Bonang (1465-1525), Sunan Drajat (b.1470), Sunan Kudus (d.1550), Sunan Kalijaga (b.1450), Sunan Gunung Jati (d.c.1570), and Sunan Muria who was also active during the 16th-century. Their exact dates are largely conjectural. The choice of the number nine may relate to Javanese cosmological notions of the *mancapat*: that is, the centre surrounded by the cardinal and inter-cardinal points. J.E. Jasper and Mas Pirngadie, 1916, *De Inlandsche Kunstnijverheid im Nederlandsch Indië III: De Batikkunst.* (Netherlands: Van Regeeringswege Gedrukt en Uitgegevan Te 'S-Gravenhage Door De Broek & Kunstdrukkerij, Mouton & Co.), 144, record the name of a popular Javanese batik motif, inspired by an Indian trade cloth pattern and depicting a *mancapat* style

The involvement of the *wali songo*, revered for their efforts to convert the Javanese to Islam, in puppet theatre suggests its unique status as an art form. The *wali* Sunan Bonang (1465-1525) supposedly instigated the division of *wayang* characters into the forces of the right (*wayang tengen*) representing good and the forces of the left (*wayang kiwa*) representing evil. This division, displayed as two opposing rows of puppets on either side of the puppeteer during performances (as in Figure 5.1), articulates the most elementary division between *halus* and *kasar* within which there exist numerous subtle configurations.[442]

The performance plots convey themes of chivalry, battlefield heroism, palace intrigues, courtly love, and the quest for mystical or temporal power obtained under the guidance of a guru. In the theatre, this pursuit involves the hero visiting a hermitage whose setting is described as the 'forest scene outside the palace audience hall' (*adegan wana*). The role of the mystic guide is represented through a number of puppet characters in the repertoire. Begawan Abiyasa, formerly King Krishnadipayana who renounced the kingdom of Bharata to spend his remaining days as an ascetic, is the archetypal guru **(**Fig. 4.3).

configuration, as 'Allah's nine *wali* of the blessed island of Java, one in the centre and the other eight radiating around him'.

[442] Clara van Groenendael, trans., 1998, *Released from Kala's Grip: A Wayang Exorcism Performance from East Java, Performed by Ki Sarib Purwacarita* (Jakarta: Lontar Foundation), xviii. Most puppet sets, known as a *kotak* (box), consist of around 150 puppets. There are fixed (*baku*) characters for the most important personages but the majority of puppets are generic character types and known as *wayang srambahan*, literally '*wayang* useful for anything'. Bernard Arps, 1990, 'Writings on *Wayang*: Approaches to Puppet Theatre in Java and Bali in Fifteen Recent Books,' *Indonesia Circle: School of Oriental & African Studies Newsletter* 18(52): 60, lists such generic characters as 'arrogant knight' (*satria ladak*) and 'long-haired knight' (*satria gondrong*), 'king from abroad' (*raja seberang*), 'sweet female attendant' (*emban geulis*), and 'plump-cheeked female attendant' (*emban kembu*).

**Fig. 4.3.** Begawan Abiyasa, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1775-1816, Java, pigment and gold leaf on carved leather, horn, 72.0 x 17.0 cm; British Museum (As1859, 1228.768). Photograph: The Trustees of the British Museum.

His benign, refined character stands in stark contrast to the mischievous teachers, Drona and Bhisma. Even among the forces of the left, there is the sage Begawan Bagaspati whose rough and frightening appearance as a giant conceals an inner wisdom and selflessness. The recurring theme of the quest for mystical power connects the puppet theatre to the spiritual values of the *wali songo*.[443] It is the search for 'the science of the whence and whither of being' (*kawruh sangkan paraning dumadi*), as described in the famous *Dewi Ruci* puppet play (Fig. 4.4), that forms a core concept in Javanese Sufi discourse.[444] The transcendental attainments of the Javanese saints, sought through withdrawal from the world, is commemorated in many holy sites associated with them and subsequently, after their deaths, at their

[443] The *wayang* scene where the hero encounters the sage may be compared to the depictions of recluses engaged in religious conversation, which was a favoured subject in the miniature paintings of Iran and Moghul India contemporaneous to the *pesisir* period. See Ladan Akbarnia with Francesca Leoni, 2010, *Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam* (Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts), 34-37.

[444] Arps, 1990, 465. The author notes the idea that God creates and recalls His creatures is stated in the Qur'an (30:33) and was also a concept known in Java before Islam. *Arjunawiwaha* (The Marriage of Arjuna) addresses Siva as 'the whence and whither of all humankind', a notion occurring elsewhere in Old Javanese texts about various deities.

graves which have continued to be revered as a source of blessings and sites of pilgrimage until today.

**Fig. 4.4**. The hero Bratasena (Bima) meets Dewa Ruci on the sea, double-folio from *Serat Dewa Ruci* manuscript, 1886, Yogyakarta, Central Java, pigment, gold leaf and ink on European paper, bound manuscript, 33.7 x 21.0 cm; National Gallery of Victoria (AS29/1982). Photograph: NGV.

**The ascendancy of Islam in Java and the development of the puppet theatre**

The location of Southeast Asia on the outer periphery of Islam's old world has given rise to the perception that the aesthetic traditions of the region's Muslim cultures lack the authenticity of Middle Eastern and South Asian Islamic art. The religion has a relatively short history as a presence in Southeast Asia, where its cultural identity is most visible in the western archipelago.[445] Islam only became ascendant during the 16th-century in an ethnically diverse and intermeshing environment of Hindu, Buddhist, and indigenous ancestral belief systems.[446] Javanese tradition attributes the success of the new religion to the *wali songo* who possessed supernatural and mystical powers, enabling them to convert rulers, attract followers, and subvert the opposing seen and unseen forces of the old order. Their activities are often perceived as chronologically superseding the older cultures although Blambangan, the last non-

[445] This includes the Malay penninsula, southern Thailand, Sumatra, Java, South Sulawesi, and Lombok; Brunei Darussalam, Indonesian Kalimantan, and parts of Malaysian Sarawak and Sabah. It is important to recognise that Islam in Borneo was primarily confined to coastal regions in pre-modern times and largely remains so today.

[446] Gravestones in Pasai-Samudra (northern Sumatra) and East Java suggest the presence of Muslims as early as the 12th-.

Muslim polity with its strong cultural and political connections to the neighbouring Hindu island of Bali, continued until 1768 in East Java.

The rise of Demak (founded 1478) and other Javanese sultanates, including Cirebon (1479), Banten (1525-26) and Mataram (1588), initiated an era of cultural fluorescence that lasted until European colonial domination of the archipelago in the 19th-century. The period is commonly referred to as the age of the *pesisir,* meaning 'coastal regions' in the Malay/Indonesian language.[447] The term *pesisir* is a reminder of the significance of maritime commerce, both globally and around the archipelago, as a vehicle for the transmission of the doctrines of Islam and its material culture.[448] The status of the wealthy Javanese sultanates, as centres of religious learning and the region's cultural arbiters, including in the performing arts, ensured *wayang kulit* became widely imitated.[449] The presence of Javanese puppets and puppeteers added their prestige and spiritual power to theatrical entertainments at the courts of the Malaysian peninsula, Sumatra, and Borneo.[450] On Lombok, the spread of Islam and Javanese cultural practices were closely aligned. Sasak tradition credits the arrival of Islam in West Lombok to the itinerant Datu Watu Milir, a pupil of the *wali songo*, and Sasak *wayang* puppets more closely relate in appearance to the *pesisir* style rather than those found on neighbouring Bali.[451] The visual conventions of the puppets also

[447] For discussions of the term *pesisir* in reference to this period see Adrian Vickers, 2009, *Peradaban Pesisir Menuju Sejarah Budaya Asia Tenggara* (Denpasar: Pustaka Larasan, Udayana University Press) and James Bennett, 2015, 'The World of the Pesisir Kingdoms', in James Bennett and Rusty Kelty, eds., *Treasure Ships: Art in the Age of Spices* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 155-170.

[448] Claude Guillot, 2008, *Barus: Seribu Tahun yang Lalu*, Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia) reports a range of Middle Eastern artefacts, dating from the 10th-century or earlier, excavated in North Sumatra. James Bennett, et al., *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art and Civilisation in Southeast Asia* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), documents preserved heirloom objects from the Middle East and South Asia that reached Southeast Asia during the *pesisir* period. Robyn Maxwell, 2003, *Sari to Sarong: Five Hundred Years of Indian and Indonesian Textile Exchange* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia), surveys the extent imported Indian textiles influenced Indonesian textile designs. Nevertheless, Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal styles of figural art, such as seen in miniature painting, did not contribute to the development of a Southeast Asian Islamic aesthetic.

[449] Bennett, 2005, 32. It is sobering to remember that the three centuries of the *pesisir* period was a time of expanding military occupation of the archipelago by European colonial powers, leading to the destruction of the political autonomy and economic wealth of the Demak (1554), Cirebon (1677), Mataram (1755), and Banten (1813) sultanates among others.

[450] Bernard Arps, 2016, *Tall Tree, Nest of the Wind: The Javanese Shadow-play 'Dewi Ruci' Performed by Ki Anom Soeroto* (Singapore: NUS Press), 4. Court performances of puppetry and dance, however entertaining or amusing, were also regarded as ritually powerful acts.

[451] In contrast, the development of other forms of Islamic figurative art in the archipelago tended largely to remain isolated within localised communities. For a discussion of indigenous Sasak woodcarving from Lombok, refer to James Bennett, 2011, *Beneath the Winds: Masterpieces of Southeast Asian Art from the Art Gallery of South Australia* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 56-57. My appreciation is expressed to Muchammadun for reminding me of the *pesisir* connection in

greatly influenced figurative depictions in a wide range of other media, such as manuscript illustration (Fig. 5.4), during the *pesisir* and subsequent Dutch East Indies periods.

The plots of the puppet theatre were based on Javanese renditions of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, in which many storylines have minimal or no connection to the Indian versions of the epics.[452] Their settings were relocated to Java as evident in the performance prologue describing the legendary capital of Prince Krishna (Fig. 5.2), known as Darawati or 'Gateway to the Port'. The scene evokes the wealth and multiculturalism of the maritime emporiums such as Banten:

> On its right lie fields of rice, to the left a great river leading to a harbour on its shore…
>
> Merchants trade by day and night…
>
> Foreigners throng to make Darawati their home.
>
> The roofs of their dwellings touch in friendship.[453]

The locations of the actions and dwellings of the *Mahabharata* heroes and villains were perceived to have been Java itself in the distant ancestral past. Amarta, the capital of the Pandawas was placed at Japara, and Hastina the capital of the Kurawas, near present day Pekalongan on Java's north coast.[454] Various characters became associated with the appearance of unusual features in the landscape. The site where the giant Rahwana was killed in the *Ramayana* is located at the hot sulphuric springs at Mt Ungaran, south of Semarang, and his burial place is the nearby hill of Kendalisada.[455]

The early 19th-century *Serat Centhini* (Story of Centhini) recounts a defining tale in the transition of Java to Islam three hundred years earlier that underscores the significance of the *wayang* puppet in Islam during the *pesisir* period. The hero

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the spread of Islam to north Lombok during my recent visit there (July, 2017). Today the Sasak puppet theatre is almost extinct.

[452] This generalization acknowledges the vast repertoire of the Javanese puppet theatre, which includes: *wayang purwa* plays narrating the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*; *wayang madya* cycle of plays following the death of Parikesit, Arjuna's grandson who is the third generation of Pandawa; *wayang gedhog*, which relates stories of Prince Panji of Koripan and Princes Candra Kirana of Kedhiri; and the *wayang cepak* repertoire, which includes tales of Amir Hamzah, the Majapahit hero Damarwulan, and local history tales.

[453] James R. Brandon, *On Thrones of Gold: Three Javanese Shadow Plays*, Cambridge, Mass., 1970, 86, quotes the prologue from the *wayang kulit* play *The Reincarnation of Rama.*

[454] JJ Ras, 1976, 'The Historical Development of the Javanese Shadow Puppet Theatre', *Rima: Review of Indonesian and Malayan Affairs* 10 (2): 62.

[455] Paul Stange, personal communication, 26 July 2017.

Yudhistira, the last surviving Pandawa brother in the *Mahabharata* epic and identified as Buddhist in Javanese tradition, was cursed to eternally practise solitary asceticism in the Fragrant Bamboo Forest of Glagahwangi, the future site of the kingdom of Demak. It was only when the *wali* Sunan Kalijaga (b.1460) (Fig. 4.5) converted him to Islam through a mystical explanation of the Muslim proclamation of the faith (*shahada*) that the curse was lifted. Yudhistira presented three shadow puppets to the Sunan in reciprocal gratitude and the other *wali songo* later took these puppets as the model for all subsequent figures.[456]

**Fig. 4.5.** Sunan Kalijaga, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, Ki Enthus Susmono (b.1966), 2005, Tegal, Central Java, pigment on carved leather, horn, 87.4 x 36.0 cm; Tropenmuseum (TM-6330-15). Photograph: Tropenmuseum.

The involvement of the *wali songo* and rulers in shadow puppetry enhanced their authority due to the theatre's ancient associations with powerful mystical forces implied in the story of Kalijaga and Yudhistira.[457] The titles of Sunan Kalijaga included 'Lord of the Stage' (Sunan Panggung) and he is regarded as the ancestor of

[456] Merle C. Ricklefs, 2006, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization From the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Norwalk: Eastbridge Publications), 199.
[457] Laurie J. Sears, 1996, *Shadows of Empire: Colonial Discourse and Javanese Tales* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 55; The accounts of their active participation in the theatre chronicled in the new literary medium of the *babad* contrasts with the evocation of shadow puppetry as a poetic trope, symbolising the illusionary nature of existence, in Mpu Kanwa's *Arjunawiwaha*, composed in East Java in pre-Islamic times around 1030.

nearly all puppeteers.[458] A text written in Cirebon (West Java) around 1820 recounts how Sunan Kalijaga used the puppet theatre to convert Javanese non-believers in the former realm of Majapahit:

> He became known as a puppeteer under the name
> The Honorable Old Konjara.
> To make it easy to hire him,
> All one had to do was recite the Profession of Faith.
> This resulted in many converts.[459]

Subsequently, *wayang kulit* became a rich source of metaphysical imagery for the authors of didactic religious poetry (*suluk*). In Sufi compositions associated with *wali* Sunan Bonang (1465-1525), the comparison of God to the puppet-master is a recurring theme that offered a variety of mystical interpretations.[460]

**Islamic attitudes to figurative imagery in the puppet theatre**

Today many Indonesian religious scholars (*ulama*) and Sunni traditionalist commentators label the shadow puppet as *shirk* (polytheism) due to its figural forms and the perception that the theatre is contiguous with pre-Islamic spiritual values, seen in the Indian origins of many of the plots and the customary performance rituals, such as making offerings before the commencement.[461] According to puppeteer traditions, *wali* Sunan Giri (b.1442) created the first non-realistic puppet set in order to

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[458] Cohen, 1997, xxiii. Elsewhere in the same study (22), Cohen quotes various scholars who have suggested that one of the characteristic features of the puppet theatre everywhere is the form's availability for appropriation by dominant elites; Some Javanese accounts ascribe the title ' Lord of the Stage' to Sunan Kalijaga's son.

[459] Abdul Kahar's 'Story Collection' (*Carub Kandha*), quoted in D.A. Rinkes, 1912, 'Pangeran Panggoeng, Zijne Honden en Het Wajangspel', *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal, Land- en Volkenkunde Uitgeven door het Bataviaasch Genootshap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen 54*, Batavia, 150-151, and translated by Cohen, 1997, xvii. According to the contemporary puppeteer Akirna Hadiwekasan in his unpublished *Serat Wayang Purwa Kawedar*, the choice of the medium of puppetry was specifically 'to entertain the heart at the same time as articulating moral lessons or the teachings of the Holy Religion', quoted in Cohen, 1997, xx.

[460] G.W.J. Drewes, 1968, 'Javanese Poems Dealing with Or Attributed to the Saint of Bonan', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde,* 124(2): 211; The perspectives included people seeing the world as a play originating from the *dalang* (God), others saw it as accompanied by the *dalang*, still others as revealing the existence of the *dalang* while others note the unity of the *dalang*, puppeteer, and spectator: Drewes, 1968, 227; Merle C. Ricklefs, 1993, *War, Culture and Economy in Java 1677-1726* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin), 127, notes Sultan Amangkurat II of Mataram (r.1677-1703) advised his son to read both the Qur'an and the 'Story of Rama' (*Serat Rama*) for guidance in his life, indicating how puppet plays were also regarded as morally edifying.

[461] Moh. Isa Pramana Koesoemadinata et al., 2013, 'Socio-Historical and Cultural Influences on Visual Differentiation of *Wayang Kulit* of Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia: A Case Study of the Attributes of Priest Drona Puppets', *Tawarikh: International Journal of Historical Studies* 5(1): 47.

circumvent the perceived Islamic proscription against figurative depiction that had led to their temporary banning.[462] It was the holy man who reportedly sought to distance their visual style from pre-Islamic temple reliefs as well as established the convention of almond-shaped eyes for refined puppet figures and bulging-eyes for those characters driven by passion or anger.[463] Nevertheless, the contemporary conservative Muslim view that shadow puppets are outside the boundaries of Islamic aesthetic norms is encapsulated in the acquisition polices of the Museum of Islamic Art Malaysia, the leading institution of its kind in Southeast Asia, and Bayt Al Qur'an and Museum Istiqlal at Jakarta's Taman Mini Indonesia Indah, that both exclude *wayang kulit* from their collections.

The apparent popularity of the puppet theatre during the *pesisir* period raises the question of Javanese attitudes to figurative imagery. Islam had arrived into an environment where there existed a dynamic pre-existing tradition of making Hindu and Buddhist icons. Even today, the *wayang* maker considers the eyes, nose, and mouth to be critically important in a figure's creation and they are left to the final stage of the carving. The Javanese term for this is *ambedah*, literally 'to break open', suggesting bringing the puppet to life.[464] This workshop practice may preserve memories of Hindu-Buddhist consecration rituals known as 'opening the eyes'.[465] For example, *Kidung Aji Dharma* (Romance of Aji Dharma), performed with rod-puppets until modern times, relates how a carpenter creates a sculpture of a beautiful maiden but only a Brahmin priest can bring her to life.[466]

Existing evidence suggests Javanese attitudes were mixed, undoubtedly reflecting the pluralist world of the Southeast Asian archipelago. The earliest surviving eyewitness account of a Muslim response to images is by the Portuguese trader Vasco Lourenco who visited Brunei Darussalam in 1526. The apprehension felt by the local ruler in accepting the gift of a European tapestry depicting figures implies

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[462] Brandon, 1972, 6, does not cite the source for his statement describing the temporary ban.
[463] Sri Ir. Mulyono, 1978, *Wayang: Asal-Usul, Filsafat dan Masa Depannya* (Jakarta: PT Gunung Agung), 81.
[464] Mellema, RL, 1954, *Wayang Puppets: Carving, Colouring, Symbolism* (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen), 17. The consecration of an image installed in a temple, through symbolically opening the idol's eyes, is known in Sanskrit as *praṇa* (breath) *pratiṣṭha* (position).
[465] It is uncertain the extent to which making puppets was accompanied by ritual acts during the *pesisir* era. The prevalence of surviving *primbon* almanacs, used for determining auspicious days, and 19th-century accounts of folk beliefs suggests considerations, such as the choice of the appropriate day to commence carving a major puppet character, were once likely important.
[466] G.W.J. Drewes, 1975, *The Romance of King Anlin Darma in Javanese Literature* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff), 137.

objections to images may have arisen more from fear of their potential magical powers rather than attention to image-averse doctrines.[467] On Java the destruction of images was evidently selective and contextualised, as indicated by the damaged stone Akshobya Buddha, dated from the 13th- to 14th-century or earlier, recently discovered buried close to the mausoleum of Sunan Bonang in the old *pesisir* port city of Tuban.[468] Yet by the 18th-century, the extent of *pesisir* acceptance of figurative images in a religious setting is apparent in the Dutch Delft tiles decorating the walls of the mausoleum of the *wali* Sunan Gunung Jati in Cirebon, many depicting Biblical stories and European scenes of people (Fig. 4.6).

**Fig. 4.6.** Mausoleum of Sunan Gunung Jati (d.c.1570), 1600-1800, Cirebon, West Java. Photograph: AGSA.

An important factor reinforcing the visual potency of the *wayang kulit* figures for *pesisir* audiences is found in the physical landscape of Java. The puppet characters, whose actions and personas were epic in dimension, were witness to an ancestral past whose existence was testified in the visibility of the monumental stone and brick structures, dating from the Hindu-Buddhist period, found throughout the island. This architecture, representative of a past era, was almost certainly viewed ambiguously in the 16th-century as the newly established *pesisir* sultanates vied for power. For instance, *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Chronicle of the Land of Java), a collection

[467] Lourenco presented a European figurative tapestry to the local ruler who, fearing the figures might magically come to life and slay him, ordered it to be immediately removed (Bennett, 2005, 251).
[468] The statue is now in the collection of the Museum Kambang Putih, Tuban, East Java. A surprising number of pre-Islamic Hindu and Buddhist sculptures of deities and deified rulers survived intact in Java until recent times while many others show clear evidence of deliberate mutilation, such as defacement.

of 17th- and 18th-century texts retelling the ancient origins of the Mataram Sultanate, describes how Sunan Giri (b.1442) assumed the role of king for forty days and performed prayers to ritually purify the captured Majapahit palace, previously occupied by non-Muslim rulers. The subsequent long-lasting respect for the location's significance in indicated in a Dutch East Indies Company report from 1714 describing the continuing presence of 'priests' as custodians of the abandoned palace.[469]

It is also likely small groups of hermits, in the tradition of *rsi*, inhabited ruined Hindu-Buddhist temple sites in Central Java.[470] These occupants may have been predecessors of the hereditary custodians (*juru kunci*) today found at all ancient sites, including the man-made caves used in pre-Islamic times for religious asceticism. The responsibilities of the *juru kunci* encompass maintaining the physical site, controlling access to it, and preserving and interpreting the oral traditions associated with its origins and powers. This is almost invariably done in a manner that re-locates each site's significance within an Islamic context.[471] As a case in point, the unfinished sculptures of Hindu deities at Sentono Cave, containing a Sivaite *lingam-yoni* dating around the 9th-century, in Sleman, Central Java, are said to represent *wayang kulit* characters and the current custodian reports hearing the cave's guardian spirit recite Muslim prayers.[472]

The question of whether the figurative images of *wayang kulit* are permitted under Islamic religious law is addressed in *Serat Centhini*. This picaresque Javanese tale, set around 1635, recounts an episode in which the principal characters, Jayengresmi and his companions, encounter a shadow puppet performance and question the host, Kidang Wiracapa, regarding this matter. Wiracapa's reply suggests that the shadows of the puppets on the screen creating the illusion of life were not the

[469] Ricklefs, 1993, 366. The presence of large numbers of Hindu Balinese, either as mercenary fighters, slaves, or itinerants on Java during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, may have influenced attitudes to this Majapahit site from which many Balinese claimed ancestral descent. Also it may well have been a factor contributing towards the popularity of *wayang kulit* that is a theatrical form well known in Bali.
[470] Merle C. Ricklefs, 1974, *Jogjakarta Under Sultan Mangkubumi 1749-1792* (London: Oxford University Press), 15.
[471] Annabel Teh Gallop, 1995, *Early Views of Indonesia: Pemandangan Indonesia di Masa Lampau* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 46, 53, illustrates several early 19th-century English sketches of Javanese *candi* ruins that have been enclosed with fences documenting the local tradition of respecting the sites. A stone figure, likely 14th-century, at Bogor is recorded as named 'Kiai (Javanese honorific title for a Muslim holy man) Purwa Galih'.
[472] M. Rizky Sasono, Ferry Ardiyanto, Jean-Pascal Elbaz, and Agung Kurniawan, 2002, *Situs-situs Marjinal Jogya: Sanctuaires Retrouvés: Sites Out of Sight* (Indonesia [Yogyakarta?]: Enrique Indonesia), 43-44.

problem. Rather it is forgetfulness of 'the deeper meaning of *wayang*, the inner reality.'[473] As the late great Dutch scholar, Petrus Josephus Zoetmulder, elucidates in his 1935 doctoral thesis on Javanese Islamic mysticism, Wiracapa's explanation offers two ways of symbolically viewing *wayang*. The 'deeper meaning' is understanding that the performance depicts the actions of God where the '*wayang* characters are the categories of God's creatures.' On the other hand, the 'inner reality' is the secret mystical doctrine accessible only to students who have embarked on the mystic path under the guidance of a suitably qualified teacher. The explanation proffered by Wiracapa is typical of Sufi doctrine propounding the significance of the esoteric (*batin*) over the exoteric (*zahir*) in order to gain true insight into the meaning (*ma'na*) of life.

**Mystical associations in the puppet theatre and the significance of the ascetic character**

The spiritual guru Begawan Abiyasa, grandfather of both Pandawa heroes and Kurawa villains in the *Mahabarata*, appears in many *wayang* performances.[474] In puppet iconography, Begawan Abiyasa is typically styled wearing distinctive Muslim dress including a jacket, decorated with an Indian floral chintz pattern, turban-like headdress, and sometimes wearing upturned Arabic style shoes as indicators of status.[475] The *mise-en-scène* for Abiyasa is his remote forest hermitage that the hero visits to seek advice or spiritual guidance. According to various performance traditions, the hermitage scene may occur as the opening scene known as the *jejer*, literally 'stake', due to its important role in defining the story, or at the commencement of the dramatically critical second act (*pathet sanga*).[476]

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[473] Petrus J Zoetmulder, 1995, *Pantheism and Monism in Javanese Suluk Literature: Islamic and Indian Mysticism in an Indonesian Setting* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 245.

[474] Sears, 1996, 196, notes that Abiyasa's characterization as the sage Vyasa who is the storyteller in Indian versions of the *Mahabharata* differs from the Javanese puppet theatre where he appears as a hermit.

[475] Lydia Kieven, 2013, *Following the Cap-Figure in Majapahit Temple Reliefs* (Leiden: Brill), 55, records that similarly dressed sage figures already appear in late Majapahit temple Hindu-Buddhist reliefs and she suggests the jacket indicates high status. The jacket, whose origins were most likely Persian, was already common wear in Melaka by 1433, according to the report of the Chinese traveller, Ma Huan (Bennett, 2005, 290).

[476] Matthew I. Cohen, trans., 1998, *Demon Abduction: A Wayang Ritual Drama from West Java, Performed by Basari* (Jakarta: Lontar Foundation), xi; Alton L. Becker, 1979, 'Text-building, Epistemology and Aesthetics in Javanese Shadow Theatre', in Alton L. Becker and Aram A Yengoyan, eds, *The Imagination of Reality: Essays in Southeast Asian Coherence* Systems (Norwood, NJ: Ablex), 220, explains the Javanese term *jejer* as also meaning 'what exists', 'subject of a sentence', 'handle of a *keris* dagger', and 'an audience before a king'.

The Portuguese traveller Tome Pires who visited the Javanese north coast ports around 1512 reported the presence of around fifty thousand ascetic hermits living on the island and that they were even 'worshipped by the Moors'.[477] The first Dutch visitors to Banten, West Java, at the end of the 16th-century observed the presence of local non-Muslim ascetics dressed in bark cloth.[478] These accounts are a reminder that the generic term 'Hindu-Buddhist' used since the period of Dutch colonial scholarship as a convenient cultural dichotomy and demarcation to Islam is far from precise and becomes especially problematic when discussing the iconography of shadow puppets like Abiyasa.[479] The 14th-century East Javanese poet, Mpu Prapañca, in *Deśawarṇana* (Depiction of the Districts) (Chapter 81: 1-4), also commonly known as *Nāgarakṛtāgama*, describes the existence of three lineages of spiritual practice, comprising *Śaiwa* (Hindu Śaivite), *sogata* (Mahayana Buddhist) and the *ṛṣi* (hermit recluses). The establishment of *ṛṣi* communities on remote mountains, notably Penanggungan and Lawu, appears to have increased in popularity towards the end of the Majapahit period (1293−c.1500) when their status apparently rose as well.[480] The *wayang* puppet Abiyasa, dressed in attire referencing fashions of the wider Islamic world, dutifully performs the various activities of a forest hermit including providing mystical advice, acts of divination and prescribing protective magic. The tradition did not end following the ascendancy of the sultanates as the scholar of Javanese literature Bernard Arps observes *kabudan* ('Buddhist') clerics continued to serve at the court of Mataram up till at least the 1730s.[481]

The opening narrative of a contemporary West Javanese performance of the puppet play *Barikan* (Demon Abduction) describes a hermitage retreat in the following words:

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[477] John Miksic, 2005, 'The Art of Cirebon and the Image of the Ascetic in Early Javanese Islam', in Bennett, 2005, 124; Mark Woodward, 1989, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press), suggests the Muslim merchants and Sufi teachers who first came to Java around the 14th-century would already have been very familiar with similar Indian Hindu ascetic practices related to accruing mystical powers.

[478] Claude Guillot, 2002, 'The Tembayat Hill: Clergy and Royal Power in Central Java from the 15th- to 17th-century', in Henri Chambert-Loir and Anthony Read, eds., 2002, *The Potent Dead: Ancestors, Saints and Heroes in Contemporary Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 153, records the Dutch describing the Banten ascetics as 'pythagoricians', meaning Hindus.

[479] Anthony Day, 1982, 'Ranggawarsita's Prophecy of Mystery', in David K. Wyatt and Alexander Woodside, eds., *Moral Order and the Question of Change: Essays on Southeast Asian Thought* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies), 190, notes the assumption of 19th-century Dutch scholarship that 'synthesis' is a basic impulse in Javanese thought.

[480] Kieven, 2013, 299.

[481] Arps, 2016, 88

…most beautiful, spacious and pleasingly cool, inhabited by a sage of excellent descent, a devotee of great power.

Not only animals but even birds, if they are bold enough to try and pass through

the hermitage, will return from whence they come…

This is due to the great power of the harsh devotions of the anchorite.[482]

The passage is notable for its evocation of the extraordinary spiritual powers of the hermit-sage. The setting reflects the fecundity of nature as it must have appeared in pre-modern Java, where the landscape still consisted of vast tracts of undisturbed wilderness.[483] The meditation of a forest ascetic was believed to have a profound effect on the physical environment. *Wali* Sunan Kalijaga first became cognizant of the presence of the Buddhist hermit Yudhistira when the vegetation he cut to clear the Glagahwangi forest immediately sprouted again. Later, Sunan Kalijaga and Gunung Jati would use their own mystical powers, acquired through meditation, to send forth whirlwinds to stave off invading Hindu forces.[484]

The cataclysmic events, such as storms and earthquakes, precipitated by the power of a hermit's meditation are sometimes represented in the *wayang* performances through the use of a unique puppet-prop called the *gunungan*, meaning 'mountain' (Fig. 4.7). The multi-purpose puppet also marks the commencement and conclusion of acts, represents landscape topography, and indicates palace buildings on the screen. The *gunungan* is also known as *kayon* or 'tree' due to its depiction as a towering tree, commonly identified as the Tree of Abundance (*Kalpataru*), or alternatively the Tree of Life (*Pohon Hayat*).[485]

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[482] Cohen, 1998, act 1:1

[483] Ricklefs, 1993, 5, estimates the population of the whole of Java in the 17th-century to have been around only three million persons. The heavily forested landscape likely appeared closer to what we recognize existed in more recent times on the neighboring islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan; Jacobus Noorduyn and Andries Teeuw, 2006, *Three Old Sundanese Poems* (Leiden: Brill), 439, record Old Javanese and Sundanese texts use the term *alas* (forest) for a geographical region and West Javanese puppeteers today continue to use *alas* to describe the district in which each *dalang* commonly performs (Cohen, 1997, 1). The Indonesian/Javanese word *babad*, meaning a historical chronicle of a kingdom, originates from the phrase *mbabad alas* or 'to clear the forest'.

[484] Woodward, 1989, discusses Islamic attitudes to magic in the context of Java, mentioning the magical powers of King Sulaiman described in the Qur'an (34:12) as a precedent for its practice by the Javanese saints to further the Islamic faith.

[485] Solichin, 2016, *Tokoh Wayang Terkemuka* (Jakarta: Yayasan Sena Wangi), 40, states that the origin of the word *kayon* is the Old Javanese *khayun* meaning 'wish' (*kehendak*) or 'intention' (*niat*). A flaming demonic face is painted on the reverse side of the *gunungan*.

**Fig. 4.7.** *Gunungan*, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1775-1816, Java, pigment, and gold leaf on carved leather, horn, 93.5 x 38.3 cm; British Museum (As1939, 04.51). Photograph: Trustees of the British Museum.

*Wali* Sunan Kalijaga is said to have designed the *gunungan blumbangan* that incorporated a chronogram (*sangkala*), for 1521, thus marking the year of its creation.[486] It is named *blumbangan* as it features a pool (*blumbang*) at the base of the tree. The *gunungan gapuran*, designed during Mataram's Kartasura era (1680−1755), features a low-roofed building with closed doors that is identified as a palace gateway (*gapura*). The building/gateway often displays Garuda wings similar to the mountain caves of hermits depicted on 16th-century wooden panels at the mausoleum of *wali* Sunan Drajat and the gateways at Makam Sendang Duwur (Fig. 4.8).[487] A pair of ogre guardians, Cingkarabala and Balaupata, armed with clubs stand sentinels at either side of the closed doors.[488] According to *wayang* tradition, these twins also are the guardians of the gateway to Suralaya, the heavenly kingdom of Batara Guru, who is discussed further below.

[486] Ras, 1976, 59; R Soetarno AK, 1987, *Ensiklopedia Wayang* (Semarang: Effar and Dahara Prize), 141.

[487] An origin for the motif of a winged sacred cave/building is suggested in the winged sanctuary stairway at the early 13th-century Vaishnavite temple of Candi Sawentar near Blitar. I have used the convention of describing the Javanese motif of wings, found also in batik and architecture, as 'Garuda wings' though it is uncertain how far the *gunungan gapuran* consciously intended to invoke the Garuda who was the vehicle of the Hindu god, Viṣṇu.

[488] Solichin, 2016, 44. Modern Central Javanese *gunungan* customarily depict the pair of ogres as very similar in appearance to the guardian *dwarapala* of pre-Islamic temples.

**Fig. 4.8.** Gateway, c.1560-1580, Sendang Duwur Mausoleum, Paciran, East Java. Photograph: Ali Akbar.

The *gunungan* refers to the sacredness of mountain peaks from earliest times in Javanese cosmology. Pre-Islamic texts refer to mountains as the dwelling place of indigenous gods that subsequently became transformed into *jin*-like territorial spirits, known as *dhanyang*.[489] Several notable East Javanese *wali* graves are located in elevated locations, suggesting a departure from earlier practices in which Majapahit mortuary temples were erected facing sacred mountains and not on them. *Babad Giri* (The Chronicles of Giri) record how *wali* Sunan Giri chose the mountain Giri Perwata 'whose earth was very sacred' as the site for his mosque.[490] The name Giri Perwata refers to the cosmic mountain Mahameru in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. Giri Perwata also became the location of his mausoleum, whose richly carved doorway replicates a cave entrance surrounded by luxurious floral growth. Carvings of *kala* monster-faces and *naga* serpent images at the mausoleum offer talismanic protection and evoke the remote and magical world of sacred peaks.[491] The late 15th- to early-16th-century *Tantu Panggelaran* text relates how Mahameru was transported from India to Java where Batara Guru appointed Kala and Anukala as its guardians while he engaged in meditation practices upon the summit.[492] The idea of mountains and hills as locations associated with spiritual power is embodied in the symbolism of the *gunungan* puppet and extends to the schema of the mausoleums of *wali* saints.

[489] Noorduyn and Teeuw, 2006, 142.
[490] Moehamad Habib Mustopo, 2001, *Kebudayaan Islam di Jawa Timur: Kajian Beberapa Unsur Budaya Masa Peralihan* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Jendela), 185.
[491] Marijke J. Klokke, 1993, *The Tantri Reliefs on Ancient Javanese Candi* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 153.
[492] For a further discussion of the imagery of the *kala* head in the pre-Islamic period, see Bennett, 2011, 22-23.

**The ascetic character and the mausoleums of Javanese saints**

The graves of the 16th-century Sufi *wali songo* are popular pilgrimage destinations along the north coast and in the central region of Java. Ironically, many sites—which several hundred years ago were set in remote natural settings amongst tranquil forests of tall trees and verdant rural landscapes—are now surrounded by towering concrete buildings, often constructed imitating a Middle Eastern style unsympathetic to indigenous Javanese traditions of architecture, asphalt carparks, food vendors and crowded, souvenir stalls. The peaceful atmosphere of a place of spiritual retreat still remains only at comparatively less visited graves, like the *makam* (mausoleum) in Tuban of Sunan Bejagung Kidul, a Majapahit aristocrat who embraced Islam.

The decorative schema of the 16th-century mausoleums, such as the ornate Makam Sendang Duwur, said to be the burial place of an unknown holy man sometimes identified as named Nur Rachmat ('Light of Mercy'), are notable for the absence of the depiction of human figures. This contrasts with the extensive use of narrative reliefs in the Hindu and Buddhist temples, erected as mortuary monuments to royal personages in the preceding generations. The lack of figuration is often used to justify identification of the *wali songo* mausoleums as definitive examples of Southeast Asian Islamic art. Their incorporation of earlier Majapahit architectural elements, such as the imposing gateways (*gapura*) and terraced courtyards, is interpreted as indicative of the highly syncretic tendencies first attributed to Indonesian Islam by 19th-century European scholars.[493]

The *wayang* theme of the ascetic dwelling in the forest hermitage may be a key to understanding the non-figurative visual elements present in 16th-century mausoleums. The importance of the eremitic tradition in *pesisir* art is emphasised by the archaeologist John Miksic in his analysis of the design of the Kasepuhan Palace in Cirebon, established in the 16th-century by *wali* Sunan Gunung Jati (d.c.1570).[494] The royal structures, Miksic proposes, are intended to convey the notion of the ruler as an ascetic and his dwelling as a place of spiritual attainment. Likewise, the Sufi mausoleums, rather than being merely syncretic adaptations of Majapahit *Śaiwa* and

[493] Many of the mausoleum complexes have been repeatedly altered and restored in subsequent centuries so that it is difficult sometimes to gain a precise sense of their original appearance.
[494] Miksic, 2005, 126.

*sogata* temple elements, minus figural depictions, also may contain similar veiled allusions to the dwelling place of the ascetic.[495]

Such allusions are not unexpected given the *wali*'s commitment to ascetic practices. Sunan Kalijaga had initially held the illustrious title Raden Said but changed his name to Kali Jaga after performing austerities on the banks of the Jaga River (*kali*).[496] His son, Sunan Muria, lived as a semi-recluse and was buried on Mt. Muria, in Central Java. Javanese traditions state Mt. Muria, a popular pilgrimage site today, is also the location of the sage Abiyasa's hermitage and the cave where Arjuna, the Pandawa hero of the *wayang* world, performed his meditation.[497] It is believed that the 8th-century ruins of the hilltop Śaivite temple of Gunung Wukir, literally 'the carved mountain', also in Central Java, is haunted by the presence of Abiyasa who likewise performed austerities at this place and whose spirit can still be occasionally sighted dressed in the long white robes of a religious scholar.[498] The association of both pre-Islamic sites and Islamic graves with ascetic practices represents a continuing tradition that is theatrically embodied in the figure of the hermit Abiyasa at his forest retreat.

The suggestion that the *wali*'s mausoleums the alluded to the sacred space of a hermit retreat, such as appears in puppet theatre *lakon*, is further supported by two remarkable wooden branching columns that have survived from the mausoleums of Sunan Bonang (Fig. 4.9) and Sendang Duwur. The richly carved decoration of both columns feature densely forested landscapes scenes with buildings and figural images.[499] Miksic has observed *pesisir* landscape depictions of forested mountains

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[495] The modern-day Indonesian institution of Islamic school, known as *pesantren*, is assumed to have developed out of the Majapahit *mandala* communities of hermit recluses.

[496] H.R. Sumarsono, trans. and ed., 2014, *Babab Tanah Jawi: Mulai Dari Nabi Adam Sampai Tahun 1647. Disusun oleh W.L. Olthof di Belanda Tahun 1941* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Narasi), 36. The practice of forest austerities may have been regarded by some as un-Islamic as seen in the advice of the mother of Jaka Tingkir, future ruler of the Central Javanese Muslim state of Pajang, to her son not to go into the forests or mountains to perform retreats (Sumarsono, 2014, 68).

[497] Muria (Murya) is said in some Indonesian accounts to derive from Mount Marwah, located close to the Ka'ba in Mecca, while other traditions say the word derives from Mount Moriah, on which King Solomon's temple was erected in Jerusalem. Muria is close to the city of Kudus, meaning Al-Quds (Jerusalem) in Javanese, where Sunan Kudus is believed buried in the al-Aqsa Mosque.

[498] Sasono, Ardiyanto, Elbaz, and Kurniawan, 2002, 78.

[499] My appreciation is expressed to Hélène Njoto for providing me with an English translation of her paper 'À propos d'une pièce en bois sculptée de l'art du Pasisir (xv$^{e}$-xvii$^{e}$ s.): le <kalpataru> du musée de Tuban à Java-Est', *Archipel* 88, Paris 2014, presenting a comprehensive analysis of the Sunang Bonang column now in the collection of Museum Gambang Putih, Tuban. Radiocarbon dating tests of the column suggest a dating between a more likely1445-1525 or 1555-1630. The Sendang Duwur column regrettably has been dismantled and removed from its original position. My appreciation to Rony Firman Firdaus for pointing out an *in situ* photograph of the column, described as located in the

commonly feature a small open pavilion, often with a branching single column (*soko tunggal*) supporting the roof, whose depiction may imply the presence of an ascetic hermit.[500] They also appear in Majapahit period terracotta miniature sculptures and subsequently in stone reliefs at the 16th-century Mantingan Mosque. An 18th-century wooden panel preserved in the Kasepuhan Palace, Cirebon, features the same style hermit's pavilion in a mountain scene inset with Dutch glazed tiles decorated with Biblical scenes (Fig. 5.10).[501] A small ceremonial pavilion, known as the *Langgar Alit*, featuring a central four-branched column carved with ornate stylised foliage, stands in the grounds of the Kasepuhan Palace, whose structures Miksic interpret as symbolising the realm of the ascetic.

**Fig. 4.9.** Drawing of carved branching column inscribed 'Taken at Tooban opposite the mosque', dated 24 April 1812, unknown artist, Tuban, East Java; British Library, Indian Office Library Collection (WD 953 f.69 (77)). Photograph: British Library.

tomb-house, published in Ir. Zein M. Wiryoprawiro, 1986, *Perkembangan Arsitektur Masjid di Jawa Timur* (Surabaya: Bina Ilmu), 228, plate 223. Uka Tjandrasasmita,1984, *Islamic Antiquities of Sendang Duwur* (Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian Arkeologi Nasional), 26 states that the column was in a small pavilion, now demolished, in a courtyard adjacent the tomb-house. He describes figures of deer, horses and an elephant on the carved column but the writer was unable to inspect it closely enough to verify Tjandrasasmita's report.

[500] Miksic, 2005, 124.

[501] The Dutch tiles on the panel, from the collection of the Kasepuhan Palace, Cirebon, include figures that may represent Jesus Christ and also Suzannah bathing. Palace tradition attributes the carved panel to the Cirebon aristocrat, Panembahan Ratu I, who lived from the late sixteenth to early 17th-century. The carving style of the panel and its patina suggest this dating may possibly be correct and that the present tiles are 18th-century substitutes or additions.

**Fig. 4.10.** Mountain landscape scene with hermit pavilions and inset with Dutch tiles, attributed to Panembahan Ratu 1 (1568-1649), 1700-1750 or possibly earlier, Cirebon, West Java; Kasepuhan Palace Collection. Photograph: AGSA.

The branching columns—identified by local people as the *Kalpataru* (Tree of Abundance), one of the five Trees of Paradise according to Hindu cosmology—at the mausoleums of Sunan Bonang and Sendang Duwur date to the 16th-century. Their decoration of forest scenery includes hermit's pavilions, and the swirling motifs in the upper sections of the two columns perhaps represent mountain clouds or wind. The ogre-like faces appearing on the columns may be the elemental beings that haunted wilderness places.[502] It was said the psychic heat produced by a recluse in meditation so discomforted forest spirits that they would assume terrifying forms in order to frighten or deceive the recluse into ceasing his practice.[503] A large unadorned squatting figure on the base of the Bonang column possibly represents the *gendrowo,* a giant ghost who dwelt in the forests of north coast Java.

The roles of the *wali songo* as psychically powerful personages who engaged the unseen world through their efforts to convert Java to Islam, explains the presence of such unexpected figurative imagery at the two mausoleums. The branching form of the columns and their carved decoration reference the activities of *wali songo* as

[502] These creatures were all part of the realm of 'mysterious happenings' (*kelokan*) that included unexplained visions, physical deformities, and spirit visitations. Day, 1982, 217, observes *kelokan* were already becoming marginalized in the increasingly urbanized Dutch East Indies world of the mid-19th-century.

[503] Ward Keeler, 1987, *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), 42.

ascetics and their retreats as places of spiritual power, an idea apparently extended after their death to their graves. These sites have become destinations where pilgrims gather for devotional practices and meditation at auspicious times, including *malam Jumat*, that is, the eve of Friday, the Muslim holy day of the week.

**The puppet figure as an image of mystical power**

The involvement of the *wali songo* in the shadow puppet theatre, as previously outlined, conveys specific implications in the *pesisir* era that are easily overlooked today. The long-held association of *wayang kulit* with unseen mystical forces is recounted in the *Tantu Panggelaran,* which attributes the creation of the first shadow puppets to an act of exorcism. The text describes the attempt of several gods to placate the god Sang Hyang Batara Guru who had transformed himself into a wrathful ogre and was sowing destruction in the world of men. They descended to this realm and performed a puppet play revealing the demonic disguise of Batara Guru, thus rendering him harmless.[504]

**Fig. 4.11.** Batara Guru, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1800-1900, East Java, pigment on carved leather, horn, metal, fibre, 77.5 x 26.5 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia Public Donations Fund 2010, Art Gallery of South Australia (20109A72). Photograph: AGSA.

[504] Groenendael, 1998, xi.

Batara Guru, also known as Manikmaya, is the most enigmatic figure in the *wayang* tradition and also encapsulates the nuanced relationship, as well as distinct differences, between the iconography of the Islamic *pesisir* era and its pre-Islamic heritage (Fig. 4.11). The puppet is respectfully concealed in cloth when displayed beside the *wayang* screen and an offering of incense made to it before the commencement of a performance, suggesting an ancient pre-Islamic ancestry.[505] The honorific appellation Sang Hyang means 'Great Being' and his alternate name, Girinata or 'Lord of the Mountain', as well as the four arms, one hand holding a flywhisk, and the buffalo vehicle, Lembu Andhini, explicitly reference the Hindu god Siva Mahadeva. Nevertheless, by the 11th-century, a recorded account portrays Batara Guru not as a god, but one who 'by virtue of his own wisdom was guru to the gods, who was the ray-garlanded [sun] to the lotus grove of the wise'.[506]

**Fig. 4.12.** Batara Guru confronts his demonic son, Batara Kala, in a contemporary *wayang kulit* shadow puppet performance of the *Murwakala* exorcism play, 2006, Java. Photograph: Marshall Cavendish International and Fendi Siregar.

[505] Kanjeng Madi Kertonegoro, 2009, *The Javanese and Balinese Wayang Figures of Gods and Goddess* (Ubud: Daya Putih Foundation), 18. Batara Guru's lack of movable arms further suggests the puppet's great antiquity as it may not to be too bold to presume the oldest form of Javanese puppet figures possessed no jointed limbs.

[506] Bijian Ray Chatterjee (1933) cited in JR. Kevin Jacques, 2006, 'Sejarah Leluhur: Hindu Cosmology and the Construction of Javanese Genealogical Authority', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17(2): 142. For a further discussion of the iconography of the Batara Guru puppet, see Bennett, 2011, 37-38.

The role of Batara Guru as the main protagonist, subject to the very human failings of lust and anger, in the *Murwakala* (Origin of Kala) story cycles (Fig. 4.12), indicates that by the 15th-century he had become regarded as less than divinely perfect. Modern day Javanese interpretations of the *wayang* figure's appearance have no connection to Hindu deity iconography. The four arms are a consequence of Batara Guru mocking a man at prayer (*sholat*). He is said to have been present at the nativity of Nabi 'Isa (Jesus) but doubted the baby was a prophet of God because he could not walk at birth.[507] Batara Guru's unbelief caused his own feet to shrink so that he was unable to walk. The buffalo Lembu Andhini, the elder brother of the ogres Cingkarabala and Balaupata, who are the doorway guardians on *gunungan* puppets, consequently became his vehicle. Unlike in older Javanese images of the Hindu god Siva, most puppets depict Batara Guru with his two front arms folded together (*sendhakep*) in a gesture associated with one of the postures of Islamic prayer.[508]

The *Babad Tanah Jawi* incorporates Batara Guru into a Javanese ancestral lineage in a manner unprecedented in pre-Islamic royal genealogies: he is cited as the seventh-generation descendant of the Qur'anic Adam, whose offspring ultimately established the three great sultanates of Demak, Pajang, and Mataram.[509] Significant aspects of his iconography are attributed to the Mataram rulers Senapati Mataram in 1619 and Susuhunan Mangkurat in 1656.[510] Batara Guru embodies the radiant spiritual energy associated with the concept of *wahyu*, the divine light of revelation, which the Javanese believe infuses individuals such as the *wali* saints and worldly rulers, who were followers of Sufism and to whom exceptional spiritual powers were attributed.[511] The transition of Batara Guru from a pre-Islamic deity into an embodiment of Islamic mystical practice is evident in a contemporary performance rendition of *Murwakala.* The West Javanese puppeteer, Ki Sarib Purwacarita,

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[507] Joko Susilo, 2004, 'Eisler Shadow-Puppet Collection Catalogue', *Scholarship and Research* 1: 124, <http://scarab.bates.edu/music_research/1>.
[508] For a discussion of a hadith of the Prophet preferring the prayer gesture of *qabd* (right hand on left hand, in front, above or below navel) over *sadl* (hands at one's sides), see Yasin Dutton, 1994, *''Amal v. Hadith* in Islamic Law: The Case of *Sadl al-Yadayn* (Holding one's Hands by one's Sides) when Doing the Prayer', *Islamic Law and Society* 3 (1): 13-40.
[509] James Fox, 'Interpreting the Historical Significance of Tombs and Chronicles in Contemporary Java', in Chambert-Loir and Reid, eds., 2002, 164.
[510] Becker, 1979, 240, states their contribution is most notable in the depictions of Batara Guru's *wanda* (moods).
[511] Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, 1965, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University), 3.

describes the descent of Batara Guru, assuming the form of the divine puppeteer Purwasejati as exorcist:

'… There is a fragrant scent unsmelled

A sound unheard that penetrates inner feeling and opens the shutters…

Penetrating the soul, penetrating the inner meaning, the essence of the inner meaning.

There is a flash of bright light, a ray is seen, brilliant, without a shadow…

The glow of Mohammad incarnating into a human being who is pure,

Aspiring towards heaven, who comes down as *dalang* Purwasejati.[512]

**The puppet as talismanic protection**

The supramundane associations of *wayang kulit* ensured shadow puppet figures became regarded as potent talismanic devices in Java. The oldest precisely dated image of a *wayang* style figure in an Islamic context is found in the Pusponegoro Cemetery in Gresik, East Java, adjoining the revered grave of *wali* Sunan Gresik (Maulana Malik Ibrahim, d.1419). The Hindu elephant-headed god Gaṇeśa, known in Java as Batara Gana, forms a chronogram for the year 1720 and appears on an inscribed stone post at the entrance to the mausoleum of Kyai Ngabehi Tumenggung Pusponegoro.[513] The head and upper-body of Gana are depicted from a schematic viewpoint, combining a facial profile with a stylised three-quarter view of the torso in a typical visual convention for *wayang* figures. Seen without reference to *wayang kulit*, the carving of the Gana appears naive yet the figure's form is certainly based on the canons of puppet iconography. The use of a puppet figure as a chronogram is not unexpected as the *sangkala* was a visual riddle that appears to have implied talismanic notions in pre-modern Javanese culture.[514] Chronograms feature as components in several *wayang* designs. As well as the previously mentioned *gunungan* created by

[512] Quoted in Groenendael, 1998, 10.

[513] Hasan Muarif Ambary, 1986, 'Epigraphical Data from 17th-19th Century Muslim Graves in East Java', in CD Grijns and S.O. Robson, eds., *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation: Papers form the Fourth European Colloquium on Malay and Indonesian Studies, Held in Leiden in 1983* (Dordrecht: Foris Publications), 26, interprets the Javanese chronogram of Gana, holding an arrow over the sea, as moon = 1, Gana = 6, arrow = 5, sea = 4, which adds up to Saka 1645 (1720), the year before Pusapanegara passed away. The object that Ambary describes as an arrow may represent an elephant goad. The mausoleum is remarkable for containing a 14th-century Hindu *yoni* altar installed beside the grave.

[514] Day, 1982, 171, notes the folk etymology of *sangkala* as Lord (*sang*) Time (*kala*) and suggests that Javanese court texts such as *Babad Sangkala* (Chronicle of Chronograms) may have had a certain prophylactic purpose.

*wali* Sunan Kalijaga, the Surakarta *wayang* connoisseur, Prince Mangkunegara VII (r.1916-1944), recounts one tradition that states the ogre Buta Cakil, or 'Fang', alludes to the chronogram 'one honours with homage the weapon of a giant', meaning 1552.[515]

Gana, armed with an arrow, may also have been intended as talismanic protection for the mausoleum of Tumenggung Pusponegoro, an aristocrat who led forces in the Surabaya War (1717-1719).[516] During the pre-Islamic era, East Javanese court circles revered Gana as a remover of obstacles through his role as a military leader in battle. Consequently, his image was installed at open-air locations perceived to be sacred or dangerous.[517] Gana with a sword appears on a *gunungan* puppet collected by Sir Stamford Raffles in Java prior to 1816 (Fig. 4.7). Two guardian lions akin to Chinese *shi*, otherwise called Fu dogs, flank the elephant-headed figure and document the diverse multicultural world of the *pesisir*. Their presence suggests the puppet was made in north coast Java, where there were many Chinese immigrant communities. Several *wali songo* are said to have been of Chinese and Champa (southern Vietnamese) descent. The scholar Hélène Njoto has noted the remarkable similarity of Sinitic-style guardian lions, installed at the mausoleums of *wali* Sunan Drajat and Sendang Duwur, to contemporaneous Vietnamese temple lions.[518] A batik cloth, most probably made in the 18th-century, preserved in the site museum collection at Makam Drajat depicts a similar style of lion in combination with abstracted, winged mountains suggesting the feline creature was viewed as an auspicious talisman like Gana.[519]

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[515] K.G.P.A.A. Mangkunagoro VII, 1957, *On the Wayang Kulit (Purwa) and Its Symbolic and Mystical Elements* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University), 9, gives the Javanese chronogram as *hanembah gegamaning buta tunggal.* Another Javanese tradition states the name is derived from the Javanese chronogram *tangan Jaksa Satataning Jalma*, meaning 1670.

[516] Ricklefs, 1993, provides a detailed account of this period of Javanese history and Pusponegoro's involvement in the Mataram conflicts.

[517] Ann R. Kinney with Marijke J. Klokke and Lydia Kieven, 2003, *Worshipping Siva and Buddha: The Temple Art of East Java* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 151

[518] Hélène Njoto, 2017, 'Sinitic Trends in Early Islamic Java (15th to 17th century)', *ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute* 4: 2-3.

[519] The blue-and-white design on the cotton fabric features stylised winged mountains drawn with a *canting nitik* to imitate the weave of double-ikat.

**Fig. 4.13.** Talismanic panel (*tolak bala*) depicting the Earthly Angel calligram, 1850-1900, Cirebon, West Java, wood with gold leaf and pigment, 71.9 x 45.5 cm; Asian Civilisations Museum (2000.5571). Photograph: Asian Civilisations Museum.

The continuing *pesisir* association of the former Hindu deity Ganesha, as Batara Gana, with prophylactic powers is apparent in an early 20th-century Cirebon carved wooden panel known as 'repelling disaster' (*tolak bala*) (Fig. 4.13). On the panel Gana is in the form of motifs suggesting Arabic calligraphy, believed to have protective powers, and is waving aloft a scimitar rather than the axe seen in Hindu iconography. He stands atop a mountain, a Cirebon symbol for Sufism's seven steps to attaining the state of Perfect Man (*Insan Kamil*), which is dotted with hermit's caves in the shape of double and single Garuda wings.[520] The Indonesian *wayang* scholar, Mohammed Isa Pramana Koesoemadinata, notes Cirebon practitioners of the Sufi Shaṭṭāriyya order identify Gana as the Earthly Angel (*Malekat Lindhu*) who crawled out of materiality to achieve heavenly spirituality.[521] The Gegesik puppet maker, the late Rastika, depicts the Earthly Angel on a contemporary *gunungan* (Fig. 4.14).[522] The figure appears in the form of an Arabic calligram referencing the *tahlil* ("There is no god but God") and *salawat* (prayers upon God and Muhammad). He holds aloft a panel, borne by winged two Garuda, inscribed with *shahada* ("There is no god but God and Muhamad is His prophet"). Like the Batara Guru puppet, pre-

[520] See Bennett, *Crescent Moon*, 283, for a more extended discussion of the imagery of the *tolak bala* panel.
[521] Moh. Isa Pramana Koesoemadinata, personal communication with author, 27 September 2017. The Shaṭṭāriyya Order was pioneered in the Southeast Asian archipelago by the great West Sumatran religious scholar 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkili (c.1615-1693).
[522] Moh. Isa Pramana Koesoemadinata, 2013, 'Wayang Kulit Cirebon: Warisan Diplomasi Seni Budaya', *Institut Teknologi Bandung Journal of Visual Arts and Design* 4(2): 150.

Islamic iconography has been reinterpreted as a vehicle for Islamic symbolism embodying the dichotomy of outer appearance (*zahir*) and inner meaning (*batin*).[523]

**Fig. 4.14.** *Gunungan, wayang kulit* shadow puppet, Rastika (1942-2014), c.2005, Cirebon, pigment and gold paint on leather, horn, about 75.0 cm high (not including handle). Photograph: Moh. Isa Pramana Koesoemadinata.

## Conclusion: The shadow puppet and Islam

The scholar of the West Javanese puppet theatre, Matthew Isaac Cohen, records that 20th-century Indonesian *wayang* connoisseurs describe the relationship of the shadow puppet to its Islamic message as *wayang kulit* being the 'skin' (*kulit*) and Islam being the 'contents' (*isi*).[524] The significance of the figurative tradition of *wayang kulit*, as an expression of Islamic spiritual practice, is apparent in the important role of the hermit-sage Abiyasa in puppet plays. The hermit-sage character reflects the extent that asceticism formed a fundamental aspect of Javanese Sufi teachings and it is likely that the model of the saintly hermit's dwelling also inspired early mausoleums erected for the *wali songo*. Both holy men and *dalang* engaged in mystical practices that ensured certain puppets, such as the *gunungan* with its complex cosmological

[523] Tommy Christomy, 2008, *Signs of the Wali: Narratives of the Sacred Sites in Pamijahan, West Java* (Canberra: ANU Press), 147 observes the particular closeness of the Javanese Shaṭṭāriyya teachings to Ibn al-Arabi's interpretation of *zahir-batin*.
[524] Cohen, 1997, xx.

references and Batara Guru, were seen as embodying talismanic or magical powers. The extent to which the painted leather figures became revered as representative of both the seen and unseen worlds ensured their significance in conveying powerful meanings for the *wali*, as the pioneer propagators of the new religion, and their Javanese audiences during the *pesisir* era.

# CHAPTER 4

The Sacred Tree:

Arboreal Imagery and Place Symbolism
in the Art of Lampung and Java

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# The Sacred Tree:

# Arboreal Imagery and Place Symbolism in the Art of Lampung and Java


## Abstract

The Tree of Life is a term used to describe an arboreal motif that is widespread in the visual arts of Java, and its cultural diaspora in the archipelago, notably Lampung, during the early modern era. The motif has often been linked to ancient indigenous traditions associating spiritual power with trees and the depiction of the celestial *Kalpataru* in art of the preceding Hindu-Buddhist period. However, the ascendancy of Islam in the 16th-century redefined many aspects of the region's cultural practices and coincided with increased inter-island contacts between Java and neighbouring southern Sumatra. These factors invigorated the birth of a new aesthetic in which the arboreal motif became one of the defining features.

This is illustrated in two remarkable wood sculptures created in Lampung for the *cakak pepadun* customary system and that were inspired by contemporaneous art fashions across the Sunda Straits on Java. They are a Pair of Doors (*lawon kori*), dated 1700-1750, and Throne-rest (*sesako*), dated 1800-1850, now in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA). An examination of the arboreal motifs on the two sculptures and their location within the context of similar motifs in Javanese art reveals a multi-valency more diverse than implied in the generic term Tree of Life. The arboreal representations suggest that the tree subject evokes locations in the landscape, either real or imaginary, where seen and unseen forces manifest. Rather than representing the Tree of Life as an archetypal symbol, the motif may be understood through the Javanese device of *pasemon*, meaning an allusion or symbolic hint where one subject may imply multiple meanings. From this perspective, the tree represents a place of momentous encounters where spiritual and temporal power merges.


## Two *cakak pepadun* sculptures from Lampung and their connection to Java.

The depictions of fantastical trees form the focal points of two woodcarvings from Lampung, southern Sumatra, that are the Pair of Doors (*lawon kori*) (Fig. 5.1) and Throne-rest (*sesako*) (Fig. 5.2). Both sculptures were created as an expression of *cakak pepadun*, a customary system literally translated as 'ascending the throne', and are now in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA). The works originate from Panaragan, West Tulang Bawang a district regarded as one of the oldest settlements established by Abung people who are indigenous to a wide area of central and east coast Lampung in southern Sumatra.[525]

[525] Atsushi Ota, 2006, *Changes of Regime and Social Dynamics in West Java: Society, State and the Outer World of Banten 1750-1830* (Leiden: Brill), 15, notes that while the term Abung has been used

**Fig. 5.1.** Pair of Doors (*lawon kori*), c14 date1700-1750, Panaragan, Tulang Bawang, Lampung, wood, 280.0 x 88.0 cm; Gift of Kathy Booth, Diana Evans, Dr Michael Hayes, Justice Kemeri Murray AO, Janice Pleydell and Sue Twedell through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors' Club 2006, Art Gallery of South Australia (20068A89 a&b). Photograph: AGSA.

**Fig. 5.2.** Throne-rest (*sesako*), c14 date1800-1850, Panaragan, Tulang Bawang, Lampung, wood 141.5 x 240.0 cm; Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC, John Mansfield AM, David Urry, Dick Whittington QC and Fran Gerard through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors' Club 2006, Art Gallery of South Australia (20068A90). Photograph: AGSA.

to distinguish the inland highlanders from southern and western coastal peoples, known as Paminggir, the differences are cultural and not linguistic. Safari Daud, 2012, *Sejarah Kesultanan Paksi Pak Sekala Brak* (Jakarta: Puslitbang Lektur dan Khazanah Keagamaa, Kementerian Agama RI), 21, includes the following groups (*suku*) as followers of the *pepadun* tradition: Abung, Way Kanan, Sungkai, Tulangbawang and Pubian. The use of the term Abung for the purposes of this paper implies reference to all five *suku*.

The AGSA Pair of Doors is dated 1700-1750 and the Throne-rest is dated 1800-1850 on the basis of radiocarbon testing conducted by the University of Waikato in 2011.[526] The estimation of their age takes into account their individual styles as well as the difficulties in the Carbon-14 testing of wood, due to unknown factors including the tree's age and anatomy at the time of felling, 'old wood effects' and environmental influences.[527] In the case of the Throne-rest, the cessation of the *cakak pepadun* traditions in the second half of the 19th-century, discussed below, has been considered significant in determining the time frame for its creation.[528]

Abung communities, like Austronesian societies elsewhere, commemorated the aggrandisement of prominent individuals, recognised as 'men of prowess', through the *cakak pepadun* system of elaborate graded rituals marking status elevation.[529] The Abung also bestowed similar honours on women of high rank who were descended from ancient families.[530] Nevertheless, both sculptures display elements closely relating them to contemporaneous styles of Javanese art that developed following the ascendancy of Islam in the 16th-century.[531] Adrian Vickers, in his seminal paper *From Bali to Lampung on the Pasisir*, identifies Lampung as a definitive example of the archipelago's *pesisir* (coastal) world during the early modern era when Java was a key cultural referent and where 'cultural differences are recognised, sometimes emphasised, but common symbols held'.[532] The floral foliage subjects on the AGSA

[526] The 2011 test results were Pair of doors: dC13 -24.4+/- 0.2%, F14C% -38.5 =/- 3.4%, 315 +/- 29 years BP (1677-1735); Throne-rest (right *naga*): dC13 -26+/- 0.2%, F14% 98.2 +/- 0.4%, 148 +/- 30 years BP (1843-1903).

[527] Palincaş, Nona, 2017, 'Radiocarbon Dating in Archaeology: Interdisciplinary Aspects and Consequences (An overview), *AIP Conference Proceedings, 1852: 0600006* (*2017*), 2-4.

[528] Differences in the carving styles suggest the pair of *naga* whose serpent scales appear unfinished, may have originated from another sculpture that possibly was different in age. However, an archival photograph documenting the two works of art sometime before they entered the AGSA collection shows the Throne-rest with the *naga* attached. If it is a composite work, this likely occurred at the time of the Throne-rest's original installation.

[529] See O.W. Wolters, 1982, *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies), 5-8. Wolter's chooses the term 'man of prowess' in preference to the more widely used 'big man' epithet in anthropology studies. James J. Fox, 1997, 'Place and Landscape in Comparative Austronesian Perspective' in James J. Fox (editor), *The Poetic Power of Place: Comparative Perspectives on Austronesian Ideas of Locality* (Canberra: The Australian National University), 13. Fox labels this style of Austronesian society as 'apical demotion' in contrast to those Austronesian societies with more egalitarian modes of social reckoning defined as 'lateral expansion'.

[530] H.O. Forbes, 1989, *A Naturalist's Wanderings in the Eastern Archipelago* (Singapore: Oxford University Press), 146,

[531] See Friedrich W. Funke, 1958, *Orang Abung: South Sumatran National in Change* Vol. 1 (Leiden: E.J.Brill), 316-321 for a general discussion of Javanese influences in *lawon kori* and *sesako* (*pepadun*) wood carving styles.

[532] Adrian Vickers, 1993, 'From Bali to Lampung on the Pasisir', *Archipel*, 45: 55.

Pair of Doors and Throne-rest exemplify the arboreal motifs found widely in *pesisir* art. Museum catalogues and art publications commonly refer to the motifs as the Tree of Life although in the recent years there has been a tendency to broaden the nomenclature to cite terms such as the 'cosmic tree', 'flowering tree' or simply 'exotic tree'.[533] The use of the label Tree of Life, and related designations, to describe arboreal motifs has reinforced stereotypes about the Indonesia's aesthetic traditions. The nomenclature overlooks the sophisticated interrelation between pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions, and local narratives associating trees with the intersection of worldly and otherworldly forces.[534] The Indonesian archipelago, including Lampung and Java, in the early modern era was a world where the Australian scholar Paul Stange has observed, 'mystical consciousness and social power were cosmologically bound together'.[535] The AGSA Pair of Doors and Throne-rest may be understood through this worldview rather than interpreting them through the single lens of a hypothetical local Sumatran past.[536] Central to the appreciation of the significance of arboreal motifs is the consideration of the Javanese aesthetic concept of *pasemon* as an interpretative tool usually applied to literature but likewise relevant to the visual arts. The philologist Nancy Florida defines *pasemon* as an 'allegory' or 'hint of a symbol' which 'indicates something more than itself, something which invites a reading (interpretation) by consciousness participating in a common epistemological universe'.[537] In the context of the discussion of tree imagery, *pasemon* refers to a visual allusion or metaphor where this subject may convey multiple meanings and

[533] For an example of the continuing use of the term Tree of Life applied to Lampung art, refer Intan Mardiana Napitupulu and Singgih Tri Sulistiyono (eds.), 2017, *Archipel: Kingdoms of the Sea* (Ghent: Snoeck Publishers), 156-157. See also Jessup, Helen Ibbitson. 1990. *Court Arts of Indonesia* (New York: The Asia Society Galleries), 69-71, Robyn Maxwell, 2003, *Sari to sarong: Five Hundred Years of Indian and Indonesian Textile Exchange* (Canberra: National Gallery of Victoria), 143-144, and Reimar Schefold, 2016, 'Art and Its Themes in Indonesian Tribal Traditions', in Reimar Schefold et al., *Eyes of the Ancestors: The Arts of Island Southeast Asia at the Dallas Museum of Art* (Tokyo, Rutland, Vermont and Singapore: Tuttle Publishing), 24.

[534] The initial application of the term Tree of Life to non-European art histories can be traced to early-19th-century interpretations of recently discovered Mesopotamian depictions of fantastical trees as representing versions of the Biblical Tree of Life. See Mariana Giovino, 2007, *The Assyrian Sacred Tree: A History of Interpretations* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Gottingen: Academic Press Fribourg).

[535] Paul Stange, 1999, 'Religious Change in Contemporary Southeast Asia', in Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, Vol.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 240.

[536] Some authors have identified the *kayu ara*, a symbolic banyan tree erected during Lampung rites of passage, with the Tree of Life although Gittinger questioned the use of the term as 'too general' - see Mattiebelle Gittinger, 1972, 'A Study of the Ship Cloths of South Sumatra' (Columbia University: Phd Dissertation), 155.

[537] Nancy Florida, 1995, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 276.

connotations shared by the artist and the audience.[538]

**The Tree of Life and arboreal imagery**

Early European scholarship identified the tree as a pan-cultural symbol and this assumption is encapsulated in the definitive 1937 paper, 'The Tree of Life in Indo-European and Islamic cultures' by George Lechler.[539] The American scholar illustrates no less than 148 examples spanning over three thousand years including several works of art from around the Indonesian archipelago.[540] In 1949, the Dutch scholar A. N. J. Thomassen a Thuessink van der Hoop compiled a comprehensive trilingual compendium of salient art motifs in *Indonesische Siermotieven: Ragam-ragam Perhiasan Indonesia: Indonesian Ornamental Design*.[541] He included examples from diverse periods and media that he believed represented the Tree of Life. Hoop presents his selection as evidence for the argument that certain common symbols underscore a deep indigenous unity in the archipelago's cosmological symbolism. In the section on the Tree of Life, Hoop commences with an arboreal image on an ethnic Dayak fibre-mat from Kuala Kapas, Central Kalimantan, said to symbolise the unity of the upper and lower realms in the cosmos.[542] The author uses this object as a reference point for his subsequent selection of works featuring arboreal motifs that he identifies represent the Tree of Life. These include a Lampung *tampan* (ship cloth), a Cirebon wood panel and Javanese *gunungan* shadow puppet.

The Bahasa Indonesia term *Pohon Hayat*, for the Tree of Life, does not literally translate an indigenous designation but it is a hybrid phrase combining the Malay word *pohon* (tree) with the Arabic *al-hayat* (life).[543] Its usage may trace back to colonial era translations of the Bible into vernacular Malay, the lingua franca of the

[538] Goenawan Mohamad and John H. McGlynn, 2006, 'Pasemon: On Allusion and Illusions', *Mānoa*, 18(1): 73.
[539] For a comprehensive discussion of the evolution of the Tree of Life as a representation of the natural and/or divine world in Western thought, see Nathalie Gontier, 2011, 'Depicting the Tree of Life: The Philosophical and Historical Roots of Evolutionary Tree Diagrams', *Evolution: Education and Outreach* 4(3): 515-538.
[540] George Lechler, 1937, 'The Tree of Life in Indo-European and Islamic Cultures', *Ars Islamica*, 4: 369-419. Lechler's paper was indebted to James Fraser's pioneer *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (1894) proposing the belief in sacred trees is ubiquitous to all cultures. Among the multitudinous examples, drawn from every continent, the author references Southeast Asian Borneo, Maluku and Sumatran beliefs that imbue trees with a life force and sanctity.
[541] A. N. J. Thomassen a Thuessink van der Hoop, 1975, *Indonesische Siermotieven: Ragam-ragam Perhiasan Indonesia: Indonesian Ornamental Design* (Jakarta: Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap Van Kunten En Wetenschappen).
[542] Hoop, 1975, 280-81.
[543] Paul Michael Taylor and Lorraine V. Aragon, 1991, *Beyond the Java Sea: Art of Indonesia's Outer Islands* (Washington D.C.: The National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution), 35.

Dutch East Indies, most notably by Hillebrandus Kornelius Klinkert (1829-1913).[544] The missionary, who commenced his translation while living in Jepara, Central Java, utilised the phrase *pohon kayu alhayat*, literally the 'wood tree of life', for the tree in Paradise mentioned in Genesis, Proverbs and Revelations (Fig. 5.3).[545] In doing so, Klinkert may have been aware of earlier Malay translations of the Qur'an that render the Tree of Immortality (*Shajarat al-Khold*) (Al-Qur'an 20:120) as the '*khuldi* wood tree that is eternal in heaven'.[546]


**Fig. 5.3.** Adam before the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Christian *wayang wahyu* shadow puppet play, 1975 or earlier, Java; Photograph: Mulyono, 1975.

Arboreal imagery conveys ideas of auspiciousness in Islam and images of exuberant flowering foliage often invoke visions of the garden of Paradise (*jannah*) to the Muslim believer.[547] Nevertheless, the several sacred trees mentioned in the Qur'an, such as the Tree of Immortality, appear never to have become closely

[544] See Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap, 1888, *Wasijat Jang Baroe Ija-Itoe Segala Kitab Perdjandjian Baroe ataw Indjil Toehan Kita Isa Almasih* (Te Leiden: Gedrukt Bijp P.W.M. Trap). The Netherlands Bible Society, who commissioned Klinkert's Bible translations, regarded his use of Low Malay (*Malay rendah*) as inappropriate. The translations were subsequently revised and the term *pohon kayu alhayat* changed to *pohon kehidupan*, where the Malay/Indonesian *kehidupan* means 'life'. My appreciation is expressed to Ali Akbar for his research into early Dutch publications of the Malay translations, personal communication, January, 2020.

[545] See Genesis 2.9 and 3:22-24, Proverbs 13.12 and 15.4, Revelation 2.7, 22.2 and 22.14.

[546] The earliest Malay translation of the Qur'an was by the religious scholar Abdurra'uf Singkel (d. 1693) in Aceh. Singkel translates the Arabic into Malay as *pohon kayu khuldi yang kekal di dalam surga*. Today the standard Malay/Indonesian translation of *Shajarat al-Khold* renders it as the *Pohon Keabdian* (Tree of Eternity). Ali Akbar, personal communication, January 2020.

[547] The association with the joys of the afterlife is epitomised in the verses: 'But for those who believe and do good deeds will be given the Gardens of Paradise. There they will remain, never wishing to leave.' (Qur'an, 18: 107-108). For a discussion of Islamic garden imagery in Malay cultural traditions, see Virginia Hooker, 2009, 'Gardens of Knowledge: From *Bustan* to *Taman*', in Jan van der Putten and Mary Kilcline Cody, eds., *Lost Times and Untold Tales from the Malay World* (Singapore: NUS Press), 339-356.

associated with arboreal motifs in the visual arts of the Indonesian archipelago.[548] This may reflect the mode of historical conversion to Islam that emphasised the adoption of external ritual acts and gestures – such as obligatory prayer, circumcision, and burial practices – which initially were often adjusted to local circumstances.[549] In a process the historian Merle Ricklefs describes as 'mystic synthesis' to describe how the multiplicity of local cosmological beliefs continued to exist in fusion with Islam.[550] Both Muslim and Christian translators of their respective religious texts into Malay may have intentionally sought to differentiate the sacral tree of their own religious traditions from the celestial jewel tree described in Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and depicted in art. The glittering gold *Pohon Budi* (Tree of Wisdom), with its fruits of amber and diamonds, appears in the Malay *Hikayat Seri Rama* (Story of Prince Rama), dated around 1530s although the text is most probably a recension of an older work.[551] The word *budi* is derived from the Sanskrit root *budh*, meaning 'to be awake, to understand, to know'.[552] Nowadays Malaysian artists use the term *Pohon Budi* to describe the same category of motifs that in Indonesia are called *Pohon Hayat* or Tree of Life.

The dazzling appearance of the *Pohon Budi* immediately evokes the Indic Hindu-Buddhist *Kalpataru* Tree of Abundance, or Wish-Fulfilling Tree, with which the Tree of Life has commonly been conflated in modern scholarship.[553] Both the

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[548] Along with the Tree of Immortality, the span of the Lote tree is said to define the boundaries of all that is knowable in the human realm. It also flourishes in the Gardens of Paradise accompanied by 'spreading shade and water gushing and fruit in plenty' (Qur'an, 56: 28-32).[548] The other auspicious tree mentioned in Qur'anic tradition is the Tuba tree that grows in Paradise and embodies the happiness of salvation. Images of trees, related to doctrinal or cosmological subjects, feature in Islamic manuscripts. My appreciation to Annabel Teh Gallop for introducing me to several examples from Aceh, personal communication, July 2020.

[549] Mark Woodward, 2010, *Java, Indonesia and Islam* (Dordrecht: Springer), 140.

[550] See M.C. Ricklefs, 2006, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Norwalk, CT: Eastbridge Publications). Woodward, 2011, 140, proposes that among the reasons for this is that the Qur'an does not concern itself with a 'detailed, explicit cosmogonic mythology'.

[551] The context of the Malay terms relating to the Tree of Life is especially relevant as Malay was also 'the language of Islamisation' as noted by Bernard Loir, 1996, 'Bima on the Edge of Tradition', in Anne Kumar and John H. McGlynn (eds.), 1996, *Illuminations: The Writing Traditions of Indonesia* (Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation), 74.

[552] R.J. Wilkinson, 1901, *A Malay-English Dictionary* (Singapore: Kelly and Walsh Limited) defines *budi* as 'wisdom; understanding; turn of mind; discretion'. The word is closely related to the name of the Buddha and *bodhi* that is the pipal tree under which the sage Shakyamuni attained enlightenment at Bodh Gaya in northeast India.

[553] The term *kalpataru*, or its Sanskrit root *kalpawrekṣa*, means 'wish-fulfilling tree'. For the inter-changeability of the terms *kalpataru*, *pārijāta*, and *Pohon Hayat*, see M.M. Sukarto K. Atmodjo, 1986, *Arti dan Fungsi 'Pohon Hayat' dalam Masyarakat Jawa Kuno* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Kebudayaan 'Panunggalan'). Also Muhajirin, 2010, 'Dari Pohon Hayat Sampai

*Kalpataru* and Tree of Life are often interchanged with the magical *pārijāta*, sometimes equated with the coral tree, unlike the *Kalpataru* that has no form in the realm of earthly botany. The auspiciousness of the *pārijāta* is described in the Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* (Poem of Ramayana), dated to the 10th-century or earlier. The yogic power of the hermit-sage Bharadwāja was so great that miraculous 'attractive and marvellous *pārijāta* trees descended [from heaven] which could produce everything one wished as a gift from the sage'.[554]

The earliest visual depictions of sacred arboreal subjects in Java or southern Sumatra appear in the relief scenes on the early-9th-century Buddhist stupa of Borobudur and as motifs on the Śivaite temple complex at Prambanan in Central Java where they have greatly influenced Indonesian interpretations of the Tree of Life.[555] Wish-Fulfilling Trees, flanked by various creatures and non-worldly beings (Fig. 5.4), adorn the outer walls of the Śiva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu temples at Candi Prambanan and are considered definitive representations of the subject. So much so that the Dutch colonial scholar, Theodoor van Erp (1874-1958), refers to these arboreal reliefs simply as the 'Prambanan motif'.[556] Several historians interpret the Prambanan complex as an architectural representation of the *Adiparwa* (Book of the Beginning) story of the Churning of the Ocean by the gods and titans out of which was magically created the *Kalpataru* and other treasures.[557] From this reading, the Wish-Fulfilling Trees on the monument reference a specific moment in the *Adiparwa* narrative rather than being a generic archetypal symbol similar to how the Tree of Life has often been interpreted.

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Gunungan Wayang Kulit Purwa: Sebuah Fenomena Transformasi Budaya', *Imagi: Jurnal Seni dan Pendidikan Seni* 8(1): 34.

[554] Soewito Santoso (trans.). 1980, *Ramayana Kakawin* (New Delhi: ISEAS, Singapore, and International Academy of Indian Culture, New Delhi), 77, canto III:38.

[555] For example, Istanto, Riza and Syafi, 2017, 'Ragam Hias Pohon Hayat Prambanan', *Jurnal Imajinasi* 11(1): 19-27, and Dharsono (Sony Kartika), 2006, *Budaya Nusantara: Kajian Konsep Mandala dan Konsep Triloka/Buana terhadap Pohon Hayat pada Batik Klasik* (Bandung: Rekayasa Sains).

[556] Roy E. Jordaan, 1996, 'Candi Prambanan: An Updated Introduction', in Roy E. Jordaan, ed., *In Praise of Prambanan: Dutch Essays on the Loro Jonggrang Temple Complex* (Leiden: KITLV), 109.

[557] Jordaan, 1996, 45-59.

**Fig. 5.4.** *Kalpataru* flanked by two auspicious heavenly half-human half-bird *kinnara*, c.830, Prambanan temple complex, Central Java. Photograph: www.ruangkumemajangkarya.wordpress.com

In the subsequent East Javanese period (929-c.1500), Hindu-Buddhist temples featured arboreal motifs that are a marked departure from the *Kalpataru* at the Prambanan and Borobudur sites. The Majapahit arboreal motifs exhibit a style more closely related to the natural world than the fantastical earlier Central Javanese depictions. At the same time, the trees often display unusual features, such as simulacra *kala* faces in their foliage that imply their supra-natural status. Lydia Kieven in her comprehensive study of the Majapahit stone reliefs in East Java notes the frequency of depictions of trees and their special significance in the *candi* temple narratives where they mark decisive moments in the story line.[558] The Panataran Temple story of Prince Panji demonstrates their significance in a scene depicting the heartsick prince sending a palm-leaf love letter to his distant beloved Sekartaji (Fig. 5.5). The visual focus is a magnificent tree under which his servant, a *panakawan* dwarf often attributed with paranormal powers, entrusts the letter to the cockatoo. The tree is framed by the handsome prince, sitting beside a pair of intertwined trees that may represent a *pasemon* metaphor for Panji and Sekartaji's inseparable love, and a standing *ṛṣi* hermit-sage wearing a turban or dreadlocks in a head bun. The significance of the tree marking their encounter is underscored by the framing with

[558] Lydia Kieven, 2013, *Following the Cap-Figure in Majapahit Temple Reliefs: A New Look at the Religious Function of East Javanese Temples, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill), 58

figures representing the worldly − Panji and the dwarf retainer − and otherworldly − hermit and cockatoo (a creature whose element is air) − realms.


**Fig. 5.5.** Panji entrusting the cockatoo to deliver the palm-leaf message, from narrative relief, 1375, Pendopo Terrace, Panataran Temple, Blitar, East Java, andesite, 51.0 cm high. Photograph: Helmi, 2003.

With the arrival of Islam, the continuity of arboreal motifs is documented in a rare very early batik textile (Fig. 5.6) whose reported provenance is Lampung or South Sumatra. Stylistic elements and the blue-and-white colour scheme of the textile, dated 1450-1550, suggest the place of production was Java's *pesisir* north coast.[559] The cloth, originally intended as a waist-wrap garment, depicts a repeat scene of a standing and seated figure. Both figures, each wearing the *supit* hair-bun of a Javanese warrior, appear in conversation beside a fantastical tree.[560] The borders of the cloth consist of rows of an animal whose scaly-bodies and articulated tails point to the pangolin.

[559] University of Waikato (2011) radiocarbon c14 test results are dC13 -23.6+/- 0.2%, F14C% 92.4 +/- 0.3% (1362-1422). This date has been adjusted following discussions with Nobuko Kajitani and Sandra Sardjono who examined the textile firsthand in 2018. Whichever date, it appears this textile is among the earliest surviving Javanese batik.

[560] Jasleen Dhamija, 2002, *Woven Magic: The Affinity Between Indian and Indonesian Textiles* (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat), 65, describes the batik's figures as 'proto-wayang' and the arboreal motif as 'the Tree Life…possibly 18th-century' (before the c14 test). The possibility that the arboreal motif references a specific plant species is testified much later in an early- to mid-20th- century Aceh or West Sumatran embroidered valence in the AGSA collection and featuring a very similar fantastic tree, which is identified by the textile's Jawi inscription as the *pohon pandan disebutkan Allah dengan ilmu* (the pandanus tree which is the knowledge of Allah).

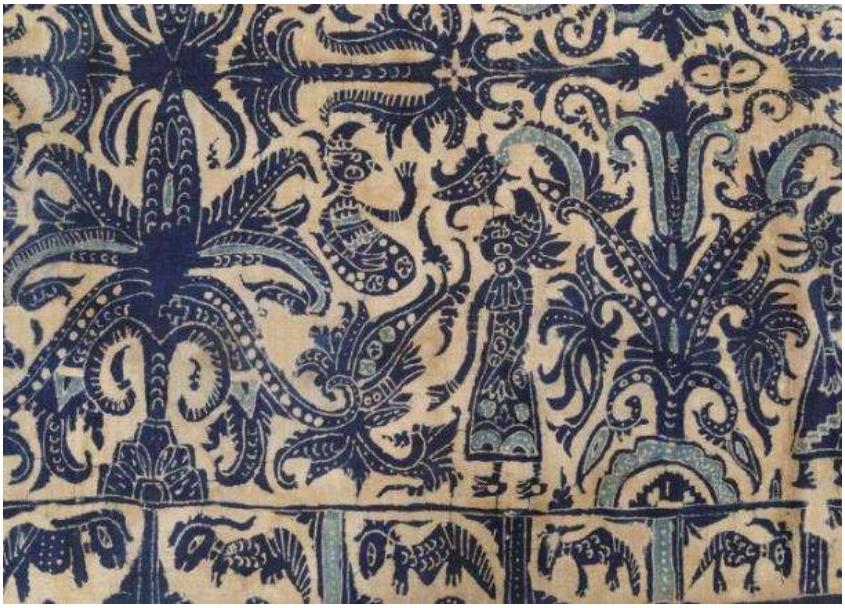

**Fig. 5.6.** Ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom depicting two figures in a forest or garden [detail], c14 date 1450-1550, probably north coast Java, reportedly found in southern Sumatra, cotton, indigo dye, hand drawn batik, 84.0 x 218.0 cm; Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC 2008, Art Gallery of South Australia (20083A32). Photograph: AGSA

Mary-Louise Totton in her study of pangolin imagery in Indonesian art notes the close association of the animal with Prince Rama in the Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* and his depiction in related Javanese temple reliefs.[561] She also notes the high rate of literacy in that language in the Lampung region where the textile was reportedly preserved. Figurative subjects on textiles were likely intended to allude to specific literary narratives rather than be generic symbols, although it can only be speculation to assume the batik references an episode from the popular *Rāmāyaṇa*.[562] Curiously, the design is related to Balinese *geringsing wayang* woven textiles where several characters, typically a hermit and royal personage, converse beside a fanciful arboreal form (Fig. 5.7). Scholars have commented on the similarity of the *geringsing wayang* to scenes appearing in East Javanese temple narrative reliefs such as those cited above.[563] However, the Javanese batik artist has replaced the geometric Hindu-Buddhist mandala configuration of the *geringsing wayang* textile with the arboreal

[561] Mary-Louise Totton, 2011, 'The Pangolin', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 39: 113, 15-18.
[562] Vickers, 1993, 63, is referring to Lampung textiles but this was certainly a much wider in practice.
[563] Marie-Louise Nabholz-Kartaschoff, 2010, 'Ceremonial Cloth, *Gerinsing Wayang Kebo*', in Ruth Barnes and Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, eds., 2010. *Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles: The Mary Hunt Kahlenberg Collection* (Munich: Delmonico Books, Prestel), 218. The antiquity of this motif has recently been confirmed with the discovery of a *geringsing wayang kebo* style textile preserved in southern Sumatra as a sacred heirloom and now in a private collection. The long narrow cloth, depicting figures beneath a tree, is almost certainly Javanese and dates to the 14th- to 15th-century Majapahit era.

motif framing the figurative subject and emphasising the design's symmetry. Both arboreal and symmetrical elements subsequently became commonly associated with Islamic aesthetics in the art of Java and its *pesisir* diaspora.

**Fig. 5.7.** Sacred textile (*geringsing wayang kebo*), with three seated figures in forest or garden motif, 1875-1900, Tenganan, Bali, cotton, dyes, gold thread, double ikat, embroidery, 54.0 x 212.0 cm; National Gallery of Australia (1982.2308). Photograph: https://nga.gov.au/indonesiantextiles

In the discussion of the arboreal motifs on the AGSA Pair of Doors and Throne-rest it is pertinent to recall an observation fifty years ago by Mattiebelle Gittinger in her study of Lampung *tampan* textiles. She describes her research as like an 'art historical salvage operation' because so little is now understood about their history.[564] The same may be said concerning the two wood sculpture as their associated oral histories were likely long forgotten before they entered the AGSA collection although the two objects may have once belonged to the same lineage of ownership. The decline of the *cakak pepadun* system commenced during the 19th-century at a time of dramatically changing political, economic and environmental circumstances. Dutch colonial authorities first began to ban aspects of the customs in 1869 as part of attempts to impose control over Abung communities.[565] In 1883, the devastating impact on Lampung from the eruption of Krakatau volcano in the adjoining Sunda Straits led to a further abandonment of the costly ceremonies.[566] The increasing influence of Islamic orthodoxy in the late 19th-century discouraged the enactment of ancestral rituals. A Dutch administrator's report in 1904 mourned the loss of customs in Lampung as normative Islam became stronger and a 1916 account describes the

[564] Gittinger, 1972, 203, observes 'the composition of a single textile cannot be correctly understood until it is placed with a progression which illustrates the alteration effected by various weavers', a comment relevant to the study of Lampung sculpture.
[565] Funke, 1958, 201. This ban was part of the Dutch attempt to impose the Cultuurstelsel policy forcing Indonesians to grow crops that were economically profitable for the colonial government.
[566] Thomas Murray, 1998, 'The Ship and the Tree: *Adat* Textiles of Southern Sumatra', *Hali*, 101: 114, Thomas Murray, 2012, 'Red Tapis', *Hali* 171: 86.

subverting of old rituals, and the burning of ancestor houses and figurative sculptures.[567] Gittinger comments on the reluctance she encountered among Lampung people 'to speak seriously of customs stemming from a time before that religion became dominant'.[568] Today in Tulang Bawang, *cakak pepadun* ceremonies are re-enacted principally as community cultural performances and are no longer ceremonies where an individual marks his/her spiritual and social empowerment through the sponsorship of status objects like the *lawon kori* and *sesako*.

**Pair of Doors (*lawon kori*)**

The AGSA Pair of Doors features lavishly carved plant and geometrical motifs in a combination that is part of a long established tradition of door ornamentation in Islam. A pair of 8th-century wooden tomb doors, originally from Iraq and now in the Benaki Museum, Athens, displays a similar configuration attesting to the antiquity of this decorative schema in the Islamic world.[569] In insular Southeast Asia, the practice of creating ornate wooden doors may represent an innovation of the Islamic Period. It is notable that the depictions of doors on all the types of buildings shown in the Borobudur reliefs appear lacking in three-dimensional decoration.[570] A pair of plain doors, with the only carved decoration being two Majapahit floppy-eared creatures at the base, is installed at the entrance of the mausoleum of Sunan Kudus (Ja'far Shadiq) (d. 1550) at Al-Aqsa Mosque, Kudus, in Central Java.[571] These possibly are the only surviving example of the pre-Islamic style of wooden doors.

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[567] See Toos van Dijk and Nico de Jonge, 1980, *Ship Cloths of the Lampung South Sumatera: A Research of Their Design, Meaning and Use in Their Cultural Context* (Amsterdam: Galerie Mabuhay), 10.

[568] Gittinger, 1972, 9. For a general discussion of the issues of *adat* versus religion, see Robert W. Hefner, 1985, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 37-41. Heffner notes that from the Muslim perspective, customs (*adat*) are man-made and not God-given as is religion (*agama*), hence the former ought be reformed wherever it violates religious imperatives.

[569] Illustrated in Mikhail B. Piotrovsky and John Vrieze (eds.), 1999, *Heavenly Art, Earthly Beauty: The Art of Islam* (Amsterdam: Lund Humphries Publishers), 153.

[570] Parmodi Atmadi, 1994, *Some Architectural Design Principles of the Temples of Java in Java* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press) documents an extensive survey of buildings depicted in the reliefs on the Borobudur stupa. He records no examples of illustrated ornamented doors although the sculptors sometimes carefully detailed the surrounding wall decoration.

[571] The mysterious and whimsical floppy-eared creatures on the Kudus doors also appear in Majapahit temple reliefs and may convey symbolic associations with Surya the sun god or royalty. Their names are unknown today.

The British naturalist, Henry Forbes, who travelled through southern Sumatra in 1878-83, described the *lawon kori* as the 'honour-door'.[572] The doors are recorded as customarily erected freestanding in proximity to the owner's house. This practice may reflect a widespread belief that doorways should not be placed 'directly in front of a house entrance but in an oblique or sideways direction'.[573] Thresholds spaces have long been considered vulnerable to malevolent forces hence their iconography is especially significant in marking the boundaries between 'outer' and 'inner' realms – here emphasised by the open-air display of *lawon kori*. The ownership of the doors indicated privileged rank, as their display was the right of the third highest level of Abung nobility in the *cakak pepadun* system.[574] Friedrich Funke, in his definitive study of Abung society, reports that very few *lawon kori* remained in place in Tulang Bawang by the time of his fieldwork in 1953.[575] This observation highlights the importance of the AGSA Pair of Doors, with their considerable weathering due to exposure to the natural elements, as being among the few surviving examples of the form.

Two arboreal motifs feature in the visually prominent position of the upper panels on the AGSA Pair of Doors. The trees are depicted in 'apparent symmetry', a term Annabel Teh Gallop uses to describe vegetal designs in Southeast Asian Islamic manuscripts that seem on an initial glance to be a mirror-match but actually differ in every detail.[576] The luxuriant paisley-like growth and tightly curled vegetal scrolls are carved in dramatic deep relief so that the trunks appear as negative space, highlighting the foliage. A similar delineation of the leaves is found on fragments of a stucco relief

[572] Forbes, 1989, 146. F.M. Schnitger, 1989, *Forgotten Kingdoms in Sumatra*, *Introduction by John N. Miksic* (Singapore: Oxford University Press), 153, writing in 1939 states 'Permission to erect them [*lawon kori*] was given only after the successful termination of a head-hunting expedition …a slave had to be buried under the gate, though this ceremony was often omitted.' See also Funke, 1958, 216.
[573] Ann Kumar, 2015, *Java and Modern Europe: Ambiguous Encounters* (Abingdon, Oxfordshire, and New York: Routledge Press), 123.
[574] Gittinger, 1972, 149, records evidence of the former existence of *lawon kori* in southern coastal regions in the form of a pair of portals she saw still surviving in the village of Putih Doh, Tanggamus Regency.
[575] Funke, 1958, 216.
[576] Annabel Teh Gallop, 2019, 'Cultural Interactions in Islamic Manuscript Art: A Scholar's Library From Mindanao' in Oman Fathurahman, Kawshima Midori and Labi Sarip Riwarung (eds.), *The Library of an Islamic Scholar of Mindanao: The Collection of Sheik Muhammad Said bin Imam sa Bayang at the Al-Imam As-Sadiq (A.S.) Library, Marawi City, Philippines: An Annotated Catalogue with Essays* (Tokyo: Institute of Asian, African and Middle Easter Studies, Sophia University), 210.

(Fig. 5.8), possibly once a gateway erected sometime between 1526 and c.1680, at the site of the former Surosowan Palace in Banten Lama.[577]

**Fig. 5.8.** Fragments of stucco reliefs depicting arboreal motif, possibly from a gateway, at the site of the former Surosowan Palace, 1526 − c.1680, Banten Lama, West Java. Photograph: Don Longuevan.

Beneath the arboreal motifs on the AGSA Pair of doors are two sets of talismanic symbols. A pair of precisely carved endless-knots is remarkably similar in style to the geometric knots carved in stone panels on the veranda of Mantingan Mosque, built around 1559 in Central Java. The longevity of this apotropaic device in Java is testified in an endless-knot carved on a pair of wooden doors whose lintel displays the Saka date 1683 (1761) at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Kudus.[578] Below the knots on the AGSA Pair of Doors are two inverted grimacing feline creatures, partly camouflaged as vegetal simulacra.[579] The animals invoke local beliefs regarding the supernatural powers of tigers (*macan*), an animal once widely regarded with awe in Sumatra and Java.[580] Forbes records seeing a wood 'coat of arms' (*sesako*?) in Kisam,

[577] Ota, 2006, 22- 23, records the *Sejarah Banten* (History of Banten) relates how Maulana Hasanuddin erected the first Banten palace in 1526 and the complex was subsequently renovated in 1680-1681, before the Dutch destroyed it in 1808. The stucco fragments indicate the decoration also included one or more near life-size figures thus making the Surosowan site a unique example of a figurative architectural relief sculpture in Islamic Java. Figurative carving appears on an undated pair of doors depicting *raksasa* guardians in the Kanoman Palace Museum, Cirebon, and the lost *lawon kori* discussed below.

[578] My appreciation is noted to Ali Akbar for alerting me to the Kudus mosque inscription and providing a translation of its date, personal communication, 2011.

[579] For an extensive discussion of feline imagery in Islamic calligrams, see Farouk Yahya, 2020, 'Calligrams of the Lion of ʿAlī in Southeast Asia' in Liana Saif, Francesca Leoni, Matthew Melvin-Koushki, Farouk Yahya, *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice* (Leiden and Boston: Brill), 454-526

[580] See Robert Wessing, 1995, 'The Last Tiger in East Java: Symbolic Continuity in Ecological Change', *Asian Folklore Studies*, 54(2): 191-218.

West Lampung, depicting rampant tigers in combination with serpents.[581] In Java, the spectral spirits of tigers reportedly protect sacred sites and feline guardian statues were installed at the mausoleums of several of the *wali songo* saints.[582] The tigers on the AGSA Pair of Doors create a visual *pasemon* as a similitude that may be read either as feline creatures or forest vegetation.[583]

Two additional botanical motifs on the AGSA Pair of Doors further document connections to Javanese art. The modelling of the vertical foliate scroll design framing the central panels is remarkably similar to the carved decoration on a pair of wooden doors, dated 1710, made for the gateway to the mausoleum of Demak's rulers at the Great Mosque in Demak, Central Java.[584] The other botanical motif is the leaf of the *waru*, or beach hibiscus (*hibiscus tiliaceus*) forming a row along the lower border. The *waru* leaf first widely appears with Islam in Sumatra around the 15th-century although the motif also became known at the same time in the late Majapahit era in East Java.[585] Following the ascendancy of Islam, it is found in Javanese carving, textiles, and metalwork, and often replaces the stylized lotus-petals borders associated with earlier Hindu-Buddhist decorative schema.

[581] Forbes, 1989, 180.
[582] See Hélène Njoto, 2018, 'Mythical Feline Figures in Java's Early Islamization Period (Fifteenth to the Early Seventeenth Centuries): Sinitic and Vietnamese Imprints in *Pasisir* Art', *Arts Asiatiques*, 73: 41-60.
[583] Refer my essay 'Talismanic Seeing: The induction of Power in Indonesian Zoomorphic Art' in Samer Akkach (ed.), *Nazar: Vision, Belief and Perception in Islamic Cultures* (forthcoming).
[584] Local tradition states the massive wooden pillars of the Demak Mosque's veranda, also carved with scroll ornament, were carried from the sacked palace of Majapahit in East Java although they are more likely contemporaneous with the mosque's erection in the 16th-century.
[585] For a discussion of the *waru*, alternatively described by the authors as a 'trefoil' motif, in early Sumatran Islamic art, see R. Michael Feener et al. 2021, 'Islamization and the Formation of Vernacular Muslim Material Culture in 15th-century Northern Sumatra', *Indonesia and the Malay World*, Feb. 2021: 28-35.

**Fig. 5.9.** Pair of doors (*lawon kori*), likely 1700-1750, Lampung, illustrated in *Oudheidkundig Verslag* (Batavia), 1940. Photograph: Courtesy of Don Longuevan.

Photographs published in several editions of *Oudheidkundig Verslag* (Archaeological Reports) during the late Dutch colonial period document Lampung 'honour-doors' that have now perished. They suggest the Javanese style of carving was once widespread among Abung communities.[586] The lost examples include a majestic pair of doors, photographed in 1931, prominently displaying Javanese *wayang* puppet figures with the lintel featuring a *kala* monster face and mountain motifs reminiscent of Cirebon's carving style. Other doors, such as the example illustrated in the 1940 *Archaeological report* (Fig. 5.9), stylistically resemble the decorated wood doors formerly installed at the entrance to the 16th-century mausoleum of Nur Rachmat at Sendang Duwur Mosque, Paciran, in East Java but are likely contemporaneous to the AGSA *lawon kori*.[587]

The commissioning of *lawon kori* was a statement of prestige and the patron's choice of a Javanese sculptor, or a carver with a direct connection to Java, imbued the AGSA Pair of Doors with added cachet. The transformation in regional networks

[586] See the Royal Batavia Society of Arts and Sciences editions of *Oudheidkundig Verslag* (Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenshappen) for 1928, 1931-35 and 1940. My appreciation is expressed to Don Longuevan, personal communication, 2010, and Bruce Carpenter, personal communication, February 2020, for alerting me to these photos and their source.
[587] The Sendang Duwur doors are illustrated in situ in A.J. Bernet Kempers, 1959, *Ancient Indonesian Art* (Amsterdam: C.P.J. Van der Peet), plate 345. Sometime around 2000 they were removed from their position and stacked in open storage in the mosque's graveyard where termites has since damaged them beyond repair.

following the 16th-century ascendancy of Islam and the subsequent arrival of Europeans meant that maritime links emanating from the polities of Java's north coast *pesisir* facilitated both the movement of artists and styles. The prestige of the sultanates of Banten, Cirebon and Mataram, resulted in the fashion for Javanese visual and performing arts practices extending to coastal societies elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Portuguese reports from Melaka in the 16th-century describe the Javanese craftsmen as the dominant woodcarvers in the port city.[588] Artist's travelled for various reasons, such as seeking new patronage or fleeing war, epidemics and food shortages.[589] The extent of social mobility is recorded in a remarkable 1788 memoir whose author identifies himself as Nakhoda Muda, meaning the 'Young Ship Captain'.[590] The account portrays the dynamic maritime networks connecting itinerant individuals and communities of mixed ethnicities around the west archipelago, particularly Banten in West Java and southern Sumatra.

Many European interpretations of Lampung art have perceived Islam as marginal to the region's indigenous culture, namely the proto-historic traditions, thus present Islam and Abung art practices as representing a dichotomy.[591] However, William Marsden, writing in 1811, notes the widespread presence of mosques in villages in Lampung.[592] Forbes, who travelled through Tulang Bawang identifies Lampung society as unequivocally 'Mahomedan' thus differentiating it from more 'pagan' neighbours.[593] The long history of Lampung's close contact with the Banten Sultanate, as well as its connections with the Islamic polities of Palembang and Aceh,

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[588] Bruce Carpenter, personal communication, February 2020. Vickers, 1993, 66.

[589] Civil strife lasted almost continuously in Java from the time of the reign of Mataram's Sultan Agung in the first half of the 17th-century until the defeat of Prince Dipanagara at the conclusion of the Java War (1825-1830).

[590] W. Marsden, trans., 1830, *Nakhoda Muda. Memoirs of a Malayan Family, 1788, Translated from the Original by W. Marsden in 1791-2, F.R.S. Printed for the Oriental Translation Fund by J. Murray & Parbury* (London: Allen & Co.) www.digital-virgin-press.net/nakhoda-mda-memoirs-of-a-malayan-family (accessed February, 2020).

[591] Robert J. Holmgren and Anita E. Spertus, 1979, '*Tampan Pasisir*: Pictorial Documents of an Ancient Indonesian Coastal Culture' in Mattiebell Gittinger, ed., *Indonesian Textiles: Irene Emery Roundtable on Museum Textiles 1979 Proceedings* (Washington D.C.: The Textile Museum), 157, encapsulated this viewpoint when they wrote of Lampung *tampan* cloths that 'memory itself (a tenacious attribute in Indonesia) has here been erased by Moslem fundamentalism, which supplanted the pre-Islamic religion that inspired these extraordinary weavings…' They continue by describing Lampung as having 'submitted to Islam.'

[592] William Marsden, 1986, *The History of Sumatra: Containing an Account of the Government, Laws, Customs and Manners of the Native Inhabitants, With an Introduction by John Bastin*, (Singapore and Oxford: Oxford University Press), 301.

[593] Ota, 2006, 34, cites a 1767 report describing the regular use of the Qur'an in Tulang Bawang although twenty years later another Dutch official describes their religion as 'mixed up with superstitions.'

testifies that Tulang Bawang certainly was very much part of the archipelago's world of Islam by the 16th-century. A Lampung origin story, recorded in 1852, documents the mystic fusion of Islam and older traditions in the *personae dramatis* who include an Indic *dewa* god, *naga* serpent, a hero with the Muslim name of Wali Olah and a *jin* spirit.[594] The extent Lampung identified its spiritual heritage as shared with Java is suggested by an account recorded in Tanggamus.[595] It is said the Muslim holy man Sekh Jambu Manglid, who died around 1625, used shadow puppets as an instrument of evangelism. The story is remarkably similar to accounts describing the *wali songo* saints utilising the theatre medium for the purpose of converting Javanese. At least one Lampung clan claimed a direct connection with the *wali songo* through a lineage descended from Sunan Gunung Jati of Cirebon, revered for his role in spreading Islam to West Java.[596]

The French historian, Denys Lombard, cites the Sunda Strait linking Lampung and West Java to exemplify the significance of water as a connecting element in the archipelago's cultural histories.[597] The prestige of Banten was founded on both its maritime commercial wealth and spiritual identity as the pre-eminent Javanese sultanate in the 16th-century. The polity's influence in nearby Lampung derived from the global market for the pepper crops grown there. This influence may have increased around the early- to mid-17th-century when Tulang Bawang became the sultanate's most important source of the spice and increasingly fell under Banten's suzerainty.[598] Abung tradition records trading vessels (*perahu pertjalang*) that were sailed by West Javanese princes carrying goods, foremost likely Indian textiles, to

[594] Quoted in Dijk and de Jonge, 1980, 23. *Dewa* is a Hindu-Buddhist term for god. Hisyam (2012).
[595] Evi Kusmiana, Iskandar Syah and M. Basri, 2013, 'Penyebaran Agama Islam oleh Sekh Jambu Manglid pada Abad Ke-16 di Desa Airnaningan, Kecamatan Airnaningan, Kabupaten Tanggamus', *Pesagi: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Penelitian Sejarah* 1(2) non-paginated, available at <jurnal.fkip.unla.ac.id>id>artikel>download>pdf_3>, accessed 14 February 2020.
[596] Lampung elite also used Javanese aristocratic titles. Funke, 1958, 208, notes *ratu* (ruler) already appears among Abung communities in the first half of the 17th-century although *pangeran* (prince) only became widely used around the middle of the 18th-century.
[597] Denys Lombard, 1990, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya Kajian Sejarah Terpadu Bagian 1: Batas-Batas Pembaratan*, 3 vols, trans. *Le Carrefour Javanais, Essai d'historie globale, 1. Le Limited de I'occidentalisation, Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia), 16, also map p.19. The map identifies the maritime spheres of influence connected by water as Aceh and west Malaysian peninsula including Singapore and Riau; Java and South Kalimantan; East Java, Bali and Lombok; Sumbawa, South Sulawesi and East Kalimantan; Maluku, North Sulawesi and Mindanao.
[598] Ota, 2006, 17, notes that such a conclusion is viable from the evidence of Lampung's increased pepper sales to Banten in 1640s. Andaya, 1993, 97. Funke, 1958, 181, cites the earliest surviving Lampung *piagem*, an imperial decree issued by the Banten court in 1662 as evidence of this influence. Ota, 2006, 35 and Funke, 1958, 180, state that by the mid-18th-century much of Lampung was unequivocally under Banten's rule.

Lampung in exchange for pepper.[599] Banten apparently recognised the importance of the region was more than as a mere subservient dependent. Envoys from Tulang Bawang and elsewhere in Lampung were invited to join its diplomatic mission to the Central Javanese court of Mataram during the 1613-1645 reign of Sultan Agung.[600]

Lampung's participation in Javanese aesthetic fashions encompassed other areas of artistic production alongside woodcarving.[601] It is documented in many *tampan pasisir* (coastal ship cloths) where figures in the style of Javanese shadow-puppets are depicted wearing voluminous Javanese courtly waist garments, known as *dodot* and *kampuh* (Fig. 5.10).[602] The verisimilitude of these depictions is testified in unexpected details, such as the pointed slippers worn by some *tampan* figures.[603] The Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) officer, Jonkheer Jan de Rovere van Breugel, around 1787 recorded both the waist garments and footwear as fashionable Banten dress.[604] An early 19th-century Javanese batik *kampuh* textile, featuring the *semen* pattern of fantastic forest motifs and mountains with a *waru* leaf border, found in Lampung documents the inter-island trade in this type of court garment.[605] Breugel describes 'coast cloth' worn by Banten aristocracy. This is an apparent reference to the Indian textiles from the Coromandel Coast – modern day Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh - that were imported into Indonesia from the 17th- to early-19th centuries as part of the spice trade. Large numbers of southern Indian textiles made in the style of Javanese *kampuh* and *dodot* have been found preserved as ancestral heirlooms in Lampung where they were displayed during rites of passage ceremonies.[606] Many of their

[599] Funke, 1958, 180

[600] Funke, 1958, 175-176, also records Lampung participation alongside Banten in military campaigns against Pajajaran (1579) and Palembang (1596). The involvement of Lampung and Tulang Bawang representatives in the Banten delegation may have been intended to point score regarding Banten's relationship to Lampung as both Palembang and Jambi rival courts also sent missions to Mataram in 1641-42.

[601] Vickers, 1993, 55.

[602] Itie van Hout, 2017, *Indonesian Textiles at the Tropen Museum* (Amsterdam: Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen), 168, plate 156, cites the textile's c14 dates with 95% confidence interval.

[603] See the Lampung *tampan* illustrated in Bruce Carpenter, 2015, 'The First Argonauts', in James Bennett and Rusty Kelty, eds., 2015, *Treasure Ships: Art in the Age of Spices* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 179, fig. 13.

[604] Kumar, 1997, 267.

[605] Illustrated in Ruth Barnes and Mary Hunt Kahlenberg (eds.), 2010, *Five Centuries of Indonesian Textiles: The Mary Hunt Kahlenberg Collection* (Munich: Delmonico Book-Prestel), 138-141. Although titled 'Ceremonial hanging' the accompanying sub-title *kampuh* reveals it was made as a waist wrap-garment for wear, for which it was originally traded to Lampung, and only subsequently utilized as a hanging.

[606] For examples of Indian trade cloths in the form of Javanese *dodot* and reportedly found in southern Sumatra, see Bennett and Kelty (eds.), 2015, 157, cat. no. 212 and 231, cat. no. 211.

designs feature floral chintz and endless-knot patterns indicating an aesthetic taste shared with the designs on the AGSA Pair of Doors. In modern times, Lampung people call the heirloom cloths simply *lelohor* or *leluhur* in Javanese, meaning 'the ancestors' implying they are imbued with the presence of exalted forebears.[607]


**Fig. 5.10.** Ceremonial cloth (*tampan*), depicting ship with figures wearing Javanese *dodot* court garments, c14 date 1650-80 or 1764-1801, Kalianda, Lampung, cotton, natural dyes, supplementary weft weave, 75.0 x 70.0 cm; Tropenmuseum (TM-1969-1/RV-B90-19). Photograph: Hout, 2017.

### Throne-rest (*sesako*)

The AGSA Throne-rest (*sesako*) features two fantastical flowering trees as the focal point and flanked by a pair of *naga* serpent guardians.[608] Forbes describes the *sesako* as a 'wooden pillar' against which an aristocrat was permitted to lean in the *sesat* (clan house) although Abung tradition states the throne-rests were first created as an integral part of the *pepadun* seat.[609] A Tulang Bawang account relates how later

[607] Robert J. Holmgren and Anita E. Spertus, 1991, 'Is Geringsing Really Balinese?', in Gisella Völger and Karin v. Welck, eds., *Indonesian Textiles Symposium 1985* (Cologne: Ethnologica), 59. The authors highlight the associations of the root words *lohor*/*luhur* with the 'sublime', 'noble' and 'aristocratic'.

[608] There is considerable variation in museum collections regarding the translation of the term *sesako*. For example, 'Partition: *Sesako* – backrest of a *Pepadon* seat' (National Museum of Indonesia), 'Backrest for a seat of honour, *sesako*' (Musee du quai Branly) and 'Nobleman's throne of honour, *pepadon*' (National Museum of Australia).

[609] A. N. J. Thomassen a Thuessink van der Hoop, 1940, 'De Megalithische Hoofdenzetel Oorsprong van den Lampongschen Pepadon?', *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde Uitgegeven door het Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*, 80: 63. The Abung term *sesat* is translated as the *balai* in Bahasa Indonesia. No *sesako* appears to have survived with the seat intact that is certain to be original. My appreciation is expressed to Don Longuevan for providing me with an English translation of Hoop's paper, personal communication, 2010.

customary practices permitted the two objects to be separated in order to best display the carved woodwork of the throne-rest whose surviving examples display a remarkable variety in the individual styles of sculptors.[610] A consequence of their separation was that a non-*pepadun* owner could acquire just a *sesako*, its beauty serving to emphasise the power and prestige of the honour's recipient. Both the *pepadun* and throne-rest were regarded as objects of awesome power in Lampung. Several folk stories have been recorded associating the thrones with magical properties – they could change from wood to stone, fly through the air and even hide from marauding Buginese pirates.[611]

The AGSA Throne-rest is unique amongst surviving *sesako* as its arboreal motif is directly inspired by designs appearing on Indian *palampore* textiles (Fig. 5.11) imported from the Coromandel Coast. Modern-day textile collectors have recorded numerous Indian *palampore* featuring arboreal motifs found in southern Sumatra.[612] The imagery represents an international blend of Indian, Iranian, Chinese, and European Chinoiserie elements. These same elements are visible in the Throne-rest's depiction of the wondrous foliage blossoming from sinuous trunks and the stylised hillock on which they stand.[613] The mirror image configuration also appears on early 19th-century *palampore* and likely conveyed talismanic connotations.[614] The Indian arboreal motif formed a source of inspiration for art practices throughout the *pesisir* world. It is evident in the 19th-century *gunungan* shadow puppet from the Kasepuhan Palace, Cirebon (Fig. 5.12); reliefs on royal gravestones, attributed to the

[610] Funke, 1958, 215.
[611] 'Kisah di Balik Papadon Batu', *Lampung Post* 1 March 2019. Available at <https://lampost.co/berita-kisah-di-balik-papadon-batu>, accessed 25 January 2020.
[612] Murray, 1998, 101. Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, 2013, *Hobson-Jobson: The Definitive Glossary of British India* (Oxford: University Press), 400, identify the term *palampore* as possibly a corruption of a hybrid Persian-Hindu word *palang-posh* meaning a 'bed cover. The term has been maintained here although Rosemary Crill, 2008, *Chintz: Indian Textiles for the West* (London: V&A Publishing), 7, states she 'generally avoided the archaic word 'palampore' as a term applied to both bed-covers and wall-hangings, and generally used 'hanging' to refer to a chintz that may have been used for either.'
[613] Robyn J. Maxwell, 1991, 'The Tree of Life in Indonesian Textiles: Ancient Iconography or Imported Chinoiserie', in Gisella Völger and Karin v. Welck (eds.), *Indonesian Textiles Symposium 1985* (Cologne: Ethnologica), 111. In connection with Lampung, the author states there appears 'little firm evidence that the flowering tree *palampore* was an important influence' on *tampan* motifs although she proposes the schematic patterning of stylised trees on *palepai* may owe something to palampore imported in the form of panelled formats. The popularity of the Indian designs as a source of inspiration for Indonesian textile makers has been widely documented by Maxwell and other authors.
[614] See Bennett and Kelty, eds., 2015, 230, cat no. 225, for an illustration of an example reportedly found in southern Sumatra.

18th-century but likely later, at Aer Mata, Madura (Fig. 5.13);[615] and on a Hindu north Balinese panel documented in a Dutch colonial period photograph (Fig. 5.14).

**Fig. 5.11.** Heirloom hanging (*palampore*), with motif commonly known as the Tree of Life, 1675-1700, Coromandel Coast, India, found in Bali, Indonesia, cotton, dyes, mordant painting, 164.0 x 106.0; Gift of Cecilia Ng in memory of Anthony Forge, National Gallery of Australia (2002.152). Photograph: https://nga.gov.au/indonesiantextiles

Nevertheless, the AGSA Throne-rest displays a singular feature that appears in neither the Tree of Life seen on Indian *palampore* nor on any related arboreal motifs in Indonesia. Four vegetal simulacra of gaurdian *kala* monster faces emerge from the Throne-rest's foliage forming the vertical axis of the central panel while the exuberant shapes of other flowers and leaves likewise suggest faces, hinting at a spirit presence residing in the pair of trees. The animist attributes assigned to trees in Lampung was noted by William Marsden in his 1811 pioneer study of Sumatra where he reported the common belief that:

> Certain trees, particularly those of venerable appearance…are the residence, or rather the material frame of spirits of the woods…[616]

[615] Made Wijaya, 2014, *Majapahit Style* (Sanur: Yayasan Beringin Berapi and Wijaya Words), 184.
[616] Marsden, 1986, 301.

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**Fig. 5.12** *Gunungan* depicting flowering tree, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1800-1900, Cirebon, West Java, buffalo hide, horn, pigment, gold leaf, 102.0 x 40.2 cm; Kraton Kasepuhan Palace, Cirebon. Photograph: Jessup, 1990.

**Fig. 5.13.** Monumental stele attributed to Balinese sculptors, 1700-1800 but likely later, Aer Mata Cemetery, Madura, East Java, stone. Photograph: James Bennett.


**Fig. 5.14.** The court official (*punggawa*) of Sukasada and the minister (*patih*) of Buleleng with palm-leaf manuscripts and panel depicting intertwining flowering trees, c.1890, Buleleng, Bali; KITLV Leiden (2811). Photograph: KITLV.

Despite their dominant arboreal imagery, several early European writers concluded that throne-rests were originally intended as an anthropomorphic form. Hoop, in his discussion of the magnificent *sesako* in the National Museum of Indonesia (NMI) (Fig. 5.17) associates it with an ancestor image.[617] The presence of faces on the Jakarta throne-rest and on another *sesako* (Fig. 5.18) in the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, supports this proposition. Especially as the NMI face displays grimacing teeth, a feature often associated with Austronesian iconography of the dead.[618] The archaeologist F.M. Schnitger also concluded that *sesako* were intended to represent a human being and describes one example he sighted as 'decorated with figures of breasts …[and] a great penis carved'.[619] The notion that images of trees on *sesako* reference Marsden's 'material frame' of spirits does not contradict the anthropomorphism proposed by Hoop and others but it is supported by the design of a Lampung *tampan* textile (Fig. 5.15) in the AGSA collection. The textile, dated early- to mid-19th-century, depicts a central arboreal motif flanked by two *naga* serpents just as appears on the AGSA throne rest and other *sesako*. The *tampan*'s motif is

[617] Hoop. 1940, 65, draws this conclusion on the basis of comparison with similar style of thrones, featuring wooden ancestor images, erected at 'feasts of merit' in Nias.
[618] Comparative examples are numerous depictions of *marapu* ancestors on East Sumba woven ikat textiles. The presence of similar imagery documented in an Islamic context is a grimacing ancestral head depicted on a Sasak wood storage box for a Qur'an manuscript from Lombok, dated 19th-century, in the AGSA collection, see Bennett, 2011, 56-57.
[619] Schnitger, 1989, 152. The erect penis, evokes Śiva's *lingam* although southern Sumatra was Mahayana Buddhist in pre-Islamic times, so like the breasts it may relate to ancient Austronesian symbols of generation and fertility.

visually ambiguous, simultaneously suggesting both a tree and the frontal view of a standing ancestral figure.[620]

Trees of immense age or displaying unusual features were often regarded as the abodes of invisible forebears or powerful spirits in Java and Lampung, just as Marsden recorded. Angelo Andrea Di Castro observes how sacred trees, commonly situated near locations identified with Muslim saints, are objects of reverence and the foci of ritual activity.[621] Lampung tradition identified an intimate link between the three elements of sacred tree veneration, Islam and the *pepadun* tradition.[622] Historical narratives record that the inhabitants of the legendary Skala Brak Kingdom worshiped deities that were believed to dwell in a sacred tree. Following conversion to Islam in the 15th-century, the tree was cut down and its wood became the first *pepadun* that subsequently was used for the enthronement of the Skala Brak kings and their descendants, among whom the Abung people were counted. [623]

[620] Frontally depicted figures also feature on Lampung *tampan* although they have not received the attention given by researchers to the *wayang* figures. They often appear remarkably similar to figures on Lombok *usap* textile and likely represent a shared earlier archaic style. For a similar *tampan darat* (inland ship cloth), dated 19th-century, see Hout, 2017, 165, plate 150.

[621] Angelo Andrea Di Castro, 2012, 'Graves, Trees and Powerful Spirits as Archaeological Indicators of Sacred Spaces' in Alexandra Haendel, ed., *Old Myths and New Approaches: Interpreting Ancient Religious Sites in Southeast Asia* (Clayton: Monash University Press) 238. Claire Russell, 1979, 'The Tree as Kinship Symbol', *Folklore* 90(2): 224, observes that in many cultures 'the tree that grows from the ancestral grave is closely bound up in symbolism with ancestral figures and also with their lineal descendants and the continuity of the family or clan.'

[622] Sacred trees have a long history in Middle Eastern and South Asian Islam with folk veneration of miraculous trees once widespread in the Middle East.

[623] Funke, 1958, 173, records the Abung emphasis on maintaining accurate oral traditions although customary *adat* practices altered with changing circumstances. The Skala Brak origin account may not be historically accurate but certainly reflects a fundamental link between *pepadun* and Islam in the eyes of Abung people.

**Fig. 5.15.** Ceremonial cloth (*tampan*) with sacred tree guarded by pair of *naga* serpents, 1800-1875, Krui, Lampung, cotton with natural dyes, supplementary weft weave, 72.0 x 61.0 cm; South Australia Government Grant 1975, Art Gallery of South Australia (757A79). Photograph: AGSA.

### *Naga* serpents and the sacred tree

A defining element that Lechler identifies as representative of the Tree of Life is its depiction flanked by two guardian figures.[624] The placement of an arboreal image, accompanied by paired creatures, in a symmetrically arranged design is a key feature of sacred tree schema in Indonesian art.[625] The two inverted *naga* – originally an Indian Sanskrit term for semi-divine snake beings – on the AGSA Throne-rest flank the central back panel whose crested pyramid profile is often interpreted as a stylised representation of the cosmic mountain, known as *meru* in Javanese art.[626] According to Javanese tradition, the *naga*'s face combines the features of a serpent with those of a man and a *raksasa* (giant) and his head is adorned with a crown and a *sumping* ear

[624] For a broader discussion of this imagery in the context of Sassanian imagery and its Middle Eastern Islamic heritage, see Lechler, 1937, 380-394.
[625] Taylor and Aragon, 1991, 35. The authors suggest the paired animals and figures symbolise fertility, prosperity and life.
[626] Gittinger, 1972, 182, observes that symmetry is a dominating principle in Lampung *pelapai* and *tampan* textiles, including depictions of animals in profile as mirror images facing a single object, such as tree.

ornament.[627] The headdresses on the AGSA throne-rest *naga* underscore the Javanese connection as they suggest the Javanese *jamang* crown.[628]

**Fig. 5.16.** Throne-rest (*sesako*) with seat (*pepadun*), *sesako* c14 date 1415-1455, Lampung, wood, 160.0 x 73.0 x 67.0 cm; NGA (1985-1982).

The combination of the arboreal motif with *naga* serpents and the *meru* profile in Lampung has exceptional longevity as they appear together on **t**he earliest documented *sesako* (Fig. 5.16), whose wood was radiocarbon dated to 1415-1455, in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia.[629]

Totton, in her study of Lampung *tapis* textiles, describes the pair of crowned *naga* flanking the NMI *sesako* as 'guardian spirits, associated with fertility and royal status… they recall Hindu *makara* that flank temple stairs leading to the inner sanctum of a deity'.[630] The style of the NMI throne-rest's *naga* guardians reflect the multiplicity of sources from which Lampung artists drew inspiration. Their grimacing

[627] Ceptian Suryana, 2014, *Kajian Visualisasi Naga Sang Hyang Anantaboga dan Sengkalan Dwi Naga Rasa Tunggal Berdasarkan Cara Pandang Kosmis-Mistis.* Diploma thesis (Bandung: Universitas Komputer Indonesia), 71-80. The ear ornament is the *sumping sekar kluwih* (flower of the breadnut tree *sumping*)

[628] Ceptian Suryana, 2018, 'Makna Simbolik dan Wujud Estetik Naga Dalam Kebudayaan Jawa pada Sengkalan *Dwi Naga Rasa Tunggal* and *Dwi Rasa Wani* di Keraton Yogyakarta', *Artic Jurnal*, 2. The likelihood of a belief in multiple species of *naga* is supported by the variations in the serpents on the NMI and Branly throne-rests although they may simply reflect different sculptor's styles.

[629] Schnitger, writing in his 1939 description of travels through Sumatra, reports that the *pepadun* could also have the head of a bird, elephant or horse. My appreciation is expressed to Carol Cains for providing information on the NGA throne-rest c14 dating, personal communication, March 2021. The accompanying *pepadon* seat appears to be a subsequent addition as the radiocarbon test results for it were not conclusive but suggested approximately 1728-1813.

[630] Mary-Louise Totton, 2009, *Wearing Wealth and Styling Identity: Tapis from Lampung, South Sumatra, Indonesia* (Hanover and London: University of Press of New England), 82. Hoop, 1940, 61, tentatively dates the NMI throne-rest to around 1568 on the basis of local oral tradition recorded at the time of its acquisition.

fangs and flamboyant crests appear very similar to drawings of *naga* in Malay divination manuscripts.[631] The throne-rest additionally includes other serpent types. A pair of winged *naga* sits on the crest of the panel and other winged and more naturalistic snakes appear among fantastic creatures, beneath the solar orb. The variations imply different narrative references or sources of inspiration but their relationship to the throne-rest's enigmatic human face and solar orb is now unknown.

**Fig. 5.17.** Throne-rest (*sesako*), 1568 or later, Lampung, wood, 193.0 x 196.0 cm; National Museum of Indonesia (Inv. 610). Photograph: www.artsoftheancestors.com

**Fig. 5.18.** Throne-rest (*sesako*), 1800-1900, Lampung, wood, 118.4 x 199.0 cm; Musée du Quai Branly. Photograph: www.nga.gov.au/exhibition/lifedeathmagic.

[631] Farouk Yahya, 2016, *Magic and Divination in Malay Illustrated Manuscripts* (Leiden and Boston: Brill), 70, fig 46 & 281, illustrates comparative examples in the 19th-century *Kitab Ilmu Firasat dan Ubat* (Book on Physiognomy and Medicine), from the collection of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, created in either the Malay Peninsula or Sumatra. The possibility this style of image inspired the NMI *naga* is supported by the virtuosic filigree carving of their features suggesting a drawing as their source. *Naga* represent the most commonly depicted creature in Malay divination manuscripts.

Naturalistic snakes appear on the Musée du Quai Branly *sesako* although their depiction is likewise ambiguous. They simultaneously suggest both the scaly bodies of snakes and the outspread branches of a tree upon which perch birds whose plumage may be the tree's foliage.

The association of *naga* with power and venerable authority in southern Sumatra dates back to the Srivijaya kingdom (c.7th- to-14th-centuries). The 7th-century Sabukingking oath stone found at Telaga Batu - its original location in Palembang is still a site of pilgrimage for local Muslims – is crowned with seven carved serpents whose naturalistic resemblance to cobras contrasts with subsequent *naga* depictions on Lampung throne-rests. The oldest surviving image of the tree-with-*naga* theme in Java is a Hindu altar relief (Fig. 5.19) dated c.1425. Johanna van Lohuizen-De Leeuw's comprehensive study of the East Javanese relief identifies the tree as the heavenly *pārijāta* and interprets the pair of *naga* flanking the central figurative relief as indicating the divine status of the scene.[632] She proposes the altar was intended as a temporary seat for the descent of the gods during Majapahit religious ceremonies, just like the *padmasana* throne in open-air Hindu Balinese shrines today.[633]

[632] Lohuizen-De Leeuw, J.E. van, 1979, 'An Indo-Javanese Garden of Eden', in *The Royal Asiatic Society: Its History and Treasures* (Leiden and London: E.J. Brill), 128. Kunjabhiari Das, 1965, 'The plant in Orissan folklore', in Sankar Sen Gupta (ed.), *Tree Symbol Worship in India: A New Survey of a Folk Pattern of Folk-Religion* (Calcutta: Indian Publications), 30, records the Indian custom of planting *pipal* (*Ficus religiosa*) and banyan (*Ficus Indica*) together so they intertwine and are 'married' when reaching maturity. Lohuizen-De Leeuw proposes that the intertwined trees here are a visual metaphor for the divine Krishna and Satyabhama depicted on the front of the altar-stone. Rosemary Crill, 2019, 'A Revolution In the Bedroom: Chintz Interiors In the West', in Sarah Fee, ed., *Cloth That Changed the World: The Art and Fashion of Indian Chintz* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 110, Fig 9.2, illustrates a 7th-century Sassanian silver dish depicting intertwined flowering trees that anticipate the Majapahit images although they are almost certainly unrelated.

[633] Lohuizen-De Leeuw, 1979, 139. The author (131) proposes the presence of the *naga* together with the *pārijāta* tree reference the Churning of the Ocean of Milk. Javanese-Balinese Hindu tradition typically portrays two *naga* assisting the gods and titians to create the magical tree form the Ocean of Milk unlike Indian tradition where only one *naga* is present.

**Fig. 5.19.** Altar relief depicting two figures with sacred tree and pair of *naga*.c.1425, East Java, stone, 81.0 x 99.0 x 15.0 cm; V&A Museum ((S.10.1979). Photograph: V&A Museum.

Although many modern-day writers have emphasised the Hindu-Buddhist origins of the *naga*, few people during the Islamic period made such a connection. *Babad Tanah Sunda* (Chronicle of the Land of Sunda) describes an encounter in the Holy Land between the saint Sunan Gunung Jati (d.1570), said to be the founder of the Banten sultanate, and a fiery *naga* during his mystical journey to meet the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca.[634] Magically powerful *naga* are sometimes classed as a category of *jin*, especially in folklore traditions associated with Muslim holy sites.[635] The Masjid Jami'in Kajen in Pati, Central Java, displays two *naga* heads on either side of the *mimbar*'s steps. Local tradition states that a *jin* pupil of Syekh Ahmad Mutamakkin (1645-1740), builder of the mosque, still guards the wood *mimbar* so that no person may interfere with the carved serpents.[636] Images of paired *naga* ubiquitously feature in a diverse range of Javanese works of art in the early modern era. Leeuw observes the creatures commonly are found on objects whose forms imitate, or are associated with, architectural contexts. [637]

[634] Pangeran Suleiman Sulendraningrat, trans. and ed., 1984, *Babad Tanah Sunda, Babad Cirebon* (Cirebon: publisher not stated), 23.
[635] William Shaw, 1975, *Aspects of Malaysian Magic* (Kuala Lumpur: Muzium Negara), 5, notes a tendency in the 20th-century to incorporate indigenous spirits and astral beings into classes of *jin.* This reflects increasing religious pressures to explain indigenous beliefs within an orthodox Islamic framework.
[636] 'Sengaja Memegang Mimbar Masjid Jami' Kajen Bisa Neggeblak', *Mitrapost*, 16 July 2020. Available at <https://mitrapost.com/2020/07/16/sengaja-memegang-mimbar-masjid-jami-kajen-bisa-neggeblak/?>, accessed 6 March 2021.
[637] Lohuizen-De Leeuw, 1979, 133.

**Fig. 5.20.** The eastern gateway, known as the Pavilion of the Terraced Gateway (*Gedong Gapura Panggung*), of Taman Sari, 1758, Yogyakarta. Photograph: Wikimedia Commons.

**Fig. 5.21.** Double-folio from 'Story of Amir Hamzah' (*Serat Menak Sarehas*), 1850, Yogyakarta, European paper, pigment, gold leaf, 44.0 x 29.0 x 13.0 cm; Museum Sonobudoyo, Yogyakarta (SK:133.MSB/L:219). Photograph: AGSA.

The most spectacular example is the monumental entrance (Fig. 5.20) to the Yogyakarta royal retreat of Taman Sari (Fragrant Garden) where they appear in a configuration remarkably similar to the AGSA Throne-rest despite the contrast in dimensions.[638] The gateway, known as the Gedong Gapura Panggung (Pavilion of the Terraced Gateway), is a stylised *meru* mountain decorated with arboreal motifs in

[638] Denys Lombard, 2010, *Gardens in Java* (Jakarta: École françois d'Extrême-Orient & Percetakan Grafika Mardi Yuana, Bogor), 33.

stucco relief and flanked by a pair of giant *naga* sculptures.[639] The *naga* are said to form the visual chronogram *catur naga rasa tunggal* (four *naga* one feeling) for 1758, the year that the construction of Taman Sari commenced.[640] The elements of *naga* and *meru* forming the gate of Taman Sari, once part of Yogyakarta's *kraton* (palace) complex, resonate on several levels. They evoke the geomantic principles of the *kraton*'s location as axial to the four cardinal points, suggested in the chronogram's four *naga*, and its alignment between the sacred mountain Merapi and southern Indian ocean, home of the dynasty's tutelary protectress, Nyai Roro Kidul.[641] They also hint of the mystical *Serat Dewa Ruci* (Tale of Dewa Ruci), performed both as a shadow-puppet play and recited text. The tale recounts how the hero Bratasena had to conquer two giant ogres on Mount Candramuka then overcome a fierce sea serpent in order to search the ocean for the 'whence and whither of being'.[642] Partly submerged beneath Taman Sari's former artificial lake, known as the Segaran (Ocean), was a remarkable building, today identified as a mosque, where the sultan is said to have retreated to perform prayer and engage in meditation practices. [643]

The Taman Sari gate inspired the pair of text panels (Fig. 5.21) in the Yogyakarta palace manuscript copy of *Serat Menak Sarehas* adopted from the Malay text *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* (Story of Amir Hamzah) relating the adventures of Amir Hamzah, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad.[644] The illuminated manuscript, completed in 1850, depicts *naga* serpents guarding the panels that are crowned with impressive floral *meru*. Their human faces, copied from a European engraving or

[639] The design of the arboreal motifs suggests a European or other foreign influence. Lombard, 2010, 32, relates an account that the Yogyakarta aristocrat responsible for the plan of Taman Sari travelled to Batavia on two occasions to copy European designs for inclusion in its construction.
[640] <https://kebudayaan.kemdikbud.go.id/bpbcbyogyakarta/gapura-panggung-tamansari/>, accessed 6 March 2021. My translation of 'feeling' for *rasa* is provisional given that the Javanese word covers contextual meanings ranging from mystical insight to physical sensations.
[641] *Naga*, whose element is water, are closely associated with divinatory practices related to the four cardinal and four ordinal directions while Nyai Roro Kidul, usually called 'Goddess of the South Seas' is a powerful *jin* who has vowed to protect the Mataram rulers and their descendants.
[642] Bratasena, also known as Bima, sought life-giving water on Mount Candramuka that was the home of two giants, Rukmuka and Rukmakala. It was on the second part of his search, entering the ocean that he overcame the *naga* Nabatnawa.
[643] Dutch observers named the complex the Waterkasteel, meaning 'Water castle', in reference to the extensive lake originally fed by springs. The gardens and water features of Taman Sari have almost all completely disappeared and now have been replaced by dense inner-city urban settlement. The sunken building, formerly an island in the Segaran, is now referred to as a mosque. See Robert Wessing, 1991, 'An Enclosure in the Garden of Love', *Journal of Southeat Asian Studies*, 22 (1): 1-15, for a comparative discussion of the 17th-century royal Taman Ghairah with it *gunungan* symbolism in Banda Aceh, Aceh.
[644] Ali Akbar, 2005, 'Catalogue entry no.22 *Serat Menak Sarehas*' in James Bennett (ed.), 2005, *Crescent Moon: Art and Civilisation of Southeast Asia* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 271.

lithograph, are perhaps a humorous allusion to the Javanese belief that the supernatural serpents belong to the class of *jin* spirits and, by implication, so do *wong Walandi* (Dutch people). Blossoming vegetation fills the *meru* and grows from the sides of each panel, a reminder that *jin* were particularly attracted to the perfumed scent of flowers according to a Javanese tradition.[645]

The definitive expression of the tree-with-*naga* theme is the Javanese *gunungan* (mountain-like) puppet in the form of a towering many-branched tree that marks the opening and completion of performances, as well as being a multivalent prop, in the *wayang* shadow theatre. The tree is conventionally depicted flanked by guardian creatures, either *naga* or *raksasa*. Another name for the puppet is the *kekayon*, a term with its epistemological roots in the Old Javanese words for *kayun* (living) and *kayu* (wood).[646] Hoop cites a *gunungan* among examples of the Tree of Life in *Indonesian Ornamental Design* with the interpretation that it 'symbolises the totality or unity, and therefore equivalent to the Tree of Life.'[647] However, the tree on the *gunungan* did not maintain a fixed set of meanings for audiences but rather new contexts presented new constructions of meaning.[648] In Lombok, the *wayang* theatre is customarily recorded as introduced from Java by an early Muslim saint and its repertoire focuses on the adventures of Amir Hamzah.[649] Contemporary Sasak theatrical tradition identifies the *gunungan* with its two *naga* guardians as the tree under which Adam and Hawa (Eve) were reunited after their expulsion from Paradise.[650] This interpretation suggests the extent arboreal motifs may be understood from a broader perspective rather than through the fixed themes implied in the nomenclature Tree of Life. The following Abung account of royal meeting in Banten specifically evokes the concept of the tree as representing a place of momentous encounters, encompassing

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[645] Bambang Harsrinuksmo, 1990, *Mengungkap Rahasia Isi Keris* (Jakarta: Pustaka Grafikatama), 11.
[646] James R. Brandon, 1970, *On Thrones of Gold: Three Javanese Shadow Plays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 40.
[647] Hoop, 1949 (1975), 280-81.
[648] Mark Woodward, 1989, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press), 43, cites Sperber (1975) that 'Each evocation brings about a different reconstruction of old representations, weaves new links among them' and the author continues 'symbols cannot be said to have a definite set of meanings but rather meanings are evoked under specific circumstances' (44).
[649] The recent research has revealed unexpected far-reaching Muslim *pesisir* socio-intellectual networks connecting Lombok with the Malay world of Sumatra, both directly and via Java. See Jamaluddin, 2019, 'Al-Shabakāt al-ijtimsā'īyah wa al-fikrīyah bayn muslimī Lombok wa Sumatera: Dirāsah fī tūhfah wa makhtū Sasak', *Studia Islamika* 26 (3): 543-584. My appreciation is expressed to Muchammadun who facilitated the translation of the Arabic language paper.
[650] *Dalang* Haji Safwan, personal communication, 2018.

both spiritual and temporal realms in the landscape and its association with the *pepadun* throne.[651]

**The sacred tree as a meeting place**

Stange's recognition of mystical consciousness and social power conveying a cosmological unity is encoded in the Abung story attributing the establishment of the *cakak pepadun* customs to an encounter between the Sultan of Banten and a Lampung delegation. The sultan received the visiting entourage while he was seated on a large stone beneath a banyan tree in his garden in the cool of the evening.[652] According to the story, the Lampung guests were so impressed by the circumstances of the meeting that on their return home they subsequently created the first *pepadun* throne to commemorate the occasion. Dutch scholars since 1880 have noted the connection between *pepadun* and the widespread practice of erecting stone thrones dating back to prehistoric times in the Indonesian archipelago, including Lampung.[653] The archaeologist, John Miksic, records similar stones are found in all major surviving Islamic palaces and also royal graveyards in Java from the early modern era.[654] They are customarily called a 'shining stone' (*watu gilang*) from the widespread belief, first documented in Majapahit inscriptions that personal charisma and power causes the physical appearance of great individuals to glow with radiance.

The former royal square (*alun-alun*) in Banten Lama is the location of a 'shining stone', named Singayaksa, which was once situated beneath a large banyan tree. Singayaksa is a compound Javanese word consisting of 'lion' and *yaksa* derived from the Sanskrit term for the forest spirits (*yakṣa*) of Indic cosmology. The name '*yaksa* lion' references both feline and nature guardians and also may be connected to the Javanese concept of the establishment of a dynasty symbolised by the 'clearing of the forest' (*mbabad*).[655] Banten tradition states the Singayaksa shining stone was the

[651] Funke, 1958, 210

[652] J. Hooykaas, 1957, 'Upon a White Stone Under a Nagasari-Tree', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 113(4): 336.

[653] Hoop, 1940, 64, acknowledges D.W.Horst, 1880, 'Uit de Lampong', *De Indische Gids* 2(1): 971-983, for this observation. Hoop interprets the bi-partite horizontal and vertical combination of the menhir, known as a dissolith, as symbolizing female and male elements

[654] John N. Miksic, 2009, 'Shining Stones: The King and the Ascetic in Indonesia', in Putten and Cody (eds.), 22-24. In Bantenese language the 'shining stone' is known as a *watu gigilang* and in Bahasa Indonesia *batu gemilang*.

[655] The Javanese term *mbabad* is the root word for a dynastic chronicle *babad* as in the *Babad Banten* (Chronicle of Banten).

place where the ruler Maulana Hasanuddin (1479-1570) performed prayers requesting God's guidance in the choice of a location to establish his palace.[656] The ambivalent role of the spirit realm at such times is related in the Javanese shadow puppet play *Babad Alas Wanamarta* (The Clearing of the Wanamarta forest). [657] Here the Pandawa heroes, while attempting to establish a new kingdom in the Wanamarta forest, seek to cut down the trees in which hidden spirits dwell. Although the Pandawas are eventually successful, the cost for themselves is the sometimes-malevolent nature of the dryad beings merge with their own nature.

The historian Ota Atsushi describes the combined presence of the 'shining stone' and banyan tree in the Banten royal square as representing 'supernatural power, the seat of sacred spirits, the throne of the king with the supreme authority and the centre of the world'.[658] This notion of power radiating from the royal centre is visually suggested in the Banten batik motif *singayaksa* named after the 'shining stone'. The motif, with its four-pointed star configuration emanating from a central point, belongs to the *ceplokan* category of geometric patterns that historically are among the oldest and most respected Javanese textile designs.[659] Another *ceplokan*-related pattern, in the form of a rhombic motif with a stylised floral centre, appears carved in the upper-border of the AGSA Pair of Doors. Both the AGSA Pair of Doors and the Banten batik *singayaksa* motifs may derive some inspiration from popular Indian trade cloth patterns, particularly double-ikat *patola*. In the Javanese context, the centre surrounded by four radial points has often been interpreted as representing the cosmic mountain/sacred centre/seat of the ruler whose power radiates in the four cardinal directions.[660] The inter-relatedness of the three concepts of the mountain, the temporal/spiritual centre and the ruler's seat, and their association with the sacred banyan tree, is poetically conveyed in an episode in the *Babad Tanah Sunda*. The

[656] My appreciation to Muchammadun for drawing my attention to the story of Hasanuddin's *sholat istikharah* on the stone and the Banten *singayaksa* batik motif, personal communication, December, 2019.
[657] George Quinn, 2019, *Bandit Saints of Java* (Burrough on the Hill UK: Monsoon Books), 355.
[658] Ota, 2006, 21 records that in the 18th-century it was also the location of royal graves and royal circumcisions.
[659] For a further discussion of the *ceplokan* motif, see James Bennett, 2019, '*Ilm* or fashion? The question of the identity of batik designs of Java', in Samer Akkach, ed., *'Ilm: Science, Religion and Art in Islam* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide), 157-180.
[660] The Dutch colonial officer, A.D. Carnets de Groot, recorded various symbolic meanings early in the 19th-century associated with banyan trees growing in Javanese palace squares whose branches were trained to point in the four cardinal orientations. Groot reports they symbolised the 'four winds' and the wish for prosperity in each quadrant of the ruler's domain. See Kumar, 1997, 122-23.

*Babad* records the endeavours of Prince Walansungsang (c.1423-1529), first Muslim ruler of Cirebon, to seek Islamic teachings at various mountain hermitages (*petapaan*). Following guidance from a *naga* serpent, the Prince climbs the peak of Mount Cangak in West Java where he discovers a towering banyan tree in whose uppermost branches magically appears a beautiful palace.[661]

The Banten sultan's choice to receive the Lampung delegation while seated on the stone throne beneath the banyan tree likely was intended to convey potent meanings related to Stange's meeting of social power and mystical consciousness. Javanese rulers were regarded as the penultimate embodiment of these two qualities united within the one person. The AGSA Pair of doors and Throne-rest once occupied spaces – a Panaragan clan house or aristocratic dwelling – likewise representing the unity of temporal and spiritual authority. The AGSA Throne-rest with its arboreal motif evokes the 'shining stone' upon which the Banten sultan received the Lampung visitors beneath a tree in his garden. The association of trees with places of spiritual encounter is explicitly articulated in the Javanese romance *Puspakrema* (The Flower of Good Romance) from Lombok. An episode describes the hero Puspakrema arriving at the top of a very high mountain where:

> There was a banyan tree and a stone,
> Which was very smooth
> The roots of the banyan tree completely enclosed the stone.[662]

There he meets a dervish, sent by God, with whom he converses while they sit together beneath the ancient tree.

An exceptional visual expression of trees conveying supra-natural associations are two monumental columns, in the form of branching tree trunks, found at the mausoleums of Sunan Bonang, Tuban, and Sendang Duwur, Paciran, in East Java.[663] The columns nowadays are commonly described either as representing the *Kalpataru* or Tree of Life.[664] Radiocarbon testing of the Tuban column's wood

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[661] Sulendraningrat, 1984, 10.
[662] Th. C. Van der Meij, 2002, *Puspakrema: A Javanese Romance from Lombok,* (Leiden: University of Leiden), 25 – 26, stanza 48.
[663] For an extensive discussion of the Tuban *kalpataru* see Hélène Njoto, 2014, 'À Propos d'une Pièce en bois Sculptée de l'Art du Pasisir (xv$^{e}$ s.-xvii$^{e}$ s.) : le <<kalpataru>> du Musée de Tuban à Java-Est', *Archipel* 88: 169-188. My appreciation to the author for providing me with an English translation of this paper.
[664] Rony Firman Firdaus, 2016, 'Kalpataru, Media Merajut Harmoni Antarumat Beragama', in H. Ahmad Mundzir and Nurcholis, ed., *Sunan Bonang, Wali Sufi, Guru Sejati* (Tuban: Yayasan Mabarrot Sunan Bonang), 224.

revealed that the tree was likely felled in 1445-1525.[665] Neither column remains in its original position so it is difficult to surmise their intended use although likely they were originally installed in open-air pavilions at the religious complexes.[666] Elsewhere I have proposed that the Tuban and Sendang Duwur *Kalpataru* and their carved decoration allude to the place of the asceticism performed by *buda* ascetics and early Javanese Sufi saints.[667] The Bonang *Kalpataru* column, now in the collection of Kambang Putih Museum, Tuban, appears to feature forest imagery with suggestions of various unearthly creatures although the carving is much weathered with age. These beings may represent the psychic heat that Javanese tradition believes is generated by a spiritually powerful mystic practitioner or, alternatively, they may be the dryad beings such as appear in *Babad Alas Wanarmata* puppet play. The creatures seemingly grow out of the column's wood and thus prefigure the vegetal simulacra *kala* that emerge from the arboreal motifs on the AGSA Throne-rest.


**Fig. 5.22.** *Kalpataru* branched column featuring miniature Hindu-Buddhist temple located directly above a wood-knot [detail], formerly Mausoleum of Sunan Bonang, Tuban, East Java, c14 date1445-1525, teak wood, 1.41 cm (total height), 38.0 cm (base circumference); Museum Kambang Putih. Photograph: Njoto, 2014.

[665] Njoto, 2014, 170, fn.9, records the 2014 test results from Beta Analytic Inc. Miami, revealed two possible date ranges 1445-1525 CE or 1555-1603 CE of which the former the author suggests may be more likely.
[666] The Sendang Duwur column has been dismantled from a now-demolished pavilion adjacent to the mausoleum and its current storage location makes access difficult.
[667] James Bennett, 2019, 'The Shadow-Puppet: A Southeast Asian Islamic Aesthetic' in Christiane Gruber, ed., *The Image Debate: Figural Representation in Islam and Across the World*' (London: Gingko Press), 172-193.

The multi-valency associated with arboreal imagery is further encapsulated in the Tuban *Kalpataru* through the carving of a landscape scene with several man-made structures in forest settings around the column's trunk. Among the miniature depictions of buildings are an East Javanese Hindu-Buddhist *candi* temple (Fig. 5.22) and an ascetic's pavilion with the roof supported by a single branching column, just like the *Kalpataru* itself. Rony Firman Firdaus, a staff member at the Kambang Putih Museum, in an extensive essay discussing the *Kalpataru* notes the curious feature of a naturally occurring wood-knot located in a position below the temple exactly where the *peripih* (consecration offerings) are ritually buried beneath a sanctuary.[668] Firman Firdaus proposes the positioning of the temple at the point of the wood-knot is more than coincidental and suggests that the sculptor purposely created a correlation between the two. The term 'wood-knot' in modern Javanese is *moto kayu* and literally means 'eye of the wood', thus hinting that the tree is a living entity just as the consecration offerings imbues life into the spiritual power of a temple.[669] The depictions of the man-made and spirit world on the column, with its trunk, branches and knotted wood, together intimate a representation of a microcosm (*bhuana alit*) of the greater universe (*bhuana agung*).[670] The Tuban *Kalpataru* is no longer a tree growing in the landscape but the landscape has become embodied in the tree through the hands of the sculptor. The column, among the works of art discussed in here, most closely approaches the classical notion of the Tree of Life although its complex site-specific imagery implies the potential for a more modulated interpretation than possible within that single term.

**Conclusion**

Interpretations of Indonesian arboreal motifs as representations of the Tree of Life have reinforced stereotypes about the aesthetic practices of Java and its diaspora,

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[668] Firman Firdaus, 2016, 237. The author notes that the sanctuary, known *garbagriha* or 'womb chamber', is where the Śaivite *linga-yoni* is installed and that the wood knot becomes a symbol of the '*energi*' in that location.

[669] *Moto kayu* is Low Javanese (*ngoko*). In Bahasa Indonesia a wood-knot is *mata kayu* (eye of the wood) and the concept extends to *mata air* (eye of the water), meaning a 'natural spring', and *matahari* (eye of the day) meaning the 'sun'. In High Javanese (*kromo inggil*) a wood-knot is *soco kajeng.*

[670] Several Javanese writers connect the Tree of Life in art with the philosophical concept, related to *bhuana agung bhuana alit*, which is the *tri-loka* (three realms) being the *niskala* (unseen), *nisakala-sakala* (unseen and seen merged) and *sakala* (seen) realms of reality, see Ony Setyawan, 2018, 'Konsep Tri-loka dan Keberadaan Pohon Hayat pada Batik Motif *Lengko* Kambretan Tulungagung', *Seminar Antar Bangsa: Seni Budaya dan Desain – STANSA 2018.* Non-paginated. Available at<seminarsedesa.um.ac.id>, accessed January 2020.

including Lampung. The perception of Lampung's Abung societies as isolated and inherently conservative in their art traditions is contradicted by the Javanese style of the woodcarving on the AGSA Pair of Doors and Throne-rest. The two sculptures are visual expressions of Lampung's interconnectedness with Java's cosmopolitan world during the early modern era. The strong sense of Islamic identity is apparent in their choice of styles as well as the apotropaic feline simulacra and geometric symbols appearing on the AGSA Pair of Doors. The reference to Indian *palampore* textile imagery on the AGSA Throne-rest documents Lampung's engagement with international maritime trade. It was through the entrepôt of Banten, and later Batavia, that Indian textiles were imported and subsequently transhipped to southern Sumatra and elsewhere around the archipelago.

An examination of arboreal motifs as they appear in diverse contexts and media in both Lampung and Javanese art suggest their meanings were complex and nuanced, and varied immensely over the three centuries of the early modern era. Although the historical stories and orals traditions once associated with many of the works of art are now lost, their significance can be understood through the appreciation of the role of the *pasemon* visual metaphor or allusion in their creation. This is apparent in objects created for display during status ceremonies such as *cakak pepadun* or for the context of palace or religious settings. Rather than being a representation of the generic Tree of Life, or its associated manifestations, the arboreal motifs signal potent locations where mystical consciousness and social identity are united. Here the sacred tree evokes a place of encounter in which spiritual and temporal power merges, as is epitomised in the AGSA Pair of doors and Throne-rest.

# CHAPTER 5

## Bountiful Cargoes:

## Asian Trade Ceramics and Their Engagement with Islam

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# Bountiful Cargoes:

# Asian Trade Ceramics and Their Engagement with Islam


## Abstract

The chapter, written for the Art Gallery of South Australia publication commemorating the philanthropy of the Adelaide art collectors, the late Tom and Elizabeth Hunter, examines the extent Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai trade ceramics in the early modern era document the tastes of Islamic markets, notably exemplified by Java. The international demand for the wares profoundly influenced the non-Muslim potter's choice of vessel forms and the designs featuring floral and geometrical themes. The ceramics consequently provide an insight into one important aspect of the aesthetic milieu of Javanese society during the early modern era and Java's participation in the global narrative of Islamic art.

The provenance of many of the Hunter collection pieces is unknown yet they almost all represent ceramic styles or designs commonly found in Indonesia. These include in the National Museum of Indonesia's collection of Chinese and other trade wares, said to be exceeded in number only by Taiwan's National Palace Museum, assembled by E.W. van Orsoy de Flines (1886-1964) while living in the Dutch East Indies. The immense quantities of wares retrieved from shipwreck sites and shards excavated at archaeological sites in Java, such as the former sultanate palace in Banten Lama, are evidence of the extraordinary local demand for these utilitarian pieces during the 16th- to early-19th-century. The highly glazed foreign ceramics also were used to decorate mosques, such as Demak's Masjid Agung, and the mausoleums of the *wali* Sunang Gunung Jati (Cirebon), Sunan Bonang (Tuban) and Sunan Kudus (Kudus). The wares attained an elevated status as revered sacred heirlooms (*pusaka*) in the Cirebon, Surakarta and Yogyakarta palaces where they continue to be used for Islamic religious festivals, including for the birthday celebrations of the Prophet Muhammad.


## An unexpected scene on a plate

In 1984 Elizabeth and Tom Hunter gifted a unique late 15th to early-16th-century Vietnamese ceramic, whose cavetto features the earliest surviving indigenous illustration of a sea battle in Southeast Asia (Fig. 6.1).[671] The blue underglaze painting depicts two boats clashing in battle, with warriors atop the masts firing arrows at each other, while others swing from the rigging below. On the decks, the crews attempt to use grapple and rope to draw the ships alongside each other, for hand-to-hand combat. A body, an early casualty of the affray, floats in the water, while a giant fish swallows another unfortunate victim. The painting of the scene is so striking that it is easy to overlook the visual disjunction between the naval battle and the flowering foliage

[671] See James Bennett, 2001, *Beneath the Winds: Masterpieces of Southeast Asian Art from the Art Gallery of South Australia* (Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide), 222–3. The only earlier documented image of boat warfare is a stone relief in the southern galleries of the Bayon temple, erected late 12th- to early-13th-century, at Angkor, Cambodia. The relief depicts a water battle between Khmer and Cham forces and the setting is the Tonle Sap Lake near Angkor.

decorating the inside rim. The floral motif is typical of blue-and-white wares from the Chu Dau-My Xa kilns at Nam Sach, east of modern-day Hanoi, where *Plate with naval battle* was created.

The immediacy of the sea battle imagery, with its graphic details, is heightened by the amateurish style of the drawing. Together they convey the forceful impression of an eyewitness sketch of an actual event rather than a conventionalised illustration re-creating the legendary past. It is notable that the artist has depicted clouds in the skies above the battle. Perhaps it is the monsoon season, the time when trading ships, laden with valuable cargo, took advantage of favourable prevailing winds to set sail for distant ports. At the time *Plate* was painted, Vietnam exported silk and a variety of exotic jungle products, including fragrant woods, cinnamon, tortoiseshell and rhinoceros horns. However, it was the high-fired glazed ceramics manufactured at the Nam Sach kilns that were amongst the most popular items shipped to foreign markets.

**Fig. 6.1.** Plate, with naval battle, 1500-1525, Chu-Dau-My Xa, Hai Duong, Vietnam, stoneware with underglaze blue decoration, 36.0 cm (diam); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1984, Art Gallery of South Australia (846C13). Photograph: AGSA.

The period between the 15th- and 16th-centuries was an era of increasing maritime conflict in Southeast Asian waters due to the growing wealth of international commerce, an outcome of the expanding spice trade, accompanied by

increased piracy and slave raiding to address endemic labour shortages.[672] The Portuguese, the first Europeans to sail into Southeast Asian waters, in the early-16th-century, reported with astonishment at the size of local sea vessels, known as *jong*, an Indonesian word from which the modern-day term 'junk' derives. Some of the vessels were larger than any known European ships and capable of carrying one thousand men.[673] The vessels on the *Plate* appear to represent a hybrid Southeast Asian design, which had evolved from the *jong* after the latter proved uncompetitive in naval warfare with the more agile Portuguese ships. Local shipwrights are known to have quickly adapted foreign elements, including Chinese and European features, into their boat construction. The five masts on each of the ships are indicative of the earlier large Southeast Asian vessels, while the suggested European features include the absence of side rudders, the stern's structure and the crow's nests.

The warriors engaged in the sea battle are armed only with bows and arrows, although firearms had already been used in Southeast Asia for several centuries before the arrival of Europeans. Vietnamese seamen gained a wide reputation as both mercenaries and traders during this time. The Portuguese apothecary, Tomé Pires, writing in the newly conquered port city of Melaka in 1515, expressed surprise at the 'countless musketeers and small bombards' in Vietnam.[674] It is difficult to identify the nationality of the crews on the *Plate*, as they wear their hair in buns in a fashion often associated with the Javanese, who were also renowned seafarers. The two ships display tantalising similarities to the picture of a vessel illustrated in a travel account by the East Indies Dutch merchant Jan Huygen van Linschoten in 1598. The Latin caption states, 'ships from China and Java … used for war and transporting merchandise'.[675]

[672] Victor Lieberman, 2003, 'Some Comparative Thoughts on Pre-modern Southeast Asian Warfare', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 46: 16.
[673] Pierre-Yves Manguin, 1993, 'The Vanishing *Jong*: Insular Southeast Asian Fleets in Trade and War (Fifteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)', in Anthony Reid, ed., *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power and Belief* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press), 198.
[674] Anthony Reid, 1993, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680: Volume Two: Expansion and Crisis* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 220.
[675] Dick Richards, 1990, 'A Vietnamese Ship Plate in the Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia', *Trade Ceramic Studies* 10: 175.

**Vietnam and its ceramic heritage**

The history of Vietnam and its ceramics testifies to the country's strategic geographical location as a frontier between Southeast Asia and China. In pre-modern times, Vietnam consisted of two distinct cultural spheres. In the north was the Sinicised world of Dai Viet, which several times over the centuries had been occupied by China as the 'Pacified Southern Province'. In the centre and south of the country was Champa, consisting of mixed Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim communities, culturally oriented towards the Indianised world of the archipelago of Southeast Asia and South Asia. With a coastline extending 3260 km from north to south, water has defined Vietnam's history. The country faced an ocean that was simply known as the Champa Sea or East Sea long before it acquired the appellation 'South China Sea' in more recent centuries. It was across these waters, as far back as prehistoric times, that northern Vietnamese ships traded monumental cast-bronze drums and other valuable items into the Southeast Asian archipelago. The significance of the sea in the Vietnamese worldview is summarised in the traditional aphorism: 'Leave the shore, only then you will know what is deep and what is shallow'.[676]

**Fig. 6.2.** Ewer, with lobed body, 1200-1300, Thanh Hoa, Vietnam, stoneware with light brown glaze, 19.5 cm (height); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1994, Art Gallery of South Australia (943C4). Photograph: AGSA.

Vietnamese ceramics reflected this unique location, the maritime meeting point between China and the Indianised polities of Southeast Asia. The elegant 13th- or

[676] Charles Wheeler, 2006, 'Re-thinking the sea in Vietnamese history: littoral society in the integration of Thuận-Quảng, seventeenth–eighteenth centuries', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 37 (1): 123.

14th-century *Ewer with lobed body* (Fig. 6.2) references the Chinese lobed ewers produced in preceding centuries.[677] Nevertheless, the ancestral lineage of the form can be traced even further back, to the Indian *kundika* ritual vessels, which entered Vietnam through the Hindu–Buddhist culture of Champa. The visual outcome of the merging of the influences in the *Ewer* is a robust vessel with a uniquely graceful profile, very different from the rarefied aesthetic of Chinese Song dynasty (960–1279) wares.

**Fig. 6.3.** Bowl, inscribed 'This is a priceless treasure', 1300-1400, Thanh-Hoa, Vietnam, stoneware with green (celadon) glaze, 16.9 cm (height); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1987, Art Gallery of South Australia (871C2). Photograph: AGSA.

A similar felicitous merging of cross-cultural influences manifests in *Bowl, inscribed 'This is a priceless treasure'* (Fig. 6.3), created one or two centuries later.[678] The vessel's lotus shape appears early in Vietnamese ceramics and is likely to have been introduced from India via Champa rather than through China, where similar forms are known. The influence of the Chinese literati culture on northern Vietnamese society is confirmed in the inscription inside the rim, in Chinese characters, which declares, 'This is a precious treasure'. The poetic hyperbole provides telling insight into the exceptional status of ceramic art in Vietnam. The presence of the inscription signifies that the *Bowl* was intended for use by the local educated elites. Nevertheless,

[677] Phillipe Truong, 2007, *The Elephant and the Lotus: Vietnamese Ceramics in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, (Boston: MFA Publications), 56.
[678] See Bennett, 2011, 216–7.

the ceramic was created at a time when Dai Viet potters were increasingly responding to the potential for the sale of their wares to international markets.

The impetus for Vietnam's entry into the ceramic export market may have been the restrictions on Chinese foreign trade, including ceramics, imposed by the first Ming emperor, Hongwu, who reigned from 1368 to 1398.[679] The ban eventually proved so difficult to enact that one modern scholar has sardonically described it as 'Ming China's equivalent of the "war on drugs", just as costly and just as unsuccessful'.[680] However, the resulting shortfall in the official trade in Chinese ceramics provided an important opportunity for Dai Viet potters to capture the niche market. By the fifteenth century, Vietnamese blue-and-white wares were exported widely throughout the Indonesian archipelago and to the Muslim world of the Middle East. Vietnamese ceramics, along with Chinese wares, have been preserved in the Ottoman palace collection in the Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul, and in the royal shrine of Shaykh Safi al-Din Ardabili (died 1334) in Ardabil, whose collection is now housed in the National Museum of Iran, Tehran.[681] Ceramics were the preferred medium for serving food to distinguished pilgrims rather than ostentatious gold or silver utensils, which were forbidden in the shrine's religious setting.

**A phoenix vessel from beneath the sea**

The sinking of the merchant ship *Cu Lao Cham* in Vietnamese waters around 1490 while carrying a consignment of around 250,000 ceramics was an economic disaster for the traders who underwrote the voyage.[682] An unexpected discovery during the 1997–2000 salvage of the shipwreck was evidence that the sponsors of the business venture may not have been local people, although its consignment contained chiefly

[679] Kerry Nguyen-Long, 2010, 'Trade and Exchange in the Sixteenth-Eighteenth Centuries Through the Prism of Hoi An', in Nancy Tingley, *Arts of Ancient Viet Nam: From River Plain to Open Sea* (New York and Houston: Asia Society and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), 255.
[680] Craig Clunas, 2007, quoted in Eva Ströber, 2013, *Ming: Porcelain for a Globalized Trade* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers), 98.
[681] Dick Richards and James Bennett, 2005, 'Islamic Ceramics of Southeast Asia', in James Bennett, ed., *Crescent Moon: Islamic Art and Civilization of Southeast Asia* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 238. The collection
of Chinese and Vietnamese ceramics at the Ardabil Shrine included one individual gift of 1200 pieces made by the
Safavid ruler Shah Abbas in 1611.
[682] Kerry Nguyen-Long, 2016, 'Vietnamese Ceramics: In the Context of History, Religion and Culture', in Dick Richards and T.S. Loh, eds., *Vietnamese Ceramics From the Yi-Lu Collection* (Singapore: Ken Soon Asiatic Art), 12. It is also popularly called the 'Hoi An wreck' after the location of its discovery.

wares from the northern Vietnamese kilns. The ship's teak timbers, the skeletal remains of the crew and utilitarian ceramics containing supplies for the voyage indicated that the *Cu Lao Cham* was constructed in Thailand, manned by a Thai crew, and had previously sailed from that country.[683] This confirms the participation by multiple nationalities in the early maritime commerce in Southeast Asia. Traders, sailors and craftsmen travelled vast distances along established shipping networks, consequently leading to the creation of multicultural port communities throughout the archipelago. As the Iranian geographer, Ibn al-Faqih, wrote in the 10th-century, even the parrots in Southeast Asia 'could speak Persian, Arabic, Chinese, Indian and Greek'.[684]

**Fig. 6.4.** Ewer in the shape of a phoenix, 1480-90, Chu Dau, Hai Duong, Vietnam, stoneware moulded with underglaze blue decoration, 26.5 cm (height); Gift of Alastair Hunter OAM in recognition of the friendship of his parents Elizabeth and Tom Hunter and Dick Richards, Curator of Asian Art (1968-2000) 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia (20194C73). Photograph: AGSA.

Among the ceramics retrieved from the ill-fated freight is *Ewer in the shape of a phoenix* (Fig. 6.4). From the shipwreck's location and cargo, we can assume that the

[683] Nguyen-Long, 2010, 260.
[684] J.M. Blaut, 1993, *The Coloniser's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York and London: Guildford Press), 167.

*Ewer* was intended for the overseas market, although the boat's position only allows us to deduce that her proposed route was southwards.[685] The cargo's wares imply her likely destination was Java, where the ceramics would have been sold locally or transhipped elsewhere.[686] The long history of Java's contact with Vietnam is testified in the Javanese panegyric, *Depiction of the Districts*, composed in 1365. The author, Mpu Prapanca, describes the relationship of the East Javanese kingdom of Majapahit to both Vietnam, including Dai Viet and Champa, and Thailand as 'always friends'.[687] The last Hindu–Buddhist Majapahit ruler, Brawijaya V (died 1478), is recorded as marrying a Muslim Cham princess. Numerous Vietnamese ceramic shards have been discovered at the site of the Majapahit capital, near Mojokerto in East Java, where Islamic graves document the existence of a Muslim community from early times. Vietnamese ceramics have also been found in pre-Islamic burials in South Sulawesi, which had close trade contacts with the Javanese kingdom.

The *Ewer* is in the classic form of a Southeast Asian pouring vessel, lacking handles and known as a *kendi*. The vessel was moulded into the shape of the legendary phoenix, with an opening on top of the head for receiving liquids, while the bird's beak acted as the spout. In Vietnamese belief the phoenix is often paired with the dragon, representing the cosmic duality of yin–yang, known as *am duong* in the Vietnamese language, embodied in the principle of female–male elements and sky and earth/water. Pouring vessels in the shape of dragons, similar in dimensions to the phoenix, were salvaged from the same wreck site and have also been found in Indonesia. It is possible that the two types of vessels may have originally been conceived as pairs. The comparatively small group of ceramics in the shape of animals discovered on the *Cu Lao Cham* suggests the *Ewer* was a luxury item, one intended for the upper end of the market, or perhaps it was a special order. The types of decoration on some Vietnamese ceramics found in Java imply that they may have been specifically commissioned from northern Vietnamese kilns to cater for local tastes.

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[685] Michael Flecker, 2009, 'Maritime Archaeology in Southeast Asia', in John Miksic, ed., *Southeast Asian Ceramics: New Light on Old Pottery* (Singapore: Southeast Asian Ceramic Society), 44.
[686] Kenneth R. Hall, 2011, *A History of Early Southeast Asia: Maritime Trade and Societal Development* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield), 247. Vietnamese wares do not appear to have been in exceptional demand in Thailand despite the ship and crew being Thai.
[687] Stuart Robson, 1995, *Deśawarnana (Nāgarakrtāgama) by Mpu Prapañca* (Leiden: KITLV Press), 34, canto 15, 1. The Javanese title of the poem is *Desawarnana* and it is commonly also known as *Negarakertagama*.

Ceramics such as the *Ewer* acquired their own local meanings wherever they travelled. Indonesian patrons almost certainly reinterpreted the phoenix as the Garuda bird, which guards the nectar of immortality in Hindu belief. During the 15th-century in Java, the cult of holy water, water being an element equated with the legendary nectar, became especially popular. Such an artefact as the *Ewer*, in the shape of a fantastical bird, would have held special significance when used in Hindu religious rituals associated with this cult. The popularity of the bird is testified by the presence of depictions of the phoenix among the numerous Vietnamese glazed tiles decorating the Great Mosque of Demak, erected in around 1479 in Central Java. Local tradition states that the tiles were carried away from the Majapahit capital after it was conquered by a Muslim alliance led by the Demak sultanate (1475–1548). Vast numbers of similar tile fragments have been uncovered at the site of the former capital, among which is *Wall tile, with phoenix* (Fig. 6.5), also featuring the legendary bird.[688]

**Fig. 6.5.** Wall tile, with phoenix, 1400-1500, Hai Duong, Vietnam, found in Trowulan region, East Java, Indonesia, stoneware with underglaze blue decoration, 24.8 x 3.2 cm; The John Watson Collection 1992, Art Gallery of South Australia (928C18). Photograph: AGSA.

[688] See Russell Kelty, 2012, 'Northern Vietnamese Architectural Tile Shards in the Michael Abbott Collection', Master of Arts thesis, University of Adelaide.

The geographical extent of the overseas distribution of Vietnamese ceramics and shipwreck discoveries indicate that the maritime export trade from Vietnam was immense. Nevertheless, the numbers of vessels that sailed each season or the organisation of their commercial sponsorship are uncertain.[689] Consortiums of traders likely shared the expenses of a voyage, with the traders on-selling products purchased at each port of call, as this was a widespread practice in early Asian maritime commerce. If the *Cu Lao Cham* had successfully continued her voyage and not foundered beneath the waves of the Champa Sea, she may have landed on very different Javanese shores from those to which previous traders had sailed for centuries. After 300 years of illustrious rule, the great Hindu–Buddhist Majapahit Kingdom had begun to disintegrate as a result of internal power struggles and the rise of powerful Muslim trading polities on Java's north coast, principally Demak.

Vietnam played a key role in the ascendancy of Islam in Java in the 16th-century, given that religious conversion, as elsewhere in the Muslim world, aligned with routes of trade. Several of the saintly Javanese 'nine friends of God' (*wali songo*) were of Cham heritage, through parents or grandparents, and one historical account identifies southern Vietnam as the source of Islam in Java.[690] Vietnam's close relationship with Java is confirmed by the presence of the blue-and-white tiles decorating several Islamic sites in the north of coast Java. These include the Al-Aqsa Mosque, dating from 1549, Kudus, and the mausoleum of the renowned Sufi saint, Sunan Bonang (died 1525), Tuban, as well as Demak's Mosque, erected by the 'nine friends of God'.

**Chinese ceramics and Islam**

The fame of the Middle Kingdom in the Muslim world was such that an early apocryphal saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad declared, 'Seek knowledge, even as far as China'. In 851, the Persian merchant Sulayman al-Tajir (Solomon the Merchant) travelled to Guangzhou, known to the Arab–Persian world as Khanfu, and became the first foreign person to study the art of ceramic production in China. He

[689] Roxanna Maude Brown, 2009, *The Ming Gap and Shipwreck Ceramics in Southeast Asia: Towards a Chronology of Thai Trade Ware* (Bangkok: Siam Society), 30, notes a difference in terminology between 'trade ware', referring
to ceramics made for Asian markets, and 'export ware', for porcelain made for the European markets since the 17th-century.
[690] Jean Gelman Taylor, 2003, *Indonesia: Peoples and History*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press), 78.

praised the products, noting that some vessels were as transparent as glass and 'which, when filled with wine, could be seen through'.[691] During the cosmopolitan Tang dynasty (618–907), exceptionally large expatriate communities of Middle Eastern Muslims established themselves in ports along China's southern coast, notably in Guangzhou and Fujian, where they traded in the 'rare and strange' foreign goods imported into the Middle Kingdom.[692]

**Fig. 6.6.** Bowl, with five petal flower motif, 800-900, Changsha, Hunan, China, found in Indonesia, stoneware with underglaze brown and green decoration, 15.2 cm (diam.); Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC 2011, Art Gallery of South Australia (20113C5). Photograph: AGSA.

Two remarkable wrecks of Arab *dhow* testify to the magnitude of the cargoes carried on the annual trans-oceanic voyages back and forth between the Persian Gulf and Guangzhou towards the end of the first millennium. The ships, identifiable as *dhow* by their construction technique of stitched, rather than nailed, planks and their species of timber, were recently discovered in Indonesia and Thailand, far from their Middle Eastern ports of origin. The *Batu Hitam* sank in around 830 near the island of Belitung, off the east coast of Sumatra, and was carrying a cargo of approximately 57,500 Chinese ceramics, along with luxury goods, such as gold utensils. The majority of the ceramics were brown-and-green glaze bowls produced at the Changsha kilns in Hunan province. Many of the designs in the bowls' cavettos depict variations of a stylised floral motif, based on a simple configuration of four or five petals, as seen in *Bowl with five petal flower motif* (Fig. 6.6). This type of

[691] Richards & Bennett, 2005, 228.
[692] John Guy, 2010, 'Rare and Strange Goods: International Trade in Ninth-Century Asia', in Regina Krahl, et al., *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds* (Singapore: Smithsonian Institute and National Heritage Board), 21.

symmetrically placed motif is rarely seen on Chinese artefacts, but its prevalence in medieval-period Islamic pottery suggests that Changsha kilns were already catering to the tastes of Middle Eastern communities in the early centuries of Islam.[693] Perhaps even more remarkable than the enormity of the cargo of Changsha bowls are the three small cobalt blue-decorated stoneware dishes discovered amongst the other wares at the underwater site. The vessels are among the earliest examples of Chinese blue-and-white ceramics known today.

**Fig. 6.7.** Bowl, with segmented radial design, 1300-1400, Iran, possibly Soltan Abad (Arak), Markazi, stone-paste earthenware with blue glaze decoration, 10.1 x 21.0 cm (diam.); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Bequest 2009, Art Gallery of South Australia (20093C19). Photograph: AGSA.

The medium of cobalt blue had been used to colour glazes and clay in the Middle East from around 2000 BCE and the blue glaze subsequently became especially popular in Islamic ceramics produced in Iran, Iraq and Syria, such as *Bowl, with segmented radial design* (Fig. 6.7). In the 9th-century, Basra potters invented the application of cobalt blue designs onto white slip-glazed wares and this innovation subsequently inspired the development of blue underglaze technology in Chinese ceramics.[694] It seems most likely that informed merchants – or even the potters themselves – travelling from the Middle East introduced the technique of preparing the cobalt oxide – found as pebbles in riverbeds – into China. The blue mineral may have been obtained from Kashan, a major Persian centre of ceramic production, or

[693] Hsieh Ming-liang, 2010, 'White Ware with Green Décor', in Regina Krahl, et al., *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds* (Singapore: Smithsonian Institute and National Heritage Board), 162.
[694] Jessica Hallett, 'Pearl Cups Like the Moon: The Abbasid Reception of Chinese Ceramics', in Regina Krahl, et al., *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds* (Singapore: Smithsonian Institute and National Heritage Board), 81.

even as far away as Somalia in east Africa, and shipped to China as a raw ore, where kiln orders were placed for consignments of ceramics utilising the blue. By the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) the association of the blue glaze with the world of Islam had become so complete that the raw mineral acquired the name 'Mohammedan blue' (*Huihui qing*).[695] Initially Chinese connoisseurs dismissed the blue-and-white pottery, made for the foreign markets, as 'vulgar', but in 1279 Mongol invaders established the Yuan dynasty at Khanbaliq, now modern-day Beijing, which lasted until 1368.[696] The foreign rulers brought with them tastes in the applied arts markedly different from the indigenous Han Chinese. It was this change in fashion that led to the reinvention of blue-and-white painted porcelain, now exuberantly decorated, for which China subsequently became so famous.

For many centuries, the Chinese overseas ceramic trade was officially couched in terms of exchange for tribute. The Sinocentric worldview of the ruling mandarin class precluded any possibility of regarding the 'southern barbarians' in Southeast Asia, and beyond, as on a parity with the Middle Kingdom. Nevertheless, early Chinese records list the astonishing variety of tropical products eagerly sought from outside the borders of the realm: medicinal and aromatic plants, including pepper and other spices, camphor, sandalwood, incense and rattan; exotic animal and bird products, including tortoiseshell, pearls, ivory, rhinoceros horn, peacock feathers; and raw materials such as gold, copper and tin.[697]

Concurrently with the imperially sanctioned tribute system, a lively unofficial export business developed in ceramics, mostly produced in the southern Chinese coastal provinces. From the initial commencement of production, trade ceramics reflected the local folk style of the 'people's kiln' (*minyao*) wares, differentiating them from the hyper-refined style of 'official kiln' (*guanyao*) imperial wares, although the two types of kilns sometimes operated side by side, such as occurred at Jingdezhen, Jiangxi.[698] There were marked differences in their decoration, representing the contrasting milieu of court formality and practical domesticity. Also the *minyao* potters made do with lesser-grade greyish-white clays, unlike the pure

[695] Adam T. Keesler, 2012, *Song Blue and White Porcelain on the Silk Road* (Leiden: Brill), 520.
[696] Regina Krahl, 2010, 'Tang Blue-and-White', in Regina Krahl, et al., *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds* (Singapore: Smithsonian Institute and National Heritage Board), 211.
[697] Ströber, 2013, 99.
[698] Brown, 2009, 29.

white kaolin clay reserved for the imperial porcelain. Further to the two well-defined classes, Middle Eastern merchants recognised three categories of Chinese export porcelain available in the marketplace. These were the top-quality ceramics, distinguished by their clear colour and crisp ring when struck, middle-grade creamy-white porcelain, and lower-grade wares, characterised by less-refined decoration.[699]

The simple *Bowl, with fish* (Fig. 6.8) is typical of early 'people's kiln' wares manufactured for overseas. Ceramics with white glazes, known as *qingbai* or *yingqing*, were particularly valued in the Southeast Asian archipelago, to which they were exported from the 10th-century onwards. The precise provenance of the *Bowl* is unknown, but it is most likely to have been Indonesia or the Philippines, where such vessels have been discovered in shipwreck cargoes and as funerary goods at burial sites. Neither of these countries developed a native high-fired ceramic tradition until modern times; hence, the popularity of the lustrous glaze medium, which may have been valued because of its similarity to the appearance of silver.

**Fig. 6.8.** Bowl, with fish, 1200-1300, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain, glaze, 6.4 x 18.8 cm (diam.); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1989, Art Gallery of South Australia (891C5). Photograph: AGSA.

The striking visual appearance of the foreign Chinese ceramics, which displayed a superb technological sophistication, prompted fantastical explanations among local people regarding their origins. The naturalist G.E. Rumphius (1628–1702), while living in the Dutch East Indies, recorded a popular story attributing their creation to the semi-legendary Sampo, otherwise known to history as the Chinese Muslim eunuch, Admiral Zheng He.[700] According to one local belief, he was the

[699] Richards and Bennett, 2005, 228.
[700] E.M. Beekman, 1999, *The Ambonese Curiosity Cabinet, George Everhardus Rumphius* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 272.

inventor of pottery, leaving porcelain wares wherever he travelled around the islands of the archipelago. The crazing sometimes found in the glazes of the antique ceramics was said to be caused by the powerful Garuda bird flying over his pottery studio and shaking its foundations.

**The green glaze 'pure as jade'**

When, during its fourth international voyage, Admiral Zheng He's fleet visited the flourishing port emporium of Tuban, on the north coast of Java, in 1413, it was accompanied by the Chinese translator, Ma Huan, who like Zheng He, was also a Muslim. Later, writing an account of his journey, Ma Huan noted the extensive local Muslim trading communities 'from every foreign kingdom in the West', as well as the many immigrant Chinese who had converted to Islam and settled in Indonesia. It was in Java that Ma Huan observed the custom of communal meals:

> They sit round in a circle; they have a dish well filled with rice which they moisten with butter [likely thickened coconut milk] and gravy; in eating they use the hand to take up the food.[701]

Chinese potters quickly realised the market potential in the production of large dishes for this dining practice of shared meals, especially as the custom was widespread throughout the Middle East and South Asia, where it continues today. The first vessels made for the purpose appear to be copies of a metal prototype, most likely of Islamic origin.[702] The presence of large Chinese ceramic dishes in both Middle Eastern and South Asian Muslim kitchen inventories from an early date further supports this assumption.[703]

[701] J.V.G. Mills, trans., 1970, *Ma Huan: 'Ying-yai Sheng-lan' The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores (1433)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society), 93. We can assume Ma Huan is referring to the eating habits in the coastal Javanese Muslim community, as he does not appear to have travelled to the interior of the island, which was the heartland of the Hindu–Buddhist Majapahit Kingdom. Furthermore, it is unlikely that Ma Huan participated in meals with non-Muslim Javanese due to their consumption of pork and those other meats – a practice he noted with horror – regarded as unclean under Sharia law.
[702] Duncan Macintosh, 1994, *Chinese Blue-and-White Porcelain* (Woodbridge: ACC Artbooks), 13.
[703] Colin Sheaf and Richard Kilburn, 1988, *The Hatcher Porcelain Cargoes: The Complete Record* (Oxford: Phaidon Christies), 121.

**Fig. 6.9.** Bowl, with lotus blossoms and leaf, 1150-1250, Yaozhou, Shaanxi, China, stoneware with green (celadon) glaze, incised decoration, 18.7 cm (diam.); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1989, Art Gallery of South Australia (891C4). Photograph: AGSA.

From medieval times, green-glazed trade wares were popular in Southeast Asia. An example in the Hunter Collection is the incised *Bowl, with lotus blossoms and leaf* (Fig. 6.9), which was likely found in Indonesia. The magnificent 15th- or 16th-century *Large bowl, with cash diaper motif* (Fig. 6.10) features an incised quatrefoil pattern, which covers the entire inside surface of the vessel's green-glaze cavetto.[704] The Malaysian archaeologist, Amir Husni, and his colleagues propose this style of bowl may have 'served as an official gift from the Ming dynasty to countries that had bilateral relations with China'.[705] Nevertheless, the antiquity and the wide distribution of the cash diaper motif throughout the Asian world indicates a popular market appeal for the ceramics outside diplomatic channels. The oldest surviving representation of the cash diaper motif appears on a Harappan earthenware storage jar, dated 2700–2000 BCE, from the region of modern-day Pakistan.[706] The later extent of its distribution is confirmed in medieval Indian textile fragments found in Egypt and in garment patterns carved on statues of Hindu and Buddhist deities in Java. The cash diaper's geometrical character and its association with spiritual power ensured that the

[704] A very similar plate appears in the Mr & Mrs John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection of the Asia Society, New York, <https://asiasociety.org/new-york/exhibitions/chinese-ceramics-iran-and-indo-persia>, accessed July 2019.

[705] Amir Husni, Saryulis, Husaini Ibrahim and Mokhtar Saidin, 2019, 'An Investigation of Archaeological Remains at Lamreh Site, Aceh, Indonesia and Their Context Within the Lamuri Kingdom', *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 15 (2): 83.

[706] The jar is now in the National Museum of India collection, New Delhi.

popularity of the motif continued following the ascendancy of Islam on the island in the 16th-century. It assumed the definitive form in Javanese batik textiles, where it became known as the *kawung*.[707] The Chinese potters who created *Large bowl* may have copied a Javanese *kawung* textile, or an Indian prototype featuring the pattern. The vessel was most likely made for trade to Indonesia, possibly for the same international Muslim communities that Ma Huan described on the north coast of Java.

**Fig. 6.10.** Large bowl, with cash diaper motif, 1450-1550, Longquan, Lishui, Zhejiang, China, stoneware with green (celadon) glaze, incised decoration, 40.5 cm (diam.); Gift of Alastair Hunter OAM in memory of his parents Tom and Elizabeth Hunter 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C51). Photograph: AGSA.

*Large bowl*'s green glaze, known in Chinese as *qinci*, is traditionally called celadon in English and there are various explanations for the origin of this term. These suggestions include: the name of Saladin, Sultan of Egypt, who is said to have sent forty pieces of the ware to the ruler of Damascus in 1171, or a French theatre character named Celadon in the 17th-century play *L'Astree*, who always wore a grey-green costume. In Southeast Asia, the Indo–Malay term for the large celadon dishes is 'stone plates' (*pingan batu*). There have been discoveries of vast numbers of 14th- and 15th-century green-glazed utensil shards at the site of the former capital of

[707] For discussion of *kawung* and related geometrical designs in Indonesian textiles, see James Bennett, 2019, '*Ilm* or Fashion? The Question of Identity in the Batik Designs of Java', in Samer Akkach, ed., '*Ilm: Science, Religion and Art in Islam* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press), 157–80.

Majapahit. This suggests these ceramics were among the most commonly exported Chinese wares to the Southeast Asian archipelago during this period.[708]

The popularity of celadon produced at the Longquan kilns of Zhejiang in the Islamic world is confirmed by both archival documentation and surviving historical collections. During the 17th-century, the Dutch East India Company, commonly referred to as the VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie), traded in immense quantities of celadon dishes. Dutch commercial inventories record 2000 pieces in their factory (warehouse) in Mocha, Yemen, and 1176 pieces in the Masulipatnam factory on the Coromandel Coast, in southern India.[709] The wares were particularly valued in Muslim courts. In 1652, the Dutch ambassador presented six valuable antique Chinese celadon dishes as a diplomatic gift to Shah Abbas II in Iran. The Topkapi Saray Palace collection in Istanbul houses over 1350 celadon wares – the largest collection in the world – with a considerable number being large dishes.[710] The preservation of similar ceramics in other parts of the Muslim world, including India and Southeast Asia, was due also to their highly prized status.[711] The Islamic courts of Cirebon, Surakarta and Yogyakarta in Java continue to use large antique Chinese dishes, revered as sacred heirlooms (*pusaka*), for court rituals today. A celadon dish is among the heirloom ceramics reserved for special rice offerings at the Garebeg Maulud celebrations, commemorating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, in the Surakarta Palace in Central Java.[712]

The use of Chinese ceramics in Muslim communities contrasted with their circumvention among caste-conscious Hindus in India, where religious prescriptions forbade the sharing of vessels between persons of different castes – indeed even the glance of a lower-caste person to a vessel was said to be enough to defile it.[713] Caste rules prohibited Hindu householders from eating from 'a bad dish, similar to the

[708] Longquan celadons make up twenty-nine per cent of the shard finds there. Marie-France Dupoizat and Naniek Harkantiningsih, 2007, *Catalogue of the Chinese style Ceramics of Majapahit: Tentative Inventory* (Paris: Cahier d'Archipel), 14, also report that related Fujian green-glazed wares make up another thirty per cent of the shards.
[709] Sheaf and Kilburn, 1988, 74.
[710] Eva Ströber, 2013, *Ming: Porcelain for a Globalised Trade* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche), 180. Eva Ströber, 2010, *Large Dishes from Jingdezhen and Longquan Around the World* (Leeuwarden, Netherlands: Keramiekmuseum Princessehof), non-paginated.
[711] For examples from India, see Mary Greenstead and Peter Hardie, 1982, *Chinese Ceramics: The Indian Connection* (Bristol: City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery), 26–8.
[712] Ströber 2010, non-paginated.
[713] Greenstead and Hardie, 1982, 9.

dishes used by foreigners'.[714] The impact of this prejudice on the ceramic trade is testified by the observation of a VOC employee at Masulipatnam. He reported that the VOC in south India found its biggest markets where communities of Iranian merchants settled, as they 'eat from porcelain, while the Hindus do not'.[715]

A significant factor contributing to the popularity of celadon wares was the common belief that the glaze possessed the unique capacity to detect poison. For this purpose, the Ottoman court in Istanbul is reported to have utilised dinner services of more than 800 celadon dishes for formal banquets. In the 17th-century, Rumphius recorded the Indonesian belief that the properties of celadon included:

> The ability to betray poison, to wit, if one puts some liquid poisoned food in it, the broth will boil or cast up bubbles, that dish crackles and shows cracks or at least change colour. If one puts rice in it, the rice will stay good for three days, and not become sour, though it will dry up.[716]

Thai potters also produced celadon wares at the Sawankhalok kilns, located at modern-day Si Satchanalai in central Thailand, from the late-14th- to early-16th-centuries. The Thai production was likely a response to the overseas market opportunities offered by the Chinese ban on foreign trade, proclaimed by Emperor Hongwu. *Large bowl, with lotus flower and barrel of peony flowers and leaves* (Fig. 6.11) is evidence of the extent to which the potters' skills rivalled their Chinese counterparts.[717] The scale of the Thai export is documented in the wreck of the *Nanyang*, which sank off the Malaysian peninsula around 1400, carrying a consignment of 10,000 to 15,000 Sawankhalok celadon wares. We do not know the harbour to which the *Nanyang* was bound, but green-glaze Sawankhalok shards have been found as far away as the Coromandel Coast port of Kottapatnam, in Andhra Pradesh, India, and in archaeological excavations at the old capital of Fustat (Cairo) in Egypt.[718]

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[714] Greenstead and Hardie, 1982, 9.
[715] Greenstead and Hardie, 1982, 16.
[716] Beekman, 1999, 272.
[717] For a further discussion of Thai celadon wares in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, see Bennett, 2011, 162–3, and Dick Richards, 1995, *Southeast Asian Ceramics: Thai, Vietnamese and Khmer: From the Collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press), 29–32, 121–35.
[718] John Guy, 1989, *Ceramic Traditions of Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Oxford University Press), 66. Also Noboru Karashima, 2007, 'Medieval Commercial Activities in the Indian Ocean As Revealed by Chinese Ceramic Shards and South Indian and Sri Lankan inscriptions', in Hermann Kulke, K.

The recent discovery of the early-9th-century Arab shipwreck, *Phanom Surin*, at Samsut Sakhon, a coastal province in Thailand, documents the long presence of Muslim traders in that country.[719] Their important role in negotiating Thailand's commerce with the international markets is remembered today in the commonly used modern Thai term *farang*. The word, meaning 'white foreigner', derives from the Persian nomenclature 'Frank', as Europeans were once known in the Muslim world. The far-reaching impact of Islamic aesthetics is apparent in the decoration of the *Large bowl*, with its concentric bands of an alternate floral and geometric pattern. This genre of decoration can be traced back to the influence of Islamic art, as seen in Chinese Yuan and Ming dynasty ceramic wares.[720]

**Fig. 6.11.** Large bowl, with lotus flower and barrel of peony flowers and leaves, 1400-1500, Sawankhalok (Si Satchanalai), Sukothai Province, Thailand, stoneware with green (celadon) glaze, underglaze incised or carved decoration, 33.0 cm (diam.,); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1985, Art Gallery of South Australia (854A16): Photograph: AGSA.

Kesavapany and Vijay Skhuja, *Nagapattinam to Suvarnadwipa: Reflections on the Chola Naval Expeditions to Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies), 51.

[719] The other *dhow* shipwreck, known as the *Phanom Surin*, was discovered at a saturated landsite of reclaimed mangrove swamps located eight kilometres inland from the present-day shoreline of the Gulf of Thailand; see John Guy, 2017, 'The Phanom Surin Shipwreck, a Pahlavi Inscription, and Their Significance for the History of Early Lower Central Thailand', *Journal of the Siam Society* 105: 178–96.

[720] Andrea Natasha E. Kintanar, 2014, 'Identifying "Islamic motifs" on Chinese Blue and White Porcelain Recovered from 15th century Shipwrecks in the Philippines', University of the Philippines, 014, p. 54. <www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Identifying-'-Islamic-Motif-'-on-Chinese-blue-and-Kintanar> accessed March 2020.

**An ancient seaport and the 'people's kilns'**

Among the works produced by Asian potters in the pre-modern era, it is the Swatow wares of southern China that perhaps speak most eloquently to the role played by the Islamic world in the global ceramic trade. Less than a century ago collectors and scholars first applied the term 'Swatow', an old European spelling for the port emporium of Shantou in Guangdong, to this robust group of 'people's kiln' wares, but today the name is regarded as archaic.[51721] Recent Chinese archaeological research has unearthed evidence for their place of production as the Pinghe county kilns, near Zhangzhou in neighbouring Fujian province, as well as in provincial sites in Guangdong. These kilns are generally assumed to have been active from around 1575 to 1650.[722]

Swatow ware typifies the best qualities of southern Chinese 'people's kiln' pottery. The definitive form is the large glazed dish, whose development owes so much to the influence of Islamic aesthetics and Muslim social customs. The pressures of mass production, as a result of market demand, are underlined on many of the large dishes by the accidental imprints of the potter's hand on the base of the vessel's foot as he or she hurriedly applied the raw glaze. The impression of the handprint is poignant evidence of the existence of an otherwise anonymous craftsperson, whose identity has been forever lost in time.

[721] Ströber, 2013, 134, notes the nomenclature does not appear in Robert Hobson's definitive study *The Wares of*
*the Ming Dynasty* (1923), who instead refers to 'coarse ceramic ware', a term dating back to 17th-century
Dutch East India Company documents recording shipments of Chinese trade wares. The term 'Swatow' is
maintained in this essay in deference to its use as understood by Tom and Elizabeth Hunter.
[722] Monique Crick, 2010, *Chinese Trade Ceramics for Southeast Asia from 1st to the 17th century: Collection of Ambassador and Mrs Charles Müller* (Milan and Geneva: 5 Continents Editions and Foundation Baur), 328. Several Chinese scholars have tentatively suggested production may have commenced earlier and finished a little later in the 17th-century.

**Fig. 6.12.** Large dish, with astrological compass design, 1575-1650, Zhangzhou, Fujian, China, porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration, 38.4 cm (diam.); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1990, Art Gallery of South Australia (902C7). Photograph: AGSA.

The remarkable popularity of Swatow wares, initially made for Muslim markets and their associated local networks in Indonesia, Philippines, India, Middle East and east Africa, spread far beyond the Islamic world to continental Europe and Great Britain, Japan and even the New World of the Americas. The dependence of the potters on the maritime networks stretching around the globe is encapsulated in *Large dish, with astrological compass design* (Fig. 6.12). The dish's cavetto features a large sailing ship, whose hybrid appearance is a combination of Zheng He's 'treasure ships' and a European galleon. A giant fish, inspired by depictions of sea monsters on Western nautical maps, appears opposite the vessel. The ceramic collector and dealer Jorge Welsh notes that this class of Swatow ware was once popularly believed to reference Portuguese patronage of the Chinese porcelain trade, as the coat of arms of Lisbon likewise displays a sailing ship.[723] Nevertheless, the inclusion of the Chinese Eight Trigrams around the rim, Nine Stars and the phrase 'Great Absolute' (*Taji*) – now almost completely worn away – in the cavetto's centre, indicates the *Large dish*

[723] Jorge Welsh, 2006, *Zhangzhou Export Ceramics: The So-called Swatow Wares* (London and Lisbon: Jorge Welsh Books), 143. The boat on the coat of arms in fact refers to the miraculous transfer of the relics of the martyred saint, Vincent of Saragossa (died c.304), patron saint of Lisbon, to the Portuguese capital.

is inspired by the feng shui compass, whose identity later merged with the astrological compass.[724]

The low open shape of Swatow dishes and bowls provided the ideal opportunity to paint visually striking glaze decoration on the internal cavettos, specifically catering to the tastes of the overseas clients. Their robust construction suited Muslim societies, where diners sat cross-legged on carpets or mats laid over wooden, brick or stone floors, whose surface was not always as even as we have come to expect in modern times. An additional advantage of this eating arrangement was it concealed from view the bases of the Swatow ware, on which coarse kiln grit had often accidentally fused during firing in the kiln. The English explorer John Davis described a typical dinner reception during a visit to the sultanate of Aceh in northern Sumatra in 1598:

> I sat down before the king who drank some aquavit to my health and invited me to taste all manner of strange food. The cutlery and tableware was all gold or very fine porcelain, set out on the ground with no tablecloth or linen of any kind.[725]

The most distinctly Islamic example of Swatow ceramics in the Art Gallery of South Australia's collection is *Large dish, with Qu'ran verses* (Fig. 6.13). Similar dishes were once commonly found in northern Sumatra and they date from the period when the sultanate was at its zenith. In the early 17th-century, Aceh was an international maritime commercial power and a centre for Islamic learning, attracting scholars from around the Muslim world. The Arabic script on *Large dish* testifies to the presence of Muslim calligraphers at the southern Chinese kiln workshops, where they assisted in the decoration of export wares intended for Islamic clientele. The inspiration for the design is traditionally attributed to the Acehnese royal seal, known as the Nine-Fold Seal.[726] The initial Swatow production in the early 17th-century possibly may have commenced with a special palace order from Aceh, but there is no evidence that the potters sought to faithfully replicate the sultan's seal.[727] The

[724] Alex Burchmore, 2015, 'Catalogue No. 38 *Large Bowl with Astrological Compass Design*', in James Bennett and Russell Kelty, eds., *Treasure Ships: Art in the Age of Spices* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 278.
[725] Crick, 2010, 320.
[726] Welsh, 2006, 173.
[727] My appreciation is expressed to Annabel Teh Gallop for sharing her research on the Nine-Fold Seal or *Cap Sikureueng* and the question of its relationship to the Swatow dishes, personal communication, April 2020.

Indonesian architectural historian, Muhammad Naufal Fadhil, suggests they may have been intended as gifts from maritime merchants to the court in order to procure the annual royal trading licences for imported Chinese ceramics.[728]

**Fig. 6.13.** Large dish, with Qur'an verses, 1580-1620, Zhangzhou, Fujian, China, found in North Sumatra, Indonesia, porcelain with overglaze red and green enamel decoration, 37.0 cm (diam.); Gift of Michael Abbott AO QC and Sue Crafter 2015, Art Gallery of South Australia (20154C32). Photograph: AGSA

The inscriptions on the *Large dish* include the *Bismillah*: 'In the name of Allah the most gracious, the most merciful …' and the Declaration of Faith: 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger', as well as various verses from the Qur'an.[729] The legible text is combined with garbled letters in the cavetto, leading some scholars to suppose that the potters were illiterate in reading/writing Arabic. Nevertheless, the illegibility may have been an intentional magical device to infuse the decoration with talismanic power, through concealed apotropaic meanings in the pseudo-Arabic lettering.[730] A similar inscribed Swatow dish is preserved in the Surakarta Palace, in Central Java, as a sacred heirloom that only the sultan or his

[728] Such gifts usually took the form of the product for which the licence was intended, in this case, ceramics. My appreciation is expressed to Muhammad Naufal Fadhil for his helpful comments on this essay, personal communication, May 2020.
[729] My appreciation is expressed to Ali Akbar for translating the *Large dish*'s inscriptions, personal communication, April 2020. The additional texts include verse excerpts from chapters 2, 17, 36, 68 and chapter 112 (complete) of the Qur'an.
[730] See James Bennett, 'Talismanic Seeing: The Induction of Power in Indonesian Zoomorphic Art', in Samer Akkach, ed., *Nazar: Vision, Belief and Cultural Difference*, forthcoming.

designated representative may touch. Palace tradition records that Sultan Agung of Mataram, who ruled most of Java during the early 17th-century and who almost succeeded in expelling the invading Dutch colonisers, owned the ceramic.[731] The Indonesian ceramics scholar Sumarah Adhyatman reports that the revered dish has even received the honorific Javanese title *Kanjeng Nyai Blawong*, approximately rendered in English as the 'Greatly Esteemed Noblewoman'.[732]

As well as more conventional blue-and-white wares, Swatow potters also created designs using the novel method of applying a white clay slip over a blue glaze ground. They may have been inspired by ceramics decorated with this technique at the Jingdezhen kilns, an example being *Bottle, with three chrysanthemum flowers in bowl* (Fig. 6.14). The technique resulted in a slightly raised surface on the slip design, thus creating both tactile and visual elements.[733] As the potters relied on locally mined cobalt, the high manganese content of the oxide resulted in a pale or greyish-blue tone, seen on the *Large dish, with three aster flowers* (Fig. 6.15). Rumphius observed the popularity of Chinese ceramics featuring 'white flowers' in eastern Indonesia, where they were so prized that they were buried in the ground for safekeeping.[734] Nevertheless, the fashion for this style of Swatow ware elsewhere was comparatively short lived, suggesting perhaps it was not to the taste of markets more accustomed to the well-defined motifs of mainstream blue-and-white porcelain.

[731] Sumarah Adhyatman, 1981, *Keramik Kuno yang Ditemukan di Indonesia, Berbagai Penggunaan dan Tempat Asal: Antique Ceramics Found in Indonesia, Various Uses and Origins* (Jakarta: Himpunan Keramik Indonesia), 150.
[732] Adhyatman, 1981, 150. Its equivalent status ceramic in the neighbouring, younger court of Yogyakarta is said to be a nineteenth-century European-manufactured plate displaying a Javanese inscription.
[733] William R. Sargent, 2012, *Treasures of Chinese Export Ceramics From the Peabody Museum* (New Haven and London: Peabody Essex Museum), 167; Crick, 2010, 334, observes that this technique, typically creating the design in flowing lines and dots, dates back to the Yuan dynasty.
[734] Beekman, 2010, 271.

**Fig. 6.14.** Bottle, with three chrysanthemum bottles in bowl, 1590-1610, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with blue glaze with white slip decoration, 27.5 cm (height); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1990, Art Gallery of South Australia (907C19). Photograph: AGSA.

The original Chinese term for the aster flower motif, a specialty of the Fujian kilns, is unknown.[735] The three flowers on the *Large dish* are typically depicted with radial petals; hence, its modern botanical name 'aster', derived from the ancient Greek word for 'star'. The marked symmetry of the design suggests that the Chinese potters were consciously imitating the geometrical balance that is a key element in pattern-making in Islamic aesthetics. Large numbers of the wares have reportedly been found in Indonesia, where the motif became known as the 'papaya flower' (*bunga kates*). In Japan it was called the '*mocha*-style flower' (*mochibanade*), 'because the dotted designs looked like the little *mochi* rice cakes tied to willow branches for New Year celebrations'.[736] Ceramic shards displaying a white slip on blue glaze have also been discovered at archaeological sites in India and Sri Lanka. Most surprising is the discovery of similar Swatow shards in Jamestown, Virginia, established in 1607 as the first permanent English settlement on that continent, and in Mexico City in the New World.[737]

[735] Crick, 2010, 334. Evidence of the production of this ware has been found at Huazilou, Dongkou and Wuzhai kiln sites in Fujian province.
[736] Crick, 2010, 390.
[737] Sargent, 2012, 163.

**Fig. 6.15.** Large dish, with three aster flowers, 1575-1650, Zhangzhou, Fujian, China, porcelain, blue glaze and white slip decoration, 39.5 cm (diam.); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1990, Art Gallery of South Australia (907C17). Photograph: AGSA.

Eva Ströber, in her comprehensive study of Ming export ceramics, notes the sketchy style of much Swatow ware decoration:

> borders on abstract art or the traditional Chinese aesthetic concept of painting, *xieyi*, literally meaning to write down an idea. *Xieyi* does not aim at realism or easy recognition, rather it emphasizes the spirit, giving no attention to details … the painting is vibrant, casual, free and spontaneous, and the strokes are rapid and fluent, often with a certain humor.[738]

*Large dish, with qilin* (Fig. 6.16) is decorated in this style of uninhibited drawing in white slip over a brown 'soy sauce' glaze. The creature sitting in the central cavetto is identifiable only through a comparison with more constrained images of *qilin* depicted on other Chinese wares. The *qilin* is a fabulous monster, combining the features of a dragon's head, stag's body and a lion's fan-like tail, with felicitous associations of grandeur and longevity.[739] Like the Vietnamese phoenix previously discussed, the image of the *qilin* on the dish was almost certainly reinterpreted in an Indonesian context, where the ceramics featuring the creature were popular.

[738] Ströber 2013, 109.
[739] Welsh, 2006, 144

**Fig. 6.16.** Large dish, with *qilin*, 1575-1650, Zhangzhou, Fujian, China, porcelain with brown glaze and white slip decoration, 36.3 cm (diam.), Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fund 1990, Art Gallery of South Australia (907C18). Photograph: AGSA.

The Swatow *qilin*, sitting on its haunches with a raised head and incorporating linear decoration, displays marked feline attributes. In this guise the animal is remarkably similar to the wooden sculptures of the Sino–Vietnamese-style lions guarding the entrances to several mausoleums of sixteenth-century Sufi saints in the north coast of Java.[740] These guardians are often identified as the *singabarong*, or *barong* lion, a supernatural creature that Javanese tradition once believed protected individuals or communities against malevolent forces, such as natural catastrophes, pestilence and plagues.[741] The Swatow ware design has also been found in Hindu Bali, where the belief in the protecting power of the *barong* creature continues today. Given the extensive networks of trade distribution, it is not surprising that the large dishes have also been discovered in non-Muslim locations around the Southeast Asian archipelago, including West Kalimantan, Indonesia, as well as in Japan.[742]

[740] For a discussion of the Sino–Vietnamese guardian lions in the context of Javanese Islamic art, see Hélène Njoto, 2018, 'Mythical Feline Figures in Java's Early Islamisation Period (Fifteenth to the Early Seventeenth Century)', *Arts Asiatiques* 73: 41–60.
[741] The term *barong* defies precise translation, although one Indonesian scholar proposes it means 'combination', as in a hybrid animal.
[742] Ströber, 2013, 140, records that this design is known in Japan as the '*mochi* flower' style.

**Islamic aesthetics and Chinese ceramics**

The 16th-century Yemen chronicler Shaykh Qutbuddin an-Nawrawali described the European discovery of a sea route to India in 1498 thus:

> And there befell, at the beginning of the Tenth Century of the Hegira. among calamitous and strange events, the entry of the accursed Portuguese, from among the accursed Franks, unto the lands of India.[743]

For 800 years or more, Chinese ceramics were traded along the maritime networks extending halfway round the globe and involving a multiplicity of ethnicities, many of whom were Muslims. The arrival of the Christian Franks – Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish and English – commenced an era, known as the Age of Spices, which would dramatically overturn the international status quo in the 16th- to 18th-centuries. Previously, even during the most intense periods of commercial rivalry between various Asian nation–states, there had never occurred a mode of colonial imperialism such as the one that subsequently defined the presence of Europeans as invaders in the region. Age-old maritime trade routes connecting East Asia with the world of Islam were disrupted and dismantled through the imposition of a European hegemony, whereby it assumed ever more control of the international shipping lanes. In 1615, the astonished response of Sultan Ala'uddin of Makassar, in South Sulawesi, to commercial restrictions imposed by the Dutch VOC, encapsulated the changing world order:

> Allah made the land and the sea: the land He divided among men and the sea He gave in common. It is unheard of that anyone should be forbidden to sail the seas …[744]

Initially driven by the desire for spices and exotic luxury items for the home markets, the European cartels quickly discovered the immense profits that could be made in the intra-Asian trade in manufactured goods, notably ceramics. As Chinese kilns responded to the changing fashions of multiple societies, both within Asia and

[743] Michael Barry, 1998, 'The Reality and Symbolism of a Myth: The Tradition of Vasco da Gama's Arab Pilot', in National Commission for the Commemoration of the Portuguese Discoveries, eds., *Cultures of the Indian Ocean* (Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Commemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses), 59. The Islamic Tenth century of the Hegira is 1495–1591.
[744] John Villiers, 1985, *East of Malacca: Three Essays on the Portuguese in the Indonesian Archipelago in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Bangkok: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation), 44.

beyond, there emerged an international decorative arts style defined by a hybrid aesthetic. Consequently, it is often difficult to precisely identify the primary sources, whether from the East or West, of many ornamental designs in the decorative arts. This becomes most apparent by the eighteenth century, when the tastes of the various stakeholders from diverse nationalities – artist, trader and consumer – had broadly blended.

**Fig. 6.17.** Large dish, with radial design depicting flowering plants, 1700-1800, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with overglaze enamel, 38.5 cm (diam.), Gift of Alastair Hunter OAM in memory of his parents Tom and Elizabeth Hunter 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C47). Photograph: AGSA.

*Large dish, with radial design depicting flowering plants* (Fig. 6.17) at first glance may appear quintessentially Chinese, yet it typifies the development of the international style. The platter-like shape, with the cavetto surface divided into radiating 'cloud collar' sections, reveals the inspiration of Islamic metalware. The cloud collar came into prominence as a motif in Chinese ceramics during the period of foreign Mongol rule in the Yuan dynasty. The design is commonly attributed to an indigenous Chinese origin, but it more likely has Iranian or Central Asian ancestry.[745] Each radiating section of the cloud collar finishes with the outline of a pointed arch, similar to the prayer niche, known as the *mihrab*, found in every mosque. The cavetto

[745] Kintanar, 2014, 5.

centre features a schematic depiction of a symmetrical aster flower, with its four 'leaves' marking cardinal directions. The genesis of this motif dates back to the petals painted in the cavettos of the 9th-century *Batu Hitam* bowls made for the Muslim market. The eight sections of the cloud collar contain naturalistic depictions of blossoming plants, including lotus, plum, aster or chrysanthemum, and a bursting pomegranate fruit, symbolising fecundity. The choice of subject matter and style reflects the inspiration of contemporary Qing dynasty (1644–1911) painting, such as the botanical themes illustrated in *The Mustard Seed Garden manual of painting*, compiled by the artist Wang Kai and others in Nanjing and published in 1679. However, the plants also relate closely to floral motifs embroidered on Chinese silk textiles for export to the West, where they were assembled as garments, including as priests' chasubles.[746]

A related ceramic, featuring the floral symmetry often found in Islamic wares, is *Large dish, with lotus flower and four chrysanthemums* (Fig. 6.18). A pink multi-petal lotus blossom in the middle of the cavetto marks the visual focus of the design. Four chrysanthemums are placed at equally spaced points around the lotus and further emphasise geometrical balance, which is not associated with mainstream Chinese decorative arts. The source of this configuration appears in 15th- to 16th-century *minyao* blue-and-white wares made for the Southeast Asian market, and examples are also found in the Topkapi Saray Palace collection.[747] A typical feature of this porcelain made for Muslim clients is the so-called *horror vacui* or 'fear of empty spaces', a label once used by European art historians to describe the practice of filling entire surfaces with pattern. Rather, like Islamic art, the background of flowers and leaves serves to frame the central subject, in this case, the lotus and chrysanthemums. Although the flowers have their own symbolic significance in Chinese art, floral subjects in Islamic cultures convey other associations. This includes their use as imagery in the poetry of romantic or mystical love and evoking the joys awaiting the blessed in the afterlife in Paradise, visualised as a beautiful garden.

[746] For an example of such a priest's chasuable, see Fr Jeremy Clark, SJ, 2015, 'Jesuit Journeys: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Christianity in Asia', in James Bennett and Russell Kelty, *Treasure Ships: Art in the Age of Spices* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 137.
[747] Crick, 2010, 258.

**Fig. 6.18.** Large dish, with lotus flower and four chrysanthemums, 1775-1875, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China, porcelain with overglaze enamel, 27.0 cm (diam.), Gift of Alastair Hunter OAM in memory of his parents Tom and Elizabeth Hunter 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C48). Photograph: AGSA.

Like their Asian predecessors, the success of the Dutch and British commercial interests in dominating the sale of Chinese ceramics to the Muslim markets can be attributed to their awareness of the tastes of their clientele. A letter requesting porcelain for Muslim customers and written by a businessman in London in 1723 acknowledges orthodox Sunni proscriptions against the realistic depiction of living forms. His order states:

> Chinaware 300 to 350 chests … One General Rule must always be observed, and that is, never pack a piece of Ware that hath the figure of Humane species, or any Animal whatsoever and as formerly the Color'd ware prevailed, so it is more than probable that it still doth, the red and gold used to be most esteemed.[748]

This concurs with the evidence of a porcelain cargo of several hundred pieces, including 140 large dishes, salvaged from the *Sadana*, which sank in the Red Sea in

[748] Cheryl Ward, 2000, 'The Sadana Islands Shipwreck', *Aramco World* 51(6): 14–21. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that in the Shi'a world of Iran, India and elsewhere, scriptural proscriptions against figurative images were rarely strictly followed.

the 1760s.[749] Unlike contemporary ceramics for the Western market, all the ship's Chinese and Japanese ceramics feature only floral patterns.

**Fig. 6.19.** Plate, with 'Sassanian asterisk' motif, 1700-1800, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, 39.4 cm (diam.), Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Bequest 2009, Art Gallery of South Australia (20093C17). Photograph: AGSA.

The distinctive element in blue-and-white porcelain designs produced for the Islamic market during China's last imperial dynasty – the Qing – is their emphatic symmetry. *Plate, with 'Sassanian asterisk' motif* (Fig. 6.19) represents a devolved version of the ancient Middle Eastern pointed-star device, found widely on medieval Islamic ceramic vessels and tiles. The device subsequently also appears in 15th- to 16th-century Chinese and Vietnamese blue-and-white wares made for the Southeast Asian market.[750] The striking contrast between the thick blue lines of the *Plate*'s central motif and the lightly drawn subsidiary patterns may have intended to convey an impression of exoticism through abrupt tonal contrasts.[751] The delicate decoration on the rim is a contrasting interlocking band evoking baroque strapwork, for which

[749] Cheryl Ward-Haldane, 1995, 'Sadana Island Shipwreck: Excavation 1995', *The INA Quarterly* 22(3): 4. The ship appears to have been trading in Middle Eastern waters, as the cargo included Yemeni coffee and the crew were likely local Muslims. The ship may have been made in India or be an Egyptian copy of an Indian-designed ship.
[750] For an example of Chinese Ming blue-and-white trade displaying the motif, see Bennett, ed., 2005, 229, and for a contemporaneous Vietnamese example see Miksic, ed., 136.
[751] Alternatively, the contrasting tones may document the work of two hands with one of the artists being more skilled than the other.

sample designs were available to the potters through introduced European engravings and drawings.[752] This ornamental technique was also widely known in Islamic art, where it was called *girih*, meaning a 'knot' in the Persian language.[753]

**Fig. 6.20.** Plate, with bird and lotus motif, 1700-1800, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, 22.5 cm (diam.), Gift of Alastair Hunter OAM in memory of his parents Tom and Elizabeth Hunter 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C20). Photograph: AGSA.

The Chinese potter's emulation of Islamic aesthetic elements, either consciously or unconsciously, is apparent in the elegant *Plate, with bird and lotus motif* (Fig. 6.20). The cavetto features a bird whose delicate naturalism is camouflaged by a background dominated by a large stylised lotus flower, with its petals infilled in a dense geometric pattern. This exemplifies the Muslim artist's 'keenness to elaborate surfaces, where there were layers of decoration', as opposed to the treatment of the painted design in the style of a picture plane as found in Chinese porcelain.[754] The *Plate*'s striking contrasts between the elaborately infilled cavetto, the unembellished white surrounding band and the rim ornament, consisting of a repeated single symmetrical flower, further speak to a non-Chinese aesthetic.

[752] Clare Le Corbeiller, 1974, *China Trade Porcelain: Patterns of Exchange: Additions to the Helena Woolworth McCann Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), 9.
[753] Hooman Koliji, 2015, *In-between: Architectural Drawing and Imaginative Knowledge in Islamic and Western Traditions* (London and New York: Routledge), 77.
[754] Kintanar, 2014, 4.

**Fig. 6.21.** Plate, with flowering tree, 1700-1750, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, 21.0 cm (diam.), Gift of Alastair Hunter OAM in memory of his parents Tom and Elizabeth Hunter 2019, Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C21). Photograph: AGSA.

The close interrelationship between many designs on blue-and-white porcelain and other decorative arts media, notably metalware and textiles, is suggested in *Plate, with flowering tree* (Fig. 6.21), whose form has been gently moulded into the shape of a shallow lobed metal dish. The arboreal motif, with its twisting boughs and oversize blossoms, recalls the fantastical Tree of Life, seen on Indian trade textiles, known as *palampore*, which were internationally popular in the eighteenth century. The *Plate*'s tree is symmetrically positioned in the centre of the cavetto, unlike conventional Chinese botanical depictions, which usually place the subject off-centre. This latter placement, known in Chinese painting as the 'cut-branch' (*zhe zhi*) technique, allows for the foliage to extend into the space of the picture plane. Thus it creates a greater sense of naturalism, an attribute generally avoided in Islamic decorative arts.[755] The rim of the *Plate* conveys the startling optical impression of spiralling rotation, produced by the repetitive band of slanting single-stem flowers. This decorative technique is first found on medieval Middle Eastern ceramic vessel rims and its appearance here evokes the exoticism associated with Islamic art at the time the *Plate*

[755] Maria Cheng, Tang Wai Hung and Eric Choy, 2017, *Essentials of Chinese Painting* (Hong Kong: City University of HK Press), 177.

was created.[756] The single-stem flowers, also present on the other blue-and-white ceramics in the Hunter Collection discussed here, are probably derived from a similar popular motif in Indian textiles and metalware from the Mughal dynasty (1526–1857) in India. The same single-stem flowers appear in the eighteenth-century Worcester *Plate, with radial floral design* (Fig. 6.22), whose radial configuration and shaped rim owe their origins, not just to European chinoiserie fashions, but to much earlier Islamic metal and ceramic wares.

**Fig. 6.22.** *Plate, with radial floral design*, c.1775, Worcester, England, soft-paste porcelain with underglaze blue, overglaze enamel and gilt decoration, 24.0 x 24.0 cm; Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Fumd 1983, Art Gallery of South Australia (8311C194). Photograph: AGSA.

## A rosewater flask and *huqqa* base

The Chinese potter's firsthand familiarity with Islamic art objects is confirmed in *Rosewater vase, for the Muslim market* (Fig. 6.23) and *Huqqa base made for the Muslim market* (Fig. 6.24).[757] The distinct globular shape of the *Rosewater vase*, with its jointed raised foot and dominant white glaze, suggests the potter directly copied a foreign silver vessel. Rosewater has particular significance in Islam, as tradition states

[756] Marilyn Jenkins-Madina, 2006, *Raqqa Revisited: Ceramics of Ayyubid Syria* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art), 79 & 186, illustrates similar examples, using lines on 13th-century ceramics from Raqqa, Syria. Spiral devices also appear on 16th-century Iznik ceramics in Turkey.
[757] See James Bennett, 2013, *Realms of Wonder: Jain, Hindu and Islamic Art of India* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia), 168–73.

that the flower blossomed from the sweat of the Prophet Muhammad on the night he rode the magical Buraq steed to the celestial realms. The sweetly scented perfume is customarily used in rites of passage around the Muslim world, such as weddings, funerals and also sometimes before entering the mosque for weekly Friday communal prayers. From around the seventeenth century, wealthy Indian and Southeast Asian hosts adopted the practice of sprinkling rosewater over new guests as a welcoming gesture. On some occasion in the past, a former owner of the *Rosewater vase* provided a metal lid for the vessel, although its dimensions are too slight to identify a specific date or place for this charming addition.

**Fig. 6.23.** Rosewater vase, for the Muslim market, 1700-1750, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, gilding, metal 25.3 cm (height), Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Bequest 2009, Art Gallery of South Australia (20093C18). Photograph: AGSA.

The fashion for smoking the *huqqa*, or 'shisha' as it is now commonly called in Australia, was initially linked with Islamic court culture, although the practice was widely adopted in Hindu circles and even among the British colonial ruling elite in India.[758] The earliest representations of *huqqa* vessels appear in about the 1630s in Indian Mughal paintings, although tobacco had been introduced to the Mughal court

[758] The term 'shisha' derives from the Persian word for 'glass' and is widely used in the Middle East, from where immigrants brought the custom to Australia. 19th-century English retiring home to Great Britain after serving in India brought the habit with them, as reflected in the water-pipe smoking caterpillar in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865).

several decades earlier. By the 19th-century, the enjoyment of the *huqqa* was *de rigueur* amongst both genders from privileged classes, creating commercial opportunities for Chinese potters to produce copies of indigenous vessel shapes for sale to the Indian market.

**Fig. 6.24.** Huqqa base, made for the Muslim market, 1775-1800, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration, 18.3 cm (height); Elizabeth and Tom Hunter Bequest 2009, Art Gallery of South Australia (20093C16). Photograph: AGSA.

The distinct bell shape – the foot flattened for stability – of *Huqqa base made for the Muslim market* first appeared in Indian metal vessels in the eighteenth century. Prince Mirza Muhammad Salim Shah, one of the last scions of the Mughals, smokes this form of *huqqa* in his miniature portrait, dated around 1825 (Fig. 6.25). The floral sprigs, depicted in enamel glaze on the *Huqqa base*, appealed to Muslim tastes and are commonly found in Persian and Mughal decorative arts of the period. Both British and Dutch traders engaged in the export of Chinese ceramics to South Asian markets. This example may have been imported through the Gujarati port of Surat, from which European merchants traded Chinese porcelain wares into north India and the Deccan region, as well as onwards to the Middle East.

**Fig. 6.25.** Prince Mirza Muhammad Salim Shah with huqqa pipe [detail], c.1825, Delhi, India, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 34.0 x 22.5 cm; Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund 1940, Art Gallery of South Australia (0.1148). Photograph: AGSA.

## Conclusion

During the decades that Tom and Elizabeth Hunter supported the development of the Asian ceramic collection at the Art Gallery of South Australia, widespread public appreciation of the rich story of Islam's long engagement with Southeast and East Asian art had not yet emerged; nor had historians or archaeologists begun to closely map the artistic exchanges that followed the maritime routes of global trade in the pre-modern era. This story remained largely unrecognised until art-historical studies began to look beyond countries or regions, as defined by post-colonial boundaries, to earlier transnational histories of multiculturalism. It is extraordinarily fortuitous that Tom and Elizabeth Hunter were so generously committed to the Art Gallery of South Australia at this time, when the institution was pioneering the establishment of Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese trade ware collections. It was through their benefaction that we are now better able to understand the significance of this story of cultural exchange and its contribution to the rich heritage of ceramic art in the part of the world that Australia calls its neighbourhood.

# Appendix I

Object Stylistic Analysis

# Appendix I
# Object Stylistic Analysis

The accompanying visual chronology illustrates the works of art, referenced in the thesis, in a time-line that seeks to characterise the 'period eye' of Java as well as form the preliminary basis for the mapping of styles. The tentative grouping of these objects provides a holistic picture of the visual cultures of Java during the early modern era – what individuals wore, the kinds of artefacts present and utilised in their lives, the entertainment they witnessed, and the association of communities with specific architectural settings and religious contexts.

The importance of physically juxtaposing works of art, whether in actuality or as a chronological table, rather than merely conceptualising objects in the mind's eye, struck me dramatically in the final stage of preparing this thesis for submission. At this time AGSA was in the process of installing the new exhibition *A Vast Emporium: Artistic Exchange and Innovation in the Global Age*, curated by Russell Kelty and opened 1 May 2021.[759] For the display, the jacket (Fig. 1.13), dated 1700-1750, has been installed on a mannequin dressed with a contemporaneous chintz wrap-garment, made in the Coromandel Coast, India, and also found in Indonesia.

Appendix Fig. 1. *A Vast Emporium* exhibition installation (in process) displaying mannequin dressed in 18th-century Indian textiles found in Indonesia. Photograph: James Bennett.

[759] See <https://www.agsa.sa.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/vast-emporium-artistic-exchange-and-innovation-global-age/>, accessed 22 April 2021.

The dressed mannequin very likely creates the near accurate appearance of an early- to mid-18th century Javanese *pesisir* male wearing the fashions of the day. It challenges commonly held notions about the development of indigenous Javanese batik textile art and firmly locates Java within the international aesthetic trends of the period. A remarkably similar floral chintz pattern appears on an 18th-century *robe a 'langlaise* woman's dress, also assembled from an Indian trade textile, in the collection of the Museum Rotterdam, Netherlands.

The Appendix I chronology facilitates an insight into the dynamic of mutual influences between various art traditions and media on Java in the early modern era. The 15th-century Lampung throne-rest (Fig. 5.16), with a lack of figural imagery implying an Islamic context, and the contemporaneous East Javanese figural altar-relief (Fig. 5.19) are salutary reminders that a regional Islamic style evolved concurrent to the development of Majapahit art and not subsequent to the Hindu-Buddhist era as so often assumed. The early ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom (Fig. 5.6) and waist wrap or scarf garment (Fig. 1.8) feature elements that strongly support their attribution to *pesisir* batik artists although both textiles were preserved until modern times on Indonesian islands outside Java. The latter's motifs appear to represent figures without their heads. This is a common device attributed to Muslim artists seeking to avoid doctrinal proscriptions against figural forms. Some of the truncated figures are depicted frontally and displaying conventionalised renditions of male genitals. They are reminiscent of ancestor images found in the weaving traditions of the animist cultures of the East Nusa Tenggara islands, notably Sumba.

The 17th-century *dodot perada* waist wrap (1.17) features a batik design imitating stitched patchwork with the various cloth 'fragments' displaying contrasting patterns. The patchwork floral and vegetal motifs balance the geometrical *ceplokan* designs. By the 18th-century, plant motifs became the preferred subject for many Javanese artists in a fashion globally shared in decorative arts. Curiously, the stylized and embellished profiles of 18th-century Javanese shadow puppets (Fig. 4.2 & 4.3) evoke the ornate convoluted depictions of foliage on Indian *chintz* trade textiles (Fig. 1.13 & 5.11). These visual resonances raise the question as to what extent Javanese taste and aesthetic preferences for the floral designs subsequently influenced the evolution of the *wayang kulit* puppet form.

The following chronology is not definitive but suggests potential directions for further research that would deepen our understanding of the period.

## VISUAL CHRONOLOGY

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| **700-800** | |
|  | Fig. 2.6. Architectural antefix depicting a lion as a vegetal simulacrum, 780-820, Borobudur Stupa, Magelang, Central Java, stone. Photograph: James Bennett. |
|  | Fig. 3.2. Carved stone panels based on textile patterns, found at Candi Sewu temple, Central Java, c.782; Museum Volkenkunde (1403-3792-25). |
| **800-900** | |
|  | Fig. 6.6. Bowl, with five petal flower motif, 800-900, Changsha, Hunan, China, found in Indonesia, stoneware with underglaze brown and green decoration, 15.2 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (20113C5). |
|  | Fig. 5.4. *Kalpataru* flanked by two auspicious heavenly half-human half-bird *kinnara*, c.830, Prambanan temple complex, Klaten, Central Java. |
| **1100-1200** | |
|  | Fig. 6.9. Bowl, with lotus blossoms and leaf, 1150-1250, Yaozhou, Shaanxi, China, stoneware with green (celadon) glaze, incised decoration, 18.7 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (891C4). |
| **1200-1300** | |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 2.3. Standing Gaṇa, 1200-1300, Karangkates, Malang, East Java, stone, 269.0 cm high. |
|  | Fig. 6.2. Ewer, with lobed body, 1200-1300, Thanh Hoa, Vietnam, stoneware with light brown glaze, 19.5 cm (height); Art Gallery of South Australia (943C4). |
|  | Fig. 6.8. Bowl, with fish, 1200-1300, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with glaze, incised decoration, 6.4 x 18.8 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (891C5). |

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| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 2.8. Arjuna sees the elephant-shaped stone in the lake, from *Pārthāyana* narrative relief, 1275-1350, Candi Jago, Malang, East Java. |
| **1300-1400** | |
|  | Fig. 6.3. Bowl, inscribed 'This is a priceless treasure', 1300-1400, Thanh-Hoa, Vietnam, stoneware with green (celadon) glaze, moulded decoration, 16.9 cm (height); Art Gallery of South Australia (871C2). |
|  | Fig. 6.7. Bowl, with segmented radial design, 1300-1400, Iran, possibly Soltan Abad (Arak), Markazi, stone-paste earthenware with blue glaze decoration, 10.1 x 21.0 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (20093C19). |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 5.5. Panji entrusting the cockatoo to deliver the palm-leaf message, from narrative relief, 1375, Pendopo Terrace, Panataran Temple, Blitar, East Java, andesite, 51.0 cm high. |
| **1400-1500** | |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 2.4 Gaṇa and the forging of the sacred keris, 1400-1500, Sukuh Temple, Karanganyar, Central Java, stone. |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 2.10. Three figures, including Rama, standing by water, from *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative relief, reverse side of elephant simulacrum panel, presumably 1400-1500, Mantingan Mosque, Jepara, Central Java, stone. |
|  | Fig. 6.5. Wall tile, with phoenix, 1400-1500, Hai Duong, Vietnam, found in Trowulan region, East Java, Indonesia, stoneware with underglaze blue decoration, 24.8 x 3.2 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (928C18). |
|  | Fig. 6.11. Large bowl, with lotus flower and barrel of peony flowers and leaves, 1400-1500, Sawankhalok (Si Satchanalai), Sukothai Province, Thailand, stoneware with green (celadon) glaze, underglaze incised or carved decoration, 33.0 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (854A16). |
|  | Fig. 5.16. Throne-rest (*sesako*) with seat (*pepadun*), *sesako* c14 date 1415-1455, Lampung, wood, 160.0 x 73.0 x 67.0 cm; National Gallery of Australia (1985-1982). |

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|  | Fig. 5.19. Altar relief depicting two figures with sacred tree and pair of *naga*.c.1425, East Java, stone, 81.0 x 99.0 x 15.0 cm; V&A Museum ((S.10.1979). |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons<br><br>  | Fig. 5.22. *Kalpataru* branched column featuring miniature Hindu-Buddhist temple located directly above a wood-knot [detail], c14 date 1445-1525, formerly Mausoleum of Sunan Bonang, Tuban, East Java, teak wood, 1.41 cm (total height), 38.0 cm (base circumference); Museum Kambang Putih.<br><br>Fig. 4.9. Drawing of *kalpataru* branched column inscribed 'Taken at Tooban opposite the mosque', dated 24 April 1812, unknown artist, Tuban, East Java; British Library, Indian Office Library Collection (WD 953 f.69 (77)). |
|  | Fig. 6.10. Large bowl, with cash diaper motif, 1450-1550, Longquan, Lishui, Zhejiang, China, stoneware with green (celadon) glaze, incised decoration, 40.5 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C51). |
|  | Fig. 5.6. Ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom depicting two figures in a forest or garden [detail], c14 date 1450-1550, probably north coast Java, reportedly found in southern Sumatra, cotton with indigo dye, hand drawn batik, 84.0 x 218.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20083A32). |
|  | Fig. 6.4. Ewer in the shape of a phoenix, 1480-90, Chu Dau, Hai Duong, Vietnam, stoneware with underglaze blue decoration, moulded, 26.5 cm (height); Art Gallery of South Australia (20194C73). |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 1.8. Waist-wrap or scarf garment, preserved as a ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom (*mawa* or *ma'a*) [detail], Java, found in West Central Sulawesi, c14 date 1484-1663, cotton, dyes, hand batik, 60.0 x 197.0 cm; Kahlenberg Collection. |
| **1500-1600** | |
|  | Fig. 6.1. Plate, with naval battle, 1500-1525, Chu-Dau-My Xa, Hai Duong, Vietnam, stoneware with underglaze blue decoration, 36.0 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (846C13). |

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|  | Fig. 1.16. Crown of Banten, dated 1526-1832, West Java, gold, rubies, diamonds, emeralds, pearls, enamel work, 16.5 x 19.3 cm; National Museum of Indonesia (E587).<br>** date requires further clarification.* |
|  | Fig. 4.8. Gateway, c.1560-1580, Sendang Duwur Mausoleum, Paciran, East Java. |
|  | Fig. 2.7. Elephant as a vegetal simulacrum, 1559, Mantingan Mosque, Jepara, Central Java, stone; Tropenmuseum (TM-60054170). |
|  | Fig. 2.9. Monkey and crab as vegetal simulacra, 1559, Mantingan Mosque, Jepara, Central Java, stone; Tropenmuseum (TM-60054169). |
|  | Fig. 5.17. Throne-rest (*sesako*), 1568 or later, Lampung, wood, 193.0 x 196.0 cm; National Museum of Indonesia (Inv. 610).<br>** date requires further clarification.* |
|  | Fig. 6.12. Large dish, with astrological compass design, 1575-1650, Zhangzhou, Fujian, China, porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration, 38.4 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (902C7). |
|  | Fig. 6.15. Large dish, with three aster flowers, 1575-1650, Zhangzhou, Fujian, China, porcelain with blue glaze and white slip decoration, 39.5 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (907C17). |
|  | Fig. 6.16. Large dish, with *qilin*, 1575-1650, Zhangzhou, Fujian, China, porcelain with brown glaze and white slip decoration, 36.3 cm (diam.), Art Gallery of South Australia (907C18). |
|  | Fig. 6.13. Large dish, with Qur'an verses, 1580-1620, Zhangzhou, Fujian, China, found in North Sumatra, Indonesia, porcelain with overglaze red and green enamel decoration, 37.0 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (20154C32) |
|  | Fig. 6.14. Bottle, with three chrysanthemum bottles in bowl, 1590-1610, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with blue glaze and white slip decoration, 27.5 cm (height); Art Gallery of South Australia (907C19). |

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|  | Fig. 5.8. Fragments of stucco reliefs depicting arboreal motif, possibly from a gateway, at the site of the former Surosowan Palace, 1526 − c.1680, Banten Lama, West Java.<br>** date requires further clarification.* |
| **1600-1700** | |
|  | Fig. 1.25, 4.6. Outer walls of mausoleum of Sunan Gunung Jati, 1600-1800, Cirebon, West Java.<br>** date requires further clarification.* |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig.1.9 Two unidentified characters, *wayang klitik* rod puppets, 1600-1700, Java, wood with traces of pigments and gold leaf, 50.5 (L), 59.0 cm (R) high; Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Kunstkammer (12.397), National Museum of Denmark (HA-2). |
|  | Fig. 1.14. Royal *keris* with blade in shape of a *naga* serpent, 1600-1700, Bima, West Nusa Tenggara, nickel, iron, gold, diamonds, semi-precious stones, 51.0 x 130.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia, 2008 (20082A4). |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 1.17. Javanese *dodot perada* (gilded waist-wrap court garment) featuring *tambal-tambalan* (patchwork) motif [detail], preserved as a ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom, collected in Palembang, South Sumatra, c14 date 17th-century, cotton, indigo with applied gold, hand batik, 272.0 x 169.0 cm; Private Collection. |
|  | Fig. 3.3. Ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom, with rhombic geometric motif [detail], 1600-1650, Gujarat, India, found in Indonesia, cotton with block printed mordant dyes and hand batik, 77.0 x 420.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (963A10). |
|  | Fig. 2.13. Talismanic panel (*tolak bala*) depicting Gaṇa riding elephant as vegetal simulacrum, attributed to Panembahan Girilaya (1601-1677), 1650-1700, Cirebon, West Java, wood with traces of pigment; Kasepuhan Palace Museum.<br>** date requires further clarification.* |
|  | Fig. 3.5. Portrait of Sultan ‘Abu’l Hasan Qutb Shah wearing a Coromandel coast style skirt cloth, c. 1675, Golkonda, Telangana, India, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 22.1 x 14.2 cm; San Diego Museum of Art (1990.491). |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 6.10. Ceremonial cloth (*tampan*), with ship and figures, c14 date 1650-80 or 1764-1801, Kalianda, Lampung, cotton with dyes, supplementary weft weave, 75.0 x 70.0 cm; Tropenmuseum (TM-1969-1/RV-B90-19). |

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|  | Fig. 5.11. Heirloom hanging (*palampore*), with motif commonly known as the Tree of Life, 1675-1700, Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh), India, found in Bali, Indonesia, cotton with dyes, mordant hand-painting, 164.0 x 106.0; National Gallery of Australia (2002.152). |
| **1700-1800** | |
|  | Fig. 5.13. Monumental stele attributed to Balinese sculptors, 1700-1800 but likely later, Aer Mata Cemetery, Madura, East Java, stone.<br>** date requires further research.* |
|  | Fig. 6.17. Large dish, with radial design depicting flowering plants, 1700-1800, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration, 38.5 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C47). |
|  | Fig. 6.18. Large dish, with lotus flower and four chrysanthemums, 1775-1875, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China, porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration, 27.0 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C48). |
|  | Fig. 6.19. Plate, with 'Sassanian asterisk' motif, 1700-1800, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, 39.4 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (20093C17). |
|  | Fig. 6.20. Plate, with bird and lotus motif, 1700-1800, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, 22.5 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C20). |
|  | Fig. 3.6. Ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom, with floral *chintz* motif [detail], 1700-1725, Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh), India, found in Indonesia, cotton with dyes, mordant hand-painting and batik, 405.0 x 115.0 cm; National Gallery of Australia (1988.1612). |
|  | Fig. 5.1. Pair of Doors (*lawon kori*), c14 date 1700-1750, Panaragan, Tulang Bawang, Lampung, wood, 280.0 x 88.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20068A89 a&b). |

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|  | Fig. 5.9. Pair of doors (*lawon kori*), likely 1700-1750, Lampung, illustrated in *Oudheidkundig Verslag* (Batavia), 1940. |
|  | Fig. 4.10. Mountain landscape scene with hermit pavilions and inset with Dutch tiles, attributed to Panembahan Ratu 1 (1568-1649), 1700-1750 or possibly earlier, Cirebon, West Java; wood, glazed earthenware; Kasepuhan Palace Collection. |
|  | Fig. 6.21. Plate, with flowering tree, 1700-1750, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, 21.0 cm (diam.); Art Gallery of South Australia (20193C21). |
|  | Fig. 6.23. Rosewater vase, for the Muslim market, 1700-1750, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with underglaze blue decoration, gilding, metal 25.3 cm (height); Art Gallery of South Australia (20093C18). |
|  | Fig. 1.13. Jacket (*baju*), with floral chintz design, 1700-1750, Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh), India, garment assembled in Indonesia, cotton with dyes, mordant hand-painting, 81.5 cm (collar to hem), 116.0 (sleeve to sleeve); Art Gallery of South Australia (20083A51). |
|  | Fig. 2.14. Chronogram (*sangkala*) in the form of Gaṇa crossing the sea, 1720, Pusponegoro Cemetery, Gresik, East Java, stone. |
|  | Fig. 2.11. Elephant, with raised trunk, as stone, coral and stucco simulacrum, c.1741, Sunyaragi, Cirebon, West Java, coral and stucco. |
|  | Fig. 5.20. The eastern gateway, known as the Pavilion of the Terraced Gateway (*Gedong Gapura Panggung*), of Taman Sari, 1758, Yogyakarta, Central Java. |
|  | Fig. 6.22. Plate, with radial floral design, c.1775, Worcester, England, soft-paste porcelain with underglaze blue, overglaze enamel and gilt decoration, 24.0 x 24.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (8311C194). |
|  | Fig. 1.21. Javanese court waist-wrap garment (*dodot*), with ‘dagger’ (*parang*) design, 1775-1825, Coromandel Coast (Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh), India, found in Indonesia, reportedly southern Sumatra, preserved as a ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom, cotton with dyes, mordant hand-painting, 206.0 x 159.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20083A45). |

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|  | Fig. 6.24. Huqqa base made for the Muslim market, 1775-1800, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, China, porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration, 18.3 cm (height); Art Gallery of South Australia (20093C16). |
|  | Fig. 4.7. *Gunungan*, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1775-1816, Java, leather with pigment and gold-leaf, horn, 93.5 x 38.3 cm; British Museum (As1939, 04.51). |
|  | Fig. 4.3. Begawan Abiyasa, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1775-1816, Java, leather with pigment and gold-leaf, horn, 72.0 x 17.0 cm; British Museum (As1859, 1228.768). |
| **1800-1900** | |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 1.10. Double-folio depicting *keris* blade types and damascene (*pamor*) patterns from *Kawruh Dhuwung* album, c.1800, Surakarta, Central Java, paper and ink; National Library of Indonesia. |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 5.12. *Gunungan*, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet depicting flowering tree, 1800-1900, Cirebon, West Java, leather with pigment and gold leaf, horn, 102.0 x 40.2 cm; Kraton Kasepuhan Palace. |
|  | Fig. 4.11. Batara Guru, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1800-1900, East Java, leather with pigment, horn, metal, fibre, 77.5 x 26.5 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20109A72). |
|  | Fig. 5.18. Throne-rest (*sesako*), 1800-1900, Lampung, wood, 118.4 x 199.0 cm; Musée du Quai Branly. |
|  | Fig. 4.2. Prince Kresna (Krishna), *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1819, Java, leather with pigment and gold leaf, horn, 78.0 x 20.0 cm; Tropenmuseum (RV-264-89). |

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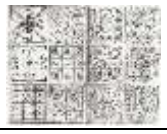
|  | Fig. 1.20. Waist wrap garment preserved as sacred heirloom (*mawa* or *ma'a*), 1800-1825, Java, found in South Sulawesi, cotton with dyes, tulis hand drawn batik, 86.0 x 240.0 cm; National Gallery of Australia (2006.711). |
|  | Fig. 5.2. Throne-rest (*sesako*), c14 date1800-1850, Panaragan, Tulang Bawang, Lampung, wood 141.5 x 240.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20068A90). |
|  | Fig. 5.15. Ceremonial cloth (*tampan*), with sacred tree guarded by pair of *naga* serpents, 1800-1875, Krui, Lampung, cotton with dye, supplementary weft weave, 72.0 x 61.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (757A79). |
|  | Fig. 1.15. *Ceplokan* textile patterns documented by A.D. Cornets de Groot in Gresik, East Java, in 1822. |
|  | Fig. 6.25. Prince Mirza Muhammad Salim Shah with huqqa pipe [detail], c.1825, Delhi, India, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 34.0 x 22.5 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (0.1148). |
|  | Fig. 2.15. Talismanic panel (*tolak bala*) depicting the Earthly Angel riding the Lion of Ali (*Macan Ali*) as calligrams, 1827-1837, Cirebon, West Java, wood with pigment and gold leaf; Kasepuhan Palace Museum. |
|  | Fig. 5.21. Double-folio from 'Story of Amir Hamzah' (*Serat Menak Sarehas*), 1850, Yogyakarta, Central Java, pigment, ink and gold leaf on European paper, 44.0 x 29.0 x 13.0 cm; Museum Sonobudoyo (SK:133.MSB/L:219). |
|  | Fig. 2.1, 4.13. Talismanic panel (*tolak bala*) depicting the Earthly Angel calligram, 1850-1900, Cirebon, West Java, wood with pigment and gold leaf, 71.9 x 45.5 cm; Asian Civilisations Museum (2000.5571). |
|  | Fig. 1.12. Ceremonial cloth and sacred heirloom (*patolu*), with elephants and tigers, 1850-1900, Gujarat, India, found in Bali, Indonesia, silk with dyes, double-ikat weaving, 100.0 x 336.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (747A75). |
|  | Fig. 2.16. Earthly Angel and birds as calligrams, double-folio from *Serat Panji Jayalengkara* manuscript. 1851, presumably Cirebon, West Java, ink and pigment on paper; Sonobudoyo Museum. |

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| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 1.11. Tale of Panji (*Cerita Panji*) from *wayang beber* scroll painting [detail], before 1852, Central Java, pigment and ink on paper, wood batons, 71.0 x 289.0 cm (complete); Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (360-52560). |
|  | Fig. 4.1. A *wayang kulit* performance accompanied by a gamelan orchestra, Blora, Woodbury and Page, photograph, Central Java, Indonesia, 1862-1872; Tropenmuseum (TM-6002262669). |
|  | Fig. 1.22. 14th-century deification stele of the Hindu god Harihara in the residential gardens at Kediri, East Java, photograph by Isidore Kinsbergen, 1866-1867, albumen print, 27.5 x 20.5 cm, Rijksmuseum (RP-2005-159-63). |
|  | Fig. 5.7. Sacred textile (*geringsing wayang kebo*), with three seated figures in forest or garden motif, 1875-1900, Tenganan, Karangasem, Bali, cotton with dyes, gold thread, double ikat weaving, embroidery, 54.0 x 212.0 cm; National Gallery of Australia (1982.2308). |
|  | Fig. 1.5. Panji Asmoro Bangun (Panji Awakening to Love) from *Cerita Panji* (*Tales of Panji*), *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, 1875-1900, Surakarta, Central Java, leather with pigment and gold leaf, horn; National Gallery of Australia (73.584). |
|  | Fig. 1.6. Jatayu, king of the birds, from *Ramayana*, *wayang topeng* dance mask, 1875-1900, Yogyakarta, Central Java, wood with pigment and gold leaf, metal, gemstones, 21.5 x 15.5 x 16.0 cm; National Museum of Indonesia (22255.3). |
|  | Fig. 1.28. Parley at the Kurawa court, double folio from *Serat Dewi Ruci* manuscript, 1886, Yogyakarta, Central Java, European paper, with ink, pigment and gold leaf, 33.7 x 21.0 cm; National Gallery of Victoria (AS29/1982). |
|  | Fig. 4.4. The hero Bratasena (Bima) meets Dewa Ruci on the sea, double-folio from *Serat Dewa Ruci* manuscript, 1886, Yogyakarta, Central Java, European paper with ink, pigment and gold leaf, bound manuscript, 33.7 x 21.0 cm; National Gallery of Victoria (AS29/1982). |
|  | Fig. 2.2. Man's head cloth (*iket kepala*), with feline creatures as vegetal simulacra, 1875-1900, Cirebon, West Java, cotton with dyes, tulis hand drawn batik, 86.0 x 84.0 cm; Jakarta Textile Museum (025.1). |

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|  | Fig. 3.7. Ceremonial cloth, with a *truntum* motif [detail], 1880-1900, Java, probably north coast region, gold leaf applied in Bali, cotton with indigo dye, cap hand print batik, 80.0 x 181.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20133A61). |
|  | Fig. 3.4. Shoulder cloth or wrap garment, with rhombic geometric motif, 1880-1920, Jambi, South Sumatra, Indonesia, cotton with dyes, tulis hand drawn batik, 91.0 x 203.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20004A108). |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 5.14. The court official (*punggawa*) of Sukasada and the minister (*patih*) of Buleleng with palm-leaf manuscripts and panel depicting intertwining flowering trees, c.1890, Buleleng, Bali; KITLV Leiden (2811). |
| **1900-2000** | |
|  | Fig. 2.18. Man's head cloth (*iket kepala*) depicting bird and *kala* simulacra, c.1900, Cirebon, West Java, cotton with dyes, tulis hand drawn batik; Tropenmuseum (RV-Liefkas-608). |
|  | Fig. 2.17. Man's head cloth (*iket kepala*) depicting birds as calligrams, 1900-1940, north coast Java, cotton with indigo dye, cap hand print batik, 90.0 x 91.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20123A19). |
|  | Fig. 2.12. Gravestone with elephant heads as *wadasan* simulacra, undated, possibly 1900-1950, Mausoleum of Sunan Gunung Jati, Cirebon, West Java, stone. |
|  | Fig. 3.1. Tube skirt (*sarong*), with two contrasting variants of *ceplokan* in a configuration known as 'morning-evening' (*pagi sore*), 1900-1960, Indramayu, West Java, wax-resist batik on cotton, 104.0 x 250.0 cm; Anne Dunham Collection. |
|  <br>  | Fig. 1.27. Sufferings of hell, folio from *pesantren* manuscript, 1917, Madura, East Java, ink and pigment on paper; Art Gallery of South Australia (20073A22).<br><br>Fig. 1.29. '*Dengan rahmat Allah*…' folio from *pesantren* manuscript [detail], 1917, Madura, East Java, ink and pigment on paper; Art Gallery of South Australia (20073A22). |

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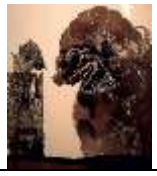
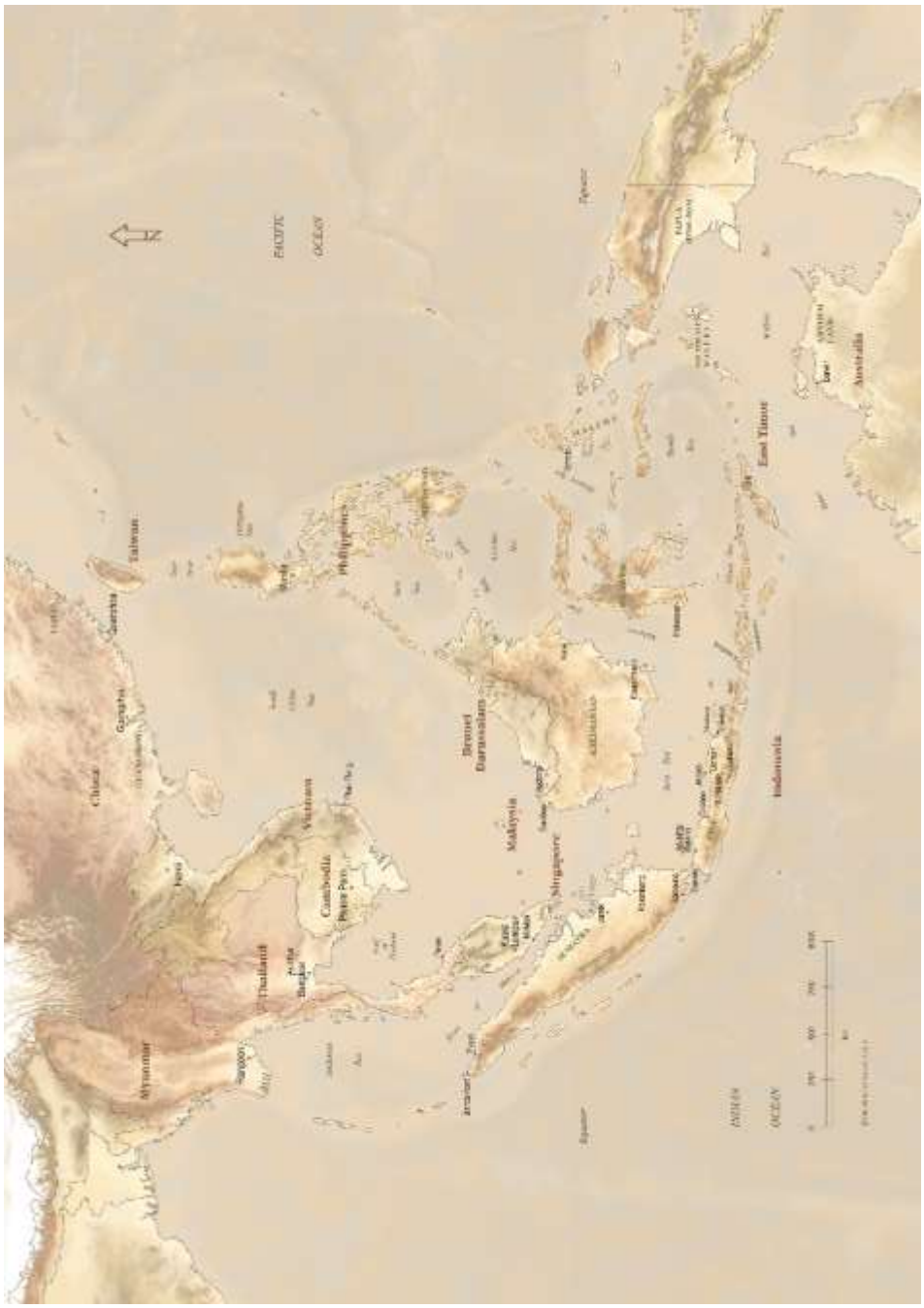
|  | Fig. 1.18. A courtier dressed in European jacket and hat, *wayang klitik* rod puppet, 1931, Central Java, wood with pigment and gold leaf, leather, 53.0 cm (height including handle); Art Gallery of South Australia (20131A9). |
| Photo removed for copyright reasons | Fig. 5.3. Adam before the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Christian *wayang wahyu* shadow puppet play, 1975 or earlier, Java |
|  | Fig. 3.8. Wrap cloth (*kain panjang*) with 'creating tranquility' (*ciptoning*) motif, 1975-2000, Yogyakarta, Central Java, cotton with dyes, tulis hand drawn batik, 122.0 x 206.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20004A28) |
|  | Fig. 1.23. 'Verses of the Throne' (Qur'an 2: 255) (*kain bersurat*), 1975-2000, Lampung, cotton and dyes and gold metallic threads, plain weave and couching, 68.0 x 98.0 cm; Art Gallery of South Australia (20063A38). |
|  | Fig. 1.26. Raden Premadi (Prince Arjuna as a young man), *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, Partorejo (d.c.1982), 1980, Surakarta, Central Java, leather with pigment and gold paint; Private collection. |
| **2000-PRESENT** | |
|  | Fig. 2.5, 3.14. *Gunungan*, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, Rastika (1942-2014), c.2005, Cirebon, leather with pigment and gold paint, horn, about 75.0 cm high (not including handle). |
|  | Fig. 4.5. Sunan Kalijaga, *wayang kulit* shadow puppet, Ki Enthus Susmono (b.1966), 2005, Tegal, Central Java, leather with pigment, horn, 87.4 x 36.0 cm; Tropenmuseum (TM-6330-15). |
|  | Fig. 5.12. Batara Guru confronts his demonic son, Batara Kala, in a contemporary performance of the *Murwakala* exorcism play, 2006, Java. |
|  | Fig. 1.24 Muhammadiyah mosque in Lamongan, East Java, 2016. Photograph: James Bennett. |

**Appendix II** Regional Map of Java and Southeast Asia



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