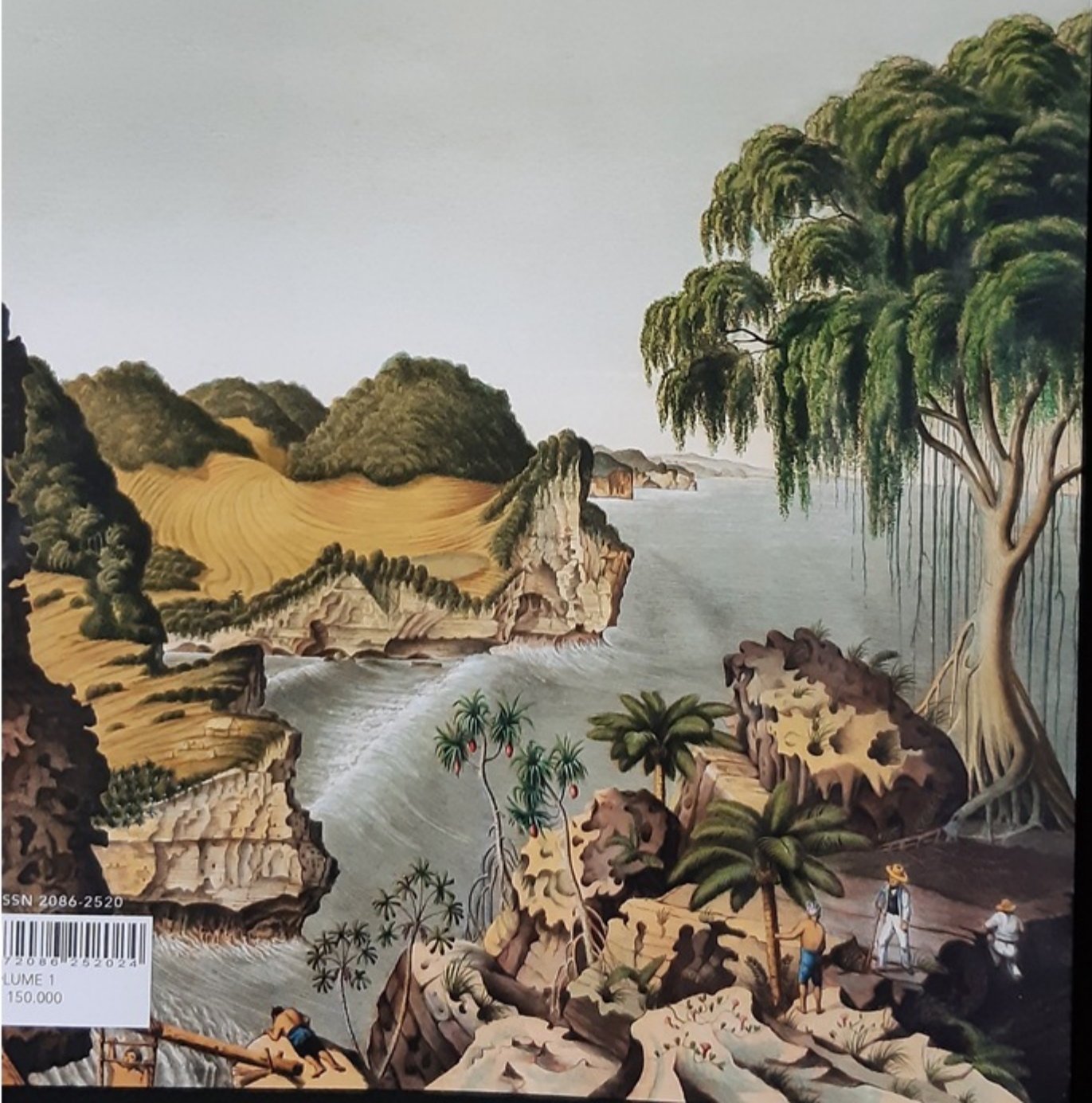


TIMELESS

HISTORY | ART | THE CITY AND THE PALACE | CULTURE | AND MORE

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VOLUME 1
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TIMELESS YOGYAKARTA: A VISION AND A MISSION

It has been my pleasure to work with our team of publishers, editors, and writers to establish what is destined to be, not just this publication, but an endless series of events and happenings which reflect our theme of "Timeless" Yogyakarta

As you will read in virtually every story in this marvelous first edition, the history of our beloved city and province is deep and strewn with significant events: from wars to revelations, all building and crystallising the traditions on which Yogyakarta are built, and on which they run till today.

From the first moments that Yogyakarta was established as the heir to the Mataram empire, the weight and honour of preserving the traditions of the Sultanate have fallen on the shoulders of the kings. And none have failed to serve with honour and uphold, and even amplify, those traditions, preserving and promoting the peace and strength of the Sultanate.

Our current King, His Majesty Sri Sultan Hamengku Bawono X is a shining example, who interprets the lessons of the past for the benefit of the people, building prosperity through tradition, building consensus through consultation, and building care into all he oversees.

As you walk around the city and drive around the province, you will see evidence of His Majesty's vision, to create a new and modern society with commerce and industry attracting the visitors, with agriculture and fisheries still feeding the people and sustaining the land. But he also is building for the future.

The whole history and traditions of Yogyakarta are governed by the axis between the power of Mt. Merapi in the north and the power of the Southern seas, with that line driving through the centre of the city and the palace. That tradition demanded that the next development should be in the south next to the sea which is why the magnificent new Yogyakarta International Airport has been built at Kulon Progo. It is the southern anchor of our commerce, and our place of welcome to all.

As I said at the beginning Timeless Yogyakarta is not just this publication, which really only begins the story, focusing on history and tradition, but a whole series of events including art exhibitions, concerts, conference and seminars, workshops and podcast. This is just the beginning, after all 'Timeless Yogyakarta is limitless, endless and eternal.

Kanjeng Pangeran Haryo Wironegoro

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YOGYAKARTA

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AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE EDITOR



Buddhist *Majapahit* 60 years before. Demak had emerged in the wake of the high demand for spices in Renaissance Italy. When Mataram appeared, its maritime power had fallen into Portuguese hands.

The article on Mataram's founder *Senopati* shows how *Senopati* could found a new kingdom in *Kota Gede* by taking into account traditions from the semi-Islamized heartland of Java, not far from the ancient kingdoms of yore. These traditions express the symbolic alliance of the king with the natural forces of his territory. They are discussed both in a literary and in a descriptive way, especially the *Labuhan* beach rite.

Javanese culture rests on the imbrication of Islam and older tradition. One of the texts discusses one of its most extraordinary results: the *wayang* puppet show theatre, in which the Indian stories of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatta* provide the framework for an islamized syncretism.

The core of the volume, however, deals with Javanese culture after Mataram was split between Yogyakarta and Solo at the instigation of the Dutch (1755). Competition between Javanese power centers shifted from politics to culture. An insider article explains the founder of the new sultanate of Yogyakarta, *Hamengku Buwono*, planned his new city in such a way as its lay-out could symbolize the phases of the human life heading toward encounter with the divine. Another article shows the extraordinary *Taman Sari* water-garden created by the same ruler. And a third one, written by a former female dancer explains the secrets of Javanese dance training. Crowning the whole are articles about "*rasa*", the Javanese code of feeling, about Javanese Islam and about the Moslem quarter of Yogyakarta. The remaining pieces are about the condition of women, and interesting places in an around Yogyakarta.

Jean Couteau

This book was conceived with a clear concept in mind: Yogyakarta ought to be viewed through the lens of the sultanate, the unique institutional framework that gives the city and its surrounding province their unique flavor. Yogyakarta is indeed the only autonomous area of the country in which there is a sultan-king in charge of the local government. This situation accounts for the presence of a *kraton*, a palatial compound and a surrounding old city in which traditional culture retains its function and therefore remains very much alive.

Yogyakarta bathes in a cultural environment much older than the sultanate, created in the 16th century. Several articles refer to this past, but, with one exception, they are more about a general cultural atmosphere than about pre-Islamic monuments or religions. So, the *Borobudur* and *Prambanan* are not treated as such, but their presence hover over the whole book.

The foundation of the sultanate, and its peculiar atmosphere, owes a lot to the changes in the balance of power in the archipelago. At the origin there was the creation of *Mataram* (1586), an indirect spin-off from the North-coast *Demak* sultanate, the faller of Hindu-



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CULTURE AND RELIGION

Yogyakarta is culture, but it also has great religious depth, but one word which unites both is 'Rasa'. To understand Yogyakarta you need to understand 'Rasa'! We try to explain this fascinating concept.



SORTING OUT WHAT "RASA" IS ABOUT IN JAVANESE

BY ROMO SUBANAR SPD

Constantly referred to by the Javanese as key to their apprehension of the world, "rasa" – usually badly translated as feeling – is arguably the most difficult notion of Javanese thought. Romo Subanar, a catholic priest cum lecturer at the post-graduate department of Sanata Darma University in Yogyakarta, untangles here the workings of the Javanese mind with regard to "rasa". A fascinating read.

Any attempt to sort out the exact meaning of "rasa" for the Javanese is bound to refer to history and consider what has been previously said, in other words what approaches have been used. All deal with the psyche in one way or another. And all are based on the assumption of an existing dualism between the macrocosm or universe on the one side (*jagad gede*), and the microcosm (*jagad cilik*), which houses the human psyche, on the other side. All pre-assume the existence of a dialectic between the tangible (*alam kasar*) and the intangible (*alam halus*). In other words, concerns about *rasa* are all of a religious nature.

Considering that "rasa" involves the psyche, the definition given by General Dictionary of the Indonesian language, which classifies "rasa" as a mere emotion, clearly does not fulfil our expectations—because the meaning of "rasa" goes well beyond that of a mere emotion mentioned in the dictionary. Some observers have tried to classify *rasa* on the mental side of the thinking process. Others avoid to refer to thinking as such and choose instead to focus on examples in which the word is deemed to best fit, under the pretext that the Javanese way of thinking makes

do without any explanation being needed. It is then implicitly understood that, from one example to the other, a succession of meanings will come up, leading us to an ever-closer understanding. This understanding will then be further enriched, outside the examples proper, by literary references to the topic. *This is the approach adopted here.*

First, let us select a number of Javanese words that deal with thinking. We put them one next to the other to show how the thinking process gradually proceeds from one meaning to the other, with each time a deepening of the meaning. For example, the expressions: *dipun gagas*, *dipun raos*, *dipun manah* (or *dipun limbang*), *dipun penggalih*, taken as a succession of words express phases in the mental activities of the thinking process. First, *dipun gagas*, (thinking about, considering) deals with the rational side of thinking. Then, *dipun raos* (feeling) deals with the emotional aspect: the emotional side involved in the rational process. Finally, *dipun manah*, and *dipun limbang* (intending) implies the intention to act that appears beyond the process of thinking proper. This leads to take into account the advice expressed in the *tepa selira* expression: "don't subject others people to any deed/

action you would in no way wish to see applied to yourself or people closest to you." With the expression *dipun penggalih* (fully assimilating) the deepest depth of meaning is being felt. The word "galih" refers to the core of a tree trunk, which one uncovers layer after layer until one eventually finds it, gaining access to the essence.

A number of classical Javanese texts, from different periods refer to this phased opening of the mind. For example, a strophe of the classical text *Wedhatama* enumerates four phased mental stages one has to pass through in order to properly perform one's prayer. It begins with the *Sembah raga*, the physical sign of respect, which may depend on the type of prayer undertaken and which translates into bodily expressions or experiences. Then comes the *Sembah cipta*, prayer as a creative action, which involves a rational process (*daya nalar*). Such is for example the case of meditation, the processes of which can be easily followed. The next step is the *sembah suksma*, involving will, which is the spiritual power needed to focus on praying. Finally comes the *sembah rasa* which involves the whole psyche in the prayer process and which is considered the highest stage.

Another example is given in an *asmaradana* song created by the Indonesian modern thinker and national hero Ki Hadjar Dewantara. He uses a poetical ploy so that his name and meaning appear only when one reads the first syllables of verses of the *tembang* poem. One thus reads: Ki (H)adjar Dewantara/ A free-thinking gentleman/ (who) lives at the Tamansiswa. At the end comes of this sentence as a paradox: "swaraning sunya kapyarsa". "It is when the voice of the void is heard". The paradox is in the "voice of the void" coming up to a scholar whose whole experience has been among the noises and rumble of daily public life. He thus sublimates his life experience while expounding how to achieve the state of "rasa" (through the indirectness of the ploy).

In "Wedha Pradangga Kawedhar", classical literature also shows how *rasa* operates in the gamelan sound system. The bilahan tempo is not marked by uttering in succession the numbers 1,2,3, 5, 6 as is usually done. *Rasa* is present through the use of symbols instead of numbers. Thus, one says *barang*

and not the number 1)- with the head as its symbolization. One says *jangga* and not the number 2, with the neck as its symbolization. One says *dada* and not the number 3, with the torso as its symbolization, which open the path (to life), and awakens, first, desire through the five senses, then *rasa*, which takes us beyond everything.

Kuntara Wiryamartana, a scholar in Old-Javanese language, inventories in its literature the presence of a series of *rasa*: sex, comedy, pity, relentless urge, heroism, worry, awe, admiration, each of which appear and is nurtured esthetically and artistically throughout the literary productions. Each type of *rasa* thus identified corresponds to a particular type of emotion (love, humor, sadness, anger, steadfastness, fear, disgust, surprise). To these *rasa*-s he adds the *rasa* of peace (*santa*). All are present in literary works with depth of meaning and elegance in expression.

On the ancient inscription (*prasasti*) of Candi Canggal, Salam, in Central Java, years are indicated using the *candra sengkala* system, meaning that the numbering of the Saka Hindu year is expressed -both revealed and hidden-through association of numbers to particular symbols. This can be construed as the onset of the rationalization of *rasa*. For example, the year 654 Saka (732 Masehi) is given in reverse through the following sentence: *Shruti indriya rasa*. *Shruti*, which corresponds to 4, is a sacred book offered to interpretation; *indriya*, which corresponds to 5, is the knowledge based on direct observation (anthropology, sociology, history). The combination of *shruti* and *indriya* gives *rasa*, or *nalar rasa*, the logic of sensing, with *rasa* corresponding to 6.

The series of layered meanings that appear behind all the examples and literary references mentioned above provides the matter on the basis of which a delineation of what is meant by *rasa* can be undertaken -in other words the semantic field of the notion identified. From the above one can provisionally sum up *rasa* as being, to the Javanese individual, the phased opening of mind and senses in his/her search for Sublime Oneness.

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Alia Swastika is a writer, researcher and art curator based in Yogyakarta. Since 2007 she has been involved in many local and international projects that focus on arts and politics, history and feminism. A recipient of several international grants, she is a noted exponent of women voices in contemporary art.



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Siti Adiyati was raised as a kraton dancer before turning into one of the "protesting artists" at the origin of the New Art Movement (1975-1979), the starting point of contemporary art in Indonesia. Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, co-founder of the Forum Paris-Jakarta and holder of several international awards, she runs the RIM (Republik Imajiner Malioboro), a circle of discussion and creativity in Yogyakarta.



Leo Gillet is a Dutch citizen who doubles as a French writer, like Ionesco and Cioran, he claims. A former lecturer in French, he came to Yogyakarta on the track of his uncle, a hero of the Dutch resistance who later became a chaplain in the Dutch Airforce around 1947. The ambivalence of his uncle's position haunts his writing about Indonesia.



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Dr Jean Couteau is an eclectic multi-lingual writer (French-Indonesian-English) best-known in Indonesia for his books on famous Indonesian artists and his regular columns in the Sunday edition of the national newspaper Kompas. He also writes extensively on Balinese culture. His latest book is a conversation: "Bali, 50 Years of Changes, Conversation with Jean Couteau", by Eric Buyelot. He was entrusted with the editing of *Timeless Bali*.