Lecture Titles and Abstracts

Java in Jerusalem
New Directions in the Study of Javanese Literature and Culture

June 17 - June 19, 2019

June 17th

Panel 1: Javanese Tales of the Miraculous: Saints, Prophets, Kings
Chair: Mirjam Lücking, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Nail that Keeps Java Steady: Old Narratives and an Ancient Sacred Place in the Military Heart of Modern Indonesia
George Quinn, The Australian National University

The geologically volatile island of Java is wracked by earthquakes. In Javanese tradition the pre-Islamic gods tried to solve the earthquake problem by fixing Java to the face of the earth with a huge nail. The head of the nail is visible today – a hemispherical hill in the southern suburbs of Magelang close to the dead centre of Java. Known as Mount Tidar, the hill is an important centre of pilgrimage. It hosts three busy sacred sites: the grave of the Muslim missionary Sheikh Subakir, the grave of the sacred spear Kyai Sĕpanjang, and a hill-top shrine dedicated to Java’s pre-Islamic clown-god Sĕmar. At the foot of the hill lies the campus of Indonesia’s military academy. The academy draws symbolic authority from the hill. Mount Tidar is the mandala-like site for the academy’s ceremonies. It embodies a conviction that military iron holds modern Indonesia steady, as earthquake-prone Java is held steady by its ancient nail.
Prophets, Paintings and Pégon: A Pesantren Ambiya Manuscript
Ronit Ricci, Sternberg-Tamir Chair in Comparative Cultures
Associate Professor, Departments of Asian Studies and Religion, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Anbiya (“Tales of the Prophets”) corpus is central to Javanese Islam: to imagining and internalizing a Muslim perspective on the history of the world’s creation and the early history of humanity; the many prophets who preceded Muhammad; major developments before, leading up to and throughout Muhammad’s lifetime; his legacy and the history of early Islam.

The great popularity enjoyed by these texts, based in part on the belief that engaging with them would bring significant rewards, and the variations found across the many extant manuscripts, mean that studying them is a daunting task. Several scholars have done so in the past, producing canto summaries and some analysis, thus laying the initial groundwork for comparative study. In considering the Anbiya texts, and in the spirit of our “new directions” theme, in this paper I explore the Layang Anbiya (MS. MSB L12 from the Museum Sonobudaya), an illuminated manuscript produced in rural Java (i.e not in a palace), and written in a modified form of the Arabic script (pégon). I present some preliminary thoughts on the relationship among content, poetic meter and illumination in the manuscript and on the situating of these ancient stories within a Javanese context.

Words of Power and Wisdom: Sultan Agung’s Wondrous Adventures
Els Bogaerts, Independent Scholar

In various media and forms Sultan Agung (r. 1613-1645) has lived on in the collective memory of the Javanese. The Serat Nitik Sultan Agung are part of this storytelling tradition. These Modern Javanese-language texts relate how the sovereign in a miraculous way conquers the surrounding world, subjugating its inhabitants to the kingdom of Mataram and converting them to Islam. They are composed in tembang macapat, a Javanese poetic form.

The manuscripts that have been preserved were written, copied, read/recited and listened to in Javanese Islamic aristocratic circles, mostly in Yogyakarta, in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Presenting Sultan Agung as a pious and invincible leader, the tales (re)create the history of Mataram, including the confrontation with ‘foreigners’, from a Javanese point of view. The stories are not just alluring because of the sultan’s wondrous adventures and the aesthetics of their rendering. They also provide a Javanese narrative of a glorious past and a strong ruler in a period when the grip of the Dutch colonialists on local society became increasingly firm.

Questioning the relation between the tales and the circumstances at the time of writing, the paper raises issues of representation. It focuses on narratives about Islamic saints, Hinduistic deities and the Queen of the Spirits who support the young Agung. Their words
of power and wisdom invigorate the sultan and prepare him for kingship. At the meta-
narrative level, references to credible sources, either well-known Javanese historical texts
or oral testimonies, vindicate the veracity of the tales. Sultan Agung’s flying adventures
serve as an example.

**Panel 2: New Readings in Javanese Islamic Texts**

Chair: Michal Hasson, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Two Teachers, One Path: Sainthood, Tradition, and Modernity in Java**

Verena Meyer, Columbia University

This paper will examine a common conceptualization of the relationship between different
lineages of learning and initiation among Javanese Muslims. Combining textual and
ethnographic approaches, it will focus on a frequent motif in narratives around the
formation of a wali: his efforts at cultivating insight into God’s will and truth, often at the
hands of one or several teachers, which is only realized through a spiritual relationship
with and endorsement by Nabi Khidr. It focuses on one example of such narrative
traditions around a wali from contemporary Java: Mbah Munawwir (d. 1942), the founder
of Krapyak, the largest traditionalist pesantren complex in Yogyakarta. Contemporary
accounts of Mbah Munawwir’s life strongly resonate with an older literary legacy of
the well-known story of Sunan Kalijaga’s encounter with Nabi Khidr after his long formation
with his teacher Sunan Bonang in the Seh Malaya. Contemporary accounts of wali
implicitly draw on this literary tradition and its theological concepts, which provide modern
stories with the discursive and ideological conventions and momentum to render stories
of wali meaningful and convincing (Quinn 2018).

But even as prior texts provide narrative and discursive frameworks for contemporary
stories, they are not stable in meaning and use. This paper asks what difference the
presence of Khidr makes in an account, particularly when versions of a story exist with
and without him. It argues that the reference to Khidr is not just a literary tradition but also
an ideological identity marker associating people with traditionalist and mystical
affiliations. As Muslims who self-identify as traditionalists navigate the influence of modern
sensibilities in public discourse, such an identity can be strategically claimed or dismissed.
This paper addresses the context and mechanism of such strategic uses of theological
motifs among Javanese Muslims.
Embodied Knowledge, Embodied Truth: Sheikh Shamsu Tabriz in a Sufi Song of Early 19th Century Java
Nancy Florida, University of Michigan

The talk explores a suluk, or Sufi song, that was composed by R.Ng. Ronggasasmita, a Javanese court poet from the palace of Surakarta, as part of a compilation of suluk that he wrote in 1815 while stranded in Aceh, on the northern coast of Sumatra, in an interrupted journey to perform the hajj in Mecca. The 365-line poem tells the story of another Javanese pilgrim to Mecca, this one the saint Samsu Tabriz, who, though more famously known as Rumi's lover and teacher, is here presented as a Javanese saint who suddenly plops down in the sacred mosque of Mecca in the form of a naked three-year-old boy. The child engages the Maulana-King of Rum (Turkey) in a metaphysical debate of sorts. The tiny child wins the debate first by posing questions the learned king cannot understand and then by manifesting himself as the embodied truth of a form of experiential knowledge of the absolute that the bookish Maulana Rum could never have imagined. While this poem, like others in Ronggasasmita's 1815 compilation, may at times appear to diverge from what might be called "mainstream" Sufi discourse, I contend that these poems are not best approached as examples of some peculiar form of Javanese syncretism. Rather, by taking seriously what they say as local manifestations of universal Islam, I hope thereby to suggest that the notion of such syncretism itself is one that invites serious reexamination.

Sunan Bonang’s Teaching: Theology and Sufism in 16th Century Java
Yumi Sugahara, Osaka University

The Islamization of Java is assumed to have been made easy by the spread of Sufism, a movement which no doubt appealed to the mystically minded Javanese. Javanese society holds it that Islam spread peacefully in the island as an achievement of the legendary nine saints, who were active in the 15-16th centuries. Sunan Bonang is one of the most famous saints among the nine. He is believed to have had many disciples and to have exerted extensive religious influence over the first king of the first Islamic kingdom in Java, Demak. In popular stories, Sunan Bonang is the representative of the “right” saints who punished heretical teachings. He is also the person to whom most of the contemporaneous writings are ascribed. One of the few manuscripts copied in the 16th century that still exist is even assumed to be written by Sunan Bonang himself. What interests us is that the text of this manuscript contains a discussion of Islamic doctrine. My paper aims to analyze the text by discussing some focal points of Islamic doctrine current at the time.
The British Library has just completed the digitisation of 75 Javanese manuscripts identified as having been taken from the royal library of Yogyakarta during the British assault on the palace in June 1812. The manuscripts derive from two main sources: 27 from the collection of John Crawfurd, at the time British Resident of Yogyakarta, and 46 from Colin Mackenzie, Chief Engineer of the British army in Java, with a further two manuscripts from Thomas Stamford Raffles, Lieutenant-Governor of Java. After Mackenzie’s death in Calcutta in 1821 his manuscripts ended up in the India Office Library in London (together with the two Raffles manuscripts), while in 1842 John Crawfurd sold his Malay, Bugis and Javanese manuscripts to the British Museum. All these manuscripts are now held in the British Library.

The manuscripts are all catalogued concisely in Ricklefs & Voorhoeve (1977). But in preparation for digitisation in 2018 every manuscript was inspected individually, with particular attention paid to the material form of the books: paper, inks, scripts and styles of handwritings; the graphic layout of the text on the page, and scribal emendations; sketches, illuminations and other decorative elements; and bindings. Insights gained from this codicological examination can in some cases add significantly to our understanding not only of the individual volumes, but also of the collection as a whole, and the extent to which it reflects the state of the royal library at the time of its seizure in 1812.

The digitisation of Javanese resources is important for the continued study of Javanese language, literature, and culture. In addition to preserving rare and often undocumented resources, online access to digitised content is transforming research and education, while contributing to public awareness of its heritage. This, and the prolific linguistic and literary history of Javanese intertwined with art, traditions, and religion, poses significant challenges and opportunities for its digitisation. This presentation discusses and illustrates these challenges and opportunities based on the experience of a Javanese digitisation program in Central Java (sastra.org).
Sastra.org aims to preserve, enhance access to, and cultivate knowledge about Javanese resources. It achieves this through a series of processes that convert resources into digital formats, organise, describe, and cross-reference these resources, and manage and maintain them on a web-based platform. For a small program limited in resources, each of these processes are challenging, requiring dedication, scholarship and technical know-how, respectively. Nonetheless, with over a decade of experience, Sastra.org has made more than 1,200 titles totalling around 20 million words available online. With a data repository of this size - and growing - there are opportunities emerging for further analysis, annotation and contextualisation, and provision of a more advanced and innovative platform for querying information and extracting knowledge for researchers, students and the general public. These and other opportunities are a part of the program’s current goals, all of which are considered a necessary development to achieve future sustainability. Whether or not these goals are achieved, with the involvement now of larger and better equipped institutions, the digital era will continue to transform the study of Javanese.

Panel 4: Echoes of the Past
Chair: Danielle Chen, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Ideal Match: Views on Marriage in the Panji Paniba (1816)
Willem van Der Molen, KITLV, Leiden / University of Indonesia

Panji Paniba is the name of a romantic story in Javanese about the adventures of the legendary prince Panji and his fiancée, princes Candrakirana. Their marriage is thwarted by the princess’ disappearance from the palace. Panji takes it upon him to find her back. The Panji Paniba is one out of many texts, in Javanese and other languages in Southeast Asia, that have the adventures of Panji and Candrakirana as their subject and are commonly referred to as Panji stories. Besides written texts, there are also other artistic forms in which the stories found expression, such as dance, shadow theatre, and temple reliefs. The Panji tradition seems to go back to the beginning of the fifteenth century and is still very much alive today. The Panji stories are set in the days of the old Hindu kingdoms of Java. At the time the Panji Paniba was created, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Javanese society had already for centuries been Muslim. The present paper addresses the question how religious elements are used to provide the story with a pre-Islamic background.
A New Look at the Serat Rama
Esrih Bakker, Leiden University

The Serat Rama is one of many examples of Javanese literary texts of which manifold manuscripts rest in library storage facilities, waiting for their secrets to be discovered and their stories to be shared. Though the Serat Rama is seen as an important work and has been touched upon by various scholars and, for example, has been explored with respect to its role in the transmission of Old Javanese literature, there is at present no comprehensive study of the text. Aiming at this comprehensiveness, I am approaching the text philologically. However, because there are many interesting facets to the text that call for a broader approach, I am also taking an expanded view in order to achieve an understanding of how the Serat Rama reflects on and intervenes in its contemporary socio-cultural circumstances. I will include contextual information that might help to analyse, explain and interpret the text: factors beyond the level of the text that determine its position within its socio-cultural and historical context. The results will be presented in a hybrid edition: a book edition and a digital scholarly edition. The two editions are intended to complement each other.

In this paper I will focus on the three primary sources of the Serat Rama text (two manuscripts and one printed edition) that my research project draws upon. I will explain why I chose these specific sources and how I intend to use them. I will discuss their composition and characteristics and will go into what makes them particularly interesting.

Panel 5: Music, Painting, Performance
Chair: George Quinn, The Australian National University

Cakepan Srambahan (All-purpose Gamelan Lyrics) as Absolute Music: Listening to Poetry about Nothing
Marc Benamou, Earlham College

In the course of a project to transcribe and translate the lyrics of central Javanese gamelan music, it became clear that something highly unusual was going on in the way some of the texts were being used. Indeed, the lyrics of a typical gendhing (gamelan piece) represent an extreme, among the world’s vocal musics, of fragmentation and discontinuity. Moreover, many of the texts are difficult for the average listener to understand because of their heavy doses of archaic words and their subtle word play, made all the more incomprehensible by melisma, the surrounding thick instrumental texture, breaths taken mid word, and the aforementioned fragmentation. In traditional gendhings, it is usually impossible to summarize what the words are “about”: not only are they not tied to the music—singers can choose whatever texts fit the appropriate poetic meter—but a huge proportion of them are only there for the sound or in order to set up a
riddle. Santosa (2001:375), in his study of the role of gamelan music in certain villages of central Java, while emphasizing that competencies vary, says, “[a]mong ‘ordinary audiences’ texts can mean the rendering of syllables or even the ‘noise of vowels’ because the ‘literal meanings’ are not significant to some of them.” In other words, the audiences in question heard texts as absolute music, devoid of propositional or even semantic content. And yet, gamelan lyrics contain some of the most beautiful, evocative poetry in the Javanese language. The following questions arise: What role do these lyrics play? Why do singers emphasize correct pronunciation, if meaning is unimportant? Why are certain texts overwhelmingly favored over others?

Javanese Manuscripts as Artistic Inspiration: The Tradition of Glass Painting in Cirebon
Opan Safari, Sheikh Nurjati Islamic State Institute

Glass painting is the most popular art form of Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia. The glass paintings of Cirebon have a long history, that began with the first generation led by Prince Aruna Martaningrat, Talam, and Sudarga, and continued with the generation of Rastika, Raden Sugro, H. Winta, and Sugiri. Rastika was the most famous glass painter of his generation.

According to Rastika, the making of a glass painting requires a conceptual plan. Thus, paintings of Wayang must be in accordance with the “Bramakawi Perangjaya” manuscript, the Cirebon version of the Bharatayuddha, which was written by Siti Siwan (1896-1946), commissioned by Dalang Konjem, and later copied by Sojat Boja Sasmita. The Bramakawi Perangjaya manuscript tells the story of the great war between the Kuravas and Pandavas. In addition, it speaks about the historical civil war that occurred in Cirebon, in the Village of Kedongdong, namely between a local court that supported the Dutch Colonial rule and another, that was against it.

In the 1970s, painting episodes of the Perangjaya became taboo, due to a myth that was attached to the pro-colonial court, and prevented people from speaking about their “sin”. Nevertheless, driven by Rastika, and then followed by Toto, and Bahendi, the paintings of the Perangjaya episodes are the most popular ones today.

Muslim Moods in Writing: The Creation of Affect in Amir Hamza Texts from Java
Ben Arps, Leiden University

The stories told in Java are told in many ways, but historically the main categories are drama – including puppetry – and texts. A major difference between the two lies in the evocation of atmospheres, emotions, temperaments, in short of affect – which happens to be a major point of emphasis in storytelling in Java (and in South and Southeast Asia generally). Put very simply, in drama affect is enacted, in texts it is represented verbally.
In mainstream academic scholarship, born-textual and text-oriented as it is, the multimodality, emergence, and interactivity of performance do not readily lend themselves to empirical study. Much remains beyond reach. One victim is affect. A philology of performance (Arps 2016) that makes good use of the affordances of digital multimedial methods enables a deeper understanding of the performative creation of affect. But of course affect is also made on paper.

I begin by asking, briefly, how a multimedial philology of performance is relevant to Javanese texts. Then I consider the verbal creation of affect against this background. The focus is on the multifaceted personage of Umarmaya, a key protagonist in the famous Asian Islamic epic of Amir Hamza. In Javanese drama and literature, Umarmaya appears variably as a devoted friend and follower of Hamza, trickster, Muslim official, dancer, ferocious warrior (armed with a deadly beam of light), messianic figure, and clown-servant. I examine the affective dimensions of his portrayal across several Javanese texts.

June 19th

Panel 6: New Considerations of Genre in Javanese Writing
Chair: Yigal Bronner, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Sex, Food, and Poetry: Everyday Life in Early 19th Century Java
Anthony Day, Independent Scholar

Arguably, the 714 cantos and 247, 766 lines of poetry in the Serat Centhini, composed in Surakarta by several authors in 1814 at the height of the British occupation of Java (1811-1816), are the greatest expression of literary art ever written in Java. The text is certainly encyclopedic, “a story taken from the past/ in such a way that all Javanese science/ be gathered together there, arranged in metrical form/ so that those who hear it will be pleased, not bored,” to put it in words taken from the opening stanza in a translation by Tim Behrend. Boring the Centhini is certainly not, as I will show in my discussion of how sexual desire and performance and the sharing of food, perhaps the ultimate expression of sociability in Java as in many places in the world, are represented in sung poetry in ways that make a critical comment about the state of political and cultural uncertainty in early 19th century Java. Light refreshments will be served while I give my paper and sung renditions will be performed of the passages I discuss.

Confessiones Javaniae: The Autobiography of a Javanese Gentleman Around 1900
Edwin Wieringa, University of Cologne

At the beginning of the 20th century, a Javanese gentleman called Raden Sasrakusuma wrote his autobiography Sėrat Raga Pasaja, which could be translated as “Book of My
"Unadorned Self". Written on the request of his son, who was a teacher, just like him, this text consists of memoirs about the author's life, from the earliest age that he can remember until the time of writing. The genre of autobiography is rare in Javanese literature and this particular specimen raises many questions. For example, contrary to later Indonesian autobiographies which generally rarely deal with private matters, Raden Sasrakusuma reveals his innermost thoughts and feelings, so that his notes almost read like confessions. The author is haunted by feelings of sin, openly addressing the connection between sex and sin. Although he was clearly Muslim, one wonders whether Dutch Calvinist perspectives may have influenced his thinking. In any case, Raden Sasrakusuma was a litterateur who among others composed a Christian missionary version of the Joseph story (Cariyos Lalampahane Nabi Yusup, kaanggit dening Raden Sasrakusuma, Mantri Guru Pensiyun ing Madiun, published by the Commissie voor de Volkslectuur in 1917). Still unstudied and left untouched as an unpublished manuscript in the vaults of Leiden University Library, the “Book of My Unadorned Self” offers us unique insights into the life of a Javanese author, being a most fitting object for study within the framework of the research project “New Directions in the Study of Javanese Literature”.

The Art of Travel Along the Post Road: Impressions of 19th Century ‘Java Posting'
Judith Bosnak, Goethe University Frankfurt

‘Java Posting’, travelling from post to post on Java’s Great Post Road, was an exclusive and expensive endeavour. Apart from a carriage with a set of post horses, coachmen and footmen one needed a special license from the colonial government to make use of this means of transport. Netherlands Indies' government functionaries had the privilege to travel for free on the Post Road, but anyone else had to pay a large amount of money to get access. As a result, only well-connected Javanese noblemen and wealthy foreign visitors were in the position to journey along this highway that traversed the island from west to east.

The aim of this paper is to study literary as well as artistic impressions of Java Posting in the nineteenth century, taking Javanese travelogues as well as contemporaneous illustrative material as a starting point and comparing these with European travel accounts and illustrations. Lyrical portrayal of Java’s abundant nature is a recurrent element of travel writing throughout the nineteenth century, defining Java as 'the finest tropical island in the world', 'Garden of the East' and, in Javanese terms loh jinawi, literally 'fertile and plentiful', but (following Van der Molen alluding to Deut.31:20) freely translated as a 'land flowing with milk and honey' like Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel. On one hand focus will be on the phenomenon of travelling itself, on motivations, pleasure and hardship and on the other hand attention will be on the travellers' depiction of the Javanese 'sublime' landscape, including remnants from the past and signs of 'modernity'.