



# Nyai Sabirah's folklore and sacred local heritage in Central Java

Abdul Karim, Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, Abdul Mutholib, Akhmad Nurul Kawakip, Agus Retnanto & Mukroji

To cite this article: Abdul Karim, Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, Abdul Mutholib, Akhmad Nurul Kawakip, Agus Retnanto & Mukroji (2023) Nyai Sabirah's folklore and sacred local heritage in Central Java, Cogent Arts & Humanities, 10:1, 2198629, DOI: [10.1080/23311983.2023.2198629](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2198629)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2198629>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 19 May 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Received: 18 August 2022  
Accepted: 29 March 2023

\*Corresponding author: Abdul Karim,  
Faculty of Tarbiyah, State Islamic  
Institute of Kudus, Conge  
Ngembalrejo Street, Ngembalrejo,  
Bae District, Kudus Regency 59322,  
Central Java, Indonesia  
E-mail: [karim.iainkudus@gmail.com](mailto:karim.iainkudus@gmail.com)

Reviewing editor:  
Timothy Clack, Department of  
Islamic Elementary Teacher  
Education, Kudus, Central Java,  
Indonesia

Additional information is available at  
the end of the article

## CULTURAL HERITAGE | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Nyai Sabirah's folklore and sacred local heritage in Central Java

Abdul Karim<sup>1\*</sup>, Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya<sup>2</sup>, Abdul Mutholib<sup>3</sup>, Akhmad Nurul Kawakip<sup>4</sup>,  
Agus Retnanto<sup>5</sup> and Mukroji<sup>6</sup>

**Abstract:** The folklore of Nyai Sabirah is one of the diversity of Indonesian heritage as an hereditary oral tradition. As a female emancipation figure from the descendants of the Majapahit kingdom who fled from the siege of the invasion, Nyai Sabirah played a role as the *founder mother* of the Bakaran village by deforesting forests and building rural communities. Nyai Sabirah's character is sacred by the people who penetrate the space between syncretism and social reality. This article examines the folklore of Nyai Sabirah, which has intangible and tangible local cultural heritage values which include four categories of folklore (myths, legends, saga and saying). Values and social education taught by Nyai Sabirah formed the Bakaran village community with high social tolerance. The establishment of Bakaran village and batik education with eighteen local batik motifs are forms of tangible heritage of high value. Finally, folklore is not just a legacy of oral tradition,

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Abdul Karim, M.Pd from the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia, Doctor of Education with a concentration in Social Education at the Tadris Study Program of Social Sciences (IPS) Faculty of Tarbiyah IAIN Kudus. The field of scientific assignment in Social Science Education (IPS).

Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, is a senior researcher at the *Center for the Study of Muslim Society* in Malang, East Java. In 2019, the author received his Doctor's degree from UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. He has been the Director of *Center for the Study of Muslim Society* since 2020. His major research interest currently focuses on the anthropology of culture and religion, religious studies, studies of Inter-religious relations, and Islamic education. He has published his research results to various leading publishers such as Springer, Taylor and Francis, and the Technological University Dublin.

Abdul Mutholib is a researcher and lecturer at the Department of Arabic Language Education at the Islamic Education Faculty of IAIN Kudus. He received his doctorate in Teaching Arabic from Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University in Malang, Indonesia. His major research interests are Islamic, educational studies and language teaching & learning.

Akhmad Nurul Kawakip He was born in Rembang, Indonesia, on July 31th, 1975. He is a lecturer and researcher for State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, East Java, Indonesia. He teaches issues on sociology of education, Islamic educational thought and ethnography of Islamic educational system. He got Master degree in Asia and Pacific Studies from Victoria University Melbourne Australia. In 2018, he completed his doctoral degree at State Islamic University of Sunan Ampel Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia.

Agus Retnanto is a researcher and lecturer at Department of Islamic Elementary Teacher Education at Islamic Education Faculty at IAIN Kudus. His Doctorate degree in 2013 from Yogyakarta State University. His major research interests are Islamic psychology and educational studies.

Mukroji is a researcher and lecturer of Departement of Arabic Language Education at the Islamic Education Faculty of K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri State Islamic University in Purwokerto Central Java. His doctorate degree was in 2020 from Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University in Malang City.

but also contributes to the heritage of artifacts and products of community civilization that characterizes the face of Indonesian vernacular culture.

**Subjects:** Cultural Heritage; Social & Cultural Anthropology; Culture; Heritage

**Keywords:** folklore; rituals; tangible and intangible heritage; tolerance; city brand

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is known as a country that has a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, customs, and *indigenous* religious beliefs. Even Forshee sorts out this diversity from various aspects such as region, society and history; thought and religion; ancient literature and art; architecture, cuisine and fashion, weddings, cultural festivals, and lifestyles (Forshee, 2006). As part of an international country, Indonesia also accepts foreign cultures from various countries with a process of assimilation and acculturation to create what is called cosmopolitan Indonesia (Antweiler, 2019). As a result, the indigenous culture becomes a complex problem when faced with the struggles of a pluralistic society.

For example, folklore that has been rooted for a long time in Indonesian society has developed into an interesting phenomenon where the values and traditions in these treasures have become norms and regulations that have been carried out until now in modern times. Folklore is an asset of the Indonesian nation (*traditional knowledge*) whose existence can be used for the economy (Santyaningtyas, 2016), such as religious tourism in sacred places through oral stories of the people passed down from generation to generation (Raya 2022; Zuhri, 2013). The noisy “adat voice” as the owner of this indigenous asset lives in a contradictory niche of modernisation and forces this intangible wealth to be extinct (Kutin & Kropiej Telban, 2018; Tsing, 2007). This means that folklore, as one of the indigenous assets in the form of traditional culture, is currently in the progress of modernization, so these cultural assets are slowly disappearing and becoming extinct over time.

This study examines the folklore of *Nyai Sabirah* as the main actor for the forerunner to the formation of Bakaran village in the Juwana district, Pati, Central Java. The story of the Nyai Sabirah is told over and over from generation to generation, where the dominance of the Majapahit kingdom over two-thirds of the archipelago is very popular (Pigeaud, 1960). Nyai Sabirah is a descendant of Majapahit at the end of the collapse of this kingdom by the Demak Sultanate in Central Java at the end of the 15th century (Hasyim, 2021). This article presents two sides to the folklore of Nyai Sabirah for the Bakaran community; First, the value of education is as ideas, thoughts, and forms of social wisdom that are taught to the community from generation to generation as an intangible asset. Second, the legacy of Nyai Sabirah as Bakaran village and Batik Bakaran as a tangible heritage of artefacts. These two legacies make folklore not only a local legend but also a state asset for social education and community economic development.

This article examines what Troll and Sudjarwo did not discuss, where folklore is only limited to local legends transmitted through oral tradition. The value content in the folklore research is maximal in the commemoration of traditional or religious ceremonies, but has not touched the aspects of education and tangible economic development opportunities. This research corroborates Troll’s findings in 2015 where folklore has a relationship with natural activities but differs from its conservation aspect (Halengkara, 2021; Troll et al., 2015). The story of Nyai Sabirah “burning the forest” for deforestation which was later called *Bakaran Village* shows that folklore teaches how to properly clear forest land for residential areas, which so far deforestation has been classified as an act of abuse of government power (Hoang & Kanemoto, 2021; Perumal et al., 2021). The two legacies of folklore, as mentioned above, show that no similar research has examined in full where the substance of folklore produces *intangible* and *tangible* assets that still exist in the modern era, as assets for social education and economic opportunities for the

welfare of local communities. This study also strengthens Cvijić and Guzijan's argument that city brands in rural areas are influenced by local cultural heritage from oral traditions firmly rooted in society (Cvijić & Guzijan, 2013).

## 2. Methods

Folklore has received less serious attention as a local cultural heritage in the formation of rural communities. For this reason, this study aims to look again at the great potential of folklore in preserving cultural heritage in the people of Bakaran Village, Jepara, Central Java. This research uses a qualitative approach (Aurini et al., 2021) with ethnological methods in folklore. This ethnological method of folklore is object formation, cultural transmission, tradition, cultural representation, and ownership of the cultural repatriation (Anttonen, 2008). This research focuses on discursive efforts from tradition to heritage, cultural relativist replication, and the construction of identity that forms Bakaran village from a Nyai Sabirah folklore. We mention this method in folklore as an attempt to perpetuate oral recordings into textual documentation of artificial representations of people's literature (Anttonen, 2012).

Primary data comes from in-depth observations (Testa, 2016) which we conducted from late February to mid-December 2019. We also interviewed with two caretakers of the oath well as parties who inherited the Nyai Sabirah folklore directly from the ancestors of the people of Bakaran village. The information determination technique is based on purposive sampling, where the party has the mandate to maintain the oral tradition of Nyai Sabirah based on the four principles of data validity (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) (Campbell et al., 2020). Meanwhile, secondary data comes from two documentations as Batik Bakaran because of tangible assets from the heritage of batik education taught by Nyai Sabirah from generation to generation. The second documentation comes from a study of existing literature about the whereabouts of Nyai Sabirah and the history of the village of Bakaran. Meanwhile, data analysis techniques include data reduction, presentation, and conclusion (Miles et al., 2018). The reduced and presented data results from data coding, which can form a pattern between categories (Adu, 2019). These patterns are then compiled and narrated into a research report as scientifically justifiable articles.

## 3. The existence of Nyai Sabirah: a folklore

In the Indonesian context, oral cultural heritage as folklore has been embedded and has become part of people's lives (Sudjarwo, 2021). The intensity of storytelling is carried out almost daily at every moment of life. Folklore motivates the next generation to preserve local culture and traditions so that folklore becomes a collective tradition spread and passed down from generation to generation, traditionally and sometimes with different versions. As part of people's lives. Agus sees folklore as a function of revitalising traditional culture to develop national character (Agus, 2021). The narration aims to invite people to know the traditions where they come from and as an identity attached to a person's personality (Ruslan, 2021). From here, folklore functions as public education in social interaction, as a strong pedagogical tool to shape morals, values, and even the construction of religious norms. This means that the influence of folklore is very urgent as social control of society in fostering diversity and the struggle of social interaction. The role of folklore as an educational medium is not only in educational institutions but also in educating the wider community.

Nyai Sabirah's story cannot be separated from several relics as archaeology, former deforestation, ancient buildings, and educational values. For the Bakaran people, the existence of the "sumur sumpah or oath well" or popularly known as *Belik*, is strong evidence of Nyai Sabirah as a respected female figure. As a descendant of Majapahit in the era of its destruction, Nyai Sabirah travelled erratically until she finally entered the wilderness because of being chased by troops from the Islamic Demak kingdom under the leadership of Raden Patah in the 15th century.

The incident of this attack was recorded by several historians such as Theodore and de Graaf, where there was an attack by a group of Muslim fanatics from Central Java against the residence

of the Majapahit kingdom, whose culture was dominated by the Buddhist Shivaite dynasty (Theodore & de Graaf, 1976). Other records, such as in *Pramoedya Arus Balik's* novel, mention that the Java Maritime region was then controlled by Demak and Jepara, resulting in struggles and disputes in the area which was previously owned by Majapahit (Scherer, 1998). Besides that, there is another problem, namely the internal conflict that occurred in Majapahit and the small kingdom under the rule of Demak. The Pengging Kingdom was one of those small kingdoms that rebelled by defending Majapahit (Guillot & Couteau, 2002). Another motive was because Ki Ageng Pengging, as the ruler of the Pengging kingdom, was aggressively preaching the teachings of Sheikh Siti Jenar which according to the Demak kingdom, was deviating from Islam (heretic) (Acrid, 2019).

For the Bakaran community, Nyai Sabirah is a legendary female figure. He left a sacred shrine and is believed to grant all wishes to his visitors. This phenomenon is referred to as veneration, where the cult of people who are holy with a high level of holiness through cultural narratives or traditions that are formed or through other means. This is like the veneration of seven people who are sacred with the discovery of their graves through dreams, and then the so-called “wali pitu” in Bali (Slama, 2014). Nyai Sabirah’s story is based on three *petilasan* as a sign that she is the main character in the veneration of the Bakaran community.

*Petilasan* is a relic that contains mystical value. This artefact is only used during certain conditions and people. Another legacy of Nyai Sabirah, considered having a high heritage value, is the existence of Bakaran village with a story of deforestation carried out by Nyai Sabirah to build a village for the community. Nyai Sabirah also teaches the art of *batik* and innovation of marine catches, which later become the value of local commodities for the Bakaran people and are popularly called “batik villages”. We classify these two relics of Nyai Sabirah as a tangible inheritance. In addition, some of Nyai Sabirah’s teachings, which contain the value of social education, have been preserved by the community as values and norms for the people of Pati, Central Java. Nyai Sabirah’s four saying (*petuah*) describe gentleness and good manners in interacting and socialising with other people, especially respect for guests. We classify Nyai Sabirah’s advice as intangible heritage, besides other, more complex education in supporting the aforementioned tangible heritage.

#### 4. Belik: the sacred “Sumur Sumpah” veneration

Belik is a well that is believed to be the remains of Nyai Sabirah because the community considers that she died *muksa* (died but lost her body). The Bakaran community highly cults this site because it is considered the residence of Nyi Ageng Bakaran, the nickname for Nyai Sabirah, who has helped to clear land to create a village. In contrast to Gottowik’s finding that several sacred locations in Indonesia are closely related to the practice of *pesugihan* and sex rituals (Gottowik, 2018), belik is made by residents as a place for meditation and a test of honesty for those who are in dispute.

Belik is dubbed the “*sumur sumpah* or well of the oath” because of its function as a validation of one’s honesty over the social strife experienced. Judging from its appearance, belik is not like most wells. It’s like an old well that was intentionally sacred, with the addition of various mystical ornaments on it. Before entering the good area, visitors must enter an entrance made of stone gates and black cement with a Hindu pattern, and the words “Punden Nyai Ageng and Ki Dalang Soponyono, Bakaran Wetan Village, Juwana District”. The shrine of Nyai Sabirah with her oath well is in the same location as the *petilasan* of Ki Dalang Soponyono, who is also sacred as the founding figure of the Duchy of Pati-Pasantenan (now Pati Regency, Central Java).

Meanwhile, the location of the well is in a special room that is purposely covered with a red mosquito net and has a batik pattern. We interviewed Mbah Basyir, a caretaker and custodian of the well. She swore that the pattern of well-covering batik was typical of the batik that Nyai Sabirah taught the Bakaran community (Basyir, 2019a). A caretaker is a term for someone who is given guarding of sacred places, such as cemeteries and *petilasan* (relics) (J. Hellman, 2018; Raya 2022). Mystical sightings are seen when many flowers are scattered in the wellborn area, which is

covered by wooden planks, complete with a mystical fragrance. At first glance, like a sacred tomb, belik can attract a mystical aura, which is believed to be a place to test honesty. Residents think Nyai Sabirah doesn't like lies, so the petilasan in the well is an appearance of Nyai Sabirah. For the visitor who drank the water while he was lying, then the truth would soon be revealed quickly.

Besides roses and jasmine flowers, in the good area, there are also various offerings made from fruits such as *pisang setangkep* (*Pisang Raja* which has two layers), *kinang suruh*, *payung sesaji*, perfume, and *kemenyan*. On Thursday night, this petilasan is crowded with pilgrims asking for blessings or in the famous Javanese tradition it is called *ngalap berkah*. This term was popularised to ask God for blessings through the tombs and shrines of sacred people, usually juxtaposed with the ritual pilgrimage to the tomb of Wali Songo and his shrine (Suriyani, 2020). However, in its development, sacred sites do not always aim to get blessings, other motives make pilgrimage activities crowded. For example, the practice of asking for wealth and position or what is popularly known as the "pesugihan ritual" by bringing in *tuyul* or *babi ngepet* was common in the 90s. Pemberton views this event as an effort for the poor to face social inequality because of the view of a luxurious lifestyle displayed by artists and role models through social media (Pemberton, 2018).

The same pattern occurs in the belik sumur sumpah where pilgrims visit the punden of Nyai Sabirah to ask for blessings and *ngalap berkah* to the Wali's gravesite. However, with other goals such as what happened at Mount Kemukus, Sragen Central Java, where *ngalap berkah* are complemented by pesugihan rituals and sex rituals (Gottowik, 2018; Setiawati, 2016). The blessing referred to at the Belik Wells Oath site is proof of the truth that this site can test the truth of one's words and actions.

*"Bubar iki ana wong loro sing arep nyoba kesaktian Belik. Dheweke difitnah dening tanggane, nyolong barang. Wong loro kuwi ora setuju sapa sing nindakké kuwi. Ingsun paring piweling, aja nganti kleru ing sumur Belik Nyai Ageng Bakaran, awit yen bener sapa kang nyolong ing antaramu, uripe bakal sengsara lan tumeka ing pati"* (Rah, 2019). [Recently, two people wanted to try Belik's supernatural powers. They were slandered by their neighbours stealing things. The two disagree over who among them did this. I have warned you not to mess with the Belik well of Nyai Ageng Bakaran, because if it is true who steals among you, his life will be miserable and lead to death].

The interview above was conducted with Mbah Rah as the caretaker who accompanied Mbah Basyir to guard Nyai Sabirah's shrine at the sumur sumpah. The motives of the two pilgrims claimed to want to test the truth of the magic of belik. One pilgrim admitted he felt nothing after drinking well water and returned to Punden to meet Mbah Rah to celebrate gratitude. While the other pilgrims never returned (Rah, 2019). The sacredness of the sumur sumpah is also believed by the community as a cure for chronic diseases that are difficult to cure. According to Mbah Basyir's narrative, the pilgrims performed a *slametan wilujeng* after the truth-testing ritual by offering *ayam ingkung* and *nasi tumpeng* with fruits and tubers. If the pilgrims are rich people, they hold a *wayang kulit* performance which is done all day long as gratitude (Basyir, 2019d).

Currently, most folklore can be enjoyed by the modern generation in various writings. To explain how folklore is passed down from generation to generation to become a written record. Quoting the theory of oral tradition, Anttonen explained that folklore is a preserved oral word document manifested by social performances as rituals or traditions, which are transformed into textual documentation. To realise this, apart from rituals and traditions, folklore requires one more primary source, artefacts. According to Anttonen, textualisation or documentation of folklore is the practice of representing orality in written form. Meanwhile, rituals, traditions, and artefacts represent folklore Field's original sayings (Anttonen, 2012).

Another story that developed in the community was that Nyai Sabirah asked Joko Pekuwon for a dowry, as a condition for a sign of love, to make seven wells (*pitu sumur*) in one night. Like the



story of Rara Jonggrang's conditional love with Bandung Bondowoso, the well and the temple are iconic replicas of the legacy of folklore in Indonesia (Malioboro, 1996). In literary theology, love and infatuation with a partner create a mystical narrative that requires an epic romance, each lover will be dissolved in an ocean of crazy beauty, because anything will be done for love (Schimmel, 1975; Seyed-Gohrab, 2021). The conditions for Nyai Sabirah's dowry to Joko Pekuwon are very hard for ordinary people to do, but Joko Pekuwon has *linuwih*, an ability to interact with supernatural beings. Kern mentions that these creatures in Indonesian cultural traditions are known as *dedemit* or demons comprising *Jin*, *Satan*, *Genderuwo*, and *Periyangan* (Kern, 1961).

Joko Pekuwon asked demons for help to complete the construction of seven wells overnight before dawn with their magical powers. However, seeing Joko Pekuwon's cunning, Nyai Sabirah tricked the demons by beating a mortar and burning wood to make the red light visible on the eastern horizon, marking dawn. With pride, Joko Pekuwon showed off his success, but only six wells were completed, while the other well belonged to Nyai Sabirah, which was in the yard of her house which was claimed by Joko Pekuwon. Knowing that Joko Pekuwon was lying, Nyai Sabirah proved her words by challenging him to drink water from Nyai Sabirah's well, and Joko Pekuwon was killed.

The story of the magic of this well is then told from generation to generation to the people of Bakaran village. The name "*sumur sumpah* or well of the oath" was born after Joko Pekuwon's love story to Nyai Sabirah, who ran aground because of a lie. Finally, this petilasan is sacred by the community and is believed to bring magical powers. The figure of Nyai Sabirah will meet those who perform the "Monday-Thursday fasting" ritual at the oath well using *mutih* or *sahur* and break only with white food such as rice and water only. In Islamic tradition, this fast is a "model fast" taught by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH as an act of self-cleansing when charity is lifted on both days. In Javanese mystical beliefs, fasting Monday-Thursday in *mutih* way is considered part of a successful ritual for worldly purposes (J. C. R. B. J. C. R. B. Hellman, 2009). This practice later developed with the holding of a "*ritual meleak di pendapa punden*" where pilgrims perform the "sowan ke Nyai Sabirah" ritual, but it differs from the general pilgrimage by not talking and praying or contemplating for a moment in the petilasan, as is a pilgrimage to sacred tombs (J. Hellman, 2017; Jonge, 1998; Van & De Jong, 2006). This ritual allows the pilgrims to freely talk, chat while relaxing, and other activities, such as activities. Rituals like this are another form where the practice of veneration at petilasan sites is still glorified.

### 5. Langes: forest deforestation and the forerunner of Bakaran village

The formation of Bakaran village comes from a story of Nyai Sabirah, who carried out deforestation to clear land for the settlement of residents who had no place to live. According to Cash, a new community in a rural area is formed through intensive folkloric narratives told from relatively simple origin events (Cash, 2011). The story of Nyai Sabirah clearing forest land is a legacy of the past, where deforestation has not been studied scientifically. In Javanese folklore, deforestation is referred to as *babat hutan*, which means opening up new land in the forest for habitation. As in the famous Javanese literary work, the *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Kouznetsova, 2002; Ricklefs, 1972).

When the Demak royal troops carried out a pursuit mission to the entire Majapahit royal family, which was on the verge of collapse because these two kingdoms were ambivalent (Al Qurtuby, 2009; Johns, 1964). Many of the Majapahit royal family fled the kingdom to save themselves and carried out the largest exodus by Majapahit after he came to power in Southeast Asia (Bougas, 1998; Husson, 1997), including the two brothers, Ki Dhukut and Nyai Sabirah. Although there are no historical records that mention who the Majapahit royal family escaped from the Demak army's siege, as well as written evidence of the existence of Nyai Sabirah, who was among the people who escaped the pursuit. This shows that the absence of historical evidence allows it to be traced by folklore heritage.

The escape of these brothers came to a dense wilderness full of trees and uneven ground. Ki Dhukut cut down trees and level the ground with minimal means, but Nyai Sabirah was exhausted and objected to the task. Nyai Sabirah conveyed the tone of objection by offering a solution as langes. In folklore, the langes are mentioned in this conversation of the two brothers:

*Kang Mas koweki wong lanang, pesanggrahanmu luwih jembar tenimbang aku wong wadon. Ngene kang Mas, supoyo adil seumpamane aku ngumpulke larahan terus tak obong, lah nangdi langes kuwi bakal tiba maka dadi wilayah bagianku. Piye kang Mas ?*

["Brother, you are a man. Your share of the territory is wider than I am a woman. Look, to be fair, what if I collect trash and burn it, where the ashes fall? that's my territory. How are you ?"]. (Basyir, 2019c)

The Langes (garbage ashes) then fell in an area near to the Ki Dhukut section. Seeing the many langes scattered and the smoke rising high, this deforestation attracted many people to join in. As more and more people take part in helping Nyai Sabirah, a small forest clearing area has now become a large village that can accommodate many residents. Deforestation was carried out for months while levelling the community's land, collecting wood and leaves to build houses. The area of Langes became known as *Bakaran village*, now the village is in Juwana district, Pati Regency, Central Java (see in Figure 1). The word "Bakaran" shows that this village was created from the ashes of garbage (langes) that were burned in the middle of the forest with the mission of deforestation to clear residential land.

Nyai Sabirah is known as a woman who is persistent, intelligent and hard-working. Her beautiful face displays the figure of Majapahit nobility. With this appearance, Nyai Sabirah is highly respected by the community and makes her a role model for the village. Nyai Sabirah's initiatives are always followed by the community, let alone ordering people to build houses, set up tents for emergency kitchens, and dig up water sources. Agricultural land was cleared to grow various foodstuffs and spices for needs during the deforestation project. Initially, the agricultural land was only for emergency kitchen needs, but seeing the fertility of forest land, agricultural products are increasingly abundant. Until finally the Bakaran area was known to the public because of the legendary Nyai Sabirah.

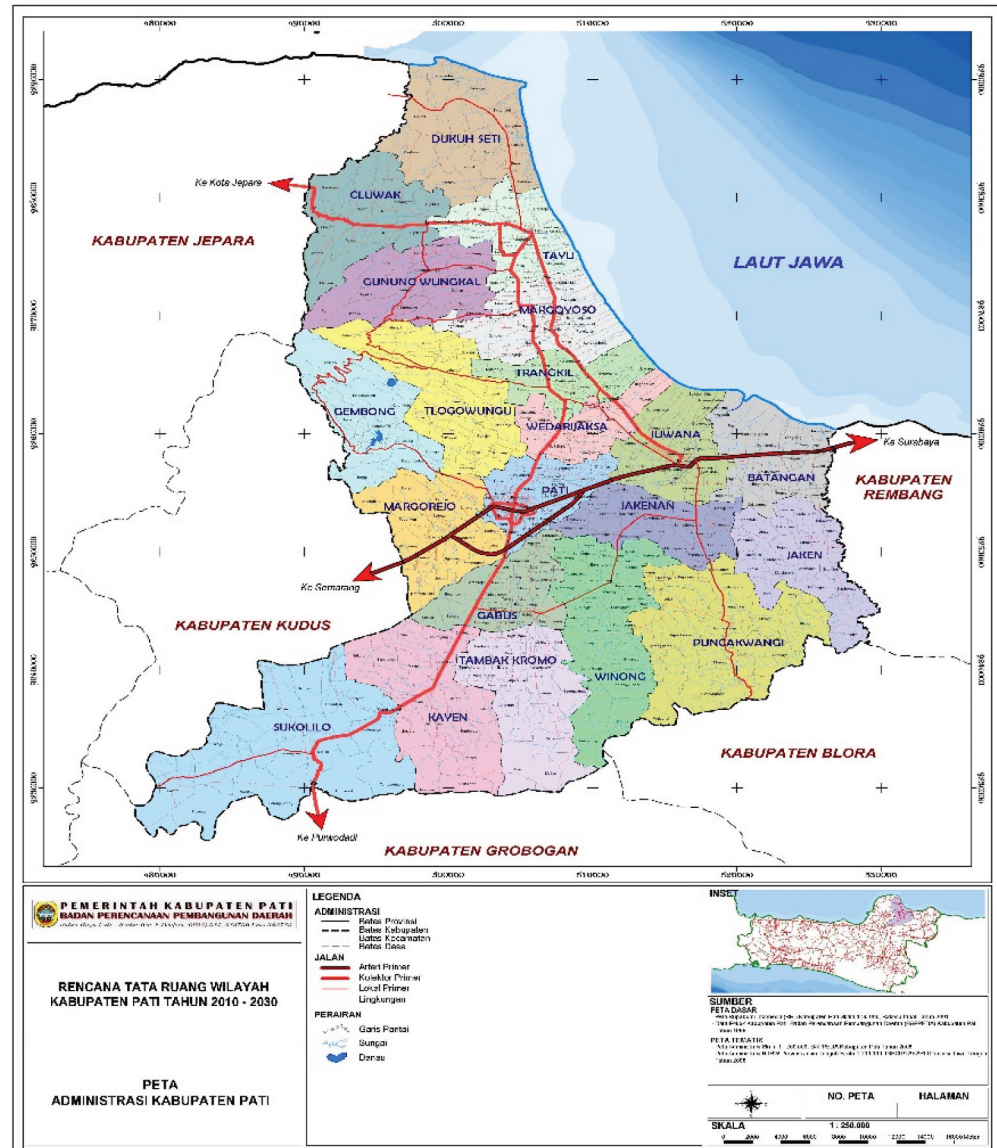
## 6. Buka Luwur and Merti Dusun

For a long time, the people of Bakaran village have held sacred Nyai Sabirah and her petilasan with various rituals. *Buka Luwur* is a ritual to replace batik cloth as a heritage product which is held every 10 Suro or 10 Muharram in the Islamic calendar. Buka luwur is accompanied by other rituals such as *Merti Dusun* or village cleaning, which is held on 1 Suro or 1 Muharram to be gratitude to God for good harvests and the success of the Bakaran community. The Merti Dusun ritual is designed like the *Kenduri* or *Slametan* pattern, such as Boogert's findings where gratitude for the Javanese people is manifested in offerings as food and crops of the earth which are read special prayers from Javanese or Arabic (Boogert, 2017). Both Buka Luwur and Merti Dusun were carried out to sanctify Nyai Sabirah as the founder of Bakaran village, who is considered the sole elder who also acts as a "supervisor" for the Bakaran community.

Changing the cover or netting begins with cleaning the edges of the mouth of the well and the area around the well from dirt and leaves. There are several properties other than the luwur cloth, such as a *selendang hijau* or green scarf that functions as decoration after being replaced by a luwur. Green means fertility and prosperity. In folklore, the colour green appears as a symbol of immortality, as in the folklore of *Nyi Roro Kidul*, a powerful woman in Old Javanese mythology. The figure of Nyi Roro Kidul often appears in mystical stories of people on the coast of Java where she is considered a Queen who has unparalleled supernatural powers because she has bathed in the spring of life given by *Prophet Khidir*, a holy prophet who is considered eternally alive in Islamic belief (Wessing, 1997). The red luwur is combined with a *selendang hijau* and white *Mori cloth*



**Figure 1. Administrative Map of Pati Regency, Central Java.**



before being placed together on the anjang, a place made of bamboo to place these three fabric properties on the well.

The next property is the *blabak bunda* which is used as a well bore cover before the red carpet. On this red carpet, pilgrims usually put offerings as flowers or money. Meanwhile, the function of the jug next to the well is used to collect water from the well which will be distributed to pilgrims. After all the properties are installed, the caretaker decorates it with *daun salam* and *bunga melati* to add a sacred impression to the Nyai Sabirah shrine. These properties are equipment for the tradition of breaking the fast, although there are other important equipment, namely *sesaji* (offerings).

Synthetic rituals performed in Java use offerings as offering to sacred sites (Gottowik, 2020; Smith, 2020). People believe that by giving *sesaji* or offerings, they will avoid the harm that can interfere with their lives. In not luwur, several foods are specified for the offerings, including *ketan*

**Figure 2.** The basic motif of Bakaran batik introduced by Nyai Sabirah at the end of the 14th century.



**Figure 3.** The Bakaran batik motif is the result of the development and integration of Chinese culture.



*salak*, *jajanan pasar* or market snacks, coconut leaves and young coconut, *minyak telon*, *kemenyan*, coins, and *nginang* ingredients such as betel nut, gambier, whiting, and tobacco. Ketan Salak is a food made from glutinous rice and Salak fruit cooked with palm sugar or Javanese sugar. The salak sticky rice dough is then moulded into 14 small balls. Salak sticky rice offerings are divided into two places with 7 items in each place. In Javanese tradition, the odd number 7 is a symbol of the creation of nature so that some Javanese rituals, such as the *Selamatan*, are carried out for up



to 7 days (Woodward, 1988). Ketan Salak sesaji are *jarans* or horses with the intention of Nyai Sabirah getting a horse ride in the afterlife.

While *jajanan pasar* are sesaji comprising food sold such as *jadah*,<sup>1</sup> fruits, *dawet*,<sup>2</sup> sticky rice tape, and peanuts. All these *jajanan pasar* are packaged into 7 packs like salak sticky rice. To add a sacred impression to the breaking of *luwur* ritual, the offerings are added with telon flowers, young coconut and leaves, and incense. *Kembang Telon* comprise roses and kantil flowers or a type of jasmine flower. These two flowers are also often found in the Javanese syncretism tradition at sacred sites (Smith, 2020). The tradition of *Buka Luwur* is also a depiction of providing benefits to others by distributing coins to residents. This ritual is called *udik-udik*. To commemorate Nyai Sabirah's habit, the ornaments for offerings are added with betel, gambier, whiting, and tobacco because, during her life, Nyai Sabirah routinely used *nginang* or the ancient woman's habit of chewing these ingredients to strengthen her teeth and add freshness to her mouth.

The ritual of breaking the *luwur* begins with cleaning the entire location of the Nyai Sabirah shrine, voluntarily, by the Bakaran Wetan community. During the opening ceremony, the community was read about the life history of Nyai Sabirah, who had founded the Bakaran village with all her kindness to commemorate the services of the character. Then proceed with the handover of the *luwur* cloth, blue scarf, and *wori* cloth to the Juwana sub-district head by the head caretaker of Nyai Sabirah's petilasan, namely Mbah Basir. This ritual is sacred because the substance of the folklore that is taught contains respect for people who are prominent or *disesepuhkan* (elders) in the founding of Bakaran village. So that Chambert-Loir calls it the "cult of the saint" at the shrines which are then turned into a tomb as a marker for performing ritual worship (Chambert-Loir, 2002). In some other places, breaking the *luwur* is done to pay homage to the Wali site, celebrated once a year by holding a similar ritual (Bonneff, 1980). With the meaning that *Buka Luwur* is a tradition of respecting a sacred site in Java.

## 7. Sigit and Nyai Sabirah's Saying

Nyai Sabirah is an emancipation figure who teaches women to be independent and establish a village and lead the community. Bakaran village is closely related to this one character. Wessing assessed that the characterisations in Javanese folklore are always related to regional mythology and concerns of local spirit in restoring nature and culture (Wessing, 2006). Nyai Sabirah's spirit and intelligence could persuade people to build a building called *Sigit*. In this discussion, *sigit* is juxtaposed with the advice of the figure because this building is a place of "spirit school" for the people of Bakaran village.

*Sigit* which means "*isine wong anggit*" or contains a group of intelligent people. This building resembles a mosque, the entrance side faces east and the front side faces the Qibla. In 1923 *sigit* underwent renovations on the foundation of the roof of the main door, and the porch. Wood or *blandar* is the main material for the construction of this building, with red brick as a reinforcement. Some writings that have been renovated are September 15, 10 November 1923, 1949, and 15 February 1957. The word "contains a collection of smart people" is addressed to the people of Bakaran village who were invited by Nyai Sabirah after the main harvest to eat together and watch a puppet show. The goal is that after experiencing the joy of the harvest by eating together, Nyai Sabirah invites the people in *Sigit* to contemplate God's goodness through *wayang* performances. After watching the story in the *wayang*, Nyai Sabirah invited them to discuss good values for nature conservation and social attitudes towards others. *Wayang* performances are performed by the community itself whom Nyai Sabirah has trained. From here, Nyai Sabirah became known as a figure in Jepara who put forward tolerance and social values.

As a place for the soul's school, in *sigit* Nyai Sabirah gives her advice to invite people to understand the meaning of life. Through *wayang* performances and chatting together after eating

harvested food, through the media and in this way, Nyai Sabirah has taught the values of social education to the people of Bakaran. Because of his character, sigit was built based on community self-help to use simple materials from the forest. Even though it is like a mosque, but the sigit does not have faith or a place to lead prayers, because indeed Nyai Sabirah is not from among Muslims but still accepts Muslims to take part in the school of souls. The building is like a large hall, like the main room, and there are several chambers in a foyer. The main room is used by Nyai Sabirah by holding *wayang kulit* shows and eating together as a form of refreshing the mind from socialising.

Sigit and *wayang kulit* are perceived as the main entities in the history of performing arts amid different loci periodisation. In the history's context of performing arts, *wayang kulit* is an art performance that negotiates between the aesthetics and philosophies of the two major religions in Indonesia (Hinduism and Islam) where there is assimilation between Hinduism and Sufism (Harnish & Rasmussen, 2011). While in locus, *wayang kulit* is a conversion tool in Islamic palaces or palaces to fight against colonial invaders (Foley, 2015). As in sigit, *wayang kulit* acts as a means of persuasion and mobilisation carried out by aristocrats such as Nyai Sabirah from the famous Majapahit family to gain legitimacy of power in her migration area. From here, Nyai Sabirah is famous for her social education mission, especially to the Bakaran community.

Besides the soul school, Nyai Sabirah also teaches honouring guests. Among the famous advice of Nyai Sabirah is to be *diaruh*, *disuguh*, and *direngkuh*. Indonesian people have always been known as people who like to honour guests. This appears in films such as *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* where Fahri as a student from Indonesia who graduated from al-Azhar University Cairo reprimands someone who hates Islam, saying that Islam is a religion that respects guests and Fahri's country respects guests very much (Brenner, 2011). *Diaruh* means the word cool, so every guest who comes is given cool, happy, and painless words. *Disuguh* means that every guest who comes is given food and drink, and *direngkuh* means that every guest who visits is considered as a relative. Honouring guests in the Indonesian context is more about the relationship between the dimensions of religion and humanity by entertaining them and providing food as snacks as respect (Fitrisia et al., 2018). People who come to visit have certain intentions and urgent interests so that Nyai Sabirah provides an example and message to the Bakaran village community to honour guests in these three aspects.

Visiting in family psychology is like visiting a park in the open when the weather is hot (Laforteza et al., 2009). This sensation is got when the host gives beautiful words as a conversation (*diaruh*) and provides snacks and drinks (*disuguh*). If they finished visiting, they are considered brothers by the host (*direngkuh*). In Indonesia, this tradition has been entrenched for a long time so that Indonesian people are known as people who like to honour guests. Drinks as coffee or tea and snacks such as sweet cakes are dishes called "*suguhan* or treats". This story about honouring guests by Nyai Sabirah is taught to her children and grandchildren, namely *Soponyono* or *Sapayana* and who is now a *dalang* (puppeteer) or person who plays *wayang kulit*. *Dalang Soponyono* is popular in the oral tradition of Javanese *wayang*, but no one has studied the scientific study of this puppeteer. The prowess of the *dalang Soponyono* in playing the puppeteer of the *wayang kulit* has attracted the sympathy of the rulers of the Paranggaruda Kadipaten. Although until now no one has studied it, the daily stories that often hire a puppeteer to the palace are listed in the *Serat Babad Pati* (Hakim, 2016).

#### **8. Batik village: Tangible heritage**

Besides the oral inheritance passed down from generation to generation to the Bakaran community, Nyai Sabirah also passed down the way of making batik to the women in Bakaran village. Because there are no scientific sources that explain how Nyai Sabirah teaches batik, only folklore can reveal information about Nyai Sabirah's teachings about the art of batik. In the beginning, Nyai Sabirah taught how to hold a *canting* or a batik tool, a kind of large pen filled with hot ink. Nyai Sabirah teaches to carve *canting* onto cloth media that has the basic motif drawn. Until now, in the modern era, the women in Bakaran village continue to pursue the craft and serve as one centre of batik in the Pati area of Central Java, which is very famous.

The story of *mbatik* begins with Nyai Sabirah's concern for unemployed women after the establishment of Bakaran village. The men work as farmers and fishers in the coastal area of the North Coast of Java (Pantura) as the border of Pati district in the north. As Majapahit's closest family, Nyai Sabirah was given the position of Nurse Pusakan and clothing procurement division in the Majapahit kingdom. Armed with that, Nyai Sabirah saw the condition of the women of Bakaran village, who had no other activities other than cooking and taking care of the family. As a woman who cares about women's emancipation, Nyai Sabirah finally donated the knowledge of batik she had gained while serving as an official of the Majapahit kingdom.

Nyai Sabirah made the basic pattern of batik based on the natural conditions of Bakaran village, which were forest elements, leaves, marine catches, and the philosophy of life. The first pattern is the theme of plants in the forest, comprising patterns of *blebak duri*, *blebak kopik*, *manggaran*, *kegat ireng*, and *padas gempal*. The second pattern is a leaf theme comprising *ungker cantel*, *blebak kopik* or *kopi pecah*, *bregat ireng*, *blebak lung*, *rawan*, *puspo baskoro*, and *gringsing*. The third pattern of the theme of marine catches is *blebak urang*. While the last pattern of elements that describe the philosophy of life such as *gandrung*, *limaran*, *liris*, *magel ati*, *kedele kecer* and *sido rukun*. Except for the Merak Ngigel which is the only depiction of forest animals in the batik pattern taught by Nyai Sabirah. 24 typical Bakaran batik motifs are taught and introduced by Nyai Sabirah to the public, but which are thought to be the original tangible heritage of folklore, totalling 18 motifs and patented by the Pati Regency Government as the original heritage of Bakaran village, the rest results from the combination and development of Chinese culture (see in Figure 2).

The theme of the philosophy of life, the *gandrung* pattern is the most popular among the Bakaran people. *Gandrung* describes Joko Pekuwon's waiting and longing for Nyai Sabirah. This pattern was painted by Nyai Sabirah herself as romance when she was loved by a man who was crazy about her. This motif combines circles with short lines so that it forms like a network of cells that depicts Joko Pekuwon's longing that combines them in every moment of life. Another pattern is a form of the depiction of the philosophy of life such as *magel ati*, *kedele kecer*, and *sido rukun*. *Magel ati* patterned squares that are divided and not connected. Contrary to the *gandrung* pattern, *magel ati* gives a message to youth in particular so that they do not divide each other. This motif is continued with another motif, namely *Sido Harmoni* as an answer if one day there is a split between the community. Nyai Sabirah as the founder mother of Bakaran village, aspires to make her village prosperous and its people prosperous. Nyai Sabirah also put this ideal into a batik motif called *kedele kecer*, where there are hundreds of scattered soybeans as a symbol of the welfare of the community in abundance, like the many scattered soybeans.

This motif results from development after introducing synthetic colours in the 1960s by the Chinese community in Indonesia. Coppel identified that the Chinese *peranakan* had settled in Indonesia since the end of the 15th century and inhabited several areas in Indonesia and spread to other countries such as Malaysia and Singapore (Coppel, 2012). They have a diaspora to Southeast Asia countries because they have long-established diplomatic relations between the Majapahit kingdom and the Chinese Empire when Cheng Ho, a famous Muslim sea admiral, made sea expeditions to Java and Malacca (Al Qurtuby, 2009). From here, the *peranakan* Chinese blended in with the Javanese society and gave the ethnic Chinese colour to the Javanese culture, including the batik motifs developed by the Bakaran village (see in Figure 3).

All the batik motifs taught by Nyai Sabirah are predominantly black, which is a symbol of the natural colour of the leaves that grow in the forest area when Nyai Sabirah and the community carry out *langes* and forest deforestation activities, except for some development batik motifs. The colours of the leaves and forest plants are inspired by Tini wood, Tegeran wood, and Jambol wood leaves. Meanwhile, the materials used by Nyai Sabirah as ink materials vary from the bark of the Tingi tree and Kudu root for brown, and Tegeran wood for yellow. The dominance of the black colour with the yellow colour combination is typical of Bakaran batik as the fruit of Nyai Sabirah's legacy.

### 9. The myth sacredness of Nyai Sabirah

The Bakaran people, especially in the eastern part (Bakaran Wetan) live in a very strong tradition and heritage of Nyai Sabirah's folklore. The advice of Nyai Sabirah is considered as a way of life for the Bakaran Wetan community even though it is classified as a myth. Society highly respects these myths as part of the social order and there is a supernatural power surrounding the folklore. The myth is a type of prohibition, and society may not violate it.

The first myth is about the prohibition of building houses out of red brick. Until now, the Bakaran people are prohibited from building houses made of red brick. The reason is that Nyai Sabirah's Oath Well is made of red brick. So respecting the Nyai, people are prohibited from making from this material.

*"Wonten inkang warga sing griyane dibangun dugi bata abrit. Tiyang sing mendiami griya niku awale sakit biasa, namung dereng lekas diparingi waras. Akhirenipun griya sing ditinggali dirobohke kale pemiliknya".* Meaning: "There is one resident whose house is made of red brick. The person who lived in the house initially suffered from a common illness and then did not recover. Finally, the house was torn down by the owner" (Basyir, 2019b).

*"Wonten kisah male. Pak Saidan warga setempat meniko boten percados mitos niku, lan nekat mbangun griya dugi bata abrit. Sampune griya meniko rampung, putranipun Pak Saidan pisahan kale garwone lan meninggal. Akhire griya niku dipuger kale Pak Saidan lan pugeran bangunan niku tasek wonten jejake, sehingga sakniki boten enten seng wantun mbangun griya dugi bata abrit."* Meaning: "There is another story. A resident of Bakaran Wetan named Mr Saidan did not believe in the myth and was desperate to build a house out of red bricks. After the house was completed, Mr Saidan's son divorced his wife and later died. Finally, Mr Saidan tore down the house and the rest of the collapsed building is still there today" (Basyir, 2019b).

The two stories above add to the legitimacy of the myth that is made to make it sacred. Borrowing Behrend's term, that myth is deliberately created from a cosmic gap that describes the cause and effect of human actions to emphasise that sacred sites have an addendum to God's destiny (Behrend, 1989).

The second myth is a collection of food prohibitions. Three prohibitions are sacred in this folklore, namely the prohibition of selling rice, the prohibition of "incip" or trying the taste of food for a feast or slametan, and cooking in a state of purification. This myth is very popular in the Pati community, Central Java and outside the region, which is contradictory to the sociology of Javanese society. Residents of the Bakaran community, especially the wetan (eastern) area, are prohibited from selling rice, either from the business of opening a *warung lesehan* or selling packaged rice and ordering services related to selling rice. This myth develops, creating a cycle of fear for offenders as in the first myth. In the story, Nyai Sabirah never sells rice for business needs. He always gave rice to people in need. As respect for Nyai Sabirah, this prohibition myth honoured the services of Nyai Sabirah who cares for hungry people.

As with the first myth, this prohibition is reinforced by the story of the experiences of the Bakaran Wetan community:

In the past there were Bakaran Wetan people who tried to sell rice, in the end all the cooked food was stale. The traders don't dare to sell or buy rice. If they want to buy rice, people can't say 'buy' but have to say "kulo nyuwun sekul" or I ask for rice. Merchants will voluntarily provide rice and food free." (Mustopa, 2019).

Likewise, with the myth of the prohibition of "incip" food for a *kenduri* or *slametan* because trying the taste of the dish is a dishonourable act in honouring guests, as taught by the ancestor of the Bakaran community (Nyai Sabirah) who honors guests. Nyai Sabirah is considered a person who



**Table 1. Mapping the folklore of Nyai Sabirah**

No	Category	Folklore Title	Inheritance Type	Grassroots
1	Myth	Nyai Sabirah, a female emancipation figure who ran away from Majapahit kingdom	Intangible	The invasion of the Demak Sultanate and the history of the collapse of Majapahit kingdom
		Belik the 'Sumur Sumpah' and its sacredness	Tangible	Artifacts of wells made by Nyai Sabirah, and the story of Joko Pekuwon
		Fasting "mutih" Monday-Thursday in Punden	Intangible	The figure will meet the pilgrim
		Ritual 'melek in pendapa'		
		'sowan' to Nyai Sabirah		Blessings
		Langes or babad hutan	Tangible	Bakaran village
		Buka Luwur ritual	Intangible	Sacred the petilasan site
		Merti Dusun ritual		Heritage conservation
		Soul School Sigit "isine wong anggit"	Tangible	community empowerment
		'Batik village'		Bakaran village
		18 batik motifs		Bakaran Batik
		Prohibition of building a house of red brick ( <i>bata merah</i> ).	Intangible	Sacred the petilasan site
		Prohibition of selling rice		Sacred characters
		Don't 'incip' or try the taste of food for <i>kenduri</i> and <i>slametan</i> .		Honoring guests
		Purification for those who cook food for <i>kenduri</i> and <i>slametan</i> .		Javanese ritual syncretism
2	Legend	Joko Pekuwon's Longing		The inspiration for the story of Roro Jonggrang and Bandung Bondowoso
3	Saga	Died "Muksa"		Javanese ritual syncretism
		Sesaji 'ketan salak'		
4	Saying	<i>diaruh, diasuh, direngkuh</i>		Honoring guests

*Note: Source: research data processing*

has never tasted the food that will be given to guests. This story develops and is then enforced by the community at the moment of kenduri and slametan events. People believe that this myth is a behaviour taught by Nyai Sabirah and for those who violate it will get bad things.

This food myth continues to the person who cooks the food as the incip prohibition above. It is forbidden for women who cook food for feasts and slametans when they are dirty or menstruating, and they are required to purify themselves or *wudū'* (ablution). The reason for this myth is that kenduri and slametans are sacred events and pray for the ancestors. This activity is one of worship, so in its implementation, it must also be in a holy state. In the Javanese tradition, food is a type of offering that is highly considered in certain rituals, such as offerings to ancestors and entertaining guests in the palace tradition (Hefner, 1983; Heringa, 1997). The type of food served and the ritual of making it in Javanese tradition is a sacred matter that must be obeyed and should not be violated by its adherents.

### 10. Mapping Nyai Sabirah's folklore

Cook divides folklore into three categories, namely myths, legends, and fairy tales (Cook, 1976), while Teverson adds saga and saying (Teverson, 2019). Myth is a part of folklore which tells about the past and contains elements of the universe and its contents, such as descriptions of the world and its inhabitants. The content of folklore in myths is slightly persuasive in personifying a phenomenon (Lévi-Strauss & Wilcken, 2013). Legend is a genre of folklore that presents a visualization of human actions believed to be true in the past. The genre of human action can be supernatural powers, miracles, or miracles experienced by someone, which becomes an oral story passed down from time to time (Degh, 1991). A *saga* is a folktale told in ancient history books, which explains that the story's narrative has been stated in legendary prose, poem, or short story. At the same time, *petuah* advises young people on advice (see in Table 1).

In Nyai Sabirah's folklore, several categories are got, including:

Currently, all folklore about Nyai Sabirah is still being taught and passed down from generation to generation to the community. Besides a story, this oral heritage also has historical value and artefacts, as evidenced by the legacy of Nyai Sabirah. We call it a tangible heritage that is manifested as a rural area (Bakaran village), a local speciality product (batik motif) which is inherited directly by Nyai Sabirah. Reinforcing oral traditions as myths, legends, saga, and advice from Nyai Sabirah, this tangible heritage is what Cvijić and Guzijan call a city brand, namely a brand identity of an urban or rural area that has a local cultural heritage (Cvijić & Guzijan, 2013).

### 11. Conclusion

In the Indonesian context, oral tradition is one of the cultural heritages that make up the hierarchy of society. Folklore is a tradition that is deeply rooted in society and is used as a guide for religious and social life. In Pati Regency, Central Java, there is a village formed by the character of a woman descended from the Majapahit kingdom who fled to the forest, the effect of the conflict at the end of the fall of Majapahit. Nyai Sabirah is a figure who is sacred by the community because of her services in clearing forest land (deforestation) to be used as a village area so that the so-called Bakaran village was established. For her dedication, the community sacred Nyai Sabirah with various folk tales comprising myths, legends, saga, and the saying of the Nyai taught to the public. Not only that, the folklore of Nyai Sabirah contains a high contribution value for the Bakaran Wetan community in particular and the Pati district with the existence of a typical Bakaran batik cloth motif. Apparently Nyai Sabirah's folklore contains intangible heritage values with various social education and tangible inheritance as Bakaran village and eighteen batik cloth motifs, both of which are taught by Nyai Sabirah from generation to generation through folklore. This research breaks through the space between Javanese syncretism and the social reality that ancestral cultural heritage plays a role in forming an independent and highly tolerant local civilization.

### Acknowledgments

We want to thank the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) of Kudus, Central Java, which has encouraged the author as motivation to complete this paper. We also thank the Center for the Study of Muslim Society, which has contributed to this research.

### Author details

Abdul Karim<sup>1</sup>  
 E-mail: [karim.iainkudus@gmail.com](mailto:karim.iainkudus@gmail.com)  
 ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5610-6232>  
 Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya<sup>2</sup>  
 ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1934-2161>  
 Abdul Mutholib<sup>3</sup>  
 Akhmad Nurul Kawakip<sup>4</sup>  
 Agus Retnanto<sup>5</sup>  
 Mukroji<sup>6</sup>  
<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Tarbiyah, State Islamic Institute of Kudus, Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia.  
<sup>2</sup> Research Department of Anthropology, Center for the Study of Muslim Society, Malang, East Java, Indonesia.  
<sup>3</sup> Department of Arabic Language Education, State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia.  
<sup>4</sup> Postgraduate at the State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, East Java, Indonesia.  
<sup>5</sup> Department of Arabic Language Education, State Islamic University of K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri, Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia.  
<sup>6</sup> K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri State Islamic University in Purwokerto Central Java.

### Citation information

Cite this article as: Nyai Sabirah's folklore and sacred local heritage in Central Java, Abdul Karim, Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, Abdul Mutholib, Akhmad Nurul Kawakip, Agus Retnanto & Mukroji, *Cogent Arts & Humanities* (2023), 10: 2198629.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Jadah*, is one of the local snacks that can be found in Central Java. This cake is made of glutinous rice like *wajik*. However, the cooking method is not mixed with Javanese sugar but with coconut milk from young coconuts, and the dregs are printed into a rectangular or triangular baking dish like *wajik*. *Jadah*, was used during religious rituals and rituals to reject disasters such as requests for safety from the eruption of Mount Merapi. See in (Aisyah, 2022).
- <sup>2</sup> *Dawet* is a typical Javanese drink originating from Ponorogo (East Java), made from glutinous rice flour served with grated ice and mixed with Javanese sugar and coconut milk. *Dawet* was introduced in the fifteenth century during the Demak Sultanate when Bathoro Katong (governor) served this drink to Raden Patah.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### References

- Aciri, A. (2019). Becoming a Bhairava in 19th-Century Java. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 47(139), 285–307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2019.1639925>
- Adu, P. (2019). *A Step-by-Step Guide to Qualitative Data Coding*. Routledge.
- Agus, C. (2021). Revitalization of local traditional culture for sustainable development of national character building in Indonesia. *World Sustainability Series*, 16 (57), 347–369. 2021-11 27. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78825-4\\_21](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78825-4_21).

- Aisyah, V. N. (2022). Ritual communication and disasters preparedness in the slope of merapi volcano. In *In* (pp. 141–151). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220501.016>
- Al Qurtuby, S. (2009, April). The Tao of Islam: Ceng Ho and the Legacy of Chinese Muslims in Pre-Modern Java. *Studia Islamika*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v16i1.489>
- Anttonen, P. (2008). Tradition and heritage in ethnological practice and theory. *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, 17(2), 84–97. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ajec.2008.170206>
- Anttonen, P. (2012). *Oral Traditions and the Making of the Finnish Nation*. Brill. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004211834\\_017](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004211834_017)
- Antweiler, C. (2019). Towards a cosmopolitan Indonesia: Makassar as a paradigm for organising cultural diversity? *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 47(3), 340–363. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04703004>
- Aurini, J. D., Heath, M., & Howells, S. (2021). *The How to of Qualitative Research*. SAGE.
- Baswir, M. (2019a). Keberadaan Belik: Sumur Sumpah Nyai Ageng Bakaran (Nyai Sabirah).
- Baswir, M. (2019b). Mitos Larangan Mendirikan Rumah dari Bata Merah.
- Baswir, M. (2019c). Pembagian wilayah langes.
- Baswir, M. (2019d). Rasa Syukur Para Peziarah.
- Behrend, T. E. (1989). Kraton and cosmos in traditional Java. *Archipel*, 37(1), 173–187. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.1989.2569>
- Bonneff, M. (1980). Vu de Kudus : L'Islam à Java. *Annales Histoire Sciences Sociales*, 35(3–4), 801–815. <https://doi.org/10.3406/ahess.1980.282669>
- Boogert, J. V. D. (2017). The role of slametan in the discourse on Javanese Islam. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 45(133), 352–372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2017.1345166>
- Bougas, W. (1998). Bantayan: An early makassarese kingdom, 1200–1600 A.D. *Archipel*, 55(1), 83–123. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.1998.3444>
- Brenner, S. (2011). Holy matrimony? The Print Politics of Polygamy in Indonesia. In Andrew, N. W. (Ed.), *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia*. Routledge.
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposeful Sampling: Complex or Simple? Research Case Examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652–661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>
- Cash, J. R. (2011). *Villages on Stage: Folklore and Nationalism in the Republic of Moldova*. LIT Verlag Münster.
- Chambert-Loir, H. (2002). Saints and Ancestors: The Cult of Muslim Saints in Java. In Anthony, R. (Ed.), *The Potent Dead*. Routledge.
- Cook, E. (1976). *The Ordinary and the Fabulous: An Introduction to Myths, Legends and Fairy Tales (Second Edition ed.)*. Cambridge University Press.
- Coppel, C. A. (2012). Diaspora and Hybridity: Peranakan Chinese Culture in Indonesia. In Chee-Beng, T. (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*. Routledge.
- Cvijić, S., & Guzman, J. (2013). Cultural and historical heritage: An Asset for City Branding. *Spatium*, (30), 23–27. <https://doi.org/10.2298/SPAT1330023C>
- Fitrisia, D. R., Sibarani, M., & Ritonga, M. U. (2018). Pragmemic Triggers in the Acehnese Commensality. *KnE Social Sciences*, 3(4), 255–265. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i4.1937>

- Foley, K. (2015). The ronggeng, the wayang, the Wali, and Islam: Female or transvestite male dancers-singers-performers and evolving Islam in West Java. *Asian Theatre Journal*, 32(2), 356–386. <https://doi.org/10.1353/atj.2015.0057>
- Forshee, J. (2006). *Culture and Customs of Indonesia*. Greenwood Press.
- Gottowik, V. (2018). Pilgrims, Prostitutes, and Ritual Seks: Heterodox Ritual Practices in the Context of the Islamic Veneration of Saints in Central Java. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*, 174(4), 393–421. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17404001>
- Gottowik, V. (2020). Ritual, Sex and the Body: Heterodox Ritual Practices at Pilgrimage Sites in Central Java. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 21(4), 332–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2020.1800811>
- Guillot, C., & Couteau, J. (2002). The Tembayat Hill: Clergy and Royal power in central java from the 15th to the 17th Century. In Anthony, R. (Ed.), *The Potent Dead*. Routledge.
- Hakim, M. T. (2016). Sabdopalon Dan Nayagenggong Sebagai Vidūṣaka Dalam Serat Babad Pati. *Jumantara: Jurnal Manuskrip Nusantara*, 7(1), 65–87. <https://doi.org/10.26610/metasastra.2015.v8i2.275-288>
- Harnish, D., & Rasmussen, A. (2011). Past and present issues of Islam within the central Javanese gamelan and wayang kulit. *Divine Inspirations: Music and Islam in Indonesias*, no. Query date: 20211226 13: 14: 03. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195385410.003.0002>
- Hasyim, A. W. (2021). Demak sultanate: The Fortress of Islamic Greatness in the Middle Ages Java Island. *Buletin Al-Turas*, 27(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v27i1.16400>
- Hefner, R. W. (1983). Ritual and cultural reproduction in non-islamic java. *American Ethnologist*, 10(4), 665–683. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1983.10.4.02a00030>
- Hellman, J. (2017). Living together with ancestors: cultural heritage and sacred places on West Java. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 5(1), 78–88.
- Hellman, J. (2018). Pilgrimage and historical tourism on West Java: Learning about History. In *Religious Tourism in Asia: Tradition and Change through Case Studies and Narratives* (pp. 77–86). CAB International.
- Hellman, J. C. R. B. (2009). Fasting Rituals in West Java. In B. S. T. and (Ed.), *The Body in Asia* (Vol. 3, p. 59). Berghahn.
- Heringa, R. (1997). Dewi Sri in village garb: Fertility, myth, and ritual in northeast Java. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 56(2), 355–377. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1178731>
- Hoang, N. T., & Kanemoto, K. (2021). Mapping the deforestation footprint of nations reveals growing threat to tropical forests. *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, 5(6), 845–853. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41559-021-01417-z>
- Husson, L. (1997). Eight Centuries of Madurese Migration to East Java. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 6(1), 77–102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719689700600105>
- Johns, A. H. (1964). The role of structural organisation and myth in Javanese Historiography. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 24(1), 91–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2050416>
- Jonge, H. D. (1998). Pilgrimages and Local Islam on Java. *Studia Islamika* 5 (2) <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v5i2.751> *Studia Islamika* 5(2)
- Kern, R. A. (1961). Dedemit. (Met Naschrift van Th. Pigeaud). *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 117(3), 386–387. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90002183>
- Kouznetsova, S. (2002). The oldest manuscript of babad mataram (BL MSS JAV. 36) in the Context of Javanese Babad Manuscripts of the Eighteenth Century in British Collections. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 30(86), 63–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639810220134674>
- Kutin, B. I., & Kropej Telban, M. (2018). Ohranjanje nesnovne kulturne dediščine Z lokalnimi pripovedmi V prostorupreservation of intangible cultural heritage through local legends of place. *Traditiones*, 47(3), 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.3986/Traditio2018470307>
- Laforteza, R., Carrus, G., Sanesi, G., & Davies, C. (2009). Benefits and well-being perceived by people visiting green spaces in periods of heat stress. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 8(2), 97–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2009.02.003>
- Malioboro, J. (1996). ‘Prambanan (Central Java, Indonesia)’. In *Asia and Oceania*. Routledge.
- Miles, M. B., Michael Huberman, A., & Saldana, J. (2018). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. SAGE Publications.
- Mustopa. (2019). *Larangan Menjual Nasi*.
- Mydiantoro A., & Halengkara, L. (2021). Values Folklore in West Lampung Indonesia. *Folklor/Edebiyat*, 27(106), 597–608. <https://doi.org/10.22559/folklor.1633>
- Pemberton, J. (2018). *On the Subject of ‘Java’*. On the Subject of ‘Java’. Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501729362>
- Perumal, B., Kalaiyarasi, M., Deny, J., & Muneeswaran, V. (2021). ‘Forestry land cover segmentation of SAR Image Using Unsupervised ILKFCM’. *Materials Today: Proceedings*, March. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.matpr.2021.01.779>
- Pigeaud, T. G. T. (1960). ‘Java in the 14th Century’. *The Nagara-Kertagama by R. Prapanca of Majapahit, 1365 A. D.* <https://ci.nii.ac.jp/naid/10029393853/>
- Rah, M. (2019). Uji Kesaktian Belik Sumur Sumpah Nyai Ageng Bakaran.
- Raya, Moch. Khafidz Fuad (2022) Wali Pitu in Bali: Inventing New Halal Tourism Destinations in Contemporary Indonesia *Contemporary Islam* November <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-022-00503-8> *Contemporary Islam* 2–3475–505
- Ricklefs, M. (1972). A 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(2), 285–315. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X00109371>
- Ruslan, A. (2021). Discourse and Identity in the Indonesian Short Animation “Si Pitung”. *Review of International Geographical Education Online*, 11(5), 149–158. <https://doi.org/10.48047/rigeo.11/5/15>
- Santyaningtyas, A. C. (2016). Preserving of Traditional Culture Expression in Indonesia. *Asian Social Science*, 12(7), 59–65. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v12n7p59>
- Scherer, S. (1998). Globalisation in Java in the 16th Century. A Review of Pramoedya’s Arus Balik. *Archipel*, 55(1), 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.1998.3441>
- Schimmel, A. (1975). *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Univ of North Carolina Press.
- Setiawati, R. (2016). Meaning Construction of “ngalap Berkah” Ritual in Mountain Kemukus of Central Java in Indonesia: An Interpretation from

- a Communication Perspective. *Man in India*, 96(11), 4749–4764.
- Seyed-Gohrab, A. A. (2021). *Laylī and Majnūn: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Nizāmī's Epic Romance*. BRILL.
- Slama, M. (2014). From Wali Songo to Wali Pitu: The travelling of Islamic Saint Veneration to Bali. *Between Harmony and Discrimination: Negotiating Religious Identities Within Majority-Minority Relationships in Bali and Lombok*, 17, 112–143. Query date: 2021-07-15 20:20. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004271494\\_006](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004271494_006)
- Smith, R. (2020, April). Mysticism and Syncretism on the Island of Java. *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*, [https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp\\_collection/3348](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/3348)
- Suriyani N. E., Umaidiono, A., Suharno, N. E., & Hidayati, S. E. N. (2020). The portrait of tourism and “ngalap berkah” at sunan kalijaga site in gresik, Indonesia. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 9 (1), 1–21.
- Testa, A. (2016). From Folklore to Intangible Cultural Heritage. Observations about a Problematic Filiation. *Osterreichische Zeitschrift Fur Volkskunde*, 70(3), 221–243.
- Teverson, A. 2019. Review of *Review of simple forms: legend, saga, myth, riddle, saying, case, memorabile, Fairy Tale, Joke.*, by André Jolles, Peter J. Schwartz, and Fredric Jameson. *Marvels & Tales* 33 (1): 207–209.
- Theodore, G. T., & de Graaf, H. J. (1976). The First Islamic States of Java 15th and 16th Centuries. In *Islamic States in Java 1500–1700* (pp. 1–23). Springer.
- Troll, V. R., Deegan, F. M., Jolis, E. M., Budd, D. A., Dahren, B., & Schwarzkopf, L. M. (2015). Ancient oral tradition describes volcano–earthquake interaction at merapi volcano, indonesia. *Geografiska Annaler, Series A: Physical Geography*, 97(1), 137–166. <https://doi.org/10.1111/geoa.12099>
- Tsing, A. (2007). *Indigenous Voice*. In *Indigenous Experience Today*. Routledge.
- Van, D.H.N., & De Jong, K. (2006). The Pilgrimage to Tembayat: Tradition and Revival in Islamic Mysticism in Contemporary Indonesia. In *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought* (pp. 482–506). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996188.ch29>
- Wessing, R. (1997). Nyai Roro Kidul in Puger: Local Applications of a Myth. *Archipel*, 53(1), 97–120. <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.1997.3395>
- Wessing, R. (2006). Homo Narrans in East Java: Regional Myths and Local Concerns. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 65 (1), 45–68.
- Woodward, M. R. (1988). The “Slametan”: Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam. *History of Religions*, 28(1), 54–89. <https://doi.org/10.1086/463136>
- Zuhri, S. (2013). Inventing Balinese Muslim Sainthood. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 41(119), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2012.750106>