

The Pilgrimage to Tembayat: Tradition and Revival in Indonesian Islam

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Visiting a holy grave or another spiritually potent site, especially at night, is a favorite practice for many Javanese. Yogyakarta is surrounded by some of the preeminent spiritual pilgrimage sites of Central Java. To the south is the coast area of Parangtritis, the location of the mythical spirit Queen of the South (Ratu Kidul). Close to that is the mausoleum of Imogiri with the grave of Sultan Agung (1613-46), the third and greatest king of the Muslim empire of Mataram. To the north is the active volcano Merapi, while to the northeast is the grave of one of the founders of Islam in Central Java: Sunan Bayat. This landscape still invites pilgrims and it is thought that cosmic forces and legendary characters are constantly present.¹

Pilgrimage to a holy place in Indonesia is called *ziarab*. Basically, sites for *ziarab* on Java are the graves of Muslim saints or Muslim kings and nobles. For example, the graves of the *wali sanga*, the founders of Islam on Java, draw visitors from all over the archipelago, while many graves of Muslim leaders, mystics or initiators of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), the *kiyai*, are of local importance. Pilgrimages are also made to sites situated in impressive natural landscapes such as mountaintops and caverns often considered to be holy places, loci of spiritual and magical forces. Popular belief holds that a grave on top of a mountain considerably adds to the atmosphere of holiness. Thus, several graves of Muslim saints are situated on tops of mountains. The Javanese people—Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists—like to spend the night in such places while holding vigils of fasting and meditating, or to give a *selamatan*, a meal of blessing.²

***Ziarab* in Java**

Undertaking a pilgrimage to a grave or an otherwise potent holy site is popular in Java. According to Franz Magnis-Suseno, "Faced with important

events of life or in need, the Javanese will perform prayers, and possibly undertake a pilgrimage to a magically potent site.”³ Although, in a way, most of the sites on Java are considered Islamic (due to the fact that 87% of the Indonesian population is Muslim), at many sites Islamic rituals are combined with Javanese-syncretistic rituals. Similarly, at Christian sites elements of both Christian and non-Christian beliefs and rituals are found in happy co-existence. This reality makes it a challenge to categorize Javanese pilgrimage sites along well-defined theological lines. Broadly speaking, *ziarah* takes place to three types of sites: Javanese-syncretistic sites; Muslim, Christian, Hindu or Buddhist sites; and sites that are officially considered Muslim, but in reality are Javanese-syncretistic.

Javanese-syncretistic sites are considered holy because they are situated in impressive landscapes. These can be found on mountaintops, in caves or trees, and in or near the ocean. For example, pilgrims come to a Javanese-syncretistic site in nature such as Mount Lawu (east of Solo) to practice various techniques of Javanese meditation (*semedi* and *tapa*), such as standing up to one’s neck in a sacred pool. The goals of this type of *ziarah* range from seeking esoteric knowledge (*ngelmu*), to obtaining magical powers (*kasekten*), to seeking unity with God.⁴ Many hope that their newly acquired spiritual powers eventually will be translated into tangible material gains. Muslim sites are the graves of Muslim saints, especially those of the *wali sanga*, and famous mystics and teachers of *pesantren* (*kiyai*). Many Muslims recite the Qur’ān over these graves and participate in chanting *tahlilan* (praise). The grave at Tembayat belongs to this category. In spite of the Islamic character of such sites, many pilgrims still pursue practices and rituals that would be considered non-Islamic by orthodox Islamic teaching. Some consider the graves of Muslim kings, princes and nobles to be holy, such as the grave of Sultan Agung. The Sultan embodies Javanese Islam and Javanese culture. His grave is frequented by all sorts of Muslims who desire to recite the Qur’ān or simply choose to visit the place for the sake of deriving inspiration from being close to the Sultan’s burial place.

The custom of *ziarah* in Java is also related to that of visiting the graves of deceased ancestors (*nyekar*). This is done mostly in the week prior to the beginning of Ramaḍan. At that time, the graves are cleaned and prayers said for the deceased. Some people ask the deceased to bless, for example, their wedding plans. Most Javanese believe that the ancestors display pleasure at the prayers of children and grandchildren. “It is the same as bringing them choice food while they are still alive,” a preacher once explained, “it makes them happy.”⁵ The living are also expected to facilitate the journey of the dead in the afterlife by giving *selamatan* at specific moments after death (up to the thousandth-day commemoration). This practice is believed to help the

souls advance upward to heaven.⁶ Both *ziarah* and *nyekar* are based on the belief that after death, the soul, at least temporarily, resides in the grave. Saints are thought to have the ability to commute between heaven and their tombs.⁷

There is a wide range of reasons why pilgrims visit certain sites. It is almost impossible to categorize these neatly. Most Javanese Muslims would identify themselves as believers in the one and only God, even if they practice *Kejawen*, the indigenous Javanese religion. The difference between an orthodox Muslim and a *Kejawen* Muslim is often explained in terms of religious duties. The *Kejawen* Muslim performs prayers, but not five times a day; he or she fasts, but not necessarily during Ramaḍan, and honors certain objects such as daggers and swords (*kris*) that are thought to hold intrinsic powers. Apart from magical knowledge or powers, *ziarah* always has a religious or spiritual connotation. Rituals and spiritual practices of pilgrims at all types of sites can overlap depending on the pilgrim's intentions and religious affiliation. Pilgrims visiting graves offer requests and prayers, ask for the deceased's blessing, or come to fulfill a vow. Motivations range from seeking true spiritual experiences, to wishing to honor the dead, to blatantly seeking worldly gains.

The Time

Correct timing is considered crucial for a successful *ziarah*. The correct day is decided by a system of time calculation based on combining the Javanese and the Islamic calendars. When certain days of the Javanese week (that has five days) coincide with the Islamic seven-day week, it will be considered a good time for *ziarah*. In cycles of thirty-five days, certain favorable combinations appear. Furthermore, *ziarah* takes place during the night since, in Javanese calculation, the new day begins at dusk. The nights preceding Tuesday and Friday (*Malam Selasa* and *Malam Jumaat*) are considered especially beneficial times. Also, the pilgrim should not leave the gravesite before midnight.⁸ A preeminent time for pilgrimage according to the Javanese calendar is the eve of the first of the month of *Sura*, the Javanese New Year.

Modifications in Pilgrimage

Since the 1980s, observers of *ziarah* have noticed three modifications in its practice. First, some places have become more popular while others declined. Second, pilgrims try to avoid syncretistic rituals, focusing more on those that are in agreement with normative Islam. Third, pilgrims spend less energy on strenuous journeys to holy sites, instead choosing places that are nearby and easy to reach. Often *ziarah* is simply a pleasant excursion to a

place full of blessings. As a result of this, trips to remote mountain tops or caves that require a high degree of endurance and asceticism seem to be in decline while pilgrims prefer to visit the graves and mausoleums that can be reached via smoothly paved asphalt roads. As John Pemberton observed, "the powers that the Central Javanese landscape once presented are now, it would seem, in sharp decline, . . . the spiritual attentions of most contemporary Javanese are focused on grave sites and the possible blessings they contain."⁹

Several factors may explain the shift from valuing potent landscapes to preferring graves of Muslim saints: the efforts of the Suharto regime (1966-1998), a revival of Indonesian Islam, and the demands of modern life that prevent pilgrims from making long and time consuming trips.

The so-called New Order (*Orde Baru*) government of President Suharto avidly promoted interest in human-made monuments such as graves and mausoleums. Grand projects such as the restoration of the Buddhist Borobudur and Hindu Prambanan temples were undertaken to promote local and foreign tourism. Restoration of Muslim monuments, combined with the building of roads and convenient staircases leading to the sites, encouraged Indonesians to visit graves and other holy places in droves. Along the way, a new place could be added in the hope that somehow one day a religious cult would spring up around it. An example of such a place is the grave of Suharto's wife, Mrs. Tien Suharto. Before the fall of the regime in 1998, members of Dharma Wanita, the (then obligatory) organization for civil servants' wives, would make bus trips to the grave in Solo in order to pay "respect" to Ibu Tien. A Java packed with monuments of supernatural holiness became the religious ideal and was considered the fundament on which the authority and power of the worldly government could rest.¹⁰ Furthermore, having Indonesians congregate at gravesites to pursue religious goals provided a substitute for political gatherings, practically forbidden at the time. To the Orde Baru government, *ziarah* was an outlet for religious energies that could have turned political, thus serving as a tool of control. By definition, *ziarah* is practiced by Muslims open to cultural influences on their faith. Hence, the Orde Baru regime promotion of *ziarah* can also be interpreted as a tool to keep Indonesian Muslims from becoming affiliated with more unwanted interpretations of Islam.

Partly due to this government repression, Indonesian Islam has experienced a strong renaissance since the 1980s. Fearing a spillover of the revolution in Iran and a call for an Islamic state, the Suharto regime tried to curb and streamline Muslim activities. According to Van Bruinessen, the result of this was that "many former political activists have devoted their passions and energies to the awakening and developing of an Islamic awareness among their compatriots."¹¹ Former political activists turned into religious activists,

following the slogan "Up to now we used politics for mission, now we will use mission for politics."¹² Their teachings, discussions and writings about Islam created a religious renaissance leading to improvement in Islamic education. When awareness about the non-Islamic rituals and beliefs connected with *ziarah* grew, it became a contested activity within Muslim circles that had tolerated it up to then.

The discussion concerning *ziarah* in Indonesia also serves as an indicator of the differences between the two largest Muslim organizations: the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdatul Ulama (NU). *Ziarah* is frowned upon by followers of the Muhammadiyah movement, founded in 1912. As a reformist movement, the Muhammadiyah has asked Muslims to stay away from Javanese (and other local) beliefs and practices. On the other hand, the Nahdatul Ulama, founded in 1926, has encouraged visiting the graves of their influential leaders (*kiyai*) and of the *wali sanga*. This is connected with the belief that NU teachers are considered links in a chain of Muslim scholars beginning in the sixth century. In NU circles, students of Islam, when confronted with important decisions in their lives, or when preparing to be teachers of Islam themselves, will seek the blessing of their deceased masters. Three days after being elected president of Indonesia on October 20, 1999, the former head of the NU, Abdurahman Wahid made his first trip to the grave of his teacher and ancestor, KH Hasyim Ashari, in order to seek blessings on his new calling. The NU traditionally is tolerant of Javanese practices that are not explicitly forbidden by Islam, such as holding a *selamatan* (meal of blessing). However, since the 1980s, there has been a movement within NU to emphasize the Islamic rituals and heritage and expel customs and rituals that are considered syncretistic. Hence, Islamic professionals watch over Islamic rituals such as reciting the Qur'an that take place near the tombs.

Because the Muhammadiyah and NU have expressed different opinions about visiting the graves, the position of *ziarah* has become ambiguous. Indonesian publications on pilgrimage are about the *Haji* to Mecca and little material about *ziarah* by Indonesian authors exists. Also, many pilgrims feel uncomfortable to admit that they are visiting holy graves at night.

Recently, large mosques and Muslim centers began to organize pilgrimages to the Muslim holy places in order to Islamize what is syncretistic and "nationalize" what used to be local. Hence, one runs into tour buses with pilgrims from Sumatra who in less than one week cover an average of 20 pilgrimage sites in Java. Invariably the *imam* of the mosque or another Muslim authority will guide the pilgrims in reciting texts of the Qur'an, and in performing the rituals at the grave. While moving from grave to grave, the

pilgrims eat in the bus, sleep on the graves and use the taps as their sanitary equipment for the ritual washing.

In Central Java, the so-called Kraton culture has also influenced pilgrimage. As descendants of the former Hindu and the early Muslim rulers, the sultans of Solo and Yogyakarta embody both Islamic and Javanese culture. In the Javanese worldview, society in all its layers is centered on the Sultan's power. He himself is thought to represent the Divine on earth, expressing God's norm of earthly existence via perfection of the arts, architecture and etiquette in the Kraton culture.¹³ The sultans' heritage endows them with spiritual powers that are still feared and respected by many Javanese. Yet, especially in Yogyakarta, the Kraton culture seeks to be compatible with official Islam. It considers the NU interpretation of Islam as the most congruous with Javanese culture.¹⁴ The Kraton encourages the practice of Islamic rituals at graves of former kings and sultans, yet it does not yield control of the pilgrimages to those graves to Muslim clerics.

The final reason for a shift in the landscape of pilgrimage is that religious or ascetic endeavors that are time consuming are in decline not only in Java but in many other regions of the world. Fewer people wish or are able to make time for a pilgrimage or spiritual exercise that takes months. Although there are still people who spend time in caves and trees and on mountaintops to acquire wisdom or inspiration, the demands and requirements of a fast paced contemporary life are also taking their toll there. Contemporary pilgrims consider visiting a nearby grave a more efficient use of time, with no decrease in the great power of blessing it yields.

The Landscape of Tembayat

The *ziarah* site at Tembayat is of particular interest in relation to the development of Islam in Java. The grave has strong links with Islam in Java resulting from the support given by Sunan to the powerful king of Mataram, Sultan Agung, whose kingdom replaced the great Hindu-Buddhist power of Majapahit (around 1294-1527). Although the site at Tembayat is squarely placed in the history of Java, it has remained a local place of pilgrimage. Being situated between the two centers of Javanese culture and history, the Kratons of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, the grave is managed differently from the graves of the other *wali sanga*. Sunan Bayat's grave competes with the powerful mausoleum where Sultan Agung, once Sunan's protégée, is buried in Imogiri. Seeking to increase or preserve their worldly power, politicians from Jakarta usually prefer the Imogiri mausoleum to the grave of Tembayat.

More often than not, *ziarah* is an expression of popular religion tied to a locality; that is, the Javanese system of beliefs differs from that of Indonesians

in other parts of the country. In *ziarah*, religion becomes an articulated ideology based on the local symbols and local understandings.¹⁵ Beliefs surrounding a place of pilgrimage are constructed by its myths, its history and by the efforts of those who were and are in charge of the place. Pilgrimages have to be kept 'alive'; thus guardians inform the pilgrims of the stories surrounding the saint, so that they will not lose interest in coming regularly. This constellation of features can be called the 'landscape' of any pilgrimage. The term 'landscape' here forms a "powerful organizing metaphor" that "consists not only of a physical terrain and architecture, but also of all the myths, traditions and narratives associated with natural and man-made features. In progressing through the physical geography a pilgrim travels and lives through a terrain of culturally constructed symbols."¹⁶

Tembayat

Situated in Central Java, Tembayat is a one-hour drive east of Yogyakarta. Legends about this saint inform us that he started his career as the rich governor of the city of Semarang. He is thought to have died in 1512 CE, a period in Javanese history coinciding with the replacement of the Hindu-Buddhist empire of Majapahit with the Muslim kingdom of Mataram. Furthermore, this time of important political change witnessed an intensive process of Islamic missionary activity aimed at converting the Javanese to Islam. At that time, Sunan Bayat's name was Adipati Pandan Arang. After being called to embrace Islam repeatedly, the Adipati left his riches and power behind and devoted himself to prayer, meditation and the preaching of Islam.¹⁷ Already during his lifetime Sunan Bayat became a famous religious teacher who regularly performed miracles. He gathered a great following of students around him, who immediately after his death built him a grand tomb, after which Sunan Bayat's fame grew even more.

What started out as a single tomb has now grown into a mausoleum where Sunan's grave, situated on top of the mountain called Jabalkat, crowns a landscape filled with the saint's family members, local Muslim leaders (*kyai*) and dignitaries, and people from the village of Bayat. It is a typical Javanese phenomenon to observe that although a Muslim saint is the center of the mausoleum in Bayat, there are also several Christian graves to be found in the burial complex.

The Historic Background of Tembayat as a Center of Pilgrimage

Although Sunan Bayat's grave is visited with great enthusiasm, there is some confusion about exactly whose body is buried at Bayat. Some say it is the governor and founder of Semarang, Ki Gede Pandan Arang, who at the

end of his life moved to the south of the island of Java. Others say it is his son who is resting in the grave. This son, Adipati Mangkubumi, became the second governor (*bupati*) of Semarang, but passed on his worldly duties to his younger brother in order to devote himself entirely to meditation and the spreading of Islam. Other versions of the myth surrounding this Adipati tell that he was the last ruler of the Hindu-Buddhist Kingdom of Majapahit, Brawijaya, who had fled to Semarang after being defeated by the rulers of the new Mataram Empire.¹⁸ In Semarang he became the governor, converted from Hinduism to Islam and later on became the famous Sunan Bayat. This myth, of course, is meant to import the power of the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit dynasty into the succeeding Muslim Mataram dynasty (starting ca. 1584).¹⁹ Other versions say that Sunan Bayat was the son of Sunan Pandan Arang I who came from the Middle East, and that his real name was Abdullah. His son, who later would become Sunan Bayat, was born from the marriage with a Princess from the Islamic empire of Demak, situated close to Semarang.

Whoever Sunan Bayat really was, and whoever is buried in the grave that bears his name, for the Javanese believers, Tembayat is not just an ordinary place of pilgrimage. Tembayat is regularly mentioned in old Javanese manuscripts, and mythical tales that surround the place.²⁰ The gist of those tales is that Sunan Bayat converted the inhabitants of Central Java to Islam, thus he is considered to be the tenth *wali*, or one of the saints who brought Islam to Java. According to the Javanese myths, the *walis* would regularly meet at Demak. When their number was reduced to eight because *wali* number nine, Siti Jenar, was accused of heretical teachings, it was decided to choose a replacement for him. The great *wali* Sunan Kalijaga was in charge of this process. In spite of the fact that Sunan Bayat had not become a religious leader yet and was still the governor of Semarang, he was already predestined for this high position. As the tenth *wali*, Sunan Bayat plays an important role in the Javanese-Islamic myths. Also, the place Tembayat is sometimes mentioned in connection with political developments in the Mataram Empire.

The Story of Sunan Bayat

A common story is still reported in Java about how Sunan Bayat converted to Islam, after which he left his hometown Semarang and became a religious leader outside the area where he was known. Interestingly enough, the story is very similar to the one about how Sunan Kalijaga himself went from riches to rags and became a Muslim saint.²¹ It goes as follows:

The governor of Semarang, who was then called Ki Gede Pandan Arang, or Mangkubumi, was well known for his lavish lifestyle. In order to maintain his way of living, he used to buy goods below their price and sell them at

exorbitant prices. One day, Sunan Kalijaga visited him disguised as a poor seller of grass (*alang-alang*). As usual, the governor bought the grass for the minimum price. Opening the bag, to his great surprise he found a golden sword holder hidden in the grass (*kandelan*). The governor did not understand that this golden object contained a message that was relayed to him via a typical Javanese word play. The message was: "Do have trust and turn to me." Here is how he was supposed to read this message: the word for grass, *alang-alang*, contains the single word *alang* which means: "to resist, to obstruct." By giving the governor the grass, Sunan Kalijaga asked him why he was constantly resisting the call to become a religious man. In the word for sword holder, *kandelan*, is found the word '*andel*,' which means "to trust, to believe." Had the governor understood the message, he would have seen the exhortation "have trust and turn to me." But since the time had not yet come for him to understand, the governor turned his attention to building a lavish house that was richly decorated with gold. When it was ready, he organized a huge party and invited many guests. Sunan Kalijaga was not invited but appeared nevertheless, dressed in a simple outfit. Because of this outfit, his presence went unnoticed. Then Sunan Kalijaga went outside and changed into a gorgeous robe. He now was invited to take a seat of honor at the table. While leaving the house, Sunan Kalijaga changed back to the simple outfit. The governor thought that this was a practical joke and failed to understand that this action had a deeper spiritual and symbolic meaning.

Now Sunan Kalijaga understood that he had to take stronger action to bring the governor to his senses. He started to visit the governor in disguise as a beggar. Several times the governor threw some coins to him but when the beggar refused to leave, the governor became angry. Sunan Kalijaga then told him that he had not come to receive coins, but that he was waiting for the sound of the *bedug*, the drum that is used for the call to prayer in Javanese mosques. After this he threw a fistful of clay to the governor; when the governor caught it the clay immediately changed into gold. This was the moment of enlightenment for the governor and he finally understood that all earthly goods are temporary. Now the governor wanted to become the spiritual student of Sunan Kalijaga. But before the master could accept him, he had to fulfill four requirements. The first requirement was that the governor had to pray continuously and preach Islam, converting all the inhabitants under his power in Semarang to Islam. The second was that he had to feed the students (*santri*) and teachers of Islam (*'ulama'*), craft the drums for the call to prayer and build prayer houses (*langgar*). The third requirement was to give to charity with a sincere heart and to donate his riches to the poor in the form of *zakat*. The final requirement to become a student was to follow the master into his house and light the lamps for him there. At that time

Sunan Kalijaga lived in Jabalkat, near the present day Tembayat. The governor accepted these requirements and joined the master, leaving behind everything he owned. His first wife joined him since she did not want to leave him. Because, however, she was not yet ready and able to let go of her possessions, she filled a bamboo stick with gold and jewelry.

The trip to Tembayat on foot (around 100 miles) was full of adventures which foretold that the governor was on his way to become a Muslim holy man. Legends tell us that on the road an incident with three robbers took place. The governor's wife could not move as fast as the rest of the party since she was carrying her child on her back. Halfway through the journey, three robbers jumped in front of the governor and demanded his money. He referred them to his wife and advised them to take her bamboo stick so that they would have enough money for the rest of their lives. After grabbing the stick, the robbers started to harass the woman, thinking that she might be hiding more gold. Her husband came to her rescue when she started to call for help. That is how the town now situated on the spot where this incident took place was given its name: Salatiga. The governor cried out "*oleh ketiga*" "by those three," "*mereka telah berbuat salah,*" "they were doing something wrong." *Salah* and *tiga* thus became Salatiga.

The robbers, however, were not impressed by being called wrongdoers and continued to strip the wife in search of valuables. That is when the governor, with the help of God, changed two of them into creatures with animal heads: one with the head of a sheep and one with the head of a snake. This led the robbers to immediate contrition and conversion to Islam, and they vowed to be in the service of the governor. Thus they became his first disciples and were called *Seh Domba* (sheep head) and *Seh Kewel* (the biter). After long and faithful service, they slowly regained their original forms.

At a hamlet called Wedi, in the neighborhood near Tembayat, the governor, now called Sunan Bayat, settled down and started to work for a rice merchant called Gus Slamet. *Seh Domba* and *Seh Kewel* were instructed to withdraw to the mountains and live a life of meditation. Due to Sunan Bayat's involvement in the rice business, it flourished like never before. Not all miracles, however, were positive. It is told that one day Sunan Bayat was looking for rice to buy. He stopped a rice seller who was on his way to the market. The man did not feel like selling his goods and lied, saying that he was just carrying sand (*wedi*). Upon his arrival at the market place, the contents of his bag turned out to be sand. In another incident, Sunan Bayat joined the wife of his boss at the market where she sold cooked food. When the wife realized that he had forgotten to bring the wood for burning, she became angry and started to call him names. This induced him to offer his hands as fuel for the fire. He put them on the fireplace where they immedi-

ately started to glow. Of course, such incidents made Sunan very famous. Another miracle took place when Sunan exercised his function as the one who fills the water basin for the ritual washing before the Islamic prayer. One day he filled a bamboo basket with water instead. Everyone was amazed when the water did not run out of the basket and it could be used for the ritual washing.

After a while Sunan Bayat felt that the time had come for him to move on to Jabalkat in order to receive the right directions from his master. On his way there he picked up Seh Domba and Seh Kewel from their isolated places. Halfway through the journey his child became thirsty and started to cry. According to the Sunan there was no need for crying because all he had to do to find water was to press his staff into the ground. Indeed, a well with fresh water emerged. This well exists until today and still yields drinking water. Finally, the party arrived at Mount Jabalkat where nowadays the village of Bayat is situated.

Upon his arrival in Tembayat, Sunan Bayat immediately proceeded to build a mosque on top of Mount Jabalkat. This mosque also functioned as a religious school and soon he gathered a following of future teachers of Islam. This center was in fact the first *pesantren*, or Islamic boarding school, in Central Java. His first assistants were the erstwhile robber Seh Domba and his future second wife, a girl called Nji Endang. At first the new teacher met with fierce resistance from the leaders of the mystical Javanese religion. They questioned Sunan Bayat's powers of *ngelmu*, knowledge or wisdom, which is a form of mystical, even magical knowledge that one derives from "higher beings" such as spirits or God. Without solid proof of possessing *ngelmu* Sunan could never become an acceptable leader of religion in Java.

As a result, a meeting was held with the powerful Javanese mystic Prawira Sakti to test Sunan's wisdom. In the first test he had to catch a high-flying pigeon that was released by Prawira. Sunan took his wooden slipper and threw it in the air, thus killing the pigeon. After that Prawira threw his hat so high that it became almost invisible. Yet, the Sunan's slipper could easily reach it and bring it back to earth. Finally, it is told that Prawira hid under an enormous rock and was easily found. Prawira, however, failed to find the Sunan's hiding place, between Prawira's eyebrows!

As a result of Sunan's spiritual power, many joined him in his mosque. Finally, on the Kliwon Friday of the Javanese month of Ruwah, God granted Sunan enlightenment. After that, whenever Sunan would perform the *adban* (call to prayer), he would be heard in Demak, more than 100 miles northeast of Bayat. One of the nine walis, who lived in Demak, became so annoyed with Sunan's call to prayer that he asked him to tone it down. In order to be

less audible, Sunan decided to use his power to drag the mosque downhill and place it in the village of Tembayat, where it can be found until this day. After spreading Islam for 25 years, Sunan died on a Kliwon Friday, also in the month of Ruwah, and was buried on the top of Mount Jabalkat.

This story of Sunan's conversion and his life as a Muslim teacher, however, is just one version. According to another oral source provided by the current descendants of Sunan, his death took place on the 21st of the Muslim month of Mulud. Since 1973, they have a *mawlid* at Tembayat on this day.

Meeting of Worldly and Spiritual Powers

Tembayat also played a role of some importance in Javanese history. The greatest ruler of Mataram, Sultan Agung (1613-1646 A.D.), made a special pilgrimage to Tembayat and redecorated the grave. In his capacity as the worldly ruler of a Javanese kingdom, the king is the one upon whom "the whole system pivots, for he stands at the juncture of the divine and the human, with, so to speak, a foot in each camp."²² In the Javanese hierarchy of powers, a religious leader is closer to God than a worldly leader. Hence, the king always has to seek the guidance of a saint. Sultan Agung himself would later also be regarded as a man of significant spiritual powers, and today pilgrims still visit his grave on the south side of Yogyakarta to meditate and seek advice. Yet, when alive, the sultan was obliged to pay his respects to the saint of his area, Sunan Bayat. From the notes of Batavia (what is the current Jakarta), the diary of the Dutch colonial rulers written between 1631-1634, we know that "the ruler of Mataram personally set out for a place called Tembajjat to make a sacrifice there, and that on leaving he gave the order to assemble 50,000 men: 40,000 to be sent to Batavia and 10,000 to Balimbaon with the command to wait for his return from Tambajjat and then for each army to leave for its destination. . . ."²³

Two legends are told about this visit. According to the first one, Sultan Agung was lost in the woods surrounding his palace and was getting desperate because he could not find his faithful assistant Juru Taman. To find his way out, the Sultan decided to meditate in order to reach a state of perfect wisdom but failed in his attempt. All of a sudden, a nobleman (*priai*) appeared to him, offering his help. After discussing the Sultan's problems, the nobleman suggested that the Sultan could become a student of mysticism (*ilmu gaib*). After the Sultan completed his learning, the nobleman finally introduced himself as "Sunan who lives in Bayat." Sunan helped the Sultan miraculously to return to his palace by transporting him in his sleeve. In the palace, the Sultan's assistant Juru Taman was found as well. He turned out to be residing in the quarters of the sultan's wives. Of course, Juru Taman had a strong excuse for his presence there, claiming "he was looking for the Sul-

tan." All the ministers, courtiers, servants and wives of the Sultan were relieved to see him back, and it was decided that in thanks for his return, he should build a new mausoleum for the grave of Sunan Bayat. Since Sunan was considered a very holy man, it was deemed appropriate that the mausoleum be constructed in an extraordinary way. Hence it was forbidden to use horses, regular masons or workers. The people building the mausoleum were carefully selected on the basis of their impeccable spirituality and outstanding behavior. Over 300,000 men were chosen. They lined the street from the stone quarry all the way to the grave. Sitting in the reverent *sila* position of kneeling on their ankles with bent toes, they would pass on the stones by hand. It is believed that, due to this special sacrifice, the mausoleum became one of the most beautiful in the whole of Java.

Other stories surrounding the relationship between Sultan Agung and Sunan Bayat mention the Sultan visiting a classical Javanese shadow puppet show (*wayang*) that was presented in a place far away from his palace. During the show he learned that the empires of Balambangan and Bali were conspiring against him. Even worse, it was also said that the aforementioned assistant Juru Taman was courting the Sultan's main wife, which meant that he was trying to become the sultan himself. When the Sultan was overcome by desperation, he prostrated on the floor to ask God forgiveness for his many sins that had led to this ordeal. At that moment Sunan Bayat appeared to him in the disguise of an old man. Sunan Bayat helped the Sultan to get back to his palace as soon as possible by holding out his walking stick and catapulting the Sultan to his palace with the stick. According to this story, in order to express his gratefulness, the Sultan decided to renovate the grave of Sunan Bayat in extraordinary fashion.

Today, the results of the Sultan's building activities can still be witnessed in Tembayat. For example, on the gate leading up to the grave the Javanese year 1555 is engraved. This corresponds with the year 1633 CE, the year in which Sultan Agung introduced the Javanese calendar. Until that time the Javanese had used the Hindu-Saka system based on the solar months, but the new Javanese year combines this system and the Muslim lunar calendar. All the gates at Tembayat and some of the graves are built in a distinct style reminiscent of the Hindu temples of the Hindu Majapahit Empire. What distinguishes the gates from a regular Hindu temple gate, however, is the fact that there are no longer engravings of animals, as is usual in Hindu gates. While monuments in Hindu style surround Sunan's grave, the grave itself is purely Islamic as it represents the Ka'aba in Mecca.

When considering Tembayat's architecture and all the stories surrounding the "owner of its grave," it is clear that this location reflects the gradual change from the Hindu Javanese culture to a Muslim Javanese culture in

Central Java. The ensuing Muslim culture is dominated by a mystical form of Islam filled with holy saints who are capable of appearing to people in need and of performing miracles. Sunan Bayat's biography harkens back to the life of Sunan Kalijaga, and several universal themes of miracles performed by saints run through the stories such as the Sunan's staff finding water. According to the Javanese tradition, Sunan Kalijaga also performed a similar miracle.²⁴ Sunan Bayat's senior wife wanted to share her husband's fate; that is, she believed in his new calling and was willing to give up everything "not heeding the children or wealth left behind."²⁵ Her commitment reminds one of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad: his first wife, Khadijah, was the Prophet's first convert, while his later wives all had absolute trust in his mission. Sunan Bayat's wife, however, was not fully obedient in that she did not heed Sunan's wish not to take any of their riches with her. She stuffed some jewelry in her staff for "just in case." The emphasis of the story, however, is not her disobedience. The jewels' function is to introduce the robbers and the ensuing miracles and conversions. The stories stress Sunan's praiseworthy behavior in the face of adversity such as performing a miracle instead of showing anger when being scolded by one of his bosses, a woman. This kind of information places the Sunan firmly in the company of valid saints and missionaries of Islam. Furthermore, the stories stress the struggle between the Islamic saint and the Javanese holy men. Their power is considerable, yet they lose against the saint, because his *ngelmu* is stronger than theirs. Along with his Islamic sanctity, however, he does possess the mystical knowledge that is indispensable for being accepted by the Javanese as a powerful holy person.

The stories about Sunan Bayat's conversion are mostly recorded in Javanese historic sources considered biased by leading scholars of Javanese history because they favor the Islamic Mataram dynasty.²⁶ In a way, they do acknowledge the power and strength of the former Javanese religion and empire, yet Islam always comes out victorious. Formerly powerful men become Muslims but do not let go of their Javanese heritage and knowledge. The Javanese heritage is also guarded by the kratons, the palaces of the sultans of Surakarta and Yogyakarta that still embody the expression of true Islamic and true Javanese culture. The tradition thus built is kept alive even today by the guards of the graves and the pilgrims. Although few people have actually read the existing manuscripts, the stories continue to be transmitted orally. So, just as they were created in the beginning to "construct an Islamic saint," they can now be used to re-create and revive the Islamic identity of the saint and eliminate any contradictory Javanese elements that lingered in the pilgrimage to Tembayat.

The Contemporary Pilgrimage To Tembayat

Nowadays, there is a wide paved road going up to Tembayat, built at the end of the 1970s. Most present-day pilgrims arrive by tour buses, cars or motorbikes. The parking lot holds everything they need for a successful pilgrimage: toilets and wash basins for the ritual washing in case the pilgrim wishes to perform the Islamic prayers during the visit, and endless rows of stalls where mostly women sell flowers and frankincense. The colorful arrangements of flowers consist of white and red roses, jasmine, and a flower that has not opened yet called "*kantil*." These flowers, brought as a gift to the Sunan, are considered to be a source of blessing. The pilgrims believe that their fragrance will help to "carry the petitions to God" and thus facilitate the process of asking for something.

In order to reach the grave, the pilgrim has to climb the winding stairs that go up the mountain. To enter the burial complex, one must buy a ticket at a booth that is situated at the foot of the stairs. The first building the pilgrim finds is an Islamic prayer house, a *musholla*. The prayer house was built in 1990 as a result of reformist Islamic influences and serves the pilgrims who, concurring with reformist Islamic beliefs, say that it is forbidden to pray in the neighborhood of a grave. Praying there allows the pilgrim to avoid the grave sin of *shirk*, honoring other gods than the One and True God. Halfway up the stairs, the pilgrim takes off her or his shoes and climbs to the top bare-foot. Taking off one's shoes is an act of politeness in regular Javanese houses, and when entering a mosque or other holy space, the worshipper takes off his or her shoes as a sign of reverence for the holiness of the place. The stairs leading up to the grave are lined with little booths that sell snacks, drinks and souvenirs such as water jars and plates with Qur'an texts. Most of them were opened during the early 1990s. Right behind the booths are the old and new graves where the villagers and several members from Sunan Bayat's family are buried.

At the top of the stairs the pilgrim has to register and pay more fees. This is euphemistically called 'donating money.' The pilgrims who wish to sleep on the graves have to pay more for this privilege. This income pays the guards, the "*juru kunci*," holders of the key, whose function is not only to ensure peace and quiet, but also to guide the pilgrims through the process of making the pilgrimage. Opposite the registration point stands the mosque where pilgrims pray who do not object to praying in front of a grave and who, on the contrary, consider the vicinity of the grave to hold an extra blessing. After entering the first of the five Hindu-style gates, the pilgrim steps into the main cemetery in which the saint's grave is situated. Between the second and the third gate a special pavilion is built where women can spend

the night. Between the third and the fourth is the pavilion for the men. Most people, however, avoid these special constructions and prefer to stay right next to the grave.

The door to the antechamber of the saint's grave is so low that the pilgrim has to bend over. In the middle of the antechamber is an open fire; in front of it sits a *juru doa*, a guard who offers prayers on behalf of the pilgrims. He also receives the flowers and frankincense pilgrims buy in the parking lot. The pilgrim lets the guard know what the subject of prayer is. The length of the prayer depends on how serious the problem is and also on the amount of the tip that is discreetly put in his hand. After this, the guard spreads the flowers and frankincense out on a large tray and starts praying the *Fatibah*, the first Surah of the Qur'an in Arabic. The *Fatibah* is followed by mentioning the requests and uttering prayers and praises in formal High Javanese (*kromo*). The prayers are closed by again reciting the *Fatibah* in Arabic.

The Javanese part of the prayers starts with mentioning the names of those who offer the petition, saying that they have especially brought flowers as a gift to the saint. The guard then proceeds with asking forgiveness in advance for mistakes and breaches that might be made in the protocol while visiting the grave. After "honoring the spirit of Sunan Bayat," the prayer asks God to bless the saint. Only then follows the actual request: it always starts with a supplication for general wellness, then mentions the problem at hand, and ends with a "please grant that the faith and belief of these pilgrims will be strengthened." Then the guard starts a new prayer in which he asks God to grant the pilgrims their wishes "through the mediation of the Sunan, . . . of his family, his grandchildren and all those who were his followers." All for whom the prayers were said answer "amen" and are then allowed to climb the steep steps that lead into the actual burial chamber.

In the chamber, the tomb is built on a platform surrounded by a square construction in the shape of the Ka'ba, the focal point for every Muslim's life. Five times a day the devout Muslim turns to Mecca, to the direction of the Ka'ba. On the lower level, one on the right and one on the left side, are the graves of Sunan's two spouses: Nyai Ageng Kaliwungu and Nyai Ageng Krakitan. The pilgrim enters the platform while kneeling, as if visiting a royal Javanese person. The Ka'ba-like structure around the grave is pitch dark and can only hold ten persons at one time. It is considered a dangerous taboo to put light in this chamber "since in the Ka'ba there is no light either." According to the guards, it is not necessary to add prayers while in the grave itself, except for "in the heart." In fact, it is preferable to be silent here as, according to the guards, "it is the place where one confronts the most high." Those who cannot control the urge to pray are requested to limit their uttering to *wird* or *ziker*, a repetitive prayer or recitation of just one sentence of praise, yet one

can hear furious recitations of the *Fatimah*, followed by prayers in Javanese. Hardly ever are prayers pronounced in the Indonesian language. In addition to praying, the pilgrims throw the blessed flowers on top of the tomb and mix them up by hand, but keep some flowers for the graves of the Sunan's spouses and helpers. The pilgrims then begin to examine the flowers for *kantils*, or blessing buds. According to Javanese belief, the pilgrim now will know if the prayers will be heard, depending on the number of *kantils* he or she finds. These *kantils* should be different from the ones brought, however. Hence in the pitch-dark chamber there is intense activity as pilgrims try "spontaneously" to find the blessing buds. When the guard outside deems that enough blessing has been found, he urges the pilgrims to come out in order to make space for another ten of the many hundreds that are still waiting in line for their turn to harvest their blessings. The leftover flowers are first brought to the graves of the spouses and spread out, while a short prayer is recited.

All the tombs are covered with a white cotton cloth. According to the guards, this is to protect the marble. The deeper Javanese meaning of the color white, however, is that it symbolizes death and tranquility. A death in the neighborhood on Java, for instance, is announced by hanging out a white flag. Islamic influence also could have inspired the choice of the color white, since it is an Islamic symbol of holiness.²⁷ Once a year, on the 27th of the month of *Ruwah*, the material is replaced. The old cloth is cut up into tiny pieces, which are given to the pilgrims as amulets believed to be filled with power of blessing from the tomb.

Performing a Successful Pilgrimage

Visiting the mausoleum and touching the tomb are the highlights of the pilgrims' trip. Carefully planning the day and time of entering the tomb is important to ensure the success of the pilgrimage. Most people try to enter the grave around midnight, because it seems impolite to rush. Linger around for half a night, however, is seen to be more proper pilgrimage behavior. The lingering also has a self-serving aspect in that the Javanese believe midnight to be the prime time for encounters with the supernatural. The point of spending considerable time near the grave, according to John Pemberton, is "to put oneself in the right place, at the right time, and then wait."²⁸ It is important to stay awake; when one is asleep at the moment that "boons are bestowed," what is asked for will not be given.²⁹ In case a revelation should come in the form of a dream, however, dream explainers are at hand to help the pilgrims.

Not only Muslims, but also many Christian or Confucian Indonesians of Chinese ancestry, will come to the Sunan's grave. After that they head for two graves outside the mausoleum that contain the remains of a merchant from Semarang and of the Sunan's accountant, Kwi Pawilangan. These graves are important to those who seek success in business. One of the main methods to ensure success is "counting the stones." The decorative stones on the accountant's grave are so worn down that it is hard to see how many exactly there are. Pilgrims try to count them three times in a row on their knees. If this exercise results in a higher number the third time, this can be taken as a sure proof of success in business, but a lower number means the reverse. The other grave, the merchant's, is rather long. For Indonesians, who are generally not tall in stature, it is nearly impossible to reach both the foot and the head of the grave at the same time. The one who succeeds in touching both ends is applauded enthusiastically while members of his or her family try to touch the lucky one in order to derive a part of this blessing. Needless to say, tall visitors gain deep respect when they effortlessly manage to embrace the grave. After having visited all the important graves, most people return home. Others stay for a nightly picnic or for a nap on the grave, hoping that their reward will be an interesting dream or perhaps even a vision of some sort.

Many pilgrims come from Middle Java, especially from Semarang, Sunan's hometown. There is little difference either in number between men and women or in the way they view or perform the pilgrimage. All go through the same routine, say the same prayers and sleep on the graves, mixed or segregated. Until 1985 the pilgrims used the mosque on top of the mountain as a lodging place where men and women slept together. Still today, this mixing of the sexes is a source of great anxiety for the guards, who fear "irregularities" that could harm their reputation.³⁰

Tembayat is getting more national attention since it has become a stop on tours to the graves of the *wali sanga* and is now visited by large groups of religious tourists. Civil servants and merchants seeking blessings on their businesses especially like to go there. This is not a new phenomenon, as writers from the beginning of this century mention the same type of visitors.³¹ Also there are many batik sellers from Solo who compete with each other to be the one who will provide the cloth that covers the graves. Occasionally, high dignitaries visit Bayat, such as the mayor of Klaten and Semarang, the governor of Boyolali, or a general. After Sultan Agung had his famous connection with Tembayat, it was no longer considered a place where one can find both spiritual and political power. One seldom sees a black Mercedes filled with ministers or generals who fly in from Jakarta visiting Tembayat in order to seek esoteric wisdom or to support their political legitimation. Those officials go to Imogiri and consult the grave of Sultan

Agung who is buried there on top of a mountain and who is still considered powerful as the “guardian of the world.”³²

The best times to visit Sunan Bayat's grave are Thursday nights before Friday Kliwon or Friday Legi of the Javanese Calendar. Although Friday Kliwon is the day of preference for visiting graves in Java, in Tembayat Legi was added because it is believed that Sunan was born on that day and died on Kliwon. His descendants highlighted this date and managed to increase interest in the site. When the day of birth was added as a worthy time for a visit, the number of visitors grew. Pilgrims who prefer to visit another grave on Kliwon can now visit Sunan on Legi.

On an average night of Kliwon or Legi, some 6000 pilgrims come to the grave. There is a great variety of reasons for pilgrims to come. Muslims say that graves are locations where one can find *tentrem*, tranquility and inner peace. Many pilgrims agree that graves serve as source of power that the pilgrims can draw from, provided they come at the right time, with the correct attitude, and follow the proper rituals of offering flowers, frankincense and prayers. That is how one can obtain a part of blessing (*berkah*); if the pilgrim is lucky, he or she can even acquire “a piece of the saint's power” (*kesakten*).³³ In order to facilitate this process of deriving blessing and power, Muslims honor the saint by reciting the Qur'an and chanting *tablilan*, or praises, continuously repeating the words *La ilaha illa Allah* (There is no god but God). This *tablilan* can take from one hour to a whole night. Noteworthy as pilgrims are the students of traditional Qur'an schools (*santri*). In these Qur'an schools, it is customary to visit the founders' grave every Thursday evening. If the founder is still alive, the *santri* might frequent the grave of a saint who is somehow related to their school. *Santris* are the experts of *tablilan* and often will chant all through the night. Students like to do their homework in the vicinity of a saint's grave. This, according to our informants, guarantees a higher level of concentration. Most of the pilgrims who visit Tembayat hope for tangible, that is, material results. Business people, especially those of Chinese background, are convinced that somehow traces are left of the Sunan's former riches. It is believed those former riches put him in a preeminent position to serve as intercessor when asking for financial gains. Pilgrims ask for help with exams, infertility, finding a spouse, a job or promotion.

When asked why they made the pilgrimage to Tembayat, pilgrims do not volunteer information easily. They tend to mumble vague reasons for their visit, such as “I come here every week. You see I own a business. Yes, I do feel that in the long run the Sunan will bless my business,” or, “I come to pray for good health.” This reluctance to discuss the *ziarah* is remarkable since Indonesians usually generously volunteer information about their religion

and beliefs. It can perhaps best be explained as a symptom of the ambiguous feelings of pilgrims concerning the “orthodoxy” of the rituals and beliefs involved in the visits.

The true motives behind the visits are most evident when listening to the prayers said by the *juru doa*. For example, the prayer for Mr. Suratno, a civil servant who has been trying for a long time to find a better job, went as follows: “. . . may Mr. Suratno while doing his work as a civil servant, gain more respect, may his colleagues be satisfied with his work, and may he be popular with his superiors. May he reach his promotion with ease and may, by the intercession of the saint and his grandchildren, his income be blessed.” Like the income of most civil servants, Mr. Suratno’s is not enough to live on, so he also runs a modest business of selling cookies. Hence the prayer continues with: “And may Mr. Suratno’s business activities prosper and not be hindered by problems.”

At the graves of the merchant Dampu Awang and the accountant, Ki Pawilangan, a special *juru doa* sits in front of an open fire to ask their intercession. For example, for Mrs. Darsih, who runs a small kiosk, he prayed: “God most High, by the intercession of . . . Dampu Awang and . . . Ki Pawilangan, Mrs. Darsih . . . has brought rice and flowers as a gift, and she will also donate a plate with food to Dampu Awang and Ki Pawilangan . . . [We also pray] that her kiosk will prosper and that she will be able to sell her goods easy and fast. May all these requests be heard. [We also pray] that she can find her goods for cheap prices and sell them quick with a lot of profit. We hope that the blessing of . . . Dampu Awang and . . . Ki Pawilangan will be on her so that all Mrs. Darsih asks for will be accepted.”

Of course, many come to improve their health or to pray for their family’s health. An elderly widow stated that she has come every week since the beginning of the eighties. Before that she used to go to the grave of Prince Mangkunagara I (1757-1795), which is situated closer to Salatiga, the town in which she lives. Now she comes to Tembayat, but always on a Sunday, and never at night because she cannot stand the crowds. She always brings flowers from home to put on the grave and takes a few handfuls back to put in her bathwater. Since she has started doing this, she feels rejuvenated and does not even experience pain or problems when climbing the steep stairs that lead up to the grave. The week we met her, she had a special request for the saint concerning her son’s career.

***Juru Kunci* or the Guardians of the Keys**

Although during the prime visiting nights thousand of pilgrims are present at the gravesite, the traffic of all these people seems to be arranged

smoothly. Farmers from the village come up to serve as “soldiers” and see that peace and quiet is maintained. They help the *juru kunci* who are in charge of the grave and make the rules for visiting. The power of the *juru kunci* is considerable, since the tombs can only be approached with their cooperation and through their mediation. At a large complex such as in Tembayat, there are several *juru kunci* on duty according to rotating schedules. They guard the mausoleum while at the same time being the bearers of its traditions. They know the stories about Sunan Bayat, which high officials came to visit, what the requests were and whose pleas were heard. They are also keenly aware of rejected requests. The *juru kunci* at Imogiri like to tell the story of a visit made by some ministers and high military officials from Jakarta in 1997. However, these visitors never made it to the mausoleum since a sudden heavy rain prevented their plane from landing. Of course, to the *juru kunci* this was a sure sign that the spirit of Sultan Agung rejected their worldly authority. From then on, the *juru kunci* expected that the Suharto regime would not last for much longer.³⁴ The religious knowledge of the *juru kunci*, however, is not rooted in Islamic education. They are more familiar with Javanese traditions and religious formulas. In Tembayat, they also safeguard the traditions of the Kraton. The position is exclusive and hereditary and sons join their fathers at a young age.³⁵

While some do farming on the side, the guards earn their income mostly from the fees and gifts of pilgrims. Although the sultans do not control their salaries, at Tembayat the guards feel an obligation to respect the rules for visitation customary for the Kratons at Solo and Yogyakarta. For example, the Sunan's grave is closed during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, while in east Java this is the most preferred month for visiting the graves of Muslim saints.³⁶ As mentioned before, a popular tradition is to recite the Qur'an, or chant *tablilan* near a grave. This is considered a gift to the saint and a worthy activity that will yield the saint's blessing. Also it is popular to have a meal near a grave, especially when the meal is a *selamatan*, a religious meal offered to express gratefulness for granted prayers. All these practices, popular near other graves, especially those of the *wali sanga*, are forbidden in Tembayat. There are few booklets available with the hagiography of Sunan, while near the graves of other Muslim saints stacks of books about their exemplary lives are available. The *juru kunci* in Tembayat fear that “mistakes might be made and incorrect data given” if too many books were to circulate. Their fear is based on the fact that “only the Sultan's palace (according to them, the Kraton at Yogyakarta) has access to the original manuscripts with Sunan Bayat's real biography.” According to one of the *juru kunci*, forbidding them is mandatory. If he were to allow *tablilan* near the grave, for example, it might result in “punishment from a higher power.” “I

am afraid that the ancestors will start to accuse me. If a governor is angry with me, I don't mind. The worst that can happen to me in such a case is that they lock me up for three months. But if Sunan gets angry with me, I will get paralyzed. Then I will not be able to walk, I will be confined to my chair all day long, and not a doctor will be able to help me."³⁷ Because of this fear, *tablilan* in Bayat is held in a pavilion down the hill close to the entrance. While the chanting of *tablilan* near other graves draws hundreds of visitors who join in or just listen, the distance from the grave in Tembayat causes pilgrims to lose interest in attending these otherwise meaningful sessions. At best a few dozen come on a crowded night. In order to increase the attraction, the Muslim clerics who lead the chanting have started to diverge from its original goal of honoring the saint, and add: "that it may help to grant the requests made today."

Most probably the reason for the different rules found in Tembayat is that it is situated in Central Java, which means it falls under the jurisdiction of the local sultanate. Instead of allowing the customs practiced at the graves of the *wali sanga*, the supervisors at Tembayat seem to follow what is practiced at the royal graves in Imogiri. The Sultan of Yogyakarta decreed that the royal graves should be closed during Ramadan and that eating or chanting near the graves is forbidden. This underscores the historic relation between the grave and the worldly rulers.

The management of the gravesite of Sunan Bayat and its pilgrimage are considered part of the royal territory of the Kraton. The architectural design of the cemetery, following the shape of the Kraton, also expresses its royal connections. In fact, each component of the gravesite has a name that corresponds to a room found in the Kraton. According to Hindu-Javanese architectural ideology, the Kraton, and thus the grave of Sunan Bayat, is a reflection of society and the universe. Moreover, the location of the grave on top of Mount Jabalkat invites comparisons with the Javanese cosmic mountain, a place where worldly and supernatural powers meet, and one that contains a concentration of otherworldly powers.

According to the *juru kunci*, the grave is such a holy place that a visit to it can replace the *Haji* to Mecca. Since the distance between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia is considerable, we can assume that the majority of Indonesian Muslims will never be able to make the *Haji*. That is why several Indonesian locations are considered to be cosmic centers that possess the same degree of spiritual power as can be encountered in Mecca. For example, Javanese Muslims believe that climbing up and down Mount Ciremai in Kuningan three times contains spiritual strength equal to performing the *Haji*.³⁸ In Java, as is also true in Morocco, poor Muslims can substitute the "*Haji*" for the

poor," which consists of making a pilgrimage to the graves of certain saints, or participating in festivals in honor of the saints.³⁹

The Nahdatul Ulama (Nu) And Visiting the Graves

As mentioned earlier, opinions vary as to whether or not Islam allows visits to the graves of holy persons. Reformist Muslims condemn every pilgrimage that does not lead to Mecca and teach that going to the graves is equal to polytheism (*sbirk*). Traditional Muslims (represented by the Nahdatul Ulama, NU) in Indonesia, however, not only allow pilgrimages to graves, but also encourage them, provided the *ziarah* avoids rituals incompatible with Islam.⁴⁰ This stance is based on their belief that prophets (*nabis*), holy persons (*walis*) and Qur'anic scholars (*'ulama'*) are nearer to God than ordinary believers and that such proximity allows them to intercede for the believers.⁴¹ Traditional Muslim students believe that the teacher who has passed away can always be considered as a source of spiritual guidance and intercession. That is why within NU circles the students (*santri*) of *pesantren* regularly visit the grave of the scholar who founded their school, or of those other famous scholars. Prayers and Qur'anic verses recited near the grave are considered to be gifts to the teacher, as was the case with reciting near the grave of a saint. Once a year, on the death-day of the founder of a Qur'an school, a special ceremony (*kbaul*) is held near the grave. This ceremony, similar to the *mawlid* in the Middle East, consists of Qur'anic recitations, *tablilan*, and a communal meal next to the grave. Celebration of a *kbaul* is not limited to pilgrimage sites. For example, graduation ceremonies are celebrated according to the same pattern.

Pesantren Sunan Pandan Aran and Islamic Revival

According to the tradition, Sunan Bayat did open a *pesantren* during his life, yet until the 1970s there was never a *kbaul* organized near his grave. His direct male descendants lived in the Tembayat area but held no significant religious positions, most being farmers. But the fourteenth descendant, Mufid Mas'ud, was acknowledged for his brightness, first as a student at the prestigious *pesantren* of Krapyak in Yogyakarta. He was so successful in his studies that his teacher offered Mufid one of his daughters in marriage. After a long period of study, Mufid Mas'ud became a religious teacher himself. On December 20, 1975, after many years of teaching in Krapyak, Mufid Mas'ud fulfilled the goal of every *kyai*, opening his own boarding school in a village north of Yogyakarta. The school was named after Sunan Bayat: "Sunan Pandan Aran." The remote location of the school harkened back to the days when *pesantren* were situated in isolated spots in the countryside, on the theory that isolation would help the students to focus on their religious

education so that “a cadre of devout religious specialists” could be built.⁴² The school’s curriculum comprises pre-school to high school and many students come for its specialty of memorizing the Qur’ān. It is especially famous because it helps the students to do this within two years. Currently, the number of female students far outnumbers the male students (600 girls and 300 boys).

The choice of the name “Sunan Pandan Aran” might seem illogical since the grave is far from the school. The name of a saint closer by could have been chosen. *Kyai* Mufid Maz’ud explained that the name symbolizes the school’s goal: “to bring Islam to all the villages and hamlets.” This reflects the original mission of Sunan Bayat to spread Islam in Central Java. By reviving an almost forgotten tradition, Mufid Maz’ud contributed to the general revival of Indonesian Islam and Islamic mission (*dakwah*) that started sometime during the 1980s.

Being the descendant of Sunan Bayat, *Kyai* Mufid started to spread Islam by first forging a relationship between the *pesantren* and the gravesite in Tembayat. Once a year, a *kbaul* was organized to commemorate Sunan Bayat’s passing away. When the fame of the *pesantren* spread, the reason to hold the *kbaul* shifted to commemorating the founding of the *pesantren*. That meant a freedom of choice whether to hold the *kbaul* at the *pesantren* or in Tembayat. Groups of Qur’ān students were regularly sent to the gravesite in order to recite the Qur’ān and chant *tablilan*. In the long run, the *pesantren* opened a branch in Tembayat right on the slopes of Jabalkaf. Now students who memorized the Qur’ān stay there in order to recite it continuously. Consequently, according to Javanese Muslim beliefs, the environment of the grave is now sanctified by unceasing Qur’ān recital.

Kyai Mufid also tried to purify the pilgrimage from non-Islamic elements. According to the *Kyai*, “prayers can only be directed to Allāh. That is what Islam means by *tauhid* (God’s oneness). We are not allowed to change this. Practices such as burning and offering frankincense are un-Islamic. Pilgrims to Tembayat follow these practices based on their own desire, not because Islam instructs them to do this. There are no rules for the contents of the prayers as long as they are directed to God. It is, however, not good when pilgrims misuse (*salah menggunakan*) the *ziarah*. Asking to get rich or to win the lottery is a disgraceful thing to do.”⁴³ Part of *Kyai* Mufid’s mission is also to “convert” the villagers of the village of Tembayat to Islam. Most of them are nominal Muslims and, according to *Kyai* Mufid, “people in Tembayat have a very limited Islamic mind.”⁴⁴ By this he refers to the fact that the village of Tembayat is famous for the performance of un-Islamic rituals in order to satisfy the village spirits, as well as for its Javanese

rituals and ghostly creatures, *ibuyul*, that appear in the form of children and steal from the rich.⁴⁵

The trend towards Islamization in Indonesia coincided with initiatives of the government to preserve popular sites of pilgrimage because of their archeological value. Before the government allocated funds for restoration, the Sultan from Solo paid for the maintenance of the gravesite. At that time the mausoleum fell under the jurisdiction of the Kraton Surakarta. After his wealth diminished, the costs were divided among the Sultan, the government and the local community. During the 1970s, Indonesia started to produce some *nouveau riche*. Since the wealth of most of them came from commerce, they were interested in investing in places that were heavy on blessings. Thus, Tembayat became accessible by a paved road because a group of businessmen from Jakarta financed the project. Concurrent with the revival of Indonesian Islam, the gravesite was renovated and modernized in the 1980s. As recently as 1985, the gravesite on top of the mountain did not have electricity or running water, so water for the Muslim ritual washing had to be carried up the mountain. This condition limited Tembayat's capacity to receive pilgrims. Nowadays there is running water near the gravesite.

The number of pilgrims has been growing steadily since the renovations. This increase, of course, is also the result of improved means of transportation in Indonesia. "Doing a pilgrimage," has become a favorite way to spend a holiday or the Thursday night before the weekend. A continuous stream of groups, clubs and students on outings come to the graves. On Thursday evenings, students like to come on their motorbikes and spend a night of pleasure and blessing. Also, mosques organize pilgrimages. As was mentioned earlier, bus tours have become increasingly popular. These are led by a *kyai*, and carry pilgrims from site to site. This creates the phenomenon of "*wisata ziarah*," the tourist pilgrimage. The tourist-pilgrim comes not only for blessing, but also for entertainment and some souvenirs. As a result of this trend, during the nineties, Tembayat had to build an extra prayer house and more souvenir shops, thus reflecting the dual need of the spiritual and the material.

As thanks for prayers are granted, pilgrims donate goods to embellish the gravesite, another sign of increased wealth. Until the 1980s, it was customary to bring food that was distributed among the guards and the pilgrims. Food is still occasionally brought, but nowadays pilgrims feel that more is needed as a token of gratefulness. They bring gifts that vary from material to cover the graves, to expensive watches and clocks and even elaborate chandeliers. When I asked one of the *juru kunci* if he ever received a gift as an expres-

sion of thanks for prayers heard, he muttered, "My house is packed with hundreds of clocks and watches."

In the old days, pilgrims would seek peace and quiet at the holy sites. They preferred to come alone, or in small groups of like-minded people. Now the preference has shifted to doing the pilgrimage *en masse*. This trend was actively encouraged by the Suharto regime, which also widened the pool of pilgrim sites and tried to convince the pilgrims to pay their respects at what were basically secular sites as well. As an example of such a place the grave of Mrs. Tien Suharto was mentioned. In general, however, holy places such as caves, mountaintops and lakes where pilgrims used to come for meditation and prayer are losing their attraction. Interest has shifted to sites with beautifully renovated monuments, such as the site of Sunan Bayat. Having pilgrims come to certain sites also means that it is more convenient to control them and to keep track of them. Also, religious authorities such as *Kyai* Mufid can gently move the pilgrims into the Islamic main stream, which means eliminating indigenous, non-Islamic customs and beliefs. Yet, we can observe that as Indonesia is more strongly Islamic than ever before, a new type of pilgrim is slowly emerging: the pilgrim who, rather than spiritual gain, seeks material rewards and entertainment. This type of pilgrim is clearly more focused on the present world.

At the same time, the site remains part of the sacred credentials of the Kraton and firmly forges the relationships between the Javanese version of Islam of the Kraton and orthodox Islam. At graves of the *wali sanga*, part of Islamic mission (*dakwah*) is the dissemination of the histories and hagiographies of these saints written by students of *pesantren* that have a special relationship with the grave.⁴⁶ We do not yet find these pamphlets at the grave of Sunan Bayat. *Kyai* Mufid has not yet managed to take control of this aspect of the grave's mission.

Conclusions

The pilgrimage to a site such as Tembayat provides a vivid example of how Islam, Javanese mysticism and folk religion happily co-exist while being modified by modernization and secularization. Following the earliest traditions, the prime dates for going on a pilgrimage are based on the Islamo-Javanese calendar. The Kraton and the mystical Javanese ideas and beliefs of the guards, the *juru kunci*, continue to dictate rules and directions concerning the rituals surrounding the pilgrimage. Even the stronger Islamic influence has failed to change these rules. Islam has, however, influenced the attitude of the pilgrims. Many of them consider themselves to be practicing Muslims and are no longer sure that all the rituals and prayers they

perform during the pilgrimage are correct. That is why they prefer not to talk about the goal of their visit, or their relationship with the saint. Muslim leaders increase this sense of guilt by stressing the Islamic character of the site, by frequently reciting the Qur'an and assigning religious leaders to tour groups. All this is directed at eroding the Javanese-mystical elements of the pilgrimage. Yet the Sunan is addressed mostly in the Javanese language and many pilgrims cannot resist the temptation to visit the graves of his accountant and the merchant from Semarang. The Islamic ritual comes first, yet it seems acceptable to pilgrims to combine it with an expression of what is considered harmless Javanese folk belief.

The physical and religious landscapes of Tembayat seem confusing. Hindu monuments surround the tomb inspired by one of the prime symbols of Islam, the Ka'ba. To the mix of mystical Javanese Islam, Javanese syncretistic beliefs and orthodox Islam have been added the ingredients of contemporary times, increased materialism and a greater desire for worldly pleasures. All the traditions about the saint testify to his being a true Muslim who lived according to the five pillars of Islam and used his considerable spiritual powers to convert people to his religion. Yet, many today come to seek material wealth, basing their supplications on the time the saint was still a rich man.

In spite of all these competing influences and of the many revolutionary changes in communication, transportation and technology, at the heart of the mausoleum in Tembayat is an ancient Islamic-Javanese tradition that continues to attract visitors. Each of them is free to adapt a reading of the tomb's landscape to his or her own background, education, culture, hopes and beliefs.

Endnotes

1. John Pemberton, *On the Subject of "Java"* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 270.
2. A *selamatan* is a religious meal held at times of life passages such as birth, marriage and death. *Selamat* comes from the Arabic and means "blessing." To hold such a meal of blessing at a holy place is very popular as it increases the atmosphere of blessing and thus the beneficial result of the meal. See: Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 11-120.
3. Franz Magnis-Suseno, S.J., *Javanese Ethics and World-view* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1984), 339, 340.
4. Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 374, 375.
5. Sermon of *Kiyai* Azari at Krapyak *pesantren*, December 12, 1997.

6. Mark Woodward, *Islam in Java. Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1989), 174.
7. Jane Smith and Yvonne Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 52-53.
8. James J. Fox, "Ziarah visits to the tombs of the Walis, the Founders of Islam on Java," in *Islam in the Indonesian Social Context*, ed. M.C. Ricklefs (Clayton: Monash University, 1991), 21.
9. Pemberton, *Java*, 274, 276.
10. See Pemberton, *Java*, chapter 7.
11. Martin van Bruinessen, "New Perspectives on Southeast Asian Islam?" Review article in *Bijdragen tot de Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde* Leiden: KITLV, Volume 143 (1987), 531.
12. "Selama ini kita berdakwa dengan politik, sekarang ini kita berpolitik dengan dakwah."
13. M.P. van Bruggen and R.S. Wassing, *Djokja, Solo. Beeld van de vorstesteden* (Purmerend: Asia Maior, 1998), 101.
14. The current sultan Hamengkubuwana X expressed this opinion during a meeting about inter-religious relations held at the Kraton palace in July, 1998.
15. See Dale F. Eickelman, *Moroccan Islam, Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center* (Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1976).
16. Simon Coleman & John Elsner, *Pilgrimage. Past and Present in the World Religions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 212.
17. In spite of the many tales about his life, it is not certain who the historical Sunan Bayat was exactly.
18. Pemberton in *Java*, 279, assumes that it is Adipati Pandan Arang who is buried in Bayat. After having been the *bupati* (local governor) of Semarang, he lived in Tembayat between 1498 and 1512.
19. See: Amen Budiman, *Semarang Riwayatmu Dulu* (Semarang, your history) (Tanjung Sari: Semarang, 1978, 103). This book is the first of a projected series of four. The fourth volume will contain the footnotes. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, we only have the first volume and thus cannot check the author's sources.
20. D.A. Rinkes in *Nine Saints of Java* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1996, originally 1910, 1911) in chapter IV "Ki Pandan Arang at Tembayat," mentions the sources as *Sajarah-dalem* (a comprehensive list of the Mataram dynasty royal family by Ki Padma Susastra), *Serat Kanda* and *Babad Tanah Djawi* (Central Javanese historical traditions written during the Mataram period), two *Babad Nitik* (special kraton literature which discusses intimate aspects of the lives of the kings), and the *Dagb-Register gebouden int Casteel Batavia* (the daily record kept at the Batavia Castle, A.D. 1631-1634, published in The Hague, 1898).
21. Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 28.
22. *Ibid.*, 37.
23. Rinkes, *Nine Saints*, 112, quotes this from the *Dagb-Register*, 185.
24. See Rinkes, *Nine Saints*, 88, note 62.
25. *Ibid.*, 87.
26. Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, 49-50.
27. See Denys Lombard, *Le Carrefour Javanais* (Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes et Sciences Sociales, 1990), Part III, 93, and: Huub de Jonge, "Heiligen, middelen en doel. Ontwikkelingen en betekenis van twee Islamitische bedevaartsoorden op Java," in *Islamitische Pelgrimstochten*, eds. Willy Jansen and Huub de Jonge (Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1991), 87. Islam adopted the color white for holiness from pre-Islamic culture.

28. *Java*, 285.
29. *Ibid.*
30. In Indonesia it is not unusual for men and women to freely socialize with each other. Muslims, mainly Reformists, see this as a grave problem, especially when both men and women are preparing for important rituals such as going on the *Haji*. See Kees van Dijk, "Indonesische hadji's op reis," in *Islamitische Pelgrimstochten*, eds. Willy Jansen and Huub de Jonge, 49.
31. H. J. de Graaf, *Geschiedenis van Indonesies'* (Gravenhage/Bandung: N.V. Uitgeverij W. van Hoeve, 1949), 201.
32. In "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture," *Language and Power. Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 45, Benedict R. O'G Anderson observed that Javanese rulers often use the words "world" or "universe" in their titles.
33. Also see James J. Fox, "Ziarah visits to the tombs of the Walis, the Founders of Islam on Java," in *Islam in the Indonesian Social Context*, ed. M.C. Ricklefs (Clayton: Monash University, 1991).
34. Rejection by the saint as a sign of waning power also occurred in Tembayat. When Sultan Panjang tried to remove the Mataram dynasty, he found the door to the grave firmly locked and the key could not open it. Before that, he and his army had been caught in an eruption of volcano Merapi. The *jurukunci* interpreted this event to Sultan Panjang that the saint did not allow him to retain his rank. Rinkes, *Nine Saints*, 106.
35. The *jurukunci* described by Robert Hefner in *Hindu Javanese. Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985) pronounced "a long prayer of invocation to village ancestors and guardian spirits." (108) According to Hefner, the specific role of *jurukunci* stems from a time when Islamic knowledge was mastered only by a few who were socially and spiritually qualified. He credits the growth of *pesantren* in rural Java with the increase of Islamic learning and the demise of the number of *jurukunci*. (109)
36. James Fox, "Ziarah visits," 21.
37. Interview with *Jurukunci* Kertosono, September 28, 1997.
38. Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning. Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 44.
39. Henk Driesen, "Pelgrimage, etnografie en theorie. Een overzicht uit de culturele antropologie," in Jansen and de Jonge, 18. Herman Beck writes that Moroccan Muslims believe that attending the festival of Saint Moulay Idris seven times can replace the *Haji*. "De Moessem van Idris I. Een Islamitisch bedevaartsfeest in Moulay Idris, Marokko," in *Bedevaart en pelgrimage. Tussen traditie en moderniteit*, ed. J. Pieper, P. Post & M. van Uden (Baarn: Gooi & Sticht, 1994), 147.
40. Martin van Bruinessen, "Traditions for the Future: the Reconstruction of Traditionalist Discourse within the NU," in *Nabdatul Ulama, Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia*, eds. Greg Barton and Greg Fealy (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1996), 170.
41. Interview Kiai Mufid Mas'ud, May 28, 1997.
42. Booklet published by the *pesantren* called: *Dwi Windi Pondok Pesantren Sunan Pandan Aran 1975-1991* (Yogyakarta, 1991), 3-4.
43. Interview May 28, 1997.
44. Interview July 17, 1997.
45. Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, 342.
46. Fox, in "Ziarah visits" gives an example of literature about the wali Sunan Giri produced by the *pesantren* Luhur Islam "on the basis of collective research." (27).

