

## *The Death of Semar*

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**ABSTRAK:** Melalui artikel ini penulis menelaah peran memori kultural pada masa interkoneksi global sekarang ini. Penulis mensinyalir bahwa gagasan tradisional tentang budaya terancam oleh “industri budaya” seperti teknologi informasi dan media masa. Di Dunia Barat, fungsi budaya sebagai mesin perubahan dan reformasi tampak tergerus oleh industri tersebut. Tapi di Asia Tenggara – khususnya Indonesia – kekuatan eksternal serta upaya internal untuk mempertahankan identitas budaya lokal tetap terjaga agar berimbang. Isu ini diteropong berdasarkan perpektif Michel de Certeau. Gagasan ini ditampilkan melalui telaah kisah “kematian Semar” dalam Wayang. Kesadaran akan keberimbangan antara pengaruh eksternal dan pemeliharaan budaya internal itu sangatlah penting di dalam menyikapi jaringan kekuatan global yang memaksakan masuknya berbagai struktur religius, politik, keuangan dan hukum ke dalam budaya Indonesia.

**ABSTRACT:** This essay will examine the role of cultural memory in an age of global interconnection. It will discuss how the traditional idea of culture is threatened by the

“culture industry,” information technology and the media. In the West, there seems to be a loss of culture’s function as an engine of change and reform. But throughout the history of South East Asia (and especially in Indonesia) one sees a both a process of appropriation of ideas from the outside, and at the same time, the maintenance of a deeper cultural identity that is resistant to complete control. It is an unconscious memory – or a cultural reflex – present within the languages and stories and rationalities. I will explain this with reading of Michel de Certeau . And I will show how the *Wayang* story of the “Death of Semar” is emblematic of this idea. The awareness of these old processes of appropriation and resistance are extremely important in our age of global networks of power that attempt to impose, various religious, political, financial and legal structures.

## 1. ACADEMIC PLACE

I come as an outsider. This is the first thing we need to keep in mind. So what I have to present can never be something definitive. Think of it as a calculated failure. Or perhaps a framework within whose spaces one can create something of one’s own. Think of it as an opportunity to mark one’s own place in response.

My concern as an academic has always involved stories. But I have become aware of the complex problems that emerge when one unites academic study and myth. Not only the important question concerning what is the purpose of a story? But also, what is the purpose of an academic work, and to what extent can it be employed to understand stories?

Can we disentangle what we are doing today from the context of our academic meetings and institutions, from our cultural and national identities and from global capitalism? Our relationships to one another – even as academics – are becoming more mediated by our technologies. Our technologies bring us together and yet filter and distort our reflections. The cultural places where we stand become more distant and elusive from the places that our intellects

and imaginations inhabit. We often feel disconnected from the place where we stand.

Yet, embedded as we are within such power structures, I think that we academics are usually sincere. We think beyond our careers. We try to be aware of what is happening around us, the roles we play, and the places where we stand. This awareness also involves the awareness of something retreating.

I began working on this topic for another paper that I delivered at Paramadina University two years ago. In that paper I was trying to find an alternative to what Carl Schmitt defined as *nomos*. An idea of law connected to violence, appropriation and the power to name. I was questioning if there remained minor or local laws, something elusive yet persistent, which resisted the imposition of order from the outside. Today, I wish to focus on something closer and yet even more elusive, the manner in which tradition and cultural practices operate and their resilience.

Philosophers such as Theodor Adorno saw the dilemma of culture cut off from its roots. He believed that culture should work from the bottom up. It should not be static or continuous but involves the protest against itself. This more organic conception of culture is threatened by what he called the “culture industry.”

Culture, in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to human beings; but it always simultaneously raised a protest against the petrified relations under which they lived, thereby honoring them. In so far as culture becomes wholly assimilated to and integrated in those petrified relations, human beings are once more debased. (Adorno, p. 16)

The contemporary philosopher Zygmunt Bauman extends this analysis to the fate of culture in the consumer age, when culture is “managed.” He points back to the more original idea of “culture” as it developed in the eighteenth century.

The term “culture” was conceived within the semantic family of concepts that included terms like “cultivation,” “husbandry,” “breeding,” “grooming” – all denoting improvement, prevention of impairment, arresting deterioration. (Bauman, p. 195)

Bauman then goes on to contrast this to the “management” of culture that is pervasive today.

“Culture” appeared in the vocabulary less than a hundred years *after* another crucial modern concept – that of “managing,” which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, meant “to cause (persons, animals, etc.) to submit to one’s control,” “to operate upon,” “to succeed in accomplishing” – and more than one hundred years *earlier* than another, synthesizing sense of “management”: “to contrive to get along or pull through.” To manage, in a nutshell, meant to get things done in a way in which they would not move on their own; to redirect events according to one’s design and will. To put it in a yet another way: to manage (to get control over the flow of events) came to mean to *manipulate probabilities* – to make certain conduct (openings or responses) of “persons, animals, etc.,” more likely to take place than it would otherwise be, while making some other kinds of conduct less likely or utterly unlikely to happen. In

the last account, to manage means to *limit the freedom of the managed*.  
(Bauman, p. 195-196)

For Bauman, the “multiculturalism” of today is a kind of ideology of the end of ideologies. It has the tendency to accept inequalities as something beyond the powers of human intervention. As in Adorno, the deeper function of protest and change within culture is extinguished. The more progressive aspects of cultural development are derailed.

Of course the modes of resistance one finds in the writings of Adorno and Bauman tend to be quite elitist, and intellectually abstract. But what if we can conceive of a process of resistance that has always been operative and connected to cultural place? Something closest to us but often ignored.

## 2. SEMAR (ISMAYA)

To consider the importance of local wisdom, we need to acknowledge the remarkable history of South East Asia, especially Indonesia, in the ability to adapt outside influences to local knowledge. The great sacred epics Mahabharata and the Ramayana change and adapt as they are imported from India. In their work on the *Ramayana in Indonesia*, Saran and Khanna write:

An important feature of this tradition was its permeability. It absorbed as much from local history, myth, legend, and the folk tales surrounding it as from the literary works of the time. As the stories grew they became more and more varied in the hands of the *dalangs* whose attempts to please and satisfy the needs of their audience took them on extraordinary flights of imagination. (Saran and Khanna, p. 166)

The sacred stories were creatively adapted to a situation and a place. And within the imported spirituality was a deeper and more elusive spirituality.

A *wayang kulit* performance is not simply entertainment and education. It is a phenomenon which has an impact on the viewer at several different levels. Of these the spiritual is considered most important. Shadows are a mysterious metaphysical extension of human beings into an unknown world, a good reason for their association by scholars like Rassers and Hazeu with an ancient form of ancestor worship. The presence of the ancestors in the course of the shadow play is thought to project such a strong aura of benign power that a protective barrier is said to form between the audience and the forces of evil. Furthermore, good characters are said to have the power to pass on their desirable qualities to the person for whom the performance is being conducted. (Saran and Khanna, p. 166)

Semar is an image of the oldest forms of local wisdom of Java. In this way, as various layers of order and influence come to be imposed from the outside, his power becomes more and more disguised and elusive (one of the linguistic meanings of his name). He is a servant, that is someone close to us, humble and who advises us. He is also a clown or *panakawan*. But while he is humorous and clown-like, he is the wisest. And he becomes the Javanese image of the philosopher.

Clifford Geertz in his work *The Religion of Java* points out that both Semar and Shakespeare's Falstaff...

... furnish a reminder that, despite over-proud assertions to the contrary, no completely adequate human world-view is possible; and that, behind all the pretense to absolute and ultimate knowledge, the sense for the irrationality of human life, for the fact that it is unenclosable, remains. (Geertz, p. 277)

Geertz relates an explanation by a schoolteacher concerning the *Wayang* story “The Death of Semar.”

He said that in that story ... Siva comes down to earth in the form of a mystical teacher in an attempt to bring the Pendawas and the Korawas together, and that he is succeeding quite well except that Semar stands in the way; for Semar is really a god even though he seems to be only a servant. Ardjuna is bewitched by Siva in his earthly incarnation as a mystical teacher and told that if he kills Semar the Pendawas and the Korawas will be able to make peace and the eternal struggle will end. Ardjuna does not want to kill Semar, whom he loves, but he is bewitched, and goes to Semar and is about to kill him. Semar than says, “So this is how you treat me after I have followed you around and served you and loved you.” This is the most poignant point in the play. Ardjuna is very ashamed but he has given his word. Semar then says, “Well, all right I will burn myself”; and he builds a bonfire and stands in it. But instead of dying he turns into his godly form and then defeats the magician. Then the war between the Korawas and the Pendawas begins again. (Geertz, p. 277)

So Semar casts off his humble servant presence and shows himself as the oldest god of Java. He is not the supreme God, Tunggal, who cannot be represented in human form, but he and Shiva (*Bathara Guru*) are often considered the two sons of Tunggal. One is an indigenous god and the other an outsider. One represents the primal forces and the other represents order. It would seem that following this story, that the law does not merely belong to Shiva, it can never be completely imposed from the outside. What is “our own” (as the German poet Hölderlin might say) walks closest to us, at our side, advising us. It is our deepest identity even if we are often not aware.

Semar is a story embedded within a story. The Mahabharata was a sacred story which was introduced from the outside, while the story of Semar is a recognition of an older form of the sacred embedded within the appropriation of the Mahabharata.





### 3. REFLEXES

And yet, what does this elusive presence, which lies behind the formality of the story, tell us about ethics and traditional knowledge?

If we go back to the work of Edmund Burke, we find an appreciation of the reflexive manner in which cultural tradition operates. He was critical of the French Revolution and its enlightenment ideals. According to Burke, the revolution's leaders believed that by destroying the older structures of authority they would bring about new freedom. But in fact, the revolution ultimately brought about increased tyranny. Burke's explanation is that when ancient traditions are destroyed, their natural continuity and trust is also destroyed. When power is violently usurped, the new power will employ continual violence to maintain itself.

For Burke, history is wiser than individual reason. Praising his own culture, England over the enlightenment movement in Europe, Burke writes:

You see, Sir, that in this enlightened age I am bold enough to confess, that we are generally men of untaught feelings; that instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree, and, to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted, and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them. We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages. Many of our men of speculation, instead of exploding general

prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom which prevails in them ... Prejudice renders a man's virtue his habit; and not a series of unconnected acts. Through just prejudice, his duty becomes a part of his nature... (Burke, paragraph 145)

That is our ethical traditions are in some measure reflexes. They do not require much thought (and what is significant about this is that it leaves no room for equivocation or evasion). They provide some weight and some stability to our actions. In a way they accompany us like Semar advising us. Burke then warns us,

When ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment we have no compass to govern us; nor can we know distinctly to what port we steer. (Burke, paragraph 132)

The contemporary writer, Dany-Robert Dufour echoes this sentiment. He speaks of the loss of the Cartesian and Freudian subject and the emergence of what he calls the Neoliberal subject.

The subject was once a subject insofar as he was referred to this God, this *land* or this *blood*. An external Being conferred being onto the subject. With democracy, that hetero-reference was transformed into an auto-reference. The subject became, in a sense, his own origin. This auto-reference raises a lot of problems. Perhaps more than it solves! It hurt when human beings discovered that they could be subjects only by being the subjects of a fiction, but it hurts even more when they

discover that they have no fiction, as there is now a danger that there will be no more subjects. (Dufour, p. 54)

#### 4. PRACTICES OF EVERYDAY LIFE

But if the work of Adorno and Bauman point to the tendency of the Culture Industry to produce desire and produce subjects, De Certeau is interested in those practices of everyday life that provide resistance the authority, control and manipulation.

De Certeau distinguishes “strategies” from “tactics.” He writes that a “strategy” is employed by those in power:

I call strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as a base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats, can be managed... It is also the typical attitude of modern science, politics, and military strategy. (De Certeau 1984:36)

A “tactic” is employed by those lacking power; that live within the power structure. He will say that a tactic is “an art of the weak” (1984:37). It has no place or locus, but operates on the space imposed.

Thus it must play on and with the terrain imposed in it and organized by the law of a foreign power... It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of opportunities and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its

position, and plan raids... It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them, It can be where it is least expected. It is guileful ruse. (De Certeau 1984:37)

Elsewhere he uses the French term “*perruque*.” An example would be doing *one’s own thing* while pretending to work. This resistance has its examples in the uses of folk wisdom and the creative uses of commodities.<sup>1</sup> Language is also a creative tactic of resistance.

These tricks characterize a popular art of speaking. So quick, so perspicacious in recognizing them in the discourse of the raconteur and the peddler, the ear of the peasant or worker can discern in a way of speaking a way of treating the received language. His amused or artistic appreciation also concerns an art of living in the other’s field. It distinguishes in these linguistic turns a style of thought and action – that is, models of practice. (De Certeau, p. 24)

We can see this very clearly in the humorous use of language in the *Wayang* by the *panakawan*. It is a certain use of language which puns and subverts the seriousness of the received text itself.<sup>2</sup>

The whole story of Semar seems to be a *purruque* within the official story of the Mahabharata. The use of jokes and puns not only undercuts the seriousness of the sacred story and also implants a deeper identity within it. Alois Nugroho points out that the humour and language games of the panakawan constitute a kind of *irony*:

The humour of the *panakawan* points to their modesty about their own final vocabulary (the so-called Javanese culture) *vis a vis* the Hindunese culture, and later also with the cultures of the two Semitic religions as well as with modern ideologies. That is why it might be better to call the humour of the *panakawan* as “*guyon parikena*” (meaningful and valuable humour). The Javanese insertion of the *panakawan* interlude in the *wayang* performance gives a kind of Javanese moderation into a serious struggle between the good and the bad according to the Indian Mahabharata. (Nugroho. P. 3)

This kind of internal critique would be different than the negative dialectical tactics of Adorno who despises the humour and laughter he associates with the culture industry.

Semar represents more than just a critique of outside forms. He is also a center of gravity as he represents the oldest most elusive identity of Javanese culture.

Javanese Islam adapted the gods and stories to a different cosmology.<sup>3</sup> Yet there was an attempt to reach back to the authority of the past. One example is the imposition of Islamic cosmology upon the image of Semar.

The talisman or amulet, the *Kalimasada*, was taken to be a corruption of *Kalimat Syahadat*, the Islamic profession of faith in the opening verses of the Koran – ‘There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet.’ Representations of *wayang purwas* figures, such as Semar, have even been composed of intertwined Arabic script quoting Islamic texts – a clear demonstration of Javanese syncretism combining in one

small picture an animist god, a Hindu epic and a tenet of Islamic belief. (Irvine, p. 21)

This *accommodation* within Javanese Islam has also been described by Stephen C. Headley in his work: *Durga's Mosque*. There he speaks of “genealogical landscapes” and the manner in which a balance is attempted between Javanese Islam on one hand, with the older Javanese gods on the other. Cultural authority is rooted within the land itself.<sup>4</sup> And thus arises the phenomena of village Imams attempting to trace back their authority through various genealogies, back to the first gods.

These syncretic tactics seem to be linked with a desire to respect place, to ground oneself within one's situation and to achieve some continuity with the past.

## 6. WALKING IN JAKARTA

But now we can acknowledge some limits of de Certeau's writings. In what is considered the most important part of de Certeau's book – his reflections on space, place and memory – he emphasizes the ability to give new meaning to space.

First, if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), than the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform, or abandon spatial elements. (De Certeau, 1984, p. 98)

The act of walking itself reflects the power of the tactic to provide a kind of liberation within the network of an imposed order.

They become liberated spaces that can be occupied. A rich indetermination gives them, by means of a semantic rarefaction, the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. They insinuate other routes into the functionalist and historical order of movement. Walking follows them: ‘I fill this great empty space with a beautiful name.’ (De Certeau, p.105)

This is a belief in some sort of redemption of humanity by freeing them from the tyranny of territory. These tactics of subversion and imagination, free us from the tyranny of history, political spaces and territories, and identities.

De Certeau considers the function of memory in the same way. It becomes a tactic that alters and gives meaning to place. He will claim that memory is implanted in space, “like those birds that lay their eggs only in other species’ nests, memory produces in a place that does not belong to it.” (De Certeau, p. 84) These implanted memories take the form of Stories and myths. They make places habitable in contrast to the emptiness of imposed narratives.<sup>5</sup>

Totalitarianism attacks what it quite correctly calls superstitions: supererogatory semantic overlays that insert themselves “over and above” and “in excess, and annex to a past or poetic realm a part of the land the promoters of technical rationalities and financial profitabilities had reserved for themselves. (De Certeau, 1984, pp. 105-106)

There is certainly much truth to this. Especially today we see the attempt to extinguish memory by imposing what is claimed as pure forms of religion, democracy and other forms of imposed order.

But de Certeau's idea of memory and place is a bit distorted. It is based upon a preconception of the separation of time from place. The problem here is a problem with much of Western thought. Salvation is connected with freedom, novelty and originality. Oppression is to be found in the marking-out of territories and accepted authorities and traditions.

But notice that the problem outside of the West is slightly different. Cultural memory is slowly being displaced by powers that coordinate things from a distance. Place and territory has been obscured by a discourse that is imposed by the outside. What is promoted is a kind of placelessness, where one is plugged into ones technological devises. The memories connected to place are obscured.

Certainly one can use one's imagination to project a meaning upon space. But where does the imagination come from? Isn't it the case that now our imaginations are fabricated for us, and are often designed to keep us blind to the realities of place?

Walter Benjamin writings about the *flaneur* in his various essays on cities, demonstrates the manner in which cultural memory is stored-up within a place. Not merely implanted as with de Certeau. In a book review of Franz Hessel called "On Foot in Berlin" Benjamin quotes Hessel: "We only see what looks at us. We can do only ... what we cannot help doing." To which Benjamin adds, "The philosophy of the *flaneur* has never been more profoundly grasped than in these words of Hessel's." (Benjamin, p. 265).



If we are interested in Local Wisdom, what we want to conserve is a certain place, a memory, a connection that is threatened by the global laws that fluidly traverse the local landscapes. It is not a matter of merely subverting totalitarian space, but also a matter of finding older spaces behind the virtual spaces.

This is important because the gravity of our cultural traditions – even as they retreat – is what holds us back from becoming mere ones and zeros, from becoming mere genetic information, becoming mere consumers or mere investors, or becoming slaves.



Despite certain weaknesses, the work of de Certeau is extremely important to us because it calls our attention to the practices of culture and how they live on within the imposition of various kinds of order, a tendency that continues to accelerate in our information age.

It also brings up important questions concerning the relationship between our academic theories, which in many cases can be considered *strategies*, and the reflexive practices that would be *tactics*, which often escape the academic's gaze. To what extent can we catalogue practices without violating them? To what extent is the academic a function of the network of power? These are very difficult questions for us to consider.

## 7. CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE

We might say that Semar is a personification of these *tactics* that de Certeau describes. Yet he does not represent the freedom of the imagination to implant space with new meaning. He instead represents the elusive persistence of an old meaning, a memory, or a connection.

Arjuna is asked to kill Semar. In other words he is asked by an outside power to destroy his own cultural connections. In response, Semar volunteers to die. Or it would be more accurate to say: he retreats. But in his retreat he reveals how originary and primal he is. He is the soul of a place and a people. In his presence he is elusiveness. In his disappearance he appears. We need this distance to create an awareness of what is lost.

There is a primal *reflexive* connection to our culture and a *reflective* one as well. The retreat of one calls forth the other. The danger, as Aby Warburg recognized, is that modern technology threatens to destroy even the possibility of reflection.

With Semar's retreat, with his victory over Shiva, the struggle between the Korawas and the Pendawas continues. This suggests a return to the more originary idea of culture which Adorno described as a "protest against itself."

Struggle within a culture is natural. It is what moves it forward in such a way that its tradition and memory is maintained.

And where have we placed ourselves as philosophers? When our ideas become absorbed into the strategies of domination? When they seem to be irrelevant to the great momentum driving profit and efficiency? When speaking-up we get in the way of the Gods and their attempts to impose control? And often, like Semar or Socrates, we accept our fate and willfully disappear.

We are the ones who connect things back. We are the ones who try to remember when all monuments to memory are being destroyed. We are the humble ones who provide advice. Who constantly disappear and die, but in so doing, give life to a memory, a thought, something elusive but which might someday return and build its own momentum.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> de Certeau writes: “Tales and legends seem to have the same role. They are deployed, like games, in a space outside of and isolated from daily competition, that of the past, the marvelous, the original. In that space can thus be revealed, dressed as gods or heroes, the models of good or bad ruses than can be used every day. Moves, not truths, are recounted... The formality of everyday practices is indicated in these tales, which frequently reverse the relationships of power and, like the stories of miracles, ensure the victory of the unfortunate in a fabulous, utopian space. This space protects the weapons of the weak against the reality of the established order. It also hides them from the social categories which “make history” because they dominate it. And whereas historiography recounts in the past tense the strategies of instituted powers, these “fabulous” stories offer their audience a repertory of tactics for future use.” (de Certeau, p.23)

<sup>2</sup> Preciosa de Joya has written on the phenomena of tricksters and the *Panakawan*. Here she provides a translation of their crude and clever use of language. “Deep in the forest, Semar and his sons are accompanying their master who is deep in meditation.

Semar had just woken up, and Gareng points out sharply that he was asleep for two hours. Semar tries to defend himself: “Aku wong tuwa ora kuwat (I’m an old man, I’m not strong enough). And later you might need to take me to the hospital.” Petruk laughs, and says that their father is asking for donations again. Semar ignores him and instructs his sons to stay awake and watch the pendapa (the pavilion), and soon after, announces that he will go rest. Bagong makes fun of Semar: “Look at this old man, he cannot even stay awake. And he drools.” He goes closer to Semar and hears a sound coming out of his father’s lips: “Poh. Poh.” Bagong turns to Petruk, “Truk, what is ‘poh?’” Petruk laughs, “This person really does not understand anything. Old people, when they are asleep, are like that. Because they no longer have teeth. So when they breathe, and air comes out of their mouth, and passes through the lips, it sounds like ‘poh.’” Bagong is curious more than ever, and examines Semar more closely, but as soon as he approaches, Semar lets out a huge fart into Bagong’s face. Bagong is in momentary shock: “Tak tilik, kebos!” (“I check him out, he blows!”) Semar awakens momentarily, again to defend himself: “It’s masuk angin.” Bagong retorts, “Ora masuk angin, ngebrak!” (That’s not masuk angin. Ngebrak!).” (Preciosa de Joya from an unpublished paper: Philosopher’s Farts and Clowns.)

<sup>3</sup> Irvine writes: “Amongst the more important changes wrought by Islam was the reduction in status of the Hindu-Javanese gods of *wayang purwa*. The concept of Allah as the single Divine Being came into direct conflict with the beliefs inherent in the classical *wayang* stories. The conflict was gradually resolved with the older traditional gods being assimilated into Islamic creation beliefs, a process which began in the sixteenth century and was not finally formalized until the works of the Surakarta court poets, or *punjangga*... The old gods became the humanized mythical descendants of Adam and Eve... The famous *walis*, the apostles of Islam on Java, were said to have been descended from Adam through the line which produced the Prophet. With intermarriage between the families of the *walis* and the old royal houses of Java, two lines of descent from Adam could be said to have been reunited. In this way, local rulers could continue to justify their own political and religious power by claiming ancestral affinity with the great Prophets of Islam as well as with the Hindu-Javanese gods of *wayang purwa*. (Irvine, p. 21)

<sup>4</sup> Headley writes: “Incorporated into these seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth century histories are the Muslim (right hand) and Indian-Javanese (left hand) genealogies that lead back eventually to the cosmologies with which the world began

(Pigeaud 1967, Vol. I p. 130). There was a major literary effort to connect the major Muslim figures to the cosmology preserving the role of the first Javanese kings and their purely Javanese cosmogonies on the other. Initially this gave rise to collections of genuine myths., but by the mid-nineteenth century one can speak of literary fabrications of which Ranggawarsita is the most famous author.” (Headley, p. 78)

<sup>5</sup> Here is the full quote: “By a paradox that is only apparent, the discourse that makes people believe is the one that takes away what it urges them to believe in, or never delivers what it promises. Far from expressing a void or describing a lack, it creates such. It makes room for a void. In that way, it opens up clearings; it “allows” a certain play within a system of defined places. It “authorizes” the production of an area of free play (*Spielraum*) on a checkerboard that analyzes and classifies identities. It makes places habitable. On these grounds, I call such discourse a “local authority.” It is a crack in the system that saturates places with signification and indeed so reduces them to this signification that it is “impossible to breathe in them.” It is a symptomatic tendency of functionalist totalitarianism (including its programming of games and celebrations) that it seeks precisely to eliminate these local authorities, because they can promise the univocity of the system. Totalitarianism attacks what it quite correctly calls superstitions: supererogatory semantic overlays that insert themselves “over and above” and “in excess, and annex to a past or poetic realm a part of the land the promoters of technical rationalities and financial profitabilities had reserved for themselves.” (de Certeau, pp. 105-106)

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