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Night-time in Java. Thoughts on Merapi, Verticality and Paganism

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Introduction

- 1 In Southeast Asia, the “traditional notions” of time and space tend to take a back seat to ones that are more “modern” and better valued; in Indonesia, this phenomenon is displayed in different ways (the introduction of the Gregorian and Islamic calendars, urbanisation, folklorisation and/or eradication of traditional cultures [Durand 2004]). In the Javanese countries, however, the syncretic practices linked to “Javanism” (*kejawen*) have flourished (Bertrand 2002). The goal of this article is to show how, in this context, vernacular temporalities and spatialities appear not only as a framework in which the struggle between two conceptions of Islam in Java (the one puritan and “modern” [Raillon 2003], the other heavily influenced by paganism in the etymological sense [Bertrand 2002]) plays out but also, above all, as resources and challenges for these players.
- 2 In addition, according to J. Lévy, “in geography, phenomena that stand out are regarded as non-spatial characteristics (substances) of the localised objects and not as components of the extension that, by definition, is reduced to two dimensions” (Lévy in Lévy & Lussault 2003: 927). By contrast, we consider verticality as the result of a trajectory:¹ Just as time, the fourth dimension of space-time, is trajected in temporality, ² the vertical line, whose natural forms of height – relief, altitude, salience... – make up only one of the “bases”, offers many medial holds that allow for multiple verticalities to be trajected. Yet, verticality courses through our existential relationship (geographicality [Dardel 2014] and experience [Tuan 2006]) with the night and the mountain.
- 3 We will compare these two issues by looking at a place and a moment offering an “extreme case” (Flyvbjerg 2011) brimming with imagination and sacredness: night-time

on the Merapi volcano.³ The first part will describe the nightlife of the volcano and its surroundings and will reveal both the *high places* and the *dense-moments* whose mountain and the nocturnal qualities, as we will see, respond to and support each other. The second part will frame this within the context of the conflicts between puritan orthodoxy and local practices and posit that the night and the mountain play a similar symbolic role there. Finally, the third part will attempt to conceptualise this space-time link between this place and this moment in order to strengthen the hypothesis that, beyond simple simultaneity, there is a similar relationship to *verticality*, which is itself regarded as the result of a trajection.

- 4 First of all, a word has to be said about the methodology. This article uses data collected during two trips (early 2009 and early 2013) specifically undertaken to do research on and study the volcano; these trips followed two years of volunteer work in Indonesia and preceded another research trip at the beginning of 2015 (two periods spent primarily in the Javanese areas of Lampung province on Sumatra). The research concerning Merapi and its inhabitants, the centre of “Javanism” (*kejawen*), is therefore part of a broader relationship with daily life in Indonesia (Bing 2015a). Thus, we do not claim to be objective or that the social science researcher stakes out a position as an outside observer: On the contrary, having primarily used ethnographic methods and having obtained the most important part of the information through (formal and informal) interviews and observations (guided tours...) that were the result of networks of informants living in villages spread across Merapi’s southern flank (Bing 2014a, 2014b), it goes without saying that the elements we have are only partial. For this reason, it is important to cross over into intersubjectivity by testing our own hypotheses against those of other researchers and by making use of scientific literature. In addition, the collection of information mostly took place on Merapi’s southern flank, which is administratively attached to the Yogyakarta province/sultanate (cf. Figure 1): While the other flanks (attached to the Central Java province) have differed rather little in cultural respects, the living conditions are also less affected by the risk that the volcano poses. At first blush, this does not influence the issues discussed in this article, but it would nonetheless be prudent not to unduly generalise the results.

Figure 1: Location map of the villages (dusun) where the data collection took place

1: KINAHREJO; 2: KALITENGH LOR; 3: TURGO; 4: TRITIS; 5: BABADAN (ONLY VILLAGE IN CENTRAL JAVA); 6: KALIADAM; 7: JAMBU; 8: PENTINGSARI (AT THE EXTREME WESTERN EDGE OF THE ZONE) AND "OFFICIAL" RELOCATIONS OF VILLAGES 6 AND 7, WHICH WERE AFFECTED BY THE 2010 ERUPTION. "DANGER ZONES" (KRB) AND DISTANCES TO THE CRATER ARE ALSO INDICATED (MEI, LAVIGNE & AL.,

Réalisation : J.B. Bing, 2017, map base (Mei, Lavigne & al., 2013).

Mountain nocturnality's high places and dense-moments

- 5 Generally speaking, night-time in Indonesia has a rather negative connotation: Circadian rhythms (Hallé 2010) and cultural interpretations of these astronomical and biological phenomena (Bureau 1997) render the time inhospitable for activity. In the Javanese countries, situated in the shadow of the equator, the alternation between day and night, which changes very little throughout the year, favours activity starting at dawn (*subuh*) and coming to an end when the sun sets 12 hours later (*maghrib*), sometimes including a break during the hottest time of the day (between *zohor*, around noon, and *ashar* in the middle of the afternoon). Night-time (*malam*), which becomes full after *isya*,⁴ allows for greater sociability in the immediate space (family, neighbourhood meetings); thus, it is strongly discouraged to move far away whether for practical (delinquency) or spiritual security reasons: Night-time is the realm of the spirits (*djinns*), demons (*shaytan*) and other ghosts (*hantu*). Whether in the towns or in the countryside, most of the houses are lit up at *maghrib* to keep these spirits away; lamps often remain lit when the residents are away, and it is not uncommon to sleep with this light on. Here electricity, modern technology par excellence, makes it possible to confront very old worries without calling them into question. On a day-to-day basis, the lighting is less a diurnisation of the night (a "Western" practice rejected by Islamic

teachings) than something that, while incapable of eliminating the night altogether, makes it possible to fight against its negative effects.

- 6 A distinction has to be made from the get-go: While in rural areas, starting at *maghrib*, activities tend to be restricted to the home, and movement to the outside is restricted to a minimum, there is a slight diurnisation of the first part of the night in the city among young people and their elder loved ones. The streets do empty out during the hour between *maghrib* and *isya* (considered the most dangerous hour, when the activities of the evil spirits reach their peak, no doubt because of the ambiguity underscored in footnote 4), but they fill up again thanks to the *warung* (small restaurants), *lesehan* (tarpaulin-covered street stalls where people eat on the ground) and places that are more hip (*mall*, *fast-food*, billiard hall, cinema...). Later, between 10 p.m. and midnight, the streets empty and become a stomping ground for rats, stray dogs and (in some places) some seedy activities (prostitution, smuggling...). At the foot of Merapi and on its southern flank, this contrast is very clear all along the 30-kilometre route that links the city of Yogyakarta with the very tourism-oriented town of Kaliurang: Up until Pakem, some 20 kilometres from Yogyakarta, urbanisation and rural urbanisation bring with them a diurnisation of the night that stands in stark contrast with the stillness of the remaining rural areas a few hundred metres, or even just a few dozen metres, from the big highway or, higher up, between Pakem and Kaliurang.
- 7 Merapi's truly nocturnal life is arranged around a few high places – the *tempat zihara* (“pilgrimage places”), where people congregate to practise an asceticism involving meditation and prayers. In the Javanese imaginary, the forest (*hutan*), mountain (*gunung*) and night (*malam*) make up three margins where humanity has but a peripheral and exceptional place: Those who go there, whether for reasons good or bad, only do so to get away from the common lot (saints, bandits, rebels...). Thus, the highly renowned *Mbah Marijan*⁵ was known for regularly spending the night meditating above the “belt” (situated between the highest villages and the summit area, it is a forest strip with a temple where the annual ceremony of making offerings to the volcano is held: Figure 2). Other sites, more easily accessible but relatively isolated from the towns, also welcome the night-time meditators: For example, the grave of *Sheikh Maulana*, located at the top of *Bukit* (“hill”) *Turgo* (see below). Less known is a holy spring (Figure 3) close to *Pentingsari*, a village at the bottom of the *kali Kuning* (“Yellow River”) canyon. Like Mount Athos, Merapi, the sacred mountain, has a high density of these types of places.

Figure 2: The ancient temple where the annual *labuhan* used to take place

THE TEMPLE WAS DESTROYED BY THE 2010 ERUPTION AND HAS BEEN REPLACED BY A SIMPLE SLAB. ON THE SIDES OF THE TABLET, ADORNED IN SACRED JAVANESE BY THE SULTAN'S COAT OF ARMS, ARE TWO STATUES OF GANESH THAT WERE BEHEADED BY PURITANS IN 2008.

PHOTO: BING, 2009.

Figure 3: The Pentingsari spring

The spring stand at the foot of a rocky wall in the Kali Kuning ("Yellow River") riverbed.

PHOTO: BING, 2013.

- 8 The importance of this high place is less its *topos* (location as defined in mathematical terms by latitude-longitude-altitude coordinates) than its *chôra* (location as lived relative to other places);⁶ a high place can be found on a summit (the grave) or in the depths (the spring) – the important thing is that there must be contact with the spirits or the divine. It requires two qualities:
 - an impressive topographical location: the terrestrial surface is connected via the summits to the heavens and via the caves and the springs to the Chthonic world;
 - at a remove from everyday places so as to produce an existential break (relative distance: actually, the Pentingsari spring is located just a few metres from the village but is isolated from it by a canyon wall).
- 9 The ideal high place would be an oxymoron, as it would combine the contradictory qualities of height and depth and precipitate a complete verticality. A good example is offered by the grave of *Sheikh* Maulana on *Bukit Turgo* (Figure 4): Not only was the holy man buried (depth, Chthonic world) on a hilltop (altitude, celestial world), but reaching his grave means having to climb several hundred metres above the village, following a path that is only accessible on foot (the same as for the *labuhan* temple or the spring) and passes through a forest and a cave⁷ (both with connotations of an imaginary of obscurity and nocturnality). In this respect, there is a proximity to the symbolic rituals of a number of initiation ceremonies that, among others, symbolically repeat the birth process [Fournand 2009]. Finally, the sheikh's presence has given Islamic validation to hilltop's sacredness. Of course, the crater is another example, but the difficulty of accessing it makes it much less valued.

Figure 4: “Mountain” or “hill”: a relationship with sacredness that cannot ignore the topography

Turgo Hill (left) at the foot of Merapi; the forest (right) hides Kaliurang Hill – only its summit is visible.
PHOTO : BING, 2009.

Figure 5: Skeikh Maulana's grave at the top of Bukit Turgo, opposite the volcano

PHOTO : BING, 2009.

- 10 In response to this differentiated space, time is also differentiated: Not every moment is conducive to prayer or meditation and, far from being a repetition of the same or a constant flow, time has its dense-moments,⁸ just like space has its high places. Day and night have their own priorities: The former is for productive activities, while the second is more favourable to inwardness. Whether for spiritual or tourism purposes, it is still common to visit *Sheikh* Maulana's grave by day, but it is much more impressive (and very rare) to stay there the whole night for a spiritual purpose. Moreover, not all nights are equal. The Javanese calendar, which continues to act as a point of reference for activities linked to *kejawen*, uses Islamic calculation years after the moths and festivals have been Islamicised (Lombard 2004) but still divides them up into five-day weeks:⁹ *legi*, *pahing*, *pon*, *wage* and *kliwon*. It is thought to be spiritually auspicious for Friday (*jumat*, holy day according to Muslim tradition) to coincide with *kliwon*. Furthermore, the change of day takes place at *maghrib* (and not at midnight or dawn): Consequently, night-time is part of the day that follows.¹⁰ This means that the night from Thursday to *kliwon* Friday (*malam jumat kliwon*) is considered the holiest and the most favourable for all these activities.¹¹

The mountain and the night as “anti-worlds”

- 11 Merapi is a high place of *kejawen* syncretism, which permeates a relative and generally Islamic but sometimes Christian orthopraxy of pagan and Hindu-Buddhist notions (Lombard 2004). Along with Parangtritis beach 50 kilometres to the south and, halfway, Yogyakarta's *Kraton* (the sultan's palace), it forms a topographic hub. In line with this pre-Islamic but still lively heritage, Merapi embodies both the fertility that allows continuity in the world and the threat of a violent resurgence; in both cases, it is the counterpart of the feared but revered “South Sea” (*laut Kidul*). This mountain/sea bipolarity should be understood not as an opposition but as a complementarity for which the human being (*manusia*¹²) is responsible, topographically embodied by the *Kraton*, which is tasked with ensuring balance and harmony between these forces. This mediance (meaning given to the milieu [Barque 1990] – here, to the topography in particular) is far removed from the binary notion of Good and Evil, which are considered to be absolutely irreconcilable and are promoted by both orthodox Islam and Christian (Catholic and Protestant) dogma.
- 12 Contemporary Islam in Indonesia, of which the Javanese account for almost half, is torn between antagonistic tendencies that can be schematically grouped as three trends:¹³
- The traditionalists, who are often rural and in Java claim their affiliation with *kejawen*;
 - The liberals, who are often urban and very attached to Indonesia's religious diversity and to a broad interpretation of Islamic teachings;
 - The Islamic modernists, who rally around Sunni orthodoxy, modernism and nationalism and are on a roll despite the fall of the Suharto regime that had benefitted this ideology (Raillon 2003).
- 13 The first two trends are growing their networks in the wake of the Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) mass organisation and display what at first might seem like a paradoxical alliance against the third, which not only relies on the Muhammadiyah mass organisation but has also been able to forge links with different circles of power (army, Indonesian Ulema Council [MUI]...). On Merapi, the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) affiliated with the NU places value on “traditional arts” (*seni tradisional*: dances, batik handicraft,

gamelan...) and participation in *kejawen* and interreligious ceremonies in addition to Islamic learning, while those of Muhammadiyah boast an educational programme that is both orthodox and modern. This point needs to be qualified: The socio-political-cultural reality of Merapi and of Indonesia in general is much more complex than the analysis offered here, and large blocs cannot be contrasted without undue generalisation; in particular, it is necessary to emphasise the importance of the local context where each alliance looks different. Thus, to succeed Mbah Marijan, Yogyakarta's (liberal) sultan chose the son of the deceased (a Muhammadiyah supporter who shows little interest in *kejawen* but respects the sultan's hierarchical superiority) rather than one of his friends who had been the preferred choice of the *kejawen* milieu and the liberals but would potentially have been more inclined to challenge the evacuation orders in the event of danger in the name of local knowledge.

14

- 14 The night and the mountain occupy a similar place in this confrontation between three ways of thinking and between three different notions of time and space (Lombard 2004, Durand 2004). In their roles as hubs necessary to balance complementary forces for *kejawen*, they offer an opportunity for man to attain spiritual fulfilment. Although daily life goes on during the day in anthropised areas, these two expressions of a non-human reality are "anti-worlds" (Houssay-Holzschuch 2006) that have value by themselves: The mountain and the night (as well as the sea and various spirits...) are indispensable for the balance of the "world" (human, visible) while also being radically foreign and sometimes hostile to it. By contrast, Islamic modernism turns them into symbols of loss, ignorance¹⁵ and/or savagery that have to be colonised, eliminated and made profitable (the same goes for the forest [Lombard 1974, Durand 2004]).
- 15 Among the younger generation, testimonies converge on two points: On the one hand, the low level of interest in traditional mountain practices (however, the *dark tourism* of motorcycles and 4x4s is doing well) and, on the other hand, a rather widespread ignorance (with a few exceptions) of all that concerns the Javanese calendar – particularly the ethnoastronomic knowledge associated with it: In this regard, urbanisation, modernisation and Islamicisation go hand in hand. That might confirm the notion of an erasure of *kejawen* in favour of Islamic modernism; however, this trend is not clear and is called into question instead of being passively endured: This consideration touches on a variety of areas ranging from housing to the arts, from economics to morals (Bing 2015b), and the liberals are active contributors. When eruptions take place, the disasters regularly experienced by some village communities accelerate this process (Bing 2014b). Therefore, it is possible that we are witnessing not a "shariasation" erasing "Javanism" but a revitalisation accompanied by a reassessment.
- 16 This new appreciation is seen, among others, in the contemporary *wayang* ("shadow theatre") practice, which is an identity symbol for the Javanese. Their major figures adorn the entrances to the villages alongside the main national symbols (flag, Garuda eagle...) and come from both sacred art and entertainment (Lombard 2004): A performance is a ceremony, a matter as much of spectacle as of liturgy, and the *dalang* (marionettist) must show not only virtuosity but also piety and wisdom. While *wayang* generally includes stories from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, it also utilises very contemporary Islamic or political figures; in addition, the narration (even from traditional repertoires) can be adapted to suit a socially relevant issue: Filmmaker

Garin Nugroho directed *Opera Jawa* (2006) with heavily Marxist overtones (Bing 2015b) despite the ongoing prohibition on this ideology.

- 17 In this context, one small detail deserves particular attention: *Wayang* is closely linked to both the night and the mountain. Indeed, on the one hand, a *wayang* performance can only take place at night (and can last until daybreak) and, on the other hand, one of its central figures is the *gunungan* (*kayon* in Javanese, “holy mountain”), from *gunung* (“mountain”). Is it just a coincidence? Perhaps, but in it we see a clear index of the trajectory link that binds the mountain and the night together in *kejawen*, and we will now try to improve our understanding by going deeper.

Verticality and the trajectory of the vertical

- 18 Mountains embody a verticality with a natural “basis” (their relief) to such a degree that the way in which they are culturally constructed is often forgotten (Debarbieux 2001). In the case of Java, an element of toponymy demonstrates this culturality of the definition of the mountain that goes beyond altitude alone: In the southeast of the Yogyakarta province, a few dozen kilometres from Merapi, the coastal massif of *gunung Kidul* (the “Southern Mountains”) – a massif known for its aridity – rises to a height of about 700 m. It might seem to be the sacredness that makes the mountain or at least contributes to it (Roux 1999, Dardel 2014): Indeed, on the one hand, *gunung Kidul* is a high place of *kejawen* and welcomes a number of meditators in search of austerity (Bonneff 1978, Grave 2000)¹⁶; on the other hand, the verticality and the sacredness are linked, even in the absence of high relief (Berque 2009 on the “movement of cathedrals”). By contrast, Sumatra’s western cordillera (which stretches for 1,700 km and has some peaks reaching higher than 3,000 m.) is called *Bukit* (“hills”) Barisan. There is certainly no shortage of sacred mountains, but they are especially sacred for the local ethnic groups and not for the Javanese who dominate Indonesia’s geohistory and have made their mark on it (Lombard 2004).¹⁷ We should note, however, that sacredness is not everything: Despite their sanctification thanks to the grave of the sheikh and a residence of the sultan, the *Bukit Turgo* and *Kaliurang*, which peak at about 1,200 m., cannot compete with the 2,900-metre-high volcano.
- 19 A more complex link is the one between verticality and the night. It is rare for the imaginaries of the night and the mountain to be directly associated with each other; the former is more often assimilated with the depths (by analogy, the night, like the caverns, is characterised by obscurity: Bureau 1997). However, the depths are also a figure of verticality, albeit in reverse or even negatively (the “top” often has a positive connotation, while the “bottom” has a negative one). Thus, associating the night and the mountain with each other could only be an oxymoron, if the mountain did not trajectory other imaginaries similar to those of the night: High summits and the night share part of the mystery (Roux 1999) of the dangers for the ordinary man who seldom visits them (see above) and connect the Earth to the stars (Cruchet 2005). In Java, the ethnoastronomic knowledge developed long ago had a calendar and agrarian function and is used to ascertain the main stages of irrigated rice farming, which is very demanding (Ammarell & Tsing 2015); however, this irrigated rice farming, which is crucial from the socio-political point of view (Lombard 1974), also comes from the *kejawen* tradition of a mystical and mostly pagan dimension: *Dewi Sri*, the goddess of rice, remains venerated by both Muslim and Christian farmers. This paganism of the

vernacular practices has to be understood within the etymological meaning of the word: They connect to the country, the land and the place, give it life and meaning and receive concreteness and value in return. However, in this case, this link to the work on the ground (diurnal, oriented downwards) goes through a look at the stars (nocturnal, upwards): One of the main calendar reference points is provided by a constellation formed by a double axis (Alnilam-Rigel and Saiph-Bellatrix via Orion's Belt)¹⁸; this constellation draws a plow (*weluku*), a tool that is indispensable for agriculture (Ammarell 1988). This persistence of pagan markers via *kejawen* and agrarian practices (and despite Islamicisation) characterises Javanese culture and contrasts with a more radical Islamicisation of symbols in other parts of the archipelago (for example, the Banjar of Kalimantan have Islamicised their references to Orion [Ammarell & Tsing 2015]).

- 20 In the end, therefore, we can suppose that, on Mount Merapi and according to a look that is oriented by Javanese culture, the night and the mountain maintain a close relationship, sometimes made of analogies (mystery, danger, stars), at other times made of complementary opposites (height/depth, role of stars in the agrarian calendar...).

Perspectives – by way of conclusion

- 21 On the Merapi volcano, the link between mountain and night is expressed in the many modalities of the trajectory of the relief and of the sky in a verticality, of mathematical space (plane) in lived place (mountain) and of physical time (night) in lived temporality (nocturnality). By examining these spatio-temporal links of the night, we have shown that the *kejawen* resistance to the modern-puritan normalisation passes, among others, through practices that reaffirm a temporality and a mediance that gives meaning to time and space by legitimising what comes from the local milieu in the face of standardising universalisms (scientism, Islamism). Therefore, for the supporters of “Javanism” in Java, the mountains and the night form a bastion of their resistance to national-modernist and national-Islamist assimilation: The vertical axis embodied by the nocturnal moment and the mountain high place will undoubtedly remain a rather significant ontological, spiritual and concrete resource for *kejawen*.
- 22 What are the prospects for the future? Regarding the overlap between policy and magic in Java, Bertrand (2002: 186) concludes: “The important fact is not that such an individual chooses to read reality in such a way, but that at the collective level, a choice is always possible between different registers of meanings.” In terms of the experience of the mountain and the night on Merapi, this means that Indonesia's current push towards Islamic modernism¹⁹ will not erase the *kejawen* traditions, their high places or their holy nights. On the one hand, the spiritual practices of nocturnal meditation will undoubtedly continue, possibly in an Islamicised or Christianised form,²⁰ but as in the past, they will probably affect only a few people. On the other hand, other practices that are more accessible to everyone will re-examine, reinterpret and perhaps revitalise this link by using either traditional media with a highly codified use (*wayang*) or more contemporary, more malleable forms that are not incompatible with the others (cinema, tourism...). Finally, it is not absurd to imagine that Indonesia, in the current process of modernisation, could be affected by the trajectory reversal that, in Europe, has attributed a positive value to the starry night and “heritagised” it (Bureau

1997). In Indonesia, this reversal is already visible, for example, in the heritagisation of “natural” spaces once considered for clearing that are now protected: and after space... time, perhaps?

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NOTES

1. Berque (1990) defines *trajectation* as a “medial and historic combination of the subjective and the objective, of the physical and the phenomenal, of the ecological and the symbolic, which produces a mediance. Whence: *trajectivity*, *trajective*, *trajecting*”. *Mediance* defines the “sense of a milieu; both the objective tendency, the sensation/perception and the meaning of this medial relationship”.
2. Given that the infra-atomic dimensions postulated by advanced physics is not accessible to our senses, let us consider J. Lévy's premise to be valid in this regard. For one approach to this mesology of verticality, see two presentations made at the *Mésologiques de l'EHESS* seminar: <http://ecoumene.blogspot.ch/2015/04/nuage-en-bonnet-j.html> and <http://ecoumene.blogspot.ch/2016/01/mammiferes-la-recherche-de-la-troisieme.html>.
3. We have already discussed the Merapi volcano and issues related to modernity in Bing 2014a and Bing 2014b.
4. *Subuh*, *zohor*, *ashar*, *maghrib* and *isya* are named after the five Muslim cult rituals associated with these moments. Below, we will see that the period between *maghrib* and *isya*, which lasts

around one hour, has to be treated separately: It is no longer part of day but is not night yet, either, an ambiguity that is reflected in the French expression “entre chien et loup” (literally, “between dog and wolf”, an expression used to refer to twilight, when the falling night allegedly makes it is difficult to distinguish between a dog and a wolf).

5. Born in 1927 and killed by the 2010 eruption, he represented the sultan during the annual ceremony to make offerings to the spirits of the volcano (*juru kunci*, literally “keeper of the keys”). With regard to this role and the controversy surrounding the eruptions in 2006 and 2010, cf. Bing 2014a, b.

6. For more on the *topos/chôra* duality, cf. Berque (2009: 24–38).

7. Albeit artificial, it forms part of the ensemble of “Japanese caves” (*goa Jepang*) dug on the order of the occupying army during the Second World War.

8. Lombard (2004: vol. 2: 206) mentions “each moment’s particular *density*” (his emphasis).

9. The Javanese calendar is stellar-solar, while the Islamic calendar is lunar (Ammarell 1988).

10. This idea holds for the activities linked to *kejawen*: In day-to-day life (business, state-civil...), dates change at midnight. Thus, it is important not to confuse *jumat malam* (“Friday evening” for social outings) with *malam jumat* (“Friday’s night”, in other words, the night from Thursday to Friday, conducive to spirituality).

11. Illustrating the Javanese syncretism, Christians readily conduct their *acara rohani* (prayer meetings) every Thursday evening. Thus, the seminary affiliated with the order of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, located on *jalan Kaliurang* at the Yogyakarta exit, opens its doors on the first *malam jumat* every month for sung Taizé prayers.

12. Not to be confused with *laki-laki*, man (as opposed to woman) as a gender or a sex.

13. Java’s religious anthropology generally refers to the classification suggested by C. Geertz (1960), who draws a distinction between the *abangan* (rural masses attached to popular practices and beliefs), the *santri* (orthodox village elites and urban trading areas) and the *priayi* (noble mystics and *kejawen*). Today, this division seems to have been surpassed by the sociological reality: The puritanism of the *santri* has been widely disseminated among both popular urban and rural classes and the middle classes (Feillard and Madinier [2006] talk of society’s “shariasation”), and the *priayi* are smaller in number. Also, in order to understand the ongoing dynamics, it seems preferable to make use of another classification.

14. On the extreme variety of religious postures, within both Islam and Christianity, at the levels of the mountain, the region and the country, see <http://eglasie.mepasie.org/asie-du-sud-est/indonesie/1996-11-01-java-un-centre-de-pelerinage-frequence-par-des/?SearchableText=kejawen>.

15. For devout Muslims, the Arabic term *jahiliya* (literally, “ignorance”) is understood as a reference to the pre-Islamic era.

16. See also *Serat Centhini* as rewritten by E. D. Inandiak (Paris, Seuil, 2005).

17. In vol. 3, D. Lombard explains this prevalence by pointing to the fact that, with a few intermittent exceptions, the two “shifts” (Indianisation and Islamicisation) “interlocked” only in Java, so much so that this interlocking appears to characterise Javanese culture as much as other ethnic components of the archipelago and of the Indonesian nation.

18. The second main reference is provided by the Pleiades. These two constellations also have pride of place among the Polynesians (Cruchet 2013) and in Madagascar (Beaujard 2011); in other words, at opposite ends of the Austronesian world of which Indonesia is part. Thus, it is fair to assume these traditions are very old.

19. In fact, it is the second: Lombard (2004) describes Islamicisation as an “Islamic stimulus”, and he compares the phenomena, which he calls the “harbingers of modernity”, to our Renaissance: a linear conception of time and space, an individualisation of social relations ...

20. Although there are fewer of them living on the volcano, the (Protestant and Catholic) Christians are very active in the *kejawen* movements. See the link in footnote 14.

ABSTRACTS

Despite the contemporary Islamic modernisation that manifests itself in Java in the form of new approaches to time and space, the perpetuation of local syncretic practices is reviving vernacular temporalities and spatialities. In Java, the latter appear not only as a framework in which the struggle between two conceptions of Islam plays out but also as resources and challenges for the players involved. This article, the result of two field observation stays, examines an “extreme case”: night-time on the Merapi volcano. The first part highlights the *high places* and the *dense-moments* of the volcano’s nightlife, whose mountain and night-time qualities meet and support each other; the second part reframes these practices and representations within the context of conflicts between puritan orthodoxy and local practices, where the night and the mountain play a similar role; finally, the third part conceptualises the space-time link between this place and this moment and hypothesises that, beyond a simple simultaneity, there is a similar relationship to *verticality*, which is itself regarded as the result of a trajectory.

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Keywords: mesology, Merapi volcano, night-time, verticality, javanism

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