

THE MYTH OF WHITE CROCODILES, NAWA GAPURA MARGA RAJA GUARDIAN

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Abstract

Besides functioning as a support for the community at that time, the river also functioned as a means of transportation, trade, and even defense. One of them is the Kriyan river which is located in the estuary area, which is the entry point that connects the Kasepuhan Palace through the Nawa Gapura Marga Raja with the outside world, especially from the direction of the Java Sea, which is said to have been inhabited by estuarine crocodiles, which are known to be ferocious. The developing myth of the white crocodile, supposedly the guardian of the Nawa Gapura Marga Raja, was a prince's son who was cursed by the sultan. The prince was so lazy in his daily life, that he got the curse, and finally realized that crocodiles had to live in the water (river), right in front of the Nawa Gapura Marga Raja, another term for Lawang Sanga. For Javanese people, buildings are associated with traditions and beliefs, starting from the shape of the building structure, to understanding the myths in it. The research was conducted using a visual narrative method. The results of the study are expected that according to the story that developed in the surrounding community, there is a mythological animal of a white crocodile who was a prince "Angkawijaya" who was cursed by his father Sulthan Sepuh 1 and became the guardian of Nawa Gapura Marga Raja.

Keywords: Nawa Gapura Marga Raja, myth, visual narrative, white crocodile

INTRODUCTION

Cirebon is a city on the coast of Java Island, which is the gateway for various ethnic groups to Java. Besides, there are also large rivers that divide the city of Cirebon, and even become boundaries with other areas. This affects the geopolitical structure of Cirebon City, where trade, culture, and politics are heavily influenced by the water material that has fortified Cirebon City. Until now, we can see it from the position of the Cirebon Keraton which are close together, even facing the river. In addition to rivers also functioning as life support for the community at that time, rivers also functioned as a means of transportation, trade, and even defense. The Kasepuhan Palace in particular, in the early days of its formation, was a building complex that stood firmly facing Kriyan river, where, Kriyan river became the entry point that connected the Kasepuhan Palace with the outside world, especially from the direction of the Java Sea. merchants from outside countries who wanted to trade (syahbandar), even envoys from outside kingdoms who came to Cirebon by sea.

Right on the bank of the Kriyan River, stands a historic building, which is about 300 years old. The building is named Lawang Sanga or Nawa Gapura Marga Raja, as written in the script of Pangeran Wangsakerta, entitled Pustaka Raja Raja i Bhumi Nusantara, Parwa 1, sargah 1, verse 224, which reads:

*"awighnam astu / Swasti / Telas sinusun mwang sinerat sayampratar tan henti/ de ning pirang sang manurat sinerat ri sasakala / **nawa gapura marga raja** / Eka suklapaksa / Srawana masa // * nihan ta / mangdadyakna dirge yusawastisanira sang manurat sang amaca / Sang anggeugeuh mwang sang angupakareksa pustaka / tasmata yudian hana kaluputan athawa kasasar ing serat sastreki / waraksamakna ta // mapan tan hana nusekang luput sakeng salah mwang kepan pun".*

This is information in the form of "Chandra Sengkala" or the year the building was built.



Figure 1. Nawa Gapura Marga Raja
(Source. Personal documentation, Fadhly 2019)



Figure 2. Kriyan River
(Source. <https://aboutcirebon.id> 2020)

In addition to the story about the greatness of Nawa Gapura Marga Raja as the first entrance, in the surrounding community, there is also a story about the cold-blooded reptile inhabitants of the Kriyan River, namely the Muara Crocodile, indeed because the position of Nawa Gapura Marga Raja is right in the estuary area, the greatness of the estuarine crocodile has become A scourge for the surrounding community, this was admitted by Kuncen Nawa Gapura Marga Raja, Mr. Suwari, "there were many crocodiles here, large, up to 4 meters in size". Until now, the inhabitants of the Kriyan River in Cirebon City.

The existence of Cirebon City, which is a pre-colonial royal city, will not be separated from the "ghoib" stories that have stuck to the present, and eventually become a myth that is nurtured by its people, so that it grows into a story that is highly believed to exist. This is interesting to examine, especially the myths related to the Nawa gate Marga Raja, which is the myth of the white crocodile living in Kriyan River as the guardian of the Nawa Gapura Marga Raja.

METHOD

The research will be conducted using a visual narrative method. The visual narrative is the arrangement of the past, present, and future through Expectation, Attention, and Memory analysis, using a design review approach to analyze, interpret, and assess the object of research, through the stages: objective description, formal analysis, interpretation, assessment/judgment, and conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Objective Description

The Kriyan River is important in the Cirebon area. In the past, this river was used as the main entrance for merchants, invitations of the king, and even state envoys who were present in the city of Cirebon, to be precise the Kasepuhan Palace, by sea. The width of the river is about 15 meters, and the distance from the sea to the Nawa Gapura Marga raja building is about 1 km (current size). Precisely located in Mandalangan Village, Kasepuhan Village, Lemahwudul District, Cirebon City. The river looks dirty, poorly maintained, the water is black, but there is not much trash seen.

There is a building right on the bank of the Kriyan River which is approximately 10 meters away. The building is white, with a roof that looks Sundanese style (julang ngapak). The height of this building is approximately 3 meters, there are 9 gates, with very thick walls, approx. 30 cm. One of the largest gates is right in the middle of the building, 2 gates at the front of the right and left sides, but this part of the gate is covered by walls, and 5 gates at the back of the building (1 on the left side, 1 on the right side and 3 directly behind) and 1 gate, separate from the main building.

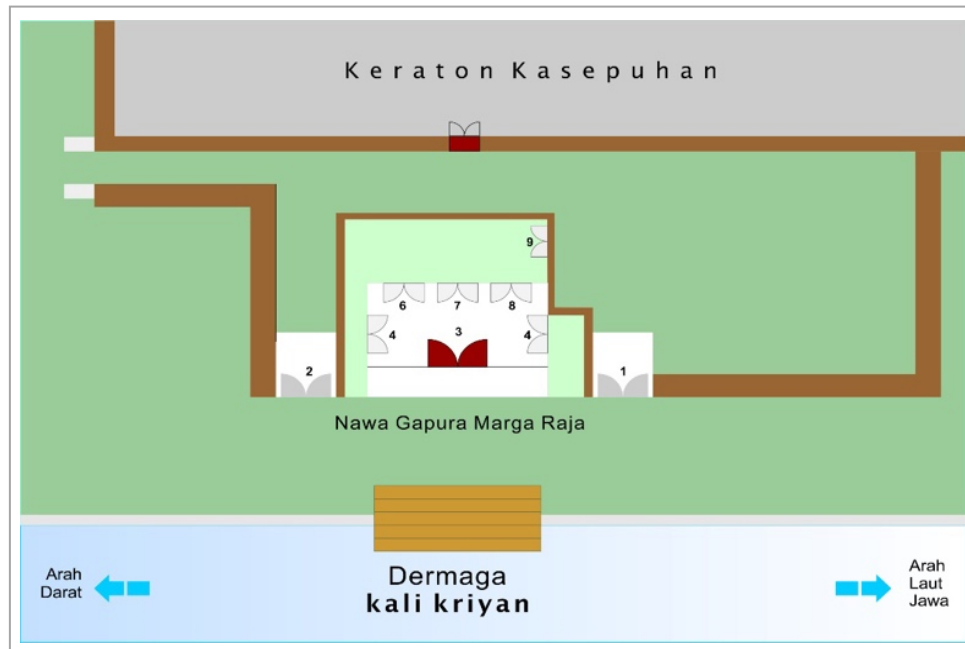


Figure 3. Nawa Gapura Marga Raja Siteplan
(Source. Personal documentation, Fadhly 2019)

Also visible are some kind of offerings such as incense, incense, and coconut lying on the floor right at the entrance to the biggest gate (middle). According to Suwari as a "kuncen", this building is often used by pilgrims at certain times to pray, especially in the month of "Mulud". Therefore, the offering looks shabby, because it has been left there for a long time. On the back fence, there are 2 twin lion statues. It is said that he has many names, starting from Hasan and Husein, Jaka Supetak, and Jaka Petik, to Raden Rasa and Raden Rosul. The tiger statue looks damaged, not maintained, many parts have broken, and some parts look moldy and dirty.

Crocodiles are four-legged semiaquatic flesh-eating reptiles that generally inhabit freshwater habitats such as rivers, lakes, swamps, and other wetlands. But some live in brackish water such as estuarine crocodiles, even in the sea, which is better known as saltwater crocodiles. The main food of crocodiles is vertebrate animals such as fish, reptiles, mammals, and sometimes also prey on mollusks and crustaceans depending on the species. Crocodiles are ancient animals, which have changed little due to evolution since the time of the dinosaurs.

Despite its creepy form, crocodiles are complex reptiles. Unlike other reptiles, crocodiles have a four bear heart, a diaphragm, and the cerebral cortex (the right hemisphere controls movement on the left side of the body, and the left

hemisphere controls movement on the right side of the body). On the other hand, the outer morphology clearly shows the way of life of aquatic predators. His body is streamlined (straight, and can reduce water resistance) allows him to swim fast. The crocodile folds its legs back and attaches itself to its body to reduce water resistance and allow it to pick up speed while swimming. The toes of the hind feet are webbed, which, although not used as propulsion when swimming fast, are very useful when they have to turn suddenly or make sudden movements in the water, or to start swimming. Webbed feet are also an advantage when crocodiles need to move or walk in shallow water.

Crocodile body size varies widely from type to species, from dwarf crocodiles to giant estuarine crocodiles. Large-bodied species can grow to be longer than 5 m and weigh more than 1,200 kg. However, baby crocodiles are only about 20 cm in size when they hatch from the eggs. The largest crocodile species is the estuarine crocodile, which lives in Southeast Asia to northern Australia.

B. Formal Analysis

Like a river that has a central role in Cirebon, the Kriyan River is also a route for boat or boat traffic to enter Cirebon. Right next to the Kriyan River, stands a historic building that is more than 300 years old. The building is Lawang Sanga which was built in 1677 AD. Lawang Sanga is located in Kasepuhan sub-district, Lemahwudul district, Cirebon City, West Java. The position of the river, which is close to the sea (estuary), is indeed synonymous with cold-blooded reptiles, namely estuarine crocodiles, crocodiles that can live in brackish water, even their size can reach 6 meters and are also famous for their ferocity.

The white crocodile that lives in the Kriyan River is believed to be the guardian of the Lawang Sanga site. Kriyan River is not only a historical witness in the development of Cirebon. The river holds many myths and mysteries that often stir up the residents of Pantura, West Java. Especially residents in Mandalangan Village, Kasepuhan Village, Lemahwudul District, Cirebon City.

C. Interpretation

- *Memori*

Kriyan River Cirebon City is one of the areas that witness the history of Cirebon's development, which is located not far from the Lawang Sanga Site in Mandalangan Village, Kasepuhan Village, Lemahwudul District, Cirebon City.

Not only the story of the many people who drowned in the river was later found dead. but in this river, it is thick with myths such as the white crocodile demon, the historical site of Lawang Sanga which is close to the Kriyan River also holds many myths, one of which is about the emergence of the white Crocodile demon figure.

The white crocodile was not savage because it was believed to be a curse by the Sultan, who was the incarnation of one of the sons of Sultan Sepuh I Syamsuddin Martawijaya. It is known, the son of Sultan Syamsudin who was cursed as a white crocodile named Elang Angka Wijaya. He was cursed because while on earth he had never obeyed his father's orders.

"The Elang Angka Wijaya has a habit of eating while lying on his stomach. The Sultan always advised not to be like that but was often ignored. Until finally the sultan said that his son ate on his stomach like a crocodile. People used to say it worked," said Suwari.

Since transforming into a white crocodile, Elang Angka Wijaya has lived in one of the ponds in the Kasepuhan Palace building. However, as an adult, the white crocodile moved to the Kriyan River area.

- **Attention**

In *Mythologies* (1957), Barthes explained a new concept about myth. Myth is a message that the mythmaker wants to convey and is not a concept, idea, or object. Myth is a way to convey messages, it is the result of the speech, not of language. What myth says is important and provides a disguise when incorporated into ideology. Myth emphasizes what to say, it is not a lie or a confession, but a distortion. Myth does not hide anything so that its effectiveness is certain, it's just that to reveal the myth, distortion is needed.

The myth of Roland Barthes arises due to the perception of Roland himself that behind these signs there is a mysterious meaning that can eventually give birth to a myth. So the point is that the myths referred to by Roland Barthes emerge from behind signs in daily communication, both written and through printed media. To get a detailed understanding, the following is a little description of the semiotic concept of Roland Barthes, namely that denotative signs consist of markers and markers. However, at the same time, denotative signs are also connotative markers. So, in Barthes' concept, the connotative sign does not only have an additional meaning but also contains two parts of the denotative sign which underlies its existence. In Barthes' framework, the connotation is identical to ideological operations, which he calls "myths" and serves to reveal and provide justification for the dominant values prevailing in a certain period. In myths, there are also three-dimensional patterns of markers, markers, and signs. However, as a unique system, myth is constructed by a pre-existing chain of meaning, or in other words, myth is also a second level system of meaning.

Likewise with the myth of the white crocodile which is still believed and preserved by residents around the Kriyan River. Residents consider the message that has been passed down from generation to generation to a very strong message to be guarded and preserved, even by the people and government of Cirebon City. Moreover, the government has begun to highlight the existence of the Kriyan River, because this river is an integral historical story that cannot be

separated from the historical building in front of it, namely Nawa Gapura Marga Raja, a silent witness to Cirebon's greatness in the past. The existence of white crocodiles can be explained scientifically, especially using medical theory, gene disorders and mutations are very likely to occur in living things, not only in humans, but also in animals, but the existence in animals is more prone to death.

- **Expectation**

The crocodile is said to often appear in front of local residents. In fact, residents have taken it for granted the appearance of the white crocodile. "Therefore, in our village, there is a tradition that we cannot miss," said Suwari. However, Suwari said, the myth of the white crocodile in Cirebon has become an important lesson in everyday life. Among other things is the effort to continue to maintain the history of the great history of Cirebon regarding the function of the river as a means of transportation at that time, while also maintaining cleanliness and preserving the river.



Figure 4. White Crocodile (albino)
(Source: <https://correcto.id>, 2020)

D. Judgment

The myth of the white crocodile was created by the ancestors to protect the river environment and the existence of a secret passage around the Marga Raja Nawa gate, which until now has been strongly trusted by the surrounding community. This myth is closely related to the geopolitical concept created by the leaders of Cirebon at that time, especially the leaders of the Kasepuhan Palace in Cirebon. This is to emphasize the existence in West Java, Nusantara in particular. It was also concluded that Cirebon or Carbon (mixed) is an area that highly upholds the values of diversity which ultimately merges into one concept of Cirebon culture itself.

CONCLUSION

According to an interview with Mr. Suwari, Kuncen Nawa Gapura Marga Raja, that the people around the Kriyan River still believe in the myth of the white crocodile (the son of the cursed Sultan named Elang Angkawijaya). Also, the white crocodile is said to be the keeper of the secret door around Nawa Gapura

Marga Raja, as the escape door for the Sultan's family. In fact, there is a tradition of its own when local people see white crocodiles. The tradition is to throw yellow rice "tumpengan" into the river if a community sees a white crocodile, or the term "rebo wekasan" in the safar month, which is the last Wednesday in the month of "Mulud". Simultaneously with the "ngirab" or holy bath, the procession uses a small boat "getek" from the estuary to the dukuh semar, and ends with a holy bath. Also, the myth of the white crocodile in Cirebon is an important lesson in everyday life. One of them is the effort to continue to maintain cleanliness and preserve the river. Slightly contradicting the meaning contained in a very Islamic nine-door building with a white crocodile associated with pre-Islamic mystical, it can be seen that Cirebon is an area that highly values pluralism.

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