

## The Sacredness of the Cultural Landscape of the Kanoman Palace, Cirebon

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### ABSTRACT

Kanoman Palace is a cultural landscape that has survived from the 17th until the 21st century AD today. This cultural landscape of the palace has elements whose sacredness is valued by palace disciples. This paper aims to describe the physical and non-physical elements of the cultural landscape of the Kanoman palace which contains sacred values, and to reveal the philosophy contained in it. The method used in this research was a qualitative approach. The results of the research show that the physical elements of the Kanoman Palace's cultural landscape are buildings, spaces, vegetation within the palace complex, and some locations outside of the palace. The non-physical elements are traditional rituals of the palace which are held periodically. The sacredness of this cultural landscape arises if traditional rituals which are non-physical elements are held in locations or places that are sacred to the residents of the palace.

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### 1. Introduction

Cultural landscape serves as a bridge between human and nature, representing a form of natural expanse shaped by human intervention using their culture (1–3). According to Patru-Stupariu, Pascu, and Bürgi (4), the identification and assessment of cultural landscapes can be traced through both tangible and intangible heritage elements. The combination of these elements forms a unique and distinct cultural heritage landscape, differing from landscapes in other regions (1,5). The philosophy embedded within a cultural landscape imbues a sense of sacredness to the natural expanse (6,7).

According to Verschuere and Futura (8), sacred places are always associated with the culture, religion, and history of the location. Their sacredness arises from individuals attributing meaning to these places, intending to preserve the site and the livelihoods of those inhabiting it (3). Humans, as traditional local communities, share a deep connection with their place of residence. Thus, preserving cultural landscapes signifies respecting the

relationship between humans and the environment in which they live.

According to Mustofa's statement on Emile Durkheim's theory, sacrality can emerge in ritual (as an intangible aspect) performed by society if it is related to religion. This is based on the following principles: 1) religious rituals provide uncommon experiences that encompass moral, social, and philosophical values, 2) the sacrality of a ritual represents the collective accumulation of logical thoughts and religious values, 3) the actions performed in the ritual symbolize the connection between social morals and the understanding of religious values and are not based on pseudo-theory or illusions by the ritual performers. Consequently, sacrality is regarded as something that must be respected, revered, and not desecrated, based on the moral-social guidelines of a religion followed by its adherents (9).

The sacrality of a space can be established through the beliefs of the participants when conducting sacred rituals, shaped by the ritualscape (the landscape of sacred rituals), which includes sacred places. Therefore, the sacrality of a cultural landscape can manifest

because of the intangible sacred activities conducted in a tangible space that holds meaning and value ascribed by the participants, often through repetitive traditions. Thus, spaces that host these traditional activities become sacred (1,10) (Figure 1).

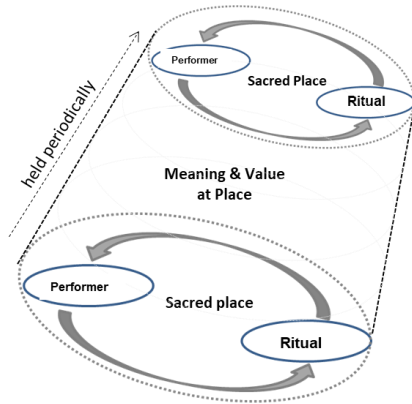


Figure 1. The formation of traditional space as Sacred Space

The degree of sacrality in tangible and intangible elements is generally related to how strongly these elements are connected to religious values. This principle also applies to elements within a cultural landscape, which reflects the respect for the relationship between humans and the natural environment in which they reside.

One unique and living cultural landscape is exemplified by the Kanoman Palace in the city of Cirebon. The Kanoman Palace is one of the fragments of the Cirebon Kingdom (15th to 17th century). Since its establishment, the Kanoman Palace has had its own followers, resulting in the areas where its followers reside outside the palace becoming the palace's territory (1,9). This also forms a part of the cultural landscape of the palace itself. The Kanoman Palace complex stands on a 4-hectare land, comprising various buildings and open spaces used for the Sultan's reception of guests, the Sultan's residence, and the conduct of traditional rituals for the Sultan of Kanoman and his disciples.

The intangible element of the Cultural Landscape of Kanoman Palace is manifested through traditional ritual activities held almost every month based on the Aboge calendar (a lunar calendar used by the Cirebonese community to determine their traditional events) (10). As for its tangible elements, they consist of the locations and buildings where these ritual traditions take place, both within and outside the palace complex, which are considered sacred places.

The purpose of this paper is to describe how tangible and intangible elements combine to form the sacredness of the cultural landscape of Kanoman Palace.

## 2. Material and Methods

The research was conducted from 2012 to 2023, utilizing a qualitative approach based on Miles and Huberman's methodology (11), where data reduction was carried out from data collection to conclusion drawing stages

Data collection involved literature review, interviews, surveys, and observations. Interviews were conducted with 4 key informants, representing the Palace, palace followers as ritual practitioners, cultural experts, and historians of the Cirebon Kingdom. Interviews were conducted repeatedly until consistent important information was revealed in each session. Literature studies were gathered from various sources including archives in both hardcopy and softcopy forms, old maps, scriptures, history books, etc.

Data analysis through the reduction method was carried out gradually, starting with literature review, interviews, and observations. Data sorting was done repeatedly from various sources. The emergence of repeated data indicated its importance (from literature, interviews, etc.). Next, the data were categorized into tangible and intangible elements, revealing the philosophical values embedded in both elements. Finally, the analysis results were validated to assess the level of sacredness of these elements.

## 3. Results and Discussions

The sacred elements of the Cultural Landscape of Kanoman Palace are divided into physical and non-physical elements, whose sacredness is subjectively determined by the palace residents. The physical elements of the palace consist of palace buildings, rooms, and vegetation within the palace complex, while the sacred spaces outside the complex usually include buildings or spaces where prominent palace figures have visited or resided.

Kanoman Palace is a fragment of the Cirebon Kingdom, divided into the Kanoman Sultanate and Kasepuhan Sultanate (17th century). These two sultanates occupied separate palaces. The Kasepuhan Sultanate remained in the Pakungwati Palace, which later became known as Kasepuhan Palace, while the

Kanoman Sultanate occupied the Kanoman Palace located to the North.

Based on data tracing, identification, and analysis, the intangible elements of Kanoman Palace consist of traditional rituals held periodically almost every month, based on the Aboge calendar. This calendar is a lunar calendar used by the Cirebonese community to determine ritual tradition events. Each tradition may consist of one or more activities with a primary goal and two or more supporting goals, including commemoration, celebration, thanksgiving, purification, and social bonding.

Table 1. The schedule Tradition and The Place of Events

Source: Rosmalia, D. (2016)

Elemen <i>intangible</i>	Elemen <i>tangible</i>
<b>1. Suroan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook tumpeng rice</li> <li>• End and beginning of year pray</li> <li>• Read the Babad Cirebon</li> <li>• Pilgrim to Astana Gunung Sembung</li> <li>• Bubur suro ritual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bangsal Witana and Kebon Bintang</li> <li>• Mande Mastaka</li> <li>• Jinem/Prabayaksa</li> <li>• Bangsal Paseban</li> <li>• The route from Palace to Astana Gn. Sembung.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Saparan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook apem kinca</li> <li>• <i>Tawurji</i></li> <li>• Pray/<i>tawasulan</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jinem/Prabayaksa</li> <li>• Bangsal Paseban</li> </ul>
<b>3. Muludan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Damel</i>, bekasem, ulam &amp; pentil (fish), boreh, ukup, candle, oil, kebuli seasoning, jimat rice, side dishes, dan fruits.</li> <li>• <i>Mungkus</i> salawat , <i>Nyisir</i> fruits &amp; flowers</li> <li>• <i>Memayu</i> (Clean the Palace)</li> <li>• <i>Nyiram</i> (washing), <i>Awit muni</i> gong <i>sekaten</i></li> <li>• Kirab <i>sesaji/panjang mios</i></li> <li>• <i>slaughtering buffalo</i></li> <li>• <i>Nyiram</i> (washing) <i>pecara</i> (seremonial tools)</li> <li>• <i>Nyiram</i> (washing), &amp; Carnival</li> <li>• Sending tumpeng rice to 40 palace <i>kramats</i></li> <li>• <i>Mlebet</i> (saving) gong/gamelan <i>sekati/sekaten</i>, seremonial tools, <i>panjang</i> (plates)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kanoman Mosque</li> <li>• Alun-alun (yard), Market</li> <li>• Kedaton/Pedaleman</li> <li>• Bangsal Ukiran</li> <li>• Kaputren</li> <li>• Prabayaksa</li> <li>• Pintu/Regol Mundu</li> <li>• Langgar Keraton</li> <li>• Siti Inggil/Bangsals <i>sekaten</i></li> <li>• Pulantara</li> <li>• Mande Semirang</li> <li>• Lumpang Alu (Pancaratra-Pancaniti)</li> <li>• Pawon Kaputren</li> <li>• Pawon Gede</li> <li>• Kramat Astana Gunung Sembung, Trusmi, Jabang Bayi, Plangon, Talun, Kejaksaan, Jagabayan, Merah-Panjuan Mosque, dsb.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Rajaban</b>	

Elemen <i>intangible</i>	Elemen <i>tangible</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Rajaban book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langgar Keraton</li> </ul>
<b>5. Ruwahan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nishfu Sya'ban pray (<i>tawasulan</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langgar Keraton</li> </ul>
<b>6. Ramadan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tadarus (reading the Al Quran, holy book)</li> <li>• Lailatul Qadar dan Nuzulul Qur'an commemoration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Langgar Keraton</li> </ul>
<b>7. Sawalan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idulfetri pray.</li> <li>• Halalbihalal</li> <li>• Pilgrimage to ancestral grave.</li> <li>• Sawyer (sharing) the coins (<i>curak</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Great Kanoman Mosque</li> <li>• Jinem/Prabayaksa</li> <li>• Astana Gunung Sembung</li> <li>• The route from Palace to Astana Gn. Sembung.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Rayagung</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idul Adha pray</li> <li>• Ziarahdan Berdoa di makam leluhur</li> <li>• Sawyer (sharing) the coins (<i>curak</i>)</li> <li>• slaughter the sacrificial animal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dog Jumeneng mosque (Astana Gunung Sembung)</li> <li>• The route from Palace to Astana Gn. Sembung.</li> <li>• Alun-alun keraton</li> </ul>
<b>9. Kliwonan (Setiap Jumat Kliwon)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ngunjung</i> (vsiting) ke <i>kramat buyut</i></li> <li>• <i>Tawasulan pray</i></li> <li>• rujak wuni Ritual</li> <li>• <i>Ngisis</i> (menjemur) wayang</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>kramat/kramat</i> keluarga keraton di sekitar keraton</li> <li>• Gates &amp; holyplans inside/surrounding the palace.</li> <li>• Bangsal ukiran</li> </ul>
<b>10. Sedekah Laut (Nadran dan Larung)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ngunjung</i> (vsiting) ke <i>kramat buyut</i></li> <li>• <i>Tawasulan pray</i>.</li> <li>• Cultural carnival</li> <li>• <i>Larung</i> (<i>Sedekah Laut</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alun-alun Gunung Sembung,</li> <li>• Condong River &amp; Jawa Sea</li> <li>• The route from Palace to Astana Gn. Sembung</li> </ul>
<b>11. Sedekah Bumi (Mapag Sri)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pertunjukan budaya</li> <li>• <i>Ngunjung</i> ke <i>kramat buyut</i></li> <li>• <i>Tawasulan pray</i></li> <li>• Cultural carnival</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alun-alun Gunung Sembung,</li> <li>• The route from plalce to kramat</li> <li>• Sawah (rice field) &amp; garden of farmer</li> <li>• <i>Kramat of Palace</i></li> </ul>

The spatial layout of the Kanoman Palace complex is oriented towards the North, facing Mount Sembung or Mountjati, where Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah, the first King of the Cerbon Kingdom, is buried. This orientation serves as a form of reverence towards Sheikh Syarifhiyatullah, also known as Sunan Gunung Jati, the founder of the palace (12) (Figure 2)

Physically (tangible), within the Kanoman Palace, several buildings stand, and the spatial arrangement of the Kanoman Palace is divided into three levels of sacredness. These three zones are divided into (1,6):

- 1) public area, this area serves as the reception area where anyone can enter. It is where guests who will meet the Sultan wait;
- 2) the second area: This area is semi-public/semi-private. It contains several sacred buildings where the Sultan meets guests, and it is also where some rituals and traditions are held;
- 3) the third area: This area is private and sacred, accessible only to the Sultan and his family.

Figure 1 illustrates the zoning of the Kanoman Palace complex, based on the activities accommodated and the philosophical meanings contained within them, thus forming three levels of sacred zones within the Kanoman Palace complex

Figure 2. The Lay out & The Sacredness Zone of Kanoman Palace

Source: Rosmalia, D. (2015; 2016)



In the rooms within these three zones, there is vegetation with philosophical meanings. The placement of vegetation in these zones is based on the level of sacredness of the vegetation. There are at least six types of vegetation with philosophical significance, placed in zones according to their level of sacredness, as follows (13):

- 1) In the public zone, there is the Weeping Fig (*Ficus benjamina*) planted in the town square, which is a public

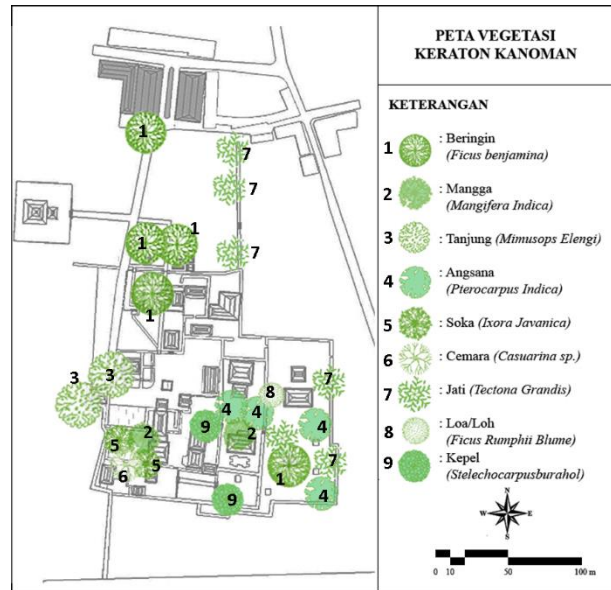
area. This plant is grown as a symbol of comfort and solace:

- 2) In the semi-public area, there is Mango (*Mangifera indica*) planted in front of the Jinem Prabyaksa building, where the Sultan meets guests. This plant symbolizes solidarity with the people. Meanwhile, Tanjung (*Mimusops elengi*) is placed near the Bangsal Semirang, where guests wait to meet the Sultan, symbolizing the Sultan's wisdom;
- 3) In the private zone, there are: 1) Soka (*Ixora javanica*), symbolizing joy and happiness, 2) Loa tree (*Ficus rumpii blume*), considered as a charm against calamities, and 3) Teak (*Tectona grandis*), symbolizing the essence and perfection of a Sultan.

The positions and types of these plants can be seen in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3. The position of Vegetation of Kanoman Palace.

Source: Rosmalia, D. (2016; 2021)

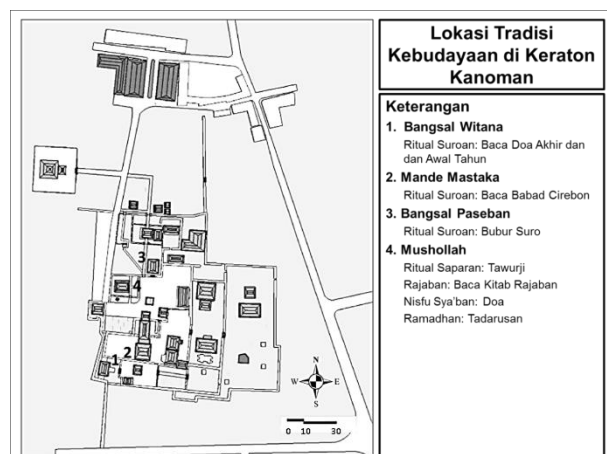


Based on the identification of these tangible and intangible elements, it can be observed that the location of traditional ritual activities is increasingly inward, conducted by the palace residents, becoming more private and with a higher level of sacredness. Additionally, the more frequently the location is used for

ritual traditions, the deeper the philosophical meaning becomes, thereby automatically increasing the sacred value of the place. This aligns with the statements made by Mustofa (9), Rosmalia (1), and Singh (10), which suggest that sacrality can emerge from religious activities conducted in religious places, with religious meanings conveyed periodically at designated times.

Thus, the sacrality of the cultural landscape of Keraton Kanoman in Cirebon is formed through continuous traditional rituals held in locations imbued with religious values and philosophical meanings related to Islam, and the figure of Sunan Gunung Jati, a Wali and founder of the Cirebon Kingdom, who played a significant role in the spread of Islam. Figure 4 illustrates the locations and buildings periodically used for ritual traditions. For instance, the Mushola (prayer room) is a crucial building because almost every ritual tradition involves activities conducted in this space.

The deepest meaning behind both elements serves as a gesture of gratitude from the palace followers and the royal family to the Creator, Allah SWT (in accordance with the Islamic faith). Furthermore, the organization of these activities always revolves around Islamic religious figures, the figures of the Cirebon Kingdom, and the figures of the Kanoman Palace, such as Prophet Muhammad SAW., Sheikh Syarif Hidayatullah/Sunan Gunungjati as the first king of the Cirebon Kingdom, the Sultans who once reigned in the Kanoman Sultanate, and the emissaries of the Kanoman Sultanate. This significance is expressed by the palace followers during prayers at the opening and closing of ritual tradition events. The delivery of prayers mentioning the figures of the Cirebon Kingdom, and the Sultanate is one way to maintain the continuity of palace traditions. On the other hand, the continuity is also ensured by the maintained relationship between the palace custodians (Sultan, Patih, Prince Commissioner, and the Sultan's family) and the followers, who automatically maintain the existence of the Kanoman Palace in the city of Cirebon.



#### 4. Conclusion

The Kanoman Palace, with its various traditional ritual activities held almost every month, occupies spaces and buildings within and outside the palace complex. The sacred traditional ritual activities held within the sacred spaces strengthen the sacred value of both elements of the cultural landscape. The stronger the philosophical meaning of these rituals, the stronger their sacred value becomes.

The sacredness of both elements of the Kanoman Palace's cultural landscape always remains intertwined with the figures of the Kanoman and Cirebon Kingdoms. This is always mentioned in the prayers conveyed during the organization of these ritual traditions, both at the beginning and the end of the rituals.

The enduring sacred value of both elements (ritual traditions and their venues) maintained by the palace followers ensures the sustainability of the cultural landscape until the 21st century. Thus, it is essential to support policies for the preservation of these elements by the Cirebon City Government, where the Kanoman Palace is located.



Figure 4. Atmosphere and Place of 1 Suro Traditional Rituals

Source: Rosmalia, D. (2016)

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