

# Visual Culture Transformation in the Myths of Prince Samudra

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**Abstract:** The Prince of Samudra Myths is a story about a noble preacher who experienced a "historical twist" so that now people are more familiar with the figure of the preacher as the figure behind the myth of *pesugihan* on Mount Kemukus. The Regional Government of Sragen Regency also has difficulty in restoring the image of the preacher. Therefore, various strategic steps were sought to normalize the deviated flow of historical stories. Among them is physical development which is expected to change the mindset of the community. In addition, a short film was also made as part of an effort to correct history. This article will focus on the visual culture transformation contained in the process of regenerating the Prince Samudra myths which were made into short films in the docudrama genre. With this study, it is hoped that the meaning that occurs in the visual culture transformation process of the Prince Samudra docudrama film can be revealed

**Keywords:** Prince Samudra, transformation, visual culture, film

## 1. Introduction

The myth of Prince Samudra has at least colored Javanese society, especially Pendem Village, Sumberlawang District, Sragen Regency, Central Java Province for almost two centuries, precisely after the role of Java which was inflamed by Prince Diponegoro [1], [2]. The Java War was one of the biggest battles the Dutch had ever experienced during their occupation of the archipelago. At that time, Dutch troops under the leadership of General Hendrik Merkus De Kock tried to silence the resistance of the Javanese population. As a result of this war, the Javanese population who died reached 200,000 people, while the death toll on the Dutch side was 8,000 Dutch soldiers and 7,000 indigenous soldiers. In addition, the Dutch Trading Company named VOC experienced a severe financial deficit that resulted in bankruptcy [3].

The impact of such a great war is of course very disturbing to the Dutch. Therefore, a "proxy war" strategy was started to make the Javanese people fall further into poverty, ignorance, and moral decline. One of them is the emergence of "pesugihan" myths that are very unreasonable [1]. In addition to myths, the Dutch also mobilized their scribes to create counter-works that essentially aimed to weaken the faith and strength of the Javanese people so that the threat to the existence of the Dutch Colonial Government weakened. Among these works are "*Babad Kedhiri*", "*Suluk Gatoloco*" and "*Serial Darmogandul*" which appeared in the early 20th century [4].

The three works develop pejorative, cynical, or even anti-Islam attitudes and actions. This can be seen clearly from the statements contained in the two works, which tend to make fun of Islamic teachings and Shari'a. As a result, the appearance of the two works became controversial. Although its circulation was banned, the existence of the work is still widely sought after and is used as an important reference for the lower-class Javanese society [5]. Moreover, at that time Javanese society was experiencing moral, cultural, and religious decadence, especially among the court nobility. The palace elites tended to snuggle and ally with the colonial government for their convenience. Of course, it makes disappointment and deep wounds among the people [3], [6].

The palace, from the king to the officials under him, was considered no longer able to protect and improve the welfare of their people [7]. As a result, the proxy war strategy of “pesugihan” began to be considered an alternative way to become rich and live a full life of prosperity.

## 2. Method

This research was conducted using a qualitative research model, namely research that tries to explain various phenomena that occur in society in a more complete and in-depth manner [8]–[10]. One of the studies that use a qualitative research approach is research on culture [11]–[13]. Cultural Studies is a field of empirical research that is focused on investigating cultural phenomena in more detail by gathering facts in the field and advancing existing concepts [14]–[16]. Therefore, cultural studies inevitably require the presence of researchers directly in the field [17]–[19]. In addition, interviews with several local customary community leaders and all relevant stakeholders (customary leaders, religious leaders, local governments, cultural experts, ulama, traditional groups, and so on) in group discussion forums (FGD) [10], [14], [17]. Thus, this study is expected to be able to reveal the transformation of visual culture so that it can be used as a source of inspiration for the birth of new works that can drive the creative economy sector [20], [21]. The resulting data is then selected and continued at the interpretation stage using interactive analysis methods [8], [22], [23]. In this interactive analysis phase, the reliability and validity of the data set are tested to obtain strong evidence [9], [24]. These facts are then presented in the form of a written report that is precise and correct [25]–[27].

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. *The Myth of Prince Samudra – Mount Kemukus – Kedung Ombo Reservoir*

Talking about the myth of Prince Samudra, of course, it cannot be separated from the existence of Mount Kemukus and Kedung Ombo Reservoir. The name Mount Kemukus is not quite right from a geographical perspective. Because Mount Kemukus only has a height of about 300 meters above sea level (m asl). Kemukus can only be called a hill surrounded by the expanse of the Kedung Ombo reservoir. Well, on the hills are the tombs of Prince Samudra, Dewi Ontrowulan, and his aides [28]. Thus, the talk about Prince

Samudra will be related to the existence of Mount Kemukus and the Kedung Ombo reservoir.

Geographically, the location of the Kedung Ombo Reservoir is right at the confluence of three regencies, namely the Boyolali, Sragen, and Grobogan regencies. The main source of the Kedung Ombo Reservoir is obtained by damming the Serang River about 90 km southeast of Semarang City, Central Java. The location of the Serang River valley itself is between 6040' - 70040' south latitude and 110025' - 110045' east longitude. To the north of the location of the Kedung Ombo Reservoir is a lowland with an altitude between 50 – 94 meters above sea level. Meanwhile, on the south side is a plateau with an altitude of 94 – 292 meters above sea level [29], [30].

The inundation of the Kedung Ombo Reservoir is located in two streams, the Serang River which flows to the northeast, and the Uter River which flows from the south to the north. The plateau around the inundation area consists of several small mountains. Mountains located north of the Serang River, starting from Mount Rendeng in Wonoharjo to Kemusu village are teak forest and mixed forest, part of which is the area of the Karangsono Forest Management Unit (KPH). Meanwhile, in the south the Serang River flows, and in the west, the Uter River flows around Mount Gedat, it is included in the Karangsono Forest Management Unit (KPH) area. Around Mount Bulakmanyar, east of the Uter River, which is the connection to the Kendeng mountains, is part of the Juranggundul Forest Management Unit (KPH) [29], [30]. Among the hilly valleys around the Kedung Ombo Reservoir, there are many areas where rainwater flows which then form several small rivers. These include the Kapuran River, Klumpit River, Bibis River, Tegalsari River, Genuk River, Dombong River, and Kedungmadu River [29].

The inundation area of the Kedung Ombo Reservoir when the water level reaches an elevation of 95.0 m is 6.125 Ha. This land area is the land area that must be acquired. The area consists of 1,500 hectares of agricultural land, 730 hectares of rice fields, 985 hectares of yards, 2,655 hectares of fields, and 30 hectares of plantations, and the rest is forest covering 37 villages in 7 sub-districts in 3 districts. Specifically for Boyolali Regency, the land area affected by the Kedung Ombo Reservoir project is 1,503,6792 Ha, covering 10 villages including Wonoharjo, Lemahireng, Watugede, Nglanji, Genengsari, Kemusu, Ngrakum, Sarimulyo, Bawu, and Klewor. Meanwhile, for Sragen Regency, the villages that were flooded were Lorog, Gilirejo, Soka, Boyolayar, and Ngargomulyo [29], [30].

The Kedung Ombo Reservoir building is shaped like a horseshoe. Consists of the main dam body along the 1.6 Km, overflow building, tapping building, hydroelectric power plant, and tunnel evasion. Kedung Ombo Reservoir has a water capacity of 635 million cubic meters, with a reservoir surface area of about 47 km square. The minimum water level is 64.50 meters and the maximum is 90 meters. The normal water level is 73.50 meters. Reservoir water will overflow when the water level reaches an elevation of 95 meters. The electricity that can be generated by the Kedung Ombo PLTA Reservoir is planned to reach 22.5 MW [29].

The total population in the area affected by the Kedung Ombo Reservoir development project is 5,268 households. More than half of them, namely 3,006 families are in the

Kemusu District. This area is relatively the most fertile land compared to other areas. Meanwhile, in Miri District, there are 1,516 families, Sumberlawang District 619 families, and Geyer District 127 families. The average number of people in each family is between 5-6 people, so the number of people who have to leave their homeland is around 30,000 people. The majority of the population makes a living as farmers, both as sharecroppers and farm laborers. The rest work as wood seekers, stone masons, carpenters, transport drivers, craftsmen, shepherds, civil servants, and retirees [29]. This can be seen in the following table.

**Table 1.** Community Livelihoods at the Kedung Ombo Reservoir Construction site [29]

Livelihood	Sumberlawang	Miri	Geyer	Kemusu
Farmer	36,7%	39,1%	29,9%	37,1%
Farm workers	24,4%	26,4%	32,8%	24,1%
Etc	38,9%	35,5%	27,3%	38,8%
Amount	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

### 3.2. Visual Culture Transformation Myth Prince Samudra

The myth of Prince Samudra is a story about a Muslim preacher descended from King Majapahit XI, named Bhre Kertabhumi, from a concubine [2], [31]–[36]. In 1486 AD, the power of Bhre Kertabhumi centered in Mojokerto (Trowulan) was successfully overthrown by his nephew named Girindrawardhana Dyah Ranawijaya (Singhawardhana's son Dyah Samarawijaya who in 1474 AD was defeated by Bhre Kertabhumi). As a result of the attack, Bhre Kertabhumi stepped down from his throne. The power of Majapahit also passed to Girindrawardhana Dyah Ranawijaya. Since then, the center of the Majapahit government was moved by Girindrawardhana from Mojokerto to Daha [2], [31]–[36]. This is also very clearly written in the *Book of Pararaton* and *Serat Kandha* [2], [31]–[36].

Since then, Prince Samudra and his stepmother Nyai Ontrowulan left Majapahit for the Demak Sultanate led by Raden Patah (son of Bhre Kertabhumi from a concubine who came from China) [2], [31]–[36]. This was done because Prince Samudra and Raden Patah were brothers, but different mothers. Arriving at the Demak Sultanate, Prince Samudra and his stepmother were warmly welcomed by Raden Patah [2], [37]–[39]. Raden Patah asked Prince Samudra to deepen his knowledge of Islam by studying with Sunan Kalijaga.

After finishing studying at Sunan Kalijaga, Prince Samudra was asked by Raden Patah to return to study with Kyai Ageng Gugur in Pandan Autumn Village on the slopes of Mount Lawu. It was intended to be able to re-establish the brotherhood of the descendants of Majapahit. Thus, they can regroup and build together the Sultanate of Demak. Prince Samudra's departure was accompanied by his two loyal courtiers. Kyai Ageng Autumn warmly welcomed the arrival of Prince Samudra. While on the slopes of Mount Lawu, Prince Samudra studied Islam more intensively and deeply. When Prince Samudra has mastered the knowledge being taught, Kiai Ageng Gugur tells that he is the older brother of Prince Samudra [2], [40]–[42].

How surprised Prince Samudra heard the story. This is because he remembered the mandate of the Sultan of Demak to unite his brothers. He also told about the mandate. It turned out that Kiai Ageng Autumn could accept and was willing to be reunited and participate in building the Demak Kingdom [2], [40]–[42].

After studying with his brother, Prince Samudra and his two servants returned to Demak. However, when he arrived at oro-oro which is now known as Dusun Kabar, Bogorame Village, he suddenly fell ill with a fever (fever). He was still determined to continue his journey. However, when he arrived in Dukuh Doyong (Miri sub-district), his illness got worse and he decided to rest in the area. Feeling that his illness was getting worse, Prince Samudra sent his servant to return to Demak to inform the Sultan of his condition in Demak. However, when his servants returned to Demak, he died. Before he died, Prince Samudra had the following message [2], [40]–[42].

*"Whoever has the desire to achieve it, it must begin with the means of perseverance. With a steady and pure heart, do not hesitate. You have to focus on what you're aiming for. Awaken your love like the word you come to the place (Essence) you love."*

The excerpts of the message are often misinterpreted, especially by the general public. There is an erroneous opinion which says that when visiting Prince Samudra's Tomb should be like going to a lover/dhemenan's place in the sense that a pilgrimage there must bring a mistress or mistress and have sexual intercourse with a non-lawful wife or husband. Unfortunately, this opinion has accepted by most people.

However, these views or opinions are not true and need to be straightened out. The emergence of this opinion originated from the interpretation of the meaning of the word "*dhemenan*". The meaning of the word "*dhemenan*" in Javanese means another lover who is not a legal wife/husband (cheating partner), a mistress, a mistress/husband. Thus, the understanding is that when a pilgrimage to the Tomb of Prince Samudra must bring *dhemenan*. In fact, the real meaning of the word "*dhemenan*" in the context of the message in the Javanese language is a longed-for desire, an aspiration to be realized/achieved as if to meet a lover.

So, it can be concluded that the essence of the pilgrimage at the Tomb of Prince Samudra on Mount Kemukus is if you have the will, the ideals you want to achieve or when you face obstacles that block the way to achieve these goals/goals, you must do it in a serious way, with a sincere heart. clean and concentrate on the ideals and goals to be achieved/goaled. Thus, the way is opened to achieve these ideals and goals easily.

In accordance with the Sultan's instructions, Prince Samudra's body was buried in the hills to the west of the hamlet. The location of Prince Samudra's grave was established by a new village and named "Dukuh Samudra" which until now is known as "Dukuh Mudra". Initially, the location of Prince Samudra's tomb was very quiet and rarely touched by people because it was located in the middle of the wilderness, and was inhabited by wild animals. However, little by little the situation changed after the area was inhabited by residents.

Then, on the hill where Prince Samudra's grave is located, when the rainy or dry season approaches, a black mist like smoke (steamed) will appear. Therefore, the local people call the hill, where Prince Samudra's grave is named Mount Kemukus until now [2], [40]–[42].

After receiving news from Prince Samudra's Abdi Dalem, Sultan Demak then conveyed the news of Prince Samudra's death to Prince Samudra's mother, R.Ay. Ontrowulan. He was surprised to hear the news and decided to follow to where Prince Samudra was buried. Prince Samudra's mother's departure to her son's grave was accompanied by Prince Samudra's loyal servant. Prince Samudra's mother intends to settle near the Tomb of Prince Samudra and care for her son's grave [2], [40]–[42].

After arriving at the cemetery, Prince Samudra's mother immediately lay down while embracing the tomb of her only son whom she loved so much. Until one day he felt that he was reunited with his son and could meet face to face and have a magical dialogue:

*"Oh Ananda, so that the heart leaves me and who else can I appoint instead of you, you are my only son and I can't be separated from you".*

Prince Samudra replied:

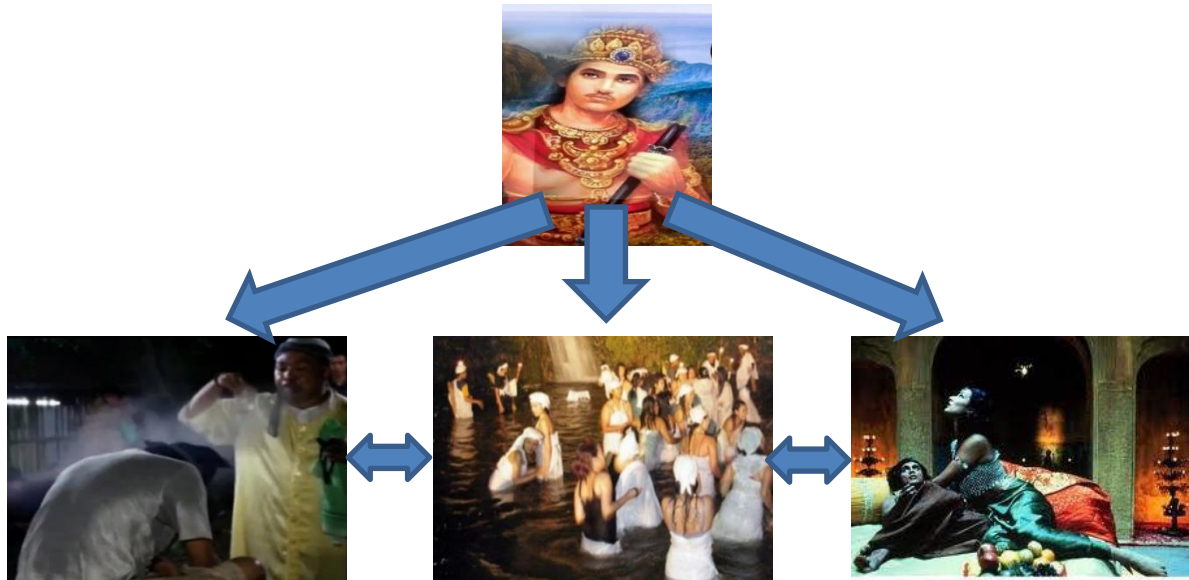
*"Oh mother, of course, you can't get together with Ananda because you are still physically fit and as long as you haven't released your body, for that, you have to purify yourself first in a "spring" which is not far from this place".*

After waking up and waking up from the meeting with his son, he got up and went to the spring that his son said to purify himself. After that, her loose hair was tossed and the flowers that decorated her hair fell. It is said that these flowers bloomed into "Nagasari" trees that can be found around the location until now. Because of the thick sense of trust in Prince Samudra's mother that transcended the limits of concern, he was finally able to reach moksa magically to his physical body. This is because no one knows where R.Ay went. Ontrowulan, or in other words, Prince Samudra's mother, has lost its forest. To commemorate this event, the shrine of R.Ay. Ontrowulan was given the name "Sendang Ontrowulan" [2], [40]–[42].

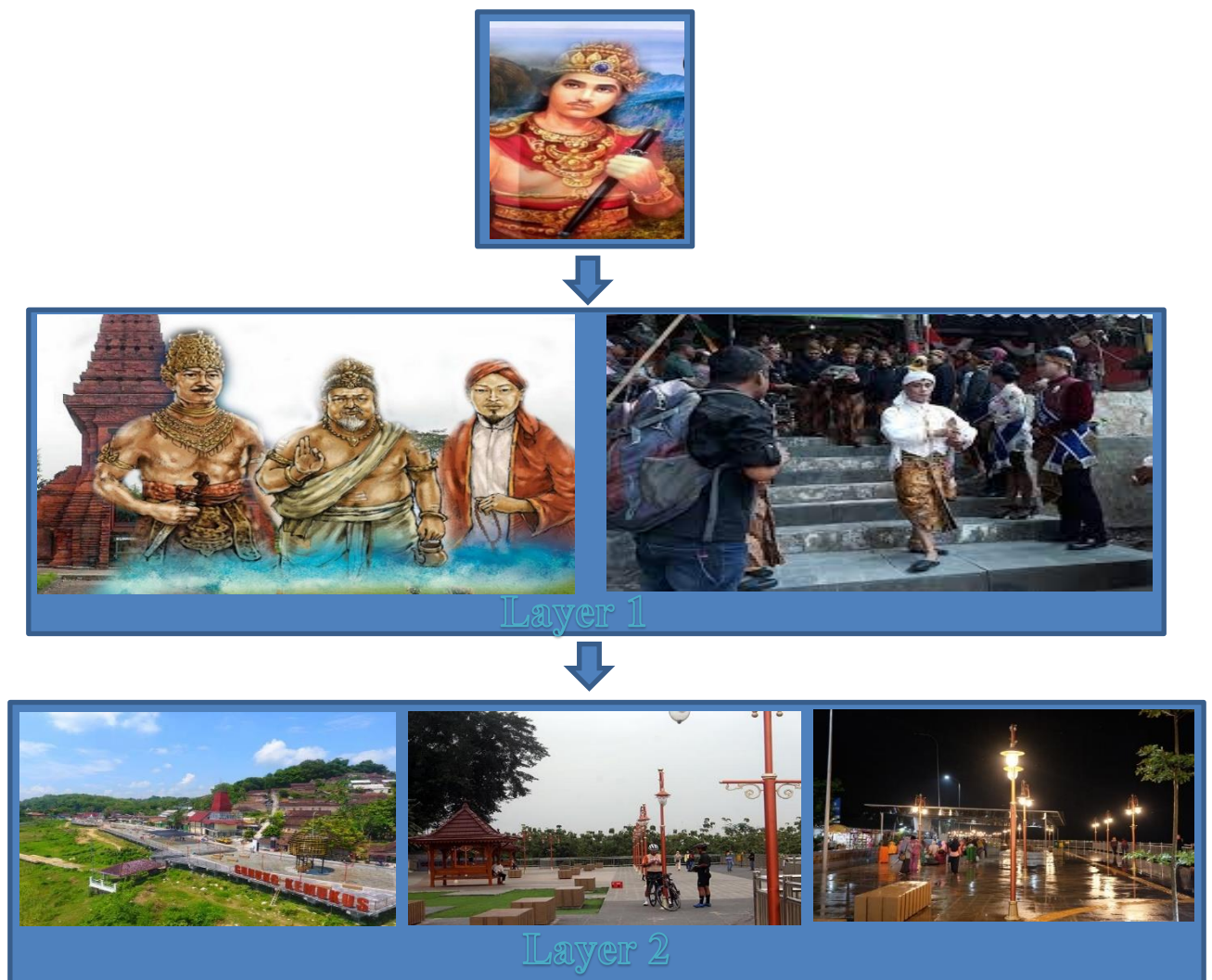
In the mythical narrative that is believed by people who believe in the "Pesugihan" ritual, they believe that Prince Samudra and his mother were expelled by Prabu Wijaya from the palace because they were known to have an affair. Since then, the two of them wandered to the area of Mount Kemukus. In this place, Prince Samudra and Nyai Ontrowulan were stoned by residents because the locals caught them both while having sex. It is said that before he died, Prince Samudra gave a message that whoever can continue the husband and wife relationship that he did not have time to do in that place for 7 times or every 35 days on every Kliwon Friday night or Pon Friday night, his request will be granted. Starting from that myth, the practice of prostitution on Mount Kemukus flourished. For pilgrims who do not bring a partner, they will look at the location or what has been provided by the shop owners in the area around Prince Samudra's tomb. Mount Kemukus briefly became an international spotlight after the Australian television station Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) broadcast an investigative report on Kemukus entitled Sex Mountain on 18 November 2014 [28]. The Regional Original Income from visitor retribution can be seen in the following table.

**Table 2.** Revenue of Mount Kemukus Tourism Object [43]

Quarterly	Year		
	2016	2017	2018
I	37,433,000	40,038,000	35,294,000
II	36,908,000	26,479,000	33,691,000
III	42,580,000	60,571,000	51,037,000
IV	43,091,000	33,155,000	49,906,000
Total	160,012,000	160,243,000	169,928,000



**Chart 1**  
**Visual Culture Transformation – nuances of misguidance**



**Visual Culture Transformation – spiritual nuance**

#### 4. Conclusion

The myth of Prince Samudra has indeed created its charm, both for pilgrims who hope for the pleasure of Allah SWT by imitating the attitude, way of life, and sincerity of Prince Samudra in studying religion. However, on the other hand, the myth of Prince Samudra has also been used by the Dutch colonial government to further plunge the Javanese people into the abyss of ignorance, poverty, humiliation, and moral depravity. All of this was part of a proxy war so that the Javanese were further away from Islam, so the Dutch government deliberately composed Javanese works such as *Babad Kedhiri*, *Serat Gatoloco*, and *Serial Darmogandul* to further convince Javanese people to stay away from Islam and fall into error. In addition, they also revived myths by deliberately carrying out “character assassination”, especially against propagators of the Islamic religion. This was done as a strategy to anticipate the power of the Javanese. In other words, the public must be made more aware that the belief in the “*pesugihan*” ritual pilgrimage by having sex was a mistake deliberately created by the Dutch colonial government in weakening the resistance of Muslims on the island of Java, especially after the Java War led by Prince Diponegoro.

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