Pusaka Pangruwating Jiwa

An Esoteric Study of the Keris and Its Living Energy

We have to keep Kejawen Alive!

Contents

Draft

Dearest reader. Writing has always been my hobby, a way to give shape to memory and meaning. Everything in this book I have created myself: the words, the structure, the photographs, all taken with my own hands. Of course, it might have looked more polished had I hired professionals to refine the text, the images, or the editing. But what you hold in your hands is real. It is my vision, my voice, and the joy I found in bringing it to life. I ask your understanding for any imperfections.

Just two months ago (June 2025), I was rushed to the hospital with bacterial endocarditis. In that fragile moment, confronted with impermanence, I felt a deep urge to write this book, to finally give voice to what is so often left unspoken. Out of love, out of gratitude, and out of the awareness that everything passes.

All the keris shown here are from my own collection. This work is my legacy, created not from perfection but from sincerity. I hope that as you read, you may feel the same joy I felt while writing, and that, like the keris itself, these pages may become a bridge between generations, cultures, and countries.

For my grandson,
Lloyd David, and all the descendants yet to come.

Introduction

Inheritance of Soul Reconciliation.The heirlooms that shape the soul

Part I: A Personal Journey

Every book begins with a question.
This book is not an academic study, not a catalogue of forms, nor a list of pamor and dapur names, or historical timelines. I am not a collector in the traditional sense.

My path began much earlier, when I was a child and first heard that one day I would inherit a keris. From that moment, the journey of the pusaka was already woven into me.

What I share here is not knowledge for museums, but for guardians, knowledge of memory and tradition. The keris was never meant to be admired only as an object. She lives to preserve the bond between human and ancestor, between the present and the unseen world. That is her true purpose, and that is what I hope to pass on: the stories that surround these sacred blades.

Even the information used to identify a keris, its tangguh, its pamor, is not always consistent. I have heard different experts name the same keris differently, and even the same expert changed his mind at another time.

The Return of Selamet

In my first book, The Scent of Grandma's Kitchen, I described the atmosphere and spiritual fabric of my childhood. It was my grandmother, Annie, who told me when I was young that the family keris, Selamet, together with its guardians, a Trisula and a Tombak, would one day come to me.

When my grandfather was captured and sent to a Japanese concentration camp, my grandmother became the keeper of the family keris. But she too was later taken. In those final days, she entrusted the keris to a family friend, Mr. De Freitas. After that, its trail was lost.

Still, my grandmother always said: "The keris always finds its way back to its rightful owner."


Me and oma Annie

Twenty years later, in Amsterdam, I visited Uncle Piet. He had a special gift for us: a keris. He lived with Aunt Anja above us on Dautzenbergstraat, the house where I was born. The keris he showed us had been hanging in their home, directly above the place where I first saw the light of day. *"Dit is voor Piet,"* he said, meaning my father.

I remember looking at my mother, asking silently: could the legend really be true? Was *Selamet* back?

We sent a photo to Uncle Bert, the last surviving family member who had seen *Selamet* with his own eyes. His reply was short but clear: *"No. The keris was richly decorated…"*

By then I was already under the spell of keris. Determined to find the true one, I showed Uncle Bert countless photos of keris from Yogyakarta. Each time he shook his head: *"No… No… No."* I could hardly believe it. I showed him every possible style from that region, but the answer remained the same. Yogyakarta keris have a very distinct appearance, like those from any other region. Years later, I discovered that the story went even deeper.

It was not my grandmother, Princess Raden Ajeng Augustine Setjodiredjo of Yogyakarta, but her father, Raden Mas Setjodiredjo, a Javanese doctor and Wedono of Prajekan in East Java, married to a Yogya princess, Raden Ayu Siti Sutari, who was the true source of the family legacy. My search carried me further, to Madura and East Java. I even found an article in a Madurese newspaper describing my journey to rediscover my roots in Sumenep.

Jauh dari Belanda, David Gallas dkk Mencari Jejak Nenek Moyang di Sumenep

Ina Herdiyana - Rabu, 8 November 2023 | 08:59 WIB

DUDUK SANTAI: Dari kiri, Hellen Pape, Bradley Jacobs, Olivier Blancquaert, David Gallas, dan Dr Sriyono saat berada di Kafe Lee Riya di Kelurahan Pajagalan, Kecamatan Kota Sumenep, Jumat (3/11).

I spoke with hundreds of people online, joined almost every keris group I could find, in the Netherlands, in Indonesia, and across the world. In 2008, I even created a website dedicated to the keris, asking if anyone knew what had happened to our family heirloom.

During this research, I discovered that in December 1944 the Japanese executed all the Wedono of Besuki. My entire family in that region vanished, murdered in the forests. With them, many family pusakas were lost.

And then, in 2014, an email arrived. A man named Mr. Langen, from Belgium, wrote to me. He had a keris for me.

He was terminally ill, had no children, and was married to a Belgian woman twenty years younger. He had found my website through Google. And how? Through the maiden name of his aunt: Setjodiredjo.

Mr. De Freitas had once given the keris to the younger sister of my great-grandmother, Raden Ajeng Augustine Setjodiredjo. She had passed away just before the war, along with her husband, Pieter Marinus Gallas, after their youngest child died in an accident.

The keris had been lying in a cupboard all those years. He had received it from his aunt, the younger sister of my grandfather's mother. After the war, she never returned to the Netherlands. Instead, she moved to Congo, where war broke out again. Eventually, her family settled in Belgium.

And so, after a long detour, Selamet returned.

My grandmother's prophecy had come true. Perhaps not as mystically as I had imagined, but true nonetheless. She had been right: the keris will always find its way home.

Part II: The Broader Context

The Soul of the Keris

This book was written to preserve the living tradition of the keris, not only the blade itself, but also the culture and spirit that surround it.
There are many works on keris forms, pamor patterns, dapur types, and historical timelines, but very few speak openly about the esoteric dimension, the names, the mantras, and the inner relationship with the isi of the keris. Not because such knowledge must remain hidden, but because it is sacred, a direct line to the spirit of the pusaka.

To know the name and mantra of a keris is to connect with her isi. That connection is intimate and never casual. It belongs to the line of guardianship, to family members, rightful heirs, and those entrusted to continue caring for these blades.

Not every keris is inhabited. Tradition distinguishes three main types:

- ***Keris Tempur*** *– Forged for combat and self-defense, strong and practical, often without spiritual charge, though in the past even temper keris could be ritually blessed.*

- ***Ageman Keris*** *– The ceremonial keris, worn with traditional dress, beautifully decorated, chosen for appearance, but rarely inhabited by spirit.*

- ***Tayuhan Keris*** *– A keris with a spirit, an isi. Kept for ritual use, approached through meditation or offerings, to seek guidance, protection, or strength.*

A tayuhan holds her energy only when nourished, when her name is spoken, when she is remembered. Without this, she becomes kosong, empty, and her power fades.

A pusaka is not a tool, and not a collector's item. It is a sacred heirloom, carrying not only steel, but stories, prayers, and responsibilities. Each keris embodies the lives and intentions of those who came before us.

In these pages, I describe the keris in both its outer form and its inner being, its pamor and dapur, but also its name, its mantra, the care it asks for, and the way it must be honored. This book is not written to satisfy curiosity, but to keep the line of reverence alive.

To receive a pusaka is to inherit not just an object, but a task.

Between Fact and Experience: Reflections from the Author

I was born and raised in Europe, but I am Indo. My father was born in Yogyakarta, my mother in Bandung. Like two million people in the Netherlands, I carry both worlds within me. Our Indonesian identity is not something distant, it is alive, carried through memory, ritual, food, stories, and heirlooms. At the same time, we are European too, shaped by another culture, another way of reasoning. In me, the rational and the mystical are always in dialogue.

And so I find myself asking questions. My logical side searches for explanations, while my spiritual side knows from experience that some things cannot be explained. I have felt keris move, heard strange knocking in the night, and seen figures appear in ways that left me shaken. These were not fantasies, they were real, even if my mind could not understand them.

There is an old saying, "There is more between heaven and earth than we can understand." Many hear this as poetry, but science itself confirms its truth.

The Limits of Our Senses

We humans live within a narrow window of perception.

- ***Sight****: Our eyes capture only a thin band of the electromagnetic spectrum, 380 to 750 nanometers. Beyond lies infrared, ultraviolet, X-rays, gamma rays, invisible worlds we can measure but never see.*

- ***Hearing****: We perceive 20–20,000 hertz. Below is infrasound, above is ultrasound. Elephants speak across great distances with low rumbles, bats navigate with high clicks, and we hear none of it.*

These are not beliefs, but scientific facts. They show how reality is filtered into a manageable, but incomplete image.

We cannot see radioactivity either, yet we know it exists because of its effects. In the same way, we live within four dimensions, while other dimensions may exist beyond our reach. They are unseen, but they can still touch our reality.

Higher Dimensions

Physics teaches us we inhabit four dimensions, three of space and one of time. Yet Einstein showed that space bends, and time slows under gravity. Beyond that, string theory suggests ten, eleven, or even twenty-six dimensions, curled up beyond human perception.

We know they exist through mathematics and experiment, but our minds cannot visualize them. We are blind to higher dimensions, just as we are blind to X-rays.

Quantum Strangeness

At the smallest scale, the rules of reality defy common sense.

- ***Superposition*** *– A particle can exist in two states at once.*

- ***Entanglement*** *– Two particles remain connected across vast distances, and changing one instantly affects the other.*

These are not theories, but proven experiments, and they challenge everything our daily intuition tells us.

The Memory of Water

One example comes from Nobel Prize laureate Luc Montagnier. In 2009 he showed that highly diluted DNA solutions, even after no molecules remained, still emitted electromagnetic signals. These signals could be transmitted into pure water, where the DNA could be reconstructed with PCR.

Controversial, yes, but it suggests that water carries more than chemistry, perhaps even memory itself.

This is also why, in keris tradition, water is central. Water is not only a physical substance, but a carrier of memory and energy. In ceremonies it is used to cleanse, to purify, and to heal. Modern experiments on water memory hint at what Javanese ritual practice has long embodied: water can retain information and transmit energy.

Between Perception and Reality

Skepticism has value, it protects us from gullibility, but it also blinds us when we dismiss what lies beyond the senses.

Spirituality, then, is not a rejection of reality, but an expansion of it. In Indonesian adat, spirituality is not superstition, but ritual, symbol, harmony, and energy.

When I hold a keris, when I sit in meditation near a shrine, I sometimes feel a shift in atmosphere and presence. Perhaps these are not "ghosts" as folklore describes them, but energies, fields of consciousness beyond our senses. Like radio waves, they exist invisibly, until the right receiver makes them known.

This is where my Indonesian and European sides meet. The Indonesian side accepts presence, spirit, and intuition. The European side questions, measures, and doubts. And yet, both arrive at the same conclusion: that our reality is larger than what we can see.

Closing Reflection

This is the bridge I seek in my work and in this book, between science and spirit, between Indonesia and Europe, between the ancestors and the present.
The keris is not just steel, it is memory, responsibility, and presence. A companion between heaven and earth.

David Gallas
Amsterdam, In the Light of the Ancestors

The 15 Guidelines of the Keris – Tradition and Respect

1. Never draw without permission

A keris may only be drawn from its sheath with the owner's permission. Drawing it without asking disrupts spiritual harmony and is seen as an insult to both the keris and the ancestors it represents.

2. Never point the blade at someone

Pointing the tip at a person is, in adat, seen as directing the keris's energy toward them, like a threat. To show peaceful intent, move your index and middle finger from the base to the tip of the blade to neutralize its energy.

3. Greet the keris

Every keris has a name and a soul (tuah). Greet her silently, with sincere intent, before drawing her. In Javanese custom, the sheath (warangka) is held at the bottom with the left hand. The right thumb gently loosens the blade. The sheath is moved upward while the keris stays still. Draw it slowly, in one fluid motion, as a sign of respect.

4. Return with the same hands

The person who draws the keris must also return it. Do so slowly, in a single smooth motion, so the "breath" of the keris remains unbroken.

5. Only the owner or heir may handle it

Only the owner or their heir may handle a keris, unless clear permission is given. In Java, a pusaka keris is rarely lent out, out of respect for its family lineage.

6. Pass it directly, from heart to heart

Always hand over a keris directly, with the tip pointing away from the other person. Do not pass it sideways, across a table, or from a distance.

7. No criticism

Do not speak negatively about a keris unless the owner specifically asks. Criticizing the keris is seen as criticizing the family and the ancestors it represents.

8. Clean once a year

Clean the keris once a year, ideally during Satu Suro (the Javanese New Year) or on Tumpek Landep. This maintains both the blade and its spiritual energy.

9. Maintain regularly

Depending on its needs, clean the keris weekly or monthly. Use rose water to clean, dry it carefully, and apply fragrant oils like sandalwood, jasmine, misik, or kenanga. Offerings like flowers, rice, or incense may be given.

10. Store it high and dry

Keep the keris above head height, preferably wrapped in cloth or placed in a cabinet or box. According to Adat, storing it too low may bring illness. A high position gives the keris the role of spiritual protector in the home.

11. No black magic

A keris is meant for balance, protection, and harmony, not for black magic. Stories of "dark kerises" are usually about misuse of their energy, not their true nature.

12. Do not sell, only pass on

A pusaka is not sold, it is given, often with a symbolic mas kawin (bridal gift). This can be incense, a cloth, or another meaningful object, not necessarily money.

13. Brings good energy

A keris can strengthen positive energy by supporting the balance of its keeper. This is not magic, but the result of harmony between person and pusaka.

14. Feel the energy

Hold the keris near your ajna (third eye) or ear to feel its presence and connect with it. In Javanese mysticism, this is the point where body and spirit meet.

15. Neutralize the energy

Never touch anyone with the tip of the keris, and do not touch the blade (wilah) unnecessarily.

Kiayi Selamet and Kanjeng Nyai Sri Tumurun *form a stately pair of ageman kerises, worn during ceremonial occasions as living symbols of protection and prosperity. Rooted in the Majapahit tradition,* ***Kiayi Selamet*** *is the embodiment of keselamatan, the guardian of order and dignity, a steady presence of ancestral strength.* ***Kanjeng Nyai Sri Tumurun****, with her graceful Segaluh form and the shimmering pamor Bendo Segodo, radiates the blessings of fertility and household harmony. She carries the quiet power of nourishment and continuity.*

Together, they represent the sacred balance of guardian and nurturer, a living reflection of harmony and abundance within the fabric of Javanese tradition. The left keris is from the East-Javanese ***Ladrang*** *type, the right Sheat is from the Sumenep* ***Jurikan*** *type.*

Left Hilt: Donoriko Type, Walrus Ivory*. Origin and Name: "Donoriko" is the Madurese term, derived from the Sanskrit Wedono, meaning "front" or "head." This type is characteristic of kerises from Madura and East Java.* ***Material:*** *Walrus ivory, identifiable by its fine, translucent core structure and lighter tone with a soft, natural sheen.,*Form and Motif: *This piece features richly carved floral ornaments that flow into the form of a winged horse (kuda bersayap). This motif often symbolizes spiritual speed, protection for travelers, and divine messages. It can be compared to the symbolism of Pegasus, though in the Indonesian context it is sometimes associated with Buraq, the mythical creature from Islamic tradition.* ***Symbolism:*** *In Madurese interpretation, the winged horse represents a union of strength (tenaga) and elevation (pangkat), often intended to highlight the status and spiritual protection of the wearer.* ***Right Hilt: Kong-bukung Type, Elephant Ivory. Origin and Name:*** *"Kong-bukung" is a Madurese hilt type known for its compact form and a distinctive backward curve that angles away from the blade. It is often found on kerises from Sumenep and Bangkalan.* ***Material:*** *Elephant ivory.* ***Form and Motif:*** *Carved with graceful leaves*

and curling lines that blend seamlessly with the natural curve of the grip. This is typical of 18th to 19th-century Madura, where floral patterns often symbolize the cosmic order (tata kosmos). ***Symbolism:*** *The Kong-bukung is sometimes viewed as the more subtle, feminine counterpart to the Donoriko type. Rather than power or rank, it expresses harmony, entleness, and the nurturing of prosperity.*

Kyai Selamet *and* ***Kanjeng Nyai Sri Tumurun***

The Keris: A Late, Tantric Birth

Evidence and Interpretation

The history of the keris is best understood not as the survival of an ancient weapon from the earliest Javanese period, but as the crystallization of a sacred object within the tantric religious and courtly milieu of late East Java. A review of textual, iconographic, and ritual evidence shows that the "modern" keris, as a distinct form and as a *pusaka*, emerged relatively late, between the 14th and 15th centuries.

The earliest secure images are late

The oldest unambiguous representations of the keris come from the repertoire of late East Javanese temples:

- **Candi Penataran (Blitar).** On the *kerishnayana* reliefs of the main temple, which carry an inscription dated 1269 Śaka = 1347 CE, short daggers appear with a distinctly keris-like base and hilt. Photographic documentation of the Penataran reliefs confirms the inscriptional date and the identification of these blades.
- **Candi Sukuh (15th century).** On the mountain sanctuary of Sukuh, dated to the first half of the 15th century, the famous smithy relief depicts Bhīma as smith, Arjuna at the bellows, and a dancing tantric Gaṇeśa in the center. The wall clearly shows the forging of keris blades. This scene has been deeply analyzed by S.J. O'Connor in *Metallurgy and Immortality at Caṇḍi Sukuh, Central Java* (1985, *Indonesia*). The dating and ritual interpretation are undisputed in the art-historical literature.

The first textual keris is written late

The **Pararaton** (Book of Kings), a Kawi chronicle compiled in the 15th–16th century, contains the famous legend of Mpu Gandring and Ken Arok, set in the 13th century. This shows that by the late Majapahit period the keris was already a literary canon, yet the colophons of the manuscript confirm its late redaction.

The myth of Raden Panji

One of the most beautiful is the legend of Raden Panji, a prince from the ancient Panji cycle (originally from East Java, 12th–13th century), who is said to have arrived with the moon boat (connection between heaven and earth), and brought the first keris to the islands. There is no evidence for this, but as is often said in Java: a story does not need to be factual in order to carry truth.

Early 16th-century sources confirm its status as a royal weapon

The Sundanese manuscript **Sanghyang Siksakandaṅg Karesian (1518)** explicitly names the keris as *senjata sang prabu*, the weapon of the king, within a classification of weapons by social rank. This provides a secure "on paper" attestation of its royal and ritual character around 1500.

At nearly the same time, **Tomé Pires** (1512–1515) mentions the keris and its weight in Java in his *Suma Oriental*, providing an independent contemporary account from a Portuguese observer.

An iconographic silence in the 8th–9th centuries

In the great Buddhist and Hindu complexes of the 8th–9th centuries (Borobudur and Prambanan), we find abundant depictions of straight swords of the khadga type, but no secure keris. A self-annotated photograph has circulated claiming a "Borobudur keris," but this identification is not accepted in the scholarly literature and lacks consensus. The absence of keris imagery in the 9th century, followed by its sudden clear appearance in the 14th–15th centuries, strongly supports the thesis of a late emergence.

Religious context: the tantric crucible of East Java

Both Sukuh and Cetho are sanctuaries suffused with tantric iconography: transgressive imagery, fertility symbolism, esoteric cosmology. O'Connor demonstrates that metallurgy and keris-smithing in these contexts were ritually coded as transformation and immortality, the precise language for the religious "birth" of the keris as a *pusaka*, not merely as a weapon. For the broader tantric visual language of Java and Bali, Acri (2021) provides context.

Converging evidence: a young sacred object

- **Visual hard data:** 1347 (Penataran) → 15th century (Sukuh).
- **Textual:** 15th–16th century chronicles (Pararaton), 1518 (SSKK).
- **Context:** the high tide of śaiva-buddhistic tantra in late Majapahit.

Taken together, these elements build a strong case that the keris, as a ritual and sacred phenomenon, arose in the 10th–15th centuries, with the first unambiguous depictions only in the 14th–15th century. UNESCO's heritage page suggests a "10th century" origin, but without archaeological substantiation; iconography and dated texts point more consistently to late medieval Java.

Counterarguments

"Borobudur already shows a keris."
This claim rests on non-peer-reviewed annotations of photographs and does not convince art historians. Unless a publication identifies an object with the defining keris features (ganja,

peshi, characteristic hilt, asymmetrical base), the identification remains inconclusive. The first secure keris iconography remains Penataran and Sukuh.

“But the Pararaton speaks of the 13th century.”
True as narrative time, but the textual redaction is 15th–16th century. By then the keris was already ideologically coded as a dynastic weapon.

“UNESCO states a 10th-century origin.”
This is a descriptive claim on a heritage page, without critical apparatus. For academic dating we rely on iconographically datable reliefs (Penataran 1347, Sukuh 15th c.) and securely dated manuscripts (Pararaton, SSKK 1518).

“What about ‘keris buda,’ supposedly much older?”
These attributions rely mainly on stylistic typology, without reliable context or stratigraphic dating. Without provenance or thermoluminescence studies, they cannot provide firm absolute dating, certainly not before the 13th–14th centuries. Modern museums treat such claims with caution.

Why “first belief, then object” holds true

At Sukuh, the smithy is itself a sanctuary. The act of forging is depicted as a tantric transformation (O’Connor). The keris is “born” in this setting as a *pusaka*, not as simple militaria.

The Sanghyang Siksakandaṅg Karesian (1518) classifies the keris as royal and courtly weaponry, not as the tool of peasants or ascetics. This is exactly what one expects of an object whose function is ritual-political legitimation.

The visual silence before 1300 in major temple cycles, followed by the sudden appearance in late Majapahit tantric sanctuaries, supports the thesis that the ritual-religious framework consolidated the form, name, and function of the keris.

The Keris: A Late, Tantric Birth.

The earliest unambiguous images of the keris are late East-Javanese: Penataran’s kerishnayana reliefs on the main temple dated 1347 CE, and the smithy relief at Candi Sukuh (early 15th c.), where Bhīma forges blades under the gaze of a dancing tantric Gaṇeśa. Textually, the *Pararaton* (compiled 15th–16th c.) fixes the Gandring keris in Javanese historical myth, and the *Sanghyang Siksakandaṅg Karesian* (1518) explicitly classifies the keris as a royal weapon. Earlier 8th–9th-century monuments (Borobudur, Prambanan) show straight swords but no secure keris, and claims to the contrary lack scholarly consensus. Together, these data imply that the keris, as a sacred *pusaka* with a specific form and name, crystallized between the 14th and 15th centuries within the śaiva-tantric religious and courtly milieu of late Majapahit, where metallurgy itself was ritualized as a path to transformation and power.

SOURCES:

O'Connor, S.J. (1985): "Metallurgy and Immortality at Caṇḍi Sukuh, Central Java" – primaire analyse van het Sukuh-smidse-reliëf en rituele duiding; peer-review.
marthistory - datering en plaatsing van **Sukuh** (15e eeuw) en **Penataran** (Majapahit; met gedateerde onderdelen).
Becker (OAPEN) - Pararaton en Tantu Panggelaran **writen in the 15th century**.
SSKK (1518) - keris als **koninklijk wapen**; bevestigt hofstatus vroeg-16e eeuw.
Penataran-reliëfs; keris in kerishnayana-panelen, hoofdtempel **1347**
Acri (2021) – tantrische, transgressieve beeldtaal in Java/Bali (contextualiseert Sukuh/Cetho).

Figure X. Close-ups from the kerishnayana Relief, Candi Penataran (ca. 1347 CE)
These panels show a short, curved blade with keris-like characteristics carved into the kerishnayana reliefs in the main temple of Penataran (1347 CE). The form aligns strikingly with later keris morphology, yet predates clear textual and ritual references—further supporting the thesis of the keris as a late medieval religious crystallization.

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