

## **THE SACRED FACE OF INDIGENOUS BELIEF: A CRITICAL REVIEW ON THE MYTHOLOGY OF *NYAI RORO KIDUL* THROUGH MARY FAT FISHER AND ROBIN RINEHART'S THEORY OF INDIGENOUS SACRED WAYS**

**DIAN NURRACHMAN, DODY S. TRUNA, NENG HANNAH**

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung

Corresponding email: [diannurachman@uinsgd.ac.id](mailto:diannurachman@uinsgd.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

In many myths and legends, Nyai Roro Kidul is believed to be a semi-divine being or a beautiful princess with mystical qualities. Known as the Queen of the Southern Sea (Indian Ocean), she embodies a unique fusion of local spiritual beliefs, Hindu-Buddhist influences, and, later, Islamic cultural integration. Her narrative not only reflects the Javanese people's interaction with nature and the supernatural world but also encapsulates deeper meanings related to power, gender, and the relationship between humans and the divine. Those who seek wealth often glorify Nyai Roro Kidul, even if it means promising the souls of family members as an offering. The story of Nyai Roro Kidul, believed by many traditional Javanese, remains controversial today. Some believe in her and even claim to have encountered her, while many others consider it just folklore. In reality, belief in Nyai Roro Kidul is not confined to indigenous communities but also extends to modern intellectuals, especially Javanese mystics. Fisher and Rinehart discuss important aspects of cultural diversity leading to syncretism in detail, such as the reliance on oral traditions among the people. Likewise, the mythology of Nyai Roro Kidul has been passed down orally through various stories, making her narrative widespread and a common feature of the belief systems among communities along Java's southern coast as part of a "living religion" from the perspective of indigenous sacred ways.

**Keywords:** Nyai Roro Kidul, Sacred, Belief, Syncretism, Indigenous Sacred Ways, Living Religion

### **ABSTRAK**

*Dalam banyak mitos dan legenda, tokoh Nyai Roro Kidul diyakini sebagai makhluk setengah dewa, atau putri yang cantik dan memiliki sifat gaib. Dikenal sebagai Ratu Laut Selatan (Samudra Hindia), Nyai Roro Kidul merupakan perpaduan unik antara kepercayaan spiritual lokal, pengaruh Hindu-Buddha, dan, kemudian, integrasi budaya Islam. Narasinya tidak hanya mencerminkan interaksi masyarakat Jawa dengan alam dan dunia supranatural, tetapi juga merangkum makna yang lebih dalam terkait dengan kekuasaan, gender, dan hubungan antara manusia dan yang ilahi. Nyai Roro Kidul juga dipuja oleh masyarakat karena mengharapkan kekayaan meskipun dengan janji mengorbankan jiwa anggota keluarga sebagai penawarnya. Kisah Nyai Roro Kidul yang diyakini sebagian besar masyarakat Jawa tradisional masih kontroversial hingga kini. Ada yang memercayai, bahkan mengakui pernah bertemu, dan banyak pula yang menganggapnya hanya sekadar cerita rakyat. Kenyataannya, kepercayaan terhadap Nyai Roro Kidul tidak hanya dimonopoli oleh masyarakat pribumi,*



*tetapi juga oleh masyarakat intelektual modern, khususnya penganut mistik Jawa. Aspek penting dari keragaman budaya yang berujung sinkretisme dibahas oleh Fisher dan Rinehart dengan cukup rinci, misalnya tentang ketergantungan pada tradisi lisan di antara masyarakat. Begitu pula dengan mitologi Nyai Roro Kidul; ia diwariskan secara lisan dan turun temurun melalui beragam cerita sehingga penyebarannya meluas dan menjadi karakteristik umum dari sistem kepercayaan masyarakat di sepanjang pantai selatan Jawa sebagai bagian dari agama yang hidup (living religion) dari perspektif sakralitas pribumi (indigenous sacred ways).*

**Kata Kunci:** Nyai Roro Kidul, Sakral, Kepercayaan, Sinkretisme, Cara-cara Suci Adat, Agama yang Hidup

## INTRODUCTION

Religion as a system encompasses beliefs, doctrines, morality, and norms adhered to and believed by humanity as truths. In English, the term "religion" derives from Latin, meaning "to bind back" (Fisher and Rinehart, 2017: 2). According to Fisher and Rinehart (2017: 2), all religions share a common goal: to bind humans back to something beyond the surface of life—a greater reality that exists beyond or invisibly permeates the world perceivable by our five senses. People's religious beliefs are connected to norms and teachings about living a virtuous life. These beliefs are shaped by how people think and behave in relation to a higher, unseen power. Religious behavior is seen not only in specific ceremonies and rituals, which follow guidelines set by each religion, but also in broader ways of thinking, known as systems of thought.

A system of thought is a way of thinking that helps individuals understand and respond to their surroundings. Every person's unique background, experiences, and values influence how they interpret information and make decisions. For instance, a positive thinker is more likely to see opportunities in challenges, while a negative thinker may focus on risks and problems. In this way, a system of thought shapes both perception and responses to events. Understanding our own and others' ways of thinking can improve empathy, communication, and relationships in daily life.

It becomes apparent that religious systems consist of two interrelated dimensions: the teachings and how individuals respond to them. Though deeply connected, these dimensions remain distinct; teachings are regarded as absolute truths by both human adherents and by the Almighty, the transcendent. For example, in Islam, there is a "teaching" that an "abstract" being called Allah is believed to be the creator of the universe and everything within it. However, Muslims may respond to this belief (teaching) differently, whether in thought, attitude, daily behavior, or religious rituals. Among many communities along Java's southern coast, there exists a mythological, transcendent reflection both as part of religious belief and cultural value, embodied in the mythology of Nyai Roro Kidul. She is a legendary figure revered as a sacred myth by people along the southern coast of Java (Andayani and Jupriyono, 2019: 28). Numerous folktales (myths and legends) still thrive in the region (Endraswara, 2005; Danandjaja, 2007).

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In many myths and legends, Nyai Roro Kidul is believed to be a semi-divine being, a beautiful princess with supernatural qualities. Known as the Queen of the Southern Sea (Indian Ocean), she represents a unique fusion of local spiritual beliefs, Hindu-Buddhist influences, and, later, Islamic cultural integration. Her narrative reflects not only the Javanese people's interaction with nature and the supernatural world but also encapsulates deeper meanings related to power, gender, and the relationship between humans and the divine. Nyai Roro Kidul is also worshipped by communities who seek wealth, even if it means promising family members' souls as offerings. Although her story, believed by most traditional Javanese communities, remains controversial, her significance extends beyond indigenous society to modern intellectuals, especially Javanese mystics.

Thus, this mythology takes the form of syncretic beliefs because, although the majority of the southern Javanese coastal population follows Islam as their official religion, the mythology of Nyai Roro Kidul is also part of the living religion, especially among fishermen who rely on the sea for their livelihoods. These fishermen feel the need to show gratitude to the "being" ruling the southern coast, Nyai Roro Kidul. Cognitive scientists also associate similarities in symbols and stories with shared human environmental conditions and the workings of the human mind. Across cultures, people tend to project human qualities onto plants, animals, and inanimate objects, and to transcend worldly logic, developing beliefs in beings or forces operating extraordinarily within the bounds of time and space (Fisher and Rinehart, 2017: 38).

Here we need to be discerning in distinguishing between religion as teaching and religion as human response to teaching. "Response" will always be closely related to the context, mindset, environment, or culture in which the "religion" or "belief" lives and grows. This form of response underlies the study of religion from an anthropological (cultural) perspective of the community. Therefore, phenomena within a religion—such as symbols, rituals, magic, and myths—are parts of cultural religious constructs, born out of community responses to religious teachings.

Because these phenomena result from human responses, it is inevitable that they contain religious symbolism blended with syncretism. In religious human culture, religious facts are intrinsically symbolic, with symbolic expressions pointing to something transcendent and supernatural. But why syncretism? Because in every response to religious teachings, humans will always be influenced by the context, mindset, environment, or culture in which their religion or belief lives and grows. In religious studies, syncretism is defined as the merging or assimilation of different beliefs, practices, or schools of thought (Hastings, TT: 156). This definition also indicates a blending of religious ideas and practices, where one set fully adopts another's principles, or the two fuse into a more cosmopolitan form (spread generally). This description aligns with the nature of syncretism, as exemplified by the mythology of Nyai Roro Kidul, found among communities along Java's southern coast. This syncretism illustrates the dynamic spirituality of society as it interacts with external influences (e.g., humans versus nature).



Fisher and Rinehart discuss significant aspects of cultural diversity that lead to syncretism, such as the reliance on oral tradition among communities. Oral transmission remains essential for sharing knowledge and preserving cultural continuity. Fisher and Rinehart (2026: 36) emphasize that oral narratives—songs, proverbs, myths—are not merely historical records but living expressions that keep sacred experiences dynamic. In most indigenous cultures, spiritual ways of life are shared orally. Although oral transmission is found in all religions, it remains the primary way to share and continue traditions in indigenous religions. People create and pass down songs, proverbs, myths, riddles, short sayings, legends, art, music, and similar forms. This keeps indigenous sacred ways dynamic and flexible rather than static. Oral narratives may contain hints of individual or group historical experiences, yet these are often conveyed symbolically from generation to generation. Symbols, metaphors, and humor, while not easily understood by outsiders, are central to the community's understanding of life's workings (Fisher and Rinehart, 2017: 36). Similarly, the mythology of Nyai Roro Kidul has been passed down orally through various stories, making her narrative widespread and a common feature of belief systems among communities along Java's southern coast as part of a "living religion" within indigenous sacred ways. This paper thus seeks to answer the research question: "How is the mythology of Nyai Roro Kidul constructed as sacred within the indigenous belief system, particularly along the southern coast of Java?"

## **METHOD**

The study of religion has its own paradigm, approach, and methods that serve as scientific principles for understanding the objects of its inquiry. Based on the classification by Suprayogo and Tobroni (2001: 116), this paper adopts a naturalistic (qualitative) paradigm with an anthropological approach to understand the meanings behind behaviors, cultures, phenomena, mythology, and symbols related to religious behavior. Therefore, the author uses Mary Pat Fisher's theory of Indigenous Sacred Ways as the main theory (grand theory) to understand and interpret the subject of study, which is the mythology of Nyai Roro Kidul as part of the myth and symbol construction within belief systems. According to Fisher and Rinehart (2017: 16), symbols are also woven into myths—symbolic stories that societies use to explain the universe and their place within it. Myths may aim to explain how things came to be, sometimes incorporating elements of historical truth, and in any case are regarded as sacred history (Fisher and Rinehart, 2017: 17). In line with the characteristics of Religious Studies, the author does not distinguish between the terms 'religion' and 'belief' here, as Kahmad (2000: 11) states that the word "religion" in Comparative Religion (Religious Studies) has a universal meaning, namely:

"... the term religion here does not refer to any specific religion believed by an individual or group, such as Islam or Christianity alone, but rather includes all religions in the world—whether local, national, or international; whether still existing and thriving, once existed, or currently exist but are no longer

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growing; and whether practiced by primitive societies or by modern communities."

The research method employed in this paper is a literature review. A literature review is a systematic effort to collect and synthesize all accessible references to address the research question. In practice, literature-based research uses an approach that can be explicitly repeated several times to minimize bias in the identification, selection, and summarization of previously published research (Gearing & Alonzo, 2018; Smith & Cragun, 2019). To support this literature review, the researcher applies a content analysis method outlined in the model of Woods and Nelson (2011). Content analysis is particularly useful in this situation as it is a textual analysis method used to define and explain the characteristics of messages embedded within texts. Content analysis, which can be employed in both quantitative and qualitative research, allows researchers to organize and summarize large amounts of data while triangulating with other research methodologies (Woods & Nelson, 2011: 100-121). The content analysis approach will examine the selection of relevant literature, integrate message units found within sources, and then interpret the findings.

The literature reviewed is randomly selected based on searches from Google Scholar, websites, and blogs that provide both scholarly and popular writings related to the mythology of Nyai Roro Kidul. These sources are then critically reviewed through a functional perspective and the Indigenous Sacred Ways theory by Fisher and Rinehart, focusing on oral tradition, symbols, and myths.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In religious studies, particularly those using an anthropological approach, examining specific myths within a community plays an essential role in understanding how events—whether from the past or present—and their narratives are intertwined with ritual practices within particular belief contexts. The word "myth" itself originates from the Greek *muthos*, which literally means "a story" or "something told by someone"; in a broader sense, it can mean a statement, a story, or even the plot of a drama (Dhavamony, 1995: 147). In the context of religious studies, myth can then be understood as a story conveying a higher and more significant truth about an original reality that offers specific guidance and direction to a group of people (Dhavamony, 1995: 147; van Peursen, 1988: 37).

A myth might be told as a story, but it can also be expressed through dances or performances like shadow puppetry. The core elements of these stories are symbols that evoke human experience: symbols of good and evil, life and death, sin and purification, marriage and fertility, blessings, and the protection of spirits over nature, among others. Ultimately, myths provide direction for human behavior and serve as a guide for wisdom. Through myth, people can participate in surrounding events to respond to the forces of nature (van Peursen, 1988: 37). Campbell (in Fisher and Rinehart, 2017: 17) conducted extensive analyses of myths worldwide and identified that myths serve four main functions: mystical (evoking a sense of



awe, love, wonder, and gratitude), cosmological (offering explanations of the universe based on the existence and actions of spiritual forces or beings), sociological (adapting people to an orderly social life and teaching ethical codes), and psychological (opening the door for inner exploration, full personal development, and adjustment to life's cycles). Understood in this way, myth is not mere falsehood or primitive imagination; it can be deeply meaningful and transformative, shaping sacred belief structures that support religious laws and institutions, the ways of society, and explaining people's place within the cosmos (Fisher and Rinehart, 2017: 17).

American cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz also recognized the significance of myth. Geertz viewed myth as a symbol that could summarize what is known about the world as it is, encapsulate the emotional qualities that underpin it, and direct how one should act within it (Geertz, 1992: 51). Consequently, a myth becomes a guide directing the ethos and worldview of a community. Such is the case with the myth of Nyai Roro Kidul, whose existence is believed by native communities along the southern coast of Java. Nyai Roro Kidul is one of the most discussed figures in the Javanese spirit world. The mythology surrounding this goddess, who is also known by various other names, has grown more complex due to influences from diverse origins (Schrieke in Wessing, 1997: 318). As a Sundanese princess, Nyai Roro Kidul is generally considered the daughter of a ruler of the Pajajaran kingdom in West Java, though opinions vary regarding her father: Prabu Mundingsari, Prabu Munding Wangi, Prabu Siliwangi, or Prabu Cakrabuwana (Wessing, 1997: 319). The reasons for Nyai Roro Kidul's transformation from a palace princess to the Goddess of the Southern Sea are also varied. The most common explanation is that she was a beautiful young woman who, due to magic used by her evil stepmother, contracted a skin disease, forcing her to leave the palace and seek refuge in the forest, where, according to some, she meditated. Some stories recount that she was accompanied by her mother.

This myth is so powerful that it influences behaviors and moral choices, especially for fishermen, who strive to create harmony with Nyai Roro Kidul, for example, by holding certain rituals, as practiced by the communities along the southern coast of Java through ceremonies such as the "Labuhan," "Hajat Laut," and similar rites. The myth of Nyai Roro Kidul has various versions adapted to the historical interests of certain regions. The version from West Java differs from the version in Yogyakarta, as well as from the version in East Java (especially in the Banyuwangi area and its surroundings). Due to these differing versions, the story of Nyai Roro Kidul is often considered a folktale or legend rather than a myth. Based on scientific and popular articles<sup>1</sup> available on the internet that provide information about Nyai Roro Kidul's mythology, the myth can be summarized as follows:

In the beginning, there was a wise king named Prabu Siliwangi, who ruled the Kingdom of Pajajaran in the late 15th to early 16th century. Prabu

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<sup>1</sup> refer to the bibliography

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Siliwangi had a beautiful queen named Ratu Mayang Sari and a daughter named Princess Kadita, whose beauty made the mistresses of Prabu Siliwangi jealous. One day, these mistresses called upon a shaman to curse Ratu Mayang Sari and her daughter Kadita, afflicting their bodies with sores, scabs, ringworm, and similar ailments. The mistresses then incited Prabu Siliwangi, suggesting that the disease suffered by his queen and daughter was a sign of an impending disaster in the kingdom. Prabu Siliwangi was persuaded and feared that the queen and his daughter would become the subject of public gossip due to their illness. Consequently, Prabu Siliwangi ordered them to leave the kingdom.

Ratu Mayang Sari and Princess Kadita then wandered into the wilderness until one day, Ratu Mayang Sari could walk no further and eventually passed away, leaving Princess Kadita alone, sad, and confused. She continued her journey southward, eventually stopping at a place that would later be known as the Southern Sea. In her despair, she rested and fell asleep. In her sleep, she received a divine message that to break the curse afflicting her, she must immerse herself in the ocean. Upon awakening, she followed the message she had received. However, by the time she realized that her ailment was cured, it was too late for her to return to the world. Princess Kadita then became the Ruler of the Southern Sea, known by the names Nyai Roro Kidul, Nyai Dewi Roro Kidul, Nyai Lara Kidul, Kanjeng Ratu Kidul, and several other mythical titles.

A myth certainly does not merely end as a story. It is always intertwined with the meanings embedded within it. Therefore, Nyai Roro Kidul ultimately became a symbol of a supernatural being that rules the southern sea of Java. Rusim (in Zakiyah, 2006: 83) explains that belief in Nyai Roro Kidul is similar to the general community's belief in other supernatural beings, such as *Kuntilanak*, *Jurig*, *Tuyul*, and so on. Essentially, Nyai Roro Kidul is simply one among many supernatural beings *anu ngageugeuh* in the Southern Sea (Rusim in Zakiyah, 2006: 83). In Sundanese, as the writer understands it, the word *ngageugeuh* has the same meaning as "to control," so in this context, Nyai Roro Kidul is equated with a godlike entity that controls nature. However, the community rejects the perception that they, especially the fishermen, are straying from Islamic teachings, for example by offering sacrifices to Nyai Roro Kidul during the *Hajat Laut* ritual (Rusim in Zakiyah, 2006: 83). According to the fishermen, only those who do not understand the symbols would interpret it that way (Rusim in Zakiyah, 2006: 83).

Whether or not Nyai Roro Kidul exists in our lives is not the main issue in this discussion. As long as Nyai Roro Kidul is symbolized and believed to be the ruler of the Southern Sea, the myth surrounding her existence and the powers attributed to her will remain a story that withstands the passage of time. This is because a myth serves to make people aware that there are magical forces behind the real phenomena visible to the eye (van Peursen, 1988: 38). Myths themselves do not provide sufficient information about these forces, but they help people appreciate





them as influences over nature and the community's way of life, serving as guarantees for current and future well-being (van Peursen, 1988: 38). The myth of Nyai Roro Kidul greatly influences the construction of belief systems, presenting a sacred dimension to the community's faith. Furthermore, the Nyai Roro Kidul myth functionally influences the economy of the southern coastal fishing communities, as they believe that the fish they catch is not only determined by God but also granted through the kindness of Nyai Roro Kidul, who allows them to fish in her sea (Zakiyah, 2006: 84). Thus, the fishermen consider it appropriate to express gratitude through the *Hajat Laut* ritual, directed toward both God and Nyai Roro Kidul.

Here, the myth and sacred symbolism of Nyai Roro Kidul become integral elements of the belief system among the southern coastal communities, forming a cultural framework. Essentially, the intertwined myths and symbols of Nyai Roro Kidul as the Ruler of the Southern Sea can be understood as humanity's mediating effort to connect with God, who grants them life. However, since the myth and symbols of Nyai Roro Kidul do not originate from Islamic teachings, syncretism remains a characteristic of the indigenous belief system, especially among the southern Javanese coastal communities. According to Geertz, this is precisely the role of a sacred symbol in a belief system (religious), where, through the symbol, believers are able to validate their behavior, depicting a world in which such behavior is seen as the only rational course (Geertz, 1992: 54). For the indigenous communities of the southern coast of Java, belief in Nyai Roro Kidul represents a spirituality that brings them closer to the Divine. As Fisher and Rinehart (2017: 36) explain, indigenous spirituality is a way of life, a unique approach to embracing all aspects of existence.

In most indigenous cultures, this spiritual way of life is shared orally. Oral transmission has been used in all religions, but in indigenous religions, oral transmission rather than written scriptures remains the main method for sharing and passing down traditions. People create and pass down songs, proverbs, myths, riddles, short sayings, legends, art, music, and so on. Similarly, Nyai Roro Kidul's mythology helps keep indigenous sacred traditions dynamic and flexible rather than fossilized, keeping sacred experiences fresh in the present day (Fisher and Rinehart, 2017: 36). Nyai Roro Kidul is a narrative constructed through oral tradition, possibly containing hints about historical experiences of individuals or groups, yet it is often passed from generation to generation in symbolic language. Symbols, metaphors, and humor are not easily understood by outsiders but form the core of the community's understanding of how life operates. The fishermen's struggles at sea, their fight to catch fish, the life-and-death stakes, and the unpredictability of the waves lead the southern Javanese coastal communities to embrace a sacred element that they can grasp with their straightforward worldview, one of which is the firm belief in the existence of Nyai Roro Kidul, perceived as a sacred entity by the indigenous southern Javanese communities.

According to Jordaan (in Wessing, 1997: 100), one often noted aspect of Nyai Roro Kidul is her inherent ambiguity; she is both revered and feared (Sentot Js et al., 1992). She is associated with demons and death as well as protection and prosperity.



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She is linked to fertility; Tisnawati, one form of Dewi Padi Sri, is said to be her sister, and she is revered by fishermen and bird nest collectors, with the latter marrying a woman from Nyai Roro Kidul's court to ensure safety and a bountiful harvest (de Cock Wheatley 1931: 206-209). She is also the consort and protector of Javanese kingdoms (Wessing, 1997: 100). Simultaneously, Nyai Roro Kidul is said to bring storms and large waves when angry and is reputed to be a jealous and lustful spirit with an insatiable desire for handsome young men, whom she lures away if they venture too far from the coast (Gow in Wessing, 1997: 100). This aligns with what Geertz (1992: 54) terms a worldview; the belief that such behavior is the only rational course because there exists a fundamental correspondence between ethos and worldview, between accepted lifestyle and assumed structure of reality, where the two complement and lend meaning to each other. This worldview then spreads cosmopolitically, becoming a belief system transmitted orally as something sacred.

Fisher and Rinehart's concept of sacred ways emphasizes how local beliefs and practices shape religious experiences. In this context, Nyai Roro Kidul can be seen as an expression of Javanese spirituality that incorporates elements from various belief systems while remaining rooted in local traditions. Nyai Roro Kidul is more than just a mythical creature; she represents a communal identity for many coastal villages in southern Java. Fisher and Rinehart (2017: 53) argue that indigenous religions often reflect the environment and social structure of their followers. In this way, Nyai Roro Kidul embodies the power of the sea, acting as both a source of sustenance and a threat to fishermen and the southern Javanese coastal communities. Rituals dedicated to her, such as offerings made by fishermen, are practical responses to their dependence on the sea for livelihood while reinforcing community bonds through shared beliefs. Rituals associated with Nyai Roro Kidul vary by region but typically involve casting offerings into the sea to appease her spirit and seek her blessings for safe voyages and abundant catches. For example, at Pelabuhan Ratu Beach and Pangandaran Beach in West Java, Parang Tritis Beach in Yogyakarta, and Puger Beach in Banyuwangi, annual festivals are held in her honor, with offerings and prayers from local fishermen. These activities illustrate how the indigenous sacred ways manifest through rituals that connect them with their environment and spiritual beliefs.

Through Fisher and Rinehart's perspective, the mythology of Nyai Roro Kidul reflects some of the main spiritual values prevalent in the culture of the people on the island of Java, particularly among the southern coastal residents.

1. **Harmony with Nature:** The myth surrounding Nyai Roro Kidul emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with the natural forces. Her character embodies the dual nature of the sea—capable of providing sustenance while also posing a threat. This reflects the broader Javanese belief in respecting and understanding natural forces.
2. **Fertility and Prosperity:** As a goddess associated with fertility, Nyai Roro Kidul symbolizes abundance and prosperity. Her blessings are sought not only by fishermen but also by farmers who rely on her assistance for



bountiful harvests. This relationship reinforces the agricultural cycle and the community's well-being.

3. **Spiritual Guidance:** Nyai Roro Kidul serves as a spiritual guide for rulers and commoners alike. The belief that she offers advice to kings highlights her role as a mediator between the divine and earthly realms. This aspect underscores a spiritual hierarchy in which rulers seek legitimacy through divine support.
4. **Cultural Identity:** The myths surrounding Nyai Roro Kidul significantly contribute to Javanese cultural identity. These myths foster a sense of belonging among coastal communities and nurture pride in their heritage. The rituals associated with her are not merely remnants of past beliefs; they are still actively practiced today, reinforcing cultural continuity.

## CONCLUSION

Nyai Roro Kidul embodies the duality of nature—she is both nurturing and destructive. This duality is crucial for understanding her role as a goddess of fertility and protector of nature. Her connection to the ocean symbolizes the life-giving power, while her tumultuous nature serves as a reminder of the uncertainties of the natural world. In this way, she reflects the spiritual value placed on harmony with nature within Javanese culture.

Nyai Roro Kidul's influence extends beyond mythology; she plays a significant role in the spiritual practices and beliefs of the coastal communities of southern Java. Fisher and Rinehart's concept of indigenous sacred ways emphasizes how local beliefs shape spiritual experiences, and Nyai Roro Kidul exemplifies this through various rituals and practices that connect the community with their environment.

She is a complex figure with multiple facets, and her mythology reflects the richness of Javanese religious and cultural heritage. As the Queen of the Southern Sea, she embodies the forces of nature and the spiritual power that shapes human existence. Her myth has evolved over centuries, incorporating elements of Hindu-Buddhist cosmology, Islamic mysticism, and indigenous animism, making her a symbol of religious syncretism in Java.

Through her role in rituals and her continued relevance in contemporary society, Nyai Roro Kidul remains central to the spiritual lives of the Javanese people. Her story serves as a reminder of the enduring power of myth in shaping cultural identity and religious beliefs, while her presence in the modern world highlights the importance of maintaining indigenous religious traditions in the face of social and environmental changes.

In conclusion, Nyai Roro Kidul is not just a mythical figure but a symbol of a living religion that reflects the Javanese community's relationship with the natural environment, their spiritual heritage, and their evolving cultural identity. The legend surrounding her acts as a bridge between the past and present, between humanity and the divine, as well as the natural and supernatural realms, making her one of the most enduring and significant figures in the beliefs of indigenous communities, particularly along the southern coastal regions of Java.

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