

## Road from Surakarta to Yogyakarta: History of the Solo-Yogyakarta since 16<sup>th</sup> until 19<sup>th</sup> century

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### Abstrak

Artikel ini menjelaskan mengenai sejarah jalan yang menghubungkan antara Kota Surakarta dengan Kota Yogyakarta dari abad ke-16 sampai ke-19. Dalam sejarahnya, jalan ini telah menghubungkan beberapa entitas politik yang telah ada di Jawa sejak abad ke-16. Dengan menggunakan metode sejarah yang terdiri dari heuristik, kritik, interpretasi, dan historiografi, penelitian ini mencoba untuk menjawab pertanyaan bagaimana sejarah Jalan Solo-Yogyakarta menurut catatan dan sumber sejarah? Berdasarkan sumber primer dan studi pustaka, Jalan Solo-Yogyakarta berawal sejak berdirinya Mataram, daerah bawahan Pajang. Pada abad ke-17, jalan ini menjadi salah satu jalan diplomatik yang digunakan oleh para duta VOC ke Keraton Mataram, hingga kemudian terjadi perang perebutan tahta di Jawa pada awal abad ke-18. Ketika Pangeran Puger menduduki istana Plered di Mataram dan Amangkurat III menduduki keraton baru di Kartasura, jalan ini juga merupakan latar penting beberapa peristiwa dalam perang di antara keduanya. Kemudian, jalan Solo-Yogyakarta menjadi salah satu jalan ziarah bagi raja dan keluarga raja, sehingga keberadaan jalan ini menjadi penting secara simbolis bagi kekuasaan Mataram.

**Kata kunci:** jalan, sejarah, mataram, pajang.

### Abstract

*This article describes the history of the road between Surakarta-Yogyakarta from the 16th until the 19th century. Historically, this road has connected several political entities in Java since the 16th century. By using the historical method, which consists of heuristic, sources criticism, interpretation, and historiography, this research attempts to explain the significance of historical events of the Solo-Yogyakarta Road according to historical records and sources. By doing literature research, this article finds that the Solo-Yogyakarta Road dates back to the establishment of Mataram as Pajang's vassal. Later in the 17th century, this road became one of the diplomatic roads used by VOC ambassadors to the Mataram's Keraton, until the war of succession clashed in the early 18th century. When Prince Puger occupied the Plered palace in Mataram and Amangkurat III occupied the new palace in Kartasura, this street was also an important setting for several events in the war between the two. Later, the Solo-Yogyakarta road became a pilgrimage route for kings and royal families, so the existence of this road became symbolically important for Mataram's power.*

**Keywords:** road, history, mataram, pajang.

### INTRODUCTION

The travellers shifting from the North Coast of Java (Pantura) road to the Trans Java Toll road in 2015 has caused some merchants and microeconomic businesses along the old road to suffer a decrease in revenue and income. Travellers across Java prefer the Trans Java Toll-road over

the Pantura Road because the Trans Java Toll Road is faster and more convenient. The new toll road cuts approximately 40 kilometres compared to the old route. This circumstance gives some people nostalgia because the Pantura road was not only a road that connects the island of Java from west to east, but also a

sociocultural icon with its culinary, entertainment, and cultural dynamics (Hartatik, 2018: 239).

Just like the Pantura road, a new toll road between Solo and Yogyakarta is planned to be constructed. The construction of the Solo-Yogyakarta Trans Java Toll-road is part of a national strategic project under President Joko Widodo's term. This toll road is expected to be built next to the northwest of the existing main Solo-Yogyakarta highway that is commonly used by travellers and will be built through Kartasura, Klaten, and Prambanan. The toll road is expected to be 42.3 kilometres long with toll gates in Kartasura, Central Java and Purwomartani, Yogyakarta. This project of construction is expected to facilitate the flow of tourism around Central Java and Yogyakarta.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Solo-Yogyakarta road was a road that connected two major Javanese cities, namely Surakarta and Yogyakarta. The two kingdoms were established after the signing of the Treaty of Giyanti in 1755, which ended the rule of the Mataram Kingdom in Java (Ricklefs, 2022: 217). Besides its political significance, the road is an economic access point for the people of both cities. Considering the construction of the new toll road, it is intriguing to look at its conjuncture in history with some key events that took place on the Solo-Yogyakarta road as a

'nostalgic' experience, much like the Pantura road.

Most of the studies of road history have implied economic and transportation study approaches. Nas and Pratiwo's article, for example, has presented a historical analysis of the plans and intentions of the road project, the development process, the social memory of the development, and the impact of Groote Postweg or Jalan Raya Pos on urban planning in Java and Javanese cosmology. The research found that the memory legacy and cultural impact of the postal highway project went beyond what Daendels had originally envisaged and intended (Nas & Pratiwo, 2002). Moreover, Endah Sri Hartatik conveys in her study that the Pantura Road is a continuation of the north coast road that existed during the 17th-century Mataram period. Herman Willem Daendels' project in 1808 was an attempt to improve these roads to fulfil his military vision and objectives. In addition, Hartatik also presents the rules of road use, statistical analyses and data on population activities, as well as the socio-economic life of the people along the Pantura road. In her argument, we can see how the Pantura Highway, especially the Central Java section, was an object that has continuity in history (Hartatik, 2018).

The topic of road development is quite interesting in historical studies. This is because, unlike other geographical

aspects, a road is a feature that is deliberately constructed by humans. The relations between people, regions and roads, thus political, social and economic dynamics can occur in the discussion. More specifically, road development can be interpreted as a form of modernisation that can lead to social change and mobility in the community (Nas & Pratiwo, 2002: 718-719). This article will explain the significance of the Solo-Yogyakarta Road according to historical records and sources.

#### **METHOD**

This research is based on the historical method which consists of source inquiring or heuristics, source criticism and verification, interpretation, and historical writing or historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2013). Literature study and review were important in the preparation of this article. Moreover, maps or cartographic sources were used in this research to get a picture of the location in the past. The map and cartography were obtained from the Dutch Nationaal Archief online sources. Then the results of the analysis are presented in a historical writing or historiography. Thus, we can see a reconstruction of the Solo to Yogyakarta road from the 16th until the 19th century.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The city of Surakarta and the city of Yogyakarta are connected by one main

road that passes through Kartasura, Klaten, Kalasan, and Maguwo. This road was originally a series of village roads connected to one another. Although, historically, the connection between these two cities was only established in 1755, the road was actually a continuation of an earlier road. Certainly, the connected entities were not Solo and Yogyakarta yet until 1755, but rather alternated with changes. Geographically, this road connects the southeastern and southern regions of Mount Merapi.

#### **Pajang-Mataram Road**

Based on historical works such as *babad*, the Solo to Yogyakarta road can be traced back to the 16th century since the founding of the Pajang Kingdom by Hadiwijaya (died 1587). The remnants of the kingdom were in the vicinity of today Kartasura and were built after the decline of the influence of the Demak Kingdom in the interior of Java (Graaf & Pigeaud, 2019: 360-364; Ricklefs, 2022: 78). Sultan Hadiwijaya then gave the Alas Mentaok land to Ki Ageng Pamanahan (died 1584) to build a settlement which later became known as Mataram. This relationship between Pajang and Mataram was connected by interconnected village roads. The relation between Pajang and Mataram was initially a power relation between a central kingdom and a vassal region, but Mataram slowly became an emerging power that could

counterbalance the Pajang's authority as the kingdom's influence grew. Especially after the Mataram kingdom was led by Sutawijaya (died 1601). Ultimately, in the mid-16th century, Mataram invaded Pajang and established Sutawijaya as the first king of Mataram with the title Panembahan Senapati (Graaf, 2020: 134-150).

In the 17th century, travel accounts of Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie or VOC diplomats to Mataram began to be documented. There were three main roads from the north coast of Java to the capital Mataram. The first was the road that starts in Subah and then heads south along the eastern slopes of the Dieng Mountains. This road was usually used by travellers who landed at Port of Tegal, which was located a short distance west of Subah. The road ran northwest to southeast to Secang, then south along the banks of the Progo River. The royal gate of Mataram upon this route was Trayem Gate in the west. The second was a north-to-south road that started from Semarang. This road passes Mount Ungaran (2050m above sea level) and the valley area around Ambarawa. It continued to Silimbi Gate and Salatiga on the eastern slopes of Mount Merbabu (3145m above sea level) and Mount Merapi (2910m above sea level as of 2010). The area of the Mataram kingdom was marked by the Taji Gate between Kalasan (formerly known as Randugunting) and Prambanan. The Solo-

Yogyakarta road was part of this road including the Taji Gate. The third road ran from northeast Mataram to Blambangan. This road was a road that follows the shape of the Solo River which has its headwaters in the Sewu Mountains and one of its tributaries empties into Gresik. The gate of this third road was the Bongor Gate (de Jonge, 1870: 30-39; Schrieke, 1959: 105).

In some accounts, VOC delegations to the Mataram capital used this road. One of them was Rickloefs van Goens who visited as an ambassador in 1656. Van Goens started his journey from Semarang, then passed Mount Ungaran to Taji, which he called *Tadie*. The visit of van Goens was significant considering the political state of Mataram after the death of Sultan Agung (reigned 1613-1645). Throughout his travels in the interior of Java, van Goens praised the mountainous terrain and rice fields that he found so beautiful (Goens, 1666: 2-4; Fruin-Mees, 1926).

#### **Kartasura-Mataram Road**

An important event that emphasised this street as a stage of contestation was the succession conflict between Pangeran Puger (lived 1648-1719) and Sunan Amangkurat II (reigned 1677-1703). It was important to highlight here for context that in 1647, Amangkurat I (reigned 1646-1677), the then ruler of Mataram, moved the Mataram court from Karta to Plered (Ricklefs, 2022: 155). The court later became the capital and center of



Picture 1. The 18th Century map shows Kartasura or Cartasoera and Mataram (Collection VELH No. 490, nationaalarchief.nl)

government of Mataram. The site of Plered Kraton was in the vicinity of Mataram, so it was not uncommon for some VOC maps to refer to Plered court as Mataram. Currently, both Karta and Plered kraton are located in Yogyakarta, precisely in Bantul Regency.

In 1677, there was an attack on the Plered by an army led by Trunajaya of Madura (lived 1649-1680). The king survived the raid and started move to the safer place. While escaping the attack of Trunajaya's troops, Amangkurat I decided to fled to the Banyumas, west of Mataram. In exile, he ordered Prince Puger to reclaim and defend Plered from Trunajaya. However, after Amangkurat I died in 1677, the throne passed to Raden Mas Rahmat with the title Amangkurat II. For several years, Amangkurat II ruled in

exile until 1679. Then with the VOC coalition, he succeeded in suppressing Trunajaya's troops in Kediri and executed him in January 1680 (Graaf, 1987; Ricklefs, 1993: 57).

In 1680, Amangkurat II built a new court named Kartasura Adiningrat, while Prince Puger remained in Plered. The feud between the two led to dualism in the Mataram government. Ricklefs refers the conflict from 1696 to 1703 as the First Javanese War of Succession between Prince Puger in the old court of Plered and Amangkurat II in the new court of Kartasura. This schism later escalated into military conflict, especially after Amangkurat II died and was succeeded by Amangkurat III (Ricklefs, 1993: 114-128). In 1704, Prince Puger became the Sunan of Mataram with the coronation title

Pakubuwana I after seizing the throne from Amangkurat III.

Since the time of Pakubuwana I, the Kartasura road to Mataram became important in for legitimacy of power. This road was a *ziarah* or pilgrimage route to their forefathers' tombs in Kotagede, Mataram for the royal family, especially the reigning king. The first *ziarah* was made by Pakubuwana I in 1716. This was followed by his son Amangkurat IV (reigned 1719-1726) who made his *ziarah* convoy in 1724. This spiritual journey suggests a strong symbolic significance to this road. From a profane road, it became a sacred road. However, in the report of the colonial official who accompanied him during the pilgrimage, it was said that this road was poor and difficult to traverse by carriage, so Amangkurat IV needed to be carried with a palanquin (Ricklefs, 1993: 164 & 213).

### Surakarta-Yogyakarta Road

In June 1742, the Kartasura Palace fell to the resistance coalition of Chinese and Javanese troops, especially from the coastal areas. This movement was supported by several Mataram princes who were disappointed with the leadership of Pakubuwana II (1711-1749), son of Amangkurat IV. The princes involved included Raden Mas Gerendi and Raden Mas Said (1725-1795). This resistance coalition was successfully expelled from the court in November (Remmelink, 1996). Meanwhile, Pakubuwana II built a new

court east of Kartasura in the village of Sala. The new court was named Surakarta and was completed in 1745 (Ricklefs, 2022: 207-212; Sarmino & Haikal, 2001).

The situation became more confounded when one of Pakubuwana II's brother and ally, Prince Mangkubumi (1717-1792), joined the resistance. War broke out between the VOC-Mataram coalition led by Pakubuwana II and the resistance group led by Mangkubumi and Mas Said. After a protracted war against Prince Mangkubumi and Raden Mas Said, Pakubuwono II, who reigned in Surakarta, died in 1749. The death of Pakubuwana II was ahead of the curve of the war, because Prince Mangkubumi and Pakubuwana II's son, Raden Mas Suryadi, both appointed themselves as Pakubuwana III. These two princes ordained themselves as the rightful kings of Java. After almost five years of war, Prince Mangkubumi withdrew his troops from Raden Mas Said's forces in 1754 and began reconciliation attempts after reaching an agreement with the VOC and Surakarta's Pakubuwana III. Then in 1755, the Treaty of Giyanti was made which divided Mataram into two states, Pakubuwana III reigned in the Sunanate of Surakarta and Prince Mangkubumi reigned in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta with the title Hamengkubuwana I. This event was called *palihan nagari*. Nonetheless, several physical clashes continued until the Java War erupted in 1830 (Ricklefs, 1974: 67-

78). With the formation of these two new 'states', the Kartasura-Mataram road became the Surakarta-Yogyakarta road. This road was an important road that connected two important cities and courts in Java.

Based on Peter Carey's study of the toll-gates and the Chinese tax collector prior to Java War, there were some toll-gates along the Solo-Yogya road, such as Kalasan, Jenu, and Prambanan (Carey, 1984). Those toll-gates were functioned as the tax paying gate for the people. The income amount of this policy was enormous and suppressed the people, especially the peasant and the koelies. However, this kind of policy showed the economical aspect from the road utilisation which was the quite common practice at that time.

#### **Great Post Road section Solo-Yogyakarta**

In 1808, Daendels instructed to construct a road connecting the north coast of Java from Anyer to Panarukan in East Java. This road was built for military purposes against the British (Marihandono, 2005: 106-113). However, it later became a highway that served not only as a medium for defence but also for the economy and urbanisation of the north coast of Java (Nas & Pratiwo, 2002). Moreover, Daendels also ordered to build a postal road from Semarang to Yogyakarta via Surakarta (Hartatik, 2018: 62-63).

One of the important events that took place on the Great Post Road section

of Solo-Yogyakarta was the British raid on the Yogyakarta court in June 1812. The situation of the road was recorded in a memoir by a British officer named William Thorn (1780-1843). After the British conquests on Batavia, Weltevreden and Yogyakarta, Thorn travelled to romanticise the invasion. In the description of the Jalan Raya Pos, he comments negatively on it. He says that the creation of the military road was inhumane and costly. However, he praised it as a road that became one of the monuments of Daendels' administration (Thorn, 1815: 208). After reaching Semarang, his journey continued to the south.

The road from Semarang then starts to slope uphill and passes through the highlands. Thorn describes areas such as Ungaran, Salatiga, Boyolali, Selo, and finally Kartasura. On this journey, Thorn also mentioned the Damak (Demak?) River. Then after arriving in Surakarta, he describes the city as a well-preserved settlement. Near the sultan's residence was the Solo River which empties into Gressik. In his description, the rivers in Jawa (Solo river) are still used as a means of transport for people in the interior (Thorn, 1815: 207-208; Raffles, 1830: 219).

The road leading from Kartasura to Yogyakarta was a military road used by the British in their invasion. The road passes through Pakis, Klaten, and Prambanan. While passing through Prambanan, Thorn

witnessed the remains of a battle between the British troops and the people of Yogyakarta during the British raid of 1812. The people of Yogyakarta set up barricades that were difficult for the British to penetrate. The remnants of this battle hampered horse-drawn carriages travelling along the road (Thorn, 1815: 290). Other accounts or any historical sources related to this event for example, *Babad Sepehi* or *Babad Sepoy* written by Pangeran Aryo Panular (1771-1826) started the chronicle by mentioning the British that was already in the first ring of the palace (Carey, 2017: 81).

## CONCLUSION

The Solo-Yogyakarta road has a long history that records the dynamics and changes that occurred in the region southeast and south of Mount Merapi. This is an example of a continuation of the geography of Java, despite its dynamic nature. While it is possible that the route may have changed over the past four centuries, the connection between the two regions, such as Pajang-Mataram or Kartasura-Mataram, demonstrates the continuity between the political aspects of Java and its geographical surroundings.

This is interesting to discuss how Javanese society, at least among the elite, values a road from a spiritual perspective. This road became a *ziarah* or pilgrimage route to visit the tombs of the ancestors of the predecessor kings. This

can be seen in how the sacred forms of animism, Hinduism and Islam find their continuity in this road and the road became an important medium for a ruler in Java. Just as the Majapahit king Hayam Wuruk travelled on pilgrimage to the temples of his ancestors in the 14th century.

On the other hand, from a European perspective, the journey can be seen in terms of heroism. The road becomes a tragic and heartbreaking stage of colonisation. Indeed, this outlook has a strong European bias where the British military perspective is the main subject of the battle. However, in Thorn's brief explanation, we could re-understand the military aspect of a road in Java. The British, who brought a large artillery force to attack the court, needed a road to access it. This was where the defence of the people of Yogyakarta became strategically important.

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