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Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity

**Changing Place Names to Reflect Heritage:
A Case Study in Javanese Philosophy in Yogyakarta**

Submitted by Indonesia**

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Abstract

The renaming of streets can be contentious, pitting the proponents against those supporting the status quo. However, if done right, it can have a positive outcome and highlight heritage. This progress report is based on ongoing research by members of the Indonesian Toponymy Community (Komunitas Toponimi Indonesia - KOTISIA). The research looks at the local government's intention to make changes to as many as 600 of the street names in the city of Yogyakarta, a historical city on the island of Java in Indonesia. This report focuses on the names of a long street which run north south intersecting the royal palace (keraton). The streets there have had different names during different historical periods. The government was motivated by a desire to reflect local heritage more in the city's street names. The study so far shows the lexical and historical meanings attached to the proposed new names. It also has a philosophical dimension. Public reaction to the name changes has been mixed. Many people accept the decision as it was seen as coming from the Sultan. Not everybody is happy. However, some people are enthusiastic as they welcome the attention given to tradition and heritage.

Yogyakarta and the plan to rename some important city streets

Yogyakarta is an important historical city on Java Island in Indonesia. It is the historical seat of the Javanese royal family with roots going back to the Mataram dynasty (late 16th to early 18th century). The city is currently a candidate as a UNESCO city of philosophy.

This status is due to the connection in Javanese philosophy between the layout of the city and the path of human destiny. As such, a human's life should be guided by three basic principles. Firstly, all human beings should know the origin and ultimate destination of human life (*sangkan paraning dumadi*). Secondly, during their life, humans have to maintain a harmonious relation to the God, to other humans, and to nature (*manunggaling kawula Gusti*). Finally, the duty of all human beings is to make the world a beautiful and peaceful place (*hamemayu hayuning bawono*).¹

It was therefore of some significance when, in 2013, the local government decided to change the names of three of street sections that make up the main road that runs due south from the palace. The three streets are Margo Utomo Street (formerly Pangeran Mangkubumi Street), Margo Mulyo Street (formerly Jenderal Ahmad Yani Street), and Pangurakan Street (formerly Trikora Street).

Research was conducted that investigated all of the dimensions connected to this change of names, the meanings of the names, the history, culture and philosophy behind the names. Importantly, it also consults with a number of important local dignitaries including members of the royal family, about their perceptions and attitudes towards the change of names. Reactions of members of the public were obtained by a search of the Indonesian social media and personal interviews. The research throws light on a complex situation where changes to street names have historical, cultural and philosophical dimensions.



Figure 1: The layout of the roads and the palace (Keraton) and the two city squares (Alun-alun). Those which were renamed are circled. Source: Yogyakarta City of Philosophy Profile Book.

¹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6206/>

Jalan Pangurakan / Jalan Trikora

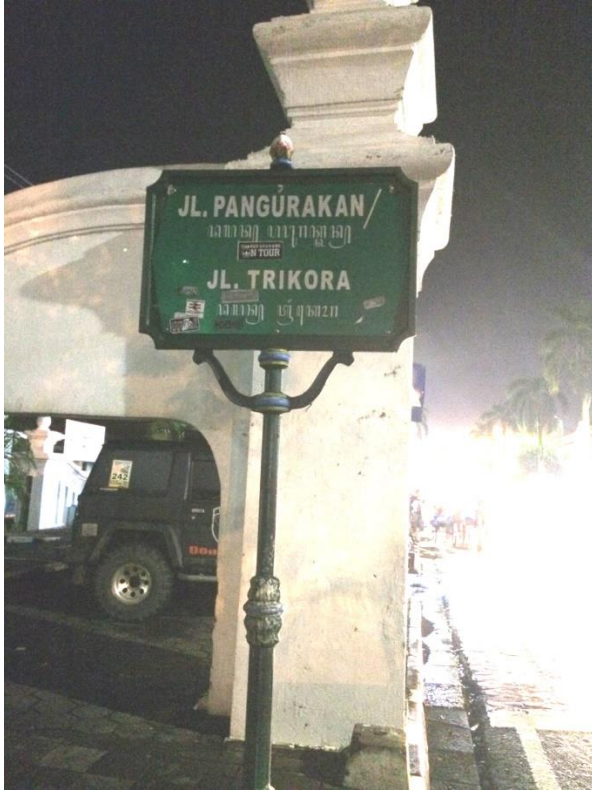


Figure 2: Street sign for one of the streets in the map. It shows the former name, Jalan Trikora, and the new name Jalan Pangurakan. The sign is written in both the Latin and the local hanacaraka script. Source: Private collection.

Pangurakan Street (formerly *Trikora* Street) is a short road that runs from the main gate of the North Square of Yogyakarta Palace to the road intersection traffic lights of *Margo Mulyo* Street. During the Dutch colonial era, this street was named *Kadasterstraat*. Along this stretch of road are a number of buildings, including a Bank Negara Indonesia (BNI) branch, a Post Office, and this *Sono Budoyo* Museum. Along the road there are also three gates: *Gapura Gladhag*, *Gapura Pangurakan Jawi*, and *Gapura Pangurakan Nglébêt*. After independence, *Kadasterstraat* was renamed *Trikora* Street to commemorate a military operation during the war of independence known as *Tri Komando Rakyat* (abbreviated as *Trikora*) or the People's Triple Command, on 19 December 1961. President Soekarno made the declaration of *Trikora* in the North Square of the palace.

The new name of *Pangurakan* Street was given in 2013 by the local government of Yogyakarta. The toponymic study of the name *Pangurakan*, reveals its significance. The literature reveals that the name appears also in the Solo palace. The Dutch scholars Rouffaer and Winter (1902) mention the Solo palace as having five gates, going north south: 1) *Pangurakan*; 2) *Gladhag*; 3) *Brajanala*; 4) *Kemandhungan* 5) *Srimenganti*. *Pangurakan* was conceived of as an initial gate. It is derived from the root word *urak* which means a commission, an order. These five names are also found in the Yogyakarta Palace. *Pangurakan* has been described as follows:

The *Pangurakan* or *Pamurakan*, which originally extended to the cross roads near the club, was, according to P.A. Soerjadinigrat, the place to which retainers of the Sultan who had been banished were escorted by their guards. *Dwijasaraya* connects this custom with the word *ngurak-urak* which means to expel with angry words. Gericky and Roorda give a different meaning in their dictionary, namely ‘the place where the duty lists are issued’.

The name *Pangurakan* suggests the idea of refusing, throwing away, or expelling. The concept is known to the Javanese as belonging to a cosmology based on the stages of human life. This philosophy is intended to purify and to release humans from ugliness and desire. *Pangurakan* is also known as the place where the Sultan’s carriage was brought ready for him to use.

Old Javanese	Meaning
<i>Uruk</i>	urging, encouragement
<i>Ajurak, imurak</i>	pushing, urgent, chasing
<i>Inurak-arik (bp)</i>	urgent, stimulating, referring
<i>Panjurakan</i>	Panjurakan Square square to the north of the palace (the gate leading to the Sultan)

Tabel 1: Lexical description of *Pangurakan*.

Conclusion

This study shows how a historical perspective on street names reveals different and potentially competing stories. Proposed name changes that reflect heritage, local values, history, culture and philosophy are fit to preserve and restore. By using a consultative approach, and by respecting the different competing values, a solution was found where both the former name (post-independence period) and the new name (*Majapahit* period) were used on street signs.

This is part of an awareness of the history and heritage of the physical space in the city and its status as a UNESCO heritage city of philosophy.