



Fig. 5: Painting by H. Widayat "The cloud *wedhus gembel* can be seen at the top of Mount Merapi" (Photo from *Exhibition Catalogue*, 1995)

Majapahit,¹⁴ who meditated as a hermit in Kawastu on the Gunung Turgo (ca. 1,200 m), which is a small mountain in front of Merapi. Syeh Jumadil Qubra remained in the area and a village was founded there. He still teaches both men and spirits and he protects the village and the kingdom of Mataram to the north from Mount Merapi.¹⁵ His *makam* (tomb) on top of Mount Turgo¹⁶ attracts many visitors in search of spiritual blessings.

Connected with these beliefs are certain prohibitions, which should be complied with by the residents and visitors of the volcano. I have already mentioned the prohibition against wearing green clothes. Furthermore, trees close to springs or to the *makam* on Mount Turgo may not be felled because of the tree spirits residing in them.¹⁷

Very important are certain prohibitions against talking: Anyone climbing Mount Merapi should not talk about his or her own condition, e.g., should never say that it is cold or that something strange is visible (Triyoga 1991: 81). The *juru kunci* (caretaker/leader of the ceremony legitimated by the *kraton*) Mbah Marijan reminded his listeners of this in his speech during the *salamatan* (ritual meal) on the night before the Labuhan ceremony on 2 January 1995. I had the impression that his intention was to prevent the participants from becoming fearful or panicking. Impressive lava streams coming from the direction of where the procession was supposed to go to on the following day could be seen during that night.

Should the Merapi erupt, nobody may talk about it. In this context the *juru kunci* explained the origin of the widespread, and surprisingly friendly-sounding name "sheep" for the dangerous hot cloud (Fig. 5) emanating from Merapi to me: During a volcanic eruption in 1965, a young man, about 25 years old, pointed at the mountain and said: "*eh... ada wedhus gembel*" ("oh... there is a sheep"). While returning home, he died (interview with Mbah Marijan 2/1/1995).

Not only are myths about the past and rules for behavior linked with Mount Merapi, but also predictions of the future. Some people expect that the world will end with an eruption (cf. Resink 1982; interview with Mbah Marijan 6/1/1991: One day Merapi will explode and everything will turn

¹⁴ There are several myths about Syeh Jumadil Qubra's descendants: According to the Babad Banyumas, he is an ancestor of Kyai Ageng Juru Mertani, the uncle and advisor of Panembahan Senopati; According to Sejarah Yudanegaran, he is the grandfather of Seh Maolana Maghribi, whose tomb is situated above Parangkusumo (*Kedaulatan Rakyat* 27/11/1994). In traditions from western Java, he figures as an ancestor of Sunan Gunung Jati, in the Babad Cirebon also of the other *wali* (saints) Sunan Bonang, Sunan Ampel, and Sunan Kalijaga (van Bruinessen 1994: 318,320).

¹⁵ According to this version, the protector of Mataram to the south is Sultan Agung, who is buried in Imogiri. He shields Mataram against calamities from the Indian Ocean.

¹⁶ Syeh Jumadil Qubra's *makam* is also to be found in other parts of Java (van Bruinessen 1994: 323).

¹⁷ Handoyo (1985) stresses that these *taboos* are meant to protect against drought and erosion. See Boomgaard 1992.