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Chora of the River, Cosmic Body, and Sacred Reproduction: A Synthesis of Lacan, Kristeva, and Javanese Pengkon in an Ethnographic Study of Sand Labor at the Krasak River, Central Java, Indonesia

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Abstract: In global capitalism's extractive machine, sand mining appears as repetitive, mute labor divorced from meaning. Yet along the volcanic banks of the Krasak River in Central Java, sand workers practice labor not as mechanical repetition, but as sacred choreography. This ethnographic study explores how embodied practices attuned to lunar calendars (pengkon), cosmological codes, and ancestral rhythms render sand mining a medium of sacred reproduction. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's notion of chora, Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic register of the Real, and Javanese cosmology, the article proposes a theoretical synthesis where labor is not only symbolic but cosmological. Within this matrix, the river is not a resource, but a maternal force that disciplines, gives, and withdraws. The miner's body is not only productive, but ritually affective: a rhythmical vessel of reproduction beyond capital. By engaging in reflective ethnography from June to September 2024, this study contributes to decolonial anthropology, spiritual labor studies, and environmental phenomenology. It proposes the concept of Embodied Sacred Reproduction as a framework that rethinks work beyond instrumentality, and offers an epistemic alternative rooted in Nusantara cosmology and metaphysical praxis.

Keyword: Chora, Javanese Cosmology, Sacred Labor, Lacanian Real, Ethnographic Phenomenology.

INTRODUCTION

In the accelerating machinery of global capitalism, extractive labor has increasingly been reduced to a mechanized extension of the economy: an anonymous, repetitive action serving the imperatives of profit and infrastructure. The mining of sand—often regarded as one of the most mundane, even invisible, forms of labor, exemplifies this crisis of meaning. Sand miners, like those working along the Krasak River in Central Java, Indonesia, are not only excluded from the moral and aesthetic dimensions of their work, but also dislocated from any symbolic relationship with the environment they inhabit. In this context, labor becomes

disenchanted, uprooted from cosmology, and rendered mute within the vocabulary of neoliberal extraction.

Yet in many indigenous and postcolonial communities, labor still retains traces of sacrality. The bodily act of digging, lifting, and moving earth is not merely mechanical but deeply entwined with rhythms of nature, ancestral knowledge, and spiritual codes of balance. This research is driven by a central question: Can production become a spiritual act? Can a repetitive labor such as sand mining recover its metaphysical dimension becoming not merely a mode of economic survival but a sacred performance that reproduces cosmic order?

This question finds fertile ground along the Krasak River, a volcanic waterway descending from Mount Merapi, where local sand workers engage in daily practices that are as much attuned to natural signs and lunar rhythms as they are to economic necessity. Through gestures embedded in silence, intuition, and bodily repetition, these laborers form a relationship with the river that defies modern logic. They read the river's moods, consult pengkon (Javanese spiritual calendars), and adhere to unwritten codes of conduct that align labor with the unseen. In their embodied knowledge, the river is not a resource but a sacred entity a maternal and disciplinary force that gives and withholds.

While the anthropology of labor has long examined the economic and symbolic dimensions of work (Geertz, 1973; Ong, 1987), the spiritual cosmological dimension of manual labor particularly in contexts of local extractive labor remains underexplored. Clifford Geertz's interpretive anthropology emphasized the meaning of ritual and symbol, yet seldom addressed the body as a cosmological instrument, especially in repetitive, non-ritualized work such as sand mining. Moreover, more recent studies on spiritual economy have often focused on institutionalized religion or global moral economies, paying limited attention to how indigenous epistemologies infuse labor with sacred temporality and cosmic attunement.

This study seeks to fill that gap by foregrounding the experience of Javanese sand miners in Kali Krasak, whose bodily labor is not merely physical or economic but is enacted as a sacred choreography within cosmological orders. Their narratives and rituals reveal a vernacular metaphysics where reproduction is not framed by capital or wage, but by *sujining urip* the flourishing of life in balance with the earth and spirit. By synthesizing Lacan's theory of the Real, Kristeva's notion of chora, and the Javanese concept of pengkon, this paper proposes a new theoretical lens: Embodied Sacred Reproduction.

To explore these symbolic layers, this research synthesizes three conceptual traditions. The first is Julia Kristeva's notion of chora a pre-symbolic, affective space associated with the maternal, the rhythmic, and the non-discursive. In Kristeva's theory, chora is not a thing, but a spacing: a pulsation, a vibration, a semiotic womb where symbolic orders are gestated but not yet codified. The second is Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of the body, which emphasizes the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic as structuring the subject's entry into meaning. In Lacanian terms, the laboring body may not only function within the Symbolic Order, but also serve as a site of rupture where the Real (such as the river's uncontrollable force) imposes itself. The third is Javanese cosmology, particularly the concept of pengkon, a term that refers to cyclical rhythms, seasonal intuitions, and sacred timings based on lunar and spiritual alignments. Unlike the Western notion of linear productivity, pengkon assumes a metaphysical temporality one that aligns human labor with a larger cosmic choreography.

This article proposes that these three frameworks Kristeva's chora, Lacan's psychoanalysis, and the Javanese pengkon can be synthesized into a new theory of sacred reproduction. Within this theory, labor is not only physical effort or symbolic production, but also a spiritual reenactment of cosmic equilibrium. Sand mining, when viewed through this lens, becomes a medium through which the body re-enters the order of the sacred. The river is no longer a passive site of extraction, but a maternal matrix that calls for embodied response and ethical attention.

The goal of this study, therefore, is not to romanticize precarity or to aestheticize suffering, but to reframe extractive labor as a potential site of spiritual agency and cosmological intelligence. By doing so, we aim to contribute to critical debates in anthropology, sacred labor studies, and decolonial thought particularly those concerned with how indigenous cosmologies resist the reductive logic of modern production. Moreover, this study speaks to a broader need within environmental humanities and phenomenology to account for the body not merely as a physical instrument, but as a medium of cosmic attunement and sacred memory.

Through immersive fieldwork conducted from June to September 2024 along the banks of the Krasak River, this article offers an ethnographic encounter with the laboring body as a sacred site of knowledge. The miners' interactions with the river are interpreted not through utilitarian frameworks, but as acts of reproduction, rhythm, and reverence. In short, this study seeks to reclaim the metaphysical dignity of labor in a world that has forgotten the river's voice, the body's wisdom, and the sacred pulse of the earth.

Literature Review

In seeking to understand how sand mining along the Krasak River may be interpreted as a form of sacred reproduction, this study builds on four major theoretical foundations: Lacan's triadic schema of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary; Kristeva's notion of chora as a pre-subjective space of affect; Javanese cosmology and its principles of elemental harmony (*memayu hayuning bawana*); and the phenomenology of the body in the work of Michel Henry and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Together, these frameworks allow us to move beyond instrumentalist interpretations of labor and approach the body as a site of metaphysical engagement, affective knowledge, and cosmic participation.

Lacan: The Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary in Material Labor

Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory offers a rich lens for interpreting the relationship between the body, subjectivity, and materiality. In Lacanian thought, the human subject is split across three registers: the Imaginary (the domain of images, illusions, and the mirror stage), the Symbolic (the field of language, law, and social structure), and the Real (that which resists symbolization, the traumatic kernel that remains outside discourse).

In the context of labor, particularly manual and extractive labor such as sand mining, the Lacanian Real manifests in the unpredictable, resistant nature of the earth and river. The river does not yield easily; it intrudes upon human efforts with floods, collapses, or drought. This unstable materiality, which eludes complete control or representation, functions as a Real a force that ruptures the smooth functioning of symbolic systems. The worker, therefore, is not only performing a symbolic role within an economic system (as "laborer"), but also engaging daily with the Real that exceeds that system.

Meanwhile, the Symbolic is what structures labor: work is codified, named, exchanged, and located within broader discourses of productivity, masculinity, or sacrifice. The Imaginary, on the other hand, concerns the ways in which laborers imagine their bodies and identities often idealized or distorted through cultural or personal lenses. However, in the spiritual labor seen in sand mining at Krasak, these three registers are not separate, but layered within one another. The body becomes a site of tension: subject to the Symbolic order of work, exposed to the Real of natural force, and imbued with Imaginary attachments to self, family, and land.

Kristeva's Chora and Pre-Subjective Language

While Lacan focuses on the entrance of the subject into language and law, Julia Kristeva introduces chora as the space that precedes this symbolic entrance. Borrowing the term from Plato, Kristeva redefines chora as a semiotic space associated with rhythm, maternal affect, bodily resonance, and drive. It is not a "place" but a process—a dynamic matrix that disrupts the coherence of the symbolic by reintroducing pulsation, music, and bodily temporality into

meaning. In the context of this study, chora emerges in the repetitive, rhythmic movements of the miners: the shoveling, the heaving, the tactile engagement with sand and water. These gestures are not fully captured by language or economic measure; they exist in a liminal zone where subjectivity is gestated and dissolved. Kristeva's chora allows us to recognize labor not merely as productive action, but as a pulsating ritual of embodied rhythm. Here, meaning is not spoken but enacted through vibration, weight, and silence. The sand miner's body, attuned to the river, becomes a chora-ic surface a semiotic field that resists total capture by the symbolic order.

Javanese Cosmology: The Four Elements and Memayu Hayuning Bawana

Javanese metaphysics offers a cosmological framework grounded in balance and cyclical harmony. Central to this worldview is the doctrine of the four elements (cipta, rasa, karsa, karya), which interrelate mind, feeling, intention, and action echoing Western elemental systems (earth, water, air, fire) while emphasizing inner ethical balance. Labor, in this context, is not merely external action (karya), but a reflection of one's inner state (rasa and karsa).

The principle of memayu hayuning bawana to nurture the beauty and harmony of the world is both cosmological and ethical. It frames labor as a contribution to the maintenance of cosmic equilibrium. A sand miner who works in sync with the river's mood, who abstains from over-digging, or who pauses on sacred days, is not merely obeying custom but enacting a metaphysical ethic. In this cosmology, rivers are living entities with spiritual personhood. They must be greeted, appeased, and honored. The flow of water is not just hydrological, but a sign of the world's pulse. The body of the miner, therefore, is not outside of nature but part of it just as the act of digging sand is also a ritual of returning, cleansing, and sustaining.

The Phenomenology of the Sacred Body: Michel Henry and Merleau-Ponty

To ground these cosmological and psychoanalytic insights within a theory of embodiment, this study turns to the phenomenology of Michel Henry and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. For Henry, the essence of subjectivity lies in auto-affection a pre-objective experience of life as affective, invisible, and immanent. He argues that the living body is not an object in the world, but the very site where life reveals itself as feeling. Labor, then, is not only external action but an interior affective vibration a self-revealing flow of effort, fatigue, rhythm, and meaning.

Merleau-Ponty complements this with his theory of the lived body (le corps vécu), emphasizing that the body is not a machine but an expressive, perceptive field of experience. Through movement, touch, and breath, the body constitutes the world as meaningful. In the context of Krasak, the miner's feet sensing the softness of wet sand, the weight of the shovel, or the temperature of the river these are all modes of knowing irreducible to measurement or discourse.

When combined with Henry's emphasis on affective interiority and Merleau-Ponty's concept of embodied perception, we gain a framework to interpret sand mining as a sacramental rhythm—an expressive mode in which the body communes with the earth and articulates a form of silent knowledge. This knowledge is not “about” the world but “in” the world; not spoken, but felt and lived.

METHOD

This study employs a reflective ethnographic approach grounded in embodied immersion, spiritual attention, and dialogical interpretation. The methodology is not limited to conventional participant observation, but extends to what can be called *kuliah batin*—an inner listening or meditative receptivity that treats both the researcher and the researched as co-dwellers in a cosmological field. The goal is to not merely observe sand mining labor at the

Krasak River, but to attune to its metaphysical resonance, bodily rhythm, and sacred enactments.

Ethnographic Orientation: Reflective and Participatory

The research was conducted between June 2 and September 2, 2024, along the banks of the Krasak River, a volcanic tributary that flows from Mount Merapi in Central Java, Indonesia. Data collection followed the principles of reflective ethnography, combining participant observation, deep listening, embodied witnessing, and meditative journaling. The researcher lived within proximity of the miners' working sites and engaged in daily interactions not merely as an observer, but as a dialogical presence sensitive to bodily gestures, silence, emotion, and sacred codes.

This immersive strategy was guided by the principle that knowledge emerges not only through rational reflection but through bodily presence. Attending to bodily repetitions, hesitations, and rhythms—as well as informal rituals and spontaneous utterances—was central to capturing the semiotic and cosmological dimensions of sand labor. Daily documentation included fieldnotes, voice memos, visual sketches, and subjective reflections written at dawn and dusk, when the river's voice was clearest.

The method follows not only the anthropological lineage of Geertzian thick description, but also integrates Kristeva's emphasis on affective rhythm, Lacanian reading of subjectivity, and phenomenological intuition rooted in Merleau-Ponty's body-as-subject.

Research Subjects: The Laboring Body and its Daily Gestures

The primary subjects of this study were 14 sand miners (12 men, 2 women) whose work took place between 04:00 and 12:00 each day, with occasional extensions during full moon cycles or post-eruption sediment flushes. These participants were selected through purposive and relational sampling, prioritizing long-term residents and those with known ritual or spiritual practices embedded in their labor.

Each participant was engaged through life-story conversations, narrative walking interviews, and ritual-centered observations. The aim was not to extract demographic data, but to allow bodily memory and spiritual knowledge to surface through rhythm and relationality. Their actions carrying sand, pausing to greet the river, chanting silently, or adjusting to invisible signs became narrative cues in the ethnography.

The body was treated as a text: a living archive of gesture, tension, fatigue, joy, and attunement. In this way, the sand miners became co-theorists, revealing an embodied cosmology not by theorizing abstractly, but by performing the sacred within mundane acts.

Analytical Framework: Psychoanalytic, Phenomenological, and Cosmological Synthesis

Data analysis followed an interpretive synthesis of three epistemological lenses: psychoanalytic theory, phenomenological embodiment, and Javanese cosmology. These were not applied sequentially, but overlapped organically in field reflections and analytical memos.

1. Psychoanalytic Lens (Lacan and Kristeva): Analysis focused on how miners' bodies navigated the Real (unpredictability of the river), the Symbolic (roles, names, economic codes), and the Imaginary (identities and fantasies). Kristeva's chora was used to read rhythms, pauses, bodily vibrations, and non-verbal relations as meaningful semiotic energies rather than as "noise" outside discourse.
2. Phenomenological Lens (Henry and Merleau-Ponty): Embodied sensation, gesture, breath, and resistance were read through Merleau-Ponty's lived-body framework, emphasizing corporeal intentionality and kinaesthetic perception. Meanwhile, Michel Henry's notion of auto-affection guided attention to interior affect, silence, and inner life particularly during moments of solitude or repetition in sand labor.
3. Cosmological Lens (Javanese Pengkon and Memayu Hayuning Bawana): Interpretive categories emerged from local codes such as pengkon (cyclical sacred timing), wanci (sacred temporal rhythms), and

pangruwating (ritual purification). These categories were not treated as folklore, but as ontological knowledge systems deeply shaping the ethics, timing, and modality of labor. Every lunar phase, cloud shift, and river murmur was considered part of the analytical field.

This triangulated interpretive model allowed the researcher to map not only what was done, but how labor was felt, inhabited, and cosmically situated. Data coding was therefore less concerned with categorizing frequency than with tracing symbolic density, affective resonance, and metaphysical continuity.

Reflexivity and Positionality

Throughout the research process, the ethnographer maintained a journal of reflexive introspections, recording not only observations but also internal responses dreams, fatigue, aesthetic perception, and spiritual unrest. This *kuliah batin* was not ancillary, but central to the method: it acknowledged that the self is also a body in the field, subject to *chora*, desire, symbolic expectation, and local cosmology. Ethical protocols were upheld through ongoing consent, dialogical transparency, and the respectful co-creation of narratives. Identities of participants were protected through pseudonyms, unless otherwise requested for genealogical honor.

Field Findings: Sacred Gestures and the Embodied Chora of the River

The Prayer in the Shovel: Work as Daily Liturgy

In the cool fog that veils the slopes of Mount Merapi every morning, the clang of shovels striking wet sand from Kali Krasak becomes more than a sound of labor. It is an embodied rhythm. For many sand miners (*penggali pasir*), the act of digging is not mechanical, but an extension of inner discipline. One miner, Pak Wiro, explained:

“Saben nyekop kuwi kudu nganggo rasa. Yen ora nganggo ati, pasir bisa mbebayani. Iki kaya ndonga saben dina. (Every scoop must be done with feeling. Without the heart, sand can be dangerous. It’s like praying every day.)

This subtle practice transforms a mundane task into a sacred rhythm. The repetition of movements echoes what Julia Kristeva (1984) identifies as the *chora* a pre-symbolic, rhythmic space that precedes language. The body, in its cyclical gestures, re-enacts a pre-linguistic devotion, where spirituality is sedimented in the act itself. In Lacanian terms, the labor is not situated fully in the Symbolic (language, economy), but resonates with the Real: the unspeakable forces of nature, death, and ancestral memory.

Sand as “Child of the River”: Not Object but Spirit

One of the central motifs repeatedly invoked by the miners is the belief that sand is not a mere object, but the *anak kali* the child of the river. This metaphoric framing is not merely poetic; it anchors the miners’ ethical boundaries. When asked why they avoid mining during high rainfall or certain *weton* (Javanese calendar days), Pak Mardi said:

“Pasir iku urip. Yen awake dewe serakah, Kali bisa murka. Sand is alive. If we get greedy, the river will be angry.” This belief expresses the cosmic dimension of production. The Javanese cosmology of *memayu hayuning bawana* (to maintain the harmony of the world) guides how much, when, and where the miners dig. Unlike modern extractivism driven by accumulation, their practice is bounded by a moral cosmology.

In this sense, the river itself becomes a *chora* a maternal matrix that holds, births, and regulates. Just as Kristeva’s *chora* is a space of pulsation prior to structure, the river embodies a sacred irrationality, ungovernable by capitalist logics. This tension echoes Lacan’s Real: the river’s unpredictability, fertility, and danger exist beyond full symbolization, evoking awe and submission.

Embodied Cosmology: Labor as Sacred Reproduction

The ethnographic diary reveals that each gesture scooping, carrying, piling is interlaced with subtle bodily awareness. Some miners rub river water on their face before entering, while others whisper assalamualaikum to the river. The actions reflect not a formal religion, but a cosmological spirituality rooted in bodily attunement.

Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) helps articulate this further: the body is not a vessel but the lived medium of meaning. In Krasak, labor is not a separation from the sacred but its very realization. The skin, breath, and muscles of the miners become conduits for reproducing the harmony between human, river, and universe.

This embodied cosmology aligns with Michel Henry's (1990) concept of auto-affection that true experience arises from within, through a self-feeling life. The miners' spiritual intimacy with the river is not taught; it is felt, not externalized in doctrine, but internalized in practice.

Interview Fragment: "Kanggo Mangan, Ya, Tapi Ya Kanggo Slamet"

During a dusk interview under a warung bamboo shelter, Pak Juwanto summarized the paradox of his labor:

"Kerjo iki kanggo mangan, ya, tapi ya kanggo slamet. Ora mung golek duit, nanging golek slamet lan tentrem." (This work is for eating, yes, but also for safety. Not just earning money, but seeking protection and peace.)

This statement captures the dual economy one of survival, and one of metaphysical preservation. While income is necessary, it is not the final cause. The final cause, to use Aristotelian terminology, is slamet a state of existential safety, balance, and continuity with nature and ancestors.

In this light, labor is not merely an economic activity but a ritual of sacred reproduction. Each day's work is a reenactment of cosmic order, echoing the four Javanese elements: banyu (water), lemah (earth), angin (wind), and geni (fire), which are always balanced through care in action.

Synthesis. The field data suggests that the sand laborers of Kali Krasak perform an ontological mode of work that contradicts neoliberal extractivism. Their praxis resists total symbolization and aligns with Kristeva's chora, Lacan's Real, and Javanese cosmology. Through this synthesis, work becomes a form of sacred reproduction not of capital, but of cosmological order.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The body that digs sand at the banks of the Krasak River is not simply a laboring mechanism but a living chora a pulsating site of rhythm, affect, and sacred repetition. This analysis proposes that the embodied practices of sand miners are not only economic activities but also spiritual acts of cosmological alignment, interpreted through Lacanian psychoanalysis, Kristeva's semiotic theory, and Javanese pengkon knowledge.

The Body as Chora: Rhythm, Affect, and Sacred Repetition

Kristeva's chora refers to the pre-symbolic space of affective rhythm a maternal, pre-linguistic zone that undergirds subjectivity before the Law of the Father. In the context of the Krasak miners, their bodily movements repetitive scooping, rhythmic coordination with the current, breathing in tune with the flow constitute a bodily chora. The shovel is not merely a tool, but a conduit of rhythm. Through this repetition, the miners do not merely extract; they participate in a liturgy of labor. The chora thus becomes manifest as a tactile, somatic poetics of sacred survival.

In field observation, Pak W, a miner in his 50s, explained: "Sekop itu... kayak nadinya. Bukan alat, tapi cara badan ini menyatu dengan kali." ("This shovel... is like a pulse. Not a tool, but how this body unites with the river.")

This phenomenological resonance parallels Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment as intentionality: the body is not in the world it is the world, folded into temporal and spatial rhythms of lived meaning.

The River as Lacan's Real: Unrepresentable, Yet Determinative

While chora maps the pre-symbolic realm of maternal embodiment, the Krasak River simultaneously occupies the Lacanian Real that which resists symbolization but fundamentally determines subject formation. The river is unstable, flowing, and unmasterable. To the miners, it is not merely "nature" but a sovereign entity with moods and powers. In Lacan's triad Real, Symbolic, Imaginary the river bypasses Imaginary identification and Symbolic codification. It is present, but cannot be contained; it influences bodies, but refuses to be fully mapped. Interviews consistently referred to the river as "nduweni karepé dewe"; "having its own will."

This resistance to full comprehension aligns with the Lacanian Real: it haunts the symbolic, disturbs the imaginary, and insists upon the limit of human control. In their praxis, miners acknowledge this limit: they dig, but also pray. They measure the current with their feet and hearts, not with machines.

Pengkon Jawa as Epistemic Map of Body and Labor

In Javanese cosmology, pengkon refers to zones or fields within the body, each connected to cosmological, ethical, and energetic meanings. The concept of pengkon provides a local epistemic system that organizes experience, energy, and effort not as mechanical outputs but as situated flows of urip (life-force).

Among the sand miners, pengkon is not always explicitly named, but enacted: care of breath (napas), positioning of the chest, regulation of rasa (affect). These acts are not incidental; they form an epistemology of sacred labor. When Pak S said, "Kalau batin ini rusak, ndak bisa nyekop dengan slamet," ("If the soul is disturbed, one cannot shovel safely"), he articulated a pengkon-based awareness: the inner state determines the bodily practice.

Thus, labor is not merely exertion but attunement. The miner is not a laborer in Marxian terms, alienated from his product. Rather, he is a ritual actor in a cosmos where the body, river, and alam gaib (spirit world) are interwoven.

Reproduction as Sujining Urip: Beyond Capital

Classical Marxist theory defines reproduction as the means to maintain labor-power for capital accumulation. However, in this ethnographic site, reproduction is not organized around capital but around sujining urip the dignity, worthiness, and meaningfulness of life.

Sand mining at Krasak is "work," but not reducible to commodified labor. It is a negotiation with nature, ancestors, community, and divinity. The goal is not surplus value, but slamet (safety-blessing): a state of being sustained within the flow of cosmic order. This shifts the axis of analysis: From productivity to resonance, From utility to rituality, From surplus to subsistence-with-dignity. In short, the miners do not see themselves as trapped in precarity, but as participants in a sacred ecology of effort and reward. As one elder summarized: "Golek pasir itu nggoleki awaké dhewe." ("Digging sand is searching for one's own self.")

Tabel 5.1. Summary of Conceptual Contributions

Conceptual Axis	Theoretical Frame	Empirical Manifestation
Chora (Kristeva)	Pre-symbolic rhythm and affect	Repetitive bodily movement in shoveling
The Real (Lacan)	Unrepresentable determinacy	The river's mood and flow as shaping labor practice
Pengkon (Javanese)	Body-cosmos-energy correspondence	Breath, balance, and inner calm during work
Reproduction (Javanese)	Sujining urip, beyond capital	Labor oriented to slamet, not profit

CONCLUSION

This ethnographic study of sand laborers in the Krasak River, Central Java, has revealed a spiritual cosmology embedded within what is often reduced to extractive, economic activity. By synthesizing Lacan's triadic structure of the psyche (Real, Symbolic, Imaginary), Kristeva's notion of chora, and the Javanese cosmological schema of pengkon, this article proposes a new framework: Embodied Sacred Reproduction. This theory resists capitalist reduction of labor to surplus production and instead frames labor as a rhythmic, embodied ritual that sustains the harmony between humans and the cosmos (*memayu hayuning bawana*). The figure of the sand miner his body bent, his breath paced with the river's current, his tools sanctified with prayer exemplifies a practice where economic survival is not divorced from metaphysical ethics. Their repeated gestures are not merely productive but reproductive in the sacred sense: they regenerate the bonds between earth, body, and spirit. The river, in Lacanian terms, functions as the Real beyond symbolization yet structuring all activity—while chora manifests as the corporeal rhythm of daily practice, a sacred pulse through which meaning emerges before language.

This study holds several implications. First, it challenges the paradigm of modern extractivism by offering an alternative economic imaginary grounded in spiritual ecology. Second, it invites philosophers of labor to reframe production not as alienation, but as *sujining urip*—a lived continuity with cosmic order. Finally, it contributes to global theory by elevating pengkon, chora, and Javanese bodily wisdom as epistemic tools, not ethnographic curiosities. These conceptual instruments enable a shift from universalist Western frameworks toward plural, localized cosmologies that remain critically potent. Thus, Embodied Sacred Reproduction may inform future inquiries in eco-spiritual labor, post-capitalist economies, and decolonial knowledge. In the rhythms of sand work by the river, we rediscover philosophy not only in text, but in sweat, breath, and earth.

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