

Classical Javanese Manuscripts as Identity Memory that Speaks Cultural Diaspora

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Abstract

This research explores classical Javanese manuscripts in correlation with diaspora identity memories. Java, which is now part of Indonesia, during the nineteenth century was a place of meeting and hope for various ethnic groups. These events are recorded in cultural memory in classical Javanese texts and formed in Javanese cultural narratives. This research is a qualitative research approach postcolonial. The hermeneutic method analyses cultural phenomena that develop in Javanese society. Data in Javanese chronicle and *piwulang* manuscripts combined with Javanese cultural traditions rooted in society. Critical analysis is carried out to identify the Javanese concept in the track record of noble culture. The research results show that Javanese culture is presented in the symbols, values, and rituals contained in the chronicle and piwulang texts as markers and evidence of the existence of diaspora contact in Java, which formed a new culture. Javanese identity was formed through the patronage of the king's power. Javanese texts record events from birth, life cycle and death, becoming a container for unifying various crystallized cultural elements. Acculturation, syncretism, and maintaining the cultural identity of each ethnic diaspora in the expression of various cultural events. The cultural identity that

crystallizes in the complexity of values, traditions and cultural characteristics is embedded in the hearts of the Javanese people. The pinnacle of Javanese identity is a philosophy of life that emphasizes the values of politeness, balance and harmony in social relations, which are crystallized in the concept of 'rasa' or the feeling of being a shared identity between natives and the diaspora in Java.

1. Introduction

The birth of classical Javanese manuscripts in developing written culture in Java has become a marker of cultural identity in Surakarta. The text contains various information about important events that occurred. Historical events, life institutions, cultural developments, trade, the process of introducing religious teachings, and the hegemony

of kings and colonial powers are informed through texts in various forms of presentation (Day, 1978; Seng, 2017; Widodo et al., 2022). As a source of information about the past, Javanese texts also provide data on the cultural diaspora that entered and formed a new culture as Javanese identities and patrons (Bhanye, 2023; He & Zhang, 2023).

Diasporas from various parts of the region unite within the cultural framework of Java's interior (Best et al., 2023; Indriani & Mulyana, 2021). Many people come in because the island of Java is fertile and, at the same time, produces commodities that are needed by nations in mainland Europe. Records of classical Javanese texts show that the presence of other nations in Java influenced the formation of Javanese culture (Sarsito, 2006; Sutarto, 2006). In the nineteenth century, this cultural diaspora meeting crystallised into Javanese cultural identity in Surakarta, symbolised by the term *adiluhung* (Mumfangati, 2017; Subandi, 2015).

Apart from culture, the religious diaspora through the north coast is expanding into the interior of Java (Khan, 2023; To & Chan, 2023). Surakarta is one of the bases for various elements of belief that are present and intertwined with existing beliefs (Muttaqin et al., 2016; Sharmila & M.A, 2023). Religion that entered Java in its development formed new cultural customs and spiritual traditions in society (Khan, 2023; To & Chan, 2023).

Java is a place for the spread and maintenance of cultural identity by various ethnic groups. In the nineteenth century, the diaspora in Java occurred due to soil fertility factors (Crangle et al., 2023; Lefort, 2023; Sholeh & Lotfi, 2023). Java was able to produce various unique commodities that were nations' needs worldwide. Encounters with various ethnic groups and ethnicities in cross-cultural and trade indirectly create a cultural identity of origin, which includes the intersection of language, customs, traditions, religion, and art maintained by each ethnic group (Doornbos et al., 2023; Geary & Ober, 2023; Sobande, 2023). Interaction and acculturation form new cultures from the contact between one culture and other cultures that come (Ferraro, 2023; Guns, 2023; Varma & Siromahov, 2023). The maintenance of traditions and the creation of new cultures complement each other in the space of cultural syncretism from local and original images. Diaspora identity in Java (Hach, 2023; McCarthy & Skoruppa, 2023; Ridley-Merriweather et al., 2023). The local community accommodates cultural syncretism in Java as the noble culture (Benton, 2023; Meel, 2017; Pattnaik & Panda, 2023; Y. Zhu, 2023). Javanese *Adiluhung* is the result of cultural exchange and contact and the integration of a diversity of local and new cultural riches so as not to cause conflict (Day, 1978; Wieringa, 1999). In Surakarta in the nineteenth century, cultural elements were absorbed into a new, more magnificent, beautiful culture (McCallum et al., 2020; Redondo-Olmedilla, 2023; Wieringa, 1999).

Research on classical Javanese manuscripts as a corpus has already been carried out from the literature review by researchers. Specifically related to culture, research on Javanese texts within the scope of the religious diaspora using an interdisciplinary approach was carried out by (Sudiby, 2007), discussing the essence of local culture as well as creating new texts to lay the foundations of Christian religion and Western civilisation through Javanese texts. The dialectics of culture, religion, and colonialism are interrelated and provide space for development. Lutfhi (2016) argues that Indonesian Islamic texts are closely related to culture. The locality is used by the *ulama*, who come to the archipelago to introduce Islamic teachings. From this process, religious and cultural syncretism was born in society. The second corpus is the Javanese text. Both

dissect Javanese texts to understand the diaspora process and the development of Islam and Christianity in Java, which is central to government. As stated (Steenbrink, 2014), cultural symbols created by the arrival of Islam and Christianity changed pluralism and the image of religiosity because both religions were exclusive truths (Aritonang, 2000; Ghannam & Gorey, 2023). During the colonial period, there was a kind of mutual understanding between the VOC (Dutch East-India Company) and its rulers.

Surakarta is a cultural centre as well as a diaspora of various ethnicities who settle and form a new institutionalised culture. As described (Aritonang, 2000). In line with this opinion, Hall (1990) stated that cultural identity and diaspora form a shared culture, a collective identity shared by people with a common history and ancestry. Cultural identity reflects shared experiences and cultural codes as a frame of reference and meaning that changes dynamically and continuously. In a broader scope (Melani, 2017) found that globalisation between countries in Asia creates a new culture by meeting various ethnic groups among the lower class, creating a flow of capital and employment opportunities in their new place of residence. Hall (1990) and Melani (2017) discuss the creation of a new identity from the meeting of many ethnic groups where they settled. Even though they have different cultures and identities, a meeting between ethnic groups will produce a new culture where they live.

The Colonial Period (Li, 2019) describes the role of the colonial government in playing an important role in ethnicity in Indonesia. The main goal is to engineer the group to be bonded and organised. The commodification of customs (colonial intervention) effectively controlled one ethnic group against another (Pangestu et al., 2021). If we look at history in the nineteenth century, Javanese culture was also created in Surakarta, manifested from the intersection of various ethnicities that settled and developed in the region.

Research on texts related to the cultural diaspora, which is one of the shapers of Javanese culture, has never been carried out. The ethnic diaspora in Java was part of the world cultural diaspora in the Middle Ages (Elmhirst, 2000; He & Zhang, 2023). In other parts of the continent, there is also the phenomenon of cultural diaspora with its local characteristics (Bonjeer & Vonkova, 2023; Susewind, 2020). In the colonial period recorded in classical Javanese texts, the Dutch not only played a role in ethnic groupings but also played a role in the centre of the Surakarta government, which became one of the patrons of Javanese culture (Putra et al., 2023; Tousignant, 2022). Colonials played an important role in ethnicity and grouping in the circulation of Javanese power (Elmhirst, 2000). This division of roles makes it easier for the Netherlands to detect if there is resistance to its power (Mukaffa, 2018; Ricklefs, 2013). This research is important to uncover the cultural diaspora recorded in the text as narrated by (Bhanye, 2023; Igboin, 2023). Therefore, this research aims to understand cultural ideology and how new cultures are created from the contact between ethnic immigrants and indigenous communities.

2. Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The research objects are classical Javanese cultural documents and texts. Primary data is in the form of texts, and secondary data is in the form of cultural products, which are still adhered to by Javanese people today. References from related articles reinforce the discussion presentation. Supporting documents taken from *Babad Tanah Jawi*, one of the classic Javanese

manuscript masterpieces of its time using the note-taking technique as stated by (Juwariyah et al., 2023; Peradantha et al., 2023). Data was analyzed using data triangulation by exploring the truth of information through various methods and data acquisition sources, as described by Hennenberg (2023).

3. Result and Discussion

Java as an identity was formed by the patron of the king's power through various things (Ras, J.J., 1987; Wójcik, 2022). Through texts, culture and power are perpetuated by the traditions that become Javanese teachings (Parashar & Schulz, 2021; Wójcik, 2022). Meanwhile, what is the value and content presented from exploring culture and values are combined into identity (Bea et al., 2023; Redondo-Olmedilla, 2023). The teachings expressed through classical Javanese literary texts became cultural and a reference for behaviour in their time. Until now, some Javanese people have used it as a reference for life behaviour. Customs and manners in life behaviour are based on what was passed down by ancestors through texts and daily life behaviour (Elika & Nurhayati, 2022; Labaronne & Tröndle, 2021; Nofrima et al., 2021).

Javanese identity is formed and crystallized through various lines of intersection and cultural syncretism. Regarding behaviour, it is adopted from religious teachings integrated with local culture (Kuehn, 2023; Ricci, 2009). The manifestation of the unification of religion and culture is in the form of various religious rituals and cultural processions routinely carried out by the community (Kuehn, 2023). Syncretism occurs in a very subtle frame, and it is almost imperceptible that what is being done is teaching wrapped in Javanese identity packaging (Drewes, 1966; Ricci, 2009). The cyclical procession of birth, life cycle, and death becomes a realm that becomes a forum for cultural unification. The Javanese created a special ritual for this cycle that was culturally agreed upon (Dickson, 2022; Lemmer, 2021). The cultural frame was created to accommodate all elements of culture and religiosity as Javanese identity (Sharma & Reimer-Kirkham, 2023). The correlation with the diaspora is that the dynamics of contact between local community groups indirectly identify potential cultural areas, develop strategies to minimize gaps and strengthen integration and understanding of newly created Javanese culture.

Culture is a means for local and ethnic communities to influence and defend each other. Social values and norms are then created culturally by the presence of new ethnic groups in society. The balance of traditional values held by each ethnic group requires a line of unification to become a new identity that all groups can accept without reducing what belongs to each ethnic group. Even though this method is difficult to implement, there is a willingness to complement each other between the original and local cultures recorded in classical Javanese texts, namely the *babad* and *piwulang*. *Babad* takes the tradition of worshipping ancestors to be accepted by all groups, while *piwulang* takes the Javanese speech tradition, which all levels of society and various existing groups can understand.

On the other hand, the diaspora in Surakarta is also given space to maintain and celebrate their cultural identity of origin without losing critical aspects of their cultural heritage. Since the nineteenth century, through community networks, each ethnic group has had space to show their original identity beautifully in certain cultural celebrations held in society. Diaspora groups create connections to feel connected that their group supports. Javanese texts record events of acculturation, syncretism, and maintaining the

identity of each ethnic origin in the expression of various cultural events and important events immortalized in Javanese texts.

Records in the Javanese chronicle and *piwulang* manuscripts show that cultural identity is always dynamic and can change in response to social, economic and political changes. Individuals or ethnic groups can create complex cultural identities and simultaneously participate in multiple cultural identities. Cultural identity is often a complex and rich aspect of human life that influences how individuals or groups interact with the world around them.

3.1 Inter-Ethnic Syncretism

The crystallization of Javanese culture cannot be separated from the ethnic identity of its constituents (Sharma & Reimer-Kirkham, 2023). In Surakarta, prominent ethnic groups are identified, including natives, as the legal owners of Javanese culture. Ethnic Chinese who exclusively belong to the class group as traders coloured the development of Javanese culture and traditions (Sárközi, 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Ethnic Arabs and their descendants spread Islam and trade (Khan, 2023; Sharmila & M.A, 2023). Local cultural elements are used as a means of supporting institutional identity. As a colonizing nation, namely the Netherlands, Europe placed its power with cultural idioms and symbols as a patron of power (Day, 1978; Sharma & Reimer-Kirkham, 2023). The Dutch position themselves higher than natives and ethnic groups from the foreign east (Melani, 2017; Stella, 2020).

A new cultural syncretism known as Javanese identity. Culture in religious rituals in the Javanese life cycle is formed by religious and cultural syncretism (Della Spina, 2023; Drewes, 1966; Zuhri, 2022). Cultural identity is formed from several religions and cultural symbols based on existing Javanese icons and is recognized as true by society (Brakel-papenhuyzen, 2006; Matthews, 2023; Watson, 2018). This syncretism draws from the procession from when the saints began to spread Islam until the Surakarta era. The cultural symbols created belong together, not a particular religion. Javanese tradition is a binding force to be followed because of its sacredness and inherent dogma (Mukaffa, 2018; Pangestu et al., 2021).

The ethnic Chinese diaspora in the cultural realm is a nation of traders who provide tools that complement the presence of cultural rituals in the Javanese life cycle (Khan, 2023; Seng, 2017; J. Zhu & Chen, 2023). They provide equipment the Javanese people need both in and outside the palace (Edwin, 2008; Yayusman et al., 2023). The sacredness of cultural ceremonies is created for certain processions, creating the belief that there is a necessity for processions in the cultural rituals being held (Fine, 2013; Hall, 2021). The providers of ritual equipment, from simple incense and incense to clothing worn, are controlled by ethnic Chinese (Rofil et al., 2016). Needs that are sacred to profane which complements the traditional Javanese cultural procession.

In contrast to labour migration in modern countries, ethnic Chinese in Java in their migration to Java simultaneously settled and controlled trade in the population centre. Apart from trading, they married local women to strengthen their position in their new residence (Khan, 2023). This also serves to strengthen trade networks and, at the same time, build new relationships (Y. Zhu, 2023).

As a colonial nation in the colony, the Dutch positioned themselves higher than the three existing ethnic groups. Cultural and identity symbols were created to legitimize their power (Büster, 2021; Fine, 2013). Apart from that, the Dutch power relations created

puppet rulers in all lines of government, which were used to suppress and perpetuate their power (Carey, 2007). In government, he placed the *patih* or *punggawa* as an extension of the government. This crystallized in the behaviour of the retainers, who were always respectful and sycophantic towards the colonialists and cruel towards the people. The perpetuation of patriarchy became increasingly sharp because the colonies gripped local rulers who also became extensions of power.

3.2 Javanese Cultural Identity

The cultural identity built by Javanese rulers has two different sides. Culturally, the rulers created various cultural identities in Javanese rituals or icons (Fine, 2013; Juárez Rodríguez, 2023). King of Java from the people's side or functions as a patron. The king shows his power to the people with various forms of cultural symbols that are perpetuated. The syncretism of indigenous culture and Western colonial influences gave birth to a patriarchal culture strongly rooted in society (Rashidian et al., 2013)(Indriani & Mulyana, 2021). The king was incarnated as a representative of God and simultaneously created detailed and complicated rules at every level of social class in society (Carvalho & Lourenço, 2023; Susewind, 2020). The formation of castes in Javanese society was inseparable from the syncretism of indigenous culture, which met with the colonial rulers, namely the Dutch. The existing social strata spaces were refined in shape and presentation so that the Javanese people increasingly idolised and competed to achieve them culturally.

The process of becoming sacred in Javanese culture is formed from various existing cultures that merge into Javanese identity. Their cultural identity of origin becomes a subculture visible within their scope and community. Syncretism and acculturation combine to form a unique Javanese identity not shared by the culture of origin they brought to Java (Sharmila & M.A, 2023; Wagar & Cohen, 2003). This opinion aligns with Watson (2010), who argues that cultural heritage produced in time is used as a narrative of identity, politics and power. The court breed was customised to create distance between the people and the rulers. The process of perpetuating it is immortalised by position. The narrative presented in the text is a form of hegemony through cultural sacredness (Dar & Masood, 2023; Gunner, 2005).

At its peak, Javanese cultural identity crystallised in the complexity of values, traditions and cultural characteristics inherent in the identity of Javanese society (Ghadimi, 2023; Pangestu et al., 2021). Awareness of cultural values and philosophy of life is formed from developing cultural identity. Animism, Hindu-Buddhism, Islam and Christianity are a diversity of beliefs that merge into the syncretism presented in Javanese cultural traditions. Javanese culture places symbols as iconic markers of tradition and cultural identity. Ceremonies and rituals are carried out to maintain traditions in spirituality in order to strengthen social relations in Javanese society. Javanese identity is the highest Javanese philosophy of life, which emphasises the values of politeness, balance and harmony in social relations, which are crystallised in the concept of 'rasa' or feeling.

4. Conclusion

Javanese identity is formed and crystallised through various lines of intersection and cultural syncretism. The crystallisation of local culture and the culture that came to form a new culture that was culturally institutionalised within the framework of Javanese

power centred in the Javanese palace. Syncretism occurs because of the intersection between beliefs that form a new culture in life practices and institutions that are adhered to and followed by Javanese society. This research contributed to the discovery of the formation pattern of a new culture in inland Java, Surakarta, in the nineteenth century, which later became a noble cultural identity in Java. Javanese justice, which is now believed, revered and sacred, was formed from various cultural elements that have existed for centuries. Javanese culture, which experienced friction from various cultural and religious elements, found a new form that was both sacred in belief and profane in food. The pinnacle of Javanese identity is a philosophy of life that emphasises the values of decency, balance, and harmony in social relationships crystallised in the concept of 'feeling' or feeling.

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