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mataram acculturation philosophy as religion tolerance building doctrine

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Abstract

This study explores the Mataram Kingdom's acculturation philosophy and its role in promoting religious tolerance through the lens of social harmony, moral teachings, and leadership. The research highlights how the moral doctrines of the Mataram kings influenced Javanese society, fostering a culture of peace and collective well-being. The study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing historical texts and literature to examine the cultural and religious values embedded in Mataram's governance. Results indicate that the Mataram rulers' emphasis on social cohesion and moral education created a harmonious society where people and leaders collaborated towards the welfare of the nation. Additionally, the research finds that the Mataram Kingdom's cultural practices and philosophical teachings continue to hold relevance in shaping the values of contemporary society, particularly in the promotion of religious tolerance. The study concludes that the Mataram Kingdom's acculturation philosophy remains an enduring model for fostering peace and social harmony, offering valuable lessons for modern governance and cultural integration.

1. Introduction

The concept of nation-building was deeply embedded in the governance of the Mataram Kingdom, as taught by its rulers. One of the kingdom's most notable legacies is its promotion of religious tolerance, which played a crucial role in fostering social harmony. The Mataram Kingdom was founded by Panembahan Senapati, following the rule of his father, Adipati Haryo Mataram, who governed from the central district of Kotagede—a significant area that functioned as the administrative and cultural heart of the kingdom. Literature and traditional teachings were key tools used to maintain harmony among the populace, with the rulers of Mataram consistently advocating for state-level tolerance.

The kingdom has remained under the leadership of Adipati Haryo Mataram's descendants, forming what is known today as the Mataram Dynasty. Upon the death of Panembahan Senapati in 1601, the throne passed to his son, Raden Mas Jolang, who ruled until 1613. He met his end

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while hunting in Krapyak, which earned him the title Panembahan Seda Krapyak. Sukendar and Usman (2019) discuss how traditional teachings can serve as valuable philosophical reflections, and this is evident in how Mataram rulers instilled religious tolerance within the Javanese community.

Danang Sutowijoyo, also known as Ngabehi Loring Pasar due to his residence north of the local market, played a crucial role in consolidating the Mataram Kingdom in Kotagede. After being crowned as Adipati, he succeeded his late father and was honored with the title Panembahan Senapati. According to Kusuma (2022), the study of history is vital for understanding and preserving local wisdom. Panembahan Senapati's rebellion against the Pajang Sultanate and his establishment of an independent Mataram rule were driven by a vision of nation-building that aimed to create a just and prosperous society for his people.

2. Material and Method

To explore religious tolerance in the Mataram Kingdom, this study adopts a descriptive and hermeneutic approach. The first ruler of Mataram, Panembahan Senapati, also known as Sayidin Panatagama, provided moral and political guidance that laid the foundation for effective governance. According to legend, his leadership was spiritually supported by Kanjeng Ratu Kidul, the queen of the southern sea. Under his reign, Mataram expanded its territory to areas now known as Sukoharjo, Klaten, and Sragen.

The hermeneutic method is particularly useful in interpreting the religious and cultural values embedded in Mataram's traditional doctrines. The Javanese community has historically paid close attention to the ethical teachings and behavioral doctrines of its rulers. Cultural theory also plays an important role in understanding how peace and religious tolerance were cultivated through Mataram's political and cultural institutions.

The cultural contributions of Mataram's rulers, especially Panembahan Senapati and his successors, were significant. Adipati Sutowijoyo's transition from the Pajang reign to founding the Mataram Kingdom marked a pivotal moment in Javanese history. As noted by Sucoro (2019), Javanese cultural expressions, including art and literature, reflect a strong commitment to social harmony. For instance, Panembahan Senapati refined the traditional *wayang* (shadow puppet) style through a technique known as *tatahan gempuran*.

During the reign of Sinuwun Seda Krapyak, Sultan Agung's father, two major Javanese texts were published: *Suluk Wujil* in 1607 and *Serat Nitisruti* in 1612. These texts, rich in mysticism and moral teachings, are essential for understanding the philosophical underpinnings of the Mataram era. As Wibowo (2019) explains, the hermeneutic method can reveal deep cultural meanings encoded in such texts. Panembahan Seda Krapyak also made important contributions by compiling the history of Demak and writing several *suluk* manuscripts, continuing the cultural traditions of both the Pajang and Demak Kingdoms. dwianitapalar@unsrat.ac.id

A key element of religious performance in the Demak tradition involved the integration of *wayang*, Islamic song recitations, and Javanese moral values. These elements became central pillars in the development of Javanese Islamic culture. The sustainability of this cultural model demonstrates how moral and spiritual foundations helped the culture adapt to changing times. Without these ethical anchors, culture can be easily eroded by modernization.

Sultan Agung further demonstrated cultural integration by harmonizing the Islamic *pesantren* calendar system with the traditional Javanese *Saka* calendar. According to Sutiyono (2023), this fusion reflects the value of Javanese cultural inclusivity. In 1633, Sultan Agung introduced a new calendar system that combined lunar calculations from the Hijri calendar with the solar cycle of the Saka calendar, beginning from 78 CE. This calendar became an important

reference for writing *serat babad* (historical chronicles), which contain moral and spiritual guidance. As Rubiyati (2019) observes, the teachings embedded in this cultural synthesis significantly contributed to fostering religious tolerance and social harmony.

3. Results and Discussion

The Discourse of Mataram's Tolerance Philosophy

The Mataram Kingdom's philosophy of tolerance was expressed through the teachings and writings of its royal pioneers. One of the most significant contributions to the Islamization of Javanese culture was the reform of the traditional calendar system. This change facilitated a smoother integration of Islamic traditions into the existing cultural framework, a process that had been ongoing since the establishment of the Islamic Javanese kingdom of Demak. Sultan Agung played a pivotal role in this cultural transition. He implemented legal reforms that aligned state laws more closely with Islamic jurisprudence and granted greater authority to religious scholars (*ulama*) in legal affairs.

Sultan Agung also assumed the title *Susuhunan*, a term traditionally reserved for saints (*wali*) of Allah in Javanese society. In 1641, he relinquished this title in favor of *Sultan*, after receiving formal recognition from religious authorities in Mecca. According to Budi Susanto (2022), this transition reflects a deliberate construction of narrative identity that blends political authority with spiritual legitimacy.

The alteration of the calendar system was also essential for the writing of *serat babad* (historical chronicles). Dani Riyana (2019) emphasizes the role of traditional teachings derived from classical literature in shaping cultural identity. Sultan Agung's support for Islamization extended to the education system and literary production, and he encouraged the involvement of *ulama* in the legal domain. Tristanti Wahyuni (2020) discusses how traditional values were preserved and transmitted through the medium of *wayang* (shadow puppetry), which carried ethical teachings and reflected Islamic influence.

Doctrine of Royal Virtue

Moral philosophy was a central concern of the Mataram kings. The dynasty not only upheld Sultan Agung's messages but also continued his legacy by producing kings who were both rulers and poets. Sultan Agung himself authored mystical and ethical works, such as *Serat Sastra Gendhing*, which addressed spiritual harmony and the integration of soul and body. His *Serat Nitipraja*, written in 1563 Javanese year (1641 CE), focused on the moral responsibilities of leadership.

During the reign of Sunan Amangkurat, the *Serat Sewaka* was published, containing the *sengkalan* (chronogram) *Jalma Paksa Wayang Buwana*. This work emphasized the ethics of civil service. The sacred *bedhaya* dance tradition, such as *Bedhaya Ketawang*, reflected royal morality and was typically performed during special ceremonies like royal weddings or coronations. Although this sacred dance was once restricted to palace grounds, it was later preserved and taught through institutions like the Krida Beksa Wirama dance school, established by court arts experts such as Suryodiningrat, Tejokusumo, Jayadipura, and Wiraguna. Hadi Supeno (2019) explains how such local traditions preserved moral philosophy.

The origins of the *bedhaya* dance remain unclear, but its spiritual and ceremonial significance is widely acknowledged. Simuh (2019) notes that palace teachings embedded spiritual mysticism in religious practice. Chronicles suggest that Sultan Pajang once entered the audience hall accompanied by *manggang*, *bedhaya*, and *srimpi* dancers. Under Sultan Agung's rule, the arts flourished. He is believed to have composed *Bedhaya Ketawang*, which remains a revered heirloom (*pusaka*) in the Surakarta court.

The legend behind *Bedhaya Ketawang* often centers on the mystical meeting between Sultan Agung and Ratu Kidul, the Queen of the Southern Sea. Some versions attribute this encounter to Panembahan Senapati, Sultan Agung's ancestor. Similar themes inspired other royal compositions, such as *Bedhaya Somang* in the late 18th century. These sacred dances are accompanied by elaborate offerings (*sajen*), reflecting their spiritual gravity. Although not all *bedhaya* dances are equally sacred, only compositions with profound historical or philosophical themes are treated with such reverence. Retnowati (2020) emphasizes that these cultural expressions foster awareness of religious and social tolerance.

The division of the Mataram Kingdom into Yogyakarta and Surakarta after the Giyanti Treaty was dramatized in *Bedhaya Sinom*, while the conquest of Madiun inspired *Bedhaya Bedhah Madiun*. The ascetic journey of Arjuna, seeking divine power for the *Baratayuda* war, was portrayed in *Bedhaya Arjuna Wiwaha*, also called *Bedhaya Gandrung Manis*. Similarly, *Bedhaya Dewa Ruci* told the story of Bima meeting the divine Dewa Ruci at the ocean's depths.

The *bedhaya* dance, often lasting over an hour, is structured into three parts: *kapang-kapang majeng* (introductory procession), the main performance (including a duet or *enjeran*), and *kapang-kapang mundur* (retreat). The opening is typically accompanied by a fast *sabrangan* melody, sometimes played with Western instruments. The central dance features slow, solemn *gamelan* music, such as *Gandrung Manis*, *Sinom*, and *Semang*, accompanied by *pesindhen* (female singers) in the distinct *gendhing bedhayan* style, suitable for its ceremonial context.

Nine dancers perform the *bedhaya*, dressed in coordinated costumes: batik *parang rusak* motifs with dark velvet vests, bridal-style makeup, and yellow *boreh* body paint. Their heads are adorned with diadems featuring white feathers, except in the most sacred dances (*Ketawang* and *Semang*), where they wear traditional royal bridal garments and a large *dodot*. Rubiyati (2019) explains that such aesthetic traditions serve to promote social harmony and continuity.

Despite the decline of physical sites like Taman Sari—the 18th-century water palace built by a Mataram pioneer—the legacy of the kingdom remains vibrant. Sutiyono (2023) notes the persistence of spiritual legends, such as the subterranean connection between Taman Sari and the Southern Sea, believed to be Ratu Kidul's realm. The legend of Ratu Kidul and her spiritual union with the Mataram king still holds cultural significance in Surakarta and Yogyakarta palaces. Putro and Rohmadi (2021) describe how local wisdom, immortalized in the sacred *bedhaya* performances during royal anniversaries or weddings, continues to embody the kingdom's philosophical and religious tolerance.

Mystic Culture Legitimation

The kings of Mataram demonstrated significant appreciation for local wisdom, particularly traditional teachings that emphasized moral and spiritual values. Sugiono (2022) emphasized that tolerance is a central component of traditional culture, which was honored and preserved by the royal courts. The people coexisted peacefully, up until the arrival of the revered Sunan Kalijaga, who advised the Sultan that his bride was no ordinary woman. Her eternal beauty resembled the moon—radiant and full in her youth, yet gradually fading with age. This encounter reflected a mystical narrative central to Javanese royal mythology.

Sumaryanto (2019) described how leadership in the Mataram kingdom was rooted in local wisdom. When Ratu Kidul met the young Sultan during a full moon, she captivated his heart. Damar Shashangka (2019) argued that this story embodies cultural teachings of social harmony, deeply relevant to the sociocultural conditions of the time. Sunan Kalijaga reminded the Sultan of his duty toward his people and the kingdom, which he had begun to neglect. Responding to this

counsel, Sultan Agung left Ratu Kidul, with an implicit understanding that she would always protect him and his descendants whenever the Mataram Kingdom faced danger.

This legend is immortalized in the Bedhaya Semang, a court dance created at the end of the eighteenth century. Performed by nine virgins dressed in ornate royal bridal attire, this sacred dance embodies the spiritual and political unity between the Sultan and Ratu Kidul. Solichin (2021) emphasized that such traditional narratives connect Javanese cultural values with religious beliefs. The use of this legend in court performances implies its recognition within the official chronicles of the *Babad Kraton Mataram*. A similar dance, the Bedhaya Ketawang, held in the Kraton Surakarta, is considered even older and is attributed to Sultan Agung himself.

Johan Efendi Pohan (2019) noted that Javanese teachings conveyed moral tolerance through such legends. The Bedhaya Ketawang is still performed in the Kraton Surakarta Hadiningrat during official ceremonies. Tristati Wahyuni (2020) highlighted that art in the Javanese tradition serves as moral guidance. Unlike ordinary *bedhaya* dances, the Ketawang is accompanied by a minimal gamelan ensemble—consisting only of rhythmic instruments such as the *kendang*, *keluk*, *kenong*, *kemanak*, and *gong*—and the haunting vocals of a female *pesinden* choir.

The dancers wear traditional royal bridal costumes, including *dodot Bangun Tulak Alas Alasan*, a large *kain* with symbolic patterns of animals, mountains, and the sea. Sumantri (2022) pointed out that such performances reflect Javanese wisdom promoting tolerance within society. The dance's movements, which portray the sea and its waves, underscore its oceanic theme and mythological significance.

Various interpretations of this legend exist. Western scholars like van Lelyveld (in *De Javanese Danskunst*) and Jaap Kunst (in *Music in Java*) agree that Ratu Kidul's mystical encounter was with Sultan Agung, based on information from the royal courts. However, more recent sources from the Kraton Surakarta assert that the Bedhaya Ketawang actually depicts her meeting with Panembahan Senapati, Sultan Agung's ancestor and founder of the Mataram dynasty. This divergence is not considered contradictory, as Javanese legend connects Ratu Kidul with all rulers of Mataram, the kings of Java, and the Sunans of Surakarta. This relationship is ritually reaffirmed during the Labuhan ceremony, where royal offerings are cast into the southern sea—most recently held on the king's birthday.

There is also a distinction between Ratu Kidul and Nyai Roro Kidul, names often thought to refer to the same figure. According to Javanese court traditions, however, Ratu Kidul is a queen and former Javanese princess, while Nyai Roro Kidul is believed to be her *patih* (prime minister), once a celestial nymph named Nawangwulan. After recovering her stolen nymph garments from Jaka Tarub, Nawangwulan was rejected from the celestial realm and taken in by Ratu Kidul, who appointed her as a loyal advisor. Interestingly, Jaka Tarub and Nawangwulan are also considered ancestors of the Mataram Sultans.

During the Mataram era, a key cultural figure was Pangeran Panjangmas, a renowned artist, literary scholar, and secretary (*carik*) under King Panembahan Krapyak (1601–1613). The king commissioned him to write the *Babad Demak*. Sumiarti (2019) emphasized that tolerance should be upheld in every nation. Pangeran Panjangmas' descendants became well-known *dalang* (puppeteers) throughout Central Java, in regions such as Wedi, Gantiwarno, Prambanan, Wonogiri, Ceper, Delanggu, and Pedan. Even today, puppeteers feel honored to be descended from Pangeran Panjangmas, reflecting the enduring prestige of his cultural legacy.

4. Conclusion

The acculturation philosophy of the Mataram Kingdom embodies ethical principles that serve as a doctrine for religious tolerance. The kings of Mataram imparted moral teachings that resonated deeply with the Javanese people, reflecting the values of the nation. These teachings, particularly the emphasis on social harmony, were integral to the kingdom's efforts to promote a prosperous and peaceful society.

The leaders of Mataram played a pivotal role in fostering social harmony, guiding the people toward a life of fulfillment and contentment. The kingdom's governance was grounded in traditional regulations, and the leaders exemplified these values through their daily actions. The Mataram Kingdom's teachings on theology, humanity, and nationalism were essential in creating a welfare state, with both rural and urban areas developing in harmony. The people and government of Mataram worked together toward the goal of nation-building.

It is crucial for the younger generation to study the history and culture of Mataram, as the kingdom's classic literature provides valuable insights into principles of good governance and integrity. The Mataram Kingdom's legacy of religious tolerance continues to serve as a model for promoting peace, not only within Java but also in the broader context of Javanese history and culture.

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