



Serat *Wicara Keras* and The Hegemony of Javanese *Priyayi*

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Abstract. This study attempts to explain how Javanese ideology and culture, as articulated by the poet R. Ng. Yasadipura II in *Serat Wicara Keras*, marked the beginning of the hegemony of the Javanese aristocratic group over the *Kawula* group. Hegemonic analysis, interpretation, and text analysis are all used in this study. Structural analysis approaches are included in the text analysis method. Interpretation based on the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce. Antonio Gramsci's theory informs hegemony analysis. This study discovered that under Sunan Paku Buwana IV's rule, the Javanese people (group *kawula*) suffered numerous moral and social failures. Some of the disadvantages include the loss of supernatural abilities in a large number of individuals, offspring of priests who no longer fast, and children of poets who are illiterate. Faced with this, Poet R. Ng. Yasadipura II in the *Serat Wicara Keras* teaches people to imitate the ancestral *priyayi*. The teachings of the *Serat Wicara Keras* became the beginning of the domination of the *priyayi* group over the *kawula* group in Javanese society. *Priyayi* hegemony occurs over the subject through the concept of a *budaya adi luhung*, only the culture of the *priyayi* group is considered valuable, the culture of the subordinate (*kawula*) group is not valuable.

Keywords: Serat Wicara Keras, hegemony, *priyayi*

1 Introduction

The author of *Serat Wicara Keras* is Pujangga Raden Ngabehi (R. Ng.) Yasadipura II, a Javanese writer. The poem *Serat Wicara Keras* is written in the style of *tembang macapat*, a classic type of Javanese poetry. *Serat Wicara Keras* has eight pupuh in total: Sinom has 26 stanzas, Dandanggula has 27, Gambuh has 25, Kinanthi has 23, Megatruh has 29, Sinom has 30, Pangkur has 22, and Dandanggula has 42 stanzas. Hard Speech Fiber is composed of 224 stanzas, 1,756 lines, and 14,809 syllables.

Serat Wicara Keras is a masterpiece because of its contentious themes as well as the quantity of stanzas. Many literary critics claim that Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura's *Serat Wicara Keras*, which was written during the reign of the fourth King Paku Buwana, is a critique of the power structure of the day (Bambang Khusen Al Marie, 2018; Ahmad, 2014; Sunaryo, 2018). This viewpoint is undoubtedly fascinating to observe, and it might even require a reassessment.

Within the Surakarta palace is the great poet R. Ng. Yasadipura II. Wasista is the surname of R. Ng. Yasadipura II, who was born perhaps in 1687 AJ or 1760 M. During Pakubuwana IV, V, VI, and VII's reign, R. Ng. Yasadipura II was one of the poets of the Surakarta Hadiningrat palace. Kiai Yasadipura I and R. Ng. Yasadipura II were both well-known poets in the Surakarta palace. Yasadipura II is descended from Sultan Adiwijaya (Jaka Tingkir), according to his family tree. For this reason, Yasadipura II is also frequently called Pajang Wasista. Yasadipura II's career started as Kiai Ranggawarsita I, a minor *priyayi* who rose to the rank of *panewu*. He is a very obedient servant who follows his superiors' instructions. Yasadipura II studied *kasepuhan* and his career progressed until he was appointed Regent (old regent). Then, Yasadipura II—who was given the name Raden Tumenggung (RT) Sastranegara—was named Regent of Carik under the reign of Pakubuwana IV, succeeding his deceased father. The Dipanegara conflict began under Pakubuwana IV's rule. Pakubuwana IV secretly assisted Prince Dipanegara; R. Ng. Yasadipura II composed and wrote all of the letters Pakubuwana IV sent to Prince Dipanegara. When Prince Dipanegara was defeated and taken prisoner by the Dutch, it was evident that Pakubuwana IV and R. Ng. Yasadipura II were implicated. When Prince Dipanegara lost and will in fact also be taken into custody by the Dutch. This was canceled because M. Ng. Ranggawarsita II, the eldest son of R. Ng. Yasadipura II, was the one who was taken prisoner by the Dutch and banished to Jakarta.³ When R. Ng. Yasadipura II passed away in 1844, Pakubuwana VII was in charge of the Surakarta Hadiningrat palace. Another common interpretation of *Serat Wicara Keras* is that it expresses the author's discontent with the state of the world. Of course, this too requires closer examination.

The purpose of this study is to analyze Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II's *Serat Wicara Keras* in the context of the *priyayi* group's dominance over the *kawula* group in Javanese culture.

2 Research Method

In *Serat Wicara Keras*, a poem by poet R. Ng. Yasadipura II, Javanese philosophy and culture are used to explain the beginning of the *priyayi* group's rule over the *kawula* group. Hegemonic analysis, interpretation, and text analysis are all used in this study. Structural analysis approaches are included in the text analysis method. Interpretation based on the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce. Antonio Gramsci's theory informs hegemony analysis.

The idea of hegemony, which was introduced by Gramsci (Abercombie, via Kurniawan, 2010: 72), shows how ideological and political factors play a role in one class's dominance over another. Hegemony shifts from the domain of intellectuals and social institutions to the targeted socioeconomic class.

According to Gramsci's theory of hegemony, literary works are viewed and interpreted as the author's channeled expression of ideology. Literary works are a site of hegemony as a cultural product. Literary works often contain an ideology that opposes the author's own and hegemonizes society. According to Gramsci, literature can be

viewed as two things: first, it may be understood as the author's initial symptom of the social class ideology that informs how he conceptualizes the universe. Literature is regarded as a hegemonic medium, and the media highlights societal ideologies. Second, as literature is an expression of the author's intuitions, ideology in it can also be found by analyzing literature within the framework of its autonomy (Kurniawan, 2007). In addition to reflecting the material infrastructure or economic class structure, literature now exists as a material force in its own right and is a component of the world of ideas, culture, and superstructure (Faruk, 2015: 131).

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 *Priyayi* as role model

The moral decline of the younger generation, which is already a cause for concern—at least in the case of Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II—is described in *Serat Wicara Keras*. It is common to read the moral deterioration of the younger generation as criticism. It could be directed at the younger generation rather than the ruling class. Surakarta's younger generation is viewed as having a negative character, as described by Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II:

*Samêngko datan sêmbada,
mung cariwis angêcuwis.
Yèn ana alis lancapan,
atine angithi-ithi.
Ambêke nglêlanangi,
muncu-muncu kaya wudun.
Kabèh rat jagad Jawa,
anèng sêlaning dariji.
Mung tumèmpèl anèng ing lambe kewala.
(Serat Wicara Keras: I, 18)*

'People are now incapacitated,
just talk a lot.
If there is a beautiful woman (pointed eyebrows),
his heart always wants to control (watch).
most manly,
almost erupted like a boil.
All across the Java universe,
It was as if he had mastered it (between his fingers).
But only empty words (Only sticks to the lips).'

At that time, there was a severe decadence among the younger generation; their claims did not match their qualities. For instance, they claimed to be the son of a scholar but were unable to recite the Koran, or they claimed to be a descendant of

Brawijaya but were not magical, or they claimed to be a child of a hermit but were not fond of fasting.

...

*Ngaku têdhak Brawijaya,
ratune wong Majapait,
pagene nora sakti,
têka sêpi mring rahayu.
Mung gunane ta padha,
kasukan lali ing dhiri,
nora nganggo duga-duga lan watara.
(Serat Wicara Keras: I, 12)*

'Confessed to be a descendant of Brawijaya,
the king of the Majapahit,
why not holy
even devoid of goodness.
His intelligence is just
rejoice until you forget yourself,
do not use guesswork and guesswork.'

*Yèn ngaku anak pandhita,
sayêkti bêtah sêsirih.
Yèn ora karêm ing lapa,
iku lamis nora dhamis.
Yèn kurang bêtah ngêlih,
sayêkti wong ngaku-aku.
Lamun anak pujôngga,
tan wêruh ing êpa siji,
ngaku anak sujana nalare liwar.
(Serat Wicara Keras: I, 13)*

'If you claim to be a pandita's child,
must be concerned.
If you don't like fasting,
it's just pretend but doesn't match.
If you can't stand hunger,
surely only people claiming to be me.
If (confessed) a child of a poet,
don't know a single letter,
admitting that the children of intelligent people have deviated from their reasoning.'

*Ngaku anaking ulama,
têka nora bisa ngaji.
Yèn ngaku anaking Cina,
pagene tan kulit kuning.
Ngaku anaking santri,*

*nora bisa maca Kulhu.
Yèn ngaku anak raja,
pasthi nalare patitis.
Yèn anaking kaum pasthi bisa donga.
(Serat Wicara Keras: I, 14)*

'Confessed to be the son of a scholar,
but can't read the Qur'an.
If you claim to be a Chinese child,
why not yellow skin
Claiming to be a student,
can not read the letter Ikhlas.
If you claim to be the king's son,
sure he was right.
If you claim to be a child of the People, you can pray.'

In order to improve the character of the younger generation, Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II through *Serat Wicara Keras* suggested that they imitate the behavior of their ancestors, such as Prince Mangkubumi (Hamengku Buwana I). Spoken as follows:

...
*Jamak wong ngaku prawira,
kaya Sultan Mangkubumi,
nyata lamun undhagi.
Awêweka gothak-gathuk,
micara tan sikara,
pasaja nalare mintir.
Lamun aprang padha Jawa datan arsa.
(Serat Wicara Keras: I, 17)*

'...
Those who describe themselves as brave
typically resemble Sultan Mangkubumi.
real if an architect.
Be creative by experimenting,
talk harmless,
act as it is his mind flows.
if you go to war with fellow Javanese you don't want to.'

By proposing Prince Mangkubumi as one of these exemplary figures, Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II emphasizes that in essence the *priyayi* character is better than the *kawula* character. As it is known that Javanese society recognizes two social groups, namely the *Kawula/wong cilik* group, namely the lower class community and the *Priyayi* group who occupy a high social class. The *Priyayi* group also includes the aristocratic/*ndara* group (Suseno, 1984: 12).

The lower class society, the *kawula* group, has its own lifestyle and culture that is different from the culture of the *priyayi* class. The culture of my class society is judged as rude and unkind. Meanwhile, the culture of the *Priyayi* class is considered a noble, refined, and complex culture. Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II through the *Serat Wicara Keras* indirectly recommends that people imitate the character and lifestyle of *Priyayi*. In other words, Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II taught the lower class people (*kawula*) to leave their lifestyle and culture and imitate the *Priyayi* culture.

3.2 *Priyayi* hegemony

Hegemony is a power or dominance over the life values, norms, and culture of community groups, all of which eventually turn into doctrines against other community groups but the dominated group consciously follows it (Arvianto, 2016). The idea of hegemony, which was introduced by Gramsci (Abercombie, via Kurniawan, 2010: 72), shows how ideological and political factors play a role in one class's dominance over another. Hegemony shifts from the domain of intellectuals and social institutions to the targeted socioeconomic class.

Serat Wicara Keras was written by Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II during the reign of King Pakubuwana IV (1788 – 1820), namely after the *Pakepung* incident. The *Pakepung* incident had socio-political and economic consequences that had to be experienced by King Pakubuwana IV. Kraton Surakarta experienced a decline in political power and economic decline.

The reduction of the kingdom's territory which resulted in economic difficulties had actually occurred since the *Giyanti* Agreement which occurred on February 13, 1755. With this agreement the kingdom's territory was divided into two, Surakarta and Yogyakarta. The territory of the Surakarta kingdom was reduced by half and only half remained.

Since then the territory of the Javanese kingdom was known as Vorstenlanden. But the term became more popular after the Diponegoro War. This is because the boundaries of the Vorstenlanden area have become clearer. The Vorstenlanden area is special or special because it has two applicable laws. One traditional law that applies in the territory of the four rulers of Java (Kasunanan, Kasultanan, Mangkunegaran, and Pakualaman), and Dutch law for white settlement areas.

The Javanese kings had lost their political greatness. Since the *Giyanti* agreement and also after the Diponegoro War, in addition to the diminishing economic power of the King, the King's political sovereignty was also very limited. The King has lost political power and has also experienced a decline in his economic power, but that doesn't mean the King has lost everything. The king still controls cultural symbols that can strengthen his position as ruler. Cultural symbols, especially ritual ceremonies and arts, are built as grand and beautiful and as complex as possible. The rituals and arts that are developed are dominated by the *Priyayi* so that they are claimed as *Priyayi* culture.

Kraton is considered the only legitimate source of culture and artistic value. So the *Priyayi* group dominates the results and forms of Javanese culture. In this regard, the

concept *Adiluhung* was developed, namely art that has high value, which is complex and complicated.

With this *Adiluhung* concept, *Priyayi's* hegemony over the underprivileged people occurs. A concept that was accepted voluntarily by the people of the lower class with the assumption that only the *Adiluhung* arts created by *Priyayi* were considered Javanese art, while the arts of the subjects were considered to be of less value.

Javanese literature has been used to support claims of cultural elevation by sorting out what is noble and what is not. Only *Adiluhung* literature is widely retold to the public and analyzed. Literature that represents my culture is kept and hidden from the public.

4 Conclusion

The poet Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II wrote *Serat Wicara Keras* in response to the societal changes that were taking place at the time it was written, taking into account the historical backdrop of the poem. The moral decay of the younger generation is described by *Serat Wicara Keras*. Faced with this, Poet R. Ng. Yasadipura II in *Serat Wicara Keras* teaches people to imitate the ancestral *priyayi*. The teachings of the *Serat Wicara Keras* became the beginning of the domination of the *priyayi* group over the *kawula* group in Javanese society. There is a *priyayi* hegemony over the subject through the concept of a superior culture, only the culture of the *priyayi* group is considered valuable, the culture of the subject group is not valuable.

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