

**AESTHETIC DISSENSUS:  
JAVANESE ISLAMIC AESTHETICS AND POLITICAL  
SUBVERSION IN *BABAD TANAH JAWI***

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**Abstract:** *This study uses the framework of aesthetic politics to analyze Javanese Islam as depicted in Babad Tanah Jawi, challenging colonial misconceptions about Javanese Islam while offering new perspectives on religious and cultural dynamics in Java. By critiquing colonial myths, this study highlights the unique heterogeneity of Javanese Islam in its various everyday practices, contrasting Western essentializations with the local particularities depicted in the manuscript. Based on Rancière's concept of aesthetic politics, this research employs critical discourse analysis to explore how Javanese Islam is not only theoretical but also practical and performative, critiquing Western views that overlook the dynamic nature of Islam itself. Emphasizing dissensus and disagreement within Javanese Islamic traditions, this analysis rejects the essentialization of Islam, presenting it as a flexible practice that defies easy categorization into a single identity. This study also underscores how Javanese Islamic practices challenge Orientalist interpretations by integrating local Javanese perspectives on one hand and rejecting Western essentialist classifications on the other. The implication of this research is the need to reevaluate Javanese Islam through various literary texts, not to render it as unreliable text, but rather to place it as the subjective aesthetic choice of the author in questioning the colonial narratives that have long prevailed in the historiography of Javanese Islam.*

**Keywords:** *Aesthetics; Babad Tanah Jawi; Islam; Politics*

## **Introduction**

*Babad Tanah Jawi* was composed in the eighteenth century, a crucial era for the Islamic Mataram Kingdom's survival. Throughout the early 1700s, numerous rebellions and resistances arose within the empire, which had reached its zenith under Sultan Agung. The growing intervention of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in the palace led to the empire's prolonged disintegration, culminating in the Giyanti Agreement of 1755, which split the kingdom into the Surakarta Sunanate and the Yogyakarta Sultanate.

In an effort to revive the political glory of Islam, Prince Amangkurat II commissioned Prince Adilangu I in 1680 to write the early version of *Babad Tanah Jawi*. The work was further developed and refined during the reigns of Pakubuwana I (1705-1719) by Prince Adilangu II, Pakubuwana II (1726-1749) by Prince Adilangu II, Pakubuwana III (1749-1788) by Carik Bajra, and Pakubuwana IV (1788-1820) by

Kertapraja. This manuscript, which became a personal deposit during the Dutch and British arrivals in 1808-1811, was continued from 1830-1858 by Pakubuwana VII through Yasadipura I.

The lengthy composition process over nearly two centuries resulted in numerous versions of the *Babad Tanah Jawi*.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the version most commonly used in the today's researches is the *Babad Tanah Jawi Meinsma*, which, according to MC Ricklefs, inaccurately portrays Islam as having a significant confrontation with Majapahit. Ricklefs states, "It is true that the *Meinsma* babad cannot be regarded as a primary historical source, that none of the *Meinsma* texts are of great value as sources for the fall of Majapahit, and that they are important sources for the fall of point of view of their authors." (p. 444). This inaccuracy is crucial for historical studies as it influences the understanding of the spread of Islam in Java and the transition from Hindu-Buddhist to Islamic rule. The version is attributed to R.Ng. Kertapraja, a teacher at the Javanese Institute in Surakarta, based on oral statements by Prof. Taco Roorda to J.J. Meinsma. This attribution highlights the need for critical analysis of historical sources to ensure accurate representation of historical events.<sup>2</sup>

Contrarily, initial information in the manuscript suggests that *Babad Tanah Jawi* Meinsma was not authored by Ng. Kertapraja. Taco Roorda's handwriting indicates it was composed by CF Winter Sr, raising doubts about its authenticity. Despite this, the prose version by JW Olthof (1941), commissioned by the colonial government and later published in Indonesian by Penerbit Narasi Yogyakarta (2012), remains widely used by scholars and readers of Javanese chronicles.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, Major Babad version of *Babad Tanah Jawi*, a song manuscript written by R.Ng. Yasadipura I and published by Balai Pustaka in 31 volumes, is a rare literary work today. Translated into prose by Amanah Lontar Publisher in six volumes (2004), this version is considered the most complete narrative, encompassing genealogy and historical periods. Wieringa (1999) argues that this version, still in macapat song form, is the most authoritative and final decree of the "*Babad Tanah Jawi*."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J Ras, "The Genesis of the Babad Tanah Jawi: Origin and Function of the Javanese Court Chronicle," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-En Volkenkunde* 2, no. 3de Afl (1987): 343-56.

<sup>2</sup>Merle Calvin Ricklefs, "The Evolution of Babad Tanah Jawi Texts: In Response to Day," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-En Volkenkunde*, no. 4de Afl (1979): 443-54.

<sup>3</sup>Willem Rimmelinck, "Babad Tanah Jawi, The Chronicle of Java: The Revised Prose Version of CF Winter Sr.(KITLV Or 8)," *Babad Tanah Jawi, The Chronicle of Java: The Revised Prose Version of CF Winter Sr.(KITLV Or 8)*, 2022, 1-1045.

<sup>4</sup>E P Wieringa, "An Old Text Brought to Life Again", *Bijdragen Tot de Taal,* *Land-En Volkenkunde* 155, no. 2 (1999): 251.

Historical accounts of Islam derived from the *Babad Tanah Jawi* often depict battles, resistance, and palace intrigue. The debate between MC Ricklefs<sup>5</sup> and Anthony Day<sup>6</sup> about Islam's rise following Majapahit's fall is a prime example. Their primary question, based on the dialogue between Brawijaya V and Raden Patah in the *Babad Tanah Jawi* and "Babad Kandha," is whether Islam in Java emerged through war or peace.

M.C. Ricklefs argues that the *Babad Tanah Jawi* exaggerates the role of Islam in the decline of Majapahit, portraying it as a period of significant confrontation. Ricklefs suggests that this narrative is historically inaccurate and serves to dramatize the spread of Islam, emphasizing conflict and resistance where there may have been more nuanced interactions. He asserts that such portrayals can distort our understanding of the historical context and the nature of Islamic expansion in Java. Ricklefs' stance implies that historians should be cautious of accepting these accounts at face value and should seek additional evidence to corroborate these events.

On the other hand, Anthony Day presents a contrasting view, emphasizing the peaceful spread of Islam in Java. Day argues that Islam's rise was marked by gradual assimilation and integration rather than outright conflict. He points to the dialogues in the *Babad Kandha* as evidence of diplomatic and familial ties that facilitated the transition from Hindu-Buddhist rule to Islamic governance. Day's interpretation suggests that the peaceful spread of Islam in Java reflects a more collaborative and adaptive process, which could provide a more balanced understanding of the region's history.

The implications of this debate for the study of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* are significant. Ricklefs' perspective encourages a critical examination of the text, prompting scholars to seek out corroborative evidence and consider alternative narratives. This approach can help to avoid overreliance on potentially dramatized accounts and promote a more nuanced understanding of historical events. Conversely, Day's argument highlights the importance of considering multiple sources and perspectives, suggesting that the spread of Islam in Java was a complex process involving both conflict and cooperation.

*Babad Tanah Jawi* is frequently cited in historical studies on Java's Islamization, as it details court power transitions, guardian involvement, and court conspiracies with the Dutch. The manuscript is considered a key text for understanding Java's Islamization, focusing on invasions, wars, and the spread of Islamic symbols involving Walisongo and Javanese kings. However, mythical elements like the descent of wangsit, the involvement of gods, and the supernatural abilities of Javanese kings

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<sup>5</sup>Merle Calvin Ricklefs, "A Consideration of Three Versions of the Babad Tanah Djawi with Excerpts on the Fall of Madjapahit," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 35, no. 2 (1973): 285-315; Ricklefs, "The Evolution of Babad Tanah Jawi Texts: In Response to Day."

<sup>6</sup>Anthony Day, "Babad Kandha, Babad Kraton and Variation in Modern Javanese Literature," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land-En Volkenkunde* 4de Afl (1978): 433-50.

are also present. Birsyadadescribes it as a representation of palace power and culture, emphasizing war and power in Java's Islamization while neglecting the everyday Islamic life and philosophy.<sup>7</sup>

Despite its historical significance, *Babad Tanah Jawi* is often overlooked in traditional Javanese literary aesthetics research, unlike classical Malay and ancient Javanese literature. Braginskyhighlights the aesthetic codes in classical Malay literature,<sup>8</sup>and Zoetmulder formulates ancient Javanese literary aesthetics through 'Kakawin,' associating poetry with spiritual practices like yoga.<sup>9</sup>

Suwondo lamented that if more research focused on chronicles, a literary system within ancient Javanese literature could be formulated. His statement reflects an ethical regime that values *kakawin* and *bikayat* for their ethical teachings, while *babad* is deemed unsuitable for aesthetic research.<sup>10</sup> Suwondo's statement shows the existence of a kind of ethical regime that only certain works, namely *kakawin* and *bikayat* are able to provide ethical teachings to their readers, while *babad* is believed to be unsuitable for research from an aesthetic perspective.

Authorship perspectives often marginalize *bhujangga* chronicles in recent Javanese Islam research, unlike *kawi* poets credited with shaping great Javanese culture. According to Nancy K. Florida, post-Java war Islamophobia led the Dutch East Indies to elevate 'high Javanese culture' as non-Islamic aristocratic heritage.<sup>11</sup>

Florida critiques colonial philology for glorifying pre-Islamic Javanese culture through classical works while dismissing coastal Islam as a 'dark' period. Pigeaudnoted a 'rebirth' of Javanese culture in the 19th century as scholars shifted focus from Islamic texts to Javanese *kakawin*.<sup>12</sup> However, Florida's research reveals that palace poets, including Yasadipura I and II, R.Ng. Ronggawarsita, and R.Ng. Ranggasasmita, hailed from *santri* families, indicating Islam's presence within palace walls.

Florida's findings suggest that *bhujangga* authorship, linked to the *santri* lineage, played a crucial role in composing *Babad Tanah Jawi*. The manuscript, born during the

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<sup>7</sup>Muhammad Iqbal Bisyarda, "Budaya Keraton Pada Babad Tanah Jawi Dalam Perspektif Pedagogi Kritis," *Jurnal Sejarah Dan Budaya* 10, no. 2 (2016): 174-85.

<sup>8</sup>Braginsky and I Vladimir, *Nada-Nada Islam Dalam Sastera Melayu Klasik* (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1994); Braginsky and I Vladimir, *Erti Keindahan Dan Keindahan Erti Dalam Kesusasteraan Melayu Klasik* (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1994); Kuntara Wiryamartana, "Aspek-Aspek Estetik," *Majalah Basis* (Jakarta, June 1986).

<sup>9</sup>Petrus Josephus Zoetmulder, *Pantheism and Monism in Javanese Suluk Literature: Islamic and Indian Mysticism in an Indonesian Setting*, vol. 24 (Koninklyk Instituut Voor Taal Land, 1995); Petrus Josephus Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan; A Survey of Old Javanese Literature*, vol. 16 (Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).

<sup>10</sup>Tirto Suwondo, "Kaidah Estetika Sastra Melayu, Jawa, Dan Indonesia," *Pangsura: Jurnal Pengkajian Dan Penelitian Sastera Asia Tenggara* 16, no. 9 (2003): 71-78.

<sup>11</sup>Nancy Florida, "Writing Traditions in Colonial Java: The Question of Islam," *Cultures of Scholarship*, 1997, 187-217.

<sup>12</sup>Th G Theodore Pigeaud, "Literature of Java Vol. 1: Synopsis of Javanese Literature 900-1900," *Koninklijke Instituut Voor Tall, Land En Volkenkunde, Leiden The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff*, 1967.

Islamic Mataram kingdom, embodies an aesthetic dimension and a genealogical connection to the "santri" family, underscoring its relevance for study.

This study aims to explore the depiction of Islamic life in *Babad Tanah Jawi* by R.Ng. Yasadipura I, with a specific focus on the concept of aesthetic politics. *Babad Tanah Jawi* is frequently cited in historical studies on the Islamization of Java due to its detailed accounts of palace power transitions, the involvement of religious guardians, and the court's conspiracies with the Dutch. However, this research seeks to investigate a less commonly examined aspect—how aesthetic expressions and cultural practices within the palace reflect and influence political and religious dynamics.

R.Ng. Yasadipura I, who has an extensive and intimate history with Islam, is positioned within the grand tradition of Javanese royalty, making him a unique political subject. His work embodies both the religious and royal influences of his time, providing a rich context for examining how aesthetic elements—such as literature, art, and ceremonial practices—intersect with political and religious life. By focusing on these aesthetic politics, this study aims to offer new insights into the complex interplay between culture, religion, and power in Javanese society during the period of Islamization.

## Method

This study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the research issue. According to Teun A. van Dijk, CDA critically studies views, identities, and activities based on the language used in a discourse.<sup>13</sup> CDA considers that language is always involved in power relations, shaping both subjects and the representations they produce. In this context, CDA will be used to critically analyze thematic discourses in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, particularly those related to the dominant discourse—the colonial myth about Javanese Islam. CDA is an approach that seeks to uncover the underlying power structures and ideologies within texts. It focuses on how language constructs social and political meanings. The analysis involves several specific steps:

*Firstly*, data collection. The primary source for this study is *Babad Tanah Jawi* by R.Ng. Yasadipura I. This text will be thoroughly examined to extract relevant language units, including words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and overall discourses. *Secondly*, initial reading. Conducting a comprehensive reading of the text is to understand its general themes and narrative structure. This step helps identify key passages and sections that are significant for the analysis. *Thirdly*, identifying language units. The specific language units are selected for detailed analysis. These include terms and expressions that reflect power relations, social identities, and ideologies. *Fourthly*, contextual analysis. The selected language units are analyzed in

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<sup>13</sup>Teun A Van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse & Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249-83.

their broader textual and historical context. This involves examining how these units function within the narrative and what historical and cultural references they invoke. *Fifthly*, thematic analysis. The dominant themes are identified and categorized within the text. For *Babad Tanah Jawi*, particular attention will be given to themes related to Islamic life, palace intrigue, and interactions with colonial powers. *Sixthly*, ideology identification. The deep structure of the text is examined to uncover embedded ideologies. This involves looking beyond the surface meaning of the text to reveal the author's underlying beliefs, biases, and power relations. In this case, the focus will be on the ideology of R.Ng. Yasadipura I as it pertains to the representation of Javanese Islam and its political implications. *Seventhly*, critical interpretation. The findings are interpreted to understand how the text constructs and perpetuates certain ideologies. This includes considering how these ideologies shape the reader's perception of historical events and social identities.

By following these steps, this study aims to reveal the hidden ideologies within *Babad Tanah Jawi* and provide a deeper understanding of how language and power intersect in the depiction of Islamic life in the text. This understanding is important to challenge colonial misconceptions of Islam and offer new perspectives on religious and cultural dynamics in Java.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **'Everyday Practice' of Javanese Islam as Political Dimension**

The concept of Javanese Islam was genealogically institutionalized in the 19th century by Western scholars who began academic studies of Javanese culture and religion. During this period, Western scholars<sup>14</sup> along with Indonesian scholars, sought to understand Javanese Islam within scientific frameworks. This era saw the emergence of terms like *syncretism*, *abangan*, and *local Islam* to describe Javanese Islam, terms familiar among scholars of Javanese Studies or local mysticism at the time. Rather than interpreting Islam through an external perspective that equates Javanese Islam with formal religion, this study seeks to understand Islam from within, based on the testimonial structure of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* written by the Javanese author R.Ng. Yasadipura I. The Islamic thought structure around the palace can be traced

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<sup>14</sup>Andrew Beatty, "Varieties of Javanese Religion: An Anthropological Account," *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 4 (2001); Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (University of Chicago Press, 1976); Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past, The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2014.943520>; H. W. P. and F. W. Stapel, "Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indie," *The Geographical Journal* 95, no. 1 (1940), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1788695>; Guy J. Pauker and J. C. van Leur, "Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History.," *Pacific Affairs* 29, no. 1 (1956), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3035479>; Karel Steenbrink, "Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam: Contacts and Conflicts 1596-1950," *Currents of Encounter* 7 (2006); Mark R. Woodward, "The 'Slametan': Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam," *History of Religions* 28, no. 1 (1988), <https://doi.org/10.1086/463136>.

through the life journeys of several figures in this manuscript, offering an alternative reading to other similar perspectives.

The theoretical assumption regarding Islam around the palace (or Javanese Islam) is informed by Fawaid's findings<sup>15</sup> which suggest that colonial stereotypes of Javanese Islam arise from viewing it as an institutional religion rather than as a unique, everyday practice and subjective experience within Javanese society. Colonialism tends to perceive Javanese Islam as separate from culture and practices that resist sanctification and universalization. Fawaid's study employs a combination of historical analysis, ethnographic methods, and critical discourse analysis to examine colonial texts and records. He meticulously analyzes Dutch colonial archives, travel logs, and administrative reports to understand how colonial authorities documented and interpreted Javanese Islam. His research reveals that these colonial records often portrayed Javanese Islam as a monolithic and rigid institution, in contrast to the more fluid and syncretic practices observed in everyday life.

One key piece of evidence supporting Fawaid's conclusions is the comparison between colonial descriptions of Javanese religious practices and the lived experiences of Javanese people documented in local sources and oral histories. He identifies discrepancies between the colonial narratives and the actual practices, which include a rich blend of Islamic, Hindu-Buddhist, and animist traditions. For example, he cites instances where colonial reports describe religious festivals and rituals in terms that suggest a strict adherence to Islamic orthodoxy, while local accounts highlight the inclusion of pre-Islamic elements and localized interpretations of Islamic teachings. His findings underscore the importance of understanding Javanese Islam not as a fixed set of doctrines imposed by religious authorities, but as a dynamic and evolving practice deeply intertwined with Javanese culture and everyday life. This perspective challenges the colonial tendency to universalize and sanctify Islam, ignoring its diverse expressions and the ways in which it adapts to local contexts.

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<sup>15</sup>Achmad Fawaid, "Contesting Double Genealogy: Representing Rebellion Ambiguity in Babad Tanah Jawi," *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 4, no. 2 (2015): 243-60; Achmad Fawaid, Zamroni Zamroni, and Hasan Baharun, "Contesting Sacred Architecture: Politics of 'Nation-State' in the Battles of Mosques in Java," *QIJS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 7, no. 1 (2019): 129-72, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v7i1.4365>; Achmad Fawaid, Wening Udasmoro, and Sri Margana, "Islam Behind the Court Wall," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Religious Literature and Heritage (ISLAGE 2021)* (Atlantis Press, 2022), 76-84, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220206.010>; Achmad Fawaid et al., "Narrative Imagination of Islam in Nusantara: A Study on Islam in Babad Tanah Jawi and Babad Giyanti," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature and Muslim Society* 8, no. 1 (2023); Achmad Fawaid et al., "Politics of Islam in Javanese Aesthetics: R. Ng. Yasadipura I's Poe (Li) Tical Imagination of Islam in Babad Tanah Jawi," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 6, no. 1 (2022): 1-12; Achmad Fawaid, Wening Udasmoro, and Sri Margana, "Politics of Prophecy in Java: A Mythological Narrative on Political Succession of Javanese Dynasties in Babad Tanah Jawi," *Khazanah Sosial* 4, no. 2 (2022): 312-26.

Incorporating Fawaid's detailed findings into this study strengthens the argument by providing a well-supported theoretical foundation. It emphasizes the need to approach Javanese Islam through a lens that acknowledges its complexity and cultural integration, rather than relying on reductive colonial stereotypes. This approach aligns with the broader aim of critically analyzing the depiction of Islamic life in Babad Tanah Jawi, revealing the nuanced interplay between religion, culture, and power in Javanese society.

The findings are related to the assumption that the everyday practice of Islam has a political dimension because they highlight how these practices serve as a form of cultural resistance and identity assertion against colonial narratives and authority. *Firstly*, it has resistance to colonial narratives. Fawaid's research reveals that colonial authorities often documented and interpreted Javanese Islam through a lens that portrayed it as a monolithic and rigid institution. This portrayal was used to support colonial stereotypes and policies that sought to control and homogenize the local population. By focusing on the everyday, syncretic practices of Javanese Islam—such as the blending of Islamic, Hindu-Buddhist, and animist traditions—Fawaid shows how these practices resist the colonial narrative of a uniform, orthodox Islam. This resistance is inherently political, as it challenges the legitimacy and authority of the colonial powers' representations and control.

*Secondly*, it has assertion of cultural identity. The everyday practices of Javanese Islam, as documented by Fawaid, reflect a dynamic and evolving religious life that is deeply intertwined with Javanese culture. By maintaining and integrating local cultural elements into their religious practices, the Javanese people assert their unique cultural identity. This assertion is a political act because it opposes the colonial effort to impose a singular, universalized version of Islam that disregards local traditions and practices. It is a way of preserving and promoting their cultural autonomy in the face of external domination.

*Thirdly*, it has power relations. Fawaid employs critical discourse analysis to uncover the power relations embedded in the language used in colonial texts. This analysis shows that the representation of Javanese Islam as a rigid institution was not just a matter of misunderstanding but a deliberate strategy to exert control over the local population. By emphasizing the everyday practices and their syncretic nature, Fawaid highlights how these practices subvert the power dynamics imposed by colonial rule. The everyday practice of religion thus becomes a site of political struggle, where local communities negotiate, resist, and redefine the power imposed on them.

*Fourthly*, it has ideological implication. His study focused on the discrepancies between colonial narratives and local practices brings to light the ideological underpinnings of colonial rule. It suggested that the colonial portrayal of Javanese Islam was part of a broader strategy to legitimize colonial authority and suppress local resistance. By documenting and analyzing the lived experiences of Javanese people, Fawaid reveals the ideological battle over the representation of Islam and its



role in society. This battle is political because it involves competing visions of authority, identity, and power.

In summary, Fawaid's findings show that the everyday practices of Javanese Islam are not just religious or cultural activities but are imbued with political significance. They represent a form of resistance against colonial narratives, an assertion of cultural identity, and a challenge to the power relations imposed by colonial authorities. This perspective aligns with the broader theoretical assumption that everyday religious practices have a political dimension, especially in contexts of colonial and post-colonial power dynamics.

Since the everyday religious practices in Babad Tanah Jawi were written in *aesthetic* style, it directly related to *political* dimension of its author. Based on this theoretical assumption, this study analyze Javanese Islam not from a formal religious perspective, nor from academic and scientific texts, but from the life experiences, everyday practices, and subjective experiences of the characters in this phenomenal 18th-century literary work, which was not written explicitly to describe Islam.

### **Aesthetic Politics of Islam in *Babad Tanah Jawi***

The portrayal of Javanese Islamic thought outlined above offers a systematic critique of the evolving colonial myth surrounding Javanese Islam. This critique emerges from a comprehensive examination of significant historical figures within a literary framework. However, a notable limitation lies in its failure to incorporate a political dimension, instead presenting a narrative dominated by key figures. This approach, while unique in its exploration of characters' life experiences in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, falls short of qualifying as a fully critical analysis and risks perpetuating colonial essentialism.

To address this gap, there is a call for an additional perspective that scrutinizes overlooked "peripheral" figures and events within the broader construction of Javanese Islamic thought. This perspective, known as aesthetic politics, seeks to enrich our understanding by exploring how these peripheral elements contribute to the political dimensions of Javanese Islamic thought as depicted holistically in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*.

Table 1 reflects Javanese Islamic aesthetics dimension that is 'political,' 'critical,' and 'subversive' towards both Islamic and Javanese identities itself, is as follows (taken from all six volumes of *Babad Tanah Jawi* I-VI).

Table 1. Reality - Representation - Ideology:  
Aesthetic Politics of R.Ng. Yasadipura I in *Babad Tanah Jawi*

No.	Data Code	Reality = Narratives of Islam in BTJ	Representation = Aesthetics of Islam	Ideology = The-Political
1	BTJ/I/1	Words transformed into beauty. Only the power of God creating and governing everything is visible. The Almighty, the Most High, the Creator, the Compassionate, the guide for all His messengers. This is the belief of the ancestors, the talisman of Kalimasada, a manuscript commissioned by King Paku Buwana IV...	Associated with the opening Bismillah and the beautiful names of Allah in Islamic tradition. This tradition is suddenly subverted through the presence of Kalimasada, the heirloom used by Yudistira to kill the Kurawa, a story famous in ancient Javanese literature Kakawin Baratayudha.	Mute speech ( <i>La Parole muette</i> ), because Bismillah and the beautiful names of Allah are expressions of silence that do not appear in the text, yet demonstrate Islam's position within it. Disagreement ( <i>La Mésentente</i> ), because Kalimasada raises conflict between what should be said and what can be understood.
2	BTJ/I/2	Prophet Adam had a son Sis, Sis bore Hyang Nurcahya, Nurcahya begot Nurasa, Hyang Nurasa bore Hyang Wenang. The Supreme being begot Guru. Guru had five offspring, the eldest named Sambo, the second Brama, the middle one Mahadewa. Vishnu who reigns in Java as a balance	Dual genealogy between Prophet Adam (Islam) and Batara Guru (Hindu). The authority of Islam in Mecca is subverted by the presence of Dewa Vishnu as the 'Islamic' ruler in Java, whose Islamic origins remain mysterious.	Disensus ( <i>Le Dissensus</i> ), because dual genealogy destabilizes authority; not knowing who holds power and who is subject, thus allowing for the emergence of equality.

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		to Islam which descended in Mecca, and lastly named Dewi Sri.		
3	BTJ/I/40	Again, in the land of Champa, the King received a guest named Makdum Ibrahim Asmara, who humbly suggested that the King should embrace Islam. "Otherwise, Hyang Widi will be angry," he said. The King immediately embraced Islam, as did the entire population.	King Brawijaya, whose authority was undisputed in Java, is suddenly subverted by the process of embracing Islam outright, seemingly without any pretense.	Dispute ( <i>Le Litige</i> ), because this sudden moment clashes between Brawijaya as Ochlos ( <i>L'Ochlos</i> ) and Brawijaya as Demos ( <i>Demos</i> ).
4	BTJ/I/55	Because King Blambangan refused to convert to Islam, Syeh Wali Lanang promptly left to follow his own desires; he wished to go to Malacca while leaving his pregnant wife in Blambangan. After Syeh Maulana left, the land was struck by a disease outbreak; many residents perished. The Princess had already given birth to a baby boy and was ordered by the	King Blambangan indeed refused Islam, but the tale of casting the baby in a box and the disease outbreak mirrors the famous story of Pharaoh and Moses in Islamic tradition.	Mute speech ( <i>La Parole muette</i> ), because the story of Pharaoh and the casting of the baby into the Nile implies the invisible that needs to be shown to balance the visible in the baby box discarded by the Princess. Disagreement ( <i>La Mésentente</i> ), because universal Islamic representation brings conflict between the visible and the invisible.

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		<p>King of Blambangan to immediately dispose of the child. The baby was placed in a box and cast into the ocean. It was found by Ki Samboja, who served the King of Majapahit. The baby boy in the box, later named Sunan Giri, became one of the Islamic saints who would bring about the downfall of Majapahit.</p>		
5	BTJ/I/56	<p>After studying in Malacca for some time, both Sunan Giri and Sunan Bonang intended to go to Mecca. Their journey was not mentioned until they stopped and settled in Malacca. There, they learned Quranic studies from Syeh Wali Lanang. After a year in Malacca, their teacher instructed them to return to Java and advised against continuing the journey to Mecca.</p>	<p>If in the previous paragraph, Java was subverted through universal Islam in the Middle East, then in this paragraph, universal Islam in Mecca is subverted by the presence of local Java, considered 'sufficient'.</p>	<p>Aesthetic revolution (<i>La Révolution esthétique</i>), because it juxtaposes contradictions between Mecca as a representation of Muslim ummah and Java island as a representation of Javanese people.</p>

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6	BTJ/I/63	Raden Patah's words convinced him and his wife that their son was worthy to succeed him as king. Raden Patah was sad and hesitant. He suffered greatly. That night felt like a hundred years, suffering like an ordinary person, understanding the harmony and mindset of a great man.	Raden Patah, a Muslim, refused to be a Javanese King, but he believed in Javanese cosmological teachings about harmony and the mindset of a great man.	Political subject ( <i>Le Sujet politique</i> ), because Raden Patah subjectivizes ( <i>La Subjectivation</i> ) against the identification and classification of his own class as Muslim on one side and Javanese on the other.
7	BTJ/I/64	Raden Patah, saddened, suddenly left the palace and went into the wilderness. Furthermore, it was narrated (nearly over 4 pages, ed.) about the plants and animals, personified to comfort Raden Patah. Raden Patah's heart was like a sandalwood tree, his soul like a clear sky without any clouds. Throughout the forest, many trees moved to give guidance. The pond water was like the sky. The turtle	These metaphors in the chronicle display the poetic intelligence of its author. This somewhat 'exaggerated' personification seems to show Yasadipura's admiration for Islam. It begs the question, why is only the Muslim king (Raden Patah) given special treatment throughout these six volumes? Why not the dukes, kings, and princes of Java, who are more dominant in this manuscript?	Disensus ( <i>Le Dissensus</i> ), because BTJ rejects consensus on its own Javanese status. Critique of knowledge politics ( <i>La Poétique du savoir</i> ) with aesthetic politics. Mute speech ( <i>La Parole muette</i> ), because R.Ng. Yasadipura I inserts admiration for Islam through aesthetics that may not be comprehensible to the Javanese kings.

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		<p>was like the full moon. The budding jasmine flowers bowed in homage. The fallen fruits were like beds for rest. The gentle wind blew through the ashoka branches as if supporting them. The chalk tree emitted burnt incense smoke. The elephants guarded Raden Patah.</p>		
8	BTJ/I/75	<p>The Sage (Sunan Ampel, ed.) said to Raden Patah, "I already know about your grandson because he is no different from yourself, who wandered away from your father and mother, underwent asceticism, and restrained all desires, passions, and wishes. I am not from Java. I am the son of Princess Cempa, my father is truly a descendant of the last Prophet, who came to Java named Makdum Ibrahim Asmara.... My sister was taken</p>	<p>Dual subversion of Islam and Java. Sunan Ampel refuses to be entirely Javanese because he is different from the 'original' Javanese. However, Sunan Ampel also refuses to be entirely an Arab 'Muslim' because he was born from one of Java's kings. On the other hand, the Majapahit King also refuses to be entirely Muslim because his religious status remains mysterious. However, the Majapahit King also refuses to be entirely Javanese</p>	<p>Equality (<i>L'Égalité</i>), because both Sunan Ampel and the Majapahit King are portrayed as political subjects who subjectivize (<i>La Subjectivation</i>) by rejecting identification as Muslim or Javanese.</p>

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as a wife by the King from Java in Majapahit.... I was asked by the Majapahit King's father to marry the daughter of Adipati Wilatikta.... These are the Javanese people who embraced Islam, not coerced by the King. They converted to Islam of their own accord.... I am Wiku who came to Java to fulfill a temporary task out of love for the King. I stayed in Java because I felt comfortable; I am different from the native Javanese, whose descendants all show their Javanese heritage.	because he is still considered a descendant of Vishnu who is 'Muslim'(?).
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Table 1 draws upon the theoretical framework of aesthetic politics, as articulated by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière. Essentially, aesthetic politics seeks to explore the inherently political dimension of aesthetics, emphasizing the distribution of sensory perceptions (sensible) to enable equitable access to thought and action across societal boundaries, transcending class distinctions.<sup>16</sup>

The table supports the argument presented in this study by illustrating how R.Ng. Yasadipura I uses aesthetic elements in *Babad Tanah Jawi* to convey political messages and critique both Islamic and Javanese identities. Each entry in the table highlights specific narratives, representations, and ideological underpinnings,

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<sup>16</sup>Rosida Erowati, "Distribution of The Sensible Jacques Ranciere," *Jubindo: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia* 3, no. 3 (2018): 109-17; Jacques Rancière, *Mute Speech: Literature, Critical Theory, and Politics*, vol. 19 (Columbia University Press, 2011).

showing how the text employs aesthetic strategies to subvert, question, and redefine power dynamics.

*Firstly*, subversion and resistance. The table highlights how Yasadipura's text uses aesthetic elements to subvert both Javanese and Islamic orthodoxies, revealing an underlying resistance to colonial narratives. By blending Islamic invocations with Javanese myths or presenting dual genealogies, the text resists simplistic categorizations and asserts a more complex cultural identity.

*Secondly*, political subjectivity. Each entry shows how characters and narratives in *Babad Tanah Jawi* become sites of political subjectivity. For instance, Raden Patah's hesitation to become a Javanese king (Entry 6) or his subsequent retreat into the wilderness (Entry 7) illustrates the tension between his Islamic faith and Javanese heritage. These narratives create space for new forms of political identity that resist colonial and orthodox impositions.

*Thirdly*, challenging colonial stereotypes. The data in the table underscores how the text challenges colonial stereotypes of Javanese Islam as a rigid, institutional religion. By documenting the fluid, syncretic practices and the ideological conflicts within the text, the study reveals how Javanese Islam is portrayed as a dynamic and evolving practice, deeply integrated with local culture.

By examining the detailed narratives, representations, and ideologies in *Babad Tanah Jawi*, the table provides concrete evidence of how R.Ng. Yasadipura I employs aesthetic politics. This approach not only enriches the understanding of Javanese Islamic aesthetics but also highlights the political dimensions of cultural practices, challenging both colonial narratives and orthodox interpretations. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing the complex interplay between religion, culture, and power in historical texts, offering a nuanced perspective on Javanese Islam's role in resisting and redefining identities and power structures.

The data is also relevant for the analysis of the aesthetic politics of *Babad Tanah Jawi* because it provides concrete examples of how Yasadipura's work embodies the interplay between religious and cultural influences. By detailing instances where Islamic traditions are interwoven with Javanese cultural elements, the table demonstrates how aesthetic expressions are used to challenge and negotiate identities and power structures. This approach reveals the subversive ways in which the text engages with political and ideological themes, underscoring the importance of aesthetic politics in understanding the historical and cultural context of Javanese Islam.

This study posits that the *Babad Tanah Jawi* exemplifies the distribution of sensible not only through the authorship of R.Ng. Yasadipura I, a poet from a santri family, but also through the imaginative characters and events depicted within. Central to this exploration is the theme of Islam within the palace walls, examining how these elements contribute to notions of equality. These aspects—the ideological position of the author and the portrayal of Islam within the text—are typically



overlooked in *Babad Tanah Jawi* research, underscoring the study's potential to uncover a political dimension within aesthetic discourse.

### **Politics and ‘Political’**

Rancière distinguishes between “the political” (*le politique*) and “politics” (*la politique*). Politics refers to the exercise of power, whereas the political represents a meeting ground where societal issues intersect with politics (*polis*). According to Rancière, the political involves advocating for what should be fought for, namely equality.<sup>17</sup> He suggests that achieving equality can be facilitated through aesthetics, which he defines as the capacity for thought and action that allows everyone to participate equally.

In the context of this study, the political dimension can be discerned through the characters and events depicted in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*. While existing research primarily focuses on major historical events and prominent figures of the Mataram Kingdom, closer examination reveals the inclusion of marginal figures such as Jaka Tingkir, Sunan Kalijaga, and Ki Ageng Pengging. These figures played significant roles in both shaping and challenging the established power dynamics of Demak.

Thus, the political dimension of aesthetic discourse within the *Babad Tanah Jawi* emerges from everyday events that have often been overlooked or marginalized in discussions of Javanese royal history. The chronicle highlights instances where “peripheral” figures and events disrupted the consensus of Javanese political power. This study aims to critique the prevailing consensus by elevating these instances of disensus, thereby offering a more balanced perspective on Javanese historical narratives.

### **Aesthetic Revolution**

Rancière's theory proposes three avenues to achieve aesthetic teleology, which centers on equality: aesthetic revolution, disensus, and treating “literature as literature.” The aesthetic revolution (*la révolution esthétique*) critiques existing art regimes, particularly the ethical and representative regimes prevalent in the 19th century. The ethical regime judges aesthetics based on ethical, moral, and religious standards (as per Plato), confining them to clergy and aristocrats. The representative regime, influenced by Aristotle, assesses aesthetics through social strata, perpetuating hierarchical divisions.

Rancière critiques these regimes for failing to foster equality. The ethical regime leads to archi-politics, where aesthetics is deemed political only when it adheres to ideal moral virtues accessible mainly to elites. The representative regime results in para-politics, where aesthetics is politicized based on social class distinctions, contrary to Rancière's vision of equality through aesthetic experience.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

<sup>18</sup>Rancière, *Mute Speech: Literature, Critical Theory, and Politics*.

In this study, parallels can be drawn with contemporary trends: the ethical regime that marginalizes the *Babad Tanah Jawi* by overlooking its aesthetic dimensions and relegating its Islamic moral teachings solely to spiritual and mystical texts (such as hikayat and suluk); and the representative regime that categorizes the *Babad Tanah Jawi* as a historical document separate from religious texts like hikayat and suluk. This study challenges these classifications by offering an alternative interpretation of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* that transcends the limiting frameworks imposed by these art regimes.

### **Disensus**

Disensus (*le dissensus*), according to Rancière, is not merely a clash of interests or personal opinions; it is a political process that resists categorizing subjects or objects within specific social classes.<sup>19</sup> Instead, it challenges established frameworks of perception and action, rejecting grand narratives of power and greatness in favor of narratives that highlight the marginalized, the ordinary, and the unexceptional.

Disensus operates through what Rancière terms “class migration,” where rigid social classifications are questioned, and alternative identifications are proposed for those traditionally excluded. This migration occurs both at ideological and thematic levels, unsettling established hierarchies and disrupting consensus. It represents a critique of stability and consensus.

In the context of this study, disensus manifests on two levels simultaneously: at the level of authorship and at the material level of the *Babad Tanah Jawi*. At the authorship level, R.Ng. Yasadipura I occupies an ambiguous position—he was immersed in the Javanese courtly tradition yet was born outside the santri community. His writings celebrate the greatness of the Javanese kingdom while subtly undermining its policies. At the material level, the *Babad Tanah Jawi* portrays events that reflect this class migration. For instance, while describing the construction of the Demak Mosque and the assertion of Islamic authority, the text simultaneously critiques the centralization of power in Java, suggesting a nuanced view of authority and resistance within Javanese society.

### **Literature**

In *Rancière and Literature*, editors and supervisors Julian Murphet and Grace Hellyer quote one of Rancière's statements in an interview, *what makes literature literature?*<sup>20</sup> According to Rancière, the essence of literature lies not in its ethical or mimetic dimensions, but rather in what Kant termed aesthetic teleology—the ability for everyone to perceive the world, distinguish between names and things, and judge beauty.

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<sup>19</sup>Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

<sup>20</sup>Jacques Rancière, Grace Hellyer, and Julian Murphet, “Fictions of Time,” *Rancière and Literature*, 2016, 25–41.

Literature, for Rancière, serves as a potent tool to challenge and reshape worldviews dominated by common sense, grand narratives, or public opinion. It achieves this by fostering what he terms "mute speech"—a form of democratic reading where everyone can interpret and utilize literature according to their own understanding.<sup>21</sup> When literature succeeds in distributing aesthetic capabilities across different social classes, subjects, or groups, it transforms into a political aesthetic work.

*Babad Tanah Jawi*, therefore, is recontextualized as a literary work that fulfills its original function. It does not conform to conventional literary norms of recounting events and glorifying historical heroes. Instead, it primarily amplifies the voices of marginalized social classes, subjects, or groups whose disruptive abilities challenge established centers of power, stability, and dominant norms. It portrays characters and scenes typically relegated to the margins of major historical narratives, employing fiction and imagination to provoke critical engagement with established facts and realities. Thus, it embodies the true essence of literature as literature according to Rancière.

### **Aesthetics of *Babad Tanah Jawi* as ‘Political’ Critique to Colonial Myths of Islam**

The corpus data representation reflecting point (c), radicalization of aesthetic politics as a mode of critique against the colonial myth of Javanese Islam, is as follows. This corpus data represents an ideological interpretation of the Islamic narrative within *Babad Tanah Jawi* that has been previously undertaken.

Table 2. Aesthetic of Islam in Babad Tanah Jawi as ‘Political’ Critique to Colonial Myths of Islam

No.	Aesthetic Politics	Islam in <i>Babad Tanah Jawi</i>	Islam in Colonial Myths
1	The Commonplace ( <i>Le Quelconque</i> )	Javanese Islam (e.g., <i>kabanan</i> ) as experiential, daily, unique, heterogeneous in Java	Javanese Islam as an Eastern religion in Western experience (Orient’s special place in European Western experience). <sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Rancière, *Mute Speech: Literature, Critical Theory, and Politics*.

<sup>22</sup>Geertz, *The Religion of Java*; Pauker and van Leur, “Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History.”

2	Critique of Knowledge Politics ( <i>La Poétique du savoir</i> )	Javanese Islam (e.g., <i>ngelmu</i> ) as practical knowledge, performative experience (knowing-how-to)	Javanese Islam as theoretical knowledge (knowing-about). <sup>23</sup>
3	Dispute ( <i>Le Litige</i> ) Disensus ( <i>Le Dissensus</i> )	Javanese Islam as endless disensus and contestation (thus rejecting essentialism in its other forms) between Islam and Javanese traditions	Javanese Islam in the essentialist standards of a 'syncretic-mystical,' 'abangan,' or 'nominal Muslim,' hence prone to essentialization. <sup>24</sup>
4	Disagreement ( <i>La Mésentente</i> )	Javanese Islam as a tradition that refuses identification due to its flexibility and uniqueness	Javanese Islam as a religion, often measured by God, Prophet, holy scriptures, legal systems, and so on. <sup>25</sup>
5	Subjectivization ( <i>La Subjectivation</i> )	Javanese Islam (e.g., <i>slametan</i> practice) as a praxis undefined in any worldview	Javanese Islam as an expression of Islamic worldview, abangan, mystical-synthetic, and so on. <sup>26</sup>
6	Mute speech ( <i>La Parole muette</i> )	Javanese Islam (e.g., <i>kerata basa, semu</i> , etc.) as praxis of <i>kawruh jiwa</i>	Javanese Islam as scientific and rational knowledge. <sup>27</sup>

Table 2 contrasts the aesthetic politics of Javanese Islam in *Babad Tanah Jawi* with colonial interpretations, showcasing its role as a political critique. It reveals how

<sup>23</sup>P. and Stapel, "Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indie"; Pauker and van Leur, "Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History."

<sup>24</sup>Geertz, *The Religion of Java*; Merle C Ricklefs, "Rediscovering Islam in Javanese History," *Studia Islamika* 21, no. 3 (2014): 397–418; Fauzan Saleh, *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological Discourse in 20th Century Indonesia*, *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological Discourse in 20th Century Indonesia*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047401131>.

<sup>25</sup>Michelle Ann Miller, "Kampung, Islam and State in Urban Java," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2012.645793>; Ward Keeler, *Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves, Javanese Shadow Plays, Javanese Selves*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400886722>; Niels Mulder, *Mistisisme Jawa* (LKIS PELANGI AKSARA, 2001).

<sup>26</sup>Geertz, *The Religion of Java*; Woodward, "The 'Slametan': Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam."

<sup>27</sup>Benedict RO'G Anderson, *Language and Power* (Cornell University Press, 2018); Mulder, *Mistisisme Jawa*.

Javanese Islam is depicted as experiential, practical, and inherently diverse, rejecting colonial essentialism and rigid definitions. Practices like slametan and kerata basa highlight its unique, non-theoretical knowledge, challenging the colonial portrayal of Javanese Islam as an exotic, mystical, or nominal faith. This analysis underscores the radicalization of aesthetic politics in *Babad Tanah Jawi*, emphasizing its resistance to colonial narratives and its assertion of a distinctive Javanese Islamic identity.

This study offers an insightful analysis through the framework of aesthetic politics applied to the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, around several key concepts derived from the text's corpus data, which serve as a critique of colonial myths regarding Javanese Islam.

*First, Critique of Colonial Misconceptions.* The text identifies and critiques colonial myths about Javanese Islam, emphasizing its uniqueness and heterogeneity within Javanese society. It contrasts these misconceptions with the everyday experiential reality of Javanese Islam, as depicted in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*. This critique challenges Western perceptions that tend to essentialize and exoticize Eastern religions and cultures, presenting instead a nuanced understanding grounded in local experiences.

*Second, Aesthetic Politics and Knowledge Critique.* Utilizing Rancière's concept of aesthetic politics, the text examines how Javanese Islam in the *Babad Tanah Jawi* is portrayed not merely as theoretical knowledge (knowing-about) but as practical and performative knowledge (knowing-how-to). This distinction serves as a critique of conventional approaches that categorize Javanese Islam within fixed theoretical frameworks, neglecting its dynamic and practical dimensions as depicted in the text.

*Third, Disensus and Disagreement.* The analysis highlights the portrayal of Javanese Islam in the *Babad Tanah Jawi* as perpetually engaged in disensus and disagreement, rejecting essentialist categorizations. It depicts Javanese Islam not as a static religious entity but as a tradition (tradition) that resists easy classification due to its flexibility and unique characteristics. This challenges scholarly tendencies to rigidly define religious practices solely based on doctrinal adherence or institutional norms.

*Fourth, Subjectivization and Mute Speech.* Examining the concept of subjectivization, the text explores how Javanese Islamic practices such as slametan are portrayed as defying categorization within any singular worldview. This aspect underscores the text's critique of Orientalist interpretations that seek to impose external viewpoints onto Javanese cultural practices, instead highlighting their expression as integral to local Islamic and syncretic-mystical traditions.

*Fifth, Implications for Rethinking Javanese Islam.* In conclusion, the text encourages a rethinking of Javanese Islam through the lens of aesthetic politics, arguing for a deeper engagement with the *Babad Tanah Jawi* as a literary work that challenges colonial narratives and offers alternative perspectives on religious and cultural practices. By emphasizing aesthetic choices and political implications within

the text, the study underscores the dynamic and contested nature of Javanese Islamic thought and practice, inviting scholars to reconsider entrenched scholarly interpretations and engage more critically with local historical texts.

Overall, this study contributes to broader discussions on the intersection of aesthetics, politics, and religious identity, offering a nuanced perspective that enriches our understanding of Javanese Islamic traditions beyond conventional historiographical and sociological frameworks.

## **Conclusion**

This study offers a critical analysis of Javanese Islam through a textual-discursive examination of characters in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, focusing on their life trajectories as they relate to this structure. The examination is significant as it addresses the first problem formulation, providing an alternative perspective that diverges from prevalent explanations of Javanese Islam. Instead of relying on social or historical facts or academic scholarly sources, this perspective explores Javanese Islam through aesthetic realities—internal testimonies found in an exemplary literary work of the eighteenth century, originally not crafted to explicate Javanese Islam.

The study reveals how R.Ng. Yasadipura I uses aesthetic elements in *Babad Tanah Jawi* to convey political messages and critique both Islamic and Javanese identities. Detailed analysis of various passages shows that the text employs aesthetic strategies to subvert, question, and redefine power dynamics. Narratives in the text highlight the subversion of both Javanese and Islamic orthodoxies, blending Islamic invocations with Javanese myths or presenting dual genealogies. This subversion is a form of resistance against colonial narratives and authority, asserting a more complex cultural identity. Characters and narratives in *Babad Tanah Jawi* become sites of political subjectivity, such as Raden Patah's hesitation to become a Javanese king, illustrating the tension between Islamic faith and Javanese heritage. This creates space for new forms of political identity that resist colonial and orthodox impositions. Moreover, the study challenges colonial stereotypes of Javanese Islam as a rigid, institutional religion. By documenting the fluid, syncretic practices and the ideological conflicts within the text, it portrays Javanese Islam as a dynamic and evolving practice, deeply integrated with local culture.

To further this research, comparative studies with other literary works, historical contextualization, interdisciplinary approaches, and exploring the impact on contemporary Javanese Islam could provide valuable insights. Expanding the textual corpus to include other works by R.Ng. Yasadipura I or his contemporaries would allow for a deeper exploration of aesthetic and ideological trends in Javanese literature during the period. This ensures a continued and enriched understanding of Javanese Islamic aesthetics and politics.

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