CALIBAN DISCOURSE FROM SHAKESPEARE TO JAVA'S BARON SEKEBER

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Abstract

Caliban discourse, marked with the arrival of a white man on a non-European island, is also found in the Javanese babad or semi-historical narrative of *Serat Babad Pati* (1925), a rewriting of the older text *Serat Baron Sakendher* (1600s). Both texts depict the arrival of European aristocrats on a foreign island. If Prospero in *The Tempest* (1610) is an exiled Italian duke, Baron Sekeber in Serat Babad Pati is a Dutch aristocrat traveling to Java to conquer the Mataram kingdom. Considering the possibility that both texts were produced in the same time period, at the beginning of both English and Dutch colonialism, the texts as contemporaries intersect within similar cultural and aesthetic discourses. While Sekeber's cultural surrogation circulated in Java, the tale of Caliban and Prospero has traveled across time and space through cultural surrogation in various texts, such as in political, psychoanalytical, and dramatic texts. Although the two texts are quite distant intertextually, *Serat Babad Pati* can be said to have subverted the assumptions about racial supremacy underlying *The Tempest*. The presence of dialectical discursive congruities is apparent in how the European colonial gaze found in *The Tempest* is displaced in *Serat Babad Pati* and the contemporary Javanese cultural performance of ketoprak staging the Baron Sekeber narrative. The text and the performance use both stratified Javanese language and staged mimicry of the Dutch baron as a means to return the gaze, albeit ambiguously. The ambiguity extends beyond text and performance and is strongly reflected at two pilgrimage sites in Central Java, where Javanese Muslims and Chinese Indonesians are divided in their valuation of Baron Sekeber. The reconstruction of the colonizer/colonized dialectic in *Serat Babad Pati*, its surrogation in the Javanese folk performance of *ketoprak*, and the divided religious pilgrimage evidence the ambiguous dialectical discursive congruities of decoloniality in Java.

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INTRODUCTION

Caliban, now an accepted symbol of the colonized subject in the Global South, is a minor dramatic figure in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610). Although Caliban only speaks 180 lines in the play, he has drawn the interest not only of liberal humanist Shakespearean scholars but also of postcolonial and new historicist critics. Most contemporary literary critics have dismissed the liberal humanist notion of authorial intention—that the essential meaning of a text corresponds to the author's intention in writing it—as a fallacy due to the impossibility of fathoming Shakespeare's intention. A deconstructionist, for instance, would see the absurdity of finding the author's intention because it is wrong to assume that there is a definitive referent or transcendental signified—a stable referent beyond language signification. While it might be true that Shakespeare had a certain intention in writing *The Tempest*, for the revisionist critic, Shakespeare's intention is less important than the complicity of the text in the political climate of the time. England's early expansionist ideology of the time, ripe with Eurocentrism and desire to know and conquer the new world, must have become, in Edward Said's words, "productive constraints" for writers (14), including Shakespeare. This makes the allegorical reading of the play with European colonialism as the background plausible. Complicit colonial perspectives in both European literature and non-European literature have been elaborated by postcolonial scholars through such terms as "Caliban discourse" to designate complex colonizer/colonized relations.

If postcolonial criticism stresses ideological and textual complicity in the discourse of colonialism, new historicism moves one step further to map textual congruities between the literary text and historical texts not only in the time of production but also in the time of consumption. Following Raymond Williams's argument in Culture and Society that literature should be treated equally with other cultural texts, new historicism and its British counterpart, cultural materialism, view literary and historical texts as co-texts. This contradicts liberal humanist readings that prioritize literary texts over historical contexts and critiques "the liberal humanist discourse that employs the rhetoric of sameness, universality, and common sense to conceal the way in which discriminatory and oppressive power structures are perpetuated and maintained" (Brannigan 120). In this view, literature is seen as participating in the practical politics of "consolidation, subversion, and containment of power" (Dollimore and Sinfield 10). The equality between literary text and other cultural products signifies the embeddedness of the aesthetics with the politics. Borrowing Alden T. Vaughan's term used to describe the Americanization of Caliban, these "textual congruities" make past texts relevant to contemporary contexts (153). Textual congruities as such make it plausible to see *The Tempest,* which was written in 1610, as embodying both the propagation and ambiguity of colonial mechanisms beyond its moment of production. In line

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with the new historicist approach, which emphasizes the historicity of texts and the textuality of history, where colonial power embodies the "constant production of its own radical subversion and the powerful containment of that subversion" (Greenblatt 30), I argue for anti-colonial discursive congruities in a Javanese text as a subversive response to a colonial encounter, and how this response is, in some way, contained. These dialectical discursive congruities refer to manifestations of anti-colonial discourses found across different modalities, space, and time beyond intertextuality. Colonialism by different European states with different colonial policies and taking place in many different places must have generated various anti-colonial discourses, which is reflected in how the colonized responds to colonial experience textually and metaphorically. The reading of *The Tempest* and the experience of colonialism in the Americas have generated the Americanization of Caliban as written in different registers by Aimé Césare, Roberto Fernandez, Retamar, Alden T. Vaughan, and Ricardo Castells. Java, with its own colonial experience under the Dutch, has produced the story of Baron Sekeber in *Serat Babad Pati* (1925), derived from older Sakendher texts of the 1600s.

Studies show that the 26 manuscripts of *Serat Baron Sakendher* were written by different writers from different periods (Widodo et al. 1). Theodoor Pigeaud contended that the composition of the first Sakendher text started in the late seventeenth century (1967). The many rewritings of Sakendher texts cannot be separated from the political backdrop of the poets. They were commissioned by the Javanese sultans to compose these semi-historical narratives depicting their superiority over Spanish and Dutch colonizers. The objective was to gain strong support and legitimacy of their rule over the populace. This strategy was especially crucial when the sultanate was suffering from post-war trauma, such as the Java war (W. Widodo et al. 294). Despite some variations in these manuscripts, they are not significant for the present objective of this article as all manuscripts narrate the arrival of a European baron to conquer Java and the anti-colonial resistance of the Javanese.

DISCURSIVE CONGRUITIES OF BARON SEKEBER AND CALIBAN

Caliban discourse since Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has been through stages of surrogation. I wrote on this process of surrogation in my master's thesis (Sarwoto), where I approached Caliban discourse using the theory of cultural surrogation, which Joseph Roach defines as a textual dialectic by which a cultural text always engenders other cultural texts (2). This is made possible as textuality involves what

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Elin Diamond called "cultural stories, traditions, and political contestations that comprise our sense of history" (1). As a dramatic figure, Caliban stage history shows aesthetic performances with politically charged surrogation. He slowly evolved from the Shakespearean half-monster of the seventeenth century to the half-human, noble savage, black Caribbean, Latin American and finally archetypal representative of the Global South. The productivity of Caliban's surrogation is inseparable from geopolitical contestation, with racism strongly involved. Such complicit racism in the process of surrogation can be found in Octave Mannoni's pseudo-scientific theorization of the Prospero complex and the Caliban complex to illustrate a psychological disposition of the European and the rest of the world in the colonial context.

Moving to Java, no studies have been able to locate the cultural surrogation of Caliban in any Javanese texts. Trisno Sumardjo, a Javanese poet and translator, translated Shakespeare's *The Tempest* into Indonesian, *Prahara*, in 1952, but no studies have mentioned any connection between Shakespeare and the trajectory of Dutch East Indies colonialism. The only connection between the figuration of the Shakespearean Caliban and Java might be no more than the reference of the play's production in 1963 when Peter Brook directed *The Tempest* at Stratford-upon-Avon in which Caliban was depicted as a Java man (Vaughan and Vaughan 209). Even though the Java man is not genealogically related to the modern Javanese, the association of Caliban with the Java man, whose fossils are believed to be the missing link between humans and apes, might suggest the director's view of the backwardness of the modern Javanese and non-European human in general. In that production, Caliban was seen as the representation of emergent humanity against the European human, Prospero.

Prospero's role is replaced with Baron Sekeber in *Serat Babad Pati*. Etymologically, Baron Sekeber is derived from the words "baron," a European aristocratic title, and "Sekeber." Anthony Reid speculated that the title "baron" refers to Governor-General Baron von Imhoff who ruled Java from 1743 to 1750 (qtd. in Winet 10). A different study by Pigeaud, however, concluded that because the text was written in the 1600s, the term "baron" might have been inspired by a Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) official of Germanic descent. While sources remain inconclusive about the origin of "baron," Pigeaud's analysis of the etymological source of "Sekeber" is more persuasive: "Sekebeber" is a Javanized term for Dutch colonial administration, *gezaghebber*/commissioner, a government official appointed by the Dutch colonial administration to oversee and manage various aspects of Dutch colonies during the period of Dutch colonialism (380).

In the text, Baron Sekeber is portrayed as follows:

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> *Wong bagus ageng dedegnya, muka tajem irungnya ragi inggil, kulit pethak semu pingul, atatag wicaksana. Sagung karya tan ono tinampik wau, wus salin panganggenira, mimba lir manungsa Jawi*. (Sosrosumarto and Dibyosudiro 212)
>
> He is good-looking with a sharp look, a pointed nose, a ruddy complexion, and a wise countenance. He never refuses any tasks, and now he is dressed like a Javanese.[1]

From a Javanese perspective, such physical figuration points unambiguously to a European. He is also depicted as mimicking a Javanese, *mimba lir manungsa Jawi,* to help in his business trip to Java. Unlike Prospero who is descended from aristocracy, Sekeber's ancestors were merchants. This might refer to the fact that Dutch colonialism in Java began with trade exploitation by a multinational company, VOC, instead of direct Dutch imperial control:

> *De kawula sanes trahing narpati, sudagar leluhur ulun, nanging amengku praja, pan ing mangkya ulun arsa dagang umur, dhumateng ing tanah Jawa.* (Sosrosumarto and Dibyosudiro 213)
>
> My ancestors were not aristocrats but merchants with some political power, and now I am going to try my luck by trading to Java.

With his magical power, this Dutchman flies to Java, but upon reaching the kingdom of Mataram, he fell to the ground and came across Panembahan Senapati, the king of Mataram. Sekeber initially mistakes him for a god, reminding one of Caliban mistaking Trinculo for a spiritual being:

> *Sekeber nulya nembah, trap pranata mangkana in aturipun: "Dhuh dewa sinten paduka, kawula ayun udani*?" (Sosrosumarto and Dibyosudiro 215)
>
> Sekeber saluted him respectfully and said: "May I know what god are you?"

Responding to Sekeber's high Javanese, Senapati speaks in low Javanese:

> "*Sira iku sapa aranmu yekti, miwah miwah ngendi wismanipun paran ingkang sinedya?" Dyian Sekeber mangkana ing aturipun: "Kawula ingkang winastanan, Dyian* Baron Sekeber *inggih." Tyang saking nagri Walanda. Ulun arsa ngupaya ratu Jawi Senapati namanipun, nedya sun sirnakena, perang tandhing nagarinya kula pundhut, kadarbe ingsun parentah, ing mangke wonten ing pundi?*" (Sosrosumarto and Dibyosudiro 215)

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> "Who are you and where are you from?" Sekeber replied: "I am Baron Sekeber. I am from the Netherlands. I am looking for the king of Java, Senapati, to kill him and take over his kingdom. Do you know where he is?"

Addressing Senapati in high Javanese, *Serat Babad Pati* locates the baron's positionality below the Javanese king. Conversely, Senapati's social position is elevated and made to address Sekeber in low Javanese, assuming his higher stratum over Sekeber. *Serat Babad Pati* uses this stratified language game to undermine the colonial white supremacist discourse that the Javanese witnessed on a regular basis.

In the dialogue, Sekeber makes it clear that the purpose of his visit is to kill the king: *nedya sun sirnakna*. The fight that ensues from this encounter ends with Senapati's victory:

> "*Senapati sun kalah dina iki, antenana patang taun, sun bali mungsuh sira, mangsa wurung sira mati dening ingsun!*" Senapati *sabdanira: "Benjang wani mene wani!*"

> "Senapati, I was defeated today. In four years' time, I will return for revenge to kill you!" Senapati answered: "I am ready whenever you are!"

Sekeber admits his defeat and intends to return in four years for a rematch, believing that by then he will be powerful enough to subdue Senapati.

Sekeber then flees in search of a powerful guru and mysterious places to improve his *kasekten* (magical power) until he lands in the Pati region. There, he meets and impregnates a local woman, Sari. Sari thinks that Sekeber is not human but a genie so that when her mother asks about the father of the child, she replies that he is not a human but a genie:

> "*Biyang biyang sun wewarti, satuhu meteng kawula, nanging boten lawan janmi, andon lulut lan ejim, kang tengga sareyan kubur*" (Sosrosumarto and Dibyosudiro 221)

> "It is true that I am pregnant but not because of a man but a genie inhabiting the graveyard."

By that time, Sekeber has returned to his cave for a lengthy ascetic mediation and, consequently, does not know that Sari finally gave birth to twins, Janurwenda and Sirwenda.

Eventually, the news reaches *Dipati* Jayakusuma of two exceptional children, Janurwenda and Sirwenda, the sons of a foreigner, a baron from the Netherlands who has fled to Pati in search of *kasekten*. After realizing that Baron Sekeber is

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in hiding in his dukedom, the *dipati* orders a thorough search for Sekeber. Upon being found, Sekeber changes into a Dutch attire before meeting Jayakusuma:

> *Sekeber enggal manjing jroning guwa, tan dangu nuli mijil, ngagem cara Landa, bagus gagah prakosa, ngasta pedhang angajrihi, nuli sesumbar: "Ya ingsun Baron Sekti. Sun Sekeber kadange Raja Nederland, becik teluk sireki, tan wurung matia, dening pamedhang ingwang!*" (Sosrosumarto and Dibyosudiro 226)
>
> Sekeber quickly entered the cave and came out again already in a Dutch attire complete with a frightening sword. He looked so grand and handsome. He then boasted, "Yes, I am the powerful Baron Sekeber, the brother of the king of the Netherlands. You'd better serve me or else I will kill you!"

They fight, Sekeber with a European sword, and Jayakusuma with a *kris*, a Javanese dagger. The fight goes on for three days and three nights, but both are so powerful that no one can defeat the other. Consequently, they agree to another mode of fighting: a diving competition. Whoever can stay underwater longer will win the battle, and the loser will serve the winner.

Jayakusuma tricks Sekeber in the challenge by pretending to dive while really staying on land, and he eventually wins. Having lost the battle, Sekeber is so humiliated that he turns himself into a horse called Juru Taman serving Dipati Jayakusuma:

> *"Salamiya kawula boten puruna, dhumating sand Dipati sedya angawula, nanging panuwun kula, mugi kula den lilani, warni turangga, dados titihan gusti. Lamun kula taksih awarnia janma, sanget merang ngembani, sami trah Kusuma, mugi anglilanana, dadi teluk wedi mati, mila kawula, kalilana rupa wajik."* (Sosrosumarto and Dibyosudiro 107)
>
> "I do not want to serve you in a human form, therefore allow me to turn myself into a horse for you to ride. I cannot stand the humiliation of serving you in a human form since we both are aristocrats. Please allow me to turn myself into a horse."

Having become a horse named Juru Taman, he can fly and save Jayakusuma plenty of time when traveling long distances.

His current form as a horse becomes a way for Sekeber to return to Mataram and carry out his plan to kill Senapati because, knowing that Jayakusuma has an unusual horse, Senapati will ask Jayakusuma to give Juru Taman to him. After becoming Senapati's beloved horse, Sekeber is free to explore the Mataram sultanate without raising suspicions. The writers of *Serat Babat Pati* depict that

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Sekeber takes his revenge by dishonoring all of Senapati's wives. When Senapati is attending a meeting on an island far away from Java, Sekeber turns himself into Senapati to sleep with Senapati's wives. However, Senapati catches him red-handed manipulating and exploiting his wives, and, in the end, he beheads Sekeber with his kris. This story has been passed down from generation to generation via *ketoprak* theater groups in Java, sometimes with variations since, as folk theater, the *ketoprak* actors never use a script but base their acting and dialogues on the oral instructions of the director.

BARON SEKEBER: FROM TEXT TO FOLK THEATER

The Javanese, especially those residing in small towns in Central and East Java, are familiar with the Baron Sekeber narrative because it has been repeatedly staged in *ketoprak* shows for generations. The origin of *ketoprak* significantly differs from *wayang kulit* (shadow puppetry), which was viewed as a high and refined art developed around the courts. In opposition to courtly performing art, *ketoprak*'s origin was to be found among poor peasants in rural areas. It presumably started with some villagers playing *lesung* (a tool for peeling rice by pounding). With this very simple musical instrument, they invented some kind of rhythm called *gejog*; hence, *gejog lesung, lesung* rhythm. A simple story emphasizing humorous dialogues was added to *gejog lesung*. A popular story, as recalled by Pak Glinding and Pak Jamal, was of a farmer working on his plot of paddy field and his wife bringing him food and water in a *kendi*, a water jar made of clay (Wijaya and Sutjipto 16). After a couple of humorous dialogues, often sexist in nature, they end up realizing that the wife has wrongly brought inedible stuff and an empty jar, and, finally, they decide to return home to have lunch together.

Gejog lesung assumed its present form of *ketoprak* when gamelan instruments were added and eventually replaced *lesung* altogether in 1927 (Wijaya and Sutjipto 31). In its development, *ketoprak* became a professional traveling theater looking for *tanggapan* (paid to perform) among *priyayi* families, the Javanese gentry. In the beginning, social distance was observed since *ketoprak* was seen as an art of the peasantry. The troupe was allowed to perform as far as the front yard of a *priyayi* house, whereas the front porch, *pendapa*, was for the *priyayi* family to sit in and enjoy the performance. Although *ketoprak* was frowned upon by the aristocracy for being less refined, in Surakarta, however, an aristocrat, KRMT Wreksadiningrat, directed a *ketoprak lesung*, signifying its acceptance among certain aristocratic circles since 1908 (Wijaya and Sutjipto 18).

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Under Dutch colonial rule, the stories, *lakon,* staged by *ketoprak* groups were folktales derived from *Panji* tales,[2] and their performances were under the close surveillance of the colonial apparatus. It was reported that in 1927 the Dutch colonial police arrested Ki Wisangkara and Sagiman for directing and staging a *ketoprak* performance titled *Ajisaka* (Wijaya and Sutjipto 32). In one of the scenes, a giant, Prabu Dewatacengkar, is depicted devouring human blood and brain. The Dutch interpreted the scene as satirizing Dutch colonialism and accused the director and the actor of the *ketoprak* of fomenting hatred toward the colonial government. This historical record indicates that *ketoprak* has been involved in political contestation regardless of the seemingly neutral story and the possible absence of directorial intention. This indicates that the *ketoprak* performance did not only reflect history but also intervened in the historical process. If Stephen Greenblatt argues that "Shakespeare plays are centrally and repeatedly concerned with the production and containment of subversion and disorder" (29), *ketoprak* theater has been imbricated in Java's political power contestations since colonial times.

The Dutch publishing house and colonial agency, Volkslechtuur, played an important role in the censorship not only of books but also of traditional performances, such as shadow puppetry and *ketoprak*. Volkslectuur, dubbed by Doris Jedamski as a colonial wolf in sheep's clothing, functioned as "civilizer, modernizer, and tranquilizer" (38), especially in coping with anti-colonial movements in the arts and literature. In January 1929, a pro-Dutch bupati (regent) of Pandeglang reported "his anxiety about agitating ketoprak theater groups" (Jedamski 37). The bupati feared the anti-colonial insurgence that the *ketoprak* performance could generate among the populace and suggested that the colonial government create a pro-colonial narrative through indoctrinated puppeteers. Shadow puppetry, also popular among the peasantry, had been seen as a more refined art performance as it developed within the Javanese courts and therefore was expected to work more effectively in influencing the populace to side with colonial policy.

Japanese troops took over Java from the Dutch from 1942 to 1945, and, during this time, *ketoprak* theater groups underwent a harsher challenge than under Dutch occupation for two reasons. First, the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies was done amid the Japanese war against American and European powers, leading to excessive exploitation of the occupied territory to support the war. The Javanese suffered from food shortages and prioritized spending on basic needs rather than buying *ketoprak* tickets. *Ketoprak* theater groups, whose survival depended on ticket sales and the patronage of rich *priyayi* families, suffered from this situation. The second difficulty arose from the Japanese colonial regime's stricter censorship of the story that the *ketoprak* theater groups could perform. They were forced to

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stage new stories supporting Japanese occupation. Wijaya and F. A. Sutjipto noted that stricter colonial government surveillance drove the *ketoprak* theater directors to write new stories accommodating the new colonial power (41).

In short, the new stories written for *ketoprak* performances during the Japanese occupation was meant to rally the people's support for Japanese troops against Dutch and British colonialism. Budi Susanto mentioned that various youth organizations during the Japanese occupation used *ketoprak* performances for war propaganda in support of the Japanese by raising funds and collecting rice (29). Heroic stories, feared and censored by the Dutch, were encouraged by the Japanese to raise people's anti-colonial sentiment against European colonialism. The other colonial policy that the Japanese enforced was banning the use of the Dutch language and encouraging the use of Bahasa Indonesia instead. It might be true, as Umar Kayam (reported in Rahmanto 2004) pointed out, that the benefit of Japanese colonialism is that it fostered the formation of a new independent nation: Indonesia.

Indonesia proclaimed its independence in 1945 and gained full sovereignty in 1948. This was not without violence, but the most violent history of Indonesia after independence and the reason why Indonesian artists were diverted from responding to postcolonial themes is the purge of the communists after the abortive coup of 1965. Before communist-affiliated *ketoprak* groups were disbanded in 1965, many leftist *ketoprak* groups modified folktales into politically charged *ketoprak* performances. As reported in *Tempo* magazine (2013), the story of Suminten Edan/ *Suminten Goes Crazy* is a case in point. Originally, the popular folktale tells of Suminten, a *warok's*[3] daughter, going mad because her aristocratic lover, Raden Broto, decided to marry another *warok's* girl. This love triangle makes the two *waroks* fight before a solution is reached: Broto marries both girls. In the hands of *ketoprak* theater groups under the banner of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), this traditional folktale underwent a cultural surrogation. Broto's decision to marry another girl is read as an aristocrat's strategy to set the people against each other. In the PKI version, rather than fighting with one another, the two *waroks* unite to attack Broto and his aristocratic pretensions. The role of *ketoprak* as a tool for a political party was quite commonduring this time. Another story, *Patine Gusti Allah* (*The Death of God*), daringly criticized Islamic parties and instigated a violent response from their members.

After 1965, with all cultural organizations under the PKI and other communist-associated groups and activities disbanded, *ketoprak* ceased to voice political criticism because any critical voice against the New Order was seen as a challenge to the state. The emergence of the army and state-sponsored *ketoprak* theater groups, such as Saptamandala and Ketoprak RRI, indicate the successful regime

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cooptation of these theater groups to manufacture consent among the populace through ideological apparatuses. The regime often used *ketoprak* to deliver government messages and programs to the masses. This does not mean that all *ketoprak* groups were coopted by the regime. A local comedy *ketoprak* group in Yogyakarta, Dagelan Mataram Baru, gained prominence through their satiric comedy against the corrupt apparatus (Susanto 139–51). After the collapse of the New Order regime, this genre of comic and satiric *ketoprak* gained more popularity.

From this brief account of *ketoprak* development, there is no available historical record on when the story of Baron Sekeber entered the *ketoprak* stage for the first time. However, the sustained popularity of the story among the *ketoprak* performers and audience is worth noting. A quick search on *YouTube* with the keywords "*ketoprak* Baron Sekeber" yields numerous recorded *ketoprak* shows, indicating the narrative's popularity across Java. *Ketoprak* might not be involved in a direct surrogation of Caliban in the same way as other postcolonial theatrical productions in Europe and America. Javanese folk performers might not have any reference to Shakespeare's figuration of Caliban and its subsequence surrogation when performing popular *lakon* (script) of the Baron Sekeber story, but a similar power constellation between the white colonizer and the people of color is present in the Baron Sekeber story as it narrates the arrival of a European baron in Java and his conflict with a Mataram sultan. A different ending with the triumph of the Javanese Indigenous king over the white baron signifies a reimagination of the European narrative of white supremacy.

Baron Sekeber can be viewed as a cultural surrogation of Caliban discourse by Javanese poets on witnessing the usurpation of European colonizers in the island of Java, a military occupation accompanied by the construction of the Javanese as the Other. In the case of Dutch colonialism in Java, the epistemological and cultural violence was carried out by a publishing house, Volkslectuur, whose initial aim was to provide quality and affordable reading materials for the Indigenous population. The story of Baron Sekeber and other anti-colonial literature belong on the opposite side of Volkslectuur that the Dutch termed *bacaan liar*, illegitimate reading materials. As such, Baron Sekeber stands in opposition to the Dutch construction of the Javanese as the Other. The legacy and preservation of Baron Sekeber through *ketoprak* leaves traces of the colonial past in the present. By revisiting the past memory in the present-day context, *ketoprak* performers have preserved a collective memory of decolonization.

The figuration of the European baron being defeated and humiliated by an Indigenous king has drawn numerous *ketoprak* performances adapting the narrative. Smaller *ketoprak tobongs* (theater companies) used to perform this favorite story from town to town while the more established theater companies, like Ketoprak

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Mataram, performed it in the auditorium of Radio Republik Indonesia, Yogyakarta, where they also regularly perform other stories. The story of Baron Sekeber has also inspired a famous local group of comedians, Ketoprak Conthong, to perform this as a satirical comedy in 2018 (Intarti).

BARON SEKEBER AND DECOLONIZATION

The apparent absence of substantive critical awareness of the colonial or postcolonial situation of Indonesian literature contrasts with the critical anti-colonial sentiment of the Javanese reflected in their love for Baron Sekeber *ketoprak* performances in the villages of Java. The enduring popularity of the story might have something to do with colonial legacy, especially the residue of an inferiority complex on the one hand and traces of anti-colonial resistance on the other. If Mannoni (1950) formulated this pseudo-scientific inferiority as the Caliban complex, the story of Baron Sekeber seems to argue against Mannoni that the inferiority is based on racism and therefore open to reconstruction. The Dutch conceptualization of the Javanese as an inferior being and the colonial policy derived from this racist paradigm are the main factors in this inferiority and its resistance. In the Baron Sekeber story, the traces of this postcoloniality are manifested in three aspects: language, mimicry, and pilgrimage.

STRATIFIED JAVANESE LANGUAGE AS A MEANS FOR A POWER GAME

The Javanese language is a stratified language. The age and social class of the speakers determine the register to be used: *ngoko, krama madya,* and *krama inggil* (low, middle, and high Javanese). *Ngoko* is the most colloquial register, used among friends of the same social class and age. It is also used by someone older or with a higher social status when addressing the lower class or someone younger. *Krama madya* is semi-formal and is used to address someone a person has just met, whose age and class status are similar or who looks a bit older and richer than the addresser. *Krama inggil* is used when meeting someone much higher socially. Each register contains distinctive vocabularies and is spoken with different gestures and tones of formality to show *hormat,* respect. Improper use of the register will result

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in an uncomfortable situation because the speaker will be judged as rude and even insulting.

Hormat is the principle that a person ought to know their position in society based on their age, wealth, status, descent, and occupation. It is impossible to talk in Javanese without considering the speakers' class just as it is impossible to speak in English without considering the tenses. With such a communication code, it might be impossible for a person of a lower status to express anger in front of a person of a higher social class because the language constraints stop them from doing so. As Clifford Geertz also notes:

> It is always a situation of some anxiety when two Javanese, especially *prijajis*, meet for the first time, for each must determine the other's rank in order both to employ the correct linguistic forms and to apply *andap-asor* pattern correctly. (243)

Geertz is referring to the historical context of the 1930s in Mojokuto, East Java, when *priyayihood,* belonging to the aristocracy, still highly mattered. Paradoxically, even today, when aristocracy has become less important, Geertz's study is still true in the context of the Javanese community. This principle of *andap-asor*, knowing one's position, in conversation is still an important dramaturgy in *ketoprak* performances.

The staging of the Baron Sekeber story by different *ketoprak* theaters depict Senapati, the Javanese king, addressing Sekeber in low Javanese, indicating Senapati's superior status. Such dialogue is exemplified by a coastal *ketoprak* performance whose dialogues have been transcribed as follows:

> "*Mengko dhisik kisanak, gene kowe wani njogarake anggonku mapan ana semedi ing asamun memintu ing ngarsaning Gusti kang akarya jagad*" (Pambudi 108)

> "Wait a second, how dare you disturb me when I was meditating, trying to be in touch with God?"

If Senapati feels inferior, he would have made the same speech but in high Javanese/ *krama inggil:*

> "*Mangkeh rumiyin to sedherek, wonten wigatos menopo panjenengan njugaraken anggen kawula semedi nyeyuwun wonten ing ngarsanipun Gusti ingkang akarya jagad.*"

Senapati's use of low Javanese/*ngoko* indicates that *Serat Babad Pati* positions Baron Sekeber's social status lower than Senapati, and this signifies a reimagination

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of power relations between the two races where European supremacism is resisted through language use.

Serat Babad Pati, the primary source of the Baron Sekeber narrative for many *ketoprak* theaters, does not only present the superiority of Senapati over Baron Sekeber by addressing Sekeber in low Javanese but also by depicting Sekeber as responding to Senapati in high Javanese:

> *"Sira iku sapa aranmu yekti, miwah miwah ngendi wismanipun paran ingkang sinedya?" Dyian Sekeber mangkana ing aturipun: "Kawula ingkang winastanan, Dyian* Baron Sekeber *inggih." Tyang saking nagri Walanda. Ulun arsa ngupaya ratu Jawi Senapati namanipun, nedya sun sirnakena, perang tandhing nagarinya kula pundhut, kadarbe ingsun parentah, ing mangke wonten ing pundi?"* (Sosrosumarto and Dibyosudiro 215)

> "Who are you and where are you from?" Sekeber replied: "I am Baron Sekeber. I came from the Netherlands. I am looking for the king of Java, Senapati, to kill him and take over his kingdom. Do you know where he is?"

The English translation might not really convey the class discrepancy of the original text, but the *ketoprak* theater groups certainly sense this when reproducing the text in their performances. The resistance against the residual white supremacy has become a collective memory continually staged and remembered through *ketoprak* shows. Since collective memory is what constructs one's identity, the rewriting and restaging of Baron Sekeber being addressed in low Javanese and responding in high Javanese can be seen as a thought experiment to redefine Javanese identity and positionality, a decolonizing gesture, albeit ambiguously. Sekeber's depiction as very good-looking that makes the Javanese female characters infatuated with him points toward the ambivalence of the previous language superiority.

BETWEEN MIMICRY AND MOCKERY

The Javanese actor portraying Baron Sekeber is dressed in the attire of a European aristocratic soldier, complete with a sword and military badges. The actor's hair is usually dyed blonde with thick whitish makeup. He always speaks half-Javanese and half-Indonesian with a foreignized accent, a stereotypical depiction of Europeans commonly found in Indonesian films portraying the war for independence against the Dutch, such as *Janur Kuning* (1979) and *November 1828* (1979), as well as the more recent movie production of Pramoedya's *Bumi Manusia/This Earth of Mankind* in

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2019, in the scene where Herman Mellema addresses Minke in a Dutch-accented mix of Indonesian and Javanese. This staged mimicry displaces the colonizer's gaze on the native to the Indigenous person's gaze on the anecdotal European figure as the Other, Baron Sekeber. To quote Homi K. Bhabha, "what is theoretically innovative … is to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (11), which, in the case of the Baron Sekeber figuration, is its anecdotal articulation of differences by the European Other on European Self—the gaze has been displaced.

It is relevant to situate Bhabha's subsequent comment on mimicry in this displaced gaze: "It is from this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double" (86). Rather than seeing mimicry as an invitation to be assimilated with the colonizer, the *ketoprak* performers create a stage representation of Baron Sekeber between mimicry and mockery as a strategy of anti-assimilation. The foreign and almost comical figuration of the baron and the stratified language of the dialogue where he is addressed in low Javanese but responds in high Javanese shift his positionality from a dominating colonizer to a subordinated colonizer. The mimicry and mockery also deconstruct the colonial fetishization of race, through which difference is mystified into sameness for assimilation purposes. The portrayal of Baron Sekeber by the Javanese *ketoprak* theater groups demystifies the politics of assimilation by returning the gaze and positioning Sekeber into an object of mockery and trickery but with ambivalence. This can be seen in how the female figures in the *ketoprak* performances always praise and are even infatuated with Sekeber's European stature.

Despite the ambivalent stage mimicry, *ketoprak*'s mockery of a European baron might share almost a similar effect with the portrayal of Henry VIII in 1600s England when the rulers were worried about the political ramifications of "making greatness very familiar if not ridiculous" by demystifying the greatness of the king and religion on a theatrical stage (Dollimore 8). The same reasoning drove the Javanese court of the past to forbid the *ketoprak* groups from depicting the sultan and his court on the stage for fear that they might misrepresent the proper court attire, such as correct *batik* patterns for the aristocracy, and *unggah-ungguh*/polite court decorum. The Dutch colonial government approached the matter more systematically by establishing a censorship body under the guise of a publishing house, Commisie voor Inlandsche Scool en volklechtuur, which did not only censor and select books but also sponsored *ketoprak* and *wayang* shows that depicted the colonial government favorably. In the post-independence context, the staging of Baron Sekeber *ketoprak* seems to reflect some residue of the anti-colonial past that might have helped mobilize anti-colonial sentiments to rebel against the Dutch colonial government.

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BEYOND STAGE AND TEXT: PILGRIMAGE

Even today, pilgrimage for the Javanese is a popular spiritual activity aimed primarily at seeking blessings. George Quinn observes that Javanese pilgrimage is unique:

> Local pilgrimage is anything but pure and exclusive, or rigidly authoritarian. It is powerfully Islamic but it fuses Islam with local history, ancient power of place and a pastiche of devotional practices with roots deep in the pre-Islamic past. (20)

Among Javanese Muslims, the traces (*petilasan*) and graves of *wali sanga*, the nine Islamic saints and scholars who played an important role in spreading Islam in Java during the fourteenth century to the fifteenth century, are among the most favorite destinations of pilgrimage spread in various districts in Java. Studies conducted by Quinn (2019) and Albertus Bagus Laksana (2014) indicate that the pilgrimage to the sacred sites signifies more than mere spiritual exercises. It also relates to identity formation and even resistance against a fundamentalist vision of Islam. Focusing on eccentric saints, Quinn explains that the saints' traces and tombs of Java's past have an enduring legacy over the Muslims of Indonesia.

Identity formation and resistance in the act of pilgrimage can also be found in the act of pilgrimage to fictional figures like Baron Sekeber and Penatas Angin in Kendal and Pekalongan, Central Java. Since pilgrimage contains a residue of pre-Islamic spirituality, which indicates the Javanese accommodative attitude in synthesizing a different spirituality, the pilgrimage to the supposed graveyard of Penatas Angin imbibes not only another form of spirituality but an anti-colonial attitude. According to a local folktale, Penatas Angin is not only a disciple of Sunan Kalijaga, one of the nine saints, but also the one who killed Baron Sekeber when he was fleeing from Senapati. As a tribute to his merits, the local community built a tomb where Penatas Angin was said to have died. People regularly flock to the site to ask for his blessing or make a promise (*nadhar*) to God that if their plea is granted, they will repay it in some way.

While the site of Penatas Angin is venerated by Javanese Muslims, Baron Sekeber has been appointed a god whose statue has been placed on a dedicated altar in the Tri Dharma temple in Weleri ("SATU-SATUNYA KLENTENG DI KENDAL") where local Chinese Indonesians usually go to pray. Pilgrimage to Penatas Angin and the veneration of the statue of Baron Sekeber is too paradoxical to dismiss. It might indicate the residual policy of racial segregation of Java's colonial past, a manifestation of the postcolonial ambivalence of Chinese Indonesians who are unconsciously longing for a vanished social structure putting them between the Dutch and the native.

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CONCLUSION

In comparing Prospero from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Baron Sekeber from the Javanese text *Serat Babad Pati*, two distinct narratives intersect within the context of early English and Dutch colonialism. Despite their geographical and cultural differences, both texts share a common ground as contemporaries, engaging in related aesthetic and cultural discourses. Sekeber's story circulates through Javanese cultural surrogation, leaving its ambivalent decolonial imprint on *ketoprak* performances. It challenges assumptions of racial supremacy that underlie *The Tempest*. The European colonial gaze—so prominent in Shakespeare's work—is displaced by a Javanese perspective using stratified Javanese language and stage mimicry of the Dutch baron to return the gaze.

The figuration of the Dutch baron who, like Prospero, is stranded on an island, contradicts Mannoni's ideas about their expected arrival by the Indigenous inhabitants of some remote islands. Rather than being glorified, the Baron Sekeber figuration is situated between mimicry and mockery, making the Dutch hero an object of Indigenous gaze and trickery. Javanese stratified language has been instrumental in displacing the gaze and flipping Sekeber's position to a lower social status, where he is made to speak in high Javanese with the king of Java. Caliban discourse in this Javanese language game provides a room for a thought experiment to reimagine a new power constellation, although as far as the *ketoprak* performances go the imagination is still confined within an Occidentalist outlook rather than a more fundamental decolonizing conceptualization.

The ambivalence in a negotiation of power and identity extends beyond mere text and performance. This echoes at two pilgrimage sites in Central Java. Javanese Muslims and Chinese Indonesians diverge in their assessment of Baron Sekeber. He becomes a contested symbol of pilgrimage at two different locations in Java: Pekalongan and Weleri. In Pekalongan, it is not Sekeber but his opponent, Penatas Angin, whose tomb has been a favorite destination of pilgrimage among local Muslims seeking blessings. Contrarily, in Weleri, some 55 kilometers away, a statue of Sekeber is venerated on a dedicated altar in the Tri Dharma temple frequented by local Indonesian Chinese. The different treatment of the Sekeber legendary figure in the local people's religiosity might evidence a complex residue of postcolonial ambiguity in a nation-state comprising more than 1,300 different ethnic groups whose position in the colonial racial pyramid was located below the Chinese and other foreign Orientals. The reconstructed colonizer/colonized dialectic in *Serat Babad Pati*, its cultural surrogation in Javanese folk performances, and the divided religious pilgrimages all exemplify the intricate and often contradictory dynamics of decoloniality in Java.

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NOTES

1. This and all subsequent translated passages of *Serat Babad Pati* are my own translation.
2. The *Panji* tales are a cycle of Javanese stories revolving around the legendary prince Panji. These tales tell of Prince Panji's search for his beloved Princess Candra Kirana. The stories are rich with adventures, disguises, and various pseudonyms of Panji before they are finally reunited.
3. *Warok* is an important figure in the Ponorogo region of East Java, Indonesia. A *warok* is believed to possess extraordinary power and artistic talent, historically playing an essential role in the arts, culture, social life, and even politics.

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