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A Hermeneutic Analysis of *Serat Wicara Keras* in the Context of Indonesian Political Dynasties

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Abstract

Keywords:

Yasadipura II;
Serat Wicara
Keras;
Nobility;
Hermeneutic;
Political dynasties.

The phenomenon of political dynasties is a contemporary issue that continually generates controversy, particularly with regard to moral legitimacy and the personalization of power within democratic practices in Indonesia. The ethical heritage of Javanese literature offers a value framework that is relevant to this issue, one of which is the value of nobility as taught in *Serat Wicara Keras*. This article is the result of research that applies the hermeneutic method to reveal the teachings of the value of nobility in *Serat Wicara Keras* as the formal object of the study, with the phenomenon of political dynasties in Indonesia serving as the material object. Library research was employed as the data collection method, beginning with planning, data inventory, data analysis, and classification. The results of the study are as follows: (1) *Serat Wicara Keras* is a literary work written by Yasadhipura II within the context of Javanese feudal culture. The work reflects Yasadhipura II's critical reflection on social conditions during the leadership of Pakubuwana IV as the successor of the Islamic Mataram dynasty. (2) The value of nobility in *Serat Wicara Keras* is referred to as *awirya*, which constitutes the principal value that must be realized in order to avoid *bilai* (calamity). According to Yasadhipura II, nobility is not grounded in lineage, but in how an individual undertakes spiritual and ethical discipline (*lilaku*) until achieving mental and spiritual readiness for attaining nobility. (3) The practice of political dynasties in Indonesia is rooted in a culture of patronage and political personalization found in the leadership of several political parties. Yasadhipura II views the occurrence of political dynasties as a natural phenomenon; however, such dynasties must maintain nobility by adhering to processes that conform to the established moral order and principles.

Abstrak

Kata Kunci:

Yasadipura II;
Serat Wicara
Keras;
Kemuliaan;
Hermeneutika;
Dinasti politik.

Fenomena dinasti politik merupakan persoalan kontemporer yang senantiasa menimbulkan polemik, khususnya terkait legitimasi moral sekaligus personalisasi dalam praktik demokrasi di Indonesia. Khazanah etis dalam kesusastraan Jawa menawarkan kerangka nilai yang relevan dengan persoalan tersebut, salah satunya nilai kemuliaan yang diajarkan dalam *Serat Wicara Keras*. Artikel ini adalah hasil penelitian yang menerapkan metode hermeneutika untuk mengungkapkan ajaran nilai kemuliaan dalam *Serat Wicara Keras* sebagai objek formal penelitian, dan objek material berupa fenomena dinasti politik di Indonesia. Metode kepustakaan dilakukan sebagai metode pengumpulan data, dengan diawali perencanaan, inventarisasi data, analisis data, dan klasifikasi. Hasil penelitian yang telah dilakukan adalah bahwa: (1) *Serat Wicara Keras* adalah karya sastra yang ditulis oleh Yasadhipura II dalam konteks budaya feodal

Jawa. Karya ini mencerminkan refleksi kritis Yasadhipura II terhadap kondisi sosial selama kepemimpinan Pakubuwana IV sebagai penerus dinasti Mataram Islam. (2) Nilai kemuliaan dalam *Serat Wicara Keras* disebut *awirya*, yang merupakan nilai utama yang harus diwujudkan untuk menghindari *bilai* (bencana). Kemuliaan menurut pandangan Yasadhipura II tidak didasarkan pada keturunan, tetapi bagaimana seseorang menjalani *lelaku* hingga mencapai kesiapan mental dan spiritual untuk mencapai kemuliaan. (3) Praktik dinasti politik di Indonesia didasarkan pada budaya patronase dan personalisasi politik yang ditemukan dalam kepemimpinan beberapa partai politik di Indonesia. Yasadhipura II memandang praktik dinasti politik sebagai hal yang wajar terjadi, tetapi dinasti politik harus mempertahankan kemuliaan dengan mengikuti proses sesuai dengan tatanan moral dan prinsip yang telah ditetapkan.

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INTRODUCTION

The term “Jawa” does not only refer to one of the major islands within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, but also to the majority ethnic group inhabiting the island of Java, namely the Javanese. Although Java is the primary center of Javanese population distribution, Javanese communities are spread across various regions of Indonesia. In 2010, for instance, based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) (Alifah, 2022), the number of Javanese people in Indonesia reached 95,217,022, or approximately 40.22 percent of the national population. Beyond their numerical dominance, Javanese society is also divided into diverse social statuses and classes based on profession, ranging from laborers and entrepreneurs to high-ranking officials. The large population of the Javanese contributes significantly to shaping the majority voice in various social, political, and cultural events in Indonesia.

The influence in the political sphere is particularly evident in the widespread belief that individuals who are likely to succeed in reaching the highest positions of political leadership in Indonesia are predominantly those of Javanese ethnicity. This belief is not only held among the Javanese community but is also common across Indonesian society more broadly. According to the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, Luhut Binsar Panjaitan (Alfons, 2022), who himself is of Batak ethnicity, Indonesian politics is anthropologically based on civil ethnicity, in which the Javanese hold the primary preference in leadership. This is reflected in the fact that the vast majority of individuals who have successfully served as Presidents of the Republic of Indonesia have been of Javanese descent.

The leadership of presidents originating from the Javanese ethnic group has made Javanese cultural characteristics highly influential in shaping leadership patterns in

Indonesia. This aligns with the view of Ahimsa-Putra (2022) who notes that elements of Javanese feudalism remain strong within Indonesia's political system. One manifestation of this is the centralistic nature of decision-making in strategic state policies, which tends to reinforce reverence for centralized authority. Additionally, the influence can also be observed in the use of kinship principles or genealogical lines in determining positions within the bureaucratic structure. This reflects the Javanese feudal system, which places the noble class, particularly the royal family at the forefront of leadership, making familial ties or kinship an important indicator in the process of leadership regeneration.

This feudal cultural character continues to persist and influences the selection of leaders as well as individuals who occupy strategic positions, shaped by their lineage or kinship background. This phenomenon can be observed in the 2020 Surakarta mayoral election, as examined by Muhammad Alif Alauddin and Rezza Dian Akbar in their article *"Di Balik Realitas Semu: Studi Kritis Ideologi dan Kuasa Politik Jawa di Pemilihan Wali Kota Surakarta 2020"*. The study reveals a strong influence of hereditary and kinship factors in determining leadership in the election, which was won by Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the eldest son of President Joko Widodo.

This influence of political personalization is evident not only in the regional election in Surakarta, President Joko Widodo's hometown, but also strongly manifested in other regions. This is highlighted by Enkin Asrawijaya (2022) in the article *"Peran Modal Sosial Jokowi dalam Politik Kekerabatan: Studi Kasus pada Pilkada 2020 di Surakarta dan Medan"*. In the 2020 simultaneous regional elections, Bobby Nasution, the son-in-law of President Joko Widodo, was also elected as Mayor of Medan, North Sumatra. This illustrates the influential position of President Joko Widodo's family in regional leadership, serving as an indication of the implementation of political dynasties. This perspective is further reinforced by the Constitutional Court's decision to approve the minimum age requirement for presidential and vice-presidential candidates, under the leadership of Anwar Usman, who is President Joko Widodo's brother-in-law. The Constitutional Court's decision is viewed as a move that paved the way for the candidacy of President Joko Widodo's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential and Vice-Presidential Election.

Although the practice of political dynasties is currently widely criticized in relation to President Joko Widodo's family, such practices have deep historical roots in Indonesian politics, particularly within elite party circles. The patronistic nature of Indonesian political parties is often manifested through party management based on genealogical principles.

This can be seen in how the Cikeas family dynasty prominently determines the leadership of the Partai Demokrat. In addition, dynastic political practices are also evident in how the bloodline of the Indonesia independence Proclamator's, Ir. Soekarno, serves as a key indicator in selecting leaders of the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P). Hasto Kristiyanto (CNN Indonesia, 2023) once stated that the chairperson of PDI-P must possess the bloodline of the Proclamator, as the party is regarded as the ideological successor of Bung Karno.

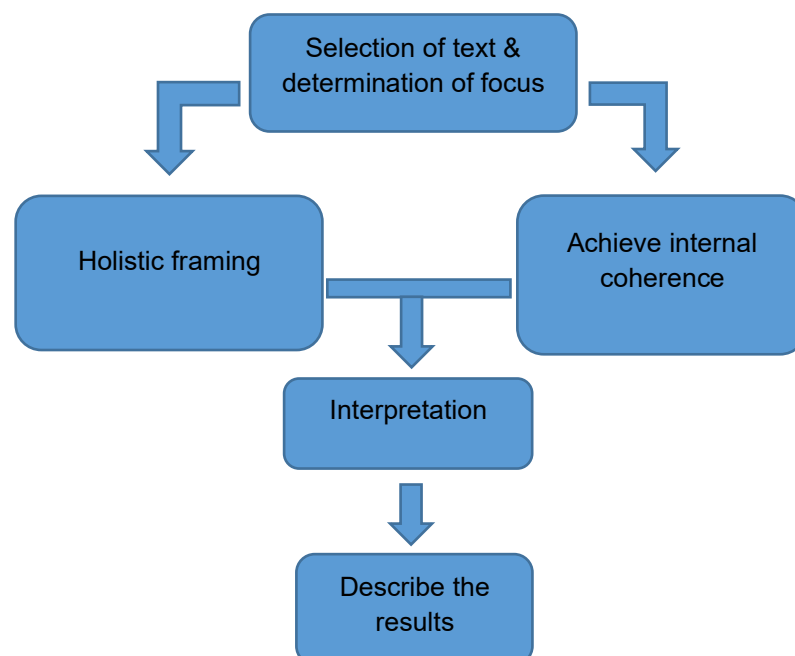
The issue of political dynasties has been extensively studied by various researchers. For instance, Susanti's (2017) study titled *Dinasti Politik dalam Pilkada di Indonesia* concludes that the application of political dynasties contributes to the lack of checks and balances in local governance, posing a threat to democratic transition. Additionally, an international journal article titled *The Interplay of Incumbency, Political Dynasty and Corruption in Indonesia: Are Political Dynasties the Cause of Corruption in Indonesia?* by Purwaningsih & Widodo (2020) also concludes that political dynasties are one of the causes of corruption in Indonesia. Both research findings mentioned above generally present negative views regarding the implementation of political dynasties in Indonesia, which is influenced by Javanese leadership culture. However, based on the literature review conducted by the author, there has been no research that attempts to explore the moral values behind dynasty-based leadership.

The author seeks to explore the moral values by grounding the discussion in Javanese literature, which provides extensive depictions of the virtues that must be upheld in applying dynastic leadership. This study focuses on the manuscript *Serat Wicara Keras* by Yasadipura II, a cultural product of the Kasunanan Surakarta Palace, which represents a dynasty that continues to exist today. This research refers to the study by Indratmo et al, (2024) titled *Serat Wicara Keras and The Hegemony of Javanese Priyayi*, which demonstrates that *Serat Wicara Keras* is not merely a feudal Javanese cultural product but also serves as a tool of criticism by Yasadipura II toward the ruling dynasty of the Mataram Islam lineage. The significance of the *Serat Wicara Keras* manuscript forms the foundation for the author to conduct a hermeneutic analysis to uncover the noble values contained within it and contextualize them as a perspective for examining dynastic political practices in Indonesia

METHOD

This research is a qualitative study conducted to contextualize the teachings on the values of nobility found in the literary work *Serat Wicara Keras* as an ideal framework for interpreting the factual realities of political practices in Indonesia, particularly the phenomenon of political dynasties. *Serat Wicara Keras* is positioned not merely as a cultural product bound to the context of its era, but as a representation of the Javanese value system that is dialogical in nature and capable of engaging with various contemporary social contexts.

To achieve this objective, the study employs hermeneutics as its methodological foundation, namely by bringing together the horizon of the author, the horizon of the text, and the horizon of the interpreter (Gadamer & Weinsheimer, 1999). The hermeneutic approach views meaning as something that emerges through historical continuity meaning is not confined to a single temporal period, but moves dynamically in accordance with the cycles of time. Accordingly, the values contained in *Serat Wicara Keras* may be re-presented in a relevant manner to examine the current socio-political conditions in Indonesia.



Picture 1. Process Diagram of Philosophical Hermeneutics Method

Based on the hermeneutical approach, this research is conducted using library data related to the formal object of the study, namely the noble values in *Serat Wicara Keras*,

and the material object in the form of the phenomenon of political dynasties in Indonesia. The analysis is carried out using the method of philosophical hermeneutics (Bakker & Zubair, 2007), which can be explained as follows:

1. Holistic, by placing the values of nobility in *Serat Wicara Keras* as the basis for ideal leadership within the Javanese cultural background and positioning the practice of political dynasties as one of the socio-political realities occurring in Indonesia.
2. Internal coherence, in which the author attempts to connect the values of nobility in *Serat Wicara Keras* with the practice of political dynasties in Indonesia.
3. Interpretation, where the author positions himself as an interpreter striving to contextualize the values of nobility in *Serat Wicara Keras*, which serve as the basis for ideal leadership in the Javanese cultural context, in order to examine the practice of political dynasties in Indonesia.
4. Description, namely explaining the results of the analytical process in detail.

This approach also serves as a response to the tendency in political studies to focus predominantly on the dynamics of power struggle and power distribution (Haboddin, 2017), while giving insufficient attention to cultural aspects, particularly moral and ethical teachings expressed through literary works as forms of local wisdom. Through hermeneutics, this research seeks to demonstrate that the value-based legacy embedded in literary texts can make a significant contribution to understanding and critiquing contemporary political practices in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Nobility Value in The *Serat Wicara Keras*

The Javanese culture has never been detached from the influence of various Hindu kingdoms to the Islamic Mataram dynasty that once flourished on the island of Java. The religious elements of each political power that emerged on the island have influenced the construction of Javanese culture (Schrieke, 1960). In this context, the established cultural paradigm that influences Javanese culture as a whole is Javanese feudalism, which positions the king at the center of his relationship with the people. The relationship between the king and the people is influenced by the Javanese spiritual nature, centralized around the concept of *manunggaling kawula lan Gusti* (Mamahit, 2021), a mystical view that forms the spiritual foundation of Javanese spirituality regarding the

relationship between God and human. The king's authority in Javanese feudalism is positioned as a manifestation of absolute divine power, requiring the obedience of the people (Wahyuningtyas, 2017). In this context, the king's decisions are considered the voice of God on various matters.

According to Koentjaraningrat (1994), cultural elements are divided into religious systems, social organization systems, livelihood systems, technology and equipment systems, knowledge systems, language, and the arts. In the context of Javanese feudalism, each cultural element can be seen as a means of legitimizing the king's power, especially the religious system and knowledge. The religious system of Javanese feudalism positions the king as the center of truth, where the king's decisions are considered certainty. This is often explained in statements like *sabda pandita ratu tan keno wola wali*, implying that the king's statements are unquestionable. The king in the context of Javanese feudalism is seen as a wise person with spiritual abilities to receive divine guidance (Rahapsari, 2022), known as *sabda jati*, as a basis for decision-making. This religious belief and knowledge base underlie the Javanese way of life in the context of Javanese feudalism.

This Javanese cultural context forms the background of every aspect of Javanese culture, especially during the reign of the Islamic Mataram dynasty. One aspect of Javanese culture influenced by this feudal background is its literary works. *The Serat Wicara Keras*, a literary work from the era of the Surakarta Kasunanan kingdom rule, part of the Islamic Mataram dynasty, is deeply rooted in the context of Javanese feudalism. Considering that the author, Yasadhipura II, was a prominent poet and a courtier of the Kasunanan Surakarta, the cultural influence within the palace grounds significantly affected Yasadhipura II's literary works.

Serat Wicara Keras is one of Yasadhipura II's works that presents a different direction. This work cannot be understood solely as the poet's effort to affirm the leadership of the king and the authority of the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom. Instead, it is more of Yasadhipura II's reflection on the socio-political conditions under the rule of Javanese feudalism. In this regard, *Serat Wicara Keras* is often considered a form of criticism against the feudal rulers of that time, specifically Pakubuwana IV, who led the Kasunanan Surakarta as the successor of the Mataram Islamic dynasty. This aligns with Yasadhipura II's statement in *Serat Wicara Keras* stanza 1:

*“Watake wicara kêras,
sumuking pangucap wêngis,
iku nangèkakên napas,*

*setane nuli kékintih.
Yèn ujar ririh manis,
nora tangi napasipun,
ayêm sarta santosa,
setane lumayu ngênthir.
Pan wus kocap wong sabar ngunjara setan “
(Yasadhipura, 1926: stanza 1).*

means:

This character of **harsh speech**
Words that burn and wound
awaken the breath of anger,
and the demon immediately clings to them.
But when words are **polite and graceful**,
the breath does not rise,
the heart remains **calm and peaceful**,
and the demon flees far away.
It is known that a patient person is able to overcome demons.

The expression clarifies the context of Yasadhipura II as the author of the *Serat Wicara Keras* manuscript. On one hand, he seeks to express his disappointment over the disorder occurring within the Kasunanan Surakarta palace, particularly regarding the policies of Pakubuwana IV that diverged from traditional customs, as well as the various intrigues within the kingdom. However, in the first stanza of the *Serat Wicara Keras*, it is evident how Yasadhipura II still strives to maintain polite language and graceful to etiquette as befitting a Javanese *priyayi*, even though he is agitated and attempts to express all his criticisms of the social-political turmoil in the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom during the reign of Pakubuwono IV.

According to Ekowati (2012), one of Yasadipura II's criticisms of the leadership of Pakubuwana IV is influenced by the policy regarding the appointment of *guru dalem*. This is a prestigious rank within the bureaucratic structure of the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom granted to the king's advisors, namely Kiai Wiradigda, Kiai Nur Saleh, Kiai Pingengah, and Brahman (Joebagio, 2009). This is explained in *Serat Wicara Keras* stanza 22 as follows:

*“ Kaya alam Wiradigda,
lali kalamun wong cilik.
Kudu angowahi adat,
ambubrah janji wus dadi.
Amêmpêng kudu jurit,
sêsumbare bisa mabur.
Saguh lamun malumpat,
bêngawane wong Sêmanggi.
Kabêh obat ing loji pan dadya toya “
(Yasadhipura, 1926: stanza 22).*

means:

Just like **Wiradigda**
Forgets that he comes from the people
Changing traditional rules
Breaking established promises
Wishing to be treated like a warrior
Boasts of being able to fly
Claims to be able to leap over
the Bengawan Semanggi River
Able to turn medicine into fresh water

The statement in *Serat Wicara Keras* refers to the appointment of Wiradigda and other advisors of Pakubuwana IV, who received promotions without adhering to the customary or traditional rules that should have been followed. Their appointment as *guru dalem* did not go through the proper procedure in the traditional order of the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom, which involves the *suwita* (learning) process, followed by an apprenticeship, and only then could a candidate for abdi dalem receive the reward of *kekancingan* as an *abdi dalem* (Marie, 2017). This demonstrates the irregularity in the appointment process of Pakubuwana IV's advisors.

Yasadhipura II highlights the instant process undergone by Pakubuwana IV's advisors. Through deception about their military and spiritual abilities, Wiradigda and Pakubuwana IV's advisors successfully persuaded Pakubuwana IV to appoint them as guru dalem, even though this decision deviated from the customary order of the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom. In this context, Yasadhipura II in *Serat Wicara Keras* stanza 4 explains the importance of patience in going through the stages of life according to each proper phase. Yasadhipura II explains as follows:

“ *Wus kocap ing dalêm kitab,
pêpacanganing bilai,
wong kurang sabar darana.
Ewan panastèning ati.
Lyan jinising utami,
dadi bangsaning truwèlu.
Andadra ngômbra-ômbra,
lali lamun ana pati.
Utamane yèn wong bécik nglakonana* “
(Yasadhipura, 1926: stanza 4).

means:

It has been explained in the holy scriptures,
What **causes disasters**,
Are people who cannot endure patiently,
Often jealous and hot-tempered.
Far from virtues,
Like rodents.
They multiply and worsen the situation,

Forgetting about death.
Those with noble character, undergo the process.

Patience in life is a virtue that should be ingrained in oneself. This is based on the awareness that everything that should be attained will be attained, but if it has not yet or is not rightfully theirs, it should not be forced. In *Serat Wicara Keras* stanza 4, Yasadhipura II explains that anything forced out of jealousy and anger will only lead to disaster. Someone with noble character will be willing to undergo the process, even if it starts from the lowest stages.

Yasadhipura II emphasizes the process as something essential, that a good outcome must be achieved through a good process. Indirectly, the term *teteken temah katekan* becomes an ideal that can explain Yasadhipura II's intent, *teteken* (walking with a cane) serves as an analogy for the journey or process undertaken physically and mentally with great effort. This process is carried out with an orientation towards a goal, which is to achieve a hope (Suryadi, 2018). The expression is commonly used by the Javanese people, both in theatrical performances and daily life, to advise on the importance of a good process in reaching a good goal.

In *Serat Wicara Keras*, it is explained that a good process, good conduct, and acts free from disgrace will lead to true nobility (*awirya*) in life.

**" Sabarang panggawe arja,
sumingkir panggawe nisthip.
Anyêgah tingkah kang salah,
nora ewan nora jail.
Saengga wiji sawi,
sayêktine enggal thukul ,
kakêmbanging awirya ,
dudu kêmbanging bilai.
Dèn waspada wong urip aja sêmbrana "**
(Yasadhipura, 1926: stanza 5)

means:

**Every noble deed
must be kept far from ignoble acts,
Avoiding disgraceful acts,
do not be mischievous and do not commit evil.
So that the seed of virtue may swiftly grow,
blossoming into true nobility,
not into a bloom of disasters.
Be watchful in life, do not be careless**

The expression clarifies that noble deed, by avoiding disgraceful and ignoble acts, will bring forth true nobility and protect a person from disasters. Noble deed in this context

is certainly grounded in customary order, which is not only obligatory for the community but also for a leader, namely the King. This reflects Yasadhipura II's position in criticizing the actions of Pakubuwana IV, who at that time often made decisions hastily and beyond the proper rules, including the appointment of advisers that did not conform to the bureaucratic procedures of the Surakarta Kasunanan court. Yasadhipura II holds that nobility (*awirya*) is the ultimate value that must be embedded in every individual. By remaining vigilant and not acting rashly in making decisions, a person will be able to preserve his nobility.

In the Javanese leadership tradition, the term *adigang adigung adiguna* is often used to describe rash and arbitrary behaviour that should be avoided by a leader or anyone with authority. People who have been endowed with authority or power will usually do things that violate appropriateness for their personal goals. Whether from various circles, positions, or descendants, everyone must maintain their behaviour, living each process of life in line with what he should get, not imposing what has not or is not his right. The *Pakepung* incident in the history of Pakubuwono IV's leadership is one of the events that resulted from decisions taken by Pakubuwono IV arbitrarily. *Geger Pekepung* was written by Yasadhipura II in Babad Pakepung as a siege of Kasunanan Surakarta palace by the VOC, Yogyakarta Sultanate troops, and Mangkunegaran (Florida, 1993).

The *Pakepung* incident was allegedly the result of Pakubuwana IV being too rash to defect from the Dutch colonial government without understanding the strength of the opponent. In addition, according to Sri Suhandjati Sukri (2004), Pakubuwono IV's desire to reclaim the territory already controlled by Kasultanan Yogyakarta and Mangkunegaran duchy in accordance with the Giyanti and Salatiga agreements, triggered Hamengkubuwana I and Mangkunegaran I troops to besiege Kasunanan Surakarta, due to concerns about disharmony in the socio-political relations that had been built before. This event then became one of the bases of the criticism raised by Yasadhipura II in *Serat Wicara Keras*.

"Aywa dumèh wong awirya,
anak putune wong mukti.
Sanadyan mêngku nagara,
aywa sumakeyan êdir.
Tan nganggo dugi-dugi,
sapa sira sapa ingsun.
Puniku bêbakalan ,
atêtombok kaki nini.
Kang wus bécik panggonane mèlu nyambat "
(Yasadhipura, 1926: stanza 6).

means:

Do not be arrogant because of noble ancestry,
descendants of dignataries.
Despite ruling the country,
do not favor yourself.
Without careful consideration,
must understand who I am and who you are.
That is the reason,
from the loss of the ancestors.
Who have done good before.

The expression in *Serat Wicara Keras* in the 6th stanza clarifies Yasadhipura II's depiction of the leadership of Pakubuwana IV as the king of Kasunanan Surakarta. Although being a king in Javanese tradition is believed to be based on divine revelation, with absolute power (Pradnyawan, 2015), every action and decision of the king must be based on careful consideration. This is because every decision made by the king will impact the condition of the country and its people.

The nobility of an individual, according to Yasadhipura II, is not based on their ancestry but on how they can maintain virtuous conduct and make thoughtful decisions, ensuring that their actions do not harm the reputation of their ancestors. An individual must understand their own position and capabilities to avoid recklessness in decision-making. In this context, Yasadhipura II provides an example of nobility in the leadership of Javanese kings, as demonstrated by Raden Ngabehi Loring Pasar or known as Panembahan Senopati.

" Ngabèi Saloring Pasar,
saparene angêmohi,
nora nganggo lara lapa.
Sadaya samya amukti,
tan milu mati ragi,
mangkruk-mangkruk nêmu gêthuk.
Kyai Gêng ing Sêsela,
pêpaline aprayogi,
dèn aggoa nora sasar ambêlasar "
(Yasadhipura, 1926: stanza 10).

means:

Like Ngabehi Loring Pasar,
never willing
to lead without experiencing hardship and hunger.
Now, his descendants have ample sufficiency
not engaging in ascetic practices anymore,
relaxing and enjoying life's pleasures.
Kyai Ageng Sela,
his advice is truly good,
to avoid going astray and stumbling.

Yasadhipura II positions Ngabehi Loring Pasar as a Javanese king worthy of emulation. Ngabehi Saloring Pasar was the first ruler of Islamic Mataram, bearing the title Panembahan Senopati, who established the Islamic Mataram kingdom after the fall of Pajang. He refused to merely accept things as they were, always prioritizing process and hard work (*lara lapa*). His ascetic practices and way of life became widely renowned and are mentioned in various Javanese literary works, one of which is found in the *Serat Wedhatama* by Mangkunegara IV.

“ **Nulada laku utama**
tumraping wong tanah Jawi
Wong Agung ing Ngeksi ganda
Panembahan Senapati
Kapati amarsudi sudaning hawa lan nafsu
pinesu tapa brata
tanapi ing siang ratri
amamangun karyenak tyasing sasama “
(Mangkunegara IV, 1953)

means:

To emulate noble conduct
for the people of Java.
The Great One of Mataram,
Panembahan Senapati,
earnestly purified himself from passions and desires,
undertaking ascetic practices,
unceasingly day and night,
in order to cultivate and bring forth peace in the hearts of others.

In this stanza of *Serat Wedhatama*, it explains that the nobility of Panembahan Senopati or Ngabehi Loring Pasar does not come from his ancestry but from his conduct. He consistently restrained his desires and performed kindness towards others. In line with this, in the 10th stanza of *Serat Wicara Keras*, it is explained that what Ngabehi Loring Pasar did was very different from the leadership of his successor, the lineage of Islamic Mataram, during the reign of Pakubuwono IV. The nobility of his ancestors had dazzled Pakubuwono IV, leading him to act arbitrarily and recklessly, resulting in a disaster known as *Geger Pakepung*.

Yasadhipura II's various criticisms of Pakubuwono IV's leadership in *Serat Wicara Keras* contain a teaching that everyone should direct themselves towards nobility (*awirya*). Nobility is a goal achieved not instantly, not based on lineage or power, but through a process until reaching a phase of readiness to achieve that goal. Someone with esteemed ancestors even has a significant responsibility to preserve the nobility of their ancestors' name. In Javanese tradition, this is carried out through what is known as *lelaku*, a spiritual path to maintain inner purity and restrain desires, as exemplified by Ngabehi

Loring Pasar. A noble person will have spiritual maturity, enabling them to make decisions and take actions with great caution and careful consideration. This nobility, as depicted in *Serat Wicara Keras*, is crucial for a national leader (in this context, the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom), as every action and decision made by a leader will impact their reputation and the condition of their country.

Critical Reflection on the Value of Nobility in *Serat Wicara Keras* Regarding Dynastic Politics in Indonesia

The independence of Indonesia in 1945, based on the proclamation of independence read by Ir. Soekarno on August 17, 1945, became a de facto sovereign and independent nation (Dulay & Ko, 2024). The sovereignty of Indonesia is grounded in the sovereignty of the Indonesian people, as conveyed in the closing part of the Proclamation text on behalf of the Indonesian nation. In this regard, it can be said that Indonesia is based on democratic principles, placing the apex of power in the hands of the Indonesian people. This is also reflected in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, which states: "...*disusunlah Kemerdekaan Kebangsaan Indonesia itu dalam suatu Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Indonesia, yang terbentuk dalam suatu susunan Negara Republik Indonesia yang berkedaulatan rakyat...*" (paragraph 4 of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution). This serves as evidence that the establishment of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is based on the spirit of people's sovereignty, the primary principle of a democratic state.

According to Marijan (2019), democracy is characterized by three main elements: (1) competition in defending and contesting power, (2) public participation, and (3) guarantees of civil and political rights. As a democratic state, the Indonesian government should ensure the rights of every citizen to participate in the governance of Indonesia according to the existing democratic mechanisms, both in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In this context, the state must grant equal rights to the Indonesian people, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, to express opinions and associate, especially in socio-political aspects. In line with the fourth principle of Pancasila which states: "*Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksanaan dalam permusyawaratan/perwakilan*" (fourth principle of Pancasila), it shows that every political decision made in the life of the nation and state in Indonesia is determined based on consensus that favors the common interests of the entire Indonesian society. Additionally, Pancasila in the fifth principle also demonstrates that Indonesia is a state that upholds justice, explained as "*Keadilan sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia*" (fifth principle of Pancasila). This spirit of

justice forms the basis for every political mechanism implemented by the Indonesian government in distributing rights and obligations to the Indonesian society.

The participation of the public in political matters is manifested in the implementation of the electoral system, which can be considered the pinnacle of implementing democratic principles in a country. Through the electoral system, elements of democracy, such as competition, participation, and guarantees of political rights, can be clearly observed (Marijan, 2019). The implementation of the electoral system opens opportunities for all people to determine their political choices regarding who is deemed fit to lead and manage Indonesia, both in the executive and legislative branches. This is also inseparable from the freedom of the Indonesian people to associate, including the establishment of political parties or becoming members of a political party. This freedom is based, in part, on Law No. 31 of 2002 on the implementation of the multi-party system in Indonesia. With the implementation of a multi-party system, there is no limit to the number of parties in Indonesia, meaning that every community group can establish a political party according to the spirit of political freedom applied in Indonesia.

While the application of democratic principles in Indonesia is based on Pancasila, which is imbued with the values of justice and equality, its implementation cannot be said to run perfectly. Indonesian politics from the post-independence period to the current reform era can be considered to have experienced ups and downs in democracy. Even looking back to the New Order era, the implementation of Pancasila democracy essentially became a political tool for the Soeharto regime to maintain its power (Hidayat & Hutabarat, 2012). Pancasila was promoted as the sole foundation, where interpretations of Pancasila can be said to be centralistic. Those who held a position contrary to government policies were indirectly considered to be against Pancasila. With such political conditions, Pancasila democracy was limited to legitimizing the power of the New Order regime for 32 years.

The post-New Order reform in Indonesia, which has somewhat shifted power from the military to the decentralization of power held by civilians, cannot be said to have progressed smoothly toward achieving perfect democratization. Parties in Indonesia are fundamentally inseparable from the existence of a patronage culture (Blondel & Thiebault, 2010), with various political directions based on certain political personalization provisions. This political personalization emerges by focusing on political figures who hold positions as party founders, party chairpersons, or figures who have successfully gained a level of popularity considered to influence the political preferences of the community

towards that political party. Political personalization in political parties is caused by the strong desire of individuals to use political parties to maintain their political position or, at the very least, that of their relatives and closest associates (Bakar, 2013). Political personalization is based on the patron-client relationship, which refers to the power proportion of certain political figures over the determination of the ideology and internal mechanisms of their political parties. This political personalization subsequently directs the party's politics towards elitist matters or is based solely on elite interests.

One of the consequences of political personalization or the patronage culture within political parties is the formation of political dynasties in the leadership of various political parties in Indonesia. It cannot be denied that several political parties in Indonesia place certain political figures in central positions, where the political direction of a party cannot be separated from the taste and interests of the figure who becomes the political personalization of each party. Examples include the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP), which places the fifth president of Indonesia, Megawati Soekarno Putri, as a central figure. Megawati Soekarno Putri, as the descendant of Soekarno, is considered capable of advocating and continuing the ideology of the proclaimer. With this belief, both her eldest and second children obtained strategic positions in the party. Another example is the Democratic Party, where the party experienced its peak when the sixth president of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), won the 2004 elections. The credibility and reformist image attached to SBY successfully attracted the sympathy of the public and increased the popularity of the Partai Demokrat in the electoral arena at that time (Honna, 2012). This ability ultimately led SBY to the position of chairman of the Partai Demokrat, replacing Anas Urbaningrum in 2013. His position as party chairman then constructed him as the patron of the party, supported by the appointment of his eldest son, Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, as his political legacy successor as the chairman of the Partai Demokrat until today.

In the view of Yasadhipura II, referring to what he conveyed in *Serat Wicara Keras*, the aspect of descent in leadership is a legitimate occurrence. This is considering Yasadhipura II is within the context of 18th-century Javanese feudal culture that adheres to the dynastic system, namely the Mataram Islamic dynasty (Arps, 2019). However, the focus here is Yasadhipura II's efforts to explain the responsibilities that must be undertaken by the successor of a particular political dynasty. A leader cannot rely solely on the illustrious name of their ancestors but must be able to actualize their nobility as successors who can maintain the good name of their ancestors. The greater the name of

their ancestors, the greater the responsibility to actualize their nobility. Yasadhipura II explained this in *Serat Wicara Keras* in stanza 13 and 14, as follows:

13

**“ Yèn ngaku anak pandhita,
sayêkti bêtah sêsirih.
Yèn ora karêm ing lapa,
iku lamis nora dhamis.
Yèn kurang bêtah ngêlih,
sayêkti wong ngaku-aku.
Lamun anak pujôngga,
tan wêruh ing épa siji,
ngaku anak sujana nalare liwar “**
(Yasadhipura, 1926: stanza 13)

means:

**If claiming to be a priest's child,
one should endure a life of humility.**
If unable to withstand hunger,
it's merely false pretense.
Similarly, proclaiming to be a poet's child
but knowing nothing,
asserting intelligence but lacking problem-solving skills,
it's just empty talk.

14

**“ Ngaku anaking ulama,
têka nora bisa ngaji.
Yèn ngaku anaking Cina,
pagene tan kulit kuning.
Ngaku anaking santri,
nora bisa maca Kulhu.
Yèn ngaku anak raja,
pasthi nalare patitis.
Yèn anaking kaum pasthi bisa donga “**
(Yasadhipura, 1926: stanza 14).

means:

**Claiming to be the child of a parson,
Yet unable to recite the Quran.**
Identifying as Chinese,
Yet why isn't the skin yellow?
**Proclaiming to be child of santri,
Yet unable to read Kulhu (QS.Al-Ikhlâs).**
**If claiming to be the child of a king,
Certainly, able to use reasoning well.
If a member of the faithful, surely capable of praying.**

The two stanzas in *Serat Wicara Keras* provide a clear perspective from Yasadhipura II regarding the implementation of dynastic politics. According to these verses, individuals who establish or continue a specific political dynasty should not only enjoy instant comfort from the preceding generations but also bear the responsibility of

upholding the family's reputation and dedicating themselves to the progress achieved or fought for by the previous generations. The text implies that the child of an *pandhita*, *ulama* or a *santri* should naturally be knowledgeable in religious matters (*betah sesirih, bisa ngaji, bisa maca Kulhu, bisa donga*), in the same way, if one is truly the child of a king, he should be well-reasoned (*nalare patitis*). In other words, based on these expressions, the practice of dynastic politics in the leadership of political parties in Indonesia is considered acceptable, but it still entails accountability for the successors to preserve the nobility of the previous generations.

Political dynasty issues can be seen as a political problem persisting from the independence era to the present. This is because political dynasties are closely related to nepotism practices that contradict democratic principles (Dedi, 2022). Recently, the Indonesian public has been shocked by the phenomenon of political dynasties in the central government affecting the family of President Joko Widodo. Although political dynasties are frequently encountered in Indonesian politics, especially in the leadership and management of political parties, the underlying processes of these events have sparked intense debates and criticisms from various quarters. This stems from the Constitutional Court's (*Mahkamah Konstitusi*) decision, chaired by President Joko Widodo's brother-in-law, Anwar Usman, which was deemed to exceed its authority regarding the change in the age limit for presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The decision is suspected to favor President Joko Widodo's eldest son for an easy entry into the 2024 political contest as the vice-presidential candidate alongside presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto (Ramadhan & Donri, 2024). This event has led to a political uproar that has shocked the public, even after the establishment of the Honorary Council of the Constitutional Court (*Majelis Kehormatan Mahkamah Konstitusi*), various lawsuits have emerged from various parties regarding the ethical violations of the Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi*) judges in making that decision.

This political turmoil can be paralleled with the events surrounding the leadership of Pakubuwono IV in the appointment of *guru dalem*, as explained in *Serat Wicara Keras* by Yasadhipura II. Yasadhipura II explains that Pakubuwana IV was influenced by his advisors to bypass existing customary norms by appointing his advisors as *guru dalem* without adhering to the established procedures within the bureaucracy of the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom. According to Yasadhipura II, this would lead to *bilai* (disaster) and deviate from what is called *awirya* (nobility) (Yasadhipura, 1926: stanza 5). Because nobility can only be achieved by practicing good conduct to achieve a good goal, based

on proper norms and morality. Meanwhile, actions or decisions not aimed at nobility will lead to disaster, as seen in the leadership of Pakubuwono IV with the occurrence of *Geger Pakepung*. This can be seen as a projection of the political dynasty problem addressed to the family of President Joko Widodo today.

Geger also occurs in the current implementation of political dynasties in Indonesia. Various criticisms and lawsuits have been directed at both the Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi*) judges and the family of President Joko Widodo. This event has even tarnished the record of President Joko Widodo's leadership, who has been considered one of the presidents who successfully brought progress to Indonesia, with a public satisfaction rate of 74.3% in 2023 (Muhamad, 2023). The good name of President Joko Widodo, earned through his hard work during two terms leading Indonesia, must now face the bitter pill of political dynasty issues strengthened by the Constitutional Court's decision that makes way for his eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, to participate in the 2024 electoral contest. The current turmoil is referred to by Yasadhipura II as *kembang ing bilai* (Yasadhipura II, 1926: verse 5), or the blossoming of disaster due to reckless and poorly considered actions. A good dynasty must be able to build a good image as well, while still adhering to the proper norms and moral foundations. According to Yasadhipura II, a person must live a certain way to reach a certain position, where this should not be forced by surpassing or even changing rules that do not conform to proper political etiquette. The effort to continue respecting the process and not acting recklessly is what allows someone to achieve their nobility, not based on the nobility of their predecessors.

CONCLUSION

The analysis conducted using the hermeneutic method shows that *Serat Wirid Hidayat Jati* should not be understood literally, but rather through an interpretation that takes into account the context or horizon influencing the existence of the manuscript. This interpretive process aims not only to understand the coherence among the internal parts of the text, but also to grasp the coherence between the text and its historical and cultural context. Through this process, *Serat Wicara Keras* is identified as a literary work that emerged within the context of the leadership of the Mataram Islamic dynasty, specifically during the reign of Pakubuwono IV over the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom. The manuscript was written by Yasadhipura II, who was a royal poet or court poet in the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom. As a court poet, Yasadhipura can be considered a high-

ranking figure in the kingdom within the circle of the king's power, serving as a central figure in the political strength of the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom. However, what is interesting is that *Serat Wicara Keras* contains various sharp criticisms from Yasadhipura II regarding various policies and socio-political conditions during the leadership of Pakubuwono IV. In essence, Yasadhipura II, as a court poet, not only affirms the power of the Kasunanan Surakarta palace in Java as the Mataram Islamic dynasty but also strives to actualize his critical reflections on the socio-political aspects and policies of Pakubuwono IV, although the criticisms expressed by Yasadhipura II still maintain the politeness that should be preserved by a Javanese *priyayi*.

Serat Wicara Keras reveals the teachings of Yasadhipura II based on various contexts of socio-political problems experienced by Yasadhipura II in his life within the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom during the leadership of Pakubuwono IV. One issue highlighted by Yasadhipura II is the appointment of Pakubuwono IV's advisors as *guru dalem*. This appointment exceeded customary norms or recognized procedures within the bureaucracy of the Kasunanan Surakarta kingdom. This demonstrates Pakubuwono IV's recklessness in decision-making, going as far as violating existing customary norms. According to Yasadhipura II, what the king's advisors obtained is like *bangsaning truwèlu* (rodent animals), which *andadra ngômbra-ômbra*, become rampant without rooting in propriety and result in worsening conditions. Yasadhipura II explains that nobility is obtained from *lelaku* (a noble process), a gradual journey that is undertaken until one is mentally and spiritually ready to achieve the desired goal. A poorly executed process will only result in *bilai* (disaster), evident in various policies of Pakubuwono IV that led to the *Geger Pakepung*. According to Yasadhipura II, a leader's nobility is based on their ability to restrain desires, as exemplified by Ngabehi Loring Pasar, in order to decide everything without haste.

The context that has been understood through the hermeneutic process is then used as a foundation for examining holistically the values of nobility contained in *Serat Wicara Keras*. These values are understood not merely as normative teachings bound to a particular time and space, but rather as an ethical ideality that possesses reflective power to assess and critique continually evolving social realities. Within this framework, *Serat Wicara Keras* is positioned as a text capable of providing moral and philosophical perspectives for interpreting various life contexts, including the practice of dynastic politics in Indonesia. In this regard, the hermeneutic process undertaken does not stop at the effort to excavate meanings from the past simply to reproduce them in the present.

Instead, interpretation is directed toward the conceptualization of the values embedded in *Serat Wicara Keras* so that they may function as a critical framework for understanding and evaluating contemporary socio-political realities. The values of nobility are projected as ethical principles that remain relevant for reading the dynamics of power and political relations today. The interpretive process is therefore dynamic and progressive, moving beyond textual understanding toward the pursuit of contemporary relevance. Hermeneutics, in this sense, functions not only as a method of interpretation but also as a bridge that connects text and reality, enabling the values of nobility derived from *Serat Wicara Keras* to be actualized as a normative ideality in responding to ongoing socio-political issues in the present era.

The value of nobility implicit in *Serat Wicara Keras* can be used to analyze the practice of dynastic politics in Indonesia. One factor influencing the occurrence of political dynasties is the patronage culture in the leadership of political parties in Indonesia. There is a process of political personalization in most political parties in Indonesia towards specific figures, be they party founders, chairpersons, or popular figures using political parties to continue the political legacy to successors with whom they have a family relationship. According to Yasadhipura II, with a background in Javanese feudal culture, considering dynastic practices normal is understandable. However, it needs to be emphasized that a dynasty should be directed towards nobility and based on a noble process. Every successor to a political dynasty has the responsibility to uphold the good name and nobility of the previous generations. In this case, the main focus is not on achieving goals, but rather on the noble process undertaken, without violating or changing the norms and moral principles that should be followed.

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