

# Java Society Moral Decadence in Serat Wicara Keras

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**Abstract.** This study aims to describe the moral decadence or decline / decline in morals and social behavior of the people of Surakarta, as expressed by Serat Wicara Keras by the poet R. Ng. Second Yasadipura. This research includes text analysis methods, interpretation, and ideological analysis. The text analysis method uses structural analysis techniques. Interpretation using Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotics. Ideological analysis uses the theory of new historicism. This research found that Javanese society during the reign of Sunan Paku Buwana IV experienced many setbacks, both morally and socially. These setbacks include, for example, that there are many descendants of kings who no longer have supernatural powers, children of priests who no longer like fasting, children of poets who do not speak the language, and so on. Because of the many deficiencies in this society, the Serat Wicara Keras considered a criticism of the power of Paku Buwana IV. This opinion cannot be accepted if it is associated with the positions of the poets and kings; however, the poets still conveyed the king's ideology. Serat Wicara Keras conveyed the opinion of King Paku Buwana IV who regretted the social situation in his day.

**Keywords:** wicara keras, moral decadence, ideology

## 1 Introduction

Serat Wicara Keras is a Javanese literary work written by Pujangga Raden Ngabehi (R. Ng.) Yasadipura II. Serat Wicara Keras is written in the form of traditional Javanese poetry called *tembang macapat*. Overall Serat Wicara Keras consists of eight cantos, namely Sinom: 26 verses, Dandanggula: 27 verses, Gambuh: 25 verses, Kinanthi: 23 verses, Megatruh: 29 verses, Sinom: 30 verses, Pangkur: 22 verses, and Dandanggula: 42 verses. When added together, Serat Wicara Keras contain 224 stanzas or 1,756 lines or 14,809 syllables. Serat Wicara Keras is a masterpiece, not only for the number of verses, but for their controversial content. Many literary observers state that the Serat Wicara Keras written by Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura contain criticism of the power at that time, namely the power of the fourth King of Paku Buwana [1] [2][3] This opinion is certainly very interesting to observe, maybe even need to be reexamined.

This research aims at examining the Serat Wicara Keras by Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II in its context, namely in relation to the author, the king, and also contemporary non-literary works.

## 2 Research Methods

In general, this research belongs to new historicism literary studies. The term new historicism was first used by Stephen Greenblatt in an introduction to the edition of the journal *Genre* in 1982, to offer a new perspective in renaissance studies, emphasizing the relationship between literary texts and the various social, economic and political forces that surround them [4]. In Indonesian, the terms "new history" and "new history" are used. New historicism contains two things, namely (1) understanding literature through history and (2) knowing culture, history, and thought through literature.

Therefore, new historicism does not distinguish literary texts from non-literary texts, such as the view of old history (history as the background of literary works) or new criticism (autonomous literature or ahistory). New historicism applies an intertext working method by reading several texts in parallel (parallel reading) because all texts are products of the times and are interconnected. The application of the method of new historicism, reading literature "in a series of archives" [5].

New historicism defines literature in terms of its relationship to non-literary texts, because arguments about the meaning of literary texts are often easily explained by looking at history. History is like a powerful analytical knife because it often provides a solid basis for establishing statements with regard to meaning [6][7]. New historicism places literary texts within the framework of non-literary texts [5]. This is in line with Greenblatt's opinion in the formula "nothing comes of nothing" when studying Shakespeare. With regard to Shakespeare, Greenblatt asks :, "where does he get his ingredients", "how does he work with them", and "what does he do with them"? New historicism does not assess cultural products (high-low, literary-non-literary, serious-popular) but rather to show how various kinds of texts are interrelated with the problems of their time because literature and history are like a network of texts and not a pendulum.

New historicism views literature as not a transparent and passive reflection of history, but rather contributes to constructing, articulating, and reproducing cultural conventions, norms, values through verbal and imaginative creative acts. According to Barry[5], historical documents are not subordinated as context, but are analysed as separate texts, called "co-texts" or "accompanying texts". Texts and co-texts in the study of new historicism are seen as expressions of the same historical moment. The nature of the objectivity of reality becomes relative because the objectivity of reality is not given but must constantly be built, with the consequence that there is no real reality.

The working stages of the theory of new historicism, such as (1) selecting literary works to be studied, (2) studying the history of society when the literary work was published, (3) reading literary works to find dominant / important issues expressed in them, (4) studying the text non-literary originating from the same historical period as literary works to find relevance (parallel relationships) between literature and non-literary texts, (5) to analyze the parallel relationships between literature and non-literary texts, and (6) the results of the analysis are arranged systematically to show the meaning of the work literature.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Older Generation vs Young Generation

If a careful look at Serat Wicara Keras describes about "replacement". The issue of substitution is presented in the conflict between old figures and young people, for example Ki Ageng Sela and Bondan Kejawan, Pangeran Mangkubumi and today's youth, and others. Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II expressed this change from the beginning of his work. Consider the following quote:

*Saksat kinarya kalipah, têngêse apan gêngênti, têka kurang panggraita. Parandene kudu bêcik, apa margane bêcik. Sok buwang sarak tur lêngus, masa silih antuka (Serat Wicara Keras: I, 3)*

'As being appointed as caliph, meaning as a substitute, do not be less responsive in thinking. Even so, it must be good, whatever the path leads to goodness. If you leave the law and you are easily offended, it is impossible to get (the result). '

In the case of a change of generations, the parents have to prepare, while the younger generation does it. Serat Wicara Keras writes as follows:

Wong tuwa wajib bêtakal, wong anom darma nglakoni (Serat Wicara Keras: I, 8)

'Parents are obliged to pave the way, young people just do it.'

The alternation of generations should have gone well, but this is not always the case, and Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II considered that the younger generation at that time was not as great as their predecessors / ancestors. The older generation as ancestors are said to have noble characters, such as like to meditate (beconcerned), like to fast, and like to do good; and also as was done by

Prince Mangkubumi, who

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

'Usually, people who claim to be brave are like Sultan Mangkubumi, it is obvious that he is an architect. Be creative by trial and error, talking doesn't hurt, being just as his thoughts flow. I don't want to go to war with fellow Javanese. '

Contrary to the character of their ancestors, the younger generation has a bad character: Samêngko datan sêmbada, mung cariwis angêcuwis. Yèn ana alis lancapan, atine angithi-ithi. Ambêke nglêlanangi, muncu-muncu kaya wudun. Kabèh rat jagad Jawa, anèng sêlaning dariji. Mung tumèmpèl anèng ing lambe kewala. (Serat Wicara Keras: I, 18)

'People today are incapacitated, only talk a lot. If there was a sharp brow, his heart was watching. His character was manly, almost erupted like a boil. All of Java, between his fingers. Just sticking to the lips. '

Even worse, the younger generation at that time liked to confess even though his quality was not commensurate with his recognition, for example claiming to be descended from Brawijaya but not powerful, claiming to be a hermit child but not fond of fasting (concerned), claiming to be a scholar but not biased to reciting the Koran (Serat Wicara Keras: I, 12 - 15).

The contradiction between the characterization or morality of the older generation and the younger generation dominates almost the entire content of the Serat Wicara Keras by Pujangga Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II. The older generation has a noble character that should be imitated by the younger generation, but even though the older generation has exemplified kindness and educates their children, the younger generation still has a bad character.

Serat Wicara Keras tells about the moral decadence of the younger generation which is already at a level of concern, at least for Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II. The moral decadence of

the younger generation is often interpreted as criticism. Perhaps it is criticism for the younger generation, but not for the authorities.

### 3.2 Client vs Patron

Serat Wicara Keras [8] written by Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II. Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II has the small name Wasista who was born around 1687 AD or 1760 AD and died in 1844 AD [9]. Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II was one of the poets of the Surakarta Hadiningrat palace during the reign of Pakubuwana IV, V, VI and VII. Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II is the son of the kyai Yasadipura I, both of whom are very famous Surakarta court poets.

As a court poet, Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II had a unique relationship with the King of Surakarta at that time, namely Paku Buwana IV, V, VI, and VII [10]. The relationship between Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II and the King of Surakarta is the relationship between the client and the patron. The life of Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II and his family is fully borne by the King. Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II's career began with serving as a minor priyayi to the rank of panewu with the name Kyai Ranggawarsita I, then he was appointed Kliwon (regent anom) and named Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II. He is a servant who is very obedient and obedient to the orders of his superiors.

Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II's career continued to improve until he was appointed as a Bupati (regent of elderly) and he studied Kasepuhan. Then during the reign of Pakubuwana IV, Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II was appointed Bupati Carik replacing his deceased father and was given the name Raden Tumenggung Sastranegara.

During the reign of Pakubuwana IV, there was a Dipanegara war. Pakubuwana IV secretly helped Pangeran Dipanegara and all the letters Pakubuwana IV sent to Pangeran Dipanegara were compiled and written by Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II. When Prince Dipanegara lost and was arrested by the Dutch, it was clear that Pakubuwana IV was involved in this, as well as Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II, who would actually be arrested by the Dutch. This was canceled because the one who admitted that he had written the letters for Pangeran Dipanegara was the eldest son of Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II, namely Mas Ngabehi Ranggawarsita II, so it was the young son who was arrested by the Dutch and exiled to Jakarta [11].

Given this patron-client relationship, Serat Wicara Keras is impossible for Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II to criticize the king's talk. As a client, Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II will convey the king's ideology in his work.

Incidentally, one of Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II's patrons is a poet who also writes literary works, namely Paku Buwana IV. So to find out whether the ideology of Paku Buwana IV can be examined from one of his works. One of the major works written by Paku Buwana IV is Serat Wulangreh.

It turns out that in Serat Wulangreh [12], Paku Buwana IV also conveyed the decline (decadence) of society (the younger generation) at that time. Pay attention to the following quote:

*angèl tèmên ing zaman samangkin  
ingkang pantês kêna ginuronan  
akèh wong jaja ngèlmune  
lan arang ingkang  
manut yèn wong ngèlmu ingkang nêtêpi  
ing panggawening sarak  
dèn arani missed  
nanging ta asèsênengan  
nora kêna dèn wor kêkarèpannèki*

*pêpangcènè priyangga*  
(*Wulangreh: I, 7*)  
"It is very difficult nowadays.  
Who deserves to be a teacher.  
Many people bear their knowledge.  
And rarely do they think that  
if there are knowledgeable people who obey the  
rules of law, they are  
said to be wrong  
but their preferences  
should not be mixed  
with personal desires."

The younger generation at that time had no manners, liked dialem, arrogant, liked style, as seen in the following quote:

*lan wong anom-anom iku*  
*kang kanggo ing mangsa iki*  
*andhap asor dipun simpar*  
*umbag gumunggung ing dhiri*  
*obrol umuk kang dèn gulang*  
*kumênthus lawan kumaki ||*  
(*Serat Wulangreh: I, 8*)  
"These young people  
At this moment  
they get rid of politeness  
Likes to boastarrogant  
A lot of talk is who is sharpened  
Like to be stylish.

Raja Paku Buwana IV captured the decline (decadence) of moral society, especially the younger generation at that time. So Raja Paku Buwana IV conveyed his teachings through *Serat Wulangreh* so that the regression of the depiction would not be protracted but could be immediately resolved together with the parties concerned.

One of the teachings to overcome the moral decadence of the younger generation conveyed by Raja Paku Buwana IV in *Serat Wulangreh* is that the younger generation should prioritize diligence and thoroughness. Consider the following quote:

*mulane wong anom*  
*iku bêcik ingkang atabêri*  
*jêjagongan lan wong tuwa*  
*ingkang sugih kojah ugi*  
(*Serat Wulangreh: II, 11*).  
"That's why young people  
should be diligent and careful  
Talking with parents  
who have lots of stories."

## 4 Conclusion

Serat Wicara Keras written by Pujangga Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II. Based on the context of the era, Serat Wicara Keras has shown and responded to the social changes that occurred at the time the work was written. Serat Wicara Keras tells the moral decadence of the younger generation. As the court poet Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II realized that he had to keep his personal opinion, on the contrary he should be happy to convey the ideas and ideology of his king, namely Paku Buwana IV.

Through his teaching work Raja Paku Buwana IV also captured the moral decadence of the younger generation at that time. Therefore, many traditional circles recognize Serat Wicara Keras as a work of Paku Buwana IV, not by Raden Ngabehi Yasadipura II.

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