

## Research Article

# The Kings and Wisdoms in Surakarta and Yogyakarta Folktales

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**Abstract.**

This research aimed to explain the king's character and the wisdom in Surakarta and Yogyakarta folktales. The results showed that the king of Kanjeng Sinuhun, Paku Buwono, was the main character in the Surakarta folktale. The king, Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono, is also the main character in the Yogyakarta folktale. Folktales use the king as the main character who is a patron of the people. The king is the master of a microcosm who tries to unite the microcosm and the macrocosm so that they exist in harmony. Wisdom in the Surakarta and Yogyakarta folktales consists of *wenang wisesa ing sanagari* (having the highest authority in the country), *gung binathara bau dhendha nyakrawati* (having as much as the power of God, being the keeper of the law and the ruler of the world), and *berbudi bawa leksana ambeg adil paramarta* (having a fair and wise leadership).

**Keywords:** Kings, Local Wisdom, Folktale

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## 1. Introduction

Folktale is a form of oral tradition that must be protected, preserved, utilized, and developed. Protection is an effort so that the oral tradition does not suffer damage and extinction. Preservation and development are efforts to improve through preservation and innovative and creative development so that something can be sustainable at various times. Utilization is an effort to use the oral tradition for the purposes of education, religion, socio-culture, economy, science, technology, and so on, which the next generation of the oral tradition strives for creatively.

In the guidelines for preserving tradition, it is stated that the objects of oral tradition are traditional ceremonies, folk tales, folk games, traditional expressions, traditional medicine, traditional food and drinks, traditional architecture, traditional clothes, traditional fabrics, living tools, traditional weapons, and traditional organization [1].

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The preservation and development of folktale is an effort to respect and protect the nation's cultural heritage for the benefit of humanity. Folk stories are stories that are disseminated and passed down orally and are classified into three major groups, namely myths, legends, and fairy tales [1]. Folktale is a form of oral tradition that is purely oral, meaning that there is no original written source [2].

There are several types of folktales, including (1) myths, which are folk prose stories that are considered to have really happened and are considered sacred by the story's owner; (2) legends, which are folk prose stories that are considered true but not sacred; (3) fairy tales, which are folk prose stories that are not considered true by the owner of the story, and fairy tales are not bound by time or place [3]. Types of folktales are origin stories, animal stories, solace stories, and humorous stories [2].

One of the efforts to preserve folktale is through documenting folk stories in oral form into written form. Based on the research results, it turns out that there are still many folk tales that have not been documented in written, so research on folktale is still extensive to do. The preservation and utilization of folktale needs to be carried out because in folktale, there are educational values and local wisdom values that are worthy of being studied, preserved, and utilized for the benefit of the younger generation. Because of its importance, folktale material has become one of the teaching materials for Indonesian language learning in elementary, middle, and high school, as well as a study program in universities.

Researches on folktale and local wisdom have been conducted [4];[5]; [6]; [7]; [8]. The articles regarding the folktale have not analyzed the folktale related to the king and the local wisdom possessed by the king.

## 2. Methods

This study was a qualitative descriptive study with a content analysis method that focused on research objectives in accordance with the research method used by Creswell [9]. The data sources of this research were the Surakarta folktales which consists of the Legend of Jagalan Village (*Legenda Kampung Jagalan*) and the Legend of the Sala City (*Legenda Kota Sala*). Meanwhile, the Yogyakarta folktale is the Legend Spring of Tears (*Legenda Air Mata Pancuran*). The data collection was done by conducting document analysis of 3 folktales found in Surakarta and Yogyakarta. The analysis included (1) analysis of the king's character in the Surakarta and Yogyakarta

folktales; (2) analysis of the local wisdom in the Surakarta and Yogyakarta folktales. The data validity was done by using theoretical triangulation between the data sources of Surakarta folktale documents and Yogyakarta folktale documents. The data analysis technique used was an interactive analysis Miles and Huberman [10] which consists of data collection, data analysis, and data presentation.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. The King in the Legend of Jagalan Village (*Legenda Kampung Jagalan*) and the Legend of the Sala City (*Legenda Kota Sala*)

In the two folktales in the form of legends in Surakarta, there was a king who was the main character of the story. Although folktales are stories that are developed orally in the community, not in the palace, both Surakarta folktales have the main character of a king. In the folktale of the Legend of Jagalan Village (*Legenda Kampung Jagalan*), which is the origin story of a village name in the Surakarta area, it is stated that King Kanjeng Sinuhun Pakubuwono X is the main character. The main character in the Legend of the Sala City is King Kanjeng Sinuhun Pakubuwono II.

Kanjeng Sinuhun Pakubuwono X is mentioned in the legend as a king who was democratic. He was willing to accept the aspirations of his people. He did not run the kingdom with an iron fist. If he thought that the opinions of the people could lead them to the common good, then the king would make every effort to carry out the aspirations of his people. In this legend, it was described that the people had been slaughtering livestock and selling them in random places. Thus, the slaughtered animals were not halal and clean, especially when they were sold carelessly. The people suggested to the king that it would be better if there was a special place for slaughtering animals that were clean and healthy and for selling slaughtered animals with guaranteed quality. The democratic dialogue between the king and a subdistrict head (*panewu*) conveying the aspirations of the people can be seen in the following quote.

“Mahesa Prawiro, has the supply of meat for the palace and my people been fulfilled in your area?” asked Kanjeng Sinuhun Pakubuwono X to Raden Mahesa Prawiro.

“It has been fulfilled, Kanjeng Sinuhun. I would like to deliver respectful greetings from all the people. Besides, my area is the meat supplier for the entire Surakarta Hadiningrat area. All this time, people have slaughtered livestock in the traditional way. This takes a long time and the meat production did not meet the target. May I propose

to make an abattoir as a place for slaughtering livestock that fulfills health functions, as well as for livestock to be slaughtered” [11].

In the Legend of Sala City (*Legenda Kota Sala*), it is described that Kanjeng Sinuhun Pakubuwono II controlled the government by moving the palace from Kartasura to Sala due to rebel attacks. Pakubuwono II took a stand to protect his people from the effects of war. When his siblings felt dissatisfied, Pakubuwono II also prioritized the interests of his people so that there was no bloodshed that would harm the interests of all his people. This is shown in the following quotation.

“Calm the people of Sindunagara. The rebel forces only attacked the palace. Please, tell the people to go back to their homes and be aware. Do not worry about the condition of the palace,” said Kanjeng Sinuhun Pakubuwono II to a subdistrict head (*panewu*) named Sindunagara [11].

### 3.2. The King in the Legend of the Spring of Tears (*Legenda Mata Air Pancuran*)

The main character in the Legend of the Spring of Tears is Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono II, the king of the Yogyakarta Sultanate. He was described as a king who was attentive to his people, including the people of Gunung Kidul. In the beginning, there was a spring that was able to provide life for their citizens. Around the spring, there were many fishes that were prohibited from being taken by the community. However, these restrictions were violated. Many people took the fish for daily consumption. When there were fewer fish, the spring also provided less water for people’s lives, until it was completely depleted.

This condition caused the people to experience hunger because there was no more water flowing into their rice fields and gardens. The supply of drinking water had also decreased. This made Hamengkubuwono II feel sorry. He also came to the spring and pretended to be an ordinary citizen. He invited residents to work together to improve water sources and keep the ecosystem in balance. Finally, thanks to Hamengkubuwono II’s policy, the spring slowly produced abundant water for the local population. This is shown in the following quotation.

Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono II had succeeded in overcoming people’s problems and guiding them out of their problems in life. Since then, Hamengkubuwono II had been

honored and loved by the people. His great concern for his people made the people more loyal to him [11].

### 3.3. The Local Wisdom in the Surakarta and Yogyakarta Folktales

Local wisdom is the human intelligence possessed by certain ethnic groups obtained through community experience [12],[13] Sedyawati stated that local wisdom is the wisdom possessed by certain ethnic groups that grows from local traditional culture as a result of cultural adoption from outside or as a result of cultural adaptation from outside to local traditional culture. Local wisdom is a very determining factor for human dignity in the community [14].

There are some local wisdoms of the kings of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, which are referred to as the concept of nobility (*keagungbinataraan*). These local wisdoms include having the highest authority in the country (*wenang wisesa ing sanagari*), having as much as the power of god, being the keeper of the law and the ruler of the world (*gung binathara bau dhendha nyakrawati*), and having a fair and wise leadership (*berbudi bawa leksana ambeg adil paramarta*) [15]. These three values of local wisdom do not stand alone but are related to one another. Through the concept of *keagungbinataraan* king, the king had guidelines in using his power in Surakarta and Yogyakarta as the former Mataram kingdoms.

*Wenang wisesa ing sanagari* has the meaning of having the highest authority in the country. The king has absolute power over the entire territory under his control. In the past, the king of Mataram had absolute power in parts of Java Island which stretched from East Java (except Madura) and Central Java to the Cirebon border. This area was successfully controlled by Mataram. Mataram did not succeed in controlling West Java, Batavia, and Madura. When the Mataram kingdom split into two, namely Surakarta and Yogyakarta, the territory of the Surakarta kingdom was throughout the Surakarta residency and the Yogyakarta region in Yogyakarta and its surroundings.

At that time, the king determined the territory of the country as the center of government, the foreign territory as the territory of the kingdoms that were successfully controlled by the ruler called the regent, while the last area was the coast, which was the area near to the coast [16]. The regent was the king of a kingdom that was successfully controlled, so he had to hand over tribute to the king in the form of agricultural, livestock, or fishery products in the region.

*Gung binathara bau dhendha nyakrawati* means having as much as the power of god, being the keeper of the law, and the ruler of the world. This concept is related to the concept of *Wenang wisesa ing sanagari*. The king's power is absolute, so it is often considered that the Javanese concept of power is feudal. The king is not only authorized in all the countries he controls but has the right to make and determine laws for the people in all the areas under his control. The two concepts mentioned above are often misunderstood that Javanese power is authoritarian and the king leads his people with an iron fist.

However, there is one more concept, which is *berbudi bawa leksana ambeg adil paramarta* that means that and having a fair and wise leadership for the people. Although a king has great power and can make laws, the king must have a noble character and a fair attitude towards his people. If he stipulates certain laws and regulations for his people to obey, then these laws are not only applied to the people, but also to all the residents of the palace. The punishments remain the same, both for the mistakes the king's sons and the commoners made. Behind his great power over the territory under his control, the king must also balance his power with noble and fair behavior towards his people.

In the concept of *keagungbinataraan*, behind the seemingly absolute king's power, there is the king's obligation to ensure the safety, peace, and prosperity of his people. The people should obey the king's orders, so that common goals will be realized. Therefore, the relationship between the king and the people is a relationship between patron and client that is balanced and gives and takes each other.

In Javanese culture, it is stated that the world consists of a macrocosm and a microcosm where the center is the king (kingdom). The king served as *sayidin panatagama khalifatullah* (representative of God in the world). Therefore, as the representative of God in the world and the center of the macrocosm-microcosm, the king is obliged to maintain the harmony of the macromosmos (the whole universe) and the microcosm realm (the kingdom), so that the king can provide justice and peace to his people.

The local wisdom of the king of Mataram, which is called *keagungbinataraan*, is still relevant to this day, where leaders, although they have absolute power over what they lead, should have noble and fair character toward their people. Leadership emphasizes not the ambition of power, but more a noble attitude towards the people that will bring peace and tranquility to a country (*mamayu hayuning bawana*). This is one of the keys to the progress of a nation. The noble attitude has been shown by the King of

Surakarta Kanjeng Sinuhun Pakubuwono II, Kanjeng Sinuhun Pakubuwono X, and Sri Sultan Hamengkunuwono II.

## 4. Conclusion

A good leader or king is shown by the figures of Sinuhun Pakubuwono II, Sinuhun Pakubuwono X, and Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono II. Even though they were powerful kings in Java, they were democratic in using their power. They always listened to people's opinions, accepted people's aspirations positively, and always tried to think about the safety and welfare of their people. This was because these kings applied the local wisdom of the King of Mataram, which became their guide as leaders. The concept of local wisdom is still worth being implemented until now in adaptables.

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