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### **The Sexual Orientation of Panji : Cultural Construction in Intermediation**

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The Panji love scenes from (1) Br. 126 manuscript in Jawi characters of *Hikayat Panji Kuda Semirang*, (2) Sas-trawinata's story book *Panji Semirang* published by Balai Pustaka, and (3) the comic book *Panji Semirang* by R. A. Kosasih, chronologically shows intermediation as a non-direct adaptation that represents the cultural construction that shifts the meaning, from a hidden signs of transgenderism to the domination of heterosexual orientation. The phenomena is connected with the fact that from early modern times (15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century) to second half of early modern period (17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century) in the region, there is the process where gender pluralism met the domination of mainstream religions and modern science, which marginalized and suppressed the former to the edge of normality. As transgender subculture still exists as an ideological struggle, the study of local genius should be done with a consciousness to contest the hegemonic discourse.

**Keywords:** *intermediation, transgenderism, hegemonic discourse*

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## Introduction

Panji is a narrative with a specific plot, which was very popular in the Majapahit era in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The plot is detected to be related to the older history of Java that is the kingdom of Tamwlang-Kahuripan under the king Dharmawangsa Airlangga in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, who divided his kingdom into Janggala and Kadiri for his two sons. The Panji story then became popular 300 years later, and continued to be known until now, in many kinds of intermediation in the form of literature, dance-drama, relief on temple walls, shadow puppet, and comic books.

The plot is always about the two main kingdoms, Kahuripan and Daha, and two others as supporting roles, Gagelang and Singhasari. The love story between the Kahuripan prince and the princess from Daha is the main plot. The code name Panji comes from the prince, who was called Raden Panji, besides being called Raden Inu—which is now better known as the name, while Panji is used to refer to the whole theme, and even the genre. In the struggle to maintain their love, in which they face many obstacles that make them apart, the couple had to disguise themselves as other people, and especially the princess Candrakirana who became a male twice before their marriage.

The case for this survey is the point that Raden Inu was already in love with Candrakirana, even when he only knew her as a man, the robber Panji Semirang. Only in their second encounter, when Candrakirana was the male mask-dancer Gambuh Asmara or Warga Asmara, and Raden Inu himself was disguised as Raden Panjing Jayeng Kesuma, both of them revealed their identities. The transgendered Candrakirana in a female-bodied, and the bisexual Raden Inu in a male-bodied as the possibilities of sexual orientation for the couple, experienced the cultural construction in the adaptation and intermediation from time to time in history, and in the end, they formally became the heterosexual dominant couple.

## The Panji Studies

The study on Panji is usually part of the temple and literature studies in the classic East Java. The first studies, like from Bosch (1920), have the tendency to look at the development of culture in East Java, after the Central Java's Borobudur-Prambanan period in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century, as a degradation, if compared to the standard of India's Hindu culture. Later studies, like from Stutterheim (1925), appreciate the development, not as a deviation of a center, but a new creativity. It was also Stutterheim (1936) in the study of Candi Selokelir, who identified a sculpture as a depiction of Panji because of the specific hat on the head. Then, Poerbat-

jaraka (1940) collected and made a comparative study of the diaspora of Panji stories in eight versions from Java, Palembang, to Cambodia (Poerbatjaraka, 1968: 3-290). It was followed by Suleiman (1978) as the first study on Panji temple reliefs, while also being the first one who studied their symbolic meaning, which then was continued by Munandar (1990) on studies about religious life in Penanggungan Mountain. The recent study by Kieven (2013, the English version) explored the existence and meaning of the cap-figure and particularly of Panji in Majapahit temple relief. The finding shows that the popularity of Panji in the kingdom, related to the fact that the fractured kingdom needed an idea of unity, is like the ideals in the Panji story (Lydia Kieven, 2017: 35-40, the Indonesian version).

For the purpose of the survey, which investigates the love scenes in the Panji narratives, here is a more detailed description of the love scene from the relief in Candi Kendalisodo.



Photo: Kieven in Karlström and Källén (2003)

## The love scene relief in Candi Kendalisodo

This scene probably depicts Panji with his betrothed Candrakirana during their travel. The love scene in Candi Kendalisodo from *Panji Jayakusuma* story, a Panji version, showed a man with a cap and a woman sitting next to a pond in a landscape. The man sits with his leg stretched out, his foot on the ground, and his right leg bent and placed on top of the left thigh. The woman, sitting on his lap, tilts her head to the left and touches it with her bent left arm. She is wrapped in a cloth and sits with her leg crossed, while the left arm of the man encircled her around her waist.

This position, especially “sitting on his lap”, is also mentioned in the *kakawins* and *kidung*, as a work of literature, while lap (*pangku*) itself is an erotic connotation. The word *pangku* is used for both situations before or after lovemaking (Kieven in Karlström and Källén, 2003: 344). In the surveyor's interpretation, what is

narrated as a relief here is that a sexual intercourse is going to happen or already happened between a female bodied feminine man and a bisexual man—who wanted Gambuh Asmara as a feminine man, but of course when the intercourse happened, he should have known that Gambuh Asmara is the woman he was searching for, Candrakirana.

In the study by Kieven, the Tantric aspect, both in Buddha and Siva's art in the relief of the Majapahit temples, is expressed in the appearance of love scenes, where sexual intercourse was an integral part. For the practice of yoga-Tantra, the unity in sexual intercourse is not just a physical activity, but is also a way to achieve the spiritual goals. The Panji reliefs in the temple then could be seen as a guide for the worshippers to find this way, as it also happens in the language in the kidung that achieved the ecstasy in the *langö*, including the love scenes. Thus, the visual and the literary depiction of the love scenes are vital codes of the messages (Kieven, 2017: 95-105).<sup>1</sup>

### The Case

As the popularity of Panji stories from the Majapahit era spread widely in the South East Asian region, and still existing in a different hegemonic culture today, it is very interesting to observe how the love scenes in the narrative of Panji from different eras continually change. These changes, however, should be related to the discourses in the context of the narrative, as the power, ideology, and identity politics that constructed each version of the love scenes.

Considering Kieven's study of the love scenes at the reliefs (Kieven in Karlström and Källén, 2003: 335-348), it is possible now to compare at least three research materials chronologically, from (1) the already transliterated *Hikayat Panji Kuda Semirang* from Jawi character (Arab character and Malay language), which is predicted to originate from 19<sup>th</sup> century (Wahyono, 2018: 1).<sup>2</sup>

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1 Love scenes is not the only aspect, Kieven also based her interpretation of the Tantric aspect on the depictions of guidance by rsi; crossing water, both symbolizing esoteric and spiritual principles (Kieven, 2017: 95-105).

2 It was written that the finishing date of the copying is in 25<sup>th</sup> of Rabiul awal month at 2 pm by a Bugis person, whose name is not mentioned. Also informed here that the same manuscript with the code Br 126 in Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia (Perpusnas) or National Library of the Republic of Indonesia transliterated from Jawi character to Latin character is the same legitimate manuscript as the original one, which hypothetically is damaged or lost. As this manuscript is formally mentioned old manuscript (*naskah kuno*), it means that the age is more than

Then, the manuscript would be compared with (2) the story book *Panji Semirang* from the publisher Balai Pustaka in the year 1963, in which an introduction from S. Sastrawinata, the writer in Bahasa Indonesia, writes that "... some scenes are already 'cleaned'...", so that it could be delivered to the youth as an entertainment; and it would be compared again with (3) the comic book *Panji Semirang* by R. A. Kosasih in 1966.

### Concepts

Hegemonic Process: Hegemony is a condition in process, in which a dominant class does not merely rule a society, but leads it through the exercise of moral and intellectual leadership. There is a high degree of consensus, a large measure of social stability; a society, in which subordinate groups and classes appear to support and subscribe to values, ideals, objectives, cultural and political meaning, which bind them to, and 'incorporate' them into the prevailing structures of power. Hegemony is always the result of 'negotiations between dominant and subordinate groups. It is a process marked by both 'resistance' and 'incorporation'. It is never simply power imposed from above (Storey, 1993: 123-130).

Transgender: The concepts of transgender are not clearly bounded or stable and are employed by different scholars in different ways. For the prefix *trans*, Ong has written than *trans* denotes both moving through space or across line, as well as changing the nature of something (as in "transformation" or "transfiguration") or going beyond it (as in "transcend"); *trans* also alludes to the transactional and transgressive aspects of "behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated" by the logics of culture and political economy. Transgendered people are an umbrella term used for those with various form and degrees of crossgender practices and identifications. "Transgendered" includes, among others, some people who identify as "butch" or masculine lesbians, as "fairies", "queens", or feminine gay men, and as heterosexual crossdresser as well as those identify as transsexual. The categories are not hermetically sealed, and to a certain extent the boundaries are permeable. Transgendered in its broadest sense refer to anyone who is transgressively gendered (Peletz, 2006: 310-11).<sup>3</sup>

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50 years. See Seri Naskah Kuna Nusantara No. 38: *Hikayat Panji Kuda Semirang* (2018), p. 1.

3 Compiled by Peletz from Aihwa Ong (1999:4), Riki Wilchins (1997, 15-16), Joanne Meyerowitz (2002, 10), Kate Bornstein (1995, 134-135), Blackwood and Wieringa 1999: ix-xi; Blackwood correctly underscores that these umbrella terms sometimes have certain meanings and connotation in the West that are of questionable relevance elsewhere. Such meanings and connotation include the

Intermediation: What happens in the process of intermediation is technically an adaptation. However, regarding the changes of the medium, from written words to combination of words and images, it is more precise to use the former term. What chronologically happened from the Jawi character manuscript with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Malay to the Balai Pustaka novel and the comic book from the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Indonesian culture is also an intermediation. Because it is not a direct adaptation, the process of long adaptation in history through any kinds of media could also be called a cultural construction. In this sense, an intermediation is a hybrid process that is constructed by ideological struggle, which involves the pilgrims, readers, and spectators, in the production of meaning (Whelehan in Cartmel and Whelehan, 1999: 11-17).

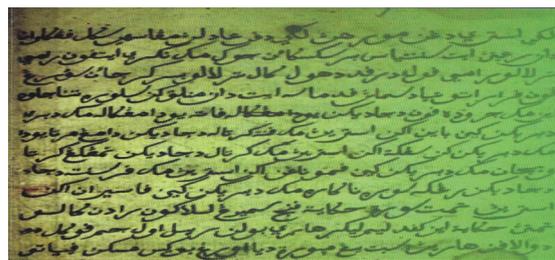
### Chronological Comparison: The Method

Comparisons of the love scenes would be the choice, as this is the case that could happen in the adaptation from a narrative for the matured people from a different age in the faraway past to a modern time story for young people that is not regarded as adults. At the same time, it is also possible to compare the depicted love scene at the temples from the Majapahit era, with how the meeting of the Panji couple is depicted in the comic book *Panji Semirang* by R. A. Kosasih (but the surveyor is not doing this in the paper). Whatever the pictures are, even this comic book may not be adapted from the relief at the temples, or the old manuscript, but instead from the Balai Pustaka book. As there are no proofs that Sastrawinata's *Panji Semirang* is a direct adaptation from the Br. 126 manuscript, as there is no proof for Kosasih's comic book as well, this survey is going to be a comparison in the context of discourses of the era, and not as an adaptation from one text to another. The differences that are shown in the transgender case would be the focus of this method.

Analysis

#### 1. The Br. 126 manuscript, *Hikayat Panji Kuda Semirang*.

empirically erroneous idea that all variants of transgendering entail same-sex relations (and vice versa), as well as the equally problematic notion that behavioral transgressions, even or especially in the straightforward definitional sense of practices that transcend or cross boundaries, are typically stigmatized. For reasons such as these, we must use the terms with caution when we are labelling, grouping, and interpreting practices and identities in non-Western setting. See Michael G. Peletz, "Transgenderism and Gender Pluralism in Southeast Asia since Early Modern Times", in *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April 2006), pp. 310-1.



*Hikayat Panji Kuda Semirang*  
Manuscript Br. 126

As part of the classic literature in Malay from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the love scenes are described like this:

*Sebermula adapun selamanya Raden Inu berhenti itu sehari-hari bergurau bersenda juga dengan Panji Semirang itu seperti tiada akan dapat bercerai, lakunya mungkin bertambah-tambah kasih Raden Inu akan dia. Maka beberapa kali hendak diajak oleh Raden Inu tidur tiada juga ia mau Panji Semirang tidur tetapi Panji Semirang sangat sangka barang lakunya seperti laki-laki sangka rupanya. Maka Raden Inu pun berkata kepada Panji Semirang, "Yayi, mari kita tidur dengan Kakanda. Selamanya Kakanda duduk di sini empat lima hari sudah lamanya Kakanda diam di sini belum juga beradu dengan Kakanda karena esok harilah Kakanda ke Daha."*

*At the beginning, Raden Inu would stay there all the time and everyday he jokes with Panji Semirang, as if they will never part; his acts show that he is more and more in love with Panji Semirang. Sometimes he would ask him to sleep, but Panji Semirang always refused, because he thought that he was a man. So, Raden Inu said to Panji Semirang, "Little brother, come sleep with your older brother. I would sit here all the time, from four to five days I stay here, never have ever you slept with me, because tomorrow I'm going to Daha."*

*Lalu Panji Semirang pun tertawa lalu keluar peng(h) adapan seraya pegangan oleh Raden Inu tangan Panji Semirang. Maka Panji Semirang pun tiada berdaya lagi rasanya seperti malu rupanya karena tangan Panji Semirang dipegang oleh Raden Inu.*

*Then Panji Semirang laughs and comes out face to face, while the hands of Raden Inu are holding Panji Semirang's hands. Panji Semirang looks like he loses power, as if being shy, because Panji Semirang's hands are held by Raden Inu.*

From these two samples, the word "sleep" (*tidur*) does not seem to have the meaning of taking a rest, but something to fill the longing of each other, which could

be continued as sexual intercourse. The degree as a fixed symbol of intercourse may not be so strong on *tidur* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially with a cultural environment that used Jawi characters. However, the other scene, where the couple are holding hands, and Panji Semirang seems to be absorbed, strengthens the interpretations that *tidur* is not sleep, but lovemaking—even when these samples do not show them.

The other case is more interesting, if not more important, that is the fact that Panji Semirang seems to be in doubt to response to what Raden Inu wants, because she—actually Candrakirana—is presenting Panji Semirang, who is a man, not a woman. It could mean that Raden Inu seduces a man, who is actually a woman disguising herself as a man, for lovemaking. On that stage of the story, Raden Inu does not know who Panji Semirang is yet. However, Candrakirana thinks that it is not right to response to Raden Inu as Panji Semirang, perhaps it is because of the danger of being caught as a woman. But it shouldn't mean that lovemaking of the same sex is unusual at the time. In other words, there is a possibility that Raden Inu's sexual orientation is bisexual. The evaluation of the differences of discourse later hopefully could give some light of this case.

## 2. *Panji Semirang*, the story book by S. Sastrawinata

The book was published by Balai Pustaka for the first time in 1963, and was reprinted at least nine times, the last reprint being in 1996. As already stated, the story, aimed for the youth this time, was “cleaned”, so that it would be different from the source, another *Hikayat Panji Semirang* book by Balai Pustaka, with the code number PB No. 48. These are some scenes that bring the narrative to a further observation.

(1) *Suatu kekuatan seolah-olah telah menggerakkan tangan Raden Inu Kartapati untuk menjamah tangan Panji Semirang yang halus itu. Panji Semirang kaget. Hatinya goncang. Srrr ... arus gaib menggeletarkan urat-urat syaraf Panji Semirang. “Oh! Betapa halusnya!” pikir Raden Inu Kartapati. Darahnya tersirap. Jantungnya berdetak-detak dengan hebatnya.*

*It was as if a power is driving the hand of Raden Inu Kartapati to touch that smooth hand of Panji Semirang. Panji Semirang is shaken. Hzzz... magical flow trembles Panji Semirang's nerves. “Oh! So smooth!” thought Raden Inu Kartapati. His blood slightly rose. The heartbeat is tapping enormously.*

(2) *Raden Inu Kartapati, pengantin baru, yang tidak bisa tidur lantaran hatinya rindu kepada Panji Semirang ...*

*Raden Inu Kartapati, the newlywed, cannot sleep because his heart is longing for Panji Semirang ...*

(3) *Asyik benar para penonton melihat lenggang-lenggok Warga Asmara di pentas. Halus luwes gerak-gerik badan dan tangannya. Suaranya merdu. Mata Raden Panji Jayeng Kesuma tidak kedap-kedip melihat. Hatinya terus berdebar-debar.*

*The spectators are so fascinated by Warga Asmara's swaying on stage. Smooth are the movements of the body and the hands. The voice is so melodious. Raden Panji Jayeng Kesuma's eyes never blink while watching. His heart keeps on throbbing.*

(4) *Permainan berhenti, oleh karena malam sudah larut. Raden Panji Jayeng Kesuma bangkit dari kursi, lalu menghampiri Warga Asmara. Dengan jantung rusuh berdetak-detak, dengan sinar mata penuh be-rahi, Raden Panji Jayeng Kesuma mendekati Warga Asmara.*

*The play stopped because the night was already late. Raden Panji Jayeng Kesuma got up from his seat, then approached Warga Asmara. With a restless pounding heart, desire in the light of the eyes, Raden Panji Jayeng Kesuma came closer to Warga Asmara.*

(5) *Mereka serasa melihat putra-putri sang Dewa Kamajaya dari Kahiyangan. Yang seorang gagah bergas dan rupawan; dan yang seorang lagi langsing luwes cantik molek. Ya, sekalipun orang yang belakangan ini berpakaian laki-laki.*

*They felt like they saw Dewa Kamajaya's son and daughter from Heaven. The one is strong, looks healthy, and handsome; the other is slim, smooth, pretty. Yes, even the latter is dressed in a man's cloth.*

From the language, *jamah* is also connoted as an act of touching in a negative way, so that sexual relations become related a desire for a person who is not willing yet to accept. But what is important in the first scene is there is enough on the term sexual desire for Panji Semirang, who is dressed as a man, without any clue that Raden Panji knew that behind that dress is Princess Candrakirana. While on Panji Semirang side, where Candrakirana saw Raden Inu as a man, and trembled, underlined the event as an erotic scene.

In the second scene, Raden Inu as a new bride with Galuh Ajeng, but on his mind is Panji Semirang, whom he does not know yet that he is actually a woman, whatever the smoothness of Panji Semirang's hands. In the third scene, Raden Inu as his own disguised character, Raden Panji Jayeng Kesuma, seems to be hypnotized by

Warga Asmara's attraction as a performer, also without knowing it as another disguise of Candrakirana, once more as a man. This scene continued to the fourth one, that while still absorbed in Warga Asmara's appearance, Raden Panji Jayeng Kesuma approaches Warga Asmara—or Candrakirana as aman—with sexual desire, just like the meaning of *birahi* in the dictionary.

The environment in the fifth scene involves the spectators into the mixing of sexual division, which seems like the couple of the same sex is just legitimate. The same sex in this case is not that simple as a man with a man, but like the sentence: a strong and handsome man with a slim and pretty man. In another word, a man with a transgendered man, in this case, the disguised Candrakirana. At this point, it could be said that if Panji Semirang is a robber and Warga Asmara is a *gambuh* (dance-theater-music) performer, there are two kinds of man that Chandrakirana use as disguise: a tough man with a smooth hand and a very pretty man. Both are loved with a sexual desire by one man, as Raden Inu or as Raden Panji Jayeng Kesuma.

3. *Panji Semirang*, a comic book by R. A. Kosasih

Just as Sastrawinata's storybook, the comic book *Panji Semirang*, published for the first time in 1966, was aimed for young readers. From this media that combines words and images for the narrative, the comparable scenes that show the encounters of Raden Inu Kertapati and Candrakirana, are picked.

(1)



So Panji Semirang appears in front of the troops. "Welcome and greetings to you, Older Brother Raden Inu Kertapati."

Then, instantly stuck, his heart trembles and suddenly the feeling of affection arises in his heart. That is the situation of Raden Inu at the time.

On the impression of this first encounter, it is not mentioned at all about any gender notification, but it is already stated that Raden Inu is attracted to Panji Semirang.

(2)



Looking at Panji Semirang's movement and style that is graceful, Raden Inu's mind is a little bit astonished.

"Please sit down at my place, Older Brother."

Raden Inu's heart becomes more attracted by the face and the clear voice of the greetings.

After he sits, Raden Inu continues to be speechless because he feels amazed and astonished, looking at the situation of this robber leader.

Panji Semirang's heart is also pounding, nervous and shy.

In the frame enlargement, the gendered sign is notified. It seems to show the obviously stereotypical feminine movement and make it more distinctive when the face and the voice are mentioned. As the reader cannot hear the voice, the face is clearly pretty in the stereotype of a woman. What is underlined here is the contradiction between a stereotypical masculine robber and the fact that Panji Semirang is stereotypically feminine. There is nothing transgendered, except that culturally it was usual at the time of Majapahit, when the first stage representation was created, but not in the story, that a male character could be acted and played by a female; while at the same time, a feminine male person in real life exists.

(3)



*"Panji Semirang? In my opinion ... so gracefully pretty, not like a man!"*

This comment from Raden Inu's servant played with only two types of gender, man and woman. As it is contradictory to historical reality that a man could be feminine, in this sentence, there is no idea that a man who is gracefully pretty is possible.

(4)



*"It's dangerous my child, it's only women."  
"Ah, Mam, we are also men isn't it, what would be feared for?"*

This dialogue shows the masculine and the manly side, while it was stated before that they were all women. In a way, it creates an ambiguity with the feminine impression before. It should be noted here that the ambiguity of masculine-feminine does not mean as a transgendered male or female that unite the division.

(5)



*Many pretty girls, beautiful women, are mad about these falsifying artists, especially with Warga Asmara.*

*But there is a result. They are never short of food, because many (women) deliver and give (it to them).*

*"If they knew the truth, this egg is not going inside the mouth, but flying to our heads, could even change with stones."*

*"What do you mean, Sekarsari?"*

*"Heheh, they think we are different kinds, different group."*

This scene shows the masculinity as well, as the women who bring the food is stated as "mad about".

(6)



“So handsome as a knight.”  
 “At first glance like a grateful woman.”  
 “Yes, if you pay attention, why is everybody like a woman, Je?”

This dialogue shows another ambiguity, and does not strongly suggest a definite transgender.

(7)



While stealing a glance, he quickly bowed the head and closed the eyes.  
 “Couldn’t be wrong, this is Panji Semirang that I look for in every corner of the country.”  
 So Raden Inu’s mind doesn’t have any doubt when he saw this pretty gambuh.

From all of the scenes shown by the comic book, there is only some slight suggestion that could direct to an ambiguity. However, it is not strong enough to make an impression that there is another gender besides the division to male and female. However, as the disguised is not treated as the real thing, it does not mean that there is nothing transgendered. The possibility for a woman to disguise herself as a feminine man could only succeed because in the gender pluralism time of Majapahit, the existence of a male bodied feminine man is usual. It means that there already exists a transgender subculture.

### Evaluation

This survey began with the oldest finding of love scenes in the Panji story, which is the relief at Candi Kendalisodo from the Majapahit era in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century. As studied by Lydia Kieven, the depiction of romantic situations on the relief is an integral part of Hindu-Buddha’s Tantric teaching, that is when the fusion of Perfection of Means (symbolizing the male part) and Perfection of Wisdom (symbolizing the female

part) is practiced with a partner in sexual union, liberation can be reached immediately (Kieven, 2013: 679).<sup>4</sup>

In that period, the *Panji Jayakusuma* story or the other, like *Angling Dharma*, *Parthayajna Arjunawiwaha*, *Sang Satyawana*, or *Sudamala*, contain that depiction, so that it could be said it was common enough in the Majapahit, as the Tantric teaching was the choice of the religious policy of the kingdom.

Meanwhile, in *Hikayat Panji Kuda Semirang* that is written in Jawi characters for Malay language, we could see it as a Javanese legacy in the region that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, accepted the Arabic culture and the already dominant religion of Islam, as shown by the existence of the characters. With Islamic teaching dominating the region, the romantic situations in the story are not part of the Tantric messages anymore. It instead shows another resistance to the dominant discourse, from the transgendered characters that mix the clear division of gender, such as the possibility of Raden Inu’s bisexuality, which is known to be a sensitive issue in the gender policy of Islam. In this Jawi characters manuscript, not only the gender relations are mixed, but the romantic situations also do not have the heavenly meaning. The way the man is attracted to the woman disguised as a man is just like a legitimation of a transgender subculture.

The story book *Panji Semirang* was aimed for young readers by S. Sastrawinata. It was published by Balai Pustaka as the symbol of healthy books for the nation, and in that spirit, there is the word “cleaned” (*dibersihkan*) in the introduction, suggesting that it would be proper for children and placed in the libraries. The fact is that on the detection of the romantic situation scenes, not dominated by Islamic teachings, but the nuance of the love scenes is clouded by the clear diction of lust like *jamah* and *birahi*. What important here is not the class of the love scenes, but the transgender condition that seem to have become common and established.

What was aimed to be cleaned happens in the comic book *Panji Semirang* by R.A. Kosasih, where mixed feeling or the ambiguity of the gender division is never fused or transferred to the third gender. Supported by the image, the narrative is definitely clear that in the female body Panji Semirang, the pretty robber, and the female body Warga Asmara, the graceful *gambuh*, disguised Candrakirana, the woman that would still be pretty and graceful as feminine woman. In other words, there is nothing outside the dominant discourse on gender, but at the same time, the expression that a

4 Kieven referring to the class of Tantra texts called *Guhyasamaja* (secret assembly), part of the *anuttarayoga-tantra* class of texts being taught in Tibet as in O’Brien (1993:22).

perfect disguise of a woman, still as a feminine man, is taken for granted as possible.



Candrakirana as Panji Semirang,  
The Female Bodied Feminine Man

To focus on the nature of the love couple, it is clear enough that different discourses in the different era changes the construction of the sexual relations. As the interest of the depictions of the loving couple is Tantric teaching, the pluralistic gender politics in the time of Majapahit made the art of disguise have nothing to do to the depictions. It means that the male-female couple only physically requires the body, but not the gender, which could be any kind, as long as being a male bodied and female bodied counterpart.

In the time when Jawi characters dominated the literate, the disappearance of Tantric teaching made the love couple only as humans with sexual desire, as a resistance to the dominant discourse. While in the new world of the modern city, even the negative lust on the romantic situations has a place in the sharpened Indonesian language. In the awakening of the nation as the book takes the role to educate and entertain, the denotation of the division between a man and a woman is clear. However, a closer look cannot deny the shadow of the past that the transgender subculture exists, besides some other agendas in the Panji stories.

The concept of hegemonic process, that in every domination of the discourse by the dominant class there is a negotiation and resistance of discourses from the subordination groups, places the existence of transgendered subculture that goes up and down from the gender pluralism era in the time of Majapahit to the more encompassing sex/gender cultural-political system from the time of the New Order in Republic of Indonesia.

The explicit depiction of romantic situations in the relief of Panji story at Kendalisodo Temple was intended to guide spectators to Tantric teaching by openly showing the high regards to the role of sexual intercourse. Knowing the gender pluralism as the circumstance of the time, this also means that lovemaking should only happen between heterosexual couples. Referring to the Panji story, it could also happen between a female bodied feminine man and a male bodied bisexual man.

From the *Hikayat Panji Kuda Semirang* manuscript, to the *Panji Semirang* storybook, there is a shift of the romantic situations. While it is not related to a spiritual purpose anymore, the signs of the transgender subculture became more apparent—in this case, from the romantic one to a mere sexual desire, that in the mainstream dominant interpretation it seems to be a degradation. The comic book *Panji Semirang* as the last work in this survey, clearly without these sexual signs, never directly suggests an intercourse in the relationship of the love couple. However, in a close observation on transgender aspect, a speculative uncovering could lead to a further discussion. It could be said that there are two findings in this survey: first, there is a shift on the meaning of sexual discourse in the hegemony process of cultural construction; second, that transgender subculture in any degree contested the discourse of the dominant class in history.

## Conclusion

The meaning of these findings in the historical context is the fact that there are days when gender pluralism existed without any stigmatization of the minority outside the heterosexual mainstream. It was regarded that all the transgendered is common phenomena, that it was already constructed as a subculture, like the *gambuh* troupe that is not coincidentally part of the Panji story. This subculture is alive, like the existence of the transgender aesthetic expression in literature, oral tradition, and dance-theater in Southeast Asia from the early modern periode—15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century—when the transgendered practices were part of sacred ceremonies that placed the transgender ritual specialist in high esteem. Sacred ceremonies were of critical importance to local societies and politics (Peletz, 2006: 310).

As shown by the changes in the nature of Panji's romantic situations from the intermediation, the transformation and reproduction of culture since the second half of the early modern period, roughly 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century, was stimulated by the growth of religious nationalism and educational reform. It degraded the gender pluralism in the society, especially on religious rituals in which women and the transgendered have a greater role before. In the words of Blackwood, "From the

1600s onward, the gendered cosmologies containing masculine and feminine principles were *supplanted* by a new masculinized gender mythology—found in both Islam and Christianity—in which ritual transvestism made little sense, especially for females only much later for males.” (Blackwood in Peletz, 2006: 326). This also means that these changes drive the attacks on the actually overdetermined transgendered ritual practitioners, so that the links between these practitioners—with the marginalized groups that belong to them—and both the religious orthodoxy and state power throughout the region would severe (Peletz, 2006: 316).

However, as seen from this brief survey, the transgenderism that was changed from a spiritual function to a romantic relationship, in the most covered form of the mixed gender signs, never really hides the transgender existence. The hegemonic power of mainstream religious and rational design of social order that draws from scientific understanding of natural laws does not have the place for the transgendered person in their domination of normality. The interests of identity politics for themselves represented in the marginalization and social pressure, if needed with violence and struggle to legalize a law, to forbid the transgender subculture—which also a denial to the thousand years of its existence in humanity.

This conclusion would end up with a simple lesson and suggestion: not everything from the hegemonic religions and modern sciences that construct their dominant normality would incorporate without serious cultural problems, as already happened. This is the very reason to contest the dominant discourse with the other normality from the local genius—that should be studied as an identity project for the nation, if not for the region.

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