

The Transformation of the Self

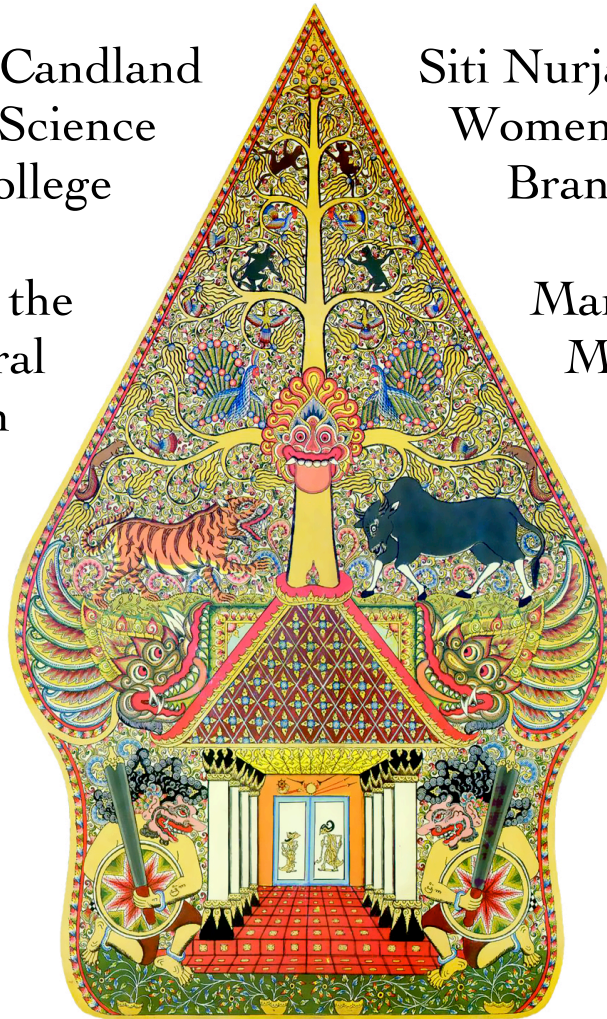
Competing Moral Repertoires in Contemporary Java

Christopher Candland
Political Science
Wellesley College

Siti Nurjanah
Women Studies Resource Center
Brandeis University

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We thank those who conceived of and supported the Self, Motivation, and Virtue Project and who organized the Interdisciplinary Morals Forum. We have benefitted already from this occasion to think about self, morality, personality, and virtue.

Presentation Overview

Java and Javanese Morality

Kejawen Propriety and Virtue • *Kejawen* Self and Obligations

Questions and Significance

Project Overview

Methodology and Research

Three Moral Repertoires • Assumptions
Five Research Exercises • Four Districts

Innovations

An Agile Self • Linguistic Analysis of Ethics
Ethnography • A Non-European Baseline

Deep Integration

Expected Results

Java

Indonesia

255 million people
fourth most populous country
largest Muslim population

Java

island at the center of Indonesia
more than 140 million people
110 million Javanese
95 million Javanese Muslims
many / most draw on the moral and spiritual resources
of pre-Islamic spiritual traditions, known as *Kejawen*

Kejawen **Morality**

Virtue in Java is embedded within the expectation of the community that the individual will bury [*mendam*] felt personal physical or psychological needs so as to promote and maintain collective harmony

Alfred Russel Wallace travelled for eight years in what is now known as Indonesia.

I have lived with communities of savages ... who have no laws or law courts but the public opinion of the village freely expressed. Each man scrupulously respects the rights of his fellow, and any infraction of those rights rarely or never takes place. ...

Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago* 1869: 548-549

Kejawen Propriety

Adam Smith's "impartial spectator" is nowhere more omniscient than in the *Kejawen* Moral Repertoire. Adam Smith distinguished between three types of virtue: as propriety (Smith 1759: 267-294), as prudence (Smith 1759: 294-300), and as benevolence (Smith 1759: 300-306). Of these, the virtue that is most relevant to the Javanese is propriety.

Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1759

Kejawen Virtue

Virtue in Java is powered by the idea that others may regard one's behavior as flawed. A person whose behavior is flawed, whatever his or her age, is considered to be not a fully formed person. A person unable to discern what is proper and improper is *ora njowo* [not Javanese].

Proper thoughts and feelings must be accompanied by proper language.

The Javanese Self (*Aḍjining Diri*) and Circulation of Obligations

Moral sentiments are necessary for the Javanese moral economy.

Moral Sentiments

Sungkan (reserve)

Urmat (respect)

Isin (shame)

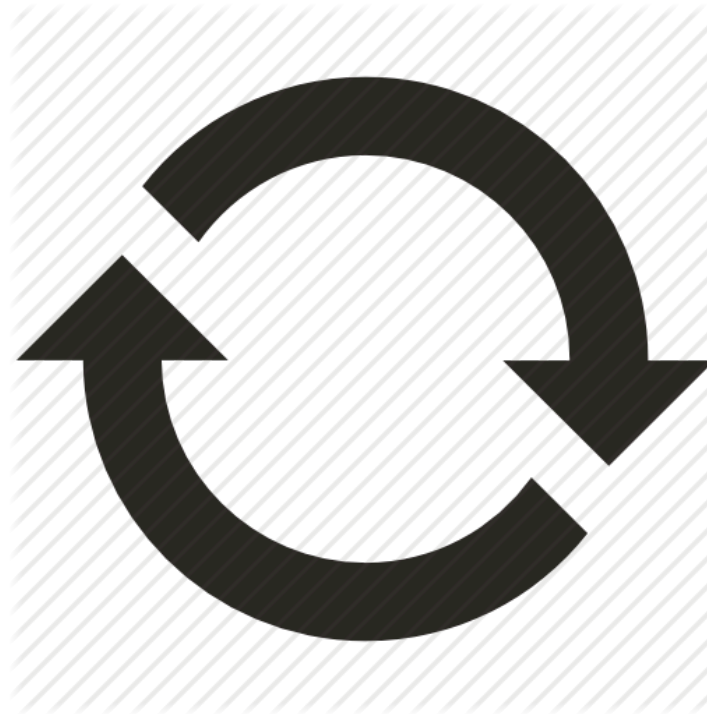
Sungkan, e.g.

Javanese believe that only Javanese possess

Sungkan - a moral sentiment of respect of others for whom one suppresses one's own feelings so as to not disturb the

“emotion equanimity of one who may be spiritually higher.”

(Hildred Geertz “The Vocabulary of Emotion” *Psychiatry*, 1959: 233)



Other Resources

Uang (money)

Kerja (labor)

Makanan (food)

Slematan (ritual)

e.g., *Slametan* for births, marriages, funerals, and anniversaries

e.g., *Gotong-Royong* building a house, caring for a child, harvesting of a field, cooking for a wedding

Without participation in this circulation one does not have a fully recognized self (*Aḍjining Diri*).

Questions and Significance

- To what extent is communal harmony the principle goal of Javanese virtue?
- What forces are driving new and less communal moral repertoires?
- How is the Javanese self accommodating these forces?

The centuries old preference for moral sentiments for communal harmony over individual advancement, individual piety, and individual satisfaction is under great stress.

We have the opportunity to study the transformation of the self and to identify the major forces that are driving the adoption of 'Islamic' and 'Secular' moral repertoires.

Project Overview

We propose ethnographic and linguistic studies of Javanese parents and children, teachers and students, and neighbors will provide insights into the changing nature of the Javanese self, motivation, and virtue.

We will focus on

- (1) language training that Javanese parents use to raise virtuous children,
- (2) politeness levels that people use to address one another with respect,
- (3) morality stories that people tell their children (across three generations),
- (4) moral values preferred in schools, and
- (5) participation in mutual aid activities.

We aim to

- (1) document the extent to which Javanese prefer communal harmony,
- (2) gauge the strength and interaction of the forces that are changing the Javanese preference for communal harmony,
- (3) suggest ways in which the preference for communal harmony can be strengthened, for example, through polite language training or formal education.

Three Moral Repertoires

A moral repertoire is not a closed system but a reinforcing set of value resources. Individuals can blend elements of each repertoire but there is more coherence among the values of a single moral repertoire than across repertoires.

1. **The *Kejawen* Moral Repertoire** is focused on the conviction that to avoid social conflict and natural calamity one must maintain harmony in human relations.

The Community is the “impartial spectator.”

2. **The Islamic Moral Repertoire** is focused on the pleasure of Allah and on individual piety, which is to guarantee worldly success.

Allah is the “impartial spectator.”

3. **The Secular Consumerist Moral Repertoire** is focused on the satisfaction of the self. n.b. It is secular only in that thought, speech, and behavior can be separated from religion.

The Self is the “impartial spectator.”

Methodology

Five Research Exercises

We propose to engage in five research exercises during six months of work in Java.

These are in three areas:

- Learning virtue (at home, in the neighborhood, and at school)
- Expressing virtue (in the neighborhood)
- Showing virtue (in social activities)

Having diverse research exercises and methods allows us to confirm and corroborate findings; to contextualize findings; and to connect social spheres, from parenting, to formal schooling, to the neighborhood.

Research Exercises

Expressing Virtue through Language

1. Teaching Polite Language at Home and in the Neighborhood (*Kampung*)

Most of Indonesia has a perfect climate for being outside and blending the public and the private; people are in close physical proximity.

Mothers do most of the politeness teaching of pre-ambulatory infant children. A child is in almost constant physical contact with her mother who uses a cloth to attach her baby above her hip.

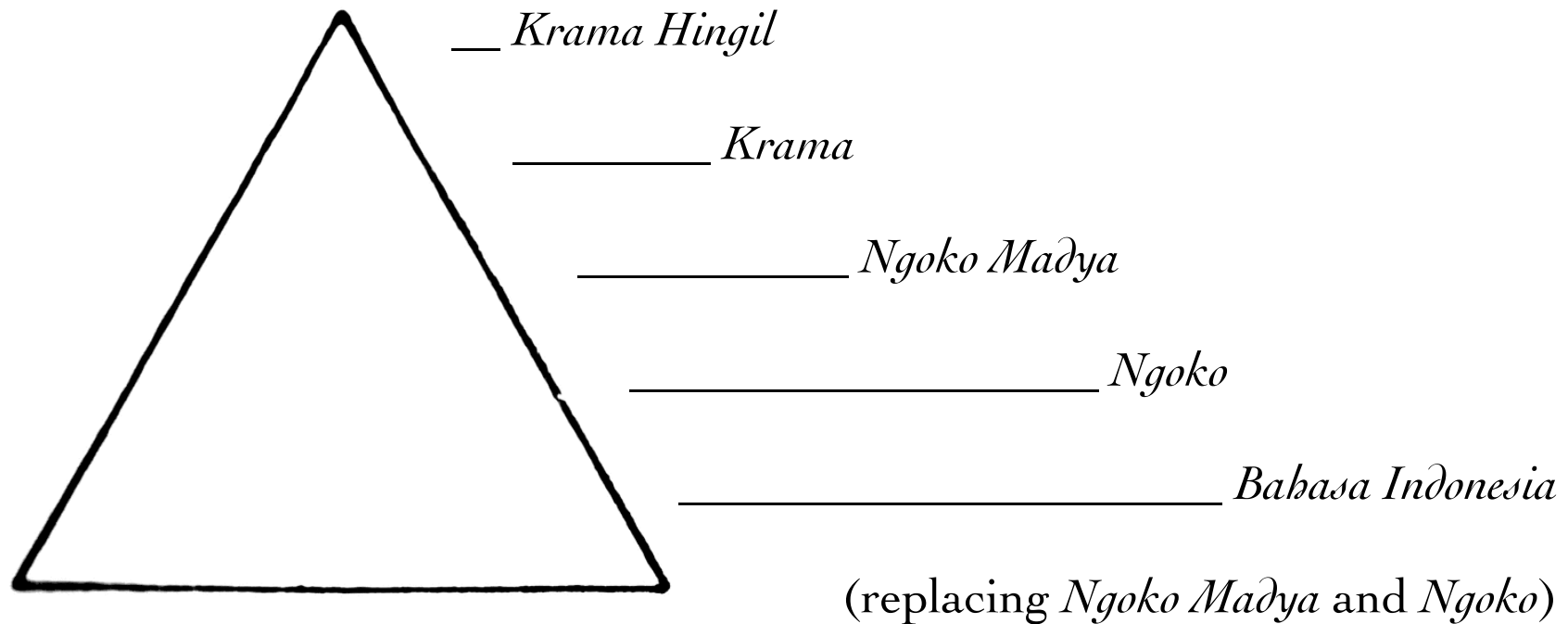
One technique for politeness training is to speak on behalf of the child. A neighbor might address a baby, before the baby can speak, and the nursing mother might in response speak on behalf of the baby, using the appropriate language for speech to an elder. The Javanese mother speaks in a highly refined (*alus*) manner (e.g., *Krama*) or idiomatically Islamic (e.g., infused with *Arabic*) or national /egalitarian manner (e.g., *Bahasa Indonesia*).

Expressing Virtue through Language

1. Teaching Polite Language in the Neighborhood (*Kampung*)

Structure of Javanese

Levels of *Alus* [Refinement]



Expressing Virtue through Language

1. Teaching Polite Language at Home

Relationships Expressed through Language

These terms are used even for people to whom one is not related.

Mbah - grandparent

Bu De - mother's older sister

Pak De - father's older brother

Bu - mother

Pak - father

Bu Lik - mother's younger sister

Pak Lik - father's younger brother
self

Mas - younger brother

Mbak - younger sister

Dik - younger brother / sister

Nak - child

Expressing Virtue through Language

2. Psycho-Linguistic Test in the Neighborhood (*Kampung*)

We would like to design a psycho-linguistic test that would assess participation in moral repertoires by language. We have in mind a test in which people are asked for directions in different languages and levels. We believe that the association between languages and moral repertoires can permit us to assess whether there are causal connections between language and morality.

Expressing Virtue through Language

2. Psycho-Linguistic Test in the Neighborhood

Level	Could you please tell me where is the house of Pak RT?						Complete Sentence
4	apakah	Anda	dapat	menunjukkan	dimana	rumah	Apakah Anda dapat menunjukkan dimana rumah Pak RT?
3	menapa	pandjenengan	kerso	paringpirsa	Ingang pundi	daleme	Menapa pandjenengan kerso paringpirsa ingkang pundi daleme Pak RT?
2a	napa	sampeyan		nduduhaken	pundi	griyane	Napa Sampeyan kerson dunduhaken pundi griyane Pak RT?
2			saget				Napa Sampeyan saget nduduhake ngriyane Pak RT?
1	Opo	kowe	iso	nduduhno	singendi	omahe	Opo kowe iso nduduhno sing endi omahe Pak RT?

Learning Virtue through Morality Stories

3. At Home through Morality Stories

We will focus on values learned at an early age and use a survey of parents and their adolescent children to gauge introduction and involvement in moral repertoires.

We will document differences in the moral education across generation, specifically morality stories that parents tell their children and were told by their parents (three generations of the same families).



4. Value Education at School

Moral Repertoires and Education

The three moral repertoires have an uneasy fit with the four kinds of schools.

Government

Morals	Moderate Islam / <i>Panchasila</i>
Curriculum	secondary research
Pedagogy	didactic
Medium	Indonesian

Private

Morals	Secular / Religious
Curriculum	secondary
Pedagogy	didactic
Medium	Indonesian

Islamic Private

Morals	Modern Islam
Curriculum	secondary, revealed
Pedagogy	didactic
Medium	Indonesian, English, Arabic

Islamic Seminaries (*Pesantren*)

Morals	Traditional Islam
Curriculum	rhetoric, logic, language, debate
Pedagogy	tutorial, round table debate
Medium	Javanese

Showing Virtue in the Neighborhood

5. Mutual Aid Practices

The fifth exercise focuses on individuals who regularly participate in mutual aid [*Gotong-Royong*] activities, by donating food, labor, money, and time, and those who do not.

Gotong-Royong includes

aiding new mothers and their babies,
preparing wedding ceremonies,
building neighbors' houses, and
assisting families after the death of a family member.

We will interview and observe both over the course of 2-4 weeks in four districts.

Research Sites

The four districts – Banyuwangi, Jombang, Kepanjen, and Tuban – are selected for their different socio-economic and cultural features.

- Banyuwangi is on the East coast, and strong in the *Kejawen* tradition.
- Jombang is in the Center of Java, where *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama* are strong.
- Kepanjen is in the South, and in the mountains, and strong in the *Kejawen* tradition.
- Tuban is on the North coast, and is where Islam was first introduced.

n.b. Jombang is identified as Modjokuto in the studies by Alice Dewey (1969), Robert Jay (1969), Clifford Geertz (1960), and Hildred Geertz (1959, 1961).

Deep Integration

Nurjanah, native of Java, earned a S1 (equivalent to a BA honors in the U.S. education system) in Indonesian literature from Airlangga University and an MA from Brandeis University in Sustainable International Development. Her knowledge of Javanese culture and the syncretic Nahdlatul Ulama tradition is rich and first-hand. She is a research scholar at the Women's Studies Research Center at Brandeis University. She grew up in an era without electricity when storytelling was the major form of entertainment, and a major inspiration for character development.

Candland earned a Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University and a BA in Philosophy from Haverford College. Candland worked with refugees and displaced people in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. He is Associate Professor of Political Science at Wellesley College. He brings 'social science' training – including in survey research – to the team.

Candland and Nurjanah have conducted fieldwork and published on how Muslim women's organizations used the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad to transform the Indonesian government's repressive population control program into a pro-female reproductive rights program. (Candland and Nurjanah 2007)

Innovations

1. An Agile Self

The concept of a moral repertoire allows us to account for individual agility in use of value resources.

2. Language and Moral Repertoires

Language is ideal for the study of change in virtue, especially in Indonesia, which gives individuals many linguistic options.

3. Ethnography

Made possible by our familiarity with Javanese culture and language is our ability to have extended interactions with our research subjects and to focus on relationships between individuals.

4. A Non-European Baseline

Ethnographic Baseline – The MIT Team (1953-55)

We have a layered and “thick” ethnological description baseline study of Javanese morality thanks to the scholarly work of a team of social scientists, which included five couples: Alice Dewey and Donald Fagg, Jane Hendon and Rufus Hendon, Clifford Geertz and Hildred Geertz, and Anola Ryan and Edward Ryan.

The most thorough and perceptive observations of child rearing practice in Java in the 1950s – before the advent of the recent Islamization and secularization – are those of Hildred Geertz (Geertz 1959 and 1961). Her work details how family members, especially mothers, teach infants an emotional vocabulary, centered on the sentiment of respect [*urmat*]. (Geertz 1959 and 1961)

Expected Findings

The *Kejawen* moral repertoire is declining.

The moral repertoires of Islamic religiosity and Secular consumerism are not in competition with one another but are reinforcing.

The most valuable practical result of this study would be discernment of an Islamic repertoire that is most compatible – not contemptuous of – the *Kejawen*.

Anticipated Challenges

Our immediate challenge is to design instruments that will allow us to measure people's participation in competing moral repertoires.

A related challenge is that moral repertoires are partly overlapping. Thus, we need to design instruments that clearly indicate the use of a single repertoire.