

# Relationships Between the Rulers of the Archipelago (Perspective of Traditional Javanese Historiography)

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## Abstract

This study examines the representation of relationships among Nusantara rulers through the lens of traditional Javanese historiography, including *Nagarakertagama*, *Pararaton*, and various *Babad* texts. Using a qualitative approach with a multidimensional analysis, this research explores how social, political, and religious dimensions were constructed to maintain regional stability and Javanese hegemony. The findings reveal that social relationships were built through "intimate geopolitics" via political marriages (consanguinity), which transformed political rivalry into kinship solidarity. In the political dimension, the "Cakrawala Mandala Nusantara" concept served as both a defensive strategy against external threats and a manifestation of cosmic sovereignty. Furthermore, the transition to the Islamic period shifted the paradigm of authority from caste-based structures to cosmopolitan intellectual-spiritual networks (ukhuwah). This study argues that the relationships between rulers in traditional historiography were not merely a history of conquest, but a continuous negotiation of identity aimed at building a cohesive regional order. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical roots of national integration in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *Javanese historiography, Nusantara rulers, Mandala, political marriage, Islamization.*

## Introduction

Discourse on the pre-modern political history of Southeast Asia is often trapped in a dichotomy between empirical archaeological facts and traditional literary narratives. The fundamental problem in this study is the methodological failure to position traditional historiographical texts as valid historical sources, which has led to a distorted understanding of the original power relations in the archipelago. The archipelago, as a fluid geopolitical space, has long been the subject of interpretation through various local historiographical texts that reflect complex power dynamics (Reid, 2015; Ricklefs, 2008). In the Javanese context, texts such as the *Nagarakertagama*, *Pararaton*, and the *Babad* tradition are not merely chronological records, but instruments of legitimacy and representations of the rulers' cosmological vision toward surrounding territories (Worsley, 2018). This historiography functions as a "mental map" defining the boundaries of influence and the nature of relationships between political entities across the archipelago (Creese, 2004).

Theoretically, understanding the relationship between rulers in the archipelago requires deconstructing the concept of modern Western sovereignty, which is often irrelevant. This study uses a New Cultural History approach combined with the concept of Mandala (Wolters, 1999) to view power as something that is concentric and personal.

The authority of a ruler is determined by their ability to exert influence over peripheral areas (Kulke, 2016; Miksic, 2013). Within this framework, relations between rulers are not always interpreted as physical territorial annexation, but rather through symbolic recognition, gift exchange, and most crucially, through kinship networks (Lieberman, 2009).

Previous literature has addressed this aspect from different perspectives. Social aspects, particularly through political marriage strategies, have been a key pillar of regional stability in the archipelago. Marriage was not merely the union of two individuals but a diplomatic pact binding two dynasties within a mutually recognized hierarchical structure (Andaya, 2008; Taşbaş, 2025; Taylor, 2011). Javanese historiography consistently illustrates how princesses from overseas territories such as Melayu, Champa, and even China became integral parts of Javanese courts (Mulyadi, 2019; Wade, 2009). These marriage networks created a cross-regional "court society" that facilitated the organic transfer of culture, technology, and religious ideology (Locher-Scholten, 2004; Sutherland, 2021). The relationship between Majapahit and the kingdoms in Sumatra, for instance, is often depicted in traditional literature as a "sibling" or "in-law" relationship, signifying an acknowledgment of Javanese moral authority without entirely erasing local identity (Drakard, 1999; Perret, 2011).

Politically, the manifestation of power in Nusantara is strongly recorded in narratives of expansion and unification. The policy of "*Cakrawala Mandala Nusantara*" championed by Kertanegara of Singosari and continued by Gajah Mada through the *Sumpah Palapa* (Palapa Pledge) serves as a significant milestone in regional political historiography (Manguin, 2011; Ptak, 2015). Modern scholars argue that this ambition for unification was driven by the need to secure maritime trade routes from external threats, particularly the Yuan Dynasty in China (Heng, 2009; Sen, 2014). Traditional texts depict military expeditions to regions like Bali, Sumatra, and the Malay Peninsula not merely as acts of aggression, but as efforts to create a "*Pax Javanica*" order that ensured collective security under the umbrella of Majapahit (Gomperts, 2012; Noorduyn, 2006). The payment of tribute and the recognition of sovereignty by local rulers to the center of power in Java constituted a confirmation of the dynamic Mandala structure (Christie et al., 2007; Yatim, 2018).

However, these relational dynamics underwent a fundamental paradigm shift with the penetration of Islam into the Nusantara region. The transformation from an "Indic" to an "Islamic" identity brought changes to how rulers defined their authority and alliances (Azra, 2004; Laffan, 2011). Islamization did not only alter spiritual aspects but also introduced a new cosmopolitan network connecting Nusantara rulers with centers of civilization in the Middle East and South Asia (Ricci, 2011; Tagliacozzo, 2009). Historiography from the Islamic era, such as the *Babad Tanah Jawi* or *Sejarah Melayu*, began to emphasize the role of *ulama* (religious scholars) and Sufi networks as mediators in inter-kingdom relations (Feener, 2015; Pelras, 2010). Cooperation between rulers was no longer based solely on bloodline, but also on religious solidarity (*ukhuwah*) and the propagation of Islamic teachings (Formichi, 2016; Riddell, 2017). The role of the *Wali Songo* in Java represents the intersection of political power and spiritual authority that crossed ethnic boundaries (Sunyoto, 2016; Woodward, 2011).

Although the above literature is very rich, there is a significant gap in which conventional historical studies tend to partially separate traditional textual analysis from practical political reality. Often, Babad texts are considered merely fictional literary works without historical value, a view that is contested by proponents of the 'New Cultural History' approach (Burke, 2008; Hunt, 2014). Furthermore, previous studies have tended

to focus exclusively on a single dimension, such as pure politics or pure philology (Florida, 1995; Robson, 2015). There remains a paucity of research attempting to integrate social, political, and religious aspects into a comprehensive analytical framework to see how Nusantara relations were constructed holistically within the Javanese collective memory (Brakel, 2004; Hellwig, 2011).

This imbalance creates a significant literary gap, especially in understanding how the "idea of Nusantara" was maintained and inherited through traditional texts amidst changing times. How did Javanese historiography balance claims of Javanese supremacy with the reality of autonomy for other kingdoms outside Java? How did the shift from Hindu-Buddhism to Islam alter the rhetoric of these diplomatic relations? These questions require deeper exploration using an interdisciplinary perspective that combines history, literature, and political sociology (Day, 2002; Houben, 2017).

The uniqueness of this research lies in its use of an interdisciplinary perspective that combines history, literature, and political sociology to dissect the 'identity negotiations' behind these grand narratives. This research aims to conduct a critical analysis of the representation of inter-ruler relations in Nusantara within traditional Javanese historiography using a multidimensional approach. By examining authoritative texts such as the *Nagarakertagama*, *Pararaton*, and the *Babad* corpus, this article seeks to uncover patterns of social interaction through political marriage, hegemonic dynamics through territorial expansion, and the transformation of power networks through the process of Islamization (Behrend, 2010). Through qualitative content analysis, this study argues that the relationship between Nusantara rulers in Javanese historiography is not merely a history of conquest, but a continuous negotiation of identity in building a cohesive regional order (Milner, 2011; Tarling, 2014). These findings are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to Southeast Asian historical studies and offer a new perspective in understanding the roots of national integration today (Nordholt, 2011; Shiraishi, 2012).

## Method

### Study Design

This research is designed as an interpretative qualitative study, focusing on the analysis of historical texts as dynamic cultural artifacts. The primary approach employed is qualitative content analysis, integrated within a historical hermeneutic framework. Through this design, latent patterns in social, political, and religious relations often overlooked in conventional historiographical studies can be dissected more profoundly (Imam et al., 2025; Martayana et al., 2025; Williams, 2021). The use of this design aims to transcend literal readings of the texts and explore the symbolic meanings and ideologies of power embedded within traditional Javanese historiographical narratives. The researcher positions the texts not as passive reflections of past events, but as active constructions that shape the understanding of inter-ruler relations in Nusantara.

### Corpus of the Study

The data corpus for this study is constructed through the selection of authoritative texts representing the chronological spectrum of Javanese history, from the Hindu-Buddhist period to the development of Islam. The inclusion criteria for the corpus are based on the presence of narratives that explicitly mention interactions with political entities outside Java, thereby enabling a valid reconstruction of trans-regional relational networks (Hafiz & Subekti, 2025; Creese, 2004; Worsley, 2018). The primary material

includes the *Nagarakertagama* (*Desawarnana*) and *Pararaton* corpuses, which represent the collective memory of the Majapahit era. Furthermore, the corpus includes texts from the transitional and Islamic periods, such as *Babad Tanah Jawi*, *Babad Demak*, and *Sadjarah Banten*. To capture the diplomatic dynamics of the Islamic Mataram period, this study also incorporates *Babad Nitik* and *Babad Mataram*.

### Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

The data collection process was conducted through systematic documentary study, utilizing the observation and note-taking method as the primary instrument. The researcher, acting as the human instrument, performed a close reading of critical editions of the selected text corpus. Each identified data point was subsequently verified through source triangulation, where a specific relationship narrative in one text was compared with representations in other texts to identify patterns of consistency or narrative discrepancy (Apellániz et al., 2024; Lemon & Hayes, 2020). To ensure transparency and objectivity in the analysis, this process was guided by a data coding protocol that classifies each narrative unit into specific relational dimensions, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Data Coding Protocol and Analysis Framework**

Dimension	Analysis Indicators	Primary Corpus Sources
Social	Kinship ties, political marriages, genealogical links, blood brotherhood	<i>Pararaton</i> , <i>Babad Tanah Jawi</i> , <i>Babad Segaluh</i>
Political	Territorial expansion, tribute systems (upeti), diplomatic missions, sovereignty recognition	<i>Nagarakertagama</i> , <i>Babad Mataram</i> , <i>Babad Nitik</i>
Religious	Da'wah networks, pesantren establishment, Islamic alliances, conversion of elites	<i>Babad Demak</i> , <i>Sadjarah Banten</i> , <i>Babad Tanah Jawi</i>

*Source: (Azra, 2004; Fincher, 2023; Wolters, 1999)*

### Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis follows an interactive model involving the circular stages of data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions. In the initial stage, data classified according to the protocol in Table 1 was filtered through a process of thematic coding to identify dominant relationship patterns. Subsequently, the data was presented in a typological matrix of relationships to facilitate the mapping of power networks in Nusantara. The final stage of analysis involves in-depth interpretation by linking findings to the Mandala theory and pre-modern Southeast Asian geopolitical concepts. Through intertextual analysis, the researcher explores how relational motifs, such as political marriage or the sending of tributes, functioned as legitimizing mechanisms in building a cohesive regional political order.

## Results

The results of this study reveal that traditional Javanese historiography does not merely record internal royal chronicles, but functions as an archive of trans-regional diplomatic relations. The data extracted from the primary text corpus are classified into three main relational categories.

### Social Dimensions: Consanguinity and Marital Diplomacy

Traditional Javanese historiographical data indicate that social relations between Nusantara rulers were not built in a vacuum, but through the deliberate construction of genealogies integrated to create regional stability.

**Table 1. Social Relations in Traditional Javanese Historiography**

No.	Types of Relationships	Relationships between the Kingdom and the Rulers of the Archipelago	Sources of Historiography	Forms of Relationships
1	Family Relationship of Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Majapahit-Jambi</i></li> <li>b. <i>Majapahit-Palembang</i></li> <li>c. <i>Sunan Ampel dan Walisongo lainnya</i></li> </ul>	<i>Pararaton</i> <i>BTJawi, SBanten, BMaj., BDm, BSegaluh</i> <i>BTJawi, SBanten, BMaj., BDm, BSegaluh</i>	Cooperation
2.	Marital Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Prabu Brawijaya (Majapahit) dengan Putri Campa</i></li> <li>b. <i>Sunan Ampel dan Walisongo lainnya dengan Putri-putri Jawa</i></li> </ul>	<i>BTJawi, SBanten, BMaj.</i> <i>BTJawi, SBanten, BMaj., BDm, BSegaluh</i>	Cooperation
3.	Cooperative Relationships Among Family Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Prabu Jayanegara (Majapahit) – Adityawarman (Jambi)</i></li> <li>b. <i>Majapahit-Campa</i></li> <li>c. <i>Majapahit-Palembang</i></li> </ul>	<i>BTJawi, SBanten, BMaj., BDm, BSegaluh</i> <i>BSegaluh</i> <i>BDm., BSegaluh</i>	Cooperation
4.	Cooperation between Foster Parents and Foster Children	<i>Nyi Patih Gresik (Ibu Angkat) dengan Jaka Samudera (Anak Angkat, dari Banjar)</i>	<i>BMaj., BDm, BSegaluh</i>	Cooperation

The first Javanese text to document an ancestral kinship relationship between Java and Melayu is the *Pararaton*. This kinship is found in the relationship between King Jayanegara (King of Majapahit) and Adityawarman (King of Malayu-Jambi), who were first cousins sharing the same grandfather, Sri Maharaja Maulimawardewa (Malayu-Jambi). This social connection emerged during the *Pamalayu Expedition* launched by Singosari against the Malayu Kingdom in Jambi in 1275. Following that event, Kebo Anabrang (the Singosari military commander) brought Dara Petak and Dara Jingga (daughters of Maharaja Maulimawardewa) to be presented to King Kertanegara (Singosari). Since the king had already passed away, Dara Petak married Raden Wijaya (King Kertarajasa), who was also the son-in-law of King Kertanegara. This fact is found in the following excerpt sourced from Padmapuspita (1966):

*Sapanjeneng Cri Kertanegara angilangekan kalana aren Bhaya. Huwusing kalana mati, angutus ing kawulanira, andona maring Malayu. Samangka akedik kari wong Tumapel, akeh kang katuduh maring Malayu. Sirapanjy Aragani angateraken, mangsul ing Tuban ...*

*Akara sapuluh dina teka kang andon saking Malayu, olik putri roro, kang sawiji ginawe binihaji denira Raden Wijaya, aran Raden Dara Petak; kang atuha aran Dara jingga, alaki dewa apuputra ratu ing Malayu, aran Tuhan Janaka, kasir-kasir Cri Marmadewa, bhiseka siraji Mantrolot. Tunggal Pamalayu lan Patumapel i caka Resi-sanga-samadhi, 1197. Pangadeg Aji Katong ratu ring Daha ia caka Naga-muka-dara-kidung Wukir polaman, wusing angapus kidung moksa.*

*V11. Samanagka Raden Wijaya anjeneng prabhu i caka Rasa rupa-dwi-citangcu, 1216. Wekasan patutan lawan Raden Dara Petak putra lanang. kesatriyanira Raden Kala Gemet. Kuneng putranira bhatara Ciwabuddha stri kalih siki, kang cinayaken ing wong Tatar, ingalap kalih denira Raden Wijaya, sira sang atuha anjeneng ring Kahuripan, sira sang anom anjeneng ing Daha. Abhisikanira Raden Wijaya duk Prabhu Sri Kertarajasa. Tahun panjenengira, oremira awihen. Mokta sira, dhinarma ring Antapura, moktanira i caka 1257.*

*VIII. Gumanti Raden Kala Gemet angadeg Prabhu, abhiseka Bhatara Jayanegara*

Terjemahannya:

"Sri Kertanegara, during his reign, eliminated a wanderer named Baya. After the wanderer's death, he commanded his subjects to launch an expedition to Melayu. Apanji Aragani escorted them; having reached Tuban, he returned...

Approximately ten days later, those who went to war returned from Melayu, bringing two princesses. One was wed by Raden Wijaya, named Raden Dara Petak. The elder, named Dara Jingga, wed a deity (*dewa*), giving birth to a son who became the King in Malayu, named Tuhan Janaka, with the regnal name: Sri Warmadewa, alias Raja Mantrolot. The events of Malayu and Tumapel occurred simultaneously in the Shaka year: *Pendeta sembilan bersamadi* or 1197. King Katong ascended the throne in Daha in the Shaka year: *Ular muka dara tunggal* or 1198. Upon King Katong's arrival in Junggaluh, he composed a poem, *Wukir Polaman*; after finishing the poem, he passed away.

VII. Now Raden Wijaya became king; in that year, he had a son by Dara Petak, whose kshatriya name was Raden Kalangemet. As for the two daughters of Batara Shiva-Buddha, who were intended for the Tatars, both were also wed by Raden Wijaya when he became king: Sri Kertarajasa. During his reign, he suffered from a swelling ulcer. He passed away and was enshrined at Antapura in the year 1257.

VIII. Raden Kalegemet succeeded him as king, with the regnal name: Batara Jayanagara."

Based on traditional historiographical data sourced from the *Pararaton*, the relationship between rulers in Java and those outside Java (Nusantara) was constructed through profound kinship ties that transcended mere formal political alliances. The *Pararaton* serves as a crucial record, being the first to document the ancestral kinship between the political entities of Java and Melayu. This bond manifested concretely in the figures of King Jayanegara (King of Majapahit) and Adityawarman (King of Malayu-Jambi), who are depicted as first cousins sharing a common lineage from their grandfather, Sri Maharaja Maulimawardewa of Malayu-Jambi. An in-depth interpretation of this data suggests that Javanese historiography did not perceive overseas kingdoms as entirely separate foreign entities, but rather as branches of a singular, vast genealogical tree intertwined through "uterine politics" or strategic marriages.

The roots of this social relationship began with a major geopolitical event: the Pamalayu Expedition launched by King Kertanegara of Singosari in 1275 CE. Literally, the expedition appears to be a military territorial expansion into Jambi; however, its historiographical impact was far more socio-culturally transformative. Through the commander Kebo Anabrang, two daughters of Maharaja Maulimawardewa, Dara Petak and Dara Jingga, were brought to Java to be presented to the Singosari ruler. As Kertanegara had already passed away by the time the party arrived, Dara Petak was married to Raden Wijaya (the founder of Majapahit), while Dara Jingga was said to have

"married a deity" (*alaki dewa*) and gave birth to Tuhan Janaka, later known as Sri Warmadewa or Raja Mantrolot in Malayu.

The interpretation of the phrase "*alaki dewa*" within the text provides a sacred dimension to the Malayu rulers, while simultaneously solidifying their legitimacy within the Java-centric Nusantara power structure. By positioning Dara Petak as one of Raden Wijaya's primary consorts who bore Raden Kalangemet (later ascending the throne as King Jayanegara) this historiography asserts that Malayu blood flowed directly through the highest leadership of Majapahit. This created a narrative of shared sovereignty, where Majapahit held a moral right to intervene in or protect Malayu territories due to these blood ties. Adityawarman, as Jayanegara's cousin, represents the integration of local elites into the Javanese power hierarchy, ensuring regional stability along the Malacca Strait trade routes under the aegis of Majapahit's authority.

Furthermore, the presence of the two daughters of Batara Shiva-Buddha (Kertanegara) who were also wed by Raden Wijaya illustrates a complex pattern of political syncretism. Raden Wijaya positioned himself as the convergence point between the Singosari legacy and the new alliance with Malayu-Jambi. In this perspective, military conquest (the Pamalayu Expedition) was merely an entry point toward a more permanent mystical and socio-political unification. The temporal alignment of the events in Malayu and Tumapel in Shaka 1197 (1275 CE), as recorded in the text, emphasizes that the destinies of these two regions were cosmically intertwined. This analysis demonstrates that in traditional Javanese historiography, inter-ruler relations in Nusantara were not based on rigid modern nation-state concepts, but on the principle of personal sovereignty bound by consanguinity. Political marriage was not merely a domestic affair but the highest instrument of diplomacy, ensuring the loyalty of peripheral regions without the need for permanent military garrisons. Through the genealogical narrative in *Pararaton*, Jambi and Sumatra were no longer viewed as "the other," but as close kin with moral rights and obligations within the Majapahit political ecosystem. This provided a two-way legitimacy: the Javanese ruler gained the legitimacy to lead Nusantara, while the Malayu rulers secured legitimacy in their own lands by being recognized by the Javanese center of power as part of the royal family.

### Political Dimensions: Hegemony and Territorial Unification

The political dimension in Javanese historiography represents a vision of Nusantara's integration through military conquest and formal sovereignty recognition.

**Table 2. Political Aspects in Traditional Javanese Historiography**

No.	Types of Relationships	Relationships between the Kingdom and the Rulers of the Archipelago	Sources of Historiography	Forms of Relationships
1	Political Relations between Kingdoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. <i>Majapahit-Campa dan Kerajaan Melayu lainnya</i></li><li>b. <i>Mataram-Palembang dan Kerajaan Melayu lainnya</i></li><li>c. <i>Mataram-Negara Selat dan Kerajaan Melayu lainnya</i></li></ul>	<i>NK</i> <i>BSAgung, BMat.</i> <i>BNitik, BMat.</i>	Competition, Cooperation Conflict Cooperation Cooperation

No.	Types of Relationships	Relationships between the Kingdom and the Rulers of the Archipelago	Sources of Historiography	Forms of Relationships
2.	Division and Transfer of Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Sri Kertarajasa-Jayanegara</i></li> <li>b. <i>Wali Songo-Raden Patah</i></li> <li>c. <i>Gajah Mada-Adityawarman</i></li> <li>d. <i>Mataram-Negara Selat</i></li> </ul>	<i>Pararaton</i> <i>BMaj., BSagalu</i> <i>BDm., BSagalu</i> <i>BNitik</i>	Cooperation Cooperation Cooperation Cooperation
3.	Territorial Expansion and Warfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Majapahit dan Kerajaan Melayu lainnya</i></li> <li>b. <i>Singosari-Malayu (Jambi) dan Kerajaan Melayu lainnya</i></li> <li>c. <i>Mataram dan Kerajaan Melayu lainnya</i></li> <li>d. <i>Majapahit-Campai-Palembang</i></li> <li>e. <i>Banten-Belanda-Jambi</i></li> <li>f. <i>Demak (Walisongo)-Majapahit</i></li> </ul>	<i>BMaj., Pararaton, NK, SBanten</i> <i>Pararaton, NK, BSAgung, BMat., NK</i> <i>SBanten</i> <i>SBanten</i> <i>BSegalu</i>	Competition and Conflict Conflict and Cooperation Cooperation Competition Conflict and War War
4	Presentation of Gifts and Tribute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Prabu Kertanegara-Malayu (Jambi)</i></li> <li>b. <i>Prabu Majapahit-Raja-raja Melayu</i></li> <li>c. <i>Pangeran Purbaya (Mataram)-Utusan Palembang</i></li> <li>d. <i>Sultan Mataram-Raja-raja Melayu</i></li> <li>e. <i>Raden Usen-Prabu Majapahit</i></li> <li>f. <i>Raja Palembang dan Raja-raja Melayu-Sultan Mataram</i></li> <li>g. <i>Raden Patah, Raden Husen ke Majapahit dan Ampel</i></li> </ul>	<i>Pararaton NK</i> <i>BSAgung SBanten, BMat., BNitik</i>	Cooperation Cooperation Cooperation Conflict
5	Betrayal and Political Wandering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Prabu Kertanegara-Malayu (Jambi)</i></li> <li>b. <i>Prabu Majapahit-Raja-raja Melayu</i></li> <li>c. <i>Pangeran Purbaya (Mataram)-Utusan Palembang</i></li> <li>d. <i>Sultan Mataram-Raja-raja Melayu</i></li> <li>e. <i>Raden Usen-Prabu Majapahit</i></li> <li>f. <i>Raja Palembang dan Raja-raja Melayu-Sultan Mataram</i></li> <li>g. <i>Raden Patah, Raden Husen ke Majapahit dan Ampel</i></li> </ul>	<i>SBanten BNitik</i> <i>BMaj., BDm., SBanten.</i> <i>BSegalu</i>	Cooperation Conflict War Competition Conflict Cooperation Competition Conflict

Traditional Javanese historiography demonstrates that political relations were the dominant interaction between Nusantara rulers, particularly between Javanese, Malay, and Bugis-Makassar leaders. These interactions manifested as political alliances between states, the distribution and devolution of power, territorial expansion, the presentation of gifts and tribute, as well as political betrayals and exiles. According to the *Babad Nitik*, the *Patih* (Prime Minister) of Jambi informed the Sultan of Mataram that the King of Jambi had fallen ill and subsequently passed away. The Sultan of Mataram, deeply moved, immediately commanded that the son of the King of Jambi succeed him. The *Patih* of Jambi

was then ordered to return to his country, as were the *Patih*s of Banten and Cirebon. The following data excerpt illustrates this:

*Hantara sampun sacondra, patih Banten nulya prapti, nyahosken kang sarwa hendah, myang patih Cerbon nyarengi, hatur dwipongga kalin, lan Jambi pepatihipun, Marseng hatur huninga, yen mangke Raja hing Jambi, nandhang roga hing wuri lajeng Palastra.*

*Pangkur*

*Kamantiyan ngungun sri Nata sapademe sira sang Raja Jambi, puwara dawuh sang Prabu, putra kinen humantiya, Patih Jambi seksana kinen humantuk, myang Banten Cerbon kya patiya, wus samya linilan sami.*

Terjemahannya:

"Approximately one month had passed when the *Patih* of Banten arrived, presenting tributes of exquisite beauty; simultaneously, the *Patih* of Cirebon presented two horses, and the *Patih* of Jambi brought word that the King of Jambi had fallen ill and eventually passed away.

*Pangkur* (Canto)

The King was greatly startled; upon the passing of the King of Jambi, he promptly commanded that the son of the King of Jambi take his father's place. The *Patih* of Jambi was immediately ordered to return, and the *Patih*s of Banten and Cirebon were likewise granted leave to depart." (Suradi (ed.) 1991: 80, 195).

Based on traditional Javanese historiographical data sourced from the *Babad Nitik*, the political relationship between the center of power in Java and territories outside Java specifically Jambi reveals a hierarchical and paternalistic sovereign structure. The narrative describing the *Patih* of Jambi's audience with the Sultan of Mataram to report his king's demise is a potent indicator of Mataram's political legitimacy as the supreme "umbrella" of power in the archipelago at that time. From a socio-political perspective, the *Patih*'s actions were not merely a routine diplomatic visit, but a form of administrative and moral obligation within the Mandala system. In this system, peripheral regions felt the necessity of obtaining a "seal of approval" (*stempel pengesahan*) from the traditional center in Java to maintain the stability of their own local leadership. This is further emphasized by the Sultan of Mataram's immediate decree for the succession of the late King's son. The Sultan's authority in determining Jambi's succession proves that Javanese political influence transcended vast geographical boundaries, positioning the Sultan as the legitimate arbiter for the survival of dynasties beyond Java.

A deeper interpretation of the *Pangkur* canto from *Babad Nitik* exposes Java's formidable role as a mediator and regulator of regional order. The simultaneous arrival of the *Patih*s of Banten, Cirebon, and Jambi at the Mataram court signifies that Mataram was viewed as the socio-political convergence point for various pivotal entities in Nusantara. The presentation of tribute exquisite objects from Banten and "two horses" (*dwipongga kalin*) from Cirebon symbolized submission and respect, reinforcing the Sultan of Mataram's status as the suzerain. Jambi, in this context, positioned itself within the same orbit of power, where reporting the king's death became a crucial moment to reaffirm loyalty to the center. The Sultan's order for the son to succeed his father demonstrates not only absolute power but also the center's protective responsibility toward the continuity of the social structure in subordinate regions.

This historiography reflects a long-standing continuity in Java-Melayu (Jambi) political relations, spanning from the Singosari and Majapahit eras to the Mataram period. Despite chronological overlaps in texts regarding figures like *Orang Kayo Hitam*, the core narrative remains centered on the recognition of Javanese supremacy. The fact that the *Patih*s of Jambi, Banten, and Cirebon only departed after receiving formal leave (*linilan*

*sami*) from the Sultan illustrates a highly formalized diplomatic protocol. This proves that in the collective memory of Javanese historiographers, the stability of Nusantara depended on the harmony between regional rulers and the Javanese sovereign. Sovereignty was upheld not only through warfare or military expansion but also through institutionalized administrative recognition, manifest in the reporting of leadership transitions and the giving of diplomatic gifts.

These dynamics also show that relations between Nusantara rulers were often characterized by a blend of cooperation and hierarchical recognition. The submission of tribute and the reporting of leadership succession served as highly effective soft power instruments to minimize open conflict. The Sultan of Mataram, acting as the "Supreme Judge" in this narrative, held control over the political legitimacy sought by rulers outside Java. Thus, the data from *Babad Nitik* profoundly constructs Nusantara's political identity as an organic unity unified by the recognition of Java's central authority, which functioned to maintain socio-political order throughout vassal and allied territories. This interpretation asserts that in traditional historiography, true sovereignty was achieved when rulers from the farthest corners of Nusantara bowed and sought approval from the central throne in Java for the sake of their own political survival.

Traditional Javanese historiography reconstructs territorial expansion not merely as an act of aggression, but as a strategic endeavor to foster regional stability. In the *Nagarakertagama* and *Pararaton*, it is clearly recorded how the Singosari Kingdom under King Kertanegara formulated a foreign policy that was both defensive and expansive through the Pamalayu Expedition in 1275 CE (1197 Saka). The primary objective was to secure Western Nusantara, particularly the Malayu Kingdom in Jambi, as a defensive base to thwart the threat of the Mongol (Yuan Dynasty) forces. As recorded in *Nagarakertagama* Cantos XLI and XLII:

*...Tahun Saka naga bermuka rupa (1197) baginda menyuruh tundukkan Melayu... Seluruh Pahang, segenap Melayu tunduk menekur di hadapan beliau. Seluruh Gurun, segenap Bakulapura lari mencari perlindungan...*

These data indicate that strategic regions such as Pahang, Gurun, and Bakulapura (Tanjungpura) were positioned as a security perimeter for Javanese sovereignty. Analytically, C.C. Berg (Sumadio, 1993) observes that this phenomenon carries a dual significance. Beyond the geopolitical dimension of restraining Kublai Khan's ambitions, this expansion possessed a profound spiritual depth. Kertanegara, as an adherent of Shiva-Buddha Tantrayana, underwent consecration as a Bhairawa. Within this cosmology, the dominion over the "Four Nusantara" (Malayu, Bali, Madura, and Tanjungpura) was regarded as the creation of a mystical union.

Political marriage served as the reinforcing instrument for this mystical unity. Although Kertanegara passed away in 1292 due to Jayakatwang's rebellion, this unification vision was sustained both genealogically and politically by Raden Wijaya (Kertarajasa Jayawardhana). Raden Wijaya's strategic move to marry Kertanegara's daughters, as well as the two princesses from Malayu-Jambi (Dara Petak and Dara Jingga), constituted an effort to maintain the continuity of that sacred mandate. Consequently, Javanese historiography constructs the relationship between Java and other Nusantara regions not as a relationship between colonizer and colonized, but as a sacred integration that connects the gods with their goddesses within a singular, complete cosmic order.

### Religious Dimensions: The Convergence of Power and Faith

The religious dimension records a shift in relational patterns from Hindu-Buddhist structures to more cosmopolitan Islamic networks.

**Table 3. Religious Aspects in Traditional Javanese Historiography**

No.	Types of Relationships	Relationships between the Kingdom and the Rulers of the Archipelago	Sources of Historiography	Forms of Relationships
1	The Spread and Learning of Islam	<p>a. <i>Raden Rahmat (Sunan Ampel) dan Raden Alip (Sunan Giri) dari Campa menyebarkan agama Islam ke Majapahit</i></p> <p>b. <i>Syeikh Wali Lanang, dari Tanah Arab datang ke Majapahit menemui Sunan Ampel dan berdakwah di Blambangan.</i></p> <p>c. <i>Pengislaman dan pembelajaran Raden Patah dan Raden Husein kepada Sunan Ampel.</i></p> <p>d. <i>Dipati Bintara (Raden Patah) menghadap Raja Majapahit dan meminta kepada ayahandanya (Prabu Majapahit) memeluk agama Islam</i></p> <p>e. <i>Syeikh Wali Lanang mengajarkan berbagai ilmu agama Islam kepada Santri Bonang, Santri Giri, Raden Sa'id (Sunan Kali Jaga) dan Sunan Gunung Jati di Pulau Upih, Melaka.</i></p> <p>f. <i>Sultan Banten berdakwah dan memerangi kaum kafir di Palembang, terdapat Soro, abdinya yang sudah lama tidak datang berguru</i></p> <p>g. <i>Pendakwahan Islam yang dilakukan Sultan Agung (Mataram) di Palembang.</i></p>	<i>BDemak,</i> <i>BTJawi</i> <i>BTJawi</i> <i>BMaj. SBanten, BSegaluh</i> <i>SBanten, BSegaluh</i> <i>SBanten</i> <i>BNitik</i>	Cooperation Conflict  Cooperation Conflict  Cooperation  Cooperation Conflict  Cooperation Conflict  Cooperation Conflict  Cooperation Conflict

No.	Types of Relationships	Relationships between the Kingdom and the Rulers of the Archipelago	Sources of Historiography	Forms of Relationships
2.	Rebellion against non-Islamic rulers	<p>a. <i>Dipati Bintara kecawa dan ingin menyerang Majapahit karena sang Prabu tidak mau memeluk Islam</i></p> <p>b. <i>Ratu Darawati, isteri Prabu Majapahit dari Campa., setelah memeluk Islam dan belajar agama, dia tidak mau berdiam di istana dan tidak mau memakan yang haram serta minta dibuatkan rumah sendiri.</i></p>	<i>BDemak</i>	Conflict
3.	Construction of Mosques and Islamic Boarding Schools	<p>a. <i>Dipati Bintara (Raden Patah) menghadap Raja Majapahit dan meminta kepada ayahandanya (Prabu Majapahit) membangun sebuah mesjid.</i></p> <p>b. <i>Syekh Maulana Malik Ibrahim dan Sunan Ampel dianggap sebagai pembina pondok pesantren pertama di Giri dan Gresik.</i></p>	<i>BSegaluh</i> <i>BMaj.</i> <i>BDemak</i>	Cooperation Conflict Cooperation Conflict

The data indicate that the spread of Islam was not an isolated phenomenon but involved high-level alliances. The role of the Princess of Champa within the Majapahit court and the emergence of the Wali Songo marked an era where inter-ruler relations began to be defined by a shared faith (*akidah*). The construction of mosques and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) served as physical indicators of socio-religious cooperation that unified the coastal regions of Nusantara under a single spiritual umbrella. In the text of *Babad Demak* (*BDemak*), it is recounted that Maulana Ibrahim (Sheikh Ibrahim Asmara) traveled from Arabia to Champa to proselytize Islam. Through his marriage to the Princess of Champa, he was blessed with two sons named Raden Rahmat and Raden Alip. Upon reaching adulthood, both migrated to Majapahit, stopping at several villages in Sumatra along the way to preach. Their arrival in Majapahit was well-received by the court, not only due to their kinship with Queen Darawati but also because of their noble mission to spread Islamic teachings.

After establishing households, they were granted territories for guidance: Raden Alip in Gresik and Raden Rahmat in Ampelgading, Surabaya. Consequently, Raden Rahmat became known as Sunan Ampel. King Brawijaya granted permission for all Majapahit subjects to embrace Islam, although he himself was not yet ready to do so. Ampelgading flourished into a prosperous and major region, with a significant portion of the Majapahit

population converting to Islam under Sunan Ampel's guidance. This missionary work (*dakwah*) was continued by his sons: Sunan Bonang preached in Tuban, while Prabu Satmata (Sunan Giri) and Sunan Gunung Muria preached in their respective regions. His younger siblings, Sheikh Benton and Maulana Ishak, also served as imams in the southern regions of East Java.

It is highly probable that Arya Damar, the Adipati of Palembang and son of the King of Majapahit, was converted to Islam by Raden Rahmat when the entourage from Champa stopped in Palembang around 1420 CE. Furthermore, he converted Aria Teja (the Regent of Tuban) before settling in Ampeldenta, Surabaya. King Majapahit's acceptance of Sunan Ampel and the granting of the Ampel territory prove that Islam was not perceived as a threat to royal authority. Moreover, these preachers were the nephews of his wife, the Princess of Champa.

Furthermore, *Babad Tanah Jawi* (*BTJawi*) records the arrival of Sheikh Wali Lanang, an Arab missionary who met Sunan Ampel in Majapahit. He was permitted to preach in Blambangan, which at that time still adhered to Hindu teachings. Sheikh Wali Lanang successfully cured the terminally ill daughter of the King of Blambangan and subsequently married her after the King embraced Islam. However, the King later reneged on his son-in-law's teachings, causing Sheikh Wali Lanang to leave the palace for Melaka. Following this, Blambangan was struck by a horrific plague. As a result of this disaster, Sheikh Wali Lanang's son was cast into the sea as he was considered a harbinger of misfortune; however, the infant was rescued by Nyai Semboja, a wealthy widow in Gresik, and named Santri Giri. As an adult, Santri Giri studied under Sunan Ampel and became close friends with Sunan Bonang. Both students were advised to continue their studies in Mecca, but during their journey, they stopped in Melaka and studied under Sheikh Wali Lanang (Santri Giri's father). Upon the Sheikh's advice, they returned to Java with new titles to strengthen their missionary work. This account is corroborated in *Sejarah Banten* (*SBanten*) and *Babad Segaluh*.

Regarding Raden Patah and Raden Husein, *BTJawi* describes how they traveled to Java to serve the King of Majapahit but ultimately studied under Sunan Ampel upon the advice of a Cirebon official. Raden Patah later established a settlement in Bintara, Demak, under Sunan Ampel's direction. There, he built a mosque and became a religious teacher until Demak developed into the first Islamic city on the island of Java. Although Raden Patah was disappointed that his father (the King of Majapahit) had not yet embraced Islam, Sunan Ampel advised him not to attack Majapahit, as the King had never obstructed the spread of Islam. The significance of Pulau Upih is also noted in Javanese chronicles as an important center for Sufi learning (*tasawuf*). Four saints Sunan Bonang, Sunan Giri, Sunan Kalijaga, and Sunan Gunung Jati once sought knowledge there. Pulau Upih, located in Melaka (now known as Tengkera), was led by Maulana Ishak (Sheikh Wali Lanang) and became a renowned center for Islamic education during the reign of Sultan Mansur Shah.

The tradition of establishing *pondok pesantren* as centers for training missionary cadres was a continuation of the Hindu-Buddhist *padhepokan* tradition. Sheikh Maulana Malik Ibrahim and Sunan Ampel are regarded as the pioneers of this system in Java. The *kiai-santri* (teacher-student) relationship model with the mosque as the center of activity proved highly successful in Islamizing Java and the Eastern Nusantara regions; indeed, this tradition spread rapidly to Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and the Malay Peninsula. In another development, the Sultan of Banten, who studied under Pangeran Mas of Demak, was directed to launch an expedition to Palembang to confront and combat Ki Gede ing Suro (Soro). Ki Gede ing Suro was considered 'infidel' (*kafir*) by the Demak/Pajang authorities due to his political act of fleeing and building an independent

power base in Palembang around 1541 CE. Banten's attack on Palembang in 1596 was not only aimed at spreading Islamic influence but was also driven by the desire to monopolize the pepper trade in Palembang and Jambi. Finally, *Babad Nitik* recounts the missionary efforts of Sultan Agung of Mataram in Palembang, carried out through an approach of spiritual charisma (*karamah*) and wisdom, leading many locals to eventually embrace Islam and acknowledge the sovereignty of Mataram.

## Discussion

The construction of Nusantara identity within traditional Javanese historiography demonstrates that relations between rulers were not built in a vacuum, but through a genealogical network deliberately integrated to foster regional stability. The kinship between King Jayanegara and Adityawarman, who shared a lineage from Sri Maharaja Maulimawardewa, proves that sovereignty in pre-modern Nusantara was not understood through rigid territorial boundaries, but through networks of consanguinity or blood ties (Gjesvik, 2022; Rodriguez et al., 2025; Xin & Qian, 2025). This phenomenon aligns with the concept of "intimate geopolitics," where regional integration was achieved by merging bloodlines to minimize cultural resistance and eliminate the "foreign" status of overseas territories (Fincher, 2023; Kartodirdjo, 1990). The strategy of "uterine politics" through diplomatic marriage as practiced by Raden Wijaya toward Malay princesses served as the supreme instrument to ensure the loyalty of peripheral regions without the necessity of permanent military garrisons (Padmapuspita, 1966; Ricklefs, 2008). From this perspective, the relationship between Majapahit and kingdoms in Sumatra is no longer viewed as a relation between "conqueror and conquered," but as a bond between close kin with moral obligations within the same political ecosystem (Miksic, 2013; Mulyana, 1979; Worsley, 2018).

The political dimension contained in the narrative of the Pamalayu Expedition (1275 CE) reveals a highly strategic regional defense paradigm in the face of external threats from the Yuan Dynasty. The conquest of territories such as Jambi, Pahang, and Bakulapura by Kertanegara was an effort to establish a security perimeter or "Cakrawala Mandala Nusantara" that guaranteed Javanese maritime sovereignty (Hall, 2011; Harefa et al., 2025; Permata et al., 2025). This vision of unification held a dual meaning; beyond being a defensive geopolitical tactic, it was a manifestation of cosmic sovereignty in which the Javanese ruler positioned himself as the center of the world (*axis mundi*), uniting diverse political entities into a "mystical union" (Hazoury et al., 2009; Kulke, 2016; Supomo & Bellwood, 1995; Zoetmulder, 1995). As analyzed by scholars, the dominion over Nusantara territories was viewed as a theo-political ritual linking the center to the periphery within a complete cosmic order (Dellios, 2025; Gunawan, 2025; Qidong et al., 2023; Zhao, 2024). This reinforces the idea that Javanese hegemony was not merely physical-militaristic, but also based on a spiritual authority (*wibawa*) widely recognized by rulers outside the island of Java (Isbah, 2020; Said et al., 2025; Widodo et al., 2022; Wijaya et al., 2025).

The transition to the Islamic period brought a fundamental shift in how rulers defined authority and alliances, moving from hierarchical Hindu-Buddhist structures toward a more cosmopolitan Islamic network. The penetration of Islam through figures such as Sunan Ampel demonstrates that the new religion was not considered a threat to Majapahit's existence, but rather an element that strengthened regional stability through networks of preaching and marriage (Janah & Ayundasari, 2021; Juma', 2025; Sulaksono et al., 2023). King Brawijaya's acceptance of the Muslim community in Ampel proves a

degree of political pragmatism, where Islam became a "bridge" connecting Java with trade centers in the Malay world and beyond (Azman & Supriadi, 2025; Mufrodi, 2022). The "kiai-santri" (teacher-student) relationship model that developed in early *pesantren* then became a model for socio-cultural integration that transcended ethnic boundaries, creating religious solidarity (*ukhuwah*) that fortified Nusantara's cohesion (Darifah et al., 2025; Nisa'u & Karsidi, 2025; Siyono et al., 2022; Yasin & Khasbulloh, 2022).

During the Islamic Mataram era, Javanese sovereignty transformed into a more paternalistic and administrative form, as evidenced by the reporting of the Jambi King's succession to the Sultan of Mataram. The action of the *Patih* of Jambi in seeking validation from the center of power in Java is a strong indicator of the recognition of Mataram's political legitimacy as the supreme "umbrella" of power in Nusantara at that time. In the Islamicized Mandala system, peripheral regions still felt the need to obtain an "official seal" (*stempel pengesahan*) from the center to maintain the stability of their local leadership. Despite the shift in spiritual identity, the collective memory of Javanese historiography maintained the principle that true sovereignty was achieved when rulers from the ends of the archipelago acknowledged the authority of the center in Java for the sake of their own political survival. Thus, the relationship between Nusantara rulers in Javanese historiography represents an ongoing negotiation of identity, uniting diverse entities through bonds of blood, political vision, and shared faith.

## Conclusion

This research concludes that traditional Javanese historiography encompassing a corpus of texts from the Hindu-Buddhist era to the Islamic period constructs the relationship between Nusantara rulers through dynamic and multilayered legitimacy mechanisms. The primary findings indicate that these socio-political relations were not solely based on military prowess or territorial control, but more fundamentally relied on kinship networks (consanguinity) and spiritual alliances. In the social dimension, the strategy of "uterine politics" through diplomatic marriage as recorded in the *Pararaton* narrative regarding the relationship between Majapahit and Melayu successfully transformed political rivalries into familial solidarity that transcended geographical boundaries. This proves that for Javanese rulers, the integration of Nusantara was an effort to merge diverse genealogical lineages into a single, sacred center of sovereignty.

Politically, the vision of Nusantara unification originating in the Singosari era and peaking during the Majapahit and Islamic Mataram periods reflects a consistent application of the Mandala model of sovereignty. Territorial expansions, such as the Pamalayu Expedition, were not merely acts of territorial aggression but represented a regional defense strategy and the embodiment of cosmic sovereignty, where Java acted as the *axis mundi*. Meanwhile, the influx of Islamic influence through the Wali Songo networks brought a paradigm shift from caste-based legitimacy toward intellectual-spiritual networks. This transformation strengthened Nusantara's cohesion through the institutions of *pesantren* and mosques, which connected Java with the centers of civilization in Melaka and Sumatra. Ultimately, traditional Javanese historiography asserts that the stability and unity of Nusantara consistently depended on the recognition of Java's central authority (*wibawa*) as the provider of socio-religious and political legitimacy for rulers in the peripheral regions.

## Suggestions

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that future researchers conduct comparative studies utilizing historiographical sources from outside Java, such as the *Sulalat al-Salatin* (*Malay Annals*) or the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*. This would provide a more balanced "counter-perspective" regarding these power relations. Furthermore, there is a need for interdisciplinary analysis combining archaeological and genetic (DNA) approaches to verify the kinship narratives that, until now, have relied solely on traditional texts. By doing so, the historical truth behind genealogical myths can be uncovered through a more scientific lens.

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