

Sêrat Bayanullah: A study of Raden Panji Natarata's thoughts on Javanese Sufism through classical Javanese literature

**Authors:**

Mila I. Rahmawati¹ 
 Wakit A. Rais² 
 Prasetyo A.W. Wibowo² 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Linguistics,
 Faculty of Cultural Studies,
 Sebelas Maret University,
 Surakarta, Indonesia

²Department of Javanese
 Literature, Faculty of Cultural
 Sciences, Sebelas Maret
 University, Surakarta,
 Indonesia

Corresponding author:

Mila Rahmawati,
 milaindahr@student.uns.
 ac.id

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This study describes Raden Panji Natarata's thoughts as a humanist, poet and religious scholar who thinks that the concepts of Javanese Sufism and Islamic Sufism are two contradictory ideas. Raden Panji Natarata describes his ideas through the medium of *tembang macapat* (Javanese song) in a classic Javanese literature entitled *Sêrat Bayanullah*. *Sêrat Bayanullah*, which is used as a source of data for this research, is a collection of the Pura Mangkunegaran library, Surakarta, with catalogue number A-393. The scope of this study focuses on Raden Panji Natarata's thoughts on the nature of life, which include the concepts of human creation, human death, and the after-death union of the servant with God. To obtain objective and comprehensive research results, the researchers used a qualitative descriptive research paradigm by applying hermeneutic theory. The results showed that Raden Panji Natarata's thoughts about the nature of life did not go beyond the limits of monotheism, while other poets tended to acculturate Javanese Sufism thoughts, which sometimes were not in line with the teachings of monotheism.

Contribution: As an academic contribution, this research is expected to enrich and preserve the repertoire of local research literature with Sufism nuances and their relationship with the thoughts of Sufi experts. Differences in perspective is natural, and the most important thing is mutual respect for differing opinions for the sake of creating harmony in life.

Keywords: Javanese literature; Sufistic; Javanese Islam; *Sêrat Bayanullah*; macapat song.

Introduction

Prior to the 19th century, the majority of Javanese literary works were still influenced by the history of the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, whereas Javanese literary works with Islamic Sufistic themes began to appear in the early 19th century (Purwadi 2011:114). Syncretism arose due to the significant Hindu-Buddhist influence. It indirectly impacted the theological views of the Javanese people. Hence, the religious activities of the Javanese who have embraced Islamic beliefs are rooted in Hindu-Buddhist traditions. The transition from the Hindu-Buddhist paradigm to Islam was indeed not a completely new matter, but rather a reconfiguring of exogenous elements that were so deeply rooted in the socio-cultural and textual structure of Javanese society. This meant that cosmology, mythology, textual canon and mystical current as the manifestation of exogenous elements of the old culture did not suddenly disappear after the arrival and the rise of Islamic domination in the archipelago. These exogenous elements continued to exist in the form of reconfiguration, adaptation in literary work, performing and figurative arts, folklore, mystical tradition and many other cultural manifestations (Acri & Meyer 2019:280–282). This reality also indicated that Hindu-Buddhist culture was linked to the spread of the religion that followed (Islam) (Khalil 2008). In other words, no religion is exempt from a society's long-standing beliefs (Machasin 2011).

In the view of most orientalist, the Islamic religious tradition in Java which was still mixed with Hindu-Buddhist practices or teachings was referred to as 'Javanese Islam' (Rubaidi 2019:28). According to Geertz (1983), Javanese Islam is considered a syncretic Islam, which is a mixture of Islamic teachings with indigenous Javanese customs and traditions. Meanwhile, Hefner (1999) and Woodward (1999) believed that Islam mixed with Javanese culture is only on the surface level. The essence of Islamic dogma remains original, namely, Islamic monotheism. This explanation can only be approached by using the Sufistic approach of Islam (Sufism). Woodward (1999) also stated that without a set of Sufistic perspectives, the study of Javanese Islam will be trapped in a false perception of Islam itself, because the fundamentals of Java as a cultural entity

are built on a belief system with the spirit of mysticism, such as Javanese customs, beliefs, Hinduism, and Buddhist mysticism. In addition, the characteristics of Javanese Islam basically cannot be separated from the spiritual dimension, namely, mysticism (*kebatinan*). Therefore, an absolute prerequisite in exploring the treasures of Javanese Islam must be mastering the discipline of Sufism. This long history was the motivation for Raden Panji Natarata to create a Javanese literary work entitled *Sêrat Bayanullah*.

Etymologically, the word *bayan* means 'illumination', while the word *Allah* means 'Allah' which refers to God. *Sêrat Bayanullah* tells the story of Raden Panji Natarata's journey in the process of finding the true nature of enlightenment on theological matters. During his journey, he came across and examined the doctrines of various viewpoints and religions, which he believed could lead people astray from the true path (Tanaya 1977). The story of the journey is expressed through a literary work in the form of Javanese poetry or what is called *têmbang macapat*. As one of the cultural observers of the Yogyakarta Palace, Raden Panji Natarata had a strong Islamic base. This is in line with what was conveyed by Woodward (1999), which states that the triumph of Islamic mysticism in Java first occurred within the scope of the Islamic Mataram kingdom with a locus in Yogyakarta, namely, the Yogyakarta Palace (Azca, Ikhwan & Arrobi 2019:28; Rubaidi 2019:27). In addition, Raden Panji Natarata was also one of the *panatagama* [regulators of social, cultural, political and religious issues] of the Yogyakarta Palace, so the perspective used on the concept of Javanese Sufism was based on the path of Islamic orthodoxy. As for the use of literary works as a medium in conveying Raden Panji Natarata's views on several teachings that he considered to be deviant, the function was to minimise turmoil or conflict. It is known that conveying messages through literary works tended to prioritise wisdom and emphasise the inner or esoteric aspects (Muqoyyidin 2012:28; Sofwan, Wasit & Mundiri 2000). This step can be called a cultural *da'wah* approach. However, cultural products such as literary works need to be adapted to the context and conditions of the community at the time the work was created so that the success of delivering messages (*da'wah*) can be achieved and local culture can also be preserved (Arifani 2010:31; Bruinessen 1998:202; Effendi 2019:18).

In the context of literature in general, literary works containing theological teachings or divinity are known as mystical literature, while in Javanese literature they are referred to as *suluk* (Afifi 2021). *Suluk* is a term that has been used by the guardians (propagator of Islam) in Java to convey esoteric teachings or Javanese Sufism (Samidi 2014; Simuh 1988). In the context of Islam, *Suluk* is Sufism, and the proponents of Sufism are referred to as Sufis (Nawafi 2020:247). The Sufis in general have a way or method to get closer to the Creator, which is commonly called the tarekat. Etymologically, the word 'tarekat' comes from Arabic which is the *mashdar* [noun] form of the word that has the meaning الكيفية [way], الأسلوب [method, system], المذبة [madzhab, flow] and الحالة [state

of the art] (Nawafi 2020:246). The Sufis try to achieve that with a scale, dimension and format commensurate with their abilities. This is in line with the essence of the experience, namely, a deep personal appreciation of meeting oneself with the Supreme Essence (Madjid 2008). The meeting with God is expected to reveal the absolute truth and open the veil between the servant and God. Unfortunately, there are still frequent misconceptions about the meaning associated with this. Therefore, Raden Panji Natarata, who is also a Sufi, took part in contributing his thoughts on the misconceptions of Sufism through *Sêrat Bayanullah*. As an Islamic Sufi, Raden Panji Natarata's thoughts do not lead to Javanese Sufism, but are pure Islamic Sufism doctrines and teachings sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith.

Thus, this study described the responses or thoughts of Raden Panji Natarata to the teachings of mysticism that he had received from his teachers. As previously stated, the medium used by Raden Panji Natarata was *têmbang macapat*. Meaningfully, *têmbang macapat* for the Javanese people represents the story of the human journey from birth to death. Therefore, the scope discussed in this research is limited to Raden Panji Natarata's thoughts on the concept of creation, the concept of death, and the concept of the union of the servant with God after death. These concepts in general are the points that are intensely discussed in the realm of Sufism. To obtain objective and comprehensive research results, the researchers used the hermeneutic theory. Thus, the academic contribution of this research is expected to be able to enrich and preserve the repertoire of local research literature with the nuances of Sufism and its relationship with the thoughts of Sufi experts. For Sufis, respecting local culture is an obligation, but upholding the belief of monotheism is a must. This is important to raise the awareness that different perspectives on a problem are normal, and the most important thing is to respect each other for any differences of thought for the sake of creating harmony in life.

Problem statement

Javanese society has a unique view and culture related to their religious life. Before the arrival of Hindu-Buddhist religion, Javanese people adhered to the teachings of animism and dynamism. Then, after the arrival of Hindu-Buddhist teachings, Javanese culture appeared to be theocratic. Animist and dynamism beliefs that have been rooted in the life of Javanese society were increasingly prominent with stories of sacred people and demigods or the services of spells (in the form of words) which were considered magical. After the saints (Sufis) introduced Islam to Java, the Javanese community was divided into two groups, namely, the *santri* (the group who were fully guided by Islamic teachings) and the *abangan* (the group who still believed in Hindu-Buddhist traditions and local beliefs) (Geertz 1983; Muqoyyidin 2012:23; Rubaidi 2019:24). Basically, Javanese society was adaptive to the various cultures they received. This was in accordance with their religious, tolerant and accommodating characteristics. These characteristics tend to give rise to

characteristics, traits and tendencies that were unique to the Javanese people, for example: (1) believe in God as *sangkan paraning dumadi* with all his attributes and greatness, (2) believe in something that is immaterial and supernatural and mystical, (3) tend to symbolism and (4) tend to want a harmonious and peaceful life (Suyanto 1990). Therefore, the Javanese people consider all religions or beliefs that came to be well received because they were not used to contradicting religions and beliefs. However, some teachings that were already deeply rooted in Javanese society could actually be misleading, so that Raden Panji Natarata had criticised the matter according to the Sufism values he had proclaimed.

Literature review

In general, many studies related to Javanese Sufism have been carried out, both by Indonesian and foreign scholars. One of the overseas scholars, Acri (2019), conducted an initial exploration of the *Suluk* text which aims to strengthen the ideas of P.J. Zoetmulder and appreciate the original teachings of India on the doctrinal elements contained in several parts of Javanese Sufism literature. Acri seeks to identify, review and rebalance the relationship between the Indian (Hindu) and Islamic paradigms from a scientific perspective. He argues that some of the parts of *suluk* presented in Javanese Islam were indebted to ideas derived from pre-Islamic tantra. He will then link the heterodox Muslim mystical figure Siti Jĕnar with other antinomical characters described in Javanese literature and contextualise it against the background of the broader issue between the synthesis of Hindu-Buddhist (tantra) and Islamic (Sufi) identities in Java.

One researcher, Wieringa (2019), discussed the tension between Islam and Javanese religiosity in the 19th century in a literary work called *Suluk Gatholoco*. *Suluk Gatholoco* is a famous anti-Islam satire poem. It was told that Muslim reformers advocated a return to the original teachings of Islam. However, this suggestion was emphatically rejected by several parties. Those who refused express their ignorance of the origins of Islam and prefer to shift their eyes to the realm of Javanese Sufism (*kejawen*), which for them is idealised as the pre-Islamic golden age.

Meanwhile, several Javanese Sufism studies that have been carried out by Indonesian researchers and have relevance to this research are as follows.

Karomi (2013) examined the views of a poet at the Surakarta Palace, named Raden Ngabehi Ranggawarsita, about the process of acculturation of two major traditions, namely, Islamic and Javanese traditions. The research findings show that the Islamic tradition of Ranggawarsita was obtained from his life journey while at the Islamic Boarding School (*pesantren*), whereas the *kejawen* tradition was obtained from the Surakarta Palace environment. The acculturation of these two great thought traditions had resulted in the formation of his thoughts which were both Javanese and Islamic in character. Therefore, the concept of divinity initiated by Ranggawarsita did not fully represent the fundamental

values of Islam, namely, monotheism. Ranggawarsita's understanding of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* reveals a syncretic and acculturative view that represented his views as a Muslim and as a believer of *kejawen* or *kebatinan*.

Another researcher, Saddhono (2013), examined the main teachings and content of *Sĕrat Suluk Babaraning Ngĕlmi Makrifat* which contains secrets related to the nature of life and life as a secret (occult) science. The results showed that the text *Sĕrat Suluk Babaraning Ngĕlmi Makripat Wasiat Kala Kanjeng Nabi Kilir* is a religious literary work with Islamic nuances which is quite popular in Java. Due to the perceived skills of earlier poets in practicing literature, such knowledge in similar writings has become a kind of knowledge as if it was true native Javanese wisdom and not only the outcome of knowledge acculturation. Therefore, this study concludes that *Sĕrat Suluk Babaraning Ngĕlmi Makrifat* is a form of Sufism work with Javanese Islamic culture nuances. The researchers also mentioned that the concept of taqarrub contained in Islam can be juxtaposed with the understanding of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* as found in Javanese culture.

The intersection between mystical teachings (Javanese Sufism) and Islam has indeed become an interesting focus of attention. This is inseparable from the role of the central figure who is believed to be the pioneer of Islamisation in Java, namely, Walisanga. One of the Walisanga figures in question is Sunan Bonang. As stated in the research by Ulfah (2013), Sunan Bonang not only created *tĕmbang* and *gĕndhing-gĕndhing* [Javanese songs] but also his mystical teachings were very closely related to the Islamisation process. In the mystical concept, humans must perform self-cleaning properly so that they can unite with God. Sunan Bonang's mysticism is not classified as pantheism, but rather based on the Shari'a. He firmly stated that there was a separation between God and man, not merging into one so that it was difficult to separate the two. Teachings like this are very common among the Walisanga who adhere to the teachings of Sufism ahlu al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah.

Still in the context of the Javanese Islamic dialectics, Zaelani, Zuriyati and Rohman (2021) conducted research on *Sĕrat Suluk Saloka Jiwa* which talks about the created world and from where humans come and return (*sangkan paraning dumadi*). This can be seen from the results of the conversation of six Sufis in the Land of Rum which was also attended by Seh Suman or Lord Vishnu. Seh Suman concluded that there are parallels between the teachings of Islam and Java. This creationism has clearly had a significant impact on the Javanese Sufism (mysticism) way of life, which draws on Islamic teachings as well as local culture. According to the research findings, the terms in Javanese Islam (Javanese Sufism) are mostly derived from Sufism rather than Hindu-Buddhist traditions. The opposition to the teachings of Javanese Islam (*kĕjawĕn*) reflects the contradiction between 'substantive Islam' and 'normative Islam'. Javanese Islam prefers 'Islamic substance' without losing its Javanese identity. It seems to be that his external life, on the surface, is

still Javanese, but his inner life is monotheistic (Islam). In this study, it is stated that 'subversive resistance' does arise so that Javanese Islamic teachings seem to 'deviate' from official Islam (which tends to be normative and sharia-oriented). Therefore, in this context, the approach that deserves to be offered is a transformative approach, which is to transform a 'mystical' way of thinking into an 'epistemological' one. It is the substantial change from 'mythical' to 'epistemological' thinking. By thinking epistemologically, humans can provide a rational picture of nature and then cultivate it for the welfare of humankind. Nature also turns into something functional and useful.

The majority of studies on Javanese Sufism cannot be separated from the chapter on self-knowledge, the teachings to become a perfect human being (*insan kamil*) and the conception of the union of humans with God. Several existing studies usually begin the introduction of Sufism through the concept of *jumbuhing kawula-Gusti* or *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* as the process of achieving the union of creatures with God. However, in accordance with the previous research, the primary focus of this study is to investigate the concept of *sangkan paraning dumadi* as the principle form of human awareness of the entity's existence, where it comes from, and where it will go. Second, the investigation focuses on the definition of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* or *jumbuhing kawula-Gusti*. The order is adjusted based on the contents disclosed in the *Sêrat Bayanullah*. The two research focuses will be examined and correlated with Raden Panji Natarata's thought, which considers that the concepts of Javanese Sufism and Islamic Sufism are two contradictory ideas.

Research method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method that was based on the quality of the data that have been described and analysed systematically to describe and analyse certain phenomena (Sukmadinata 2010). The data sources of this research were primary and secondary data sources. The primary data sources were a collection of classical Javanese literature called *Sêrat Bayanullah*, catalogue number A-393, from the Reksa Pustaka Library in Pura Mangkunegaran, Surakarta. The secondary data sources were drawn from a review of the literature, which included books and articles relevant to this study. The data were in the form of verses *tembang macapat* in accordance with the objectives of the study. In connection with this, the steps of data collection carried out by the researchers started from observing the entire contents of *Sêrat Bayanullah* which had been studied philologically, then transliterating the contents of *Sêrat Bayanullah* from Javanese into Indonesian, and then classifying the data according to the research objectives. Then, the data analysis process is carried out through descriptive analytical methods with a hermeneutic approach, namely, the analysis method by describing the problem accompanied by in-depth analysis and explanation regarding the data. Thus, this research was not only limited to data collection but also included analysis and interpretation. After

interpreting the contents of *Sêrat Bayanullah*, the researchers proceeded with drawing conclusions based on what was stated in the literary work (Baried 1994; Robson 1994; Rohberger & Woods 1971; Schleiermacher 1998).

Results and discussion

Raden Panji Natarata's thought on the nature of *Sangkan Paraning Dumadi*

According to Javanese Sufism, the basic meaning of *sangkan paran* or *sangkan paraning dumadi* reminds all humans of man's ontological existence and theological purpose of his decree as one of the creatures created and living in this world. Humans need to be aware of where they come from (*sangkan: saka ngendi*) and where their life ends (*paran: parane ngendi*). *Sangkan paraning dumadi* in Islam is fundamentally in line with the concept of *innalillahi wa inna ilaihi rajun* [all of humans are from him and will return to him]. In summary, it can be said that the life of a Javanese man is a long 'journey' from when he was in the womb to death, from Allah to Allah (Afifi 2021). This 'journey' in Javanese is called behaviour and is often manifested in the term *suluk*. Meanwhile, in the language of Islam, the 'journey' is commensurate with Sufism. In terms of the meaning of Sufism, both in Javanese and Islamic Sufism, the journey undertaken includes not only a physical and intellectual journey, but also a spiritual journey that will lead back to him (Supadjar 2001). This statement is in accordance with what was stated by Raden Panji Natarata at the beginning of *Sêrat Bayanullah pupuh dhandhanggula* (Table 1).

The quote *saking Adam purwanira/liring Adam tanpa kântha tanpa kanthi/ tan gatra tan satmata* means 'comes from nothingness our origin/meaning nothingness is without cause and effect/formless and invisible'. It actually emphasises that the meaning of 'Adam' is nothingness that is empty (*suwung wungwang*) and is eternal. The absence of that is the True Essence. Nothing is meant by God (Allah) who is formless and invisible. This is in line with the understanding of the Seventh Dignity that everything in this universe is an aspect born of a single essence, namely God (Karomi 2013:297; Simuh 1988). Then, the way that can be taken to return to nothingness (God) is through death (Zoetmulder 2000). Raden Panji Natarata (1975) utilises the verse quote to emphasise that someone who understands where he came from, who created him, and where he will go after death, is a person who understands the nature of life. That is, a person is self-aware of the fact that he exists in this world because of someone else who created him (someone created). Meanwhile, for the uncertain, such as death, humans also need to understand where he (spirit) will go after he dies. Indeed, every creation must have an origin and lead to a certain goal, namely, God (Allah) (Samidi 2014). However, in reality, Raden Panji Natarata had received teachings from a teacher who stated that humans came from 16 parts. This is stated in the quote of *tembang dhandhanggula* in Table 2.

The quote in Table 2 actually explicitly states that there are teachers who teach that human origins or doubts are made up of 16 parts. The meaning of the 16 sections in question is

TABLE 1: Data with the code 'DH-1/verse 3'.

Data's code	Data	Translation
(DH-1/verse 3)	<i>wong tamarja arjaning dumadi</i>	A person who already understands salvation in his life
	<i>sakanparan myang antaranira</i>	Origin and purpose and between the two
	<i>wus kinawruhan salire</i>	Everything is known
	<i>sêdene ingkang durung</i>	And towards things that have not yet happened
	<i>têmên musthi antêping pati</i>	Really seeks to understand about death
	<i>wit kaananing gêsang</i>	because all life
	<i>janma sadayèku</i>	Of all human beings
	<i>saking Adam purwanira</i>	Originates from nothingness of our origin
	<i>liring Adam tanpa kântha tanpa kanthi</i>	Meaning nothingness is without cause and effect
	<i>tan gatra tan satmata</i>	Formless and invisible

DH, dhandhanggula.

TABLE 2: Data with the code 'DH-1/verse 5'.

Data's code	Data	Translation
(DH-1/verse 5)	<i>supaya wruh sangkaning ngaurip</i>	In order to know the origin of life
	<i>kang sawènèh guru amumulang</i>	Then there is a teacher who teaches that
	<i>asale janma ginawe</i>	Originally humans are made of
	<i>nêmbêlas wijinipun</i>	16 parts
	<i>mapat-mapat ping pat sakawit</i>	Four-four times four that's the origin
	<i>iku yêkti dora</i>	Indeed it is a lie
	<i>tan pisan tinêmu</i>	And it really doesn't make sense
	<i>tandha saksi nora ana</i>	There is no evidence
	<i>ana manèh saka wadi madi mani</i>	There are also said it came from wadi (secret), madi (materila), mani (sperm)
	<i>manikêm yèn mangkana</i>	That's how explained

DH, dhandhanggula.

not explained in detail. In the quote that follows *yêkti dora/tan pisan tinêmu* 'really that is a lie/and it really doesn't make sense', it appears that Raden Panji Natarata does not agree with what the teacher said. From the perspective of philosophy in general, the human body consists of the gross body and the soft body. The gross body is the material aspect of humans that makes them the same as other objects. The gross body in the form of a physical or human body has the same elements as nature because the body comes from the essence of nature. Meanwhile, the soft body is the spiritual aspect of humans, which is the inner realm, namely, the realm of feeling in humans (Pramujiono 2010:212). According to Raden Panji Natarata, the explanation of the origin of humans begins from nothing, as he conveys in Table 3.

The quote from *yêkti dudu ngadam kang miwiti* 'truly is an empty nothingness (God) that initiates (creation)' refers to the thought of Raden Panji Natarata who wanted to emphasise that what started the process of creation was initiated by the Creator. In the following line, Raden Panji Natarata makes it clear that the *kale para manuswa wus nyata/saka Ngadam pinangkane* 'the chapter on the real origin of man is very clear/comes from nothingness itself (God)'. In the quote, it is implied that the doubt or origin of humans is a form of dualism between 'the Creator or the Creator' and 'the product of creation'. This dualism clearly distinguishes the

TABLE 3: Data with the code 'DH-1/verse 6'.

Data's code	Data	Translation
(DH-1/verse 6)	<i>yêkti dudu Ngadam kang miwiti</i>	In fact the empty nothingness (God) that started (creation)
	<i>kale para manuswa wus nyata</i>	The chapter on the origin of the real human being is very clear
	<i>saka Ngadam pinangkane</i>	Comes from nothingness itself (God)
	<i>marma sagung nak putu</i>	So, children and grandchildren
	<i>parsudinên asalirèki</i>	Seek your origin
	<i>dadining kanyataan</i>	Come to a real understanding
	<i>ingkang tanpa tutur</i>	What is not only through the description of words
	<i>saksi kodrating Pangèran</i>	Witnesses of God's nature/
	<i>luwih bènêr brêsih titi tur lèstari</i>	It is more true, clean, clear, and always is
	<i>campuring kautaman</i>	For the union of truth and virtue

DH, dhandhanggula.

TABLE 4: Data with the code 'DH-11/verse 2'.

Data's code	Data	Translation
(DH-11/verse 2)	<i>sidaning wong tumitah nêng bumi</i>	Certainty of people living in the world
	<i>urip iku jodhone palastra</i>	Life partner dies
	<i>sabên ri kalong nyawane</i>	Every day their age decreases
	<i>tan wêruh kantunipun</i>	Don't know how old they live
	<i>sapira yèn maksih taruni</i>	When they are young
	<i>tan pisan nyipta pêjah</i>	Will not think about death
	<i>wusnya praptèng sêpuh</i>	When they are old
	<i>sabên dina gung sumêlang</i>	Every day they feel worried
	<i>awit jîsim anyar luwase mrêpèki</i>	Because the new nature will soon come to them
	<i>anggege pulang kandhang</i>	To back to where it came from

DH, dhandhanggula.

status of God from that of creatures. The dividing line in this case is the position of God as the Creator, while creatures are the result of creation (Javed 2019:53). This verse also persuades people to look for their origin by referring to real understanding, not just through words that sound beautiful and are not necessarily true. From this case, it can be concluded that Raden Panji Natarata is more careful in conveying teachings. If researchers take it further, Raden Panji Natarata's cautious attitude is the application of the da'wah method developed by Sunni Sufi scholars who state that the essence of Sufism is knowledge and charity that produce commendable morals so that what he says is not mere theoretical expressions (Al-Ghazali & Al-Dhalal 1961).

Furthermore, Raden Panji Natarata puts forward a teaching regarding the concept of *paran*, namely, the end or goal of the journey of human life. The goal is none other than the return of humans to the Essence who first created them. This statement is in accordance with the quote as shown in Table 4.

It has become the certainty of God (Allah) that everything in this world is in pairs, as if implying that only Allah is the One and Only One. In this context, the mate who lives is death, the mate who is young is old, and those who come (live in the world) will undoubtedly return (go back to their Lord). Humans as creatures that live on earth (the world) have a time limit or what is often referred to as age. When he reaches the time limit of his life, he will die and will move to another

TABLE 5: Data with the code 'PU-8/verse 15'.

Data's code	Data	Translation
(PU-8/verse 15)	<i>yèn wong putus sandhining Hyang tan kalimput sampurnaning pêjah tan sudi mamêt puniki yèn wong mati gurune janma pralaya</i>	If people really master the secrets of God, of course there will be no wrong Perfect way of dying Will not be willing to follow that way If you want to learn the perfect death science as the teacher is the dead man himself

PU, pucung.

TABLE 6: Data with the code 'DH-1/verse 18'.

Data's code	Data	Translation
(DH-1/verse 18)	<i>jumênènge kawula lan Gusti Allah Mukhamad lan Rasulallah wus dumunung sira kabèh ing bumi langit pitu saka ananira pribadi Mukhamad Rasulallah sajéroning idhup wijange lah rasakèna lirnya rasul rasanira kang sajati tunggal rasaning Suksma</i>	The so-called servant and God Allah and Rasulallah Muhammad Everything is in you As well as the earth and the seventh heaven There is because you are Muhammad Rasulallah Is in your life Thus the teaching, try to feel it What the Apostle means are all true feelings United in the taste of the Soul

DH, dhandhanggula.

realm, namely the grave. As was stated earlier in the case of death, the meaning of 'back to where it came from' in the quote above refers to returning to God. In line with this statement, according to Raden Panji Natarata, the correct way to understand death is to take lessons from the dead. This is conveyed in Table 5.

The clause *tan sudi mamêt puniki* 'will not be willing to follow that way' in the context of the *têmbang macapat* quote refers to the experience of Raden Panji Natarata when he was told about death by a teacher he had met. According to the teacher, Raden Panji Natarata's airway needed to be silenced for a while so he could feel his death. Raden Panji Natarata felt that this method was a strange method. In fact, humans only need to understand and realise that death is a necessity, so to understand the concept of death, it is necessary to learn from people who have died. However, Javanese literature views that death is not the opposite of life because the concept of death is seen as the result of birth (Tanjung 2013:55). In this view, as long as there is no birth, during that time there can be no death. Such a view seems contradictory to the concept of death from a Sufism perspective. On the contrary, in the literary works of *Sêrat Wedhatama*, death is often expressed as *mulih mula mulanira* [return to origins]. That is, death is not the final journey in this mortal world which in the context of this research is in line with the concept of *sangkan paraning dumadi* (Sabdacakratama 2010).

Meanwhile, death is the separation of the spirit (life) from the body for a predetermined time. As for the separation of the spirit from the body, it is not forever because after the body is buried, the spirit will enter the body again (Karim 2015:26). This terminology of death in Islam is in line with the quote from *têmbang macapat awit jisim anyar luwase mrêpêki* 'because

TABLE 7: Data with the code 'DH-1/verse 19'.

Data's code	Data	Translation
(DH-1/verse 19)	<i>iku salah tâmpa ing panganggit lamun rasa-rasaning Pangeran nora mangkono patrape Pangèran rasanipun nora awor lan sira kaki pamriksa pangandika myang pamyarsanipun nora tunggal lawan sira kuwasane karsanira Hyang Kang Luwih sayêkti tan momoran</i>	That's a wrong understanding If the feeling comes from the sense of the Lord Shouldn't say that The existence of God Not one with you my son Sight, speech In His sight Not one with you His almighty is by will Really, it doesn't merge

DH, dhandhanggula.

TABLE 8: Data with the code 'DH-1/verse 31'.

Data's code	Data	Translation
(DH-1/verse 31)	<i>sun jarwani malih wong angimpi sayêktine jroning netranira mêmantik iku pamine kaca bênggala agung sinèndhèkkèn nèng gon sawiji jaban kaca sanyata kadulu sadarum barang apa kang manjing kaca yèn jinupuk jroning pangilon tan kêni iku dayaning netra</i>	I reiterate about the person who is dreaming Actually in your vision In the eyeball for example A large mirror Placed somewhere Everything outside will be seen Looks shining If you look at it on the mirror Even you take it from the mirror it won't work That's the power of the eye

DH, dhandhanggula.

a new world will soon come to him', namely, the grave. This is also proof that death is not an end, but a beginning of life and accountability in the afterlife. People who have died are separated from the life of the world and usually the Javanese people call people who have died with the term *wis ora ana* 'no longer exists'. That is, death releases human relations from the world that has been inhabited by him. Before birth, humans do not exist in the world, and after death also, humans do not exist in the world.

In summary, this has proven that the essence of *sangkan paraning dumadi* in Raden Panji Natarata's view is in line with the Islamic conception of *innalillahi wa inna ilaihi rajiun* as the author has conveyed in the introduction to this chapter. That way humans should be more active in doing righteous deeds, staying away from disgraceful acts, and doing repentance. In the realm of Islamic Sufism, the practice of pious deeds is part of the purification of the soul for taqarrub or self-approach to Allah. When a person's soul is truly pure, he will be able to meet God. In this case, he returned (pass away) in excellent condition (holy).

Raden Panji Natarata's thoughts on *Manunggaling Kawula-Gusti* core

Manunggaling kawula-Gusti is commonly understood as an important part of the beliefs and attitudes of Javanese society, which tends to be mystical and stems from the inner world. The concept of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* is often interpreted

TABLE 9: Data with the code 'DH-1/verse 20'.

Data's code	Data	Translation
(DH-1/verse 20)	têgêse Hyang dudu bangsa ati	That God is not a type of heart
	dudu jaba kang sipat pratela	Is not visible from the outside (physical)
	wala joharrin têtêse	Wa la joharin means
	dudu Nur Mukhamadu	Is not the light of Muhammad
	wala nupus Gusti Allah	Wa la nufus means that God is
	sayêkti tanpa napas	Actually is not breath
	nadyan napas dudu	Although not breath
	myang aola murtasiman	And au la murtasiman fi kiyali
	pikiyali tan kacakra Maha Suci	That the Most Holy God is
	angên-angêning janma	Unreachable by human imagination

DH, dhandhanggula.

as a condition of unity and fusion between creatures (subjects, servants, humans) and Gusti (God) (Nawafi 2020:250). Humans as creatures can fuse with God into one, as the term *curiga manjing warangka*, *warangka manjing curiga* (Sosrosudigdo 1965). Several studies have stated that the concept of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* is equated with the notion of *wihdatul-wujud* (Khalim 2014:96; Rubaidi 2019:29).

For example, one of the studies related to Javanese Islamic literature entitled *Kitab Primbon Atassadhur Adammakna* explains that the human body is a real manifestation of the manifestation of God in this world. Human behaviour and actions cannot be separated from his *af'al* so that the body is controlled by reason. That is, the motion or action carried out by the human body is caused by the desire of the mind. The will of mind that is carried out by the body is a sign of the existence of Hyang Mahayekti because the body is a sign of *af'al* mind. Therefore, the body is a real human form that also has divine attributes. God is described as having the same characteristics as humans, and vice versa (Khalim 2014:100). This concept is in line with the teachings of Ibn Arabi (560–638 H) who taught *wihdatul-wujud* and the teachings of Al-Hallaj. Al-Hallaj argues that God has the nature of *al-Lahût* [divinity] and also the nature of *an-Nasût* [humanity] just like humans. If humans are able to eliminate the attributes of *an-Nasût* with 'fana', then what remains is only the attributes of divinity in him. In this state (*maqam*), God resides in him, and the Holy Spirit and the human spirit unite in the human body (Amin 2011).

The unity of humans with God in the concept of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* is difficult to formulate in the right words, which have a single and clear meaning. Therefore, the concept of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti*, which is based on a special and subjective appreciation of the existence of God who resides in humans personally, can lead to ambiguity in understanding. Such conditions are very risky for the idea that humans and God can be physically united. Raden Panji Natarata also emphasised that the concept of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti* is not a form of physical union between creatures and God, as stated in the pupuh *dhandhanggula* in the 18th and 19th verses shown in Table 6 and Table 7.

The *têmbang* quote with the code (DH-1/verse 18) is an illustration of the discourse that Raden Panji Natarata got when his teacher taught the concept of *manunggaling kawula-Gusti*. Meanwhile, the quote from the *têmbang* with the code (DH-1/verse 19) is Raden Panji Natarata's denial that the advice given by his teacher belongs to a misunderstanding. Raden Panji Natarata emphasised that it is absolutely impossible for God to be one with his creatures. Physically, humans cannot be said to be God because when a creature is defined as a material being, he will not be able to unite with God (Utomo 2007). They are so dissimilar that they cannot be combined into one. Furthermore, to clarify the concept of the unification of God and man, it is emphasised that the position of creatures is as an immaterial form, similar to light and shadow. This is confirmed by Raden Panji Natarata in the 31st verse of *dhandhanggula* (Table 8).

Based on that quote, God is likened to a light, while humans are likened to its shadow. The shadow of the sun, like the shadow of an object, cannot be called the sun. This is because the brilliance of God is so bright that it is not possible to be seen by the human sense of sight. Humans will only be able to perceive the brilliance of God by using the heart (Table 9). The heart is like a mirror (*mir'ah*). If this mirror is cleaned of worldly dirt, humans will be able to see the image of Allah through the mirror of their heart (Al-Ghazali & Al-Dhalal 1961). Through this view, it can be said that the image of God is immanent in the human heart. The discussion was also strengthened and confirmed by Raden Panji Natarata based on arguments or quotes from the Qur'an.

The essence of the discussion above is Raden Panji Natarata's belief that God (Allah) is the Essence that cannot be reached by imagination and humans, especially if they are put together (Azra 1995). In essence, God remains transcendent to the universe and everything in it (Almirzanah 2020). So, if it is said that there is unification, it is only a manifestation of Allah's knowledge, not Allah's Essence because he cannot be known in his essence (Armstrong 1995:142; Schimmel 1975:276).

Conclusion

This *Sêrat Bayanullah* shows the tenacity and courage of Raden Panji Natarata as a Muslim humanist, religious scholar and a Sufi who has contributed to the preaching of Islamic teachings. In the midst of the rise of religious beliefs or sects that can actually be misleading, Raden Panji Natarata still upholds the essence of monotheism and Islamic Sufism in the creation of his work. Raden Panji Natarata did not hesitate to express views on the meaning of life that differed from those of previous poets. For example, in *Sêrat Bayanullah*, Raden Panji Natarata explicitly maintained the principle that all knowledge about the process of searching for the nature of life should not go beyond the boundaries of monotheism, while other poets tend to defend Javanese Sufism, which is sometimes

inconsistent with the teachings of monotheism. The messages contained in the *Sêrat Bayanullah* are as follows: (1) the recommendation to be careful and alert to the teachings and thoughts about the meaning of the nature of life and the nature of God which tend to mislead, (2) understand correctly that the essence of human creation comes from God (Allah) and will return to God (Allah) as indicated in the concept of *sangkan paraning dumadi*, and (3) the assertion that the natures of humans as creatures and Allah as God are fundamentally opposed, and thus God and humans will never unite (*manunggal*). If studied further, the thoughts of Raden Panji Natarata in *Sêrat Bayanullah* seem to lead to the style of Sunni Sufism. This was based on the ideas of Raden Panji Natarata's teachings which were contrary to the ideas of pantheism.

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Authors' contributions

M.I.R. developed the research concepts, determined the methods that followed the research objectives, conducted formal analysis, investigated data, wrote the original draft, oversaw administrative projects and determined data sources. W.A.R. contributed to determining the methodology; investigating, validating and curating data; and writing and reviewing the article. P.A.W.W. contributed to determining the methodology; conducting formal analysis; validating data; writing, reviewing and editing the article, and supervising the research.

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