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Looking back from the periphery

Situating Indonesian provincial museums as cultural archives in the late-colonial to post-colonial era

ADRIAN PERKASA AND AJENG AYU ARAINIKASIH

ABSTRACT

Discussions on post-coloniality are often situated either in the centre of the colonizer or colonial metropole or the centre of the former colonized. The local perspective, especially in Indonesia, seems overlooked in existing literature, whereas it could be regarded as the cultural archive of the colonial era to post-independence Indonesia. Edward Said (1994) has said that cultural archives are a storehouse of a particular knowledge and structures of attitude and a reference to and structure of feelings. Gloria Wekker (2016) elaborates on the cultural archive; it has influenced historical cultural configurations as well as current dominant, cherished self-representations and culture. This paper examines the role of two provincial museums in Indonesia: Mpu Tantular Museum Surabaya and the Sonobudoyo Museum Yogyakarta, as cultural archives for each region. Since their foundation in the colonial era by the Europeans and local elite figures, these museums have seen many political changes. This paper delves into the archives and exhibitions of the museums to assess how they deal with their exhibition narratives as a colonial legacy, and to what extent these provincial museums have been involved in decolonization discourse. It proposes another way of looking at the post-colonial situation in Indonesian museums, not at the centre but more on the periphery.

KEYWORDS

Cultural archive, decolonization, provincial museum, Surabaya, Yogyakarta.

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INTRODUCTION

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europeans began to assemble cabinets of curiosities, a classified collection of the weird and exotic objects from a faraway, unknown world. These cabinet of curiosities developed into public museums, and became the visual encyclopaedias of knowledge of empire (John M. Mackenzie 2009: 1-17). In Europe, the museum as an institution is a product of modernity. In his explanation of *The birth of the museum*, Tony Bennett argues that it was coincident with, and supplied a primary institutional condition for: “[...] the emergence of a new set of knowledge such as archaeology, anthropology, biology, geology, history, and art history, each of which, in its museological deployment, arranged objects as parts of evolutionary sequences which, in their interrelations, formed a totalizing order of things and peoples that was historicised through and through” (Bennett 1995: 92-96).

In the nineteenth to early-twentieth century, the era of colonialism and imperialism, Europeans introduced the idea of museum to the world (Suchen Wang 2021: 720-721). In this period, museums were established not only in Europe, but also mushroomed in the colonies. Therefore, the history of museums in Indonesia can be traced back to the time when Europeans, especially the Dutch, became the supreme power in the Indonesian Archipelago.

The oldest museum embryo in Indonesia is D’Amboinsche Rariteitkamer (the Ambonese Cabinet of Curiosities), an example of the cabinet of curiosities. It was no more than a chamber housing the collection of one individual. It was established in Ambon in 1662 by a botanist, Georg Eberhard Rumphius (1627-1702). In 1654 Rumphius arrived in Ambon as an employee of the VOC or Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (the Dutch East India Company). There he commenced his collection of natural specimens of Ambon. However, falling victim to earthquakes and tsunamis, this museum did not last long. However, recently the Indonesian government has re-created the building and revitalized Fort Amsterdam – which had connections to Rumphius – as a cultural heritage site or *cagar budaya* (R. Tjahjopurnomo et al. 2011: 15).

In 1778, elite Dutch circles in Batavia founded another museum, the Museum Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen (the Museum of the Batavian Society for the Arts and Science). The most prominent initiator of this museum and society was Jacobus C.M. Radermacher (1741-1783), a botanist and the founder of the first Freemason’s lodge in Asia. Despite many challenges and difficulties, this museum still exists. It is considered the oldest museum in Indonesia and is now the National Museum of Indonesia in Jakarta (Dedeh Rufaedah Sri Handari, Trigangga, and Yunus Arbi 2006: 3-4).

However, both the Amboinsche Rariteitkamer and the Museum Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen were located in the heart of Dutch colonial political and economic power. Ambon was the first stronghold of the Dutch East India Company in Indonesia but was later replaced by Batavia (present-day Jakarta). Moving away from these centres,

this paper discusses museums which were not located at the centre of colonial power.

Earlier scholars have certainly already examined the close relationship between the museum and colonial power. Political scientist and historian, Benedict Anderson, has observed that there are three institutions of power in the modern age: the census, the map, and the museum. All of them formed the way the colonial state imagined its domain (Anderson 1991: 163-185). A museum shares many of the cultural and epistemological functions of a census and a map. Through this apparently neutral, technical process, specific world pictures are constructed, and the resultant picture is understood to be reality. Consequently, a museum established in a colonized area is very closely tied to the idea of coloniality. Colonialism was founded on the assumption that communities required guidance to appreciate and preserve their natural and cultural heritage (Ann Laura Stoler 2013: 15).

Aníbal Quijano (2007) argues that this situation is the result of the power of coloniality centred in Europe. This coloniality of power is more lasting than colonialism, and is sustained by the continuation of knowledge production which developed under colonialism. Walter D. Mignolo (1992) also states that museums played, and continue to play, an important role in the colonization of information and human beings in the modern/colonial world. Museums and universities were and continue to be two institutions critical to the accumulation of meaning and the reproduction of knowledge. This continuation can be observed in various aspects, including the idea of race. In contrast to any kind of ethnic discrimination in the past, European colonialism invented race as a set of characteristics and consequences to be used for the control and segregation of society (Rita Segato 2022: 28-45). The upshot was that a rigid categorization was introduced, including the notion of the primitive indigenous native, among other stereotypes, imposed by the Europeans in the colonized area.

However, Frederick Cooper, an American historian who specializes in colonization, decolonization, and African history, has stated that researchers on colonialism should be more cautious and not be trapped in an essentializing situation like coloniality. Cooper believes that not all the situations in the colonial period of a specific area can be treated in the same way as those in other colonized territories. He reminds scholars of colonialism to pay more attention to some methodological shortcomings, including what he calls "story plucking". "Story plucking" occurs when a scholar plucks a narrative and combines it with other texts without heeding its spatial and temporal contexts. For example, a text originating from Spanish America during the sixteenth century, a narrative detailing the slave colonies in the West Indies in the eighteenth century, or a depiction of moderately successful African cocoa planters in the Gold Coast during the twentieth century, can be "plucked" and compared to one another. The presence of the suffix "-ity" in commonly employed terms like coloniality and post-coloniality suggests the existence of a fundamental state of being colonized, irrespective of any specific actions or events occurring within a colony (Cooper 2010: 17-18). Therefore, to

avoid “story plucking”, this paper pays more attention to more specific places and periods by analyzing two museums, Mpu Tantular in Surabaya and Sonobudoyo in Yogyakarta, from their establishment, and tracing their development during the colonial and post-colonial eras.

Using this information, the authors of this paper attempt to reassess the relationship between culture, colonialism, and power in Indonesia by taking museums as cultural archives, a term coined by Edward Said (1994) and elaborated in the work of Gloria Wekker (2016). In this paper, we use the term a cultural archive for a place in which knowledge production is made, kept, and narrated for the public, particularly in a museum, and, for our purposes, specifically in Surabaya and Yogyakarta. As the foundations of the museums in Surabaya and Yogyakarta were laid during the colonial era, their development up to the post-independence Indonesia provides a good case study of this cultural archive, not from the centre of political power, but from more towards the periphery. This topic is underdiscussed in Indonesian museum discourse.

Various previous works have delved into the continuities and changes in museums founded in the colonial period and post-colonial Indonesia. Australian historian Katharine E. McGregor (2004: 15-29) has argued that the National Museum of Indonesia has never been seriously decolonized. Here we agree with the Museums Association (of the UK) that decolonizing a museum is a long-term process of addressing colonial structures and approaches to all areas of museum work (Museum Association 2023). We choose to argue that how exactly to decolonize a museum will differ from one to the other, based on each museum’s collection and its (colonial/post-colonial) history.

McGregor (2004: 15-29) states that, after the Indonesian independence, Indonesians adhered and adapted the colonial concepts embedded in the former National Museum into an idea of nation-building. The American anthropologist Christina F. Kreps has discussed the development of museums in Indonesia, making a particular case study of Museum Balanga, the provincial museum of Central Kalimantan. Although the emergence of this museum did not occur in the colonial period of Indonesia, Kreps argues that various efforts have been made to decolonize it, despite the many difficulties raised, especially by the local and national bureaucracies (Kreps 1994, 2019: 153-184). Ajeng Ayu Arainikasih and Hafnidar (2018) have discussed the decolonization of the provincial museum of Aceh. The Aceh Museum was formerly an ethnographic museum established in 1915. In post-independence Indonesia, the museum was nationalized and served as a provincial museum. At present, the decolonization of its colonial collections, including research into the provenance of its colonial collections in order to change its narrative, is still an ongoing process. Pertinently, a recent publication by Desi Dwi Prianti and I Wayan Suyadnya (2022) has argued that public museums in post-colonial Indonesia have not yet been decolonized. In the way museums present their collections to the public and the narratives of exhibitions in Indonesian public museums the colonial era still rumbles on.

All these studies conclude that, as a former colony, Indonesia has undergone a political decolonization, while the work of decolonizing its museums is still a work in progress. The country's museum-making has been subjected not just to the dominance of western museology, but also to the hegemony of the post-independence Indonesian state, particularly under the New Order (of former President Suharto, 1966-1998). Our studies from Surabaya and Yogyakarta complicate these issues by adding another dimension, that from the local contexts after the Indonesian independence (1945), under the New Order reign, and after decentralization in post-New Order Indonesia (after 2001).

This paper presents two provincial museums which were founded in the colonial era and are still open to the general public: the Mpu Tantular Museum Surabaya and the Sonobudoyo Museum Yogyakarta. It assesses how these museums deal with their narratives as a colonial legacy, and to what extent, as seen through their archives and permanent exhibitions, these provincial museums have been involved in the decolonization discourse orchestrated by the Indonesian government in general and by their own management in post-independence Indonesia. By presenting these two provincial museums, we propose another way of looking at the colonial and post-colonial situation in Indonesian museums, not from the western (particularly European point of view) but more from the periphery. Extending Cooper's suggestion that the spatial and temporal contexts are crucial to examining coloniality, we believe that the discourse on colonial/post-colonial situation is located not only between the metropole (the Netherlands) and its colony as a single entity but in various local peripheries.

We have used a mixed methods approach to the case study, including archival research and several periods of fieldwork, both based on a long-term engagement with museum studies and cultural history, and with museum stakeholders. Adrian Perkasa has over ten years' experience researching and working on cultural heritage issues in Indonesia and is currently writing a PhD dissertation on Javanese ideas history since the late-colonial period. Meanwhile, Ajeng Ayu Arainikasih has developed a more important set of relationships with museum officials all over Indonesia. She is also working on her PhD dissertation about decolonization and museums in post-colonial Indonesia. Much of the material in this paper is also part of the PhD dissertations of both authors.

FROM THE SOERABAIASCH MUSEUMVEREENIGING AND THE PROVINCIAAL EN STEDELIJK HISTORISCH MUSEUM SOERABAIA TO THE MPU TANTULAR MUSEUM

The first museum we discuss is in Surabaya, in the eastern part of the Island of Java. Although great efforts were made by the Java-Instituut,¹ – a learned society established in 1919 by both Javanese and European scholars – to

¹ The Java Instituut was established to study the languages and cultures of Java, Sunda, Madura, Bali, and Lombok. It regularly organized cultural congresses and published an academic journal, *Djâwâ* (*Djâwâ* 1935: 203-207).

promote the foundation of a museum at its congress in Surabaya in 1926, it was only realized five years later. In 1931 the local elites, including prominent Javanese, who had been involved in the Java-Instituut congress in Surabaya, founded an association called the Soerabaiasch Museumvereeniging (Surabaya Museum Association) to establish a permanent museum (Museum Negeri Jawa Timur Mpu Tantular 1977: 7).

Cosman Citroen (1881-1935), an architect who worked as a consultant for the Surabaya municipality, chaired this museum association. Another personality who joined the association was the architect Bruno Nobile de Vistarini (1891-1971), who acted as its secretary. De Vistarini was active in the archaeological projects at the former Majapahit capital of Trowulan, Mojokerto, during the early 1930s (Cor Passchier 2020: 31). Besides these Europeans, various influential Javanese notables joined the association, among them R.A.A. Nitiadiningrat (b.?-1935), Soebroto (1894-d.?), and Soetomo (1888-1938). R.A.A. Nitiadiningrat was the regent of Surabaya. While Soebroto was a Leiden-trained lawyer and the first local *wethouder* or alderman on the Surabaya municipality council. Soetomo was a physician who was active in social and political life, not only in Surabaya but also more widely in colonial Indonesia. In 1908 when he was studying in Batavia, Soetomo established the Boedi Oetomo, the pioneer of the modern organizations which struggled to awaken an Indonesian national consciousness. Later, after he returned from Europe in 1924, he founded the Indonesische Studie Club (Indonesian Study Club) as an umbrella organization for nationalist activities in Surabaya. Soetomo also played an essential role during the 1926 Java-Instituut Congress as the chairman of the cultural exhibition organized for the event (*Djawa* 1927: 140-143).

The Soerabaiasch Museumvereeniging wanted to continue its efforts to collect various cultural artefacts from the East Java region. The starting point of this endeavour was the temporary cultural exhibition organized for the Java-Instituut Congress. Mangkunegara VII (1885-1944), the honorary chairman of the Java-Instituut, fully supported them. In 1929, Mangkunegara VII agreed to hand over many artefacts which were the property of the Java-Instituut and his personal property to the municipality of Surabaya. These collections formed the basis of the collection of the Surabaya Museum. The main objective of this Soerabaiasch Museumvereeniging was to raise cultural and artistic sensibilities and knowledge, particularly among local Indonesians (Passchier 2020: 30-31). Of course, the concept was limited to the western point of view, as the Europeans regarded that the local people needed guidance and assistance to be able to face modernity and to preserve the local cultures from extinction. The association also worked closely with the municipality, which subsidized it (*De Locomotief*, 27 August 1929).

In the initial planning stage, both the municipality and the regency government agreed to grant funding for a new building for the museum. They intended to locate the new museum in the Stadstuin (City Park) of Surabaya. However, the plan to establish a dedicated museum building never

eventuated. Instead, the collections were housed in a building at the Surabaya Zoo when this museum was officially opened in December 1931 (*De Indische Courant*, 17 December 1931). A year later, the regency government turned down the request for assistance from the Museum Association because of financial exigencies. Many government budgets had to be cut because of the Great Depression at the end of the 1920s.

A council member also expressed the opinion that the Surabaya Museum was not well known among the inhabitants of Surabaya (*De Indische Courant*, 30 September 1932). This criticism was aired not only by the regency government; it was also voiced by a member of the Municipal Council, A. van Eeckhoven. He was a representative of the Indo-European Vereeniging (Indo-European Association), who asked the municipal government to support another museum called the Stedelijk Historisch Museum Surabaya (Municipal Historical Museum of Surabaya) which, he believed, had had more impact on the society (*Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, 24 March 1936).

It was another museum established in Surabaya in the early 1930s. The official name of this museum was the Provinciaal en Stedelijk Historisch Museum Soerabaia (Provincial and Municipal Historical Museum Soerabaya), also popularly known as the Stehimu. Initially, the museum was housed in the former house of a member of the Chinese elite of Surabaya, Han Tjong Khing, in 1933. Four years later, its board moved all the collections to a building located in a more prestigious area in Simpang, next to the palace of the governor of East Java. The central figure behind this museum was G.H. von Faber (1899-1955) (*Museum Negeri Jawa Timur Mpu Tantular 1977: 7-8*).

Von Faber was a journalist and writer of various books, including two histories of Surabaya, *Oud Soerabaia* (Old Surabaya) and *Nieuw Soerabaia* (New Surabaya). Despite his efforts to build a museum and his various publications on history and culture, Von Faber was not an influential person in Javanese cultural circles in the late-colonial period. He was not on the board when the Java-Instituut held a congress in Surabaya, and he was not a member of the Museum Association of which Citroen was the chair. Years later, Th. Pigeaud (1899-1988), a former language official and influential writer on Javanese cultural history, could not even remember his name (Th. Pigeaud 1980). In short, it is clear that Von Faber did not move among the higher echelons of the cultural elite in late-colonial Indonesia. Nevertheless, his work was more highly appreciated by other groups as we elaborate on later.

From Von Faber's perspective, the situation of the museum in the Surabaya Zoo was terrible. He claimed that the Museum Association existed only on paper/was a paper tiger and that the collections were not being properly managed. In an extraordinary meeting of the Stehimu's board, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the grim conditions of the museum and questioned the municipality's financial support. He argued that the municipality should be aware that many people in Surabaya knew nothing about the museum. The government should pay an equal amount, if not more, to his museum which had been initiated by private groups in Surabaya. He also took the opportunity

to urge the municipality to transfer all the museum collections to his museum. On the same occasion, Von Faber also complained about the proposal by F.D.K. Bosch (1887-1967), the former director of the Oudheidkundige Dienst (Archaeological Service), and W.F. Stutterheim (1892-1942), the incumbent director of that service, who wanted to establish a central museum at Surabaya to house the collections of the many archaeological artefacts, especially those from the Majapahit period (*De Indische Courant*, 10 December 1937).

A year earlier, Bosch had expressed his concern about the dispersion of East Javanese archaeological artefacts to many regions. There was no central place to preserve and study them as there was in Jakarta or Central Java. He suggested the idea of building a central museum of East Java in the Surabaya City Park (*De Indische Courant*, 21 July 1936). Von Faber rejected this plan out of hand. He was convinced that the museum should be for not only study, its use limited to people such as scholars, artists, and collectors. He argued that this “traditional” kind of museum was only benefited research. Von Faber believed that this was a nineteenth-century concept of what a museum should be. Times had changed and, in the twentieth century, Von Faber advocated that museums should follow trends in commercialization as was happening in the press, radio, film, and travel agencies (Von Faber 1936: 20-22).

Having voiced these ideas which prioritized the interests of broader groups, particularly business and industry parties, it is not surprising that Von Faber was elected councillor for promoting tourism to East Java. He worked with the members from the Algemeene Bond van Hotel Houders in Nederlands Indië (the Union of the Hotel Owners in the Netherlands-Indies), to encourage more tourists to visit East Java (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, 7 December 1936). As mentioned in the short guidebook of the Stehimu, there was an East Java Tourist Information Centre. This book suggested that, after visitors had enjoyed the exhibition, they could explore other tourist attractions in East Java at that centre. Von Faber also created a storyboard for the visitor in the same book. He explains that he had divided the museum into three sections: the European, the Chinese, and the Natives. The visitor would first be introduced to the development of Surabaya as a modern city. There were maps, illustrations, and photographs from the time of Governor-General Daendels in the early-nineteenth to the early-twentieth century. There were mock-ups and photographs of infrastructural developments, ranging from water management to the construction of modern industrial complexes. Above all, the book highlighted the role of the Europeans in modernizing the city of Surabaya (see Figure 1). The next section was devoted to the Natives, or Indonesians, dealing with them as ethnographic subjects. It featured ships, mainly from Madura and its surrounding area, and various wayang (puppets) from the *wayang purwa* (made from leather), *wayang golek*, and *wayang klitik* or *krucil* (made from wood). Von Faber situated the East Java archaeological collections outside the building. Apart from examples from the regions of East Java, Von Faber also displayed crafts from Bali and other Indonesian islands, which he labelled primitive arts. To represent the Chinese, the Stehimu exhibited a Chinese prayer altar and Chinese robes (Von Faber 1939: 7-47).



Figure 1. De Empire-Kamer (the Empire-style Room) in the Stedelijk Historisch Museum Soerabaia (Municipal Historical Museum Surabaya), 1934 (*Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 2 November 1934).

The Stehimu often advertised itself in newspapers, organized public lectures, and conducted regular excursions to sites like Surabaya's old Chinese temple and old mosque. A public lecture about the history of Surabaya from the Raffles period (1811-1816) to the 1930s was also once held (*De Indische Courant*, 9 April 1936; *De Indische Courant*, 14 April 1938).

Unfortunately, there is no documentation about either the Surabaya Zoo Museum or the Stehimu during the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945). We only know that, after May 1943, the Stehimu was allowed to remain open by the Japanese authorities. Most likely its name was changed to Museum Kota (City Museum). During the Japanese occupation, all European names were changed to Indonesian or Japanese ones (*Soeara Asia*, 24 December 2602).

As a Surabaya-born citizen of German descent, Von Faber was allowed to continue his work as the director of the Stehimu, although other Europeans were interned (*Sinar Matahari*, 7 May 2603; *Soeara Asia*, 6 November 2603). As Japan was aligned with Germany in the Axis, people of German descent were not sent to internment camps. During the Japanese occupation, not only Von Faber but other museum personnel who were of German descent remained free to continue their museum work or were newly appointed to work in the museum(s) (Arainikasih 2021: 149-150). On the other hand, almost all the initiators of the Surabaya Zoo Museum either died or were sent to internment camps during World War II. Citroen had passed away (in 1935) before the Japanese occupation, and De Vistarini had been sent to several internment camps in the early 1940s because he was Jewish (Passchier 2020:

33). During the Japanese occupation, both the Oud Batavia Museum (a colonial city museum in Batavia) and the Sonobudoyo Museum were handed over to the municipalities of Jakarta and Yogyakarta by the Japanese authorities. However, the Stehimu remained open and managed by Von Faber himself (Arainikasih 2021: 142-152).

Von Faber survived the Japanese Occupation and the Revolution. However, in 1949/1950 the Stehimu and the museum located within the Surabaya Zoo were merged into Yayasan Pusat Pendidikan Umum (the Public Education Foundation). Under the aegis of this Public Education Foundation, Stehimu acquired all the Surabaya Zoo Museum collections. Then, Von Faber passed away in Indonesia in 1955 and is buried in Kembang Kuning Cemetery Surabaya. After its founder-cum-director died, the museum was neglected. Many of its collections became dilapidated or even vanished. Later, the foundation was placed under the direction of a prominent dermatologist, Prof. Dr Soetopo (1898-1982). Soetopo tried to use all his connections in the public and private sectors to save this museum from further deterioration. Then, in 1964, the East Java Provincial Government granted assistance, mainly for renovating the museum building and preserving its collections. Eight years later, the Museum Pendidikan Umum (Public Education Museum) officially changed its name again to Museum Jawa Timur (East Java Museum). Finally, the foundation handed over ownership of this museum to the Directorate of Museums of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the East Java Government on 1 November 1974. On this occasion, the new management changed its name to Mpu Tantular Museum, and so it remains to the present day (Figure 2). The museum was moved to a new building in front of the Surabaya Zoo (Museum Negeri Jawa Timur Mpu Tantular 1977: 8-10).



Figure 2. Museum Mpu Tantular Surabaya, circa the 1970s-1990s.²

² Source: <https://i2.wp.com/cushtravel.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/mpu-tantular-museum-in-surabaya.jpg>.

The management attempted to nudge the museum into a new orientation, making it a proper element in Indonesian nation-building, although, it was not categorized as an attempt at decolonizing the museum. Mpu Tantular was East Java's most outstanding influential poet during the Majapahit era. One of his works, *Sutasoma*, even inspired the Indonesian national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or Unity in Diversity. The then governor of East Java hoped that the museum would become a centre for educating the public and an institution in which the East Java cultural heritage, which is very diverse but still united as an entity, could be preserved. The governor hoped this museum would be *preserved*: by the people of East Java; for the people of East Java (Proyek Pengembangan Permuseuman Jawa Timur 1979: 1-3).

Changing the colonial-era name of a museum to that of local Indonesian/pre-Indonesian figure would seem to have been an attempt to nationalize colonial-era museums in post-independence Indonesia. A similar case is found in Makassar, South Sulawesi. In the late 1960s/mid-1970s, the Celebes Museum, a colonial-era ethnographic museum in Makassar, South Sulawesi, was nationalized and reintroduced as the provincial museum of South Sulawesi. The museum, which was first established in the 1930s, is located inside a Dutch colonial fort, Rotterdam. In post-independence Indonesia, the museum was renamed La Galigo Museum. The name *I La Galigo* is a reference to a famous legendary ancestral figure and to an ancient Bugis poem (Museum La Galigo 2011: 4). Therefore, like Mpu Tantular, the name La Galigo Museum was believed to represent all South Sulawesi ethnicities in the post-colonial context, as a unity in diversity.

The Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in the New Order period, Daoed Joesoef (1926-2018), alluded to this in his speech at the opening of the new Mpu Tantular Museum building in 1980. His words amplified the former head of the colonial Archaeological Service, F.D.K. Bosch's idea (published in 1935 newspapers) that the museum should play a decisive role in preventing cultural impoverishment (Proyek Pengembangan Permuseuman Jawa Timur 1979: 1-3). Daoed Joesoef instructed all the bureaucracies related to museums in Indonesia to bear this idea in mind without fail.

The idea of cultural impoverishment was also adopted by the Director of Museums in that era, Moh. Amir Sutaarga (1928-2013). Sutaarga was trained under the Dutch museum curator of the Museum Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, Dr A.N.J.Th.a.Th. van Der Hoop (1893-1969), and was also strongly influenced by Dr F.D.K. Bosch. Following Bosch, Sutaarga believed that Indonesia was caught in the middle of modernization and acculturation processes which included the penetration of western culture. Therefore, the existence of museums was important to the safeguarding of Indonesian cultures which were on the verge of becoming extinct; in a nutshell, the role of museums was important to minimizing cultural impoverishment (Sutaarga 1962: 11-45).

Under the New Order reign (1966-1998), museums – including provincial museums – were placed under the control of the Directorate of Museums (the

present-day Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology). The former colonial-era ethnographic museums located in the capital of a province were nationalized as provincial museums, and new provincial museums were also established in each province which did not already have one. Under Sutaarga as the Director of the Directorate of Museums (1966-1984), these provincial museums were standardized in terms of their permanent exhibitions. From the guidebook entitled *Pedoman pembakuan museum umum tingkat propinsi* (Guidebook to standardized provincial museums), published by the Directorate of Museums in 1979/1980, the storyline of the permanent exhibitions in provincial museums was standardized. All this with the aim of supporting Indonesian nation-building, reflecting Unity in Diversity. The story usually begins with a description of the natural resources of the province, before continuing to the prehistoric era, to the Hindu/Buddhist kingdoms, then the Islamic kingdoms, and the colonial era. The major theme of the colonial era documented local resistance to the colonial power. These exhibitions usually closed with displays of the culture of local ethnic groups who were believed to be the true inhabitants of each province (Proyek Pengembangan Permuseuman Jakarta 1979/1980: 8-25).

In 2001, in the post-New Order era, there was a structural change in the management of provincial museums in Indonesia. Following the 1998 Reformasi, the Indonesia central government decentralized handing broad authority over to sub-national governments (Yannuar Nugroho and Sujarwoto 2021). This policy also affected the cultural sector including museums. Prior to this policy, all the provincial museums fell under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Under this new law, each provincial government is at the helm in managing its own provincial museum. This new arrangement has meant that the provincial governors have become powerful actors in directing cultural policies. Nevertheless, museum management and practices are still influenced by many ideas which emerged in the colonial era and continued under the New Order. This is evident from the narratives of the provincial museums which have remained unchanged, even after the reins of political power changed hands.

Returning to the Mpu Tantular Museum, it is almost immediately striking how strong the influence of late-colonial figures, especially Von Faber and Bosch, still is in the museum. The idea of a museum built by the locals for themselves is not new. Von Faber had expressed the same intention at the opening ceremony of the new museum building in the Simpang area. He argued that the museum should be created by the *Indisch* people for the local *Indisch* people in Surabaya (Von Faber 1937: 3). Although Von Faber stated that the term *Indisch* people was limited to the Indo-European and the Chinese elites, the new management of the Mpu Tantular Museum was not troubled by it. Bosch's 1935 speech on the importance of museums in the cultural sphere still echoed during the opening of the Mpu Tantular Museum's new building, especially the idea of protecting local culture from the dangerous intrusion of foreign influences, such as the "modern" western culture. Until recently, the

Mpu Tantular Museum, has still upheld this idea. It has regularly organized public education sessions, discussions, and performing arts related to the so-called traditional arts of East Java (Museum Mpu Tantular 2022). Another change came when the East Java provincial government put the responsibility for this museum under the Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata (the Culture and Tourism Agency), which is really a repetition of Von Faber's idea of combining cultural preservation and the interests of tourism.

However, the Mpu Tantular Museum has also made various efforts to move away from the colonial legacy. Its most conspicuous shift has been the rearrangement of the collection of the permanent exhibition. Von Faber had arranged the Stehimu's exhibition into two main sections. The first section dealt with the development of the city of Surabaya. Here the visitor could see maps and photographs of the city, drinking water management, gas extraction, and maritime technology. In the second section, Von Faber employed a more ethnographic approach. He divided this section into three sub-sections: the Old European Room, the Native Room, and the Chinese Room. The Native Room was a space dedicated to Madurese, Balinese, and the *Buitengewesten* (Outer Islands) people (Von Faber 1939: 50). Despite his intention of establishing a museum to meet the interests of the local people, Von Faber's idea clearly mirrored the colonial vision of European superiority over "the Others". He placed the Europeans in the forefront as the main protagonists of the modernity and progress in the city; the other groups, especially the "Natives", were represented by their cultural artefacts indicating their inferiority compared to European technology such as dams, electricity-generating plants, industrial engines, and the like.

The Mpu Tantular Museum's new management has re-arranged its collections several times. Initially, it was divided into the arts, ethnography, science, and archaeology sections. This arrangement was still maintained in the new building. Moreover, the new permanent exhibition was likewise based on this arrangement. Five years later, the management reorganized the permanent exhibition into the categories of natural history, prehistory, archaeology, traditional technology, arts, traditional ritual accoutrements, transportation and communication, ceramics, and numismatics (Museum Negeri Jawa Timur Mpu Tantular 1979: 5-9). These followed the chronological order suggested in Sutaarga's guidebook. The new display also grouped collections bearing in mind the materials it had acquired.

In addition, there were new collections obtained from the East Java Police Department and the public. The police were responsible for the new archaeological finds, which it presented to the museum (Museum Negeri Mpu Tantular 1986: 6-7). They included a really spectacular find in 1989. While working in a rice field in the Kediri area, a boy called Seger found one kilogram of gold artefacts. After he had reported this to the police, this hoard was delivered to the museum. This collection of gold is now one of the treasures of the Mpu Tantular Museum.³

³ Interview with Sadari, Sidoarjo, 1-8-2022.

In 2004 the East Java Provincial Government again decided to move the museum to new premises to house its growing collection. The Mpu Tantular Museum was moved from Surabaya to Sidoarjo, a district south of the city. At this new location, the display of the urban development of Surabaya has disappeared. The management has been regrouping the collections into ten sub-groups: geology, biology, ethnography, archaeology, history, philology, ceramics, numismatics and heraldry, technology, and fine arts – an approach proposed for provincial museums by the New Order government. In its new location, the management has glorified Von Faber as the museum pioneer. It had a bust of him sculpted and named a gallery for temporary exhibitions after him (Figure 3).⁴ Some of Von Faber's former collections of "modern machineries" remain on display and are acknowledged as his collections.



Figure 3. Bust of Von Faber (left) and Galeri Von Faber (right) at the Museum Mpu Tantular (photograph by Arainikasih and Perkasa, 2023).

The colonial thinking which influenced Von Faber's Museum, for instance, the categorization of local people by their ethnicity, remains unchanged. Various cities in East Java, especially Surabaya, are promoting the area of the city called the Pecinan or Chinatown as a tourist attraction. They have set many projects in motion, including the preservation of the cultural heritage, inviting food and souvenir outlets to establish themselves there, and setting up a night market. In short, they want to celebrate the diversity of their cities by emphasizing the existence of Chinatown. However, this project omits the most important point about the history of Chinatown itself: that it was constructed during the colonial era. During the colonial era, there was a policy called

⁴ Interview with Sadari, Sidoarjo, 1-8-2022.

the *wijkenstelsel*, a zoning system, which divided settlements based on racial categories. Under this policy, the colonial government confined the Chinese to their own residential quarter. The arrangement of the Stehimu was clearly influenced by this logic.

However, in the new permanent exhibition of Mpu Tantular Museum since its move to its new location, there is no longer a Chinese section. Our observations have given us the idea that the management of the museum only displays the collections it considers represent an East Javanese identity, like the collections related to the Javanese, Madurese, Tenggerese, and Osing people. In a nutshell, it does not consider the Chinese community to be part of East Javanese people – or even as Indonesians. The Chinese are “the Other” who are excluded from the permanent exhibition of the Mpu Tantular Museum (as well as in many other provincial museums in post-colonial-era Indonesia). This kind of attitude – the exclusion of the Chinese – is confined not only to Indonesia but is also found in many regions in which a Sino-post-coloniality situation emerged, especially in East and Southeast Asian countries (Pheng Cheah 2022: 1-29). Certainly, in the early-colonial era, the Chinese were segregated by the Dutch as a separate group, “Foreign Orientals”. However, by the 1930s the Chinese were considered equal to the Europeans (Charles A. Coppel 2002: 139). Therefore, for colonial Indonesians the Chinese were considered part of the colonial elite rather than Indigenous society, despite the fact they had already lived in the area before the European administration took over. This colonial idea, particularly that of racial segregation, is still prevalent in post-colonial Indonesian museums. As evidence, in Mpu Tantular Museum the Chinese are not considered part of East Javanese society, although the Chinese population in Surabaya is one of the biggest in present-day Indonesia.

In sum, the example of the Mpu Tantular Museum shows that ideas from the colonial period still persist. The museum is not very different from the colonial era in terms of its objectives and categorization of the people. Of course, there are new collections, exhibitions, and structural changes. Nevertheless, the Mpu Tantular Museum continues its function as a shield against the supposed adverse effects of globalization, or even westernization, in post-independence Indonesia. It arranges its permanent exhibitions to represent local East Javanese society without featuring the Chinese. This idea is a continuation of the colonial point of view that the local people as traditional native or primitive. The omission of the Chinese section in the present exhibition in the museum can also be seen as the extension of racial segregation during the colonial period. All in all, the decolonization efforts in this museum have been limited to such matters as changing its name, while the colonial legacy still remains unconsciously deeply embedded.

(THE JAVA-INSTITUUT AND) THE SONOBUDOYO, YOGYAKARTA

After Surabaya, we shift our observations to Sonobudoyo Museum at Yogyakarta. Although Sonobudoyo was opened a few years later than either the Surabaya Zoo Museum or the Stehimu, its foundation had been laid before

them. The Java-Instituut was the principal institution aspiring to establish a permanent exhibition of Javanese arts and crafts. It was founded as a direct result of the *Congres voor Javaansche Cultuur Ontwikkeling* (Congress for the Development of Javanese Culture) in 1918. Unlike other learned societies in colonial Indonesia at that period, such as the Bali-Instituut, the Batak-Instituut, and so forth, this institution was affiliated neither with the colonial government nor with institutions in the Netherlands. Its objective was to develop the culture of the Javanese, Madurese, Sundanese, and Balinese. To do this, the people behind it sought to gather and record as much Javanese cultural material as possible. Their intention was to increase knowledge and awareness of Javanese culture through congresses, exhibitions, publications, and other activities. The board members of this institute consisted of Javanese and Europeans. Not all the members were scholars, many of them were people active in social and political life in late-colonial Indonesia. Even the idea of establishing the learned society had come from advocates of nationalism such as Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo (1886-1943) during the 1918 congress. However, the chairman of the Java-Instituut was Hoesein Djajadiningrat (1886-1960), the first Javanese to be awarded a doctoral degree from Leiden University, and the honorary chairman was Mangkunegara VII, the ruling prince of the minor court in Surakarta (Perkasa 2020: 27-28).

In a Java-Instituut board meeting, various board members expressed the need to evaluate the congress held in Yogyakarta in 1924 under the auspices of the local Java-Instituut branch. The members with a socialist affiliation, such as J.E. Stokvis (1875-1951) and Samuel Koperberg (1886-1957), realized that many participants were much more enthusiastic about the arts and crafts exhibitions than the debates and discussions. They raised the issue of promoting the Javanese crafts beyond just showing artefacts, such as batik, woodwork, and the like. At the 1926 congress in Surabaya, Thomas Karsten (1884-1945), one of the members, even suggested reaching out to more local artists and industries. Exhibitions organized by the Java-Instituut should pay more attention to the economic conditions of the people rather than concentrating purely on aesthetic and scientific interests, Karsten argued (*Djâwâ* 1925: 217-219). In fact, the resolution of this board meeting laid the foundation for the 1926 exhibition and was institutionalized as a museum in Surabaya, as explained in the previous section.

In Yogyakarta, another development in the collecting of Javanese manuscripts and artefacts occurred. The honorary chairman of the institute, Mangkunegara VII, in conjunction with the Sultanate and Pakualaman Principality of Yogyakarta and the Sunanate of Surakarta, launched a foundation called Panti Budoyo (Cultural House) in 1930. Its primary goal was to collect and preserve Javanese cultural artefacts from the Vorstenlanden (present-day Central Java) area. Basically, the area which formed the main territory of the four royal courts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. The board of this foundation consisted of ten Javanese noblemen as well as several European scholars such as W.F. Stutterheim (1892-1942), J.L. Moens (1887-1954), and

G.W.J. Drewes (1899-1992). Mangkunegara VII wanted to halt any further decay of the Javanese language and culture because he believed that many foreign influences were incompatible with the Javanese national spirit (*Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*, 15 April 1930). He also moved various items in his private collection from Solo to this new institute (Nutilen Bestir Pergadring Radyapustaka 1930). In its early years, this foundation acquired many Javanese collections, especially manuscripts, from the royal courts. However, its efforts were soon to be taken over by a more permanent institution, Sonobudoyo Museum (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Sonobudoyo Museum Yogyakarta, 1935 (Digital Collection KITLV/Leiden University Libraries).

In 1935 the Java-Instituut finally established a brand-new museum, Sonobudoyo, which literally means site of culture. At the opening ceremony, Hoesein Djajadiningrat, the Java-Instituut chairman, explained that the main objective of the museum was to preserve ancient and develop present Javanese culture. This objective differed slightly from the goal of the institute itself which was to study Java in the broadest sense, including Madura, Bali, and the surrounding islands. The Java-Instituut also opened a *kunstambachtschool* (arts and crafts school) in the neighbourhood of the museum to assist in attaining this idea. It appointed Thomas Karsten as the principal architect of this museum. He was an active promoter of Javanese architecture in modern urban life. He was convinced that the grandeur of Hindu-Buddhist monuments should not overshadow the present Javanese architectural style. Karsten believed that the contemporary Javanese buildings, as seen in *joglo*, *pendopo*, and other wooden constructions, were more suitable to modern life than gigantic monuments made from stone. Therefore, this was

the idea which lay behind his design for the museum building in which he also arranged several collections, such as the *petanen* or bedchamber of the Sultan Hamengkubuwono I as it had originally looked (Figure 5). He also reminded visitors that the museum building was not intended to display all the collections simultaneously. There was also another building dedicated to temporary exhibitions and the performing arts. In 1938, Karsten asked Bruno de Vistarini – of the Surabaya Museum – to join him in expanding this museum complex (Passchier 2020: 105-107).



Figure 5. The installation of the *petanen* at the Sonobudoyo Museum, 1935 (*Djawa* 1935).

The public reception of the initiative to have a building for the performing arts was enthusiastic. Many people, especially young Javanese, came to participate in various performing arts such as *wayang kulit* and dances. However, some Indonesian politicians and nationalist groups were worried about the participation of young people in Sonobudoyo activities. They complained that more and more *pemuda* (young people) were visiting the museum and were losing sight of their responsibility to play an active part in the social and political life of the nation. To express their disapproval, they gave Sonobudoyo a nickname, *Sono Praloyo*, meaning 'site of death'. Contesting their complaints, another group argued that the situation was not a path to a gloomy future for the *pemuda*, because many Indonesian nationalists, for instance, Ki Hajar Dewantara (1899-1959) and Pangeran Suryodiningrat (1880-1960) from Yogyakarta, were also involved in the museum (*Soeara Oemoem*, 27 April 1937). Ki Hajar Dewantara was the founder of the *Taman Siswa* school, a Javanese educational movement which aimed to educate the broader

public on a national level, and Pangeran Suryodiningrat was the chairman of the Pakempalan Kawula Ngayogyakarta, the biggest mass organization in Yogya in the 1930s.

Pertinently, even the exhibitions and performances organized by Sonobudoyo were often related to the contemporary social and political situation in Indonesia in the twilight of the Dutch colonial era. A good example is a performance initiated by Mangkunegara VII in 1941. During that show, Mangkunegara VII invited Balinese *topeng* (mask) dancers to perform a play about the death of Tunggul Ametung and the rise of Ken Angrok (*Djâwâ* 1941: 170). Tunggul Ametung was the last thirteenth-century ruler of Tumapel who was killed by Ken Angrok. The latter then became the first king of Singasari kingdom and the founder of the Rajasa dynasty which reigned until the sixteenth century. The Balinese considered this play sacred because it could only be staged at a moment of great disruption such as a regime change. The Dutch colonial period ended a year later, and the Japanese occupation began. By staging this performance as an omen presaging a major power shift in Java, Mangkunegara VII was using Sonobudoyo Museum differently to the way museums in Europe were viewed.

During the Japanese occupation (1942-1945), Sonobudoyo Museum reopened as early as August 1942, just five months after the Japanese arrived in Java. The museum labels were translated into Indonesian (*Soeara Asia*, 25 August 2602). The incumbent curator, Ir. J.L. Moens, was sent to a Japanese internment camp in Yogyakarta (Archive of Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap, KBG DIR 1098). In 1944 the Japanese authorities transferred the management of Sonobudoyo Museum from Java-Instituut to the Jogja Kochi (present-day Yogyakarta provincial government/municipality). The Japanese also appointed R. Katamsi Martorahardjo (1897-1975), an Indonesian art teacher, as the head of the Sonobudoyo Museum (Martorahardjo 1945).

Furthermore, Arainikasih has argued that, to promote the Japanese war propaganda that all Asians were equal, the Japanese equalized the admission price for museums (Arainikasih 2021: 143). The price of a museum ticket was no longer based on the colonial racial categorization: European, Foreign Orientals, or Natives. According to the Japanese era newspaper, *Soeara Asia*, to visit Sonobudoyo Museum, all adults had to pay 5 cents, while the ticket for children cost 2.5 cents (*Soeara Asia*, 25 August 2602).

During the Indonesian Revolution from 1945 to 1949, Sonobudoyo museum was closed, but the Sultanate of Yogyakarta and the Java-Instituut were involved in a dispute about the museum's ownership during this period. The Sultanate put the museum under the authority of the Bupati Paniradya Pati Wijata Pradja (the Education Branch of the Social Agency) in 1945, then under the Bupati Utaradyapati Budya Pratiwa (the Cultural Agency) from 1946 to 1948. After the transfer of sovereignty in 1949, the Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (the Education and Cultural Agency of the Special Region of Yogyakarta) took control of the museum (Djoko Sukiman 1985: 2).

Meanwhile, the previous caretaker, the Java-Instituut, attempted to regain its control of the museum. Hoesein Djajadiningrat kept in constant touch with the museum nightwatchman, Zoebir, to ensure all the staff and collections were protected from vandalism and looting during this turbulent period (Zoebir 1949). He also asked Koperberg, the former museum secretary, to inspect the museum directly and communicated with various leaders of the Republic of Indonesia, including the president himself, Sukarno. However, all the Java-Instituut's efforts to regain its control over Sonobudoyo were rejected by the ruler of the sultanate, Hamengkubuwana IX (1912-1988). The Sultan declared all he wanted was the dispute over the museum's ownership to be resolved after the Revolution had come to an end (Bupati Paniradya Pati Wijata Pradja 1946).

However, despite his claim, the Sultan rejected any efforts to settle this dispute until 1960. In 1959, the Special Region Government of Yogyakarta sent an explanatory letter to Kementerian Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Kebudayaan (the Ministry of Education, Teaching, and Culture) about the status of Sonobudoyo Museum. This letter asserted that Sonobudoyo Museum had been under the auspices of the government of Yogyakarta since the Japanese occupation period. This situation has continued after Indonesia's independence up to the present day. The government of Yogyakarta had covered all the costs accrued by this museum, with subsidies from the central government (Dewan Pemerintah Daerah 1959). The incumbent minister, Prijana (1907-1969), wanted to take over the museum's ownership and resolve the dispute which had begun in 1945. With this in mind, he set up a special committee to dissolve the Java-Instituut and its museum. In 1958, Prijana appointed Hoesein Djajadiningrat and all the former Indonesian board members of the Java-Instituut to this committee (Liquidation Committee of Java-Instituut 1960).

In response to this decision, the Special Region of Yogyakarta Government took a more robust measure. In 1960, Sultan Hamengkubuwana IX, as the ruler, wrote a personal letter to the Minister of Education, Teaching, and Culture rejecting all the decisions to transfer the ownership of Sonobudoyo Museum by the Ministry. Hamengkubuwana IX argued that to allow the existence of the Java-Instituut would be a disservice to national and local interests, because the authority of the committee was too powerful. He saw the Java-Instituut as a representative of the colonial past. If the Indonesian government were to revitalize this institution, the (former) Java-Instituut management/members could take the artefacts and collections back (from the museum) on behalf of private owners who had previously entrusted their possessions to Sonobudoyo. This would give the (former) Java-Instituut personnel "carte blanche" to give the owners of the museum collections, most of whom were not Indonesian citizens but Europeans, to take many precious collections out of the museum. Therefore, Hamengkubuwana IX urged the minister to abolish all decisions to revitalize the Java-Instituut, including the dissolution committee, and to make the decision to grant ownership of Sonobudoyo, including all

the artefacts in the museum, to the Yogyakarta Government (Kepala Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 1960). The strong repudiation by the Sultan himself can be seen as his effort to decolonize Sonobudoyo Museum based on his firm conviction that the Java-Instituut was a representative of colonial interest in Javanese culture. He also suspected that Hoesein Djajadiningrat was more pro-Dutch than Indonesian, especially during the Revolutionary period when he had served as Secretary of Education and Culture in the Federal Government.

By the end, in 1974 Sonobudoyo Museum was under the control of the Directorate of Museums of the central government. In 1979 it was transformed into the provincial museum of Yogyakarta. The museum guidebook states that, before Indonesian independence, Sonobudoyo Museum had been divided into various permanent exhibition sections: the *petanen*, the boat room, the wayang room, bronze galleries, and an apart room for Balinese crafts. After Indonesian independence, most of the museum collections were still in the same place. However, to serve as (New Order) province museum, its new management decided to display collections which had been underrepresented during the colonial era, such as artefacts from the prehistoric and Islamic periods chronologically (Purwoko et al. 1976: 14-15; Sukiman 1985: 14-16). The museum also acquired new collections from archaeological projects and the public in general (Museum Negeri Sonobudoyo Yogyakarta 2003: 3-95).

Moreover, as a provincial museum, in 1998 a “new” building, called the nDalem Condrokiranan, was opened as a branch to house Sonobudoyo Museum’s permanent exhibition, devoted to artefacts relating to the Yogyakarta area. The nDalem Condrokiranan itself was the former residence of a member of the Yogyakarta royal family located on the eastern side of the northern *alun-alun* (green drill-field in front of the palace) (Bejo Haryono et al. 2003: 7-8). However, the role of nDalem Condrokiranan as a branch of Yogyakarta’s province museum ended in 2015. Since 2015, the nDalem Condrokiranan building has no longer been used as Sonobudoyo’s permanent exhibition space. It has been re-assigned as the museum office and depository. In 2011, the old building of Sonobudoyo Museum underwent a refurbishment project. Despite these changes, according to the museum guidebook published in 2017, the storyline of the permanent exhibition is not very different that of the 1950s and 1970s (Herry Mardianto 2017: 5-95).

As with other provincial museums, in 2001/2002 the Provincial Government of Yogyakarta regained control of Sonobudoyo Museum after the passing of the Decentralization Bill. Indeed, compared to the Mpu Tantular Museum, the decolonization issue was robustly discussed here. Currently, the management of Sonobudoyo also actively holds temporary exhibitions, including the 2018 exhibition on the history and identity of the museum. On this occasion, various writers critically interrogated the colonial legacies of Sonobudoyo and its initiator, the Java-Instituut. Sri Margana, an Indonesian historian and lecturer at Gadjah Mada University, underlines the need to transform the Orientalist-colonialist interests in the museum into nationalist interests (Margana 2018: 14). The curator of this exhibition, Aryo Priyanggono, explained that they intend

to attract visitors in order to teach them about history as a foundation for the present and the future. Priyanggono described the colonial-era museum as visual colonialism, in which the arrangement of museums and their collections was used as a tool and an encyclopaedia of empire, as explained at the beginning of this article. Priyanggono also went on to argue that, in Sonobudoyo, the representation of the Javanese had been ordained by Orientalist discourse. Following the Saidian argument on Orientalism, in a temporary exhibition catalogue, Priyanggono concluded that Westerners and their interests had been preponderant compared to those of the indigenous Javanese in the foundation of Sonobudoyo (Priyanggono 2018: ix-x).

Looking at the intention of the present-day management of Sonobudoyo Museum to investigate the colonial legacy in the museum and its relationship with the Java-Instituut, we argue that its members are overlooking many important facts, especially about the power relations in the museum's early years. In both their 2018 temporary and permanent exhibitions and on their official website, the curatorial team of the museum only pay attention to the genesis of Sonobudoyo. They not only ignore Sultan Hamengkubuwana IX's efforts to decolonize Sonobudoyo in post-colonial Indonesia, but also the role of the many Javanese who had been involved in the establishment of this museum since the beginning. During the colonial era, there were seven Javanese members out of the nine members who sat on the Sonobudoyo board. The chairman was Javanese, and there were only two European members (*Djåwå* 1935: 199). Meanwhile, the Java-Instituut board, which was responsible for setting the agenda and exhibitions of the museum, consisted of fifteen people, of whom only five were Europeans (*Djåwå* 1935: 198).

In summary, we can see how Sonobudoyo Museum was nationalized and provincialized and is now trying to decolonize itself. Yogyakarta's status as a special region makes this museum distinct from the Mpu Tantular Museum in East Java, especially where finance is concerned. The national government grants the Yogyakarta provincial government a Special Fund (Dana Keistimewaan). With this fund, the Yogyakarta Government can allocate more budget to its cultural activities and projects, including the management of Sonobudoyo. However, this situation also presents Sonobudoyo with the challenge of interrogating its past in the colonial era and the early decades of Indonesian independence. For instance, why the concept of *adiluhung* in Javanese culture, which the museum has promoted throughout its existence, is limited only to Javanese court culture and excludes various "non-elite" and "outside Yogyakarta" Javanese cultures? *Adiluhung* (the gloriously sublime) emerged in Javanese literature as a concept only in the nineteenth century. Nancy Florida (1987) has said that this idea has become a code phrase for what many modern Javanese consider to be the extraordinarily refined, majestic heights and profound depths of Javanese culture. Many Javanese still share this assessment. The notion of *adiluhung* conveys an idealized version of a sophisticated Javanese civilization, as seen through the eyes of the elite. Therefore, the culture of Javanese farmers on Mount Merapi, fishermen in the

southern region, and other ordinary people in general, is rarely, even never, represented in this museum. In Museum Sonobudoyo's newest building, opened in 2022, the prevailing concept of its permanent exhibition is still the *adiluhung* of the Javanese culture. For instance, its display on banquets and *rijstaffel* (Figure 6).



Figure 6. The display of a banquet at the Sonobudoyo Museum (photograph by Arainikasih, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of these two provincial museums, we conclude that there have been various efforts to decolonize museums – to address colonial structures and approaches – even though the curators and management do not directly employ this term. The Stehimu in Surabaya and the Surabaya Museum Zoo – the forerunners of the Mpu Tantular Museum – were established earlier than Sonobudoyo. However, this museum is now relatively untroubled by its colonial past compared to Sonobudoyo. For instance, the Mpu Tantular Museum has honoured its founder, Von Faber, with his collections, a statue, and a temporary exhibition gallery in its new building complex. The attempts to decolonize were perhaps halted by Von Faber's continuation of the museum's directorship from the late-colonial period until he passed away in 1955. He was director during the Japanese Occupation because he was of German descent and had no Jewish affiliations. Despite changing the museum's name to that of a Javanese-Majapahit poet and rearranging the permanent exhibition – in accordance with the policy of Indonesian New Order reign – the colonial influence remained. As a cultural archive of the late-colonial period, this museum is an example of racial categorization which still to exists today.

Sonobudoyo Museum has existed under the same name since its foundation. The founder of this museum, the Java-Instituut, and as most of them were Indonesians, the people behind this institute remained very influential during the Japanese Occupation until the 1960s. In their efforts to decolonize, the curator and management of this museum were more advanced compared to the Mpu Tantular Museum. Their attempts began in the early years after Indonesian Independence under the direction of the ruler of Yogyakarta, Sultan Hamengkubuwana IX. He wanted ownership of the museum handed over to the local government of Yogyakarta. The acquisition of many collections and the expansion of the museum complex have been essential steps in moving beyond its legacy of the past. In 2018, a special exhibition was held to interrogate the colonial footprints in the museum.

Moreover, as explained previously, the decentralization policy is challenging for both museums and, indeed, all provincial museums in Indonesia. According to a report, many provincial and municipal museums have been faced with human resource and budget difficulties after the government implemented the decentralization bill (Krishna Panolih 2018). Because, Kreps argues, the thirty-two years of an authoritarian, top-down, centralized approach under the New Order reign disempowered the employees of provincial museums. The managements of the provincial museums were unprepared to run the museums by themselves, without being able to rely on the guidance from the central government (Kreps 2019: 153-184). Museums became dilapidated. Therefore, in the decade 2010-2019, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology conducted a museum revitalization project. However, this revitalization did not venture beyond redesigning the permanent exhibitions without any further reframing its narratives.

However, this situation has also opened an opportunity for them to decolonize themselves. The museums on sub-national levels, particularly in our case provincial museums, could be treated as sites in which to unpack complexities in the colonial era. These complexities are often subsumed or even marginalized in the national history. For instance, the position of the Chinese in the Mpu Tantular Museum and the existence of various Javanese groups outside Yogyakarta are underrepresented and they are treated as outsiders. Furthermore, under decentralization, regional museums are no longer compelled to follow the official national historical narrative. They could attract more researchers to dig deeper into the cultural archives in the societies they claim to represent.

All in all, this article clearly shows that the concept of a museum as a cultural archive could be employed to examine societal colonial legacies as they are evident in the history of these two museums and the narratives of their exhibitions from the beginning up to the present. By looking at a particular period (since the establishment of the museums in the late-colonial period to the present) and at a particular regional focus (in East Java and Yogyakarta), we are trying to prevent a story-plucking, which often crops up in the discussion of

de/post-coloniality as warned by Cooper (2010). Having regional/provincial museums as viewpoints to revisit coloniality issues allows insights into the concrete situation of coloniality in the former colonizer or in colonized areas, and it is not only always about the metropole and its periphery, but also about the periphery itself.

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