

# 1 Strengthening Indonesian National Identity through History 2 Semarang as a Maritime City: A Medium of Unity in Diversity

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## 7 **Abstract**

8 This article talks about the dynamic of the formation of Semarang cultural identity especially  
9 Semarang arts and Semarang ritual tradition. Semarang is a city which has an unique growth  
10 and character. Based on traditional historical resources, Semarang had been already existed  
11 since the period of the expansion of Hindu culture. Its early development as a city ran parallel  
12 with the islamization in this region. Semarang was formed administratively on May 2 - 1547,  
13 when Ki Pandanarang II was chosen as the regent of this city by the Sultan of Pajang  
14 kingdom, Hadiwijaya. The administrative development of Semarang could not be separated  
15 from its good economic and geographical position. Because of its strategic position, the Dutch  
16 came to occupy this region and also spread its political, economic, social, and cultural  
17 influences in this region. To face these influences of foreign cultures, the people of Semarang  
18 took the way of peace and hybrid, so it could be argued that Semarang become a good medium  
19 of hybrid culture. This could also be concluded that Semarang is a maritime city which can be  
20 viewed as a good medium for strengthening Indonesian national identity: unity in diversity.

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22 **Index terms**— semarang, national identity, unity in diversity.

## 23 **1 Introduction**

24 ational identity is distinctive feature of one nation. Various studies have shown that a national identity is a direct  
25 result of the presence of elements which come from people's daily lives, namely: sense of belonging to one nation,  
26 national symbols, language, the nation's history, national consciousness, blood ties, culture, music, cuisine, radio,  
27 television, etc.

28 The national identity of most citizens of one state or one nation tends to strengthen when the country or the  
29 nation is threatened by outsiders or foreigners. The sense of belonging to one nation becomes stronger when an  
30 external threat threatens the citizens, so they feel that they have to unite with their fellow countrymen to protect  
31 themselves and fight against the common threat. National identity is a part of nation character which consists of  
32 4 primary elements, namely: (1) national culture, (2) nationalism, (3) national ethics, and (4) national identity  
33 (Kartodirdjo, 1993). National identity can only be traced on nations' collective experiences or nations' history,  
34 because it is exactly what has been cristallized through certain periods and places (through history).

## 35 **2 II.**

## 36 **3 Research Problems**

37 In the process of strengthening the Indonesian national identity, modernization and globalization has brought  
38 some new cultural values such as materialism, consumerism, hedonism, etc. and these values can cause the  
39 deterioration of national identity. If the nation could not preserve and strengthen its identity, the following  
40 impact of modernization and globalization was that the nation would lose its national character, and have no  
41 strong power to protect its national cultures from total destruction.

## 5 II. EARLY INHABITANS AND OCCUPATION

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42 National identity has to be strengthened because this is closely related to the developing and recharging  
43 nationalism which can be defined as an ideology to determine vision of the future, and the basic pattern of living  
44 and being. Antony D. Smith argues that all men will be nationalists in the day when they will recognize their  
45 identity, and nationalism is a brotherhood born among those who have grown and suffered together, and can  
46 pool their memories under a succession of common historical experiences ??Smith, 1983: 22).

47 Based on the above mentioned problems, this study presents some primary research questions as follows: 1)  
48 Why does Semarang become a good medium of hybrid cultures?; 2) What kind of hybrid cultures does Semarang  
49 have?; 3) How do these hybrid cultures function as a medium of unity in diversity? III.

## 50 4 Discussion

51 a) The Formation of Semarang as a Maritime City i. Early Development of Semarang Maritime city is a city that  
52 is formed by all evidences that happened through the relationship between the land and the sea. Louis Wirth  
53 argued that a city is a huge and dense populated area, with heterogeneous populations. Grunfeld says that a city  
54 should have non-agrarian economic sectors and many buildings that stand closely (S. ??enno & Mustamin Alwi,  
55 1994: 23-24). It is difficult to say when the formation of Semarang took place, because the written historical  
56 resources are very limited.

57 Amen Budiman used traditional historical resources, Serat Kandhaning Ringgit Purwa, Script KBG No.7  
58 which shows that Semarang was founded by Ki Pandan Arang, the son of Pangeran Sabrang Lor, the second  
59 sultan of Demak. According to this script, in 1398 çaka or 1476 AD, Ki Pandan Arang came to a fertile cape  
60 "Pulo Tirang" in which he spread Islam among some ajars (ajar = Hindu-Budha preacher). This script shows  
61 also that there were 10 regions which had been conducted by ajars in Pulo Tirang, namely: Derana, Wotgalih,  
62 Brintik, Gajahmungkur, Pragota, Lebuapria, Tinjomoyo, Sejanila, Guwasela dan Jurangsuru. Ki Pandan Arang  
63 could change the beliefs of these ajars and the people of this land from Hindu-Budha to Islam.

64 Cerita Rakyat sekitar Wali Sanga explains that Ki Pandan Arang left the sultanate of Demak, together with  
65 his son, Pangeran Kasepuhan. From Demak they went to south-western of Demak, and finally they came to  
66 fertile land, namely Pulo Tirang. In this region Ki Pandan Arang built pesantren (Islamic school), in which  
67 so many people studied Islam, and because of the existence of this pesantren "Pulo Tirang" was then densely  
68 populated. In this fertile region, there were many tamarind (Javanese language: asem) trees, which grew very  
69 rarely (Javanese language: arang). Based on this story, from the words asem and arang, the name of Semarang  
70 was formulated.

71 These above stories told us that the formation of Semarang city ran parallel with the Islamization and the  
72 political expansion of Demak sultanate. Before the arrival of Ki Pandan Arang, Pulo Tirang was certainly a  
73 fertile land, and it was already inhabited by those who had followed Hindu-Budha. Based on the point of view  
74 of this good assets of Semarang, it is undisputable that the sultanate of Demak would do political expansion to  
75 colonize this region.

76 Although Ki Pandan Arang had been successful in developing Semarang, the administrative power was  
77 performed by his son, Pangeran Kesepuhan, who took title Ki Pandan Arang II. This administrative power  
78 was given to Pangeran Kasepuhan after Ki Pandan Arang I died. His official inauguration as the first regent of  
79 Semarang happened in 12 Rabiulawal 954 H or May 2, 1547 AD. Pandan Arang II, the Semarang regional ruler,  
80 was also a merchant and syahbandar (civil servant who manages of port affairs). His profession could be learned  
81 from Babad Demak, edition of R.L. Melema (Budiman: hlm. 104-105). According to this Babad Demak, Ki  
82 Pandan Arang was a rich syahbandar, and because of his richness there were many merchants or traders who  
83 could borrow money from him. Based on this story, it could be supposed that at the middle of the 16th century  
84 Semarang had developed as a maritime city which had maritime trade and society.

85 Catatan Tahunan Melayu Semarang dan Cirebon ??Graaf, et all, 1997: hlm 17 & 30) had given information  
86 that at the half of the 16 th century, there was shipping yard in Semarang with Chinese human resources. During  
87 1541-1546, this shipping yard had finished 1000 ships ordered by Sunan Prawoto (Sunan Mukmin), the son of  
88 Sultan Trenggono, the third Sultan of Demak.

89 Based on these above historical resources, it could be concluded that at the middle of the 16 th century  
90 Semarang had already developed as an administrative and maritime city which based economically on trade.  
91 These 2 characteristics were an important access of Semarang to become a good medium of the development of  
92 hybrid cultures.

## 93 5 ii. Early Inhabitans and occupation

94 The formation of Semarang as an administrative city (region) at the half of the 16th century indicates us that  
95 this region had a good geographic and economic assets for the heterogeneous people who seek better living. The  
96 occupations of the inhabitants of Semarang at the beginning of the 16th century could be studied through the  
97 witness of Tome Pires, the Portuguese sailor who came to Semarang at that time. According to Tome Pires, there  
98 were many traders and fishermen in Semarang ??Brommer et all., 1995). More illustration about the occupations  
99 of Semarang people in the 16th century could be also known from Serat Kandhaning Ringgit Purwa script KBG  
100 Nr. 7, which expresses that a part of the inhabitants of Pulo Tirang at the time of Ki Pandan Arang I were

101 fishermen ??Budiman, 1976: 67 & 75).. Speelman, a gouverneur general of VOC in Semarang, said also that  
102 there were many fishermen who lived in kampung Kaligawe (Liem Thian Joe, 1931:pg. 14).

103 Based on Catatan Tahunan Melayu Semarang dan Cirebon ??Graaf, et. all, 1998: 3) in the 15th century there  
104 was been a close relationship between Semarang and Chinese traders. Furthermore this historical resource told  
105 us that in the 15th century there had already existed muslims Chinese settlement in Semarang. In 1413 Chinese  
106 marine fleets from Ming Dynasty, led by Haj Sam Po Bo, repaired their ships in the shipyard in Semarang. This  
107 written historical resource could be taken as an evidence that in the 15th century shipping trade activities in  
108 Semarang was already excessive.

109 Besides traders and fishermen, another part of the inhabitants of the old Semarang city were craftsmen. This  
110 occupation could be traced from the toponymy, which told about the names of places that had been identified  
111 with the occupations of their inhabitants. Some places (kampongs) in the old Semarang city center had the names  
112 related to their occupations, namely: Sayangan (place of copper craftsmen), Pandean (place of iron craftsmen),  
113 Kampung Batik (place of batik craftsmen), Kulitan (place of leather craftsmen), Jagalan (place of slaughterer),  
114 Gendingan (place of Javanese music instruments craftsmen), Pederesan ( place of sugar palm tappers), Gandekan  
115 (place of gold craftsmen), Pedamaran (place of the trading of dammar /substance for colouring batik) and  
116 Petudungan (place of huts craftsmen) The names of these places (kampongs) in the centre of the old Semarang  
117 city indicates that in the 16th century, various handicrafts and craftsmen were already in existence. By the end of  
118 the 17 th century Semarang had been one of the prominent destinations of Chinese immigrants, besides Batavia  
119 and Surabaya. The arrival of the Chinese in Semarang at the end of the 17 th century had been motivated by  
120 trading relationship between China and South-east Asia regions. These immigrants came from southern coast of  
121 China, namely: Amoy, Canton, and Macao. Ong Tae Hae, a Chinese came from Fu Kien, who ever been lived  
122 in Batavia (1783-1791), said that in Batavia there was a lodging "Loji Semarang", for the Chinese who would  
123 stay overnight until they met ships to go to Semarang Based on this witness, at 1783 there had been busy trade  
124 activities in Semarang ??Ongkhokham, 1991: 86).

125 Before the arrival of VOC, the Chinese in Semarang obtained trust from the regent of Semarang to get the  
126 position of Syahbandar, who functioned to collect the taxes of imported and exported goods. The Chinese also got  
127 the monopoly of salt and rice trade. But, when the Dutch occupied Semarang region, the position of Syahbandar  
128 was taken over by VOC (Liem Thian Joe, 1931: 16-17). After VOC occupied Semarang, the Chinese took role  
129 in trade. According to the report of Speelman, the VOC gouverneur in Batavia, the Chinese in Semarang had a  
130 role in import and export trades, and were active in trading of salt, rattan, opium, and other goods ??Brommer,  
131 1988: 9).

## 132 **6 ii. Inhabitants and Occupation in the Dutch Colonial Era**

133 In the colonial era, the Chinese got a trust of the colonial government to handle the economic affairs. One of the  
134 evidences was that many Chinese people were recruited to work in economic fields such as cashiers in private or  
135 state companies (Semarangsche Kassiers Vereeniging Buku ??eringatan 1912 ??eringatan -1952: 21 & 35).

136 Based on this resources, it could be concluded that the Chinese became a part of the economic human resources  
137 in Semarang. Because of the huge amount of the Chinese population, Semarang took a notation as "the city of  
138 Chinese".

139 The arrival of the European increased the variety of the inhabitants of Semarang. The Dutch colonized  
140 Semarang at the end of the 17 th century, after Amangkurat II, the King of Mataram Kingdom, made agreements  
141 with VOC in October 1677, and 1678. These treaties had contented especially that that VOC got the domination  
142 in managing the incomes of Semarang ports, monopoly in trading of sugar, rice, textile, opium, and free taxes.  
143 These monopolies were the compensation from Mataram to VOC, because it could defeat Trunajaya, the regent  
144 of Madura, who opposed to Mataram (Ricklefs, 1981 The inhabitants of Semarang became more varied when the  
145 Malay, Arabic, and India traders arrived. There were also French, German, English, and African. The majority  
146 of Africans became the soldiers of Koninklijke Nederlandsch-Indische Leger (KNIL) (Brommer, loc. cit.).

147 The other foreigners were the Japanese. They came to Indonesia especially after World War I, especially for 2  
148 important goals, namely economy and the expansion of Japanese military power. In the 3rd decade of the 20 th  
149 century, the people of Semarang had already awareness of the expansion of Japanese spread attractive but false  
150 slogan "Asia is for Asia", and they were aware that this slogan was for attracting the Javanese people to give  
151 total loyalty to the Japanese to win the war against western imperialists ("Indonesia Ditengah Revolusi Azia"  
152 dalam Api, 5 Agustus 1924 No. 2).

153 Based on the above information, it can be seen that in the Dutch colonial era, Semarang had been inhabited  
154 by many ethnic groups. The Dutch colonial government deliberately made social stratifications of the inhabitants  
155 legalized in government regulations (regeering reglement) 1854 (Ongkhokham dalam Yoshihara Kunio (editor):  
156 87). This stratification scheme had implication on the jobs' status of the people which can be explained as  
157 follows.

158 The lowest social level was the indigenous people who worked as labours on manufactures, transportation,  
159 civil service. Helpers, craftsmen, pity traders, etc. The second level was the Chinese, divided in 2 groups, namely:  
160 (1) land holders, traders, other business men; (2) Geologically the port of Semarang was less beneficial for shipping  
161 trade, as the continued process of sedimentation had caused the river which linked the city and the sea could  
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## 6 II. INHABITANTS AND OCCUPATION IN THE DUTCH COLONIAL ERA

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163 not be sailed. To solve this problem, in 1868 some trading companies in Semarang carried out the dredging of  
164 Semarang river and during 1872-1874 they made also a new canal "Nieuwe Havenkanaal" (Kali Baru). This canal  
165 could be sailed by boats from Java sea to the center of Semarang city for unloading and uploading goods.

166 This new canal had provided a good access for foreign ships to come to Semarang port. The illustration of  
167 the increasing number of foreign ships which come to Semarang port can be checked in table presented below.  
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169 At the beginning of the 20 th century, Semarang already had some private transportation companies, such  
170 as: "Semarangsche Stoomboot-en Prauwenveer", "Het Nieuw Semarangsche Prauwenveer", and "Kian Gwan's  
171 Prauwenveer".

172 To serve the shipping trade, in Semarang were also built ships which had larger loading capacities. At the end  
173 of the 19th century the average loading capacities of the ships in Semarang port was not more than 14 koyang (1  
174 koyang = 1500-2000 kg., see A. ??eeuw, 1990: 363), and the length of the ships 10 -20 meters. In the following  
175 years, the loading capacities of the ships reached 50-120 koyang, and the length and width of the ships: 27 meters  
176 and 5, 90 meters (J.J. Baggelaar, loc. cit.).

177 All of the above presented discussion gives us an explanation that since the middle of the 16th century Semarang  
178 already had heterogeneous inhabitants, and the consequence of this ethnic diversity, Semarang had also hybrid  
179 cultures that will be discussed below. c) Semarang Hybrid Cultures i. Performing Art: Gambang Semarang  
180 Gambang Semarang is a traditional performing art which was born and officially developed in Semarang since  
181 the third decade of the twentieth century. This performing art is one of the forms of cultural integration between  
182 the Javanese and Chinese culture. There are controversial opinions about the origin of Gambang Semarang, it  
183 was from Jakarta or it was the original art of Semarang. But, apart from this controversy , Gambang Semarang  
184 has been actually possessed and developed by Semarang people until now, so this performing art is very potential  
185 to become Semarang cultural identity.

186 Gambang Semarang can be categorized as Semarang traditional performing art, born in Semarang in 1930,  
187 by the Chinese, Lie Ho soen, the member of gemeenteraad (Semarang city council). This performing art was  
188 performed at many events such as the Chinese new year in some Chinese temples, wedding events, and carnival  
189 "dugderan" (event to welcome the Ramadhan/Fasting month), events to welcome foreign tourists, etc.

190 The sequence of Gambang Semarang show can be explained as follows. The show begins with instrumental  
191 music and it is followed by some Semarang folksongs such as: "Empat Penari" (four dancers), "Gado-gado  
192 Semarang" (gado-gado = salad with peanut sauce). The following performance is dance with four primary  
193 movements, namely: lambayan, genjot, ngondek and ngeyek. Jokes are often inserted between one and another  
194 step with a theme adjusted to the actual issues of society. This performance of Gambang Semarang ends with  
195 Semarang or Javanese folksongs, for example: "Lenggang Kangkung", "Semarang Tempo Doeoe", "Jangkrik  
196 Genggong", "Gado-gado Semarang."

197 Gambang Semarang can be mentioned as hybrid culture between the Chinese and Javanese cultural elements.  
198 Its music instruments consist of Chinese instruments (kongahian, tehian, sukong, and flute) and Javanese  
199 instruments (bonang, gambang, kendang, and gong). Formerly the dancers and singers of Gambang Semarang  
200 were Chinese. The female dancers and singers wore "sarong batik Semarangan" and "kebaya Encim" (woman's  
201 blouse-the front of which pinned together, and embroidered with flora or fauna motifs), and the hair style is "gelung  
202 konde" (Javanese hair style). The musicians of Gambang Semarang are also hybrid, consisting of Javanese and  
203 Chinese musicians, and the songs presented in Gambang Semarang performance tend to be Chinese nuances.

204 How famous Gambang Semarang in 1940s era can be seen at the birth of the song "Empat Penari". This song  
205 is also the product of hybrid culture which consists of Chinese and Javanese creators. The melody was composed  
206 by Oei Yok Siang, and the poem was the creation of Sidik Pramono. These two creators were from Magelang,  
207 Central Java. Sidik Pramono was the musician of Perindu Orchestra in Magelang, and the song "Empat Penari"  
208 was sung firstly in 1940 in broadcasting studio "Laskar Rakyat" in Magelang by female singer Nyi Ertinah.  
209 Picture 4 : Sarong Batik Semarangan with plaited bamboo background and peacock motifs; these motifs were  
210 also inspired by Chinese cultural elements.

211 ii. Islamic ritual tradition: Dugderan and Waraq Ngendog

212 The Islamic ritual tradition "Dugderan" was firstly performed in 1881 by the regent of Semarang, Raden Mas  
213 Tumenggung Aryo Purbomingrat. He was the creator of this "Dugderan" event to welcome the fasting month  
214 Ramadhan.

215 As a sign of the beginning of Ramadhan, there was a performed ceremony which began with the voice of "bedug"  
216 dug?, dug?, dug? (17 x) and the voice of cannon der?, der?, der?(7 x). Based on the voices of "bedug" and  
217 cannon the people of Semarang mentioned this event "Dugderan". "Bedug" is a traditional Javanese instrument  
218 to summon the people to do salat (Islamic prayer) time and cannon was an explosive weapon which comes from  
219 Europe.

220 This tradition has developed as folks fair and has been performed in Semarang town square (alun-alun) one  
221 week before the fasting month began. This folks fair "Dugderan" is closed at the afternoon (usually at 4 o'clock),  
222 one day before the fasting month, with carnival which is accompanied with Semarang cultural symbol "Waraq  
223 Ngendog".

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## 224 **7 Warak Ngendog Tradition**

225 Carnival "Dugderan" is accompanied by "waraq ngendog" tradition. "Warak Ngendog" is truely one of Semarang  
226 hybrid cultures. The creator of "warak ngendok" is very smart to mix cultural diversity in one symbol, namely  
227 an invented animal that looks like a goat with dragon head, gold furs, and has some eggs under his legs.

228 The word "warak" is from Arabic word "wara'i" that means holy. Some people suppose that the word "warak"  
229 comes from the name of arabic invented animal "borak" (= winged steed that carried Muhammad to heaven).  
230 As a whole the shape of "warak" looks like "Kilin", the Chinese invented heaven animal which has function to  
231 spread prosperity in the world, and the eggs under "warak" legs are the symbol of Javanese prosperity. The  
232 pictures presented below are the illustration of "Dugderan" carnival. Picture 5 : "Dugderan" carnival which was  
233 performed at one day before fasting month began.

234 iii. Indie Architecture The Europeans community in Semarang had also formed hybrid culture, among others  
235 housing style (Indische landhuis stijl), which usually expressed luxurious building with comfortable terrace and  
236 wide yard or park ??Sukiman, 1996: 29) The house presented in the picture no. 7 also shows Indie architecture  
237 style with its characteristics, namely: terrace (for protecting the house from sunray and rain splash), enough  
238 ventilation and wide park with tropical trees.

239 .

## 240 **8 d) Conclusion and Suggestion i. Conclusion**

241 Along with the way of history, the Indonesian people can not be separated from the influences of foreign cultures,  
242 and now there are many people regret the disappearing of Indonesian national identity because of the pressure of  
243 foreign cultures. Together with the expansion of these foreign cultures, there arises the degradation of the loving  
244 devotion to the national cultures, and the implication is that the Indonesian nation shall lose their memory of  
245 their past experiences which are important to protect and survive the Indonesian national state and national  
246 identity.

247 Semarang as a maritime city can become a model to strengthen national identity among the diversity of ethnic  
248 and cultures. The cultural approach is an appropriate method to strengthen the national identity, because of its  
249 peace, tranquility and unity values.

250 Arts are the elements of culture which has important function as national identity, because they can show unique  
251 character and quality to the global society, and can become the media to unite the global nations. Through the  
252 arts (dance, local costume, song, drama, handicraft (example: batik), architecture, etc), people can express  
253 their feeling (happiness, appreciation), their wills and creations which are based on their local communities  
254 characteristics and cultural identities and through the arts brotherhood between nations can be developed.

255 ii. Suggestion National Identity should be strengthened continuously for some important objectives: 1) to  
256 show the national pride on nation own cultures, 2) to have national consciousness when facing the influences of  
257 other nations, 3) to protect and to survive the nation state and its nation.

258 The destruction of national identity should not happen, if we always pay attention to and perform two  
259 primary principles as mentioned below: 1. Cultural identity that will be inherited by the next generation can  
260 not be allowed to live passively. The old values of the inherited cultural identity should be explored, analyzed,  
261 and should be developed with the new spirit of the new era, so they can be accepted and endorsed by the new  
262 generation. 2. If there is no such movement, it is sure the local or national cultural identity can not be alive or  
263 be totally destroyed.

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Figure 1:



Figure 2:



Figure 3:

1

Figure 4: Table 1 :

2

Nation	1850 People	%	1890 People	%	1920	%	1930 People	%	1941	%
Native	20.000	72,99	53.974	75,83	126.628	80,12	175.457	80,56	221.000	77,70
Chinese	4.000	14,60	12.104	17,00	19.720	12,18	27.423	12,60	40.000	13,80
Other	1.850	6,75	1.543	2,17	1.530	1,47	2.329	1,06	2.500	0,90
Eastern Foreigners										
European	1.550	5,66	3.565	5,00	10.151	6,43	12.587	5,78	16.500	5,90
Total	27.400	100,00	71.186	100,00	158.029	100,00	217.796	100,00	280.000	100,00

Figure 5: Table 2 :



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