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ON DIMINISHING LOCAL EXPRESSIONS IN JAVANESE

Local expressions in a particular language are partial manifestation of the neo-Bloomfieldian assumption: every language is unique, structurally and culturally. The unique inner structure of Javanese, best exemplified by different speech levels used in both everyday and classical variants, may well be regarded as how the speech community express their sociocultural values in verbal communication and verbal performance. The period of three decades following Indonesian independence was the heyday of Javanese. This language, carrying with it rich oral-literary traditions from the past, thrived with abundant local expressions--revealing local philosophy, disclosing local wisdom, and portraying the locally desired ideal worlds. During this period, traditional oral literature (best represented by *tembang*, *wayang*, and *kethoprak* performances) was at its peak, and modern written literature (manifesting itself in short story, novel, and modern poetry) was widely acclaimed by the speech community. This portrait of the wonderful past was also enriched by cheerful Javanese childlore, particularly in the rural areas. Then, coming next in the history of "Java" was the modern era, characterized by two prominent things: (a) the introduction of "secondary orality" through TV and other electronic media, pushing live performances aside; and (b) the increasingly dominant use of *bahasa Indonesia* in every walk of life, killing literacy in Javanese. Impoverished by withering oral performances and dying written literature, Javanese today has lost much its rich local expressions, surviving predominantly as a spoken language--used in a very limited manner for daily communication.