HISTORY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Preserving Javanese identity and cultural heritage in Malaysia

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Abstract: This research traces the diaspora of the Javanese and their cultural heritage and examines their adaptation to Malaysian society. The disputes that occurred in the last ten years between Indonesia and Malaysia draw massive attention. The claims of culture between the two countries have often led to tensions between them. Disputes have generally been triggered by the Malaysian government's claims against several Indonesian cultural heritage such as kuda kepang, barongan, reog, and batik. The study employs a historical approach using qualitative data obtained through scholarly studies and sources such as archives, documents, newspapers, books, and interviews with individuals in Indonesia and Malaysia combined with scholarly research. The paper outlines the migration of Javanese people to Malaysia and discusses various elements of their culture—including music, dance forms, puppet theatre, foods and medicinal herbs, and the batik method of dyeing textiles—that they introduced into Malaysian culture. This paper re-examines the case of contemporary Malaysian society and how they negotiate their identity, paying particular attention to the Javanese Malay. This paper argues that the Javanese-Malay are the main actors who actively preserve Javanese cultural heritage in Malaysia.

Subjects: South East Asian History; South East Asian Culture & Society; Urban Cultures; Culture & Development; Ethnicity and Culture

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This research traces the diaspora of the Javanese descents (Javanese-Malay) in Malaysia. The study employs a historical approach using qualitative data obtained through interviews with cultural actors in Indonesia and Malaysia, with Malaysian people who are descendants of Javanese, and from scholarly research. Data was obtained through scholarly studies and sources such as archives, documents, newspapers, and books in Indonesia and Malaysia. The paper outlines the migration of Javanese people to Malaysia and discusses various elements of their culture—including music, dance forms, puppet theatre, foods and medicinal herbs, and the batik method of dyeing textiles—that they introduced into Malaysian culture. This paper concludes that the contemporary Javanese-Malay are the leading proponent who actively preserves Javanese cultural heritage in Malaysia while negotiating their identity by assimilation and adaptation.
Keywords: cultural heritage; diaspora; identity; Javanese; Malay

1. Introduction

The relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia in the first decades of the 21st century is generally characterized by contention, competition, and conflict. The commitment of the two countries to maintain harmonious relations is not fully implemented at the grassroots. In 2007, the Malaysian government, through its tourism promotion program, *Malaysia Truly Asia*, displayed some of their cultural heritage. The show featured *Angklung*, traditional song *Rasa Sayang*, *Wayang*, and *Reog*. On another occasion, accusations of “stealing” cultural heritage emerged again through a documentary film produced by *Discovery Channel* (Glionna, 2009). The Balinese dance *Pendet* appears in the video, and it was seen as another attempt to “claim” Indonesian cultural heritage. The “claim” causes a tumultuous situation for some Indonesian audiences, which led to a series of protests (Chong, 2012, p. 2). The Indonesian Minister of Culture and Tourism, Jero Wacik, who tends to be silent, then responded. He stated, “we have not received an apology from Malaysia if they (Malaysia) do not come” (Kompas, 27/8/2009). Another response was seen in academic institutions, for example, the rejection of Malaysian students at one of the public universities in Indonesia. Diponegoro University in Semarang, Central Java, rejected the prospective students from Malaysia (Antara, 26/8/2009). Many Indonesian audiences see the cultural heritage featured in the Malaysian tourism promotional footage as uniquely Indonesian, not Malaysian cultural heritage.

Cultural claims have been the most frequent problem triggering tensions in Indonesia–Malaysia relations, with Malaysia claiming elements of Indonesian cultural heritage such as the *kuda kepang* (a traditional dance from East Java), the *angklung* (a traditional bamboo musical instrument, popular in West Java, Indonesia), and *batik* (a technique of wax dyeing applied to cloth). The majority of Indonesian people who are outraged by the “arrogance” of Malaysia then respond to its claims with a sweeping action against Malaysians in Indonesia as well as calling for actions to mobilize the masses in the *Aliansi Ganyang Malaysia* (Alliance to crush Malaysia) calling for a second *Konfrontasi* (confrontation with Malaysia in the 1960s) and encouraging the severance of diplomatic relations with Malaysia (Sunarti, 2013, p. 78).

Some of the conflicts that have arisen over the last decade show a recurring pattern. The triggering issue has only been resolved through political statements by leaders on both sides. Repeated arguments are made, such as the classic reason Indonesia and Malaysia are cognate, brothers, and a close historical relationship sharing similar values. Although these close ties are apparent, no concrete action is taken in using such commonalities to maintain the collective memory of a close and harmonious relationship in the past.

Many people in both countries do not know that the same ethnic groups (in Indonesia, such as Javanese, Malays, Bugis, and Banjar) shaped the Malaysian identity and culture nowadays. Some ethnic groups in Indonesia, especially Java, Minangkabau, and Bugis, are essential in forming the Malay identity and culture. However, in social media, the statement of hatred and rivalry are posted, and both sides were embroiled in contention and a desire to start a war (Khadijah & Shakila, 2012, p. 373). These episodes of disagreement and tensions are the starting point for a broader discussion on the cultural history of the two nations.

Several scholars have scrutinized the uneasy relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia. Jinn Winn Chong (2012) observed Indonesia and Malaysia’s disputes over shared cultural heritage and stated that each country is determined to defend its heritage to preserve its identity. Marshall Clark (2013) examines the politicization of cultural heritage and UNESCO’s awarding of *batik* as an exclusively Indonesian intangible cultural heritage. Ulyana (2018) evaluate the cultural diplomacy programs in arts and literature between the two countries. Heritage is also a focus of a volume, *Making Heritage in Malay* (2020). The book argues that heritage plays a role in justifying power...
structure in a nation-state. Regarding Javanese in Malaysia, Koji Miyazaki (2000) aptly captures the masuk Melayu (to enter Malayness) process involving a transition of Javanese identity into Javanese-Malay. However, these notable works tend to neglect how Javanese descendents in Malaysia articulate their heritage in a new social realm.

This study traces Javanese cultural heritage in Malaysia. It asks how a selection of cultural heritages could survive throughout history in different societies and geography. Moreover, the study follows the story of several individuals, which have Javanese origins to narrate the dynamics of Javanese cultural heritage in Malaysia. This examination becomes fundamental to capture a clearer understanding of how people and cultural heritages migrated, perceived, and become part of Malaysian society. This study sheds light on our understanding of claims and disputes between the two nations so that these tensions could be tackled perspicuously without facing the threat of violence. Moreover, the study engages in a broader discussion of the Javanese migration in Southeast Asia.

The present study is limited to problems related to the cultural relations between Indonesia and Malaysia in the past concerning the role of ethnic Javanese, who are considered to have made a considerable contribution to the formation of Malaysian culture and society. The study begins by examining the history of the Javanese diaspora and the culture it has brought to Peninsular Malaysia, which dates back to the period between the early nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The selection of two areas as our research subject is based on the fact that the current number of Malaysians of Javanese origin is quite large, especially in the two areas of Selangor and Johor. Then, it explores, especially in Selangor and Johor, the adaptation and assimilation of the Javanese in Johor and Selangor, two areas with a large Javanese descent population.

2. Material and methods

This research uses qualitative approach, based on the study of Javanese culture developed and associated with Malaysian culture. As has been mentioned above the growing culture in Malaysia that has a close relationship with Indonesian culture, among others is the Javanese culture. Historical understanding helps to understand Indonesia and Malaysia’s current cultural relationship and trace its origins and developmental processes.

This research applies a mix of archival research and ethnographic research, using unwritten sources, such as interviews with Malaysians of Javanese descent and written sources obtained from archives and literature in the form of books, magazines and newspapers. Archival and library sources are located in Malaysia State Archive, State Library of Malaysia, University of Malaya Library, National University of Malaya Library, Selangor State Library, Johor State Library, Johor Heritage Foundation, and National Library of Indonesia and National Library Archive of the Republic of Indonesia. The author obtained unwritten sources by interviewing Malaysian culturalists and Javanese descendants in Johor and Selangor.

Archival sources, literature and interview results obtained, selected and analyzed under the framework of the problems created. We use written sources and interview results to trace the diaspora of Indonesians and the culture they brought to Malaysia. In that observation, the selection of individuals of Javanese descend represents the element of Malaysian culture. Among others are academics that pay attention to the culture, the Malaysian institution related to culture, art workers, and formal and informal figures. An inductive approach processes data through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion—the approach made in stages, from data collection to the report’s writing. In addition, to gain a comprehensive understanding, we make direct observations in the field. Observations were made at several centres of cultural studies such as Malay Cultural Center University of Malaysia, Johor Heritage Foundation, art galleries, and various places related to arts activities.
3. Results & discussion

3.1. The arrival of the Javanese in Malaysia

The Javanese is one of the largest groups of people in the archipelago who migrated to Malaysia. Lockard (1971, p. 41) analyzed various data on the emigration process undertaken by the Javanese and explained the background and various factors that impacted their migration and found economic and social factors to be the primary reasons. Up to the 1960s, Javanese people who migrated from Indonesia went to the following places, with Malaysia receiving the most significant number

Most of the Javanese were forced labourers sent to different regions. In Southeast Asia, the number of Javanese sent into forced labour by the Japanese reached 200,000 to 300,000 from 1942 until 1945. The number of Javanese survivors of World War II in 1945 was around 70,000, and only 10,000 returned to Java, with the fate of the rest still unknown (Lockard, 1971, p. 52). The mobility of the Javanese population began in the late nineteenth century.

Life in rural Java in that period was harsh. Poverty and land scarcity were apparent. These circumstances, then, encouraged the people to emigrate to seek a better livelihood. The Javanese worked on new plantations outside Java, which foreigners owned. One central area of migration was Malaysia, with the development of the rubber industry in the late nineteenth century drawing the Javanese. Other industries such as sugar plantations and coffee plantations were more dominated by workers from China (Burger, 1971).

Although most were forced labourers, some Javanese migrated voluntarily. Before the twentieth century, they had spread to various regions of the archipelago. While this chain of islands has no clear political territorial boundaries, the Javanese permanently settled there. Many of the Malays in the archipelago have Javanese roots, mainly from the coastal areas of Java. One area that became a destination of the Javanese in Malaysia was Selangor, with Javanese dominating the percentage of Indonesian immigrants in that area (Sekimoto, 1994, p. 173; Tamrin and Bohari, 1980, p. 35). From the 1880s, the number of Javanese who came to Selangor continued to grow until, in the 1930s, more than half the immigrants in Selangor were Javanese (Vlieland, 1932, p. 72).

Migration by the Javanese to Johor occurred long before the twentieth century. As one of the areas in Malaysia with the largest Javanese immigrant population, Johor is related to the past mobility of the Javanese (Bahrin, 1967, p. 267), mainly because the geographical condition of Johor is easily accessed through Singapore and Sumatera. The growing number of Javanese immigrants in Malaya between 1911 and 1941 was evident in Johor and Selangor. In these areas, the growth tripled and reached more than 120,000 combined at the end of 1941. At the same time, the growth in Perak and Singapore only shows slow increases in the number of immigrants (Mohamed and Kamil, 2011, p. 15).

Miyazaki (2000, p. 80) stated that the Javanese started arriving at the beginning of the mid-twentieth century, with most of them coming from Ponorogo, East Java. Batu Pahat, Johor was occupied by a majority of Javanese and Bugis. The Bugis settled in the coastal areas and planted coconut trees as a source of income, while the Javanese settled in the interior and planted rubber crops as a livelihood (Vredenbregdt, 1964, p. 109) Miyazaki (2000, p. 81) added that Javanese settlement in the area, this coincided with the rise of the rubber industry in the period 1911–1930. The Javanese migration also encouraged the British colonial who brought many Javanese to work in the rubber plantations.

In general, there are two factors behind the arrival of the Javanese in Malaysia: the push-pull factors (Ramsay, 1956). The growth of the population in Java became one of the factors pushing the Javanese to migrate. Apart from these factors, there was also pressure from the colonial
government that led the Javanese population to leave. Javanese settlement in Malaysia required them to adapt and assimilate to this new territory.

3.2. Assimilation and adaptation of Javanese in Malaysia

In the study of immigrant communities, several critical phases should be considered. According to Sauvy (1969, p. 460), assimilation occurs in three significant steps, namely placement, adaptation, and assimilation as a whole. This entire process takes a long time and does not apply to a single generation but can also occur fully within generations. The people of Java and Malay have similarities in some aspects, which can speed up the three phases of acculturation.

The Malay language played an essential role in the assimilation of the Javanese in Malaysia. In terms of vowels and consonants, the structure of Malay is similar to Javanese (Tamrin, 1987, p. 103). In addition to these factors, Malay had also become one of the subjects taught in school in Java and the language used by government officials to communicate with the natives in various Dutch colonies (Henderson, 1970, p. 108). Thus, the Javanese who reside in Malaysia have no significant difficulties in communicating with the Malays.

The process through which the Javanese people assimilated in Malaysia can be seen in marriage and educational institutions, which are the most appropriate measures for determining their level of assimilation to Malaysian society. In particular, educational institutions play an important role in integrating the Javanese and the Malays. The Javanese descendant educated in Malay school and taught in Malay ways (language and culture). This assimilation-through-education process can be seen in Kampung Jawa and Teluk Pulai in Kelang and Kampung Nipah Darat.

As one of the villages in Kelang that has a long history, Kampung Jawa provides an overview of this process. Most of the inhabitants of this village are Javanese and Sumatrans (Tamrin, 1987, p. 104). In this region, it is possible to find Javanese who owns plantations, although they have sold most of the land to Malays. The number of pure Javanese who is inhabitants of Kampung Jawa has decreased each year because of mix-marriage. The condition made it easier for assimilation to occur. Mix-marriages between members of the two groups accelerated the process of assimilation.

The social organization of Javanese living in Malaysia, in general, is still based on the old system such as gotong royong and guyub (mutual assistant and connectedness within a community) they embraced in Java. In their social life, the Javanese and the Malays, for the most part, share similar characteristics with Asians more broadly. That is, they still have prasangka (assumptions) that are rooted in the minds of their respective inhabitants (Sithi-Annuai, 1968, p. 90). One common assumption is that the prejudices of Javanese and Malays can be attributed mainly to mystical beliefs. Misunderstanding often occurs between both groups because of perceived assumptions in society.

The Javanese do not show any striking differences compared to the Malays. The likeness is strengthened by the similarity in the religion practised by the majority of each group. Many of the Javanese inhabitants in the villages of Johor and Selangor spend their time studying in surau (small mosque or religious place to do communal activities) in their villages, which provides a bond that encourages assimilation in Malaysia.

Migrants from Java have similarities to the local Malay population (Miyazaki, 2000, p. 77). Unlike Chinese and Indian “migrants of difference,” who have very different cultural backgrounds from the Malays, the Javanese are regarded as “migrants of similarity.” One similarity, among others, is that both regions share a Muslim background, besides languages and cultures. These commonalities make it easier for Javanese to be accepted in Malaysia than immigrants from China and India.

3.3. Maintaining the existence of Javanese culture

Based on field research while visiting the Setia Budi Cultural Centre at Kampung Parit Nipah Darat, Johor, Malaysia, there are several important findings on 21–22 August 2017. The head of the Setia
Budi Cultural Centre, Miskon bin Karim (born in 1944 is now 73 years old), greeted our visit. Miskon bin Karim parents come from Morosari Village, Somoroto Sub-district, Ponorogo, East Java.

Miskon bin Karim has been working in the art world for decades. He has several principles in his life, the “four K(s)”. The first principle is about keturunan (heredity); Miskon bin Karim argues that he is of Javanese descent. He believes that people from other ethnic groups will answer the same thing when asked a similar question. The second principle is keagamaan (religious), which believes that Islam is not the desire of anyone but himself.

The third principle is about kewarganegaraan (citizenship). Although Miskon bin Karim is a Javanese descendant, he does not want to hold Indonesian citizenship, and he also does not think Indonesia will accept him as a citizen. Miskon bin Karim is and has always been a Malaysian citizen. The last principle is about kebudayaan (culture). For Miskon bin Karim, Malaysia is a young country and has a relatively new culture than the older Javanese culture. He pointed out that linguistics in Malaysia does not have its own language and letters, unlike in Java, which has a hanacaraka (the native name for the Javanese script). For Miskon bin Karim, culture in Malaysia is a mixed culture derived from various customs, which then united in Malaysian society. These four principles for Miskon bin Karim, characterize the Javanese community in Malaysia. The cultural products that exist in Malaysia today result from the legacy of the older generation who had previously migrated from Java to Malaysia in the early 1900s. Miskon bin Karim’s parents and colleagues who migrated in the early 1900s were the first generations to bring Javanese cultures to Johor and other parts of Malaysia.

During his life in Kampung Nipah Darat, Miskon bin Karim brought many art tools from Java Island. Many musical instruments obtained by him from Ponorogo, East Java. Musical instruments and performances in the centre of Setia Budi culture are gamelan, head of reog (traditional dance from Ponorogo, East Java), and kuda kepang. These materials are partly taken directly by Miskon bin Karim in his journey from Java. Some other materials are obtained from artisans in Johor. One of the famous kuda kepang artisans is Syuhada. He comes from Muar, Johor, Malaysia. He is currently one of the few Javanese in Johor who has unique skills in making kuda kepang.

The people of Javanese descent in Malaysia feel to own the ancestral land and lineage of the Javanese, but they have nationalism and the right as Malaysian citizens. The preservation of Javanese culture by them is an attempt to preserve the ancestors’ heritage and bring Javanese descent to Malaysia.

3.4. Javanese culture in Malaysia
Many cultures and forms of knowledge originated in Java and then became a new cultural product in Malaysia. One example offered by Miyazaki (2000, p. 80) is a dance called kuda kepang that is performed by the Javanese–Malays. The dance was brought to the Batu Pahat area by Javanese people and staged by Javanese and Malay dancers and musicians. It is often performed in the area of Johor, and it was introduced as a local dance originating there. The dance is an example of how Malaysian culture comprises various elements from different ethnic groups. Javanese–Malays thus play a vital role in establishing the identity of the Malay culture.

3.5. Music and performance art
The Javanese in Selangor introduced Javanese arts, including music, dance, the wayang (puppet theatre), and martial arts. These forms represent entertainment and a blend of literature, music, and crafts and skills that are closely related to people’s lives. Wayang is one of the most frequently performed arts in Malaysia. Toward the end of World War II, these shows were often performed in Kuala Selangor and Kuala Langat (Tamrin, 1987, p. 118). Although they do not have the same qualities as a wayang performance on the island of Java, they draw many audiences. Wayang performances in Selangor, which mostly feature shadow puppets, and dalang (puppeteers) in
Selangor are not played by someone skilled in performing wayang. There are few wayang performer in Selangor, which makes it challenging to perform wayang.

Such shows are performed at particular times. Generally, wayang kulit performances, which are put on at night, use light and shadow to portray the silhouette of a wayang. The wayang, which also means wasiat moyang (testament of ancestors) in Java, presents a shadow of a doll to promulgate an ordinance, canons, and traditions of the Javanese (Mohamed & Kamil, 2011, p. 300). The wayang kulit is also a way of conveying a message that all layers of Javanese society can easily understand.

Some historians assume that the wayang is not original to the culture of Java. Historians like Spies, Sivyusil, and Ridgeway claimed that Indians who recited the Ramayana and Mahabharata existed widely throughout Southeast Asia, and that they first introduced the wayang kulit show (Mohamed & Kamil, 2011, p. 301). In Laufer’s (1923) view, the wayang kulit originated in China in the Han Wu Ti dynasty. However, these performances developed through the use of the ancient Javanese language, which is also a medium of communication in the show.

Malaysia is a new area that has experienced the popularity of the wayang kulit. The Javanese played a role in spreading the art of the wayang kulit in this area. This art form had become part of these societies long before it became widespread in villages in Johor and Selangor. The story of the wayang performance has been mentioned in ancient Malay texts such as Hang Tuah and Sejarah Melayu.

The wayang kulit performance in Malaysia incorporates elements of Islam. With a widespread understanding of Islam, the wayang kulit can also serve as a medium for disseminating Islamic teachings. However, elements such as animism are also still present in every wayang performance. The contents of this show are moral messages and teachings that can be practised in societies and relate to ancient Javanese texts such as as Ramayana, Mahabharata, Hikayat Amir Hamzah, Panji, and Pandawa Lima (Mohamed & Kamil, 2011, p. 302).

Most wayang performances serve the purpose of helping the community commemorate their ancestors. Unity and solidarity among people are also awakened through these performances, which also make them popular. This form of entertainment is also an important way of reflecting the life of the Javanese people in Malaysia as a whole. Apart from that, the purpose of this show is for the enjoyment of the audience. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1. Dalang (Puppeteer) Plays Wayang Kulit in Johor, Malaysia, 23 August 2017. (Original Photograph).

Wayang performances are always filled with characters from the Mahabharata, like Semar. In addition, some characters reflect the influence of Islam, such as Petruk. He is portrayed as having patience and alertness in facing problems and is not easily discouraged in any circumstance. There is also Gareng, a character who shows a willingness to sacrifice (Mohamed & Kamil, 2011, p. 315). The nature of Javanese culture is simply reflected through such characters in the form of wayang.
Another Javanese art form that flourishes in Malaysia is kuda kepang (also known as jaran kepang in Java). The name for this art comes from the word jaran (horse) in Javanese, which means “horse webbing” (Mohamed & Kamil, 2011, p. 327). This art has a long history that can be traced back to the fifteenth century.

*Kuda kepang* is a dance form that plantation workers brought from Java when migrating to Malaysia. *Kuda kepang*, essentially in terms of the image created and the purpose is part of the worship ritual. The elements of worship in kuda kepang are linked to Islam. Indirectly, this art is a way of spreading Islam in Java. *Kuda kepang* is also known by various other names. According to Mohamed and Kamil (2011, p. 328), in some areas, it is also known as jaranan, ebeg, dongong, jarang lumping, inding, lompong, embleg, oglek, jatilan, jalantur, and kedasen. A group of men performs this dance. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2. Kuda Kepang Show in Johor, Malaysia. 23 August 2017. (Original Photograph).

In this dance, the Javanese influence is strong. The dancers wear batik clothing. In addition, the carvings and ornaments used by the dancers contain elements of Islam. In Malaysia, this dance is well known in Batu Pahat and the Muar area in Johor. This art first came from the *Wali songo* (nine Islamic preachers in Java), who sought to spread Islam on the island of Java, and it is part of da’wah (propagation) efforts that were initiated to attract the Javanese since the fifteenth century. Horses are regarded as being familiar to humans, and thus, they became a symbol used in the dance.

Based on the field observation, another art that the Javanese brought to Malaysia is the *reog*, also known as a *barongan* in Malaysia. This art is popular in the Javanese–Malay community in Johor. The *reog* is a performance art that consists of dance, traditional music, and drama or theatre. The Javanese who migrated to Batu Pahat, Johor, brought this art from Ponorogo. Because the majority of the villagers are Ponorogo people, it is easy for the *reog* to spread. In Batu Pahat, the *reog* changed according to local communities’ social and cultural conditions with strong Islamic values. The most significant change is in the storyline. The *reog* in Batu Pahat, Johor, tells the story of Prophet Sulaiman, who can talk to animals. It is a form of entertainment for the villagers and does not contain the ritual aspect of belief. The *reog* serves to enliven party festivities such as weddings and circumcision rites; and welcome officials of the kingdom and government. A photograph of the *reog* or *barongan* in Johor is shown below (see Figure 3):
3.6. Food and medicinal herbs

Selametan (communal feast) activities in Malaysia are usually followed by eating kenduri (a banquet for ceremonies) cuisine. In Selangor, the Javanese who celebrate the selametan usually serve the typical food, such as nasi ambeng (Javanese style rice platter), and a side dish presented on the leaves of the talam (plant), which up to five people can consume. Under certain conditions, before the talam, people often use the ancak, which is a kind of woven leaf commonly used to make offerings to the spirits. However, it is also used to serve food at selametan events. People who have finished with the selametan then receive a pack of rice that has been prepared and wrapped in banana leaves, which is called a berkat (blessing) (Tamrin, 1987, p. 117). Serving the foods as mentioned earlier at the selametan reflects the culture maintained by the Javanese in Malaysia.

There are also traditional medicines that are part of the cultural heritage of the Javanese people in Malaysia. One of these medicines is jamu (herbal medicine). For the Javanese, consuming jamu can be considered a way of binding the identity of the Javanese in Malaysia (Rofil et al., 2015, p. 61). In Java, jamu is part of everyday culture. Malays believe that jamu is a type of traditional medicine in a different herbal category from China and India. Jamu originally came from Java and spread throughout the archipelago beginning in the eighteenth century. According to Beers (2002), the history of jamu can be traced from ancient texts such as the Serat Chentini and the Serat Kawruh, chapter “Jampi-Jampi,” which may be found in the Surakarta Palace Library. Jamu is now widely consumed by Malays in their daily life to maintain health.
The medicines used by the Javanese and the Malays have a common source. Many medicines used by each group originated from a similar geographical location. However, each community has its philosophy and beliefs concerning the application of medicine. In Javanese society within Malaysia, herbal medicine is a representation of their identity. Jamu plays a role as a cultural symbol for every Javanese residing in Malaysia by binding them with other Javanese and reinforcing their identity as Javanese. In this case, herbal medicine acts as a medium for a sense of collective identity in the construction of Javanese society in Malaysia, following Anderson’s imagined communities (Anderson, 1991).

The popularity of jamu in Malaysia is inseparable from the roles of the native Javanese as well as the Javanese descendants who later introduced it. The skill of making jamu is considered by most Malay people to be owned by the Javanese or Javanese descendants. Jamu is passed down through the generations and makes those who drink it healthy. According to Refil et al. (2015, p. 61), Malay women in the state of Johor where Javanese descendants are mostly found, would consume a set of traditional herbs called jamu rempah ratus for postnatal care... In fact, there exists a community of Javanese-Malay women who cultivate medicinal plants for jamu in the district of Muar.

This passage indicates that the adaptation of herbs to local culture has been accepted and assimilated into a shared culture built on the values of each culture. It also reflects the integration of the Javanese into Malay society. In general, jamu is a characteristic element of Javanese culture, which people have spread to various regions, including Malaysia.

### 3.7. Clothing

The Javanese community in Malaysia can generally be identified through the clothes they wear. The Javanese of the older generation wear blangkon (a traditional Javanese headdress worn by men and made of batik fabric) and batik clothing for various official ceremonies.

The use of batik cloth for men and women can still be found in various Javanese families. However, the younger generation of Javanese descent in Malaysia has started to leave behind Javanese clothes and wear them only on certain occasions. Batik is a Javanese cultural product that was integrated into Malay culture accumulatively. There is no single historian capable of providing accurate information about the birthplace of batik. However, batik has been rooted in both Javanese and Malay culture.

In Malaysia, batik is one of the most commonly produced fabrics in some areas and is done primarily on Kelantan and Trengganu, where the process is carried out through a bunching and dyeing process, thus producing cloth known as batik pelangi and batik teritik (various batik patterns). Another technique that is used in these areas involves using wood and iron prints. Batik is a common cultural technique for the Javanese and the Malays. They share this element by continuing to preserve batik cloth to pass it on as an inheritance to the next generation.

### 4. Conclusion

Migrants from Java have tried to assimilate to the local culture in Malaysia. They have also tried to maintain their cultural customs and traditions. To adapt to their new environment, the Javanese have both absorbed and adapted to local customs. For example, the way they have modified customs or traditions that are considered contrary to Islam can be seen in the kuda kepang dance art, which no longer uses sesajens (gifts to spirits) when it is performed. However, the Javanese still maintain and carry out the traditions and culture of their ancestral lands.

The arrival of the Javanese in Malaysia, which started in the sixteenth century, has indirectly contributed to the formation of Malaysian culture today. The Javanese, while adapting and culturally assimilating to the local community, is also known as a strong community concerning maintaining their customs, such as their language, food (nasi ambeng), clothing (batik), way of life (tradition of mutual help such as rewang, pakatan, kondangan), and art forms.
In Malaysia, the Javanese still maintain and develop their traditional art forms such as the kuda kepang, reog/barongan, gamelan, wayang kutil, kemplingan, and others. Their culture has gradually been accepted by the local people, especially the Malays, and recognized by the Malaysian government as part of their cultural heritage (because Javanese descendants have integrated with and become part of the Malays called “Javanese Malays”). Kuda kepang has become a traditional iconic art form of the Kingdom of Johor. Many traditions continue to be developed in Malaysia today and that are recognized as part of Malaysian cultural heritage, were brought and introduced to Malaysia by migrants from other parts of the Indonesian archipelago, such as Bugis-Makasar and Minangkabau.

Because the two areas share the same roots, it is not surprising that many cultural products of the two nations (Indonesia and Malaysia) have some similarities to each other. The knowledge should be essential for the two nations due to their lack of understanding about cultural relations in the past.

The mass media in both countries are expected to work hand in hand to make people aware of close cultural ties between the two nations. Thus far, however, coverage on culture is still minimal compared to political coverage. Reporting on cultural heritage also appears to be a political issue. Meanwhile, a common feature of the mass media of both countries is that they rarely interview or dig up information from culturalists or academics (historians) who pursue research in cultural fields when conflicts arise related to cultural heritage. These people can explain problems related to culture more than political scientists or even politicians.

The study of migration and the diaspora remains a big challenge for social scientists in understanding pluralism in Southeast Asia. The adaptation and assimilation of Javanese in Malaysia in the past needs to be explored more deeply so that the knowledge gap between the two hostile states can be filled.

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