

Filial Ethics as Moral Governance: Navigating Feeling in Nineteenth-Century Javanese Court Literature

Aris Aryanto^{1*}, Kent Fauzan Suryo Rambeli², Salma Fadhilah An Najwa³, Indah Dian Nur Fatimah⁴

¹Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo, Indonesia

^{2,3,4}Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

* aryantoaris@umpwr.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 00 January 2025

Revised 00 March 2025

Accepted 00 March 2025

Available online 00 April 2025

Keywords:

Filial ethics; Moral governance; Navigation of feeling; History of emotions; Javanese court literature; Modern philology



This is an open access article under [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) license. Copyright by Author. Published by Universitas Sebelas Maret.

ABSTRACT

This article examines Serat Pariminta, a nineteenth-century Javanese court text attributed to Sri Paduka Mangkunagara IV, as an articulation of filial ethics functioning as moral governance. Departing from readings that treat filial relations as domestic morality or cultural values, this study argues that Serat Pariminta configures the parent-child relationship as a regulatory infrastructure through which moral legitimacy and social order are produced. Drawing on theories of emotional regimes and the navigation of feeling, the analysis demonstrates how filial emotions, such as parental relief, genealogical honor, enduring shame, and ancestral disgrace, operate as evaluative mechanisms that guide conduct without recourse to juridical coercion. Methodologically grounded in modern philology, the study prioritizes close textual analysis over manuscript materiality, tracing how ethical authority is constructed through lexical choice, emotional evaluation, and discursive patterning within the text. By situating Serat Pariminta within global discussions on private and state emotion, this article contributes to the history of emotions and moral governance by showing

how intimate familial relations can function as pre-institutional foundations of wise and legitimate authority. The findings affirm the relevance of non-Western court literature as a source of theoretical insight into the emotional infrastructures of governance.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji *Serat Pariminta*, sebuah teks istana Jawa abad ke-19 yang dikaitkan dengan Sri Paduka Mangkunagara IV, sebagai artikulasi etika filial yang berfungsi sebagai tata kelola moral (moral governance). Berbeda dari pembacaan yang memosisikan relasi anak-orang tua semata sebagai moral domestik atau nilai budaya, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *Serat Pariminta* mbingkai hubungan orang tua-anak sebagai infrastruktur regulatif bagi pembentukan legitimasi moral dan ketertiban sosial. Dengan menggunakan kerangka teori rezim emosi dan *navigation of feeling*, analisis ini mengungkap bagaimana emosi filial, seperti kelegaan orang tua, kehormatan genealogis, rasa malu yang menetap, dan aib leluhur, beroperasi sebagai mekanisme evaluatif yang mengarahkan perilaku tanpa melalui paksaan yuridis. Secara metodologis, penelitian ini berpijak pada filologi modern dengan penekanan pada analisis teks, bukan materialitas manuskrip, untuk menelusuri bagaimana otoritas etis dibangun melalui pilihan leksikal, evaluasi emosional, dan pola diskursif dalam teks. Dengan menempatkan *Serat Pariminta* dalam perdebatan global tentang emosi privat dan emosi negara, artikel ini berkontribusi pada kajian sejarah emosi dan tata kelola moral dengan menunjukkan bahwa relasi keluarga intim dapat berfungsi sebagai fondasi pra-institusional bagi pelaksanaan kekuasaan yang bijaksana dan sah.

1. INTRODUCTION

Across historical and cultural contexts, filial ethics—the moral obligations governing relations between children and parents—has functioned as a foundational principle for social order and political legitimacy. Far from being confined to the domestic sphere, filial norms have repeatedly served as pre-political infrastructures through which societies regulate conduct, reproduce moral values, and stabilize authority (Nussbaum, 2013; Rosenwein, 2006). In aristocratic and courtly settings, filial ethics becomes especially consequential, as

individual behavior is evaluated not only for its personal virtue but for its impact on genealogical reputation and collective honor.

Recent scholarship in political theory and the history of emotions has emphasized that governance does not operate solely through legal rules or institutional coercion, but also through moral expectations embedded in intimate relations (Hochschild, 1983; Ahmed, 2014; Reddy, 2001). Within this perspective, filial ethics emerges as a critical site where moral discipline is internalized, emotional evaluation is normalized, and legitimacy is socially produced. Yet, despite its historical centrality, filial ethics remains under-theorized as a mechanism of moral governance, particularly in non-Western court traditions. This study addresses that gap by examining *Serat Pariminta*, a nineteenth-century Javanese court text attributed to Sri Paduka Mangkunagara IV, as an articulation of filial ethics functioning as moral governance.

Modern political thought has often treated filial relations as belonging to the private domain, separate from the rational and institutional operations of the state. However, interdisciplinary research over the last four decades has problematized this separation by demonstrating that emotions associated with intimate relations are socially regulated and politically consequential (Hochschild, 1983; Ahmed, 2004). Emotions such as shame, honor, pride, and relief, frequently cultivated within family life, are not merely personal experiences but normative evaluative tools that shape social belonging and moral worth.

William M. Reddy (2001) has shown that emotional norms form part of broader “emotional regimes,” through which societies authorize certain feelings while sanctioning others. Similarly, Barbara Rosenwein (2006) argues that historical communities are structured by shared emotional expectations that define acceptable conduct. These approaches allow filial ethics to be understood not as a set of sentimental values, but as a regulated emotional system with governance effects.

Within this framework, the dichotomy between private emotion and state emotion collapses into a continuum. Filial emotions, such as parental approval, disappointment, or shame, operate as mechanisms of moral regulation, aligning individual behavior with collective norms before any legal or institutional intervention takes place (Scheer, 2012). Filial ethics thus becomes a key conduit through which private emotional life is transformed into public moral order.

The continued relevance of filial ethics is evident in the persistence of monarchies and royal families in contemporary political systems. Comparative political studies demonstrate that monarchies, whether constitutional or executive, remain significant components of global governance structures (Anckar, 2022). While much of this literature focuses on institutional design and executive power-sharing, it also implicitly underscores the importance of family-based legitimacy.

Carsten Anckar’s comparative analysis shows that monarchic authority often relies on symbolic continuity, tradition, and moral credibility, even when formal power is constrained by constitutions (Anckar, 2022). Public reactions to perceived moral failures within royal families further suggest that filial conduct and family ethics continue to shape political legitimacy, revealing the enduring political significance of private familial behavior.

These contemporary dynamics invite historical inquiry into how earlier political cultures conceptualized filial ethics as a foundation of authority. Rather than viewing filial morality as a residual cultural value, it becomes necessary to examine it as a historically articulated mode of governance.

Javanese court literature provides a rich archive for examining the intersection of filial ethics, emotion, and governance. Produced within aristocratic milieus, such texts were designed to cultivate moral dispositions appropriate to elite social roles, emphasizing restraint, learning, and responsibility toward parents and ancestors.

Serat Pariminta is one such text. According to Nancy K. Florida, in her catalogue of Mangkunegaran manuscripts, *Serat Pariminta* belongs to a corpus of didactic writings intended to guide the ethical formation of courtly youth, with particular attention to familial responsibility and moral comportment (Florida, 2018). Composed in *pucung* meter, the text employs concise and often severe language to articulate the consequences of filial failure and moral deviation.

While previous scholarship has noted the didactic character of *Serat Pariminta*, its ethical architecture, especially the role of emotion in regulating filial relations—has not been systematically analyzed. This study proposes that the text constructs filial ethics as a governing logic, in which parental emotion and genealogical honor function as evaluative authorities.

A close reading of *Serat Pariminta* reveals that filial ethics is articulated through emotion-based evaluation rather than explicit command. Parental relief (*lega*), interiorized moral approval (*mêmuji jroning wardaya*), genealogical honor (*aji*), enduring shame (*kèsi-èsi*), and ancestral disgrace (*tan gégawa mring luhur*) operate as normative emotional states that determine moral legitimacy.

These emotions are explicitly located within familial and interior domains, yet their consequences extend into the public sphere, shaping social inclusion, reputational standing, and moral worth. In this way, filial ethics becomes a form of moral governance, regulating behavior through emotional sanction rather than juridical force (Ahmed, 2004; Reddy, 2001). By foregrounding filial emotion as a governing mechanism, *Serat Pariminta*

offers a model of authority in which legitimacy is sustained through genealogical responsibility and emotional discipline, rather than through institutional coercion.

Departing from the premise that *Serat Pariminta* articulates filial ethics not merely as domestic morality but as a mode of moral governance, this study addresses how filial relations are discursively transformed into mechanisms of ethical regulation and social legitimacy. Specifically, the research asks how *Serat Pariminta* conceptualizes filial ethics as a governing logic, which filial emotions are mobilized to evaluate and discipline individual conduct, and how these emotions enable the translation of private family relations into socially and politically consequential norms. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to identify and analyze key lexical and emotional expressions related to filial ethics in *Serat Pariminta*, to demonstrate how filial emotions function as evaluative instruments of moral governance, and to situate this Javanese court text within broader global discussions on private emotion, legitimacy, and the moral foundations of authority.

The axiological significance of this study lies in its contribution to three domains. First, it affirms the value of non-Western court literature as a source of political and ethical theory, challenging the marginalization of such texts in global scholarship (Nussbaum, 2013). Second, it demonstrates that filial ethics can function as a non-coercive yet powerful form of governance, offering an alternative perspective on authority beyond legalism (Hochschild, 1983). Third, it provides a conceptual framework for understanding why private familial conduct continues to provoke public concern in contemporary political life, particularly among ruling elites. By reframing filial ethics as moral governance, this study invites a reconsideration of how legitimacy, authority, and ethical citizenship are historically and culturally produced.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of moral governance has increasingly been used to describe forms of regulation that operate beyond formal law and coercive institutions, emphasizing instead the role of ethical norms, moral evaluation, and internalized discipline in sustaining social order. Within this body of scholarship, governance is understood not merely as a function of state apparatuses, but as a diffuse moral process embedded in everyday relations, cultural expectations, and affective dispositions (Hochschild, 1983; Reddy, 2001; Ahmed, 2004). One of the most enduring yet under-theorized foundations of moral governance is filial ethics, namely the moral obligations and evaluative frameworks governing relationships between children and parents.

In political philosophy and moral theory, filial ethics has often been treated as a component of private morality or virtue ethics, rather than as a governing principle. Even when acknowledged as socially significant, filial relations are frequently positioned as preparatory to citizenship, not constitutive of governance itself (Nussbaum, 2013). However, historical and anthropological studies suggest that in many societies, particularly aristocratic, courtly, and dynastic contexts, filial ethics functioned as a primary mechanism of moral regulation, structuring legitimacy, authority, and social belonging long before the emergence of modern bureaucratic states. This perspective invites a reorientation of moral governance theory: rather than beginning with institutions and descending into society, governance can be traced from the family outward, with filial relations serving as the earliest and most intimate site of ethical discipline.

A crucial development enabling this reorientation is the growing body of scholarship on emotion as a social and political phenomenon. Arlie Russell Hochschild's theory of emotion management established that feelings are subject to normative expectations and social regulation, even when experienced as deeply personal (Hochschild, 1983). This insight destabilized the assumption that emotions belong exclusively to the private realm, opening the way for analyses of how emotional life participates in broader systems of power.

Building on this foundation, William M. Reddy (2001) introduced the concept of "emotional regimes" to describe historically specific systems that regulate which emotions may be felt, expressed, or suppressed. Reddy's notion of "navigation of feeling" is particularly relevant for the study of filial ethics, as it foregrounds how individuals learn to maneuver within moral landscapes by aligning their emotions with socially sanctioned norms. Emotional compliance, in this framework, becomes a form of ethical navigation rather than mere psychological adjustment.

Sara Ahmed (2004) further advanced this line of inquiry by demonstrating that emotions circulate socially, attaching individuals to collectivities and marking boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Shame, pride, honor, and love do not simply reside within subjects; they operate as affective forces that bind bodies to norms, values, and hierarchies. From this perspective, filial emotions—such as parental approval, disappointment, or genealogical shame, can be understood as politically productive, even when they unfold within intimate family relations.

Taken together, these theoretical developments allow filial ethics to be conceptualized as a form of emotional governance, in which private feelings are disciplined, evaluated, and mobilized to sustain moral order. The boundary between private emotion and state emotion thus appears not as a rigid divide, but as a continuum, where governance operates through affective channels embedded in everyday familial life (Scheer, 2012; Rosenwein, 2006).

An important implication of this framework is the need to distinguish affection-based ethics from evaluative emotional regimes. While some traditions, most notably Confucian ethics, emphasize filial piety as an expression of harmony, affection, and reciprocal care, other systems foreground emotions such as shame, honor, and disgrace as primary regulatory mechanisms. In such contexts, filial ethics is less about emotional warmth than about moral evaluation and sanction.

Bernard Williams's analysis of shame as a moral emotion underscores its capacity to regulate conduct through social exposure and self-assessment rather than legal punishment (Williams, 1993). Shame operates not as an inward feeling alone, but as a relational judgment that positions the subject within, or outside of, moral community. When applied to filial relations, shame becomes a powerful tool of governance, as failure reflects not only on the individual but on parents and ancestors, thereby extending moral accountability across generations.

This evaluative dimension of filial emotion aligns closely with anthropological studies of honor–shame systems, where individual conduct is inseparable from collective reputation (Peristiany, 1966). Within such systems, family relations serve as moral transmission belts, translating private behavior into public consequence. Filial ethics, in this sense, functions as a genealogical form of moral governance, sustaining authority through reputational continuity rather than institutional enforcement.

While theories of emotion and governance provide a robust conceptual foundation, the historical operation of filial ethics as moral governance must be traced through concrete cultural artifacts. Manuscripts and classical texts occupy a crucial position in this endeavor, as they encode normative expectations, emotional vocabularies, and moral evaluations intended to shape conduct across generations.

Recent scholarship in manuscript studies and intellectual history has increasingly recognized that premodern texts often functioned as technologies of moral formation, rather than as passive repositories of values. Didactic manuscripts, courtly treatises, and ethical poems were designed to instruct readers not only in proper behavior, but in how to feel appropriately in morally charged situations. In this sense, manuscripts can be read as guides for navigating emotional regimes.

Reddy's concept of "navigation of feeling" has proven especially productive for the analysis of such texts, as it allows scholars to examine how emotional norms are articulated, internalized, and negotiated within specific historical contexts. Studies of medieval European, Islamic, and East Asian manuscripts have shown that moral instruction frequently operates through affective calibration, teaching readers which emotions are legitimate and which are dangerous to social order (Reddy, 2001; Rosenwein, 2006).

Within Southeast Asian studies, however, this approach remains underdeveloped. Javanese court manuscripts, despite their rich ethical content, have often been read descriptively rather than analytically, with limited attention to the emotional mechanics through which moral norms are enforced. This gap is particularly evident in discussions of filial relations, which are typically treated as cultural values rather than as regulatory emotional systems.

Scholarship on Javanese court literature has long acknowledged the didactic and ethical dimensions of classical texts, particularly those produced within aristocratic milieus. Early philological and literary studies have emphasized that courtly writings functioned as instruments of moral instruction, shaping character, comportment, and social responsibility among elite audiences (Florida, 1993; Ricklefs, 2006). However, much of this scholarship has approached ethical content descriptively, with limited attention to how moral norms operate as mechanisms of governance.

Several studies on Javanese ethical texts—such as *Serat Wedhatama*, *Wulangreh*, and related didactic compositions—have highlighted the centrality of familial responsibility, restraint, and moral discipline (Zoetmulder, 1995; Florida, 2000). These works affirm that filial relations occupy a privileged position within Javanese moral imagination. Yet, they tend to frame filial ethics as *values* or *teachings*, rather than as regulatory systems that actively structure legitimacy and social order.

More recent interdisciplinary scholarship has begun to move beyond value-oriented readings by situating classical texts within broader frameworks of power, ethics, and social regulation. Studies of premodern ethical literature in Southeast Asia and beyond suggest that moral instruction often operates through affective evaluation, where emotions such as shame, honor, and approval function as sanctions and rewards (Rosenwein, 2006; Reddy, 2001). In this vein, courtly manuscripts can be understood as normative technologies that guide subjects in navigating moral expectations.

However, despite these advances, *Serat Pariminta* has not yet been examined through the lens of moral governance or filial ethics as an emotional regulatory system. Existing catalogues and manuscript studies, most notably those by Nancy K. Florida, situate *Serat Pariminta* within the Mangkunegaran ethical corpus and identify its didactic purpose (Florida, 1993), but stop short of analyzing the emotional mechanics through which filial relations are transformed into instruments of governance. This gap positions the present study as the first to systematically read *Serat Pariminta* as a text that articulates filial ethics as moral governance, rather than merely moral advice.

Synthesizing these strands of scholarship, this study proposes that filial ethics constitutes a historically significant form of moral governance, operating through the regulation and evaluation of emotion. Theories of emotion management, emotional regimes, and emotional communities provide the conceptual tools necessary to analyze how filial relations are transformed into governance mechanisms. Manuscript studies, in turn, offer the empirical terrain where such mechanisms can be observed in operation. By reading *Serat Pariminta* through this integrated lens, the present study contributes to a growing body of work that treats classical texts as sources of political and ethical theory. More specifically, it advances the argument that filial ethics, when articulated through evaluative emotions such as shame, honor, and relief, functions as a non-coercive yet powerful system of moral governance, with implications that extend far beyond the family and into the very foundations of social and political order.

The foregoing review has established that filial ethics can be analytically approached as a form of moral governance operating through the regulation and evaluation of emotion. Drawing on theories of emotional regimes, navigation of feeling, and moral governance, the review further demonstrates that classical texts, particularly didactic court literature, function as normative instruments that articulate how emotions are to be cultivated, sanctioned, and internalized. Within this framework, *Serat Pariminta* emerges not merely as a repository of moral values, but as a discursive site where filial relations are systematically configured as emotionally grounded mechanisms of ethical regulation. To examine this configuration with analytical precision, the present study adopts a methodological approach rooted in modern philology, with a deliberate emphasis on textual analysis rather than codicological or manuscript-oriented inquiry.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research paradigm grounded in modern philology, which prioritizes textual meaning, ethical discourse, and cultural reasoning over manuscript materiality and stemmatic reconstruction (McGann, 1991; Greetham, 1999; Shillingsburg, 2017). Within this paradigm, texts are treated as discursive artifacts that actively produce moral knowledge and ethical orientation, rather than as passive containers of transmitted content. The epistemological stance of the study is reflexive, acknowledging that interpretation emerges through an interaction between textual evidence and theoretically informed reading. Rather than imposing external theory onto the text, the analysis proceeds inductively, allowing conceptual insights to arise from close engagement with the text while being critically informed by established scholarship on emotion and governance (Reddy, 2001; Ahmed, 2004).

The primary data for this study is the text of *Serat Pariminta*, analyzed through an authoritative transliteration and translation. Consistent with modern philological practice, the study does not seek to compare manuscript variants or reconstruct textual genealogy, as its analytical focus lies on ethical meaning-making within the text. The unit of analysis is multi-layered and text-centered, encompassing: 1) lexical items related to filial relations and emotion; 2) phrasal constructions that embed evaluative meaning; 3) clausal statements articulating moral judgment; 4) discursive patterns linking filial emotion to social consequence. This layered approach ensures analytical rigor by tracing how governance operates incrementally within the text.

The analysis follows four interrelated stages:

1. Close Textual Reading
The text is read iteratively to identify passages explicitly addressing filial relations, parental evaluation, and moral consequence.
2. Lexical-Semantic Analysis
Key emotional and ethical terms are identified and interpreted within their cultural and linguistic context, drawing on established scholarship in Javanese studies and emotion theory (Zoetmulder, 1995; Reddy, 2001).
3. Discursive Interpretation
Identified units are examined for their regulatory function, focusing on how filial emotions authorize, sanction, or disqualify moral subjects (Ahmed, 2004; Williams, 1993).
4. Conceptual Synthesis
Textual findings are synthesized with the theoretical framework to articulate *Serat Pariminta* as a model of filial ethics functioning as moral governance.

Analytical validity is ensured through theoretical triangulation, drawing on multiple, well-established frameworks of emotion and governance. Reliability is supported by transparent analytical procedures and consistent application of concepts across the text. As a text-based study, reliability does not depend on replicability in the positivist sense, but on interpretive coherence and evidentiary grounding, consistent with qualitative philological research (Shillingsburg, 2017).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Private Emotion as Moral Governance in Serat Pariminta

This section demonstrates that *Serat Pariminta* articulates a form of moral governance not through legal injunctions or explicit political commands, but through the regulation of private emotions, i.e. relief, shame, honor, and disgrace, whose consequences are socially binding and politically consequential. Rather than treating emotion as an intimate or psychological domain, the text constructs emotional states as evaluative instruments through which individual conduct is aligned with genealogical legitimacy and social order. To substantiate this argument, the analysis proceeds through multi-scalar textual evidence, moving from lexical units to normative statements, thereby showing how governance emerges organically from the text.

4.1.1. Parental Relief (*Lega*) as Moral Approval

At the lexical level, the word *lega* occupies a central position in articulating moral success. The term appears in the phrase “*légane rama lan ibu*” (Pariminta, stanza 4). The phrase is embedded within the normative clause, “...*dadya gawe / légane rama lan ibu*”. Here, *lega* does not denote spontaneous happiness or emotional warmth. Instead, it functions as an evaluative emotional state, signaling the absence of moral burden borne by parents as social representatives. The relief of parents is contingent upon the moral conduct of the child, suggesting that parental emotion operates as a moral verdict, not merely a feeling. At the discursive level, parental relief becomes a mechanism of moral validation. The child’s worth is not assessed through legal achievement or social rank, but through the emotional condition of the parents. This establishes parents as primary moral sensors, whose emotional state reflects the ethical status of the individual. In this way, private emotion becomes a public indicator of moral legitimacy.

4.1.2. Interiorized Emotion and Moral Surveillance

The governance function of emotion is further intensified through the internalization of moral evaluation. This is articulated through the phrase “*mémuji jroning wardaya*” (Pariminta, stanza 4). Lexically, *wardaya* denotes the deepest interior of the self, the heart or inner consciousness. The act of praise (*mémuji*) is not performed publicly, but located within the inner domain. This indicates that moral approval does not require public declaration or institutional enforcement. At the normative level, the clause implies that emotional evaluation operates without external surveillance. The subject internalizes moral norms to such an extent that regulation occurs within the private emotional sphere. This establishes a form of self-regulating moral subjectivity, where governance is achieved through interiorized emotional discipline rather than coercive authority. This mechanism demonstrates that *Serat Pariminta* promotes a model of governance in which filial or obedience is emotionalized, and moral order is maintained through inward emotional alignment.

4.1.3. Genealogical Honor (*Aji*) as Moral Capital

Another pivotal lexical unit is *aji*, which appears in the phrase “*ajining kang yayah rena*” (Pariminta, stanza 7). The term *aji* signifies value, dignity, or symbolic worth. Importantly, this value is not attributed to the individual alone, but to the genealogical line, represented by the parents. The normative clause reads, “...*amuwuhi ajining kang yayah rena*.” Here, individual conduct is framed as a mechanism for augmenting or diminishing genealogical honor. The subject is positioned as a custodian of inherited moral capital, whose actions directly affect the collective dignity of the family line. At the level of moral governance, this configuration produces a genealogical ethics of citizenship. Moral responsibility extends beyond the self to encompass ancestral reputation. Social legitimacy is thus grounded not in individual autonomy, but in the preservation of inherited honor.

4.1.4. Shame (*Kèsi-èsi*) as Moral Sanction

While honor functions as positive moral capital, shame operates as its inverse sanction. This is expressed through the phrase “*kèsi-èsi nora amor*” (Pariminta, stanza 11). Lexically, *kèsi-èsi* denotes a deep, enduring sense of shame, while *nora amor* indicates social disintegration or the inability to belong. The combination constructs shame as a persistent condition, not a temporary emotional response. Normatively, the clause signifies that moral failure results not in legal punishment, but in social exclusion. The subject becomes detached from communal bonds, effectively rendered socially invisible. Shame thus functions as a disciplinary mechanism,

enforcing conformity without institutional enforcement. This illustrates a form of shame-based governance, where emotional suffering replaces juridical sanction, and moral deviation leads to social expulsion rather than physical punishment.

4.1.5. Arrogance (*Sumêngah lan Têkabur*) and Moral Disqualification

The text further identifies specific emotional dispositions as morally disqualifying. This is articulated through “*sumêngah lawan têkabur*” (Pariminta, stanza 9). Arrogance and hubris are framed not as personality flaws, but as emotional violations that disrupt moral alignment. The consequence is stated explicitly, “...*kalis marang pulung wahyu lan nugraha*.” Rather than legal reprisal, the punishment takes the form of cosmic disauthorization. Moral failure results in the withdrawal of spiritual legitimacy (*wahyu*), indicating that governance operates through cosmological belief rather than juridical force.

This reinforces the argument that emotional regulation functions as a non-coercive technology of power, aligning individual conduct with cosmic and social order.

4.1.6. Ancestral Disgrace and Moral Extinction

The most extreme articulation of moral governance appears in the phrase “*tan gégawa mring luhur*” (Pariminta, stanza 12). Here, failure is framed as a disgrace to the *luhur*, the ancestral lineage. The normative conclusion is expressed through a stark rhetorical statement “*sayêktine bêcik lampus*”. Rather than advocating literal death, this statement functions as a rhetorical boundary of moral existence. Life devoid of genealogical honor is depicted as morally untenable. The subject’s existence is rendered illegitimate when it threatens ancestral dignity. This constitutes the apex of emotional governance named ancestral shame operates as a transhistorical authority, regulating conduct across generations without institutional enforcement.

Taken together, these textual layers demonstrate that *Serat Pariminta* constructs a coherent system of moral governance through private emotion. Emotions such as relief, shame, honor, and disgrace are not personal experiences, but normative instruments that produce disciplined subjects aligned with genealogical and social order.

Table 1. Filological Quotes (Private Emotion & Moral Governance)

Stanza	Key	Javanese Phrase	Emotional Level	Governance Function
4	<i>lega</i>	<i>légane rama lan ibu</i>	Private emotion	Social moral validation
4	<i>wardaya</i>	<i>mêmuji jroning wardaya</i>	Interior emotion	Inner supervision
7	<i>aji</i>	<i>ajining kang yayah rena</i>	Genealogical honor	Legitimacy capital
9	<i>sumêngah</i>	<i>sumêngah lan têkabur</i>	Emotional violation	Moral disqualification
11	<i>kèsi-èsi</i>	<i>kèsi-èsi nora amor</i>	Enduring shame	Social exclusion
12	<i>luhur</i>	<i>tan gégawa mring luhur</i>	Ancestral disgrace	The limits of legitimacy of life

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. From Private Emotion to Moral Governance: *Serat Pariminta* in Global Scholarship on Political Emotions

This discussion positions *Serat Pariminta* (Mangkunegara IV) within global debates on the relationship between private emotion and political order, arguing that the text advances a historically sophisticated model of moral governance grounded in kinship and genealogy. Rather than locating “the political” in explicit state institutions, laws, or coercive apparatuses, *Serat Pariminta* renders governance operational through the emotional economy of family life, parental relief (*lega*), interiorized moral approval (*mêmuji jroning wardaya*), genealogical honor (*aji*), social shame (*kèsi-èsi nora amor*), and ancestral disgrace (*tan gégawa mring luhur*). The results section has shown that these emotions are not merely descriptive feelings; they function as normative instruments, delimiting social belonging and authorizing (or disauthorizing) the subject’s legitimacy.

1) Private vs State Emotion: Why the Binary Collapses

In much modern political thought, emotion is often treated as “private”, a psychological interiority that may influence public behavior but remains conceptually separate from the state. Global scholarship over the last several decades has destabilized this division. Hochschild’s foundational analysis of “emotion work” and the social management of feeling demonstrates that emotional life is routinely structured by normative expectations and institutional demands (even when it appears personal) (Hochschild, 1983). Ahmed’s account of the “cultural

politics of emotion” further argues that emotions circulate socially, binding collectivities and producing boundaries of belonging and exclusion; emotion is thus inherently political rather than purely interior (Ahmed, 2004). Reddy’s framework for the history of emotions likewise shows that emotional expression and regulation shape historical trajectories through “emotional regimes” and the performativity of “emotives,” making emotional life a constitutive part of social orders (Reddy, 2001). *Serat Pariminta* aligns with these arguments while also refining them: it demonstrates a form of governance in which the state does not need to speak the language of law to govern. Instead, the text stages a polity whose regulatory mechanisms occur through micro-sovereignties (parents, ancestors, household reputation, and communal recognition), each sustained by emotionally charged valuation. In other words, the “private” does not merely influence public life; it is one of the primary infrastructures through which the public is produced.

2) Emotional Practices and Emotional Communities: A Philological Advantage

One way to avoid over-theorization is to treat emotions not as inner “states,” but as **practices** that are historically situated and socially learned. Scheer’s influential practice-theory approach argues that emotions can be studied as embodied, habitual, and socially organized practices, bridging dichotomies such as body/mind and expression/experience (Scheer, 2012). This is methodologically congenial to philology: *Serat Pariminta* does not have to “psychologize” the subject; it prescribes and evaluates what emotions do, how they legitimate, sanction, attach, or expel.

Rosenwein’s concept of “emotional communities” also supports the move from textual evidence to social meaning: communities (including aristocratic and courtly settings) possess their own emotional norms, styles, and evaluative repertoires (Rosenwein, 2006). Read through this lens, *Serat Pariminta* describes an emotional community in which filial conduct is continuously interpreted through parental relief and genealogical honor, while failure triggers shame and ancestral disgrace. The courtly world here is not merely a setting; it is an emotional ecology whose norms enable moral governance without legal formalism.

3) Affective Governance and Governmentality: Emotion as Technique of Rule

Recent scholarship explicitly frames emotion as a medium of governance. For instance, work on “affective governance” and “affective governmentality” emphasizes that modern states (and state-like institutions) increasingly mobilize feelings—fear, hope, pride, belonging, resentment—to steer compliance and legitimacy. A 2024 study on UK “Levelling Up” policy, for example, explores how government policy mobilizes “emotions of place” as a mode of governance, and identifies tensions when emotional attachments conflict with policy logics (Howcroft et al., 2025). A 2025 agenda-setting piece in regulatory politics develops “affective regulatory governance,” proposing that emotions shape both regulators’ actions and citizens’ reception of regulation (Rimkutė, 2025). These works underscore a broader disciplinary point: governance can operate through affective and emotional channels, not only through formal rules. *Serat Pariminta* allows us to extend this conversation historically and cross-culturally. The text models an “affective governmentality” in which the household is the principal site of emotional regulation, and the state (or courtly political order) is stabilized through genealogical reputational mechanisms. The emotional sanctions (*kèsi-èsi*, *nora amor*) operate as governance because they produce durable consequences: loss of belonging, reputational collapse, disauthorization of moral personhood.

4) Kinship as Political Infrastructure: Why Family Matters for Governance

The global relevance of *Serat Pariminta* becomes especially clear when considered alongside cross-cultural patterns where kinship serves as political infrastructure. In many political formations—monarchies, aristocracies, dynastic orders, family does not belong to a private realm separable from public authority. It is a symbolic and institutional anchor of legitimacy, succession, reputation, and continuity. This remains visible today: as of 2025, dozens of sovereign states still have monarchs as heads of state (with varied degrees of political power) (Wikipedia, 2025). Even in constitutional monarchies, where executive power may be limited, royal families often operate as moral-symbolic institutions whose perceived virtues or misconduct can affect public trust and national narratives. Importantly, *Serat Pariminta* does not need “scandal talk” or sensational cases to make this argument. It provides a theory of legitimacy anchored in kinship: the child’s conduct increases or decreases *ajining* the parent; parental relief is a moral verdict; ancestral dignity is a binding horizon. This is not affection-based ethics alone; it is evaluative ethics with public consequence.

5) Comparing Emotional Orders: Where *Serat Pariminta* Fits

To clarify the contribution, it helps to locate *Serat Pariminta* among major theoretical approaches to political emotions: 1) managed/disciplined emotion called emotions are regulated by social norms and institutional expectations (Hochschild, 1983); 2) circulating emotion/boundary-making called emotions produce collective attachment and exclusion (Ahmed, 2004); 3) emotional regimes/emotives called emotions are historically organized and politically consequential (Reddy, 2001); 4) emotions as Practices named emotions are embodied,

learned practices (Scheer, 2012); 5) emotional communities called communities have distinct emotional norms (Rosenwein, 2006); 6) affective governance called governance increasingly operates through affect (policy/administration literature) (Howcroft et al., 2025). *Serat Pariminta* adds a particularly “philology-friendly” insight i.e. a kinship-centered emotional regime where private emotions are already configured as public instruments. The text thus supplies evidence for a comparative claim: emotional governance can be historically anchored not only in bureaucracies or mass publics, but also in genealogy as moral infrastructure.

2. Axiological Dimensions: Why This Philological Argument Matters (Beyond Description)

Here the contribution is articulated as value-laden scholarly impact (without moralizing the text).

1) Epistemic Value: Recovering Non-Western Political Theory from Archives

A major axiological value is epistemic: the study refuses the relegation of Javanese court literature to “data” awaiting Western theory. Instead, it treats *Serat Pariminta* as **theory-bearing archive**, contributing to global political emotion studies with concepts and mechanisms that do not depend on modern state categories.

2) Ethical Value: Governance Without Coercion, Yet Not “Soft”

The text offers an ethical lesson relevant to political theory: governance can be non-judicial and non-coercive while still being forceful through **shame, honor, belonging, and exclusion**. This complicates simplistic binaries between “hard power” and “soft values.” It also resonates with contemporary concerns where moral regulation often occurs via social media shame, reputational economies, and symbolic legitimacy (a point that modern affective governance scholarship increasingly foregrounds) (Howcroft et al., 2025).

3) Cultural-Political Value: Understanding Elite Legitimacy as Moral-Emotional

Today, public trust often collapses not only due to policy failures but due to perceived moral failures of elites. The persistence of monarchies and constitutional monarchies worldwide illustrates that symbolic moral authority remains politically significant, even under modern constitutional frameworks (Wikipedia, 2025). *Serat Pariminta* provides a historic grammar for why “private” conduct can be politically destabilizing: it is not private if it is genealogically indexed.

4) Methodological Value: A Replicable Philological Toolkit

Multi-scalar quotation (word → phrase → clause → normative statement) is not merely stylistic; it becomes a replicable toolkit for reading moral governance in other texts. This is consistent with the “emotions as practice/community” approach in history of emotions, but adapted to manuscript studies (Scheer, 2012).

Below are *analytical indices*, designed to be citable and usable in DISCUSSION without pretending to list “the whole world.” They can be expanded later if you want.

Table 2. Analytical Index of Political Form and Emotion-Regime Anchor (Representative Global Map)

Political form (representative)	Primary legitimacy anchor	Typical emotion-regime anchor	“Private → public” pathway
Courtly/dynastic polity (e.g., Mangkunegaran)	Genealogy + court norm	Honor/shame, parental relief	Household reputation becomes public legitimacy
Constitutional monarchy	Symbolic continuity	National pride, trust, scandal management	Family image affects national symbolism
Absolute monarchy (selected cases today)	Personal rule	Loyalty, fear, reverence	Familial proximity to ruler structures obedience
Liberal-legal state	Legal-rational authority	Trust, fear, resentment	Institutions narrate emotion through law & policy

Notes: “Absolute monarchy” remains in a small number of contemporary states, commonly listed as including Saudi Arabia, Brunei, Oman, Eswatini, Vatican City, and the UAE (as a federal monarchy of emirates) (ThoughtCo, 2024).

Table 2. Index of Contemporary Monarchies (Scale Indicator for “Family–State Nexus”)

Indicator	Best-use in your article	Source grounding
≈43 sovereign states have a monarch as head of state (as of 2025)	Shows that monarchy is not marginal globally	(Wikipedia, 2025)
Monarchies vary widely (ceremonial ↔ executive)	Supports your argument: family symbolism matters even when power is limited	(Wikipedia, 2025)
Some monarchies retain substantial executive power	Helps discuss kinship legitimacy as political infrastructure	(Reuters, 2024)

Table 3. Kinship–Governance Grammar (Cross-Cultural, Conceptual)

Kinship grammar	Emotional instrument	Governance effect	Closest <i>Pariminta</i> match
Parental evaluation	Relief / disappointment	Moral approval / disapproval	<i>lègane rama lan ibu</i>
Genealogical reputation	Honor / disgrace	Legitimation / delegitimation	<i>ajining... ; tan gégawa mring luhur</i>
Communal belonging	Shame / acceptance	Inclusion / exclusion	<i>kèsi-èsi nora amor</i>
Cosmological authorization	Blessing / loss of blessing	“Right to rule/stand” symbolically	<i>kalis marang... wahyu</i> (as your text frames it)

Taken together, the kinship–governance grammar outlined above underscores that the navigation of feeling within parent–child relations operates not as a marginal ethical concern, but as a foundational infrastructure for the exercise of wise and legitimate authority. Filial emotions, such as parental relief, genealogical honor, and enduring shame, constitute a navigational system through which individuals learn to calibrate conduct, responsibility, and self-restraint in accordance with collective moral expectations. In this sense, the family functions as the earliest site where governance is rehearsed affectively, long before it is encountered institutionally. By guiding subjects in navigating emotions deemed appropriate or dangerous, filial ethics establishes a moral course (*course of governance*) that aligns personal conduct with broader regimes of legitimacy. What appears as private emotional discipline thus becomes a pre-institutional condition for good governance: authority is rendered effective not through coercion, but through emotionally internalized responsibility and genealogical accountability. This insight allows *Serat Pariminta* to be read as articulating a model of governance in which power is exercised wisely precisely because it is grounded in the affective navigation of familial relations rather than imposed externally through law alone.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has argued that *Serat Pariminta* articulates a distinctive form of moral governance grounded in the regulation of private emotion, rather than in legal injunctions or institutional authority. Through a close philological analysis of key lexical units and normative statements, the study demonstrates that emotions such as parental relief (*lega*), interiorized moral approval (*mémuji jroning wardaya*), genealogical honor (*aji*), enduring shame (*kèsi-èsi*), and ancestral disgrace (*tan gégawa mring luhur*) function as politically consequential instruments. These emotions are not treated as subjective feelings, but as evaluative mechanisms that determine social legitimacy, inclusion, and moral worth.

The findings challenge the conventional dichotomy between private emotion and public governance. In *Serat Pariminta*, the family operates as the primary site of moral regulation, while parents and ancestors emerge as moral authorities whose emotional states authorize or disqualify the individual. Governance is thus enacted through genealogical responsibility and emotional sanction, producing disciplined subjects without recourse to coercive power or juridical enforcement. This model reveals an alternative political rationality in which legitimacy is sustained through shame, honor, and reputational continuity, rather than through law alone.

By situating *Serat Pariminta* within global scholarship on political emotions and affective governance, this study contributes to a broader rethinking of governance as an emotional and moral process. It demonstrates that non-Western court literature should not be read merely as a repository of cultural values, but as a source of theoretical insight into how societies historically organized authority, obedience, and ethical citizenship. In doing so, the article advances the argument that emotional governance, rooted in kinship and genealogy, constitutes a powerful, durable, and globally resonant mode of political order.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of emotion*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2014). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Routledge.
- Anckar, C. (2022). *Presidents, monarchs, and prime ministers: Executive power sharing in the world*. Routledge.
- Florida, N. K. (2000). Writing the past, inscribing the future: History as prophecy in colonial Java. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 59(4), 897–918. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2659204>
- Florida, N. K. (2018). *Javanese literature in Surakarta manuscripts: manuscripts of the Mangkunagaran Palace* (Vol. 2). Cornell University Press.
- Greetham, D. C. (1999). *Theories of the text*. Oxford University Press.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. University of California Press.
- Howcroft, M., Marsh, N., & Owen, J. (2025). Levelling Up, affective governance and tensions within ‘pride in place.’ *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 43(2), 387–405.
- McGann, J. J. (1991). *The textual condition*. Princeton University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2013). *Political emotions: Why love matters for justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Reddy, W. M. (2001). *The navigation of feeling: A framework for the history of emotions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Reuters. (2024). *Kuwait's Emir dissolves parliament, suspends some constitution articles*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/kuwaits-emir-dissolves-parliament-suspends-some-constitution-articles-2024-05-10>
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2006). *Mystic synthesis in Java: A history of Islamization from the fourteenth to the early nineteenth centuries*. EastBridge.
- Rimkutè, D. (2025). Affective regulatory governance: towards an emotion-based understanding of citizen-regulator interactions in regulatory politics. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 1–26.
- Rosenwein, B. H. (2006). *Emotional communities in the early Middle Ages*. Cornell University Press.
- Scheer, M. (2012). Are emotions a kind of practice (and is that what makes them have a history)? A Bourdieuan approach to understanding emotion. *History and Theory*, 51(2), 193–220. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2012.00621.x>
- Shillingsburg, P. L. (2017). *Textuality and knowledge: Essays*. Penn State University Press.
- ThoughtCo. (2024). *What Is an Absolute Monarchy? Definition and Examples*. <https://www.thoughtco.com/absolute-monarchy-definition-and-examples-5111327>
- Wikipedia. (2025). *List of current monarchies*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_current_monarchies
- Williams, B. (1993). *Shame and necessity*. University of California Press.
- Zoetmulder, P. J. (1995). *Kalangwan: A survey of Old Javanese literature*. KITLV Press.