

The Unbridled Horse in the Royal Garden: Women's Moral Formation in *Serat Pratamakenya*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines women's moral formation in *Serat Pratamakenya*, an eighteenth-century Javanese advice text attributed to Pangeran Pringgalaya and addressed to his eldest daughter. The study focuses on the expression *wanita tindak dudu kuda mijil ing tamansari*, which compares improper female conduct to an unbridled horse released into a royal garden. Combining single-manuscript philology with qualitative discourse analysis, the research treats manuscript NB 2956 as a historically situated codex and reconstructs selected propositions of counsel from its intricate poetic arrangement. Particular attention is given to the relationship between the manuscript's riddling form, semantic reconstruction, and moral instruction. The findings show that the image of the unbridled horse functions as the governing metaphor through which subsequent counsels on speech, dress, patience, religious knowledge, family obligation, social conduct, and ancestral remembrance can be understood. The manuscript does not construct women merely as passive or deficient subjects. It imagines them as possessing significant bodily, relational, and spiritual force whose consequences extend to parents, husbands, relatives, and descendants. Moral restraint therefore operates as the management of

consequential female energy. At the same time, the text remains unmistakably hierarchical, placing upon women a disproportionate responsibility for preserving domestic and social order. The article argues that restriction and agency are not presented as simple opposites in the manuscript. Women are disciplined precisely because their conduct is believed capable of transforming the moral environment around them. The later transmission of the text further demonstrates how private paternal counsel acquired a longer life as courtly moral discourse.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji pembentukan moral perempuan dalam *Serat Pratamakenya*, teks nasihat Jawa abad kedelapan belas yang dikaitkan dengan Pangeran Pringgalaya dan ditujukan kepada putri sulungnya. Kajian berfokus pada ungkapan *wanita tindak dudu kuda mijil ing tamansari*, yang membandingkan perilaku perempuan yang tidak patut dengan kuda tanpa kendali yang dilepaskan ke taman kerajaan. Dengan menggabungkan filologi naskah tunggal dan analisis wacana kualitatif, penelitian ini menempatkan naskah NB 2956 sebagai kodeks yang berada dalam konteks sejarah serta merekonstruksi sejumlah nasihat dari susunan puisinya yang rumit. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa gambaran kuda tanpa kendali menjadi metafora utama untuk memahami nasihat mengenai tutur kata, pakaian, kesabaran, pengetahuan agama, kewajiban keluarga, perilaku sosial, dan penghormatan kepada leluhur. Naskah ini tidak semata-mata menggambarkan perempuan sebagai subjek pasif atau berkekurangan. Perempuan dipandang memiliki kekuatan jasmani, relasional, dan spiritual yang berdampak pada orang tua, suami, kerabat, dan keturunan. Pengendalian moral dengan demikian berfungsi sebagai pengelolaan energi perempuan yang memiliki konsekuensi luas. Namun, teks ini tetap bersifat hierarkis karena membebankan tanggung jawab yang tidak seimbang kepada perempuan untuk menjaga tatanan rumah tangga dan sosial. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa pembatasan dan agensi tidak ditempatkan sebagai dua hal yang sepenuhnya berlawanan. Perempuan didisiplinkan justru karena perilakunya dianggap mampu mengubah lingkungan moral di sekitarnya. Transmisi teks pada masa berikutnya juga menunjukkan bagaimana nasihat pribadi seorang ayah memperoleh kehidupan yang lebih panjang sebagai wacana moral keraton..

1. INTRODUCTION

A woman should not behave like a horse released into a royal garden. This warning, expressed in the line *wanita tindak dudu kuda mijil ing tamansari*, provides *Serat Pratamakenya* with an unusually vivid image of proper womanhood. The horse is energetic, mobile, and potentially difficult to contain. The garden is cultivated, beautiful, and vulnerable to movement that ignores arrangement. Placed together, they create more than a decorative comparison. They produce a compact moral problem concerning force, place, restraint, and consequence. The manuscript's woman is not first imagined as powerless. She is imagined as capable of disturbing an entire moral environment.

Serat Pratamakenya, also known as *Wulang Estri*, is an eighteenth-century Javanese work attributed to Pangeran Pringgalaya and addressed to his eldest daughter. Its opening statement dates the composition to 1775, during the reign of Pakubuwana III, while the surviving manuscript examined in this study is associated with Pakubuwana IX. The work therefore belongs simultaneously to an original moment of paternal instruction and to a later history of copying, preservation, and renewed courtly reading. Its advice concerns speech, dress, patience, religious knowledge, parents, husbands, siblings, social conduct, and ancestral remembrance. These counsels are composed in eight *macapat* sections and organised through the intricate riddling pattern of *wangsalan*.

Texts of advice addressed to women have often been approached as sources for reconstructing gender norms, domestic ethics, courtly refinement, and patriarchal discipline. Such approaches remain necessary because advice literature does not merely describe conduct. It attempts to establish what kinds of behaviour are desirable, shameful, dangerous, or socially recognisable. Gendered counsel may therefore be read as one site where bodies, emotions, speech, family obligations, and religious commitments are arranged into normative forms of personhood. Foucault's account of discipline is helpful in demonstrating that regulation does not operate only through prohibition. It produces habits, gestures, classifications, and forms of self-observation through which subjects become governable and intelligible (Foucault, 1977). Butler's analysis of performativity similarly shows that gendered identity is materialised through repeated acts rather than expressed from a stable essence that exists prior to social practice (Butler, 1990, 1993).

These theoretical perspectives make it possible to recognise the productive force of moral instruction, but they do not by themselves explain the historically specific world of Javanese courtly counsel. Javanese social relations have long been shaped by concerns with refinement, controlled expression, status, potency, speech level, relational sensitivity, and the management of visible conduct (Keeler, 1987). Studies of women in Central Java also show that gender hierarchy did not necessarily render women socially insignificant. Court women could participate in dynastic politics, economic relations, property management, household organisation, and broader networks of authority (Carey & Houben, 1987). Brenner's work on women, wealth, desire, and domestic authority in Java further demonstrates that female subjectivity cannot be reduced to a single opposition between submission and liberation (Brenner, 1998).

This historical complexity matters when reading *Serat Pratamakenya*. The manuscript clearly expects women to obey, restrain themselves, respect husbands and parents, regulate appearance, and avoid social excess. Yet it also presents women as morally consequential actors. A virtuous woman may become an example to her relatives, contribute to the merit of her parents, protect family dignity, and draw her husband toward salvation. The same discourse that restricts female conduct therefore attributes substantial relational and spiritual efficacy to women. Agency in this context does not necessarily appear as resistance to every norm. It may emerge through projects, capacities, and ethical practices cultivated within hierarchical relationships (Ortner, 2006).

Mahmood's critique of liberal assumptions about agency is particularly useful for understanding this tension. Her work demonstrates that discipline, submission, and ethical self-cultivation need not be interpreted solely as the absence of agency, since historically situated subjects may acquire capacities precisely through practices that modern liberal frameworks too quickly classify as passivity (Mahmood, 2001, 2005). This insight cannot be transferred mechanically from contemporary Egyptian piety movements to an eighteenth-century Javanese court. It nevertheless provides a conceptual warning against assuming that freedom is the only recognisable form of action. In *Serat Pratamakenya*, women's capacity appears through moral consequence, relational influence, disciplined judgment, and spiritual labour.

Research on Javanese manuscripts has also demonstrated the importance of treating the surviving witness as a material and historical object rather than as a transparent container of information. Philological scholarship increasingly recognises that a manuscript records a particular moment of production, ownership, selection, transmission, and reading (Nichols, 1990; McGann, 1991; Cerquiglini, 1999; Florida, 1995). Within Indonesian philology, the preparation of readable editions requires careful negotiation between fidelity to manuscript form and the need to reconstruct semantic coherence for modern readers (Robson, 1988; Baried et al., 1994). Such concerns are especially important in *Serat Pratamakenya*, where metrical structure, lexical compression, and *wangsalan* repeatedly interrupt ordinary sentence order.

The riddling form has methodological and interpretive consequences. Clues may be expressed through plants, animals, colours, smells, bodily features, or actions. Their answers are then concealed through phonological

association, syllabic extraction, or recombination within the following utterance. That utterance simultaneously completes the riddle and delivers the counsel. Meaning therefore cannot always be obtained through linear reading. It must be reconstructed through movement among image, sound, answer, and moral proposition. A complete explanation of every *wangsalan* would require a separate critical edition and extensive linguistic commentary. The present study instead examines one representative stanza in detail and reconstructs selected propositions that illuminate the manuscript's broader moral discourse.

Despite the richness of such a textual structure, scholarship on advice literature often separates form from moral content. Poetic techniques may be treated as ornaments, while ethical statements are extracted and reorganised as lists of values. Conversely, gender criticism may identify hierarchy and discipline without examining how a text produces those meanings through metaphor, rhythm, concealment, repetition, and interpretive delay. This separation creates a persistent problem. It explains what a text appears to demand from women, but not how the text makes those demands persuasive, memorable, and culturally refined.

The present study responds to this problem by asking how one governing metaphor organises women's moral formation in *Serat Pratamakenya*, how subsequent counsels elaborate that metaphor across bodily, relational, spiritual, and ancestral domains, and how the poetic structure shapes the reader's access to moral meaning. These questions direct attention away from an exhaustive catalogue of instructions and toward the internal architecture of the discourse. The purpose is to examine how the image of an unbridled horse in a royal garden gathers dispersed counsels into a coherent model of consequential womanhood.

This study combines single-manuscript philology with qualitative discourse analysis. It treats manuscript NB 2956 as a historically situated codex, reconstructs selected propositions of counsel, and analyses the line *wanita tindak dudu kuda mijil ing tamansari* as the governing metaphor through which the remaining instructions can be read. Advice concerning speech, clothing, patience, sincerity, religion, family, society, and ancestors is interpreted not as a collection of unrelated virtues but as a series of descriptors explaining how female energy should be directed.

The contribution of the study lies in its refusal of two equally limiting readings. The first treats a women's advice manuscript as a passive repository of traditional values. The second reduces it to straightforward evidence of patriarchal repression. Both approaches identify important features, but neither fully explains why female conduct requires such elaborate poetic, familial, religious, and intergenerational regulation. *Serat Pratamakenya* is troubling precisely because its disciplinary intensity reveals its dependence upon the woman it seeks to discipline. The manuscript restricts women because it imagines their conduct as capable of transforming parents, husbands, relatives, descendants, and the ordered world around them.

The article therefore addresses a wider scholarly unease concerning how historically hierarchical texts should be read without either romanticising their values or flattening their subjects into victims without capacity. By bringing philology, metaphor, discourse, and relational agency into the same analysis, the study shows that restriction and efficacy are not always presented as opposites. In *Serat Pratamakenya*, the woman is governed because she matters. The royal garden attempts to contain the horse, but the very need for containment acknowledges the force of its movement.

As a secondary interpretive lens, this study also draws cautiously on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, understood as the higher ethical purposes associated with safeguarding religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property or material wellbeing (Auda, 2008; Kamali, 2008). The concept is not attributed directly to *Serat Pratamakenya*, which does not employ the formal terminology of *maqāṣid*. It is used instead to identify points of ethical convergence between the manuscript's counsels and a broader Islamic concern with human and familial welfare. This limited use prevents the framework from replacing the manuscript's Javanese courtly vocabulary or turning a poetic advice text into a juridical treatise.

2. METHOD

This study combined single-manuscript philology with qualitative discourse analysis. Its primary source was *Serat Pratamakenya*, also known as *Wulang Estri*, preserved in the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia under the shelfmark NB 2956. The manuscript was selected because it preserves a sustained sequence of poetic counsel attributed to Pangeran Pringgalaya and addressed to his eldest daughter. The study did not attempt to reconstruct an archetypal text through the collation of several witnesses. It instead examined the surviving codex as a historically situated textual artefact whose material form, linguistic arrangement, poetic strategies, and moral propositions could be analysed together.

This decision follows a strand of philological practice that treats the individual manuscript not merely as an imperfect carrier of an abstract work, but as a meaningful historical object in its own right. Traditional textual criticism has often sought to recover an earlier or more authoritative textual state through comparison among witnesses. Manuscript-oriented philology, however, also recognises that every surviving witness records a particular moment of textual production, ownership, use, and transmission (Cerquiglini, 1999; McGann, 1991; Nichols, 1990; Robson, 1988). A single-manuscript approach is therefore appropriate when the research question

concerns how a particular witness organises and transmits meaning rather than how closely it reproduces a lost original. The conclusions of the present study are consequently restricted to the discourse preserved in NB 2956 and do not claim to establish a definitive edition of every possible version of *Serat Pratamakenya*.

The philological procedure included manuscript identification, codicological description, transliteration, semantic segmentation, translation, and interpretive reconstruction. Codicological examination recorded the shelfmark, repository, script, language, writing material, physical condition, page composition, textual divisions, and indications of provenance or ownership. Such description was necessary because the surviving witness records a particular conjunction of text, material form, ownership, and transmission rather than serving as a transparent container of verbal content (Robson, 1988; Baried et al., 1994; Arps, 1999; Fox, 2003).

The *manggala* and final notation were examined to distinguish the history of the composition from the history of the surviving copy. The opening statement attributes the work to Pangeran Pringgalaya and dates its composition to Saturday, the tenth day of Puasa in the Javanese year 1701, corresponding to 4 November 1775. This places the initial composition during the reign of Pakubuwana III. The surviving manuscript, however, contains an indication associating it with Pakubuwana IX. These references were not interpreted as contradictory dates. They were treated as evidence of two different textual moments, namely the eighteenth-century composition of the counsel and its later reproduction or possession. Distinguishing the work from its surviving material witness prevents the date of composition from being confused with the history of the codex and makes textual transmission part of the analysis rather than a problem to be silently removed.

The transliteration was prepared from the readable sequence of Javanese characters while retaining lexically and analytically significant features of the source. It was not designed as a fully diplomatic edition. A diplomatic transcription would reproduce lineation, spelling, and graphic arrangement as closely as possible, but it would not necessarily make the semantic organisation of the verses accessible to readers unfamiliar with older Javanese poetic conventions. Indonesian philology has long required editors to negotiate between fidelity to manuscript forms and the production of an intelligible reading text (Baried et al., 1994; Robson, 1988). In the present study, the purpose of transliteration was not to modernise the work indiscriminately, but to provide a stable textual basis from which its units of counsel could be reconstructed and interpreted.

This reconstruction was required because the syntax of the poem is repeatedly interrupted by metrical boundaries, poetic compression, lexical archaism, and riddling structures. Words belonging to one meaningful proposition may be distributed across several lines, while apparently descriptive images may function as clues whose answers appear only in a subsequent phrase. The study therefore applied semantic segmentation after transliteration. Segmentation identified groups of words and lines that together formed an interpretable moral proposition. Where necessary, these elements were reordered into a readable sequence without replacing their lexical content. The reconstructed units were then translated into Indonesian before being rendered into English for analysis. Translation was treated as an interpretive procedure that made the organisation of the counsel visible, not as a claim that every Javanese expression possessed one perfectly equivalent English form.

Particular attention was given to *wangsalan*, the riddling pattern used throughout the poem. In a *wangsalan*, one portion of a stanza presents descriptive or associative clues, while the answers are concealed in a following utterance through lexical association, phonological resemblance, syllabic extraction, or recombination. The utterance that completes the riddle may simultaneously deliver the moral instruction. Consequently, the semantic proposition cannot always be recovered through ordinary sequential reading. Identification required movement between the clue, its culturally plausible answer, the relevant sound or syllable, and the sentence in which that element was concealed.

One representative stanza was analysed in detail to demonstrate this mechanism. In that stanza, expressions such as *putra denta*, *ron anjrah ing siti*, and *pelem agung kang galak gandanya* function as riddling clues. Their answers contribute sounds or syllables that reappear in the following verbal sequence, which also introduces the counsel that a woman should not behave like a horse released into a royal garden. The stanza was selected because it contains both the riddling mechanism and the governing metaphor examined in the article. The study did not attempt to solve every *wangsalan* in the manuscript. A complete treatment would require an independent critical edition supported by extensive lexical, phonological, metrical, and cultural annotation. Selective explication was therefore adopted as an analytical boundary rather than presented as an exhaustive edition.

The unit of analysis was the proposition of counsel, not the graphic line, metrical line, or individual stanza. A proposition could consist of a single statement, several connected lines, or a semantic unit reconstructed from elements dispersed by the poetic structure. This choice prevented the formal segmentation of *macapat* from fragmenting statements whose meanings depended upon one another. It also allowed recurrent formulations to be compared across the eight sections composed in Dhandhanggula, Mijil, Pucung, Sinom, Maskumambang, a second Mijil sequence, Kinanthi, and Gambuh.

Repetition was treated as a pedagogical and discursive feature rather than counted as a series of independent discoveries. When later stanzas restated a moral proposition already established elsewhere, they were coded as reiterations or elaborations of the same counsel. Such repetition could add a new image, relation, or consequence

without necessarily creating a new conceptual category. The analysis therefore recorded representative propositions and their most relevant textual formulations.

The discourse analysis examined how these propositions collectively produced a recognisable moral subject. Discourse was understood here as an organisation of language that does more than convey information. It establishes categories, relations, expectations, and positions from which persons can be recognised and evaluated (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014; Mills, 2004). The study did not apply a full model of critical discourse analysis designed to map contemporary institutions, media circulation, or large-scale ideological conflict. It used discourse analysis more narrowly to investigate how a single historical text arranged its statements into a coherent account of proper womanhood.

The expression *wanita tindak dudu kuda mijil ing tamansari* was identified as the governing metaphor of this discourse. Metaphor was not treated as an ornamental substitution attached to an otherwise literal message. Studies of metaphor in discourse demonstrate that recurring metaphorical relations can frame a topic, foreground particular qualities, and organise subsequent interpretation (Cameron, 1999; Demjén & Semino, 2020; Steen, 1999). The horse and the royal garden were therefore analysed as interacting elements of a conceptual frame. The horse evokes strength, movement, appetite, speed, and the capacity to cross boundaries. The garden evokes arrangement, cultivated beauty, spatial order, and vulnerability to uncontrolled movement.

The identification of this governing metaphor emerged through repeated movement between the central stanza and the wider corpus of counsel. It was not imposed as an isolated theoretical label before the manuscript was read. Subsequent propositions were examined for the ways in which they elaborated the relation between force and regulation established by the metaphor. Advice concerning clothing, speech, patience, sincerity, religious knowledge, obedience, family responsibility, social conduct, and ancestral memory was coded as a descriptor when it specified a domain in which female conduct was expected to be directed, moderated, or rendered beneficial.

The analysis was conducted at three connected levels. The textual level examined lexical choice, poetic organisation, riddling procedures, metaphorical relations, repetition, and the construction of translatable propositions. The relational level examined the positions assigned to the female subject as daughter, wife, sibling, believer, social exemplar, and descendant. The historical-discursive level considered how counsel initially addressed to a daughter within an aristocratic household was reproduced in a later manuscript and thereby acquired a longer courtly life. Movement among these levels allowed close textual observations to remain connected with the manuscript's social and historical conditions without treating the text as a transparent record of all Javanese society.

Interpretive credibility was maintained through repeated checking among the manuscript image, transliteration, reconstructed proposition, Indonesian translation, and English analytical rendering. Difficult passages were retained as provisional when their lexical or riddling resolution remained uncertain. Interpretations were also tested against the surrounding stanza and the recurring moral concerns of the manuscript rather than inferred from isolated words. This recursive procedure resembles the philological movement between part and whole, in which a local reading must remain compatible with the textual environment while the understanding of that environment is continually revised through close examination of individual passages.

Reflexivity was particularly important because a modern interpretation can easily convert historical courtly counsel into either a celebration of Javanese values or a flat accusation of patriarchal repression. The analysis therefore distinguished textual description from contemporary ethical evaluation. Statements concerning obedience, dress, husbands, parents, and female conduct were first examined according to their position within the manuscript's own moral organisation. Their gendered asymmetries were subsequently considered without assuming that agency could appear only as resistance to authority. This enabled the study to recognise both the restrictive force of the counsel and the relational or spiritual capacities that the manuscript attributed to women.

The study makes no statistical or civilisational generalisation. One courtly manuscript cannot represent all Javanese women, all aristocratic households, or an unchanging Javanese conception of gender. Its value lies instead in the density of the individual textual case. Close examination of NB 2956 shows how one manuscript used metaphor, riddling language, repetition, religious vocabulary, and family relations to organise a discourse of women's moral formation. The method thus treats the apparent narrowness of a single manuscript not as an analytical deficiency, but as an opportunity to observe how a complex moral world was compressed into a carefully transmitted poetic object.

2.1. The Codex and the Text

The codex examined in this study is a manuscript of *Serat Pratamakenya*, also identified as *Wulang Estri*, preserved in the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia under the shelfmark NB 2956. The manuscript is written in Javanese script and language on European paper. It consists of two cover pages, three preliminary pages, twenty-two pages of textual content, and five blank pages at the end. Dimensions are not recorded in the available

digital description. The manuscript remains in good physical condition. The writing is clear, the pages are intact, and no major damage interferes with the reading of the text. The name of the copyist is not recorded.

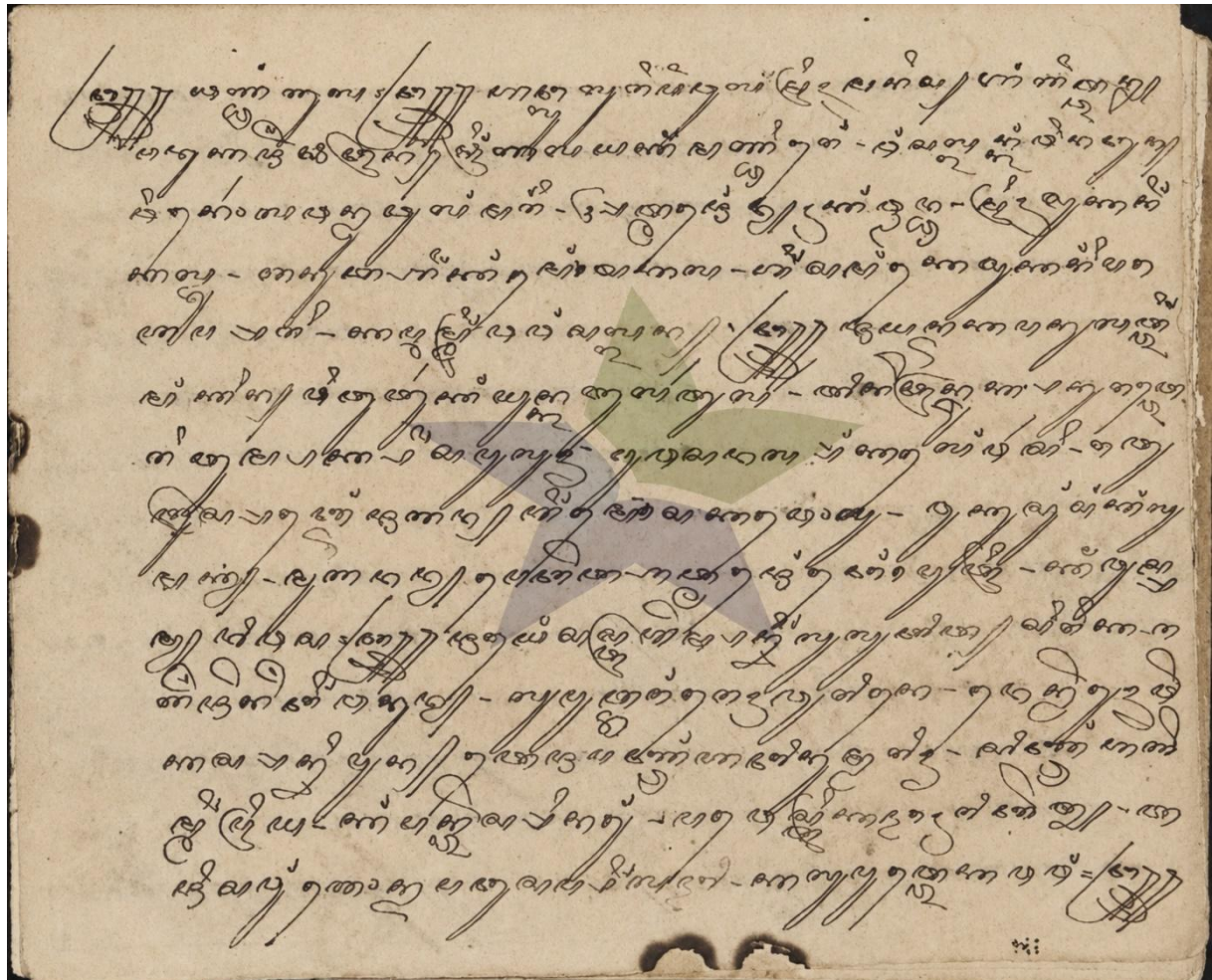


Figure 1. The opening page of *Serat Pratomakenya* manuscript NB 2956, National Library of the Republic of Indonesia. The page contains the opening section of the text and illustrates the manuscript's Javanese script, textual arrangement, and physical condition. Source: National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, digital manuscript collection, NB 2956. Image contrast and resolution enhanced for publication.

The text is attributed in its opening statement to Pangeran Pringgalaya and is presented as counsel addressed to his eldest daughter. The *manggala* records that the work was composed on Saturday, the tenth day of Puasa in the Javanese year 1701, corresponding to 4 November 1775. This date places the initial composition during the reign of Pakubuwana III. The manuscript studied here, however, carries a later indication connecting it with Pakubuwana IX. The date of textual composition must therefore be distinguished from the date or period of the surviving copy. The present codex represents a later stage in the transmission of an eighteenth-century work.

The distinction between text and codex is important for the present analysis. *Serat Pratomakenya* originated as paternal counsel within an aristocratic household, yet the surviving manuscript demonstrates that the counsel continued to be copied and preserved in a later courtly environment. The text therefore cannot be treated only as a private message intended for a single daughter. Its later reproduction suggests that it acquired value beyond its original domestic occasion and entered a longer process of courtly remembrance and moral transmission.

The poetic structure consists of eight sections composed in different *macapat* metres. These are Dhandhanggula, Mijil, Pucung, Sinom, Maskumambang, a second Mijil section, Kinanthi, and Gambuh. The sequence does not merely provide formal variation. It allows similar moral propositions to be repeated, reformulated, and extended through different rhythms and verbal arrangements. Repetition across the sections is therefore treated not as redundant data, but as part of the pedagogical structure of the work.

All stanzas employ forms of *wangsalan*, a Javanese riddling technique in which descriptive clues are placed in one part of the verse and their answers are concealed within the following utterance. The answer frequently appears

through sound association, lexical substitution, or the extraction and recombination of syllables. The same utterance that resolves the riddle also advances the moral counsel. As a result, the text does not present its teachings through transparent declarative sentences alone. Its advice must first be reconstructed from a deliberately intricate poetic arrangement.

For modern readers, this structure creates considerable difficulty. A diplomatic transliteration would preserve the original arrangement but would often fail to produce immediately intelligible semantic units. The present study therefore reorganises selected passages into reconstructed units of counsel. This procedure involves identifying the riddling clues, tracing their verbal answers, and assembling the relevant words or phrases into propositions that can be translated and interpreted. The purpose is not to simplify the literary complexity of the manuscript, but to make its moral discourse analytically accessible.

The study does not attempt to solve and annotate every instance of *wangsalan*. Such an undertaking would require a complete critical edition and extensive lexical, phonological, and literary commentary. Instead, one representative stanza is examined in detail to demonstrate the textual mechanism. The remaining passages are treated as semantically reconstructed counsels and grouped according to their relation to the manuscript's governing metaphor, the image of a woman who should not behave like an unbridled horse released into a royal garden.

3. RESULTS

The unbridled horse as the governing metaphor emerges from one of the most striking lines in *Serat Pratamakenya*, *wanita tindak dudu kuda mijil ing tamansari*. The line may be translated as an instruction that a woman should not behave like a horse released into a royal garden. It does not merely compare improper conduct with uncontrolled movement. It establishes the central proposition through which the subsequent counsels may be read. The horse represents energy, motion, appetite, and the capacity to cross boundaries. The royal garden represents an ordered space whose beauty depends upon arrangement, restraint, and the preservation of delicate forms. When the horse enters the garden without control, its strength becomes destructive, not because strength is inherently undesirable, but because it is exercised without attention to place, consequence, or proportion.

The metaphor therefore does not construct womanhood from weakness. On the contrary, it begins by imagining female conduct as a form of considerable force. The woman addressed by the manuscript is capable of affecting herself, her family, and the moral environment around her. Her movements matter. Her words matter. Her appearance, decisions, and emotional responses matter. The problem posed by the text is consequently not the absence of female capacity, but the management of that capacity. The woman who fails to regulate herself resembles a horse whose vitality has become detached from guidance. The phrase *angrusak badan priyongga*, which follows the metaphor, sharpens the warning. Unregulated conduct ultimately damages one's own person. The first object endangered by the unbridled horse is not the garden alone, but the horse itself.

Moral restraint as the management of female energy becomes clearer when the counsels placed after the governing metaphor are treated as its descriptors. The manuscript repeatedly warns against conduct that is excessive, hurried, arrogant, careless, or socially disruptive. A woman is advised not to take pride merely in status or prosperity, since wealth and poverty are represented as ordinary changes in human fortune. She should not attempt to surpass others, should not become captivated by praise, and should not treat recognition as proof of superiority. Such advice extends the metaphor of the released horse into the social field. Pride is a form of uncontrolled forward movement. It allows personal distinction to trample relational boundaries.

The text is therefore less interested in eliminating female presence than in shaping its rhythm. Expressions such as *sareh patraping ujar* and instructions to act carefully suggest that ideal conduct is measured by pace, tone, and timing. Speech should not be rough or impulsive. Action should not be performed without patience. Decisions should pass through reflection before becoming visible conduct. The moral woman is not silent in an absolute sense, but she is expected to regulate when, how, and for what purpose speech is used. Restraint is presented as a cultivated competence.

This competence also involves the refusal of theatrical concealment. One passage warns that good conduct should be visible and need not be hidden behind a metaphorical mask, *nora kudu topeng arga*. The statement is important because it distinguishes moral formation from the performance of propriety. A woman should not merely appear controlled while concealing disorder beneath an impressive exterior. The ideal demanded by the text is one in which outward conduct and inward disposition correspond. Self-control is valuable only when it has become habitual rather than decorative.

The body as the first garden of discipline is especially visible in instructions concerning clothing, movement, and public comportment. The manuscript praises dress that is orderly and elegant, while an unnecessarily exposed body is associated with contamination rather than freedom. From a contemporary perspective, such advice may readily be classified as a patriarchal regulation of the female body. Yet the internal logic of the text is slightly more complicated. Clothing is not discussed only as a means by which men control women. It is treated as one component of a larger system in which the woman manages her own visibility, dignity, and social effects.

The body in *Serat Pratamakenya* is not an isolated biological object. It is a relational surface. It is seen by parents, spouses, relatives, and the wider community. Bodily conduct therefore becomes a language through which moral condition is inferred. This does not make the system politically innocent. The burden of maintaining harmony is placed heavily upon women. Nevertheless, the manuscript attributes to women a significant capacity to organise the social atmosphere through embodied conduct. The disciplined body is not merely a body made obedient. It is a body expected to produce order around itself.

From bodily conduct to inner discipline, the manuscript gradually moves from visible behaviour toward patience, sincerity, intention, and judgment. Several counsels insist that action without patience is useless. Others urge the woman to act with sincerity that penetrates the inner self, *den eklas anrusing batin*. Such statements indicate that the manuscript does not consider external conformity sufficient. A woman may follow an instruction outwardly, yet remain morally unfinished if the action is not accompanied by an ordered interior.

The repeated concern with the heart also changes the meaning of obedience. Obedience in the manuscript is not always presented as immediate submission to another person's command. The woman is told to consider connections between causes and consequences. Once the heart has become steady, she is instructed to follow sound judgment. This suggests a limited but meaningful space for moral reasoning. The ideal woman does not simply wait for external direction. She is expected to cultivate an interior capacity capable of distinguishing beneficial conduct from harmful impulse.

The text locates temptation within the self as much as outside it. One counsel states that disturbance does not necessarily originate in the complaints or actions of other people, but may arise from one's own person. This turns moral attention inward. The uncontrolled horse is not always released by an external enemy. Sometimes the gate is opened from within. Anger, pride, impatience, and carelessness become internal forces that must be recognised before they become public conduct.

Relational morality provides the larger social frame within which this self-regulation operates. The woman addressed by the manuscript is positioned simultaneously as daughter, wife, sibling, believer, and descendant. She is told not to act disrespectfully toward parents. She is encouraged to become an example for other women and for her relatives. She is warned against carelessness in relation to her husband. She is also connected to ancestral continuity through the instruction *menule mule ing wuri*, interpreted as the moral importance of honouring those who came before.

These relations do not appear as separate obligations. They form an interconnected moral ecology. Conduct toward parents affects family honour. Conduct toward a husband affects domestic stability. Conduct toward relatives establishes exemplary authority. Religious understanding opens a path of salvation not only for the woman herself but also for others connected to her. The woman therefore occupies a structurally central position, even though this position is articulated through the language of service, obedience, and restraint.

One of the manuscript's more provocative propositions is that a virtuous wife may draw her husband toward heaven. This formulation complicates any reading of the woman as merely subordinate. The wife is certainly expected to regulate herself in relation to the husband, but she is also granted spiritual efficacy. She may become the moral vehicle through which the husband's salvation is imagined. Domestic obedience and spiritual authority are placed beside each other without being fully reconciled. The woman is governed because she is considered consequential.

A similar ambiguity appears in the manuscript's treatment of parents and children. The expression *ugering Islam anak ngungkuli sudarmi* is presented in a reconstructed semantic form because the original poetic arrangement does not easily correspond to modern sentence structure. In the context of the surrounding counsel, the statement suggests that religious merit may allow a child to exceed or elevate the standing of the parents. The moral labour of the daughter is thus not confined to her own life. It may transform the spiritual condition of the family across generations.

Submission and effort are likewise presented as complementary rather than contradictory. Wealth and poverty are described as divine destiny, yet human beings are still permitted to seek work and pursue wellbeing. The manuscript advises acceptance, but does not recommend passivity. It calls for surrender to divine will while also valuing effort, good judgment, and the pursuit of beneficial action. This combination prevents the discourse from becoming entirely fatalistic. For women, this means that moral restraint is not equivalent to inactivity. The ideal woman acts, works, prays, advises, preserves, and seeks welfare. What she must avoid is action detached from proportion. The difference between effort and excess resembles the difference between a guided horse and a released one. Movement is necessary. Direction makes it meaningful.

An ethics of ordinary conduct becomes visible in the manuscript's refusal to locate virtue only in extraordinary ascetic practice. One counsel states that a person need not perform austerities at the summit of a mountain. Moral excellence can instead be cultivated through daily vigilance over sight, hearing, speech, intention, and action. This is a notable feature of the text. It brings ethical life down from spectacular religious performance into ordinary domestic and social practice.

The woman's moral world is built from small decisions. She must decide whether to answer harshly, whether to display pride, whether to act impatiently, whether to disregard advice, and whether to allow external praise to disturb inner balance. The scale of the counsel is intimate, but its imagined consequences are large. Family harmony, social reputation, religious merit, and ancestral continuity all depend upon the repetition of seemingly modest acts.

This emphasis also explains why the manuscript returns to similar counsels across different metres. Repetition is not necessarily evidence of conceptual poverty. It reflects the pedagogical logic of moral formation. An ethical disposition is not created by hearing an instruction once. The same principle must be restated through different images, rhythms, and verbal puzzles until it becomes memorable.

Encoded counsel and the discipline of reading appear most clearly in the manuscript's systematic use of *wangsalan*. The counsels are not delivered only through direct statements. They are embedded in poetic riddles whose solutions are partially concealed in subsequent lines. In the exemplary stanza, expressions such as *putra denta*, *ron anjrah ing siti*, and *pelem agung kang galak gandanya* generate verbal answers that must be reconstructed through association, sound, and syllabic combination. The result is incorporated into the following utterance, which at once answers the riddle and advances the moral counsel.

The full mechanism is too extensive to reconstruct for every stanza within a journal article. Such an undertaking would require a separate critical edition and potentially hundreds of pages of lexical and phonological commentary. For the purposes of the present analysis, one stanza is sufficient to demonstrate the textual mechanism. The remaining reconstructed statements are treated as semantic units through which the wider moral discourse can be identified.

This selective procedure does not reduce the importance of *wangsalan*. Instead, it clarifies its function. The riddling form slows down reception. A reader cannot simply pass across the verse and collect advice immediately. Meaning must be earned through attention. The reader is trained to pause, connect, remember, and restrain premature interpretation. In this sense, the form of the manuscript quietly reproduces the conduct that it recommends. A text about restraint requires restrained reading.

This correspondence between ethics and reading practice may be one of the manuscript's most refined features. The impatient reader encounters obscurity. The attentive reader discovers that sound, image, and counsel have been carefully arranged. The woman addressed by the text is instructed not to behave like a horse released into a garden, while the reader is likewise prevented from racing through the poem without discipline. The text places reins upon reading itself.

The moral garden is therefore not merely the external world in which a woman behaves. It is also the textual space through which she, or any subsequent reader, must move. Images of plants, fruits, animals, bodies, clothing, and landscape create an ornamental surface. Beneath that surface lies a tightly organized system of verbal correspondences. The beauty of the garden and the difficulty of the poem perform similar work. Both invite entry, yet neither permits careless movement without consequence.

The royal garden also lends the central metaphor a subtle social edge. A horse loose in an ordinary field may merely run. A horse loose in a carefully arranged garden becomes a scandal. The same energy is judged differently because of the space in which it appears. Female conduct in *Serat Pratamakenya* is consequently evaluated in relation to an elite moral environment in which family reputation, courtly refinement, linguistic competence, and religious propriety converge. The manuscript does not describe all Javanese women in an undifferentiated manner. It records a form of counsel originating in an aristocratic household and directed toward the eldest daughter of Pangeran Pringgalaya.

The afterlife of the counsel confirms that the text moved beyond its initial familial occasion. According to the opening statement, the work was composed as advice for Pangeran Pringgalaya's eldest daughter in 1701 of the Javanese calendar, corresponding to 1775, during the reign of Pakubuwana III. The surviving manuscript examined here, however, is identified as a possession associated with Pakubuwana IX. The distinction between composition and later copying is crucial. The manuscript does not simply preserve a voice from the eighteenth century. It records the continued reproduction of that voice in a later courtly environment.

The act of recopying suggests that the counsel remained meaningful beyond the life of its original recipient. A private paternal instruction acquired a longer institutional and cultural life. Its survival in a later manuscript indicates that the discourse of female moral formation was considered worthy of preservation, circulation, or renewed reading. The text's authority therefore rests not only upon its original authorship, but also upon repetition across generations.

This transmission adds another dimension to the phrase *menule mule ing wuri*. The manuscript advises the preservation of ancestral honour, while its own copying performs an analogous act of textual remembrance. The counsel asks its reader to look backward, and the manuscript survives because later custodians did precisely that. Ancestral morality is not only one topic among others. It is materially enacted through the continued life of the text.

Taken together, the findings show that *Serat Pratamakenya* constructs women's moral formation through a central metaphor of guided energy. The unbridled horse represents conduct detached from reflection, proportion, and relational responsibility. The royal garden represents an ordered moral world that can be sustained only through disciplined movement. Subsequent counsels elaborate this proposition across the body, speech, inner disposition, domestic relations, religious life, and ancestral memory.

Yet the manuscript's woman is not simply reduced to obedience. She is imagined as socially and spiritually powerful enough to affect the fate of parents, husbands, relatives, and descendants. The demand for restraint is inseparable from an acknowledgement of consequence. The woman must be guided because the text believes that she can transform the garden around her. The result is a discourse that is plainly disciplinary, occasionally restrictive, and nevertheless unable to conceal the force it attributes to its female subject.

4. DISCUSSION

The unbridled horse does more than prohibit improper conduct. It provides *Serat Pratamakenya* with a compact theory of female subject formation. The metaphor begins from movement rather than stillness. A horse possesses strength, direction, appetite, speed, and an ability to cross boundaries. Its danger appears only when these capacities become separated from guidance. The manuscript therefore does not initially imagine women as deficient subjects waiting to be supplied with moral capacity. It imagines them as already possessing considerable force. What the text seeks to produce is not female energy itself, but a culturally recognisable form in which that energy may circulate without damaging the ordered environment around it.

This distinction matters because moral instruction is frequently read as a simple opposition between freedom and prohibition. Within such a reading, the acting subject exists before discipline, while social norms arrive later to restrict an otherwise autonomous self. Foucault's account of disciplinary power complicates this sequence by showing that discipline does not merely repress subjects. It also creates capacities, habits, gestures, classifications, and forms of self-observation through which subjects become socially intelligible (Foucault, 1977). Butler similarly argues that gender is not the outward expression of a stable identity that already exists. It is materialised through repeated acts governed by social conventions and possibilities of recognition (Butler, 1990, 1993). Read through this perspective, the counsels of *Serat Pratamakenya* do not simply limit an already completed woman. They participate in producing the woman whom the courtly household can recognise as morally accomplished.

Yet the manuscript should not be reduced to an imported model of discipline. Its ethical vocabulary works through specifically Javanese concerns with pace, refinement, relational awareness, controlled speech, and the management of visible conduct. Keeler's discussion of Javanese interaction shows the significance of speech, status, potency, and self-presentation in the negotiation of social relations (Keeler, 1987). Brenner likewise demonstrates that Javanese ideas about gender and desire cannot be separated from domestic authority, wealth, hierarchy, and changing forms of moral evaluation in Surakarta (Brenner, 1998). The woman envisaged in *Serat Pratamakenya* is formed within this relational field. Her conduct is never entirely hers alone because its effects are imagined to move through parents, husband, siblings, household, religious life, and ancestral reputation.

The royal garden intensifies the politics of the metaphor. A horse released in an open field may be admired for its speed. The same horse released in a carefully arranged garden appears disruptive. The problem is therefore not force in itself, but force in the wrong relation to space. The garden is beautiful because objects, paths, plants, water, and bodies occupy culturally assigned positions. It is also vulnerable because such an arrangement can be damaged by movement that disregards proportion.

The metaphor consequently joins gender discipline to spatial discipline. The ideal woman must learn how to move through a social garden whose order precedes her. She is not told to disappear from it. She is asked to occupy it with precision. This is where the manuscript becomes slightly mischievous. Its warning unintentionally admits that the woman possesses enough force to disturb the garden. A powerless subject would not require so elaborate a system of counsel. The scale of regulation reveals the scale of the capacity that regulation anticipates.

The history of women at the Central Javanese courts also cautions against interpreting courtly women only as secluded and passive figures. Carey and Houben document women's substantial social, political, military, and economic roles at Central Javanese courts during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Carey & Houben, 1987). Their historical account reveals courtly women as actors within dynastic politics, property relations, household management, and conflict. *Serat Pratamakenya* does not directly narrate those activities, but it belongs to a social world in which women's actions could carry significant consequences. The text's insistence on caution, patience, and relational responsibility therefore need not indicate that women lacked agency. It may equally indicate that their agency was considered powerful enough to require sustained moral cultivation.

This reading also prevents the historical woman from being trapped between two unsatisfactory alternatives. She need not be represented either as a silent victim of patriarchy or as a covert liberal individual waiting to resist every norm. Ortner distinguishes agency from resistance by emphasising that agency may include culturally organised projects, intentions, and forms of action that operate within existing structures rather than outside them (Ortner, 2006). A woman who cultivates patience, religious knowledge, care for parents, or responsibility toward

relatives may be acting within a hierarchical order, but she is still developing capacities through which she shapes herself and others.

Mahmood's critique of liberal feminist assumptions is especially useful here. Her analysis of women's piety argues that agency should not automatically be equated with opposition to authority. Capacities for action may be developed through historically specific relations of submission, discipline, and ethical practice (Mahmood, 2001, 2005). This does not require researchers to celebrate inequality or suspend criticism. It requires them to examine what kinds of subjects particular ethical practices make possible before deciding that submission and agency must always cancel each other out.

In *Serat Pratamakenya*, obedience is not identical to emptiness. The daughter is instructed to regulate speech, withstand temptation, recognise consequences, cultivate sincerity, understand religion, honour parents, and preserve relational harmony. These are demanding competencies. The manuscript's woman is obedient, but she is not imagined as morally irrelevant. Her discipline generates efficacy. She may become an example to other women, influence siblings, contribute to the salvation of parents, and draw a husband toward heaven. The text thus attaches extraordinary consequences to behaviours that might initially look like ordinary domestic virtues.

Agency appears here as moral consequence rather than unrestricted choice. The manuscript does not ask whether the daughter can act independently of every relationship. It asks what her actions can do within a dense network of relationships. This conception is closer to relational forms of subjectivity than to the autonomous subject commonly privileged in liberal thought. The woman's capacity becomes visible through effects distributed across the household and across generations.

Such relational agency remains asymmetrical. The manuscript places a disproportionate burden upon women to preserve the moral environment. The wife is warned not to be careless toward her husband, while the text does not appear to offer an equivalent sequence instructing husbands to discipline themselves for the wife's wellbeing. Harmony is therefore not a neutral collective achievement. It is partially feminised labour. The woman must regulate her body, voice, emotion, appearance, and intention so that the family remains ordered.

Nevertheless, the same asymmetry produces a curious elevation of female moral power. If the woman can lead a husband toward salvation, the husband's spiritual future is not wholly his own achievement. If a child's virtue can elevate the parents, parental seniority is not absolute. The apparently subordinate subject becomes the bearer of consequences extending beyond formal hierarchy. Hierarchy establishes who should obey whom, but virtue quietly rearranges who may save whom.

This is one of the manuscript's productive tensions. It does not overthrow patriarchy, but neither does it permit masculine authority to remain spiritually self-sufficient. The husband needs the virtuous wife. Parents may benefit from the pious child. The family depends upon the woman whose conduct it attempts to regulate. The discourse therefore secures hierarchy while simultaneously revealing hierarchy's dependence upon female ethical labour.

Moral formation proceeds through repetition rather than declaration. Butler's account of performativity helps explain why the manuscript restates related instructions across different metres and poetic configurations (Butler, 1990, 1993). Gendered virtue is not established through one decisive act. It must be reiterated through clothing, tone of voice, bodily restraint, patience, religious practice, and responses to parents and spouse. Each act cites and renews the norm of the ideal woman.

Repetition, however, does not guarantee perfect reproduction. Every reiteration occurs in a new circumstance and must be interpreted by the acting subject. The daughter must decide what patience requires, when speech becomes harsh, how sincerity can be distinguished from outward display, and when desire has become excess. The text provides moral coordinates, but it cannot mechanically determine every action. The subject must perform interpretive work.

The instruction to follow sound reasoning once the inner self has become settled is especially important. It suggests that ethical action ultimately depends upon cultivated judgment. The text is not satisfied with blind outward compliance because visible behaviour can be imitated. It demands correspondence between action and interior disposition. Moral authority thus moves partly inward, where the subject must observe, assess, and regulate herself.

Foucault's later writings on ethics describe such processes as practices through which individuals act upon themselves to become particular kinds of subjects (Foucault, 1985, 1986). *Serat Pratamakenya* presents a comparable concern, although within a very different historical and cultural formation. Patience, sincerity, vigilance, religious knowledge, and restraint are not merely rules imposed from outside. They are techniques through which the woman is expected to organise her own interiority.

The interior turn does not eliminate power. It makes power more intimate. External surveillance becomes less necessary when the subject learns to examine her own impulses. The image of the unbridled horse is therefore installed within the woman as a warning against her possible self. Before speaking, moving, displaying pride, or reacting in anger, she must recognise the horse that could escape. The metaphor becomes a compact instrument of self-surveillance.

The manuscript's Islam is ethical, relational, and practical. References to divine destiny, heaven, religious knowledge, prayer, surrender, and moral effort place the counsels within the long process through which Islamic commitments became embedded in Javanese courtly and literary worlds. Ricklefs describes the emergence of a Javanese mystical synthesis in which Islamic identity, observance, and local spiritual understandings could coexist within changing political and cultural formations (Ricklefs, 2006). The manuscript's religious vocabulary reflects neither a purely juridical Islam nor an untouched pre-Islamic ethic. It joins devotion to an established Javanese language of restraint, interiority, ancestral regard, and relational duty.

Read through a *maqāṣid*-oriented lens, these teachings display a cluster of protective ethical purposes without becoming a systematic exposition of Islamic law. Religious knowledge, prayer, surrender, and the orientation toward salvation correspond most directly to the safeguarding of religion. Warnings against conduct that harms one's own person, together with the cultivation of patience and emotional restraint, may be associated with the safeguarding of life. Instructions to consider causes and consequences, settle the heart, and follow sound judgment resonate with the safeguarding of intellect.

The manuscript's strongest convergence with *maqāṣid* appears in its relational and intergenerational ethics. Duties toward parents, husband, siblings, relatives, descendants, and ancestors organise moral conduct around the continuity and wellbeing of the family, thereby approaching the safeguarding of lineage. Its treatment of wealth and poverty also combines acceptance of divine destiny with permission to work and seek welfare, which may be read in relation to the safeguarding of property and material wellbeing. These correspondences should be treated as interpretive affinities rather than proof that Pangeran Pringgalaya consciously formulated the text through a classical *maqāṣid* scheme.

The relationship between destiny and effort is particularly revealing. Wealth and poverty are attributed to divine will, but human beings are still permitted to seek work and wellbeing. Submission does not excuse inactivity. The subject accepts the limits of control while continuing to act within them. This is not unlike the broader ethical pattern identified by Mahmood, in which disciplined submission can become the condition for acquiring particular capacities rather than the disappearance of action (Mahmood, 2005).

The manuscript likewise refuses to restrict virtue to spectacular asceticism. A person need not retreat to a mountain summit to become morally serious. Ethical work unfolds through ordinary acts of seeing, hearing, speaking, dressing, deciding, and responding. This shift from exceptional austerity to daily discipline is central to the text's pedagogy. The household becomes an ethical training ground, and ordinary conduct becomes a spiritual technology.

There is also a quiet relocation of ascetic practice here, even though the manuscript originates within an elite environment. Heroic withdrawal is replaced by repeated attention. The demanding mountain is brought into the domestic interior. Patience at home may become a form of asceticism. Guarding speech may become an exercise comparable to guarding the body. Sincerity may become the invisible terrain upon which discipline is tested.

The riddling form makes reading part of the moral exercise. Although *wangsalan* does not need to dominate the article's title, it remains indispensable to understanding how the discourse works. The poem refuses immediate semantic availability. Clues, answers, sounds, and moral propositions must be connected through careful attention. Meaning arrives after delay.

This delay is not merely ornamental. It creates a reader who must practise some of the very dispositions recommended by the text. An impatient reader sees confusion. A careful reader waits, remembers, tests associations, and gradually reconstructs the statement. The manuscript thus disciplines reception. It does not only describe self-control. It temporarily withholds meaning until the reader performs controlled interpretation.

The relation between poetic difficulty and ethical pedagogy is especially significant in manuscript culture. Arps shows that Javanese textual collections were organised and used as active intellectual environments rather than as inert containers of content (Arps, 1999). Fox likewise warns against treating manuscripts as transparent vehicles carrying stable texts across history without attending to the interpretive practices that continually constitute them (Fox, 2003, 2005). The surviving *Pratamakenya* codex should therefore be understood as both a repository and an event of renewed reading. Its poetic difficulty invites each generation to reconstruct the counsel again.

The riddle also protects the advice from becoming a flat command. Direct prohibition risks sounding merely authoritarian. Encoded counsel gives pleasure, difficulty, memory, and linguistic sophistication to discipline. The daughter is not simply ordered. She is drawn into a game of recognition. The command becomes more memorable because it has first been hidden.

This does not make the power relation disappear. The father still structures the moral world offered to the daughter. Yet the daughter, copyist, reciter, and later reader must actively complete the text's verbal mechanism. Authority authors the riddle, but the recipient produces its successful resolution. Meaning requires cooperation between command and interpretation.

Textual survival transforms paternal counsel into cultural discourse. The work's initial setting is intimate. Pangeran Pringgalaya addresses his eldest daughter. The surviving codex, however, belongs to a later moment

associated with Pakubuwana IX. This temporal distance alters the status of the counsel. A message created for one woman becomes available to other readers and other historical circumstances.

The repeated copying of Javanese court texts should not be treated as mechanical duplication. Manuscript transmission involves selection. A work must be considered sufficiently valuable, useful, prestigious, or meaningful to justify the labour and materials required for another copy. The survival of *Serat Pratamakenya* therefore indicates more than the endurance of paper. It suggests the continued recognisability of its moral project. Such acts of recopying and rereading are part of the historical work through which Javanese court texts acquire renewed meanings rather than merely preserve fixed ones (Florida, 1995).

At the same time, transmission does not preserve meaning unchanged. The eighteenth-century daughter, the nineteenth-century copyist, the courtly owner, the modern philologist, and the contemporary journal reader do not encounter the same social garden. Each reading relocates the horse. The metaphor survives because it is stable enough to be remembered and flexible enough to be reinterpreted.

Its contemporary disturbance lies precisely in that flexibility. A modern reader may reject many of the manuscript's gendered demands while still recognising its account of force, consequence, and self-regulation. The metaphor permits critique because it exposes the anxiety beneath the instruction. The woman must be restrained because she matters. She is watched because her movement can alter the arrangement of the garden.

Women's moral formation in *Serat Pratamakenya* is therefore neither simple empowerment nor simple subordination. It is a historically specific production of consequential womanhood. Discipline limits the woman, but it also trains capacities. Obedience secures hierarchy, but virtue makes the household dependent upon the obedient subject. Religious surrender directs the self toward God, but it also authorises effort and judgment. Domestic responsibility confines women to relational labour, but it simultaneously grants that labour spiritual and intergenerational force.

The central metaphor holds these contradictions together without resolving them. The horse is powerful and dangerous. The garden is beautiful and restrictive. The reins protect and control. None of these elements can be removed without weakening the discourse. A horse without force would make restraint unnecessary. A garden without vulnerability would have nothing to fear. Reins without movement would serve no purpose.

The manuscript's most revealing proposition may therefore be one it never states directly. Courtly morality requires female energy even as it fears female energy without direction. The ideal woman is not produced by extinguishing the horse, but by persuading it to move beautifully through the garden. This is the text's discipline, its anxiety, and perhaps its most scholarly form of mischief.

5. CONCLUSION

Serat Pratamakenya organises women's moral formation through the governing image of an unbridled horse released into a royal garden. The metaphor condenses the manuscript's wider concern with movement, proportion, consequence, and restraint. Its subsequent counsels on speech, dress, patience, religious understanding, family obligation, and ancestral regard function as descriptors of this central proposition. The ideal woman is therefore not imagined as lacking force. She is imagined as possessing enough force to affect the moral arrangement around her. The text seeks to guide that force so that it sustains rather than disturbs the social garden.

The manuscript's disciplinary language remains unmistakably gendered and hierarchical, yet it does not produce a morally insignificant woman. The daughter, wife, sibling, believer, and descendant addressed by the text is burdened with responsibility precisely because her conduct is considered consequential. She may protect family dignity, influence relatives, contribute to parental merit, and lead a husband toward salvation. Women's agency in the manuscript does not appear as unrestricted autonomy or overt resistance. It takes the form of relational and spiritual efficacy developed through self-restraint, cultivated judgment, and ethical labour. The text consequently reveals an enduring tension between restriction and dependence. Courtly order attempts to govern female energy while simultaneously relying upon it.

Seen cautiously through *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, this relational efficacy also reveals an orientation toward protecting religious commitment, personal integrity, cultivated judgment, family continuity, and material wellbeing. The value of this comparison lies not in claiming that *Serat Pratamakenya* explicitly theorises *maqāṣid*, but in showing how Javanese courtly counsel translated Islamic ethical purposes into the ordinary disciplines of speech, conduct, devotion, work, and family responsibility.

The survival of the work from its eighteenth-century composition to a later copy associated with Pakubuwana IX extends this moral project beyond its original paternal setting. What began as counsel for Pangeran Pringgalaya's eldest daughter became a transmissible courtly discourse whose authority was renewed through copying and reading. Its intricate use of *wangsalan* also makes interpretation part of that transmission. Meaning must be approached patiently, reconstructed carefully, and resisted when it appears too quickly. The manuscript thus places restraints not only upon the woman it addresses but also upon the reader who enters its textual garden. Its most revealing lesson may be that neither moral conduct nor interpretation should move like an unbridled horse.

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