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**Intersectional identity of 13<sup>th</sup>-century Javanese women in the novel “Tutur Dedes”**

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**ABSTRACT**

Within thirteenth-century Javanese tradition in Southeast Asia, women are frequently marginalized. Women who had significant influence were often omitted from historical records, such as Ken Dedes. Her tale is exclusively documented in the book of Pararaton. Dedes is seen as a significant woman who bore the ruling dynasty in Java. Modern Indonesian literature depict Dedes in different ways, offering varied interpretations of her character. This study seeks to analyze the intersectional identity of Ken Dedes in the novel *Tutur Dedes: Doa & Kutukan* by Amalia Yunus (2022) because of the intricate nature of her identity. The data consist of narrative elements such as tale sequences, characters, settings, themes, and other literary devices sourced from data repositories relevant to the research issue. The data were collected using reading and note-taking methods. Additionally, it was qualitatively analyzed via the lens of Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality approach. The results indicate that Dedes is shaped by various intersecting identities: education for an educated identity, biological physique for beauty and sexuality, high social status for respectability and knowledge access, religion for personal integrity, gender for the role of a mother, and political position for influence and network power. Each component category interacts to shape, reinforce, and internalize Dedes' identity and self as an educated woman in the thirteenth century, who wields significant influence and can overcome the oppression she faces. This study emphasises the importance of viewing women's identities as a cohesive whole rather than in fragmented elements. Javanese women were well educated and engaged in many facets of society in the thirteenth century.

**Keywords:** *Ken Dedes, old Javanese women, intersectional identity, gender*

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**Article history**

*Submitted:*  
25 January 2024

*Accepted:*  
6 March 2024

*Published:*  
14 March 2024

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**Citation (APA Style):**

Budiyanto, D., Kusmarwanti, K., Liliani, E., & Sayuti, S. A. (2024). Intersectional identity of 13th-century Javanese women in the novel “Tutur Dedes”. *LITERA*, 23(1), 50-62. <https://doi.org/10.21831/ltr.v23i1.70992>

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**INTRODUCTION**

In Javanese tradition and generally in South-east Asia, women typically play a minor role, often serving as supporting actors (Andaya, 2006: xvii). Women with influence are often ignored in national histories. One of these is the 13th-century female figure, Ken Dedes. This woman is identified as a *stri nareswari*, thought to be the ancestor of Java's kings (Lutfiati, 2020; Purwanto, 2023; Putra, 2021: 53; Reichle, 2007: 69). Dedes is regarded as the epitome of a woman who embodies perfection in life wisdom, attractiveness, behaviour, knowledge, and comprehension of virtuous principles (Lutfiati, 2020). The legendary Dedes is exclusively mentioned in the Pararaton and is absent from other works like *Nagarakartagama*. The second book highlights Ken Arok, who is known as Ken Angrok in *Pararaton*, as the primary founder of the Singhasari dynasty and the husband of Dedes. Dedes became a symbol of legitimacy for controlling Java. The rulers of Singhasari and Majapahit were born from her womb.

The figures of Ken Dedes and Ken Arok hold significant influence in Nusantara's historical recollection, leading to their portrayal in numerous literary pieces with diverse explanations. The objective is to offer an overview of the socio-political framework in the thirteenth century and to enhance awareness of the past for a better understanding of current conditions (Dewi, 2003). Furthermore, it contributes to the conservation of indigenous knowledge (Kurnia & Christiani, 2021). Several authors in recent Indonesian literature have endeavoured to explore different perspectives of Ken Dedes' life. Notable Indonesian novels depicting the life of Ken Dedes are *Arok Dedes* (1999) by Pramoedya Ananta Toer and *Ken Arok & Ken Dedes: Pertumpahan Darah Menuju Singgasana* by Gamal Komandoko

(2015). *Ken Dedes: Sang Penggoda* by Wawan Susetyo (2012), *Tutur Dedes: Doa & Kutukan* by Amalia Yunus (2022), and *Ken Arok: Cinta dan Takhta* by Zhaenal Fanani (2013).

Several researchers have analysed literary works depicting the life of Dedes. Dewi's (2003) study of the play *Ken Arok and Ken Dedes* (1928) by Muhammad Yamin and the novel *Arok Dedes* (1999) by Pramoedya Ananta Toer concluded that both works depict modern historical conflicts. Dewi (2003) analysed Ananta Toer's novel *Arok Dedes* (1999) in connection with the present-day setting. Lusiana, Wahyono, & Winarsih (2014) did a study on the novel *Ken Dedes: Sang Penggoda* by Wawan Susetyo (2012), examining its connection to the social pathology faced by the protagonist, Ken Dedes. Nashruddin, et al. (2023) did a study on the novel *Ken Arok & Ken Dedes: Pertumpahan Darah Menuju Singgasana* by Gamal Komandoko (2015). This study examines the type of resistance initiated by Ken Arok, a marginalised faction, against the prevailing authority.

Studies on Ken Dedes primarily focus on her character (Putri, 2017; Asqi & Ta'abudi, 2019; Lusiana & Winarsih, 2014; Kunia & Christiani, 2021), her transformation in literary texts (Andaya, 2006; Munandar, 2011; Dewi, 2003), and her symbolic representation as a figure of resistance (Nashruddin, et al., 2023; Kholifatu & Tjahjono, 2020; Purnamasari, 2018). Ken Dedes' identity is shaped by different factors like gender, race, education, sexual orientation, religion, and social standing. These axes intersect and lead to systemic socioeconomic inequality and injustice.

No study has studied Dedes as an influential figure with a complex intersectional identity, considering factors such as gender, social class, education, religion, economic standing, and political networks, due to the lack of identified studies. Among the five contemporary Indonesian novels focusing on Dedes, “*Tutur Dedes: Doa & Kutukan*” by Yunus (2022) stands out for portraying Dedes as a key character with a variety of identities not seen in the other novels. The novel delves into the *Pararaton* chronicles, offering many viewpoints, with a particular focus on perspectives dominated by females (Agusta, 2022).

Ken Dedes is seen as the primary female figure in early modern South-east Asia, according to Andaya (2006), although her portrayal does not reflect a singular identity. Several identities in Dedes cross. Currently, the thirteenth-century female character is primarily recognised solely for her exceptional beauty. Dedes is identified as a woman with strong attractiveness by various sources (Lutfiati, 2020; Munandar, 2011; Hunter, 2007). Mpu Purwa's lone daughter was highly educated and deeply involved in Mahayana Buddhism. In the novel “*Arok Dedes*”, Ananta Toer (1999) portrays Dedes as intelligent and courageous, as noted by Dewi (2003) and Asqi & Ta'abudi (2019). Dedes possesses various intricate intersectional identities, including gender, social status, education, political stance and connections, and religion. Regrettably, these identities are still perceived as distinct. A person's identity is not solitary but is shaped by a complex intersection of factors like gender, socioeconomic class, and ethnicity (Udasmoro & Nayati, 2020). Clarifying these intersecting complexity not only defines Dedes comprehensively but also elucidates the power dynamics that arise from the functioning of these crossings.

The intersectionality approach of Crenshaw (1989) is suitable for analysing Ken Dedes' identity in the novel “*Tutur Dedes: Doa & Kutukan*” by Amalia Yunus (2022). Women's status is now viewed as interconnected rather than distinct. Identity is a unique and dynamic expression of an individual that is authentic to itself. These identities interact, strengthen, and normalise each other (Shields, 2008: 301-302). Crenshaw (1991: 1242-1244) demonstrated that women of colour endure prejudice due to their intersecting identities. The intersections of race, gender, class, and power hierarchies are crucial structural components that influence the lives of women of colour, rendering them susceptible to coercive multiple subordination (Crenshaw, 1991).

Crenshaw (2019) states that intersectionality focuses on the connection between identity and power. Intersectionality offers a detailed perspective on an individual's experience and social position. Experiences encountered by women of colour are not equivalent to those of white women. White women do not face racialized concerns. Intersectionality studies have evolved, with one of them being utilised as an analytical framework in multiple research areas. Intersectionality is applied as a viewpoint in different research within certain situations (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Carbado, et al., 2013).

This research focuses on describing the intersectional identity of Ken Dedes in the novel “*Tutur Dedes: Doa & Kutukan*” by Yunus (2022). The study will analyse Dedes' intersecting identities to portray her as a comprehensive 13th-century Javanese female character, offer a more detailed and genuine account of her identity, and illustrate the power dynamics resulting from her intersecting

identities. The study aims to confirm the significance of literature in improving understanding of the identity of Javanese women, namely those living in the 13th century.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design. This study aims to analyse Ken Dedes' intersectional identity in the novel "Tutur Dedes: Doa & Kutukan" by Yunus (2022) because of its intersectional nature. The data and material pertaining to the study problem will be analysed qualitatively via the lens of Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality perspective. The study's data consists of narrative facts such as story sequences, characters, settings, themes, and other literary elements from sources containing information about the identification category of Dedes' character. Relevant data related to the identification category of Dedes' various characters is gathered by reading, rereading, and recording phrases, clauses, sentences, and words from the novel. The data in this study consists of sentences, dialogues, and utterances found in the novel "Tutur Dedes" by Amalia Yunus. The collected identification categories pertain to the characters' social status, religion, education, physical attributes, and inherent roles. The research data were collected using reading and recording methods, and then analysed using data condensation, classification of research difficulties, and inference and verification. The main character's identity formation data is analysed using Crenshaw's intersectionality theory (1989). Ken Dedes' identity is mutually shaped and strengthened by the various identity categories that are identified as intersections of identities. The data's validity was assessed through semantic validity, while its reliability was tested using intra-rater and interrater approaches, with the researcher acting as the human instrument.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

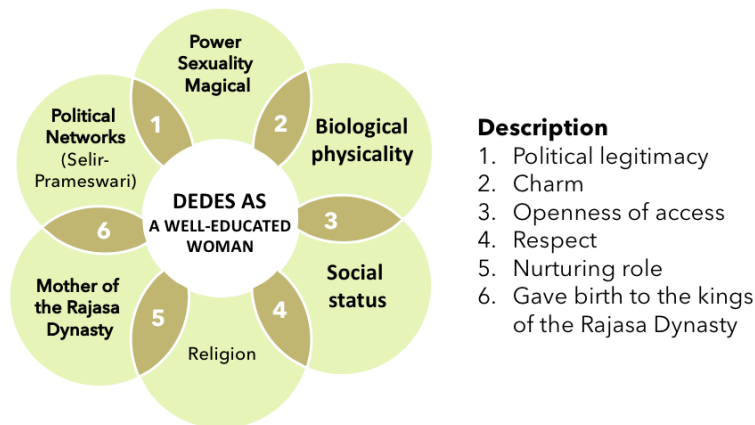
The analysis of the novel *Tutur Dedes: Doa & Kutukan* by Yunus (2022) reveals that Ken Dedes' identity is not solitary but rather intersectional. The woman from the thirteenth century was shaped by various intertwining identities. Dedes' identities are interconnected and together they constitute her entire existence as a remarkable woman. The identities identified encompass various aspects: education, biological physique, high social status/class, religion and views, gender, and political position. Each facet category interacts with one another to shape, reinforce, and internalise Dedes' identity and selfhood as an educated woman in the thirteenth century, who wields significant influence and is capable of overcoming the oppressions she faces. Each category is constructed from increasingly specific subcategories of identity. Table 1 below illustrates the complete depiction of Ken Dedes' crossing identities.

**Table 1. Intersectional Identity of Ken Dedes in the Novel Tutur Dedes by Amalia Yunus**

No.	Intersectional Identities	Sub-categories	Description
1.	Education	a. Mastering literacy b. Mastering archery c. Good at riding d. Good at tactics	Representing Dedes as a well-educated woman
2.	Biological physicality	a. Beautiful b. Young c. Magical sexuality	Dedes as sri nareswari gives legitimacy to male power
3.	Political Positioning	a. Selir b. Prameswari	Placing Dedes in a central position of government
4.	Social status/class	A brahmin princess	Provides access to education and legitimisation of power
5.	Religion	Buddha Mahayana	
6.	Gender	mother	The maternal line in shaping the dynasties of Javanese kings

The novel portrays Dedes as a powerful and prominent woman. This empowerment is centred in Dedes' education. Education rationalises all the accomplishments of the prayers and forecasts made about Dedes since her birth. Dedes prayed to become a pameswari and queen mother, hoping to give

birth to great rulers. When Dedes decreases her participation in her husband's power management, she becomes unable to prevent any curses directed towards her. The novel aims to rationalise the supposedly mysterious prayers and curses surrounding Dedes. Education overlaps with various identities in Dedes. The combination of different identities with schooling shapes Dedes as a powerful and prominent lady. Figure 1 illustrates how different identities intersect and shape Dedes' sense of self.



**Figure 1. Intersectional Forms of Identity within Dedes**

The novel portrays Dedes not as a victim of masculine ambition, but rather as a catalyst for the establishment of a new dynasty in which she actively participates due to her education. Education of women in the thirteenth century can help fight all types of oppression. Her education, magical sexuality, and political connections combined to establish a strong political legitimacy for her husband's new dynasty. Dedes used the combination of education, physical presence, and social rank to get access to knowledge in the palace. Dedes played a significant role in overthrowing the monarchs of the Rajasa dynasty due to the combination of her education, function as a mother to the dynasty, and her political connections as a prameswari. Dedes is seen as a woman with significant influence who can confront the repressive patriarchal system prevalent during her time due to the intersectionality of her various identities with education. She is perceived as a smart, powerful, impactful, and savvy lady in both public and private spheres.

## Discussion

### *Intersectional Identity of Ken Dedes*

The novel of TD mostly portrays Dedes as a knowledgeable, clever, and capable lady. She is depicted as unique among women, possessing abilities that defy societal expectations of women. Dedes was born during a time when patriarchal culture was prevalent. Sons were more anticipated than daughters. Coming from an educated household, she was anticipated to possess higher intelligence and education levels (Yunus, 2022: 9). The quote (1) illustrates the father's aspiration and choice to provide Dedes with a male-oriented education.

- (1) *Jika Ayah kecewa mendapati bayinya ternyata perempuan, itu tidak diperlihatkannya saat itu dan tidak pernah pula keluar dari mulutnya seumur hidupnya. Dia mendekapku, tetapi menolak memberiku nama, dengan dalih aku memilih namaku sendiri kelak. Dan, dia mendidik serta membesarkanku seakan-akan aku ini anak laki-laki, sama sekali tidak seperti orang-orang desa kami mendidik anak perempuan. Lebih-lebih ketika kemudian didapatinya ibuku tidak bisa mengandung lagi dan mereka harus puas dengan satu anak. Aku adalah anak perempuannya sekaligus anak laki-laki yang tidak akan pernah dimilikinya.* (Yunus, 2022: 10).

If Father was disappointed to find that the baby was a girl, he didn't show it at the time and it never came out of his mouth for the rest of his life. He held me in his arms, but refused to give me a name, saying that I would choose my own name later. And she educated and raised me as if I were a boy, not at all the way our village people educated girls. Even more so when he later found out that my mother couldn't conceive anymore and they had to settle for one child. I was both her daughter and the son she would never have. (Yunus, 2022: 10).

During the thirteenth century in South-east Asia, girlhood was a period focused on education in village communities. Girls were taught skills related to fulfilling traditional women's responsibilities, such as household administration and childcare. Old Javanese women not only learned about managing household matters but also studied ethics, art, religion, literature, language, and politics, as evidenced by written records and artefacts (Saraswati, 2015: 112; Nastiti, 2016: 170-173; Mu'aafi, G.H., Yuliati, & Khakim, MNL, 2022: 256). In this novel, Ken Dedes receives an education similar to that of a boy.

Ken Dedes' father, Mpu Parwa, was a Mahayana Buddhist priest who esteemed both science and spirituality. Dedes grew up in a demanding academic environment with a strong tradition of spirituality. This situation sparked Ken Dedes' profound thirst for information. Ken Dedes was lucky to grow up in an atmosphere that provided her with an education and information. This aligns with Pojoh, Tedjowasono, & Nastiti's (1997) study indicating that women in the Old Javanese period had a favourable position due to Hindu and Buddhist influences, either by inheritance or personal accomplishment. A tradition that persisted until the era of Islamic dominance in the archipelago (Munandar, 2015: 17; Fathoni, 2020: 2).

She showed a greater emphasis on acquiring knowledge compared to the other concubines, even though women in 13th century Java were generally aware of the need of education (Saraswati, 2015: 112; Nastiti, 2016: 316-317). Concubines were shaped to be attractive to the ruler. The individuals were instructed to possess qualities of beauty, gentleness, good manners, and proficiency in dancing (Yunus, 2022: 85). Knowledge beyond grooming and appearance was not emphasised. Dedes was considered unconventional as a consort of the Tumapel monarch. Dedes' upbringing instilled in her a strong foundation of education, shaping her into an educated woman. She acquired a variety of knowledge that enhanced her identity as an influential and resilient woman.

Ken Dedes excelled in literacy skills, particularly in reading and writing. Her fundamental skill was developed throughout her childhood education in the mandala setting under the guidance of Mpu Parwa. Her childhood contact with an ascetic grandfather heightened Dedes' awareness of the significance of knowledge in confronting the fate of one's life (Yunus, 2022: 36). Guidance or knowledge empowers individuals. Acquiring extensive information enhances an individual's strength. Furthermore, knowledge is as precious as gold and silver (Yunus, 2022: 41). The following excerpt illustrates the description provided above.

- (2) *"Heh...heh... Dedes, cucuku...Camkan satu hal ini, Nak. Semua cerita itu penting. Kuulangi, semua cerita itu penting. Biasakanlah dirimu haus dan gandrung akan petunjuk."*

***Petunjuk berarti kekuatan. Semakin banyak kamu menguasai petunjuk, semakin kuat dirimu.*** (Yunus, 2022: 41).

"Heh...heh... Dedes, my granddaughter...Keep this one thing in mind, child. All stories are important. I repeat, all stories are important. Make it a habit to thirst and crave for guidance.

**Clues mean power. The more you master guidance, the stronger you become** (Yunus, 2022: 41).

Dedes only understood the concept that knowledge equals power when she was in the Tumapel pakuwon, under the complete authority of Akuwu Tunggal Ametung. It took around a decade to grasp the significance and accuracy of the notion that knowledge equates to power. The quote (3) illustrates Ken Dedes' recognition of the significance of knowledge.

- (3) *Aku teringat pesan kakek pertapa saat perayaan Magha Puja hampir sepuluh tahun yang lalu, bahwa pengetahuan adalah kekuatan.* (Yunus, 2022: 115).

I recalled my ascetic grandfather's message during the Magha Puja celebration almost ten years ago, **that knowledge is power.** (Yunus, 2022: 115).

Dedes' realisation establishes her as a formidable lady because of her knowledge. Under pressure, she attempted to avoid oppression as a concubine under Tunggul Ametung's rule by focusing on studying different disciplines at the library. This measure appeared to be a strategic manoeuvre to deflect all types of pressure from Tunggul Ametung. Dedes' upbringing and schooling shaped her into a resilient individual who was not easily influenced by external factors. Dedes viewed each situation she encountered as a chance to enhance her strength. The quote (4) demonstrates Dedes' recognition of her intellectual abilities, shaped by her upbringing and her strategic use of Tunggul Ametung's library access.

- (4) *"Aku menunggang kuda, aku memanah, dan aku bisa baca-tulis! Aku bahkan lebih tangkas di ketiga bidang itu dibanding sebagian besar laki-laki!"* (Yunus, 2022: 198).

"I ride a horse, I do archery, and I can read and write! **I am even more skilful in all three areas than most men!**" (Yunus, 2022: 198).

This realisation demonstrates Dedes' self-assurance and proficiency in various competencies uncommonly achieved by women. The statement highlights Dedes' exceptional skills in three specific areas, surpassing the ability of most men and underscoring her remarkable achievements as a woman. Dedes has gained a significant amount of critical knowledge through diligent effort. The narrative highlights Dedes' endeavour to enhance his literacy skills, recognising education as a potent asset (Yunus, 2022: 115). This perspective aligns with Wiyatmi (2013: 31-32) who argues that women's education will enhance their societal contribution. Women will develop a sense of self-awareness as autonomous persons.

Dedes was an expert in many fundamental subjects, including astrology, the cosmos, philosophy, Sanskrit, ethics, and the arts (Yunus, 2022: 12). She mastered in agility and martial skills, particularly in horseback riding and archery. Dedes acquired archery expertise from Anjani, a reclusive archer residing on Mount Kawi in 1203 (Yunus, 2022: 12). Dedes excelled in the fields of communication, constitution, and law. She examined foreign manuscripts in the pakuwon library, including a set of papyri from Egypt, paper crafted from bamboo and donated by the Song Dynasty in China, and a collection of manuscripts depicting animal skins that belonged to the Roman Empire (Yunus, 2022: 99). Through his engagement with these foreign texts, Dedes developed a more cosmopolitan perspective. This description supports the claims of Saraswati (2015) and Nastiti (2016) that thirteenth-century Javanese women were accustomed to amassing massive amounts of knowledge.

Dedes also excelled in the field of social political engineering. This particular understanding is emphasised in the novel's narrative as one that Dedes has fully understood. Dedes stands apart from other prominent women in the narrative due to her expertise in this field, unlike Ken Utari and Ken Umang who are both portrayed as powerful figures. The author aims to highlight Dedes' self-identity and critical consciousness as distinct from the other characters. Ken Utari is characterised as an astute and honourable prameswari, however he never participated in governmental affairs (Yunus, 2022: 83).

While Utari remained uninvolved in political affairs throughout Tunggul Ametung's reign, Dedes recognised her role as a catalyst for transformation in the pakuwon from the start of her marriage to Ken Angrok (Yunus, 2022: 136). Ken Dedes is portrayed as a powerful and dominant character in the story. Throughout Angrok's reign from 1211 until 1247, Dedes was consistently engaged. Dedes was a prominent and influential leader who orchestrated political manoeuvres in the 13th-century kingdom, including the coup d'état in Tumapel against Tunggul Ametung, the reign of Ken Angrok, and the resistance to Kadiri rule in 1222 (Saraswati, 2015: 113; Munandar, 2015: 2). Dedes participated actively in the majority of these political processes.

The novel portrays Dedes as a woman who plays a significant part in power struggles often controlled by men. Dedes has been engaged in fierce political conflicts since the start. Dedes' father,

Mpu Parwa, followed the Tentrayana school of Mahayana Buddhism and was pursued by the Kediri monarchs due to his beliefs (Purwanto, 2023: 106-107). Mpu Parwa played a crucial role in resisting Prabu Dandang Gendis, the monarch of Kadiri. In 1222 AD, Dedes participated in the ousting of Kadiri alongside the brahmins who opposed Prabu Dandang Gendis. The Kadiri king desired to receive worship from the priests of Sewa-Sogata (Purwanto, 2023: 122-123). Dedes' marriage to Angrok was seen as a strategic decision to bring together Hindu-Siwa and Buddhism (Munandar: 2011; Munandar, 2015; Fitrahayunitisna, Rohman, & Astawan, 2021). An important manoeuvre within the political and religious strife in 13th century Java.

Dedes had a significant role in the political landscape of the kingdom in 13th century Java. Andaya (2021: xvii) deems Dedes' role as a character particularly noteworthy due to the infrequent inclusion of female characters in South-east Asian historical records, typically only appearing as secondary figures. Dedes is not shown as a supporting character in this work. The novel has selected Dedes as the key character and narrator, shaping both the storyline and the historical context of 13th century Java. This finding aligns with Munandar's (2015: 2) that Dedes is a historical character who had a significant role in the development of Javanese civilisation.

While the novel TD primarily portrays Dedes as an educated, clever, and important lady, the depiction of Dedes as a woman possessing mysterious and potent sexual abilities, as described in the Pararaton text (Andaya, 2021: xv; Purwanto, 2023: 109), remains significant. Dedes is initially depicted as a youthful and attractive woman. Yet, this beauty is constrained by a terrifying prediction from Dedes' infancy. The prophecy predicts that Dedes will ascend to the position of the queen of the universe, known as prameswari, and also become the queen mother of a grand palace. She would give birth to powerful monarchs who would govern distant territories. Nevertheless, her offspring and descendants would engage in lethal conflict to claim the throne. The prophecy also mentions Dedes' beauty, which caused jealousy among the goddesses and angels. The section provides a description of the prophecy directed towards Dedes.

- (5) *“Kamu Dedes, namamu akan terukir dalam sejarah sebagai ratu alam semesta. Kamu akan menjadi prameswari dan ibu suri di istana yang megah tak terlukiskan.*

*Kisah hidupmu akan mengilhami dan dinyanyikan bahkan oleh orang-orang yang hidup jauh setelah masamu. Darimu akan lahir raja-raja agung yang memerintah hingga negeri-negeri seberang. Anak cucumu akan saling membunuh demi berebut takhta.*

*Kecantikanmu membuat iri para dewi dan bidadari kahyangan. Namun, kamu juga akan dibenci karena menjadi penyebab menjandanya puluhan ribu perempuan. Meskipun hidupmu akan selalu dikelilingi orang-orang yang mendukungmu, kamu akan mati dalam kesendirian dan diliputi penyesalan.”* (Yunus, 2022: 8).

"You Dedes, your name will be engraved in history as the queen of the universe. You will be prameswari and queen mother in a palace of indescribable magnificence.

The story of your life will inspire and be sung even by people who live long after your time. From you will come great kings who rule the far-off lands. Your children and grandchildren will kill each other for the throne.

Your beauty will be the envy of the goddesses and angels of heaven. However, you will also be hated for being the cause of the widowhood of tens of thousands of women. Although your life will always be surrounded by people who support you, you will die alone and filled with regret." (Yunus, 2022: 8).

TD's novel gives meaning to the historical reality of Dedes' beauty by reinforcing it in the quality of attitude possessed by Mpu Parwa's daughter. Dedes' beauty further strengthens her identity as an ideal woman, in the perspective of 13th century Javanese society. The study of the Prajnaparamita statue that represents Ken Dedes, as conducted by Indradjaja (2017: 105-116) confirms that the figure of Dedes is

an ideal woman from the aspect of beauty in the perspective of Javanese society during the Hindu-Buddhist period.

Beauty is an inherent quality that one must embrace, although Dedes seems determined to shape her own fate by defying the prophecy concerning her. She chose the name Dewi Rimbu instead of Dedes based on the prophecy that referenced the name Dedes at the time of her birth. Nevertheless, the influence of the prophecy appeared to manifest via Dedes' beauty. Tunggul Ametung abducted Dedes due to her captivating beauty, as stated by Yunus (2022: 57). Dedes has a keen understanding of the potential of her attractiveness. Her beauty has a mystical influence that shapes the course of history in the kingdoms of Java.

Dedes is shown as a confident female character, exhibiting considerable self-assurance in both her intellect and physical appearance. Dedes' personality appears to be shaped by a harmonious combination of knowledge and beauty. Dedes has developed a logical and rational identity through knowledge. Dedes' beauty is consistently portrayed in a mystical manner, visible as light to multiple individuals. The narrative depicts three instances where light is symbolically present in Dedes' life: (1) being captured by a *genderuwo* at eight years old, (2) being kidnapped by Tunggul Ametung at sixteen, and (3) during horse riding lessons with Ken Angrok. Dedes experienced a fantastic event when a *genderuwo* captured them in the Gunung Kawi forest for stealing a red-banded banana. She deserved a two-year imprisonment at the *genderuwo* headquarters for her activities (Yunus, 2022: 18-20). Dedes was absolved of all punishment when the *genderuwo* observed her womb emitting a blue glow throughout the night (Yunus, 2022: 242-243).

The description of the setting in this third event is slightly different from the general view that the bluish light in Dedes' womanhood is seen when she gets off the chariot. As the cloth flutters, it reveals the light emanating from the "secret" part between Dedes' crotch (Andaya, 2021: xv; Purwanto, 2023: 109; Munandar, 2015: 4). In *Tutur Dedes*, the revelation of the female region occurs when Dedes first practises riding with Ken Angrok. The bluish light that Ken Angrok sees emanating from Dedes' womanly area makes him uneasy, as well as raising questions that bother him. Ken Angrok said that it was not lust that arose, but curiosity (Yunus, 2022: 160). To Dang Hyang Lohgawe, Ken Angrok asked for an explanation about the woman whose womanly area glowed blue. The following quotation (6) explains Dang Hyang Lohgawe's answer to Ken Angrok.

- (6) *"Jika ada perempuan yang demikian, Angrok anakku, perempuan itu dikatakan sri nareswari. Ia adalah perempuan yang paling sempurna, Nak. Jika kamu memperistri perempuan itu, tidak peduli siapa kamu dan bagaimana masa lalumu, kamu akan menjadi maharaja. Perempuan itu juga akan melahirkan raja-raja."* (Yunus, 2022: 161).

"If there is such a woman, Angrok my son, **that woman is called sri nareswari**. She is the most perfect woman, son. If you marry that woman, no matter who you are and what your past is, you will become a maharaja. That woman will also give birth to kings." (Yunus, 2022: 161).

The presence of the light that is often seen in Dedes is like a magical element, which borrows Faris' (2004: 7) view as an irreducible element. In the context of the story, the light in Dedes is difficult to explain with empirical natural laws. That is why, as a magical element, there is no denial by the characters or the narrator of the event. It blends realist and magical events together irreducibly. In the first and third events, the blue light that appears in Dedes' womb and female region is closely related to prophecy. Both connect female beauty and sexuality with magical legitimisation of power. The magical sexuality in Dedes fuelled several political events, including the coup against Tunggul Ametung's regime by Ken Angrok and the Battle of Ganter in 1222. In that event, full support from several parties was given to the Tumapel forces to fight the Kadiri kingdom. One of the reasons was because of the existence of Dedes who had the legitimacy of magical power. The following fragment (7) illustrates Ken Angrok's motive to coup Tunggul Ametung. The motive was driven by Ken Dedes' magical sexuality that Ken Angrok had seen.

- (7) *"Dang Hyang, perempuan yang menyala biru kewanitaannya itu adalah selir Akuwu Tunggul Ametung. Jika menikahi seorang sri nareswari bisa membuatku menjadi"*



*maharaja, Akuwu akan kubunuh dan selirnya akan kuperistri. Tapi, itu hanya kalau Dang Hyang mengizinkan.*" (Yunus, 2022: 161).

"Dang Hyang, **the woman who glows blue is the concubine of Akuwu Tunggul Ametung. If marrying a sri nareswari can make me a maharaja, I will kill Akuwu and marry his concubine.** But that is only if Dang Hyang permits." (Yunus, 2022: 161).

Dedes' unique and powerful identity is defined by the description of her sexuality, including her uterus and feminine area, as well as her status as an educated woman. Dedes' beauty and sexuality has an enchanting quality akin to the potency of divination. The educated side of Dedes is rational and fosters critical awareness in her. Dedes is shown as a lady of formidable intellectual prowess, yet also enveloped by the mystical influence of ancient prophecy. This viewpoint characterises Dedes as a woman with a powerful and important persona. Dedes' beauty has a tangible physical appeal, but she also holds a role in legitimising authority spiritually.

Ken Dedes' marriage shapes her identity as a woman embedded in a network of power, rather as just an average woman. Her domestic duty is intertwined with her position as the ruler's wife. In this environment, Dedes assumes two roles as a woman within the power structure: a concubine and a prameswari. The novel represents Dedes in the midst of political influence, first as the wife of Tunggul Ametung and later as the wife of Ken Angrok.

Dedes, as Tunggul Ametung's concubine, took steps that established her as an empowered woman in the pakuwon. Dedes observed the lives of the concubines in the pakuwon. Dedes observed that concubines were in a precarious position and often experienced different types of cruelty. Concubines, as women dedicated to power, are used for political advantage and social status. Women are considered significant assets that can provide political, social, and economic benefits. Dedes criticises the concubines' lives in the pakuwon in the following quotation.

- (8) "*Selir-selir tersebut adalah perempuan-perempuan tercantik yang didatangkan dari seluruh penjuru Tumapel, sebagian besar dipersembahkan oleh desanya dan keluarganya sendiri demi mempererat hubungan dengan pakuwon dan meningkatkan status kalangan dan keluarga mereka di mata Akuwu.*" (Yunus, 2022: 84).

"The concubines were the most beautiful women brought in from all over Tumapel, **most of whom were offered by their own villages and families in order to strengthen relations with the pakuwon and improve the status of their circles and families in the eyes of the Akuwu.**" (Yunus, 2022: 84).

Dedes is knowledgeable about the plight of certain concubines who experience multiple layers of persecution due to patriarchal culture. The layers of oppression can be outlined as follows. The initial layer of oppression is the societal and familial expectations that force village women into the role of concubines. They were considered as "offerings" to serve political objectives and enhance the family's social standing. Former concubines had limited options. They were obligated to remain loyal to the monarch for life and were prohibited from marrying anyone else, unless the ruler granted permission for them to marry another man (Yunus, 2022: 85). The second layer of oppression involves the influence imposed by the network of authority when one becomes a concubine. Concubines hold a very weak position as stipulated by regulations. They were considered merely as commodities designated for sacrifices and presents. Concubines in the pakuwon underwent rigors training to cultivate beauty, grace, politeness, refined manners, proficiency in dancing, and hedonistic behaviour (Yunus, 2022: 85). Nevertheless, all these types of training for the concubines were designed specifically for them to adhere to the "beauty norms," with the primary goal of attracting the Akuwu, as Saraswati (2022) suggests.

Upon becoming a concubine, Dedes sought to use her power and influence to improve her education and personal growth. She leveraged her influence to enquire Akuwu for consent to engage in archery practice and access a library (Yunus, 2022: 87). The requests were considered odd and unusual. Dedes ultimately gained access to the library, considered the most secure and safe by Tunggul Ametung (Yunus, 2022: 92). Accessing the library is crucial for obtaining education. Tunggul Ametung did not

perceive Dedes' wish to freely access the palace library as harmful. Accessing knowledge can elevate an individual's awareness.

Women's education sparks self-awareness and empowers them to break free from oppression. Ken Dedes possesses this insight, unlike the other concubines of Tunggul Ametung. Upon becoming a concubine, Ken Dedes participated in political activities and strategies to evade the repressive rule of the Akuwu. Dedes formulated a formal complaint against Tunggul Ametung to the Kadiri monarch, Prabu Danang Gendis, on account of his immorality (Yunus, 2022: 105-120). Dedes also supported Ken Angrok's political coup against Tunggul Ametung through a covert manoeuvre. Her resistance to the injustice that befell her manifests in both of these ways.

Ken Dedes, in her capacity as praweswari, participated extensively in a variety of state political activities. Her strategic manoeuvre was diametrically opposed to the traditions, perspectives, and stances of the prameswari who came before her. Given the royal governance system in Java during the 13th century, Dedes regarded the position of Prameswari as highly strategic. Education contributed to Dedes' understanding of these political responsibilities.

Dedes believed that Ken Utari had the capability to participate in her husband's governmental affairs. She appeared astute and dignified. Intelligence demonstrated her capability, while nobility indicated her social status and powerful demeanour. Akuwu Tunggul Ametung never included Ken Utari in governance. Tunggul Ametung's lawful wife likewise refrained from getting involved. Dedes held a strategically important position as prameswari in the 13th-century royal administration structure in Java. Dedes' understanding of these political responsibilities was shaped by her education. Being Ken Angrok's official wife is crucial for her to implement significant structural changes.

- (9) *“Aku berusaha menjelaskan sebisa-bisaku bahwa kedudukanku di pakuwon akan sangat berpeluang untuk membuat banyak perubahan yang kami cita-citakan. Segala ketidakpuasan umat yang selama ini hanya bisa kami keluhkan diam-diam, sekarang bisa kami ubah. Tidakkah mereka gembira memiliki seseorang yang bisa mereka andalkan di dalam dinding pakuwon?”* (Yunus, 2022: 136).

**“I tried to explain as best I could that my position in the pakuwon would be very likely to make many of the changes we aspired to. All the people's dissatisfaction that we had only been able to complain about silently, we could now change. Won't they be happy to have someone they can rely on within the walls of the pakuwon?”** (Yunus, 2022: 136).

In light of the aforementioned quotation, Yunus (2022) intends to demonstrate in this novel that Dedes' matrimonial union with Ken Angrok was driven by both political considerations and a profound sense of altruism. Dedes aspired to effect numerous reforms through her influential position in the pakuwon.

The tenure of Dedes as prameswari was approximately thirty-six years (1211-1247 AD). Dedes effectively employed the prameswari position to execute calculated political manoeuvres, such as serving as a political advisor (Yunus, 2022: 152-154), operating within the domains of defence and security (Yunus, 2022: 186-187), designing urban planning (Yunus, 2022: 210-212), and overseeing the management of Tumapel's natural resources (Yunus, 2022: 210). The participation of Dedes exemplifies the identity of thirteenth-century Javanese women who were actively engaged in a variety of spheres. According to research conducted by Saraswati (2015), Nastiti (2016), and Munandar (2015), women in the Old Javanese period held many roles including government officials, royal advisory councils, judges, artists, and were involved in the economy.

The identity of Dedes created in TD is multifaceted. The characteristics of each Dede character connect with one another. Women's intersecting identities align with Crenshaw's (1989) concept of intersectionality. This discovery contrasts with the study carried out by Asqi & Ta'abudi (2019) on the *Pararaton* text, the novel *Arok Dedes* by Toer (2009), and *Ken Arok: Cinta dan Tahta* by Fanani (2013). Dedes' identity and character in these works tends to be unique and passive. Dedes' role is supplementary to the tale. A contrasting picture is given in TD's book; Dedes' identity is complex and multifaceted, building and reinforcing her status as a powerful woman in thirteenth-century Java. The novel portrays Dedes as an educated lady, challenging the traditional marginalisation of women in Java and South-east Asia.

The identity as a young and beautiful woman intersects with the magical sexuality in Dedes that forms the power of enchantment. It is this charm that brings Dedes as a Panawijen village girl to the centre of Tumapel's power. It was also this identity that would later bring Dedes to a larger web of power, namely as Ken Angrok's prameswari. Previously, her identity as the daughter of a Mahayana Buddhist brahmin brought Dedes open access to knowledge. This condition will shape Dedes' identity as an educated woman, who is knowledgeable and strategic in her behaviour. This identity distinguishes Dedes from most women at that time who tended to only fulfil domestic tasks, such as taking care of the house and children (Andaya, 2021: 282-283).

Her beauty, education, social status, faith, and position in the web of power (concubine and *prameswari*) placed Dedes as a powerful woman in the thirteenth century. Each identity category not only intersects with one another but also strengthens one another. The educational category in Dedes is the primary source of identity reinforcement, besides her mystical beauty. According to Shileds' (2008: 301-302), each identity category influences, strengthens, and normalises the others. Identity formation is a dynamic process in which individuals play an active role. This is in contrast to Crenshaw's (1991: 1242-1244) reading of women of colour, where the intersections of race, gender, class and power structures make them vulnerable to multiple subordination. In the context of Dedes, these intersecting identities do not subordinate her, but place her in a position of influence and legend. As Crenshaw (2019) points out, intersectionality pays attention to the relationship between identity and power. These intersecting identities establish Dedes in intense power relations. The novel TD places Dedes' education as the main factor that strengthens and shapes identity. It is her education that makes the magical prayers and curses of her childhood more logical.

## CONCLUSION

This study determines that Ken Dedes' intersectional identity in the 13th century Javanese context is portrayed as cohesive rather than fragmented. Several identified identities in Dedes overlap. Education, beauty, social rank, faith, gender, and power networks converge to shape and reinforce Dedes' identity and selfhood as an educated woman in the thirteenth century.

Other identities within Dedes intersect with education. Dedes is portrayed as a powerful, important, and legendary Javanese woman in the thirteenth century due to the intersectionality of her identity. Dedes is now depicted as a thirteenth-century Javanese lady engaged in all aspects of life, rather than as a woman with mystical sexuality. Her position and responsibilities were equivalent to that of men. Education empowers women and liberates them from repressive circumstances, enabling them to navigate an unjust system with strength.

The study's findings confirm that Old Javanese women were accustomed to engaging in a wide range of public activities, such as education, governance, culture, social, and domestic duties. This study also raises knowledge about the identity, position, and function of women in history, particularly during the precolonial era in Java. Additional research is required regarding the identity, position, and role of women in Indonesian literary works during the colonial period.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank DIPA DPRM UNY for funding support and Prof. Dr. Wiyatmi, M.Hum for valuable discussion to enrich this article.

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