



Politics of Local Occultism: An Ethnographic Study of Tarot Community in Java

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Abstract

As a global occult practice, Tarot has been practiced by local people, including Javanese practitioners, and it is perhaps that a study of localization is necessary to determine how strongly influential Javanese belief system has been upon Tarot practitioners, or how Javanese Tarot practitioners have adopted and modified Javanese esoteric and occult practices into Tarot. My thesis is that localizing Tarot could be possible in terms of adaptation, acculturation, indigenization, or—in some extents—hybridization in Javanese society, either in the levels of superficial, practice, or values. By using ethnography as method of research, this study has resulted in two major findings: (1) Javanese Tarot practitioners have negotiated themselves in the cultic milieu they live in by localizing their alias, communities, Tarot reading strategies, Tarot decks, and their personal preference to gather in *candi*, and (2) Tarot practice in Java has closely been related to some Javanese belief systems, such as *rasa* and *kahanan*, and it makes them consciously or unconsciously practice Javanism in their daily activity of Tarot with different levels. However, these have implications and challenges they should deal with: cultural ambivalence, a cultural implication that they can't be free from it, because as much as they play Western Tarot, they are still Javanese. This ambivalence also indicates an inseparable concept of globalization as dynamic one in the term of 'localizing'. The idea of localizing Tarot makes it possible to be a global phenomena in which local Javanese belief system embedded into Javanese Tarot practice became a part of global network. The involvement of Javanese practitioners in e-commerce or international market suggests a juncture between particular occult practices and global ones to celebrate the cultural hybridity within Tarot.

Keywords: *Occult, Tarot, Javanism*

Introduction

*Setinggi-tingginya aku belajar ilmu Barat,
aku adalah dan bagaimana pun jua tetaplah Jawa.*

(As much as we have studied Western knowledge,
I am, and whoever I am, still Javanese)

~ Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX Yogyakarta ~²

Tarot is a global occult phenomenon practiced by individuals or communities in many places, including in Java. Today, many Javanese Tarot practitioners individually practice Tarot and collectively build Tarot community (which is firstly begun by Ani Sekarningsih with *Padepokan Tarot Indonesia* in 2001). The fact that Tarot is brought to Java from Western countries suggests an interplay between globalization and localization, and it is why perhaps that everything currently understood as globalization can be subsumed as “actually” the study of localization.

Tarot is essentially a deck of playing cards made up of seventy eight cards, twenty-two of which are called the Major Arcana, or trumps, and of four suits (Cups, Wands, Pentacles, and Swords) of fourteen cards number from ace to ten along with four “court” cards called the Minor Arcana. Allegedly born in Italy in fifteenth-century (some people believe its emergence since Moses period) as trick-taking game (Pollack, 2007, p. 25), today’s Tarot is used, played, and modified by people throughout the world.

An interesting fact is that Tarot deck has been associated with long and rich esoteric and occult history. Eliphas Levi (1979), for instance, made connection between Tarot cards and Jewish mysticism, claiming that the cards represented a secret alphabet and that twenty two cards of the Major Arcana could be directly linked to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In her dissertation, *Tarot Magick: Structure of Belief* (2010), Rebekkah Zhuraw used an ethnographic approach to study Tarot reader’s belief system in understanding how four areas of *magic*, including magical thinking, practices, symbolism, and manifestation, were associated to structure of belief.

The problem are among others: (1) In history of Tarot, there are no empirical studies focusing on a relation between (global) occult Tarot and (local) Javanese occult/esoteric. (2) In Javanese cultic milieu, Tarot practitioners not only have to negotiate themselves in the combative structure of other occult practices (such as *dukun*, *pelet*, *prewangan*, *primbon*, *Feng Sui*, etc.), but also to localize ‘Western’ Tarot by adopting some Javanese belief systems. (3) Today’s Tarot is simplified as mere *syirik* or *dukun* or *klenik*, traditional practices representing antithesis of modern knowledge or formal religion.³ (4) It will be worse since Tarot practitioners have to deal with problem of legal protection without having a national tarot association as like American Tarot Association (ATA) in US. (5)

Tarot is seemingly exclusive for some people because production of Tarot in Indonesia is always resulted from many sources, including ‘secular’ knowledge, such as Jungian psychoanalysis,⁴ while Tarot readers cannot discharge themselves from encountering with local knowledge and space from which they are consciously or unconsciously adopting and modifying local values into their practices.



My thesis is that if Tarot is regarded as a (global) occult practice and today practiced by Javanese people, it is possible to consider about how strongly influential Javanese belief system has been upon Tarot practitioners? How do Javanese Tarot practitioners adopt and modify Javanese occult practices into Tarot?

They are Javanese people, but they practice Western Tarot occult. This “double” position is rarely investigated to understand a “new” cultural establishment of occult community in Java. For a simple case, Javanese mystical idea of *rasa* has closely been correlated to Tarot’s use of *intuition*. Of course, they are not really identical, but they share idealistic power for those who use it. *Intuition* and *rasa* will be helpful for generating positive energy for people who use “medium” in order to get closed with Spirit, *Sephirot*, God, or goddess or—using Ferzacca’s term (2002)—simply to have an empty thought (*pikiran kosong*). This operation worked a long time ago either in Tarot or in *kebatinan* practices. At the same time, practicing Tarot is actually alike practicing Javanese philosophy of *kahanan*, or more precisely Tarot is “institutionalization” of *kahanan*, a condition in which people have been in psychological trouble. Without *kahanan*, without *rasa*, Tarot probably does not work, and that is why viewing Tarot from this perspective is important, especially for some of Javanese people who still discredited Tarot from any point of view.

Consequently, this will position me as researcher in two functions: (1) as *outsider*, who tries to investigate Tarot practitioners in dealing with double position: maintaining “Western” Tarot playing cards in one side, and negotiating with local cultic milieu in other side, and (2) as *insider*, who attempts to analyze Tarot from Javanese perspective to determine how ‘compatible’ Javanism with Tarot practice in order to—among others—reduce ‘stereotypical view’ as merely *dukun* or *klenik*.

Ethnography as a Gate

Ethnography is selected to be used in this study because it is applicable to research a certain cultural system and its relation to the specific community. I have collected data by conducting an intensive participant-observation (by giving priority on ‘observation’) with Tarot practitioners since February 2014 in Yogyakarta.

Yogyakarta become a central of location of my research because of three reasons. (1) Javanism is mostly still practiced by people in Yogyakarta as Islamic-Hindu-Buddhist-Animistic legacy complex of Mataram and Majapahit, and it leads me to easily access on traditional Javanese religiophilosophical belief system and to promote them as a representation of Javanese thought; (2) In 2012 a Tarot community has been built in Yogyakarta, *Dewaroetji*, which has lineage to *Padepokan Tarot Indonesia* as the ‘first’ Tarot community of Java, built by Indonesian Tarot expert, Ani Sekarningsih, in Jakarta. As the only one community in Yogyakarta, *Dewaroetji* has built a larger network with other communities outside Yogyakarta and still participated in some psychic events held by other communities; (3) In regards with *Dewaroetji*, its members are people with different religious background, which is in line with my academic concern of interreligious studies. The relation with *Dewaroetji* has been increased since I met with some members of *Dewaroetji* on May 2014. I had an informal conversation with them under some circumstances, particularly in their regular meetings on Saturday night in lobby of Sahid Rich Jogja Hotel Jl. Magelang and Tuesday night at Legend Café in Kotabaru, Yogyakarta.

The diversity of participants allows me to continuously cross-check reports and search for ‘deviant’ evidences (Campbell, 1975; Stewart, 1998; Douglas, 1976). To extend information on their perceptions, I have conducted an interview with some Javanese people concerning with *kebatinan*, and other Tarot practitioners outside *Dewaroetji*, such as Ani Sekarningsih’s daughter, Connie Rahakundini Bakrie; Cesario Indrawan, a leader of Saraswati community in Semarang; Leonardo Rimba, a nephew of Bunda Ani, but in 2005 he had ‘separated’ from her because of allegedly the different approach to Tarot; Joshev Audifax, a Tarot reader in Surabaya who focuses on theoretical analysis of Tarot in psychological perspectives.

Besides participant observation, informal conversation, and interview, I seek for other sources, including stories and reports in mass media, webpages, and scientific journals, to find relevant information to be coded with my field notes. It

is important to consider about their involvement in branding themselves by providing commercial services.

Localizing (and) Occultism

As mentioned before, Tarot could be regarded an occult traditional practice. A theoretical framework of *occult*, therefore, needs to be provided here. In *Dictionary of Occult, Hermetic, and Alchemical Sigils* (1981), Fred Gettings divides ‘occult’ into three domains: *symbol* (refers to a literary as well as an iconographic connotation), *sign* (refers to a very wide application, ranging from gestures and tokens made by the body, to a whole battery of devices designed for the purpose of communication), and *glyph* (refers to sculpture and architecture, symbols appearing in relief work). Every entry in this dictionary is prefaced by an abbreviation for the *class list*, the group of hermetic studies in which the sigil is most commonly found, i.e. Alchemical (Alc.), Astrological (Ast.), Geomantic (Geo.), Magical (Mag.), Occult (Occ.), Palmistic (Pal.), Religion (Rel.). This dictionary categorizes Tarot into the Occult class (Occ.), meaning *the sigils used by WIRTH 1927 in connexion with this attempt to relate the Tarot arcana to the cabbalistic tradition under separate headings...* (Gettings, 1981, p. 259). However, Gettings admits that these categories are interchangeable and “considerable overlapping of boundaries” (p. 17), which means that Tarot could be interpreted and used among these categories, including religion.

This study suggests that Javanese *kebatinan* and its occult practices could be also basis of reference and point of departure for Tarot, and have an intertwined correspondence with Western esoterism. This study also tries to find its relevance with an assumption that Tarot and its practitioners cannot go away from sociological context. It means that cultic milieu where Tarot is practiced will be influential on the way Tarot practitioners negotiate themselves and adopt the religiophilosophical belief system in attempt to achieve a good relation with clients and larger occult groups.

Today, many Javanese people play the Tarot, and it is not impossible to look forward process of adaptation, acculturation, modification, indigenization, or even hybridization upon the ‘Western’ Tarot. I extract these actions by using term ‘localizing’. Actually, the issue of localization is not a new phenomenon in the recent explosion of research on World Religion. In context of Christianity, for instance, localization has become a central topic (Freston, 2000, 2001; Hutchinson & Kalu, 1998; Howel, 2003), particularly to ask how Christianity is understood by those non-Western people who come to identify with this formerly European and US based religion. They commonly focus on localization in framework of hegemony, resistance, domination, and (miss)interpretation (Comaroff, 1985; Ileto, 1976; Rafael, 1993).

This study will begin with anthropology of Tarot, in which process of “localization” will be framed in terms of adaptation, acculturation, modification, indigenization, or hybridization in superficial, values, and practices. By

localization, I refer to *process of adapting product or service or value to a particular language, culture, and desired local "look-and-feel"*. Ideally, a product or service is developed, so that localization is relatively achieved.

Occult Revival in Java

The term 'occult revival' has been designated by Marcello Truzzi (1972) to refer a contemporary phenomenon in urban American society in which 'popular religion' became a trending topic to demonstrate final liberation of Western man (and woman) from traditional cultural prohibitions dealing with the supernatural. Astrology is an indication for this phenomenon with which people has concerned by using means of 'modern' divination rather than 'traditional' rituals to reduce its ambiguity.

In the late eighteenth century, production of occultism in Indonesia has been blossomed with emergence of Indonesian/Malay 'classic' magazines focusing on *ASTROLOGY*, *metaphysics*, *occult science*, *kebatinan*, *yoga*, *philosophy*, *prophecy*, etc. To mention a few, *Primbon Nasib* by R. Tedjohadisumanto (Solo: Pustaka Adi, 1959), *Poetsaka Adji Saka* by Ki Adjar Windoesana (Semarang: Bookhuis "Lecta" v/h Terminus, 1933), *Primbon Nudjum Djawa Sedjati* by R. Mugihardjo and Al. mBah Lantip (Semarang: Toko Buku Keng, 1958), *Hway Yong Primbon: Faal, Firasah, Ramal, Astrologie, Tjap Tjie Shio* by anonymous (Surabaya: Pustaka Gaja Baru, 1950), *Ngimpi Keduten dll.* by N. A. Srimaya (Surabaja: Marfiah, 1960), *101 Kedjadian Aneh dan Gaib* by Han Ngo Bie (Liok An Tjoe) (Semarang: Toko Buku Ho Kim Yoe, 1948), *Surja Gesang* by Sapphire (Kudus: Kwa Giok Djing, 1950), *Sapta Pudjangga (Ramalan dari Tudju Pudjangga dan Kenjata'annja)* by Sapphire (Kudus: Kwa Giok Djing, 1949), *Hwang Yong Nudjum & Hway Yong Poo Kam* (a testament book about inner illumination) by Go Hway Yong Sian Seng (Surabaya: N. V. Tjerman, 1951), or *Poestaka Radja* which still uses spelling of van Ophuysen (without cover, but including 94 pages), etc., are some examples of works authored by Tionghoa *peranakan*.

Besides indicating an influence from Tionghoa *kebatinan*, the books which have been published on 1930s shows that publishers have central role in establishing occultism in Java. This is not a new phenomenon because the occult establishment has been characterized by involvement of publishers to 'advertise' the personal interest in occultism or—using Martin Marty's terminology (1970, p. 215)—“presentation of the self of occult and metaphysical groups and individuals”.

The Javanese occult revival could be also historically traced to the revivalism of Theosophy movement in Indonesia a long before 1990. It has been very popular that Theosophy is also strongly related to occultism,

order of illuminati, magic, witchcraft, sorcery, paganism, satanism, **TAROT**, new age movement, including meditation and spirituality. Firstly born on 1875 in New York, United States, with a Jewish Russian woman, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Theosophy has influenced a spirit of nationalism and religious perspectives. The Theosophy adherents or Freemasonry has been very considerable since 1900s in Indonesia. Moreover, according to Robert Van Neils in *Munculnya Elit Modern Indonesia*, Javanese cities became not only a center of trade course of European people, but also a place where they have disseminated their cultural and ways of thought, including Theosophy. In circle of BPUPKI (*Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*), for instance, Radjiman as a leader of BPUPKI's assembly is one of the most important figure of Theosophy and member of Freemasonry group. It also includes Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Goenawan Mangonkoesoemo, Armin Pane, Sanusi Pane, Siti Soemandari, and other national figures, in particular coming from *Keraton Pakualaman* Yogyakarta, Tri Koro Dharmo organization, Jong Java, Boedi Oetomo, Perhimpunan Goeroe Hindia Belanda, and Sekolah Pendidikan Dokter Hindia in Batavia (see more details, Artawijaya, 2010).

Particularly in Yogyakarta, the organization of Theosophy still exists. Look at a website Perwathin (*Perhimpunan Warga Teosofi Indonesia*), www.Theosophy-indonesia.org, it was clear that based on the 49th Congress of Perwathin in Solo on May 18-20, 2012, the organizing committee of Perwathin has been settled, and one of them are standing at Yogyakarta, by name *Sanggar Dharma Sukarjo*, Jl. Kusumanegara No. 16, Yogyakarta.

In addition to Theosophy and Tionghoa's occultism, Javanese people also have richly been nuanced with *kebatinan* practices, such as *tapa*, *samadi*, *tirakat*, *primbon*, *petungan*, *mutih*, etc. In Yogyakarta particularly, occultism and/or esoterism has firstly been flourished by *Sunan Kalijaga* or *Raden Said*, one of the famous nine Islamic saints (*wali songo*). In *kejawen*, people should do *tirakat* in order to get *khodam* (a sacred spirit). From this spirit, they develop many occult practices, such as *kanuragan* (self defense), *pengasih* (mercifulness), *trawangan* (prophecy), *atraksi* (performance), and *kesehatan* (mental health).

However, some people consciously exploit the forces that come within their might by their understanding and penetration of supernature. For this purpose, they interchange *kebatinan* with *black magic*, engage in the type of *kebatinan* that is called *klenik*. They use *black magic* not to be united with God, but to achieve some practical goals, for instance sorcery (*santet*), voodoo (*teluh*), getting rich instantly (*pesugihan*), or attracting mate's interest (*pengasih*). Their practices are thought to endanger the harmony of

society, to be disruptive and evil. Officially **KLENIK** has been defined as 'those devious practices that are inspired by the lowly passions for earthly goods and devilish powers' (Sosrosudigdo, 1965, p. 90).

This also seems to be a reasonable argument why *pedukunan* or *shamanism* or *klenik* is still flourished in Java, especially Yogyakarta. The existence of *dukun* has a central role in Javanese tradition, especially in determining a measure of fivefold division of society or the so-called **PRIMBON** or *petungan*. Each division was believed to be closely connected with a higher cosmic unity and identified with a trade or profession, a lucky day of the five-day week, a color, and a personality trait, as *Sedulur Papat Limo Pancer* (more discussed later).

However, it will be complicated because the so-called **DUKUN** (shaman) has various definitions. Shaman could be categorized based on their functions, such as: the *prewangan* shaman (connecting human beings and spirits), the midwife shaman/*dukun beranak* (assisting childbirth), the *siwer* shaman (repelling bad luck), and the *susuk* (charm needle) shaman who promises to bring beauty, fame, and respect by implanting in parts of the human body a sort of short needle made of gold, diamond, or crystal. There are also *jampi* shamans who cure patients with their spells and herbs. There are also the *santet/teluh/tenung* (soothsayer) shamans who torture and harm their foes with magic. In other parts of Indonesia, there are various kinds of shaman: the *leak* shaman (in Bali), the *minyak kuyang* (magic oil) shaman (in South Kalimantan), and many others.

Javanese society is also familiar with *rasa*. In Javanese terms, **RASA** is not only a term applied to sensory experiences, implying a particular aesthetic, but also a cognitive organ, used actively within mystical practice or—in modern term—*intuitive knowledge*.⁵ It could be increased through **MEDITATION** or *samadi* or *tapa* or *laku prihatin*. Meditation is also practiced by Javanese artists for healing purposes. Some Javanese painters who practiced *kebatinan* are usually asked to meditate on the health of somebody just diagnosed by “Western” trained medical doctors as suffering from certain illnesses.

In Javanese healing and moral teaching, **WAYANG** is necessarily important. A *wayang* performance is believed to have the power to protect, cure, and exorcise. *Mahabharatha* consists of mythological stories of *wayang* mostly used by performers to provide vocabulary for the classification of personality and cosmic analogies to characters and events within the realm of earthly politics (Anderson, 1989, p. 32).

Another important part of meditation in Javanese society is **CANDI**. The *candi* (temple) are believed to have been erected to commemorate and

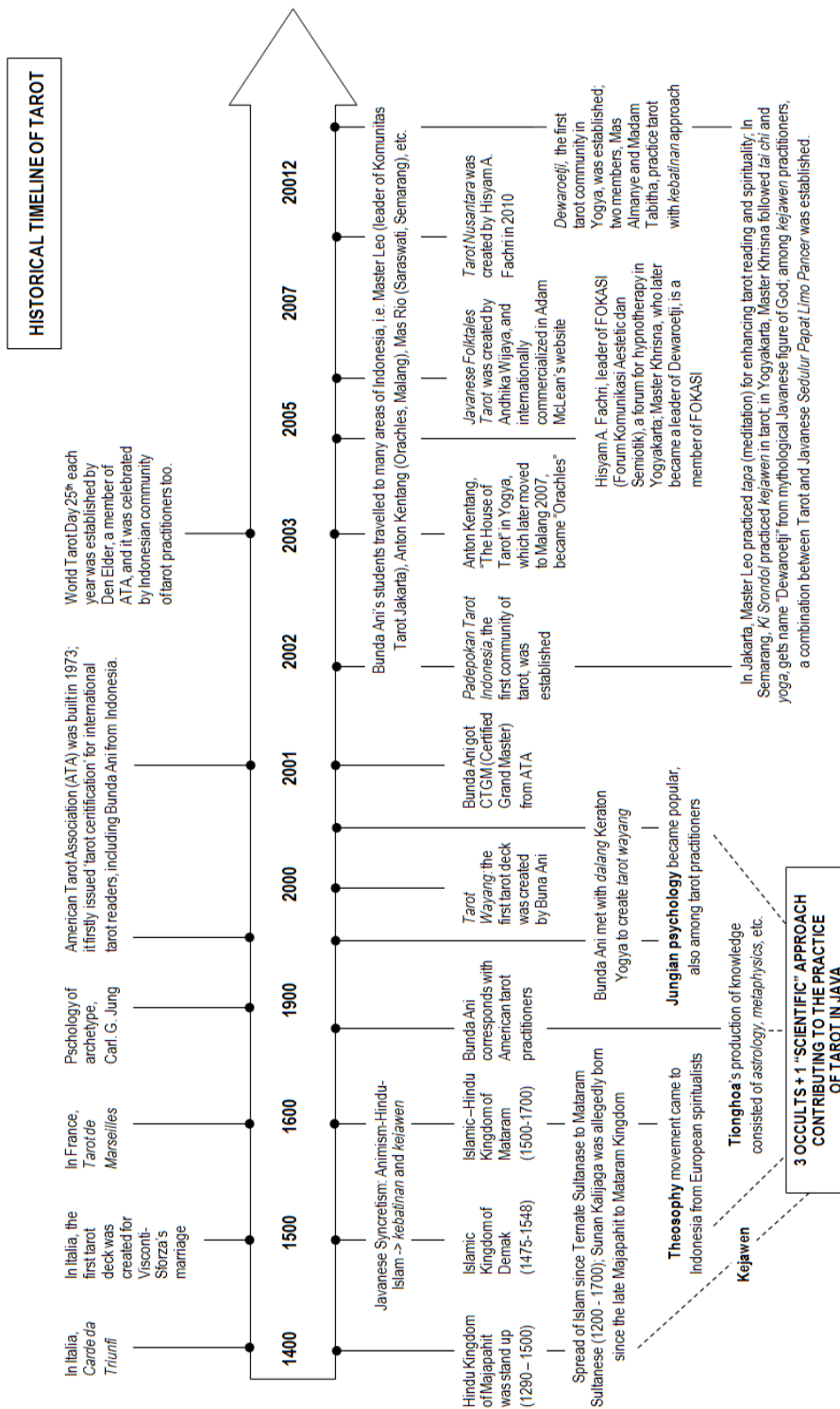
possibly to hold the ashes of deceased royalty (Dumarcay, 1986, p. 9). *Candi*, thus, functioned as metaphors in stone for both macrocosm and microcosm, mirroring the cosmic order and the political realm at its most ideal. As like *wayang*, *candi* also depicts many narratives of mythological and/or historical figures in Java from the past centuries.

Cultural and Political Contestation

Unfortunately, Javanese occult practitioners, either Theosophy, Tionghoa, and *Kebatinan* ones, have dealt with religio-political-cultural issues in regards with their social recognition in the larger Javanese society. It could be easily found in production of knowledge related to these issues. Such books or magazines are relatively categorized as ‘rare sources’ (*sumber-sumber langka*).

Firstly, New Order’s policy has restricted Chinese *peranakan*’s expressions in economic, politic, and cultural spheres. In 1967 they are regarded as ‘foreign citizens’, and their positions are subordinated to ‘Indonesian citizens’. Their rights have been ignored, and *peranakan*’s production of knowledge is viewed as ‘dangerous’ to national stability of Indonesia.⁶ Balai Poestaka, a major (Dutch) national publisher at that time under colonial apparatus, published only ‘marketable’ high Malay works, while *peranakan* books—as seen before—were issued and sold by ‘frontier’ publishers, including N. V. Tjerman.⁷

Secondly, related to the first factor, Suharto’s regime of New Order has represented himself as King of Java (*Raja Jawa*). It creates feudal mentality inside Javanese aristocrats (*priyayi*), and it is very contraproductive with *peranakan* residents who have been known as egalitarian, open-minded, and responsive to cultural movement. Suharto, with having more Javanism *Weltanschauung*, has seemingly felt disturbed to publication of *peranakan*’s idea, and also—because of her position as *Raja Jawa*—attempts to control *kebatinan* under establishment of PAKEM (*Pengawasan Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat*) under Regulation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs No. 10 of 1952.⁸



Thirdly, Internet is extremely widespread today, and the statistics of using Internet has shown a dramatic scale. Today's readers prefer to search and just simply click only to search for online information of *kebatinan* rather than looking into bookstores. Moreover, *kebatinan*, *Feng Shui*, *ramalan*, or other occult practices are "for sale" in Multi-Level Marketing (MLM) style with highly ranked and eye-catching websites. The wide use of Internet has slowly shifted printed books of *kebatinan*.

Fourthly, emergence of Muslim "puritanists" is also a contributing factor in reducing people's interest in occult practices, including Theosophy. In 1929, the newspaper *Kabar Fadjar Asia* managed by Haji Agus Salim, for instance, already blamed Theosophy, by saying, *Theosofi sudah terang-terangan mengajarkan agama Hindu, karena memberikan pelajaran Baghavad Gita, Khresna, dan Arjuna... Maka perlu diperiksa betoel azaz keneutralan itoe, soepaya jangan menjadi anti igama, ataoe anti sesoeatoe igama, yang tentoe misalja Islam*. Moreover, the recent Islamic purification movement by highlighting abolishment of *syirik*, *bid'ah*, *khurafat*, etc., has influenced on the ways people market 'occultism.'

Approximately in 1990s, Tarot has lately come in the middle of fluctuation between Muslims' rejection to occult practices and blossom of Javanese occultism. These all histories of occult establishment in Java are aimed to search a 'historical encounter' between Tarot practice and occultism of Javanese society on which Tarot has taken its spirit today. This should lead to an oblivious conclusion that history of Tarot in Java could not be separated from the history of occult establishment, ranging from Chinese, European, to Javanese *kebatinan* itself. Nowadays, Tarot offers, among others, a 'new paradigm' about occultism in Indonesia.

During 'revival' period of Tarot in Javanese society, there are commonly two perspectives about Tarot. One group believes that Tarot gives a new meaning of old occultism by offering an "innovation" of cultural belief system. This view holds that Tarot is really 'modern' type of European Theosophy which has no cultural relation to traditional occult practice.

The other holds that Tarot is part of psychopathology. It means that Tarot's practitioners are regarded as occultists who have lack of scientific evidence. They are a group of people imitating "Egyptian" occultists, which later are known as "Gypsy". As remembered that gypsy practitioners usually use black dresses, with some candles on the table, to give a sense of 'magic' in traditional meaning.⁹

Tarot in Java¹⁰

Discursively, the first Tarot community in Java is *Padepokan Tarot Indonesia* (PDI) established by Ani Sekarningsih (called “Bunda Ani” afterwards). I emphasize on the discursive assumption because of some rationale. Firstly, Bunda Ani is the first Tarot reader writing a book *Panduan Tarot Wayang* (2000), while at the time none of Tarot readers have specifically published the similar books of Tarot. Secondly, despite of *pecah kongsi* (broken relationship) issue, PDI could be regarded as the first community which ultimately ‘produces’ many independent Tarot communities in Java, including Full Moon (Surabaya), Saraswati (Semarang), Oracles (Malang), Komunitas Tarot Jakarta (Jakarta), Dewaroetji (Yogyakarta), Antaboga (Bandung), Kundalini (Bogor), etc. Thirdly, PDI was established in 2002, a year after Bunda Ani got CTGM (*Certified Tarot Grand Master*) by John Gilbert from American Tarot Association (ATA), which represents the first one—and still the only one in Indonesia—who “legally” indicated the formal coming of Tarot in Indonesia. Shortly, PDI has successfully formed a ‘discursive’ sphere of Tarot in Javanese society.

The existence of Tarot practitioners in larger occult community of Java is also marked by their participations in ‘psychic fairs’, or their self-organizing of such fairs. However, there is a ‘strange’ view in which I have identified only Tarot readers (*sesama penarot*) outside Dewaroetji have participated. Only a few of common people (*masyarakat umum*) come to these events. It is different from other events in which Tarot practitioners are co-organizers or ‘participants’ only, for instances Book Fairs (*Pameran Buku*), Art Exhibition (*Pameran Seni*), Electronic Bazaar (*Bazar Elektronik*), etc., the visitors are commonly *masyarakat biasa*. These clients seem to be more comfortable in attending to Tarot service as the events are ‘more public’ rather than similar ones organized by group of Tarot readers.

In context of larger occult community in Java, these events have provided double functions. They have offered an organizational basis for Tarot readers beyond particular cults in one side, but at the same time also revealed that they are not homogeneous entities in Javanese occultism. I have discovered at least five segments of Tarot services in the larger Javanese occult society: (1) a “spiritual” segments concerned with the moral condition of humanity and the supernatural in which salvation, liberation, and enlightenment are emphasized, i.e. “Spiritual Indonesia” community by Leonardo Rimba in Jakarta and other branches (Surabaya, Medan, Bali, etc.); (2) an “esoteric” segment emphasizing scholarly study, physical well-being, healing, or what outsiders might call “medicine”, i.e. “HypnoTarot

Nusantara” service by Hisyam A. Fachri in Yogyakarta, and also in Jakarta; (3) a “psychic” segment involving an essentially secular focus on exploring the human mind, particularly hidden or concealed senses whereby Tarot knowledge is viewed as path to personal power and success, i.e. “Light Givers” community by Joschev Audifax in Jakarta; (4) an “integrated” segment focusing on combining two or three previous segments, even in only applied (in their *lapak*), or only theoretical (in their information provided in websites/blogs) or applied one; (5) a “public” segment involving their interest to Tarot in boarder area of occultism. However, these segments are relatively interchangeable since every Tarot community or group attempts to provide these segments, try to be “public.”



Figure 3 Some e-magazines “Tarot Journey Indonesia”, published by *Komunitas Tarot Jakarta*. Free accessible at tjindonesia.com.

To be more ‘public’, Tarot practitioners in particular, and occult individuals in general, attempt to familiarize their services, knowledge, or experiences through advertisement in mass-circulation magazines. For this issue, I have to mention one of the largest magazines among Tarot practitioners; it is *Tarot Journey Indonesia*, published by Klub Tarot Jakarta, and the members—I have talked with—are among others Master Leonardo Rimba and Joschev Audifax. Firstly published on July 22, 2013 with 11 editions as the latest one, TJI has focused on disseminating knowledge of Tarot by emphasizing—as mentioned in their website—“psychological and intuitive knowledge, not by using *klenik* or others mystical approaches”. TJI seemingly strengthen a production of knowledge of Tarot from ‘scientific psychological approach’, in some extents, to respond the stereotypical views and common social recognition of Tarot in Java. Outside TJI, which is

published by 'internal' Tarot practitioners, some newspapers have also been involved in reporting Tarot community. Recently, a daily *Radar Jogja* (April 12, 2013), *Koran Merapi* (June 2, 2013), *Harian Jogja* (November 10, 2013), and *Tribun Jogja* (February 16, 2014) have reported a profile of Dewaroetji in Yogyakarta. What is clear here is that they commonly stressed a similar angle that "everyone could learn Tarot", meaning that Tarot is not *klenik* and *syirik*, because it could be approached by a scientific approach of psychology.



Figure 4 Dewaroetji in *Tribun Jogja* (16/2/2014).

Besides advertisement in mass media and publication in magazines, they also participate in radio broadcasting and television. In Dewaroetji, for instance, Madame Tabitha is a member who actively being on air in Thursday on 11.30 p.m. in Jogja TV, and in Friday on 01.00 a.m. in Swaragama 101.7 FM. In addition to Madame Tabitha, Master Krisna also joins Eltira 102.1 FM every Tuesday night 07.30 p.m., usually accompanied with Lady Sita, Mr. Arren, and Mr. Ryan. Except in Jogja TV which provides a service by phone, Radio broadcasting usually opens only a request by SMS (Short Message Service). "Due to this one, many Eltira listeners give merely a general clue of their problems, not details. In some extents, it will make Tarot readers difficult to provide the best answer," commented Master Krisna (personal communication, August 6, 2014). In

some extents, such 'on-air' programs—beside provide them additional income—also offer an opportunity to familiarize Tarot and promote their community.

The term *buka lapak* or *macak Tarot* refers to commercial activity of Tarot practitioners. In general, there are three types of *buka lapak*: private reading (or counseling), special workshops usually offered on a short-term basis like a weekend, and extensive therapy-education involving weekly meetings over a longer period of time (three months or more). However, they are also frequently invited to join other practitioners, such as tattoo painters, designers, corporate event managers, wedding organizers, etc., and have been provided special stands.¹¹

They are also dependent on the larger cultic milieu, especially seekers and clients, as a source of recruits, for economic support, and to reinforce a large number of people are interested in Tarot practices and the like. They have competed among others to make branding or presentation of self. Stark and Bainbridge (1979, 1980) call 'client cults' to refer a community in which practitioner and client has built a relationship. Sometimes they offer a free 'reading' for the first comers, publish their own posters, or perform some kinds of entertainment. Tarot is actually not limited only to divination, prophecy, or spirituality, but also 'entertaining yourself'. Some practitioners prefer to use Tarot not for commercial thing, but for amusement. They usually enjoy helping their friends without having paid.

In Yogyakarta, Tarot practitioners are commonly middle-aged, at least in Dewaroetji. Most of them are between twenty-five and fifty years of age. They are about equally divided between the sexes, with only a few more females than males. These people are predominantly from Java, middle-class, and at least high school graduates. Less than half of this community actually see themselves (or being called as) "Madame", "Lady", or "Master". In Dewaroetji, only (Madame) Tabitha, (Lady) Sita, (Madame) Virgo, and (Master) Krisna have such callings. These names will make its holders became more 'senior' than others. This is often related to "code of ethics" and professional responsibilities within Tarot readers. However, such bidding name is very diverse. Some of them prefer to be called not as "Madame" or "Master", but as 'fortune-teller', as 'motivator', or even '*dukun Tarot*' and '*ceki*' expert.

Besides Tarot readings, the practitioners perform a variety of esoteric and occult practices, such as akashic life reading, astrology, psychic counseling, dream analysis, yoga, healing, numerology, palmistry, past-future life regression-progression, psychic art, handline, herbal therapy, mentalist, tea leaves, aura reading, crystal ball, graphology, and hypnosis. In

this context, it is not really surprising that many Tarot readers in particular, and probably occult practitioners in general, see themselves as counselors of sorts.



Figure 5 Counseling and Tarot Reading service held by Dewarotji in event of Electronic Bazar, Jogja Electronic Centre, Yogyakarta (13/3/2014).

Who is and is not qualified to practice as a “professional” in the community is usually determined by informal codes of ethics, lists of approved practitioners, a variety of informal norms, and—using Master Krisna’s term—number of flight hours (*jumlah jam terbang*). A key issue is the perceived legitimacy of practitioners. The problem is—besides no legal association of Tarot in Indonesia—that so-called ‘legitimacy’ is very diverse even among Tarot practitioners.

However, different from United States in which those who use label “Madame” and “Master” are called groups of gypsy, a stereotype for illegitimate occult practitioners (Jorgensen and Jorgensen, 1982, p. 378), Javanese Tarot readers use these names as usual as *penarot*. None of Javanese Tarot readers also use titles usually used by European ones, such as Dr. or Rev. to differentiate them from gypsy. The similarity is probably laid to a fact that either European or Javanese practitioners have not sustained a “deviant” self-image in society, as like as gypsy (Tatro, 1974, p. 291). However, if *deviant* here refers to superficially ‘wearing black wears, using big necklaces or rings’ like *pesulap* or *dukun* or—in some extents—gypsy, Javanese Tarot readers still use it. It is what makes them ‘ambivalent’ person.



Figure 6 Exotic “properties” used by Madame Devita (candles, Tarot deck, liontin, white orgonite, black cover of table, a glass, etc.).

The indication of ambivalence is also found in other cases. For instance, some Tarot readers use Javanese-Hinduism names of god as their alias to be attached to their ‘European’ names, such as “Master Indra” (a mythological figure of Hindu’s God), “Madame Kunthi” (a goddess of Mahabharata), “Ki Pandu” (a husband’s Kunthi), “Master Shiva” (a supreme god of Hinduism), “Master Krisna” (an incarnated figure of the god Vishnu in Hinduism), “Lady Sita” (Rama’s wife in Hinduism mythology and *wayang* character) “Master Chandra” (a god of moon), and many others. It is also true for the names of their communities, such as “Saraswati” (Brahma’s wife), “Dewarotji” (a spirit of God within *wayang* story and Sunan Kalijaga’s doctrine), “Antaboga” (a *wayang* figure of Mahabharata, a big snake in Balinese mythology), “Kundalini” (a Javanese’s belief from Sanskrit meaning ‘The Most Powerful Power’), and the like.



Figure 7 Some Tarot books in Gramedia Yogyakarta (6/6/2014); Look at the label “religion” at the shelf, Tarot is a part of religion (?).

‘Localizing’ Tarot

Because not every Tarot practitioners are individually open to people, I focus on the community of Tarot in Yogyakarta, Dewaroetji, and it is the only Tarot community in this area. The members of Dewaroetji I have talked with have practiced different approaches to Tarot, and their practices have represented some forms of localization in different ways. For instance, the ways they prefer to choose names such as “Master Krisna” and “Lady Sita” as mythological figures of Hindu tradition, the ways they achieve a consensus to name their community “Dewaroetji” as a name of Javanese God to symbolize a ‘Submission’ and ‘Success’, the ways they practice meditation, yoga, or other Javanese rituals to advance their *rasa*, or the ways they mix modern Tarot and traditional *primbon* for getting more accurate result of reading, etc., suggest that they are constructing and constructed by Javanese dan European culture, consciously or unconsciously.

However, because they play Tarot, a playing cards game coming from Western world, they found themselves difficult to separate from outward influences. In the case of “alias”, they are modern people who have a little concern on the effects of alias, but at the same time they quietly attempt to ‘hybridize’ them with modern names, such as Master, Madame, and Lady, and using them in daily Tarot activity. As Master Krisna says (personal communication, August 2, 2014),

Krisna is my Sankrit name. It has been given when I joined Yoga. I use it as alias of my identity in Tarot for getting as cool as look like [laughing]. No, no special thing behind this name. ... but, I just prefer

to use it than Edy or Kris. I respect to my spiritual teacher who has inherited it to me.



Figure 8 Some Tarot readers perform with different cultural styles.

In the case of community name, they have to use modern (Tarot) and traditional (*primbon*) Javanese strategies at one to decide the name. It could be seen on the ways members of Saraswati have to debate in order to decide that name. Ki Sron dol tells (personal communication, July 5, 2014),

The debate over such name (*Saraswati*) is exhausted... At the time, Bunda Ani is still there, I tell it to her, and she recommends *Saraswati*... After that, we (members of community) gathered together, and decided it through Tarot reading. Finally, our reading has resulted a Hanged Man card (meaning 'creativity') for *Saraswati*, and a Wheel (meaning 'lucky') for Magus. From that result, I begin to change my choice

In the case of *macak* Tarot, they try to mix 'Western' psychological strategy with Javanese fortune-telling method *Sedulur Papat Limo Pancer* (four siblings, the fifth spirit) in order that not only an accurate result is possible, but also a relationship between Tarot and Javanism could be 'acculturated'. Every element in the Javanese directions are closely related to symbols of

cards in Major Arcana and Minor Arcana. For instance, West/Cognition/Fire/Red is represented by “Swords”, South/Sense/Yellow/Water is by “Pentacles”, East/Feeling/White/Air is by “Cups”, North/Intuition/Black/Earth is by “Wands”, while the Middle/Ego/Colorful is by “Major Arcana”. Every card of Major Arcana and Minor Arcana could be interpreted based on the Javanese philosophy of elements and/or directions. This philosophy is also used to determine an individual’s personality by using *petungan* or *pasaran* system of calendars.

In the issue of cultural performatives, some of Tarot practitioners present their performances alike *dukun*, but at the same time they deny to be *dukun*. For instance, Mami Vella, who uses ‘ritual’ devices, such as statue, red lighting, necklace, bracelet, Dayak costume, and dark room, acknowledges the existence of Allah, but she also realizes contribution of *ilmu gaib* to enhance reading skill (e-personal communication, 16 May, 2014),

I use bracelet and necklace; it probably remains you to *dukun*. But, no. It is different. Before reading, I pray to Allah, I don’t pray to Satan. I believe that Tarot reading is not only a skill, but also it has to be assisted by *ilmu gaib* which was blown all times in accordance to the predetermined conditions.

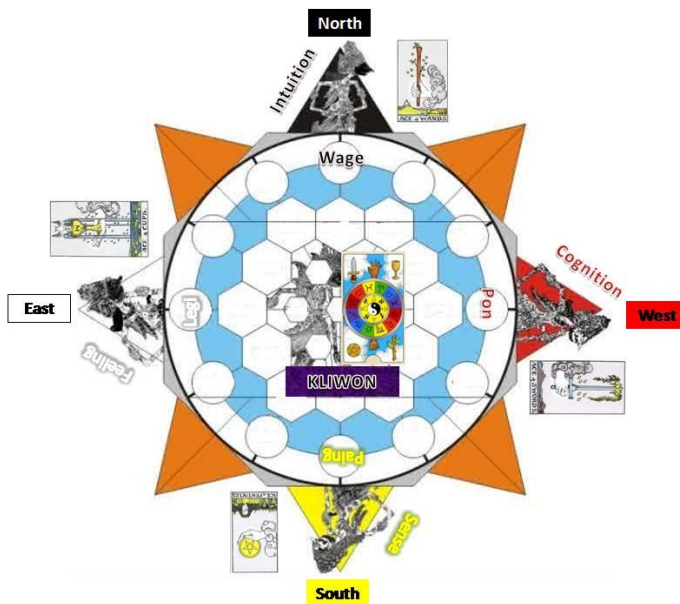


Figure 9 A ‘Mandala’ image to describe a relationship between Tarot and Javanese fortune telling of *Sedulur Papat Limo Pancer*. It consists of four elements (Minor Arcana) with the main center (Major Arcana), representing human personalities and its spirit. (Source: personally designed)

Adi Wicaksono, a *lintrik* expert in Dewaroetji, claims able to practice *lintrik* (a *ceki* playing cards which is practiced through certain mantra because it is a part of *ilmu sihir*, a practice which most of Tarot practitioners reject it), but he have not commercialized it although he showed off it before other practitioners, including me. While playing the *lintrik*, he tells (personal communication, August 17, 2014),

Ceki or *lintrik* is difficult to be practiced. You could buy them everywhere, but you have to practice some rituals to “fulfill” it (what he means by ‘fulfilling’ is *mengisi* with some devils). You have to bury them in *weton* (the night of your birth) with lands of grave on the midnight without having dresses (alias *telanjang*).... Yeah, it is *black magic*, I admitted. I focus on Tarot only. If you read a profile of Oracles in the advertisement, I am known as *lintrik*, so it is only for getting people’s interest, but I don’t commercialize it.

In the case of Tarot deck, *Tarot wayang*’s Ani Sekarningsih, *Tarot nusantara*’s Hisyam A. Fachri, and *Javanese folktales Tarot*’s Andhika Wijaya are still influenced—with different levels—by Western standards, values, and knowledge. For instance, in his review of *Tarot Wayang*, John Gilbert (2008), an American practitioner who has awarded CTGM for Ani, stated that “Ani’s deck is small by American standards being only 2 and 3/8 inches wide by 3 and 3/8 inches tall”. In her research project, Andhika Wijaya, a creator of *Javanese Folktales Tarot* deck, also acknowledges, “These cards are based on Rider-Waite-Smith (the mostly used RWS deck in the world created by Smith), but visualized through folktales characters” (Wijaya, 2007, p. 16).



Figure 10 *Tarot Wayang* deck by Ani Sekarningsih (2000), getting inspired from puppets of Keraton Yogyakarta, but using American standards.



Figure 11 *Tarot Nusantara* deck by Hisyam A. Fachri (2010), getting inspired from philosophy of archipelago's colors through translating RWS standards into Indonesian.



Figure 12 *Javanese Folktales* deck by Andhika Wijaya (2009), getting inspired from Javanese folktale characters through integrating them into RWS ones.

In terms of advancing intuition, they practice mediation, and in some extents, also ‘indigineze’ some Javanese rituals, such as *mutih* and religious liturgical praying Al-Fatihah or Mantra Gayatri. For instance, To achieve what the so-called *cakra mata ketiga*, an ultimate inner ability of intuition, Master Leonardo Rimba has recommended his ‘followers’ to practice ‘magic spells’ Surah Al-Fatihah 500 times in 45 minutes. However, at the same time they have different arguments on the relation between *meditation*, *samadi*, and *yoga* although these practices are substantially identical. Mas Almany, who practice *kebatinan*, says (personal communication, May 5, 2014),

Meditation and *samadi*? No, I don’t think it is similar although their goals are identical. For me, such meditation is a gym, but *samadi* is different [smiling]... Don’t rationalize *kebatinan*, Mas. It will be contraproductive. *Kebatinan* is based on self-submission to God, while meditation?

They also choose *candi* as a place of gathering. They *simplify* philosophical manner behind *candi*, but they believe that *candi* could be a measure of human’s personality. For instance, Bagas “The Whisper”, a member of Dewaroetji, attempts to simplify it by saying “I don’t think more... never think of philosophy”, but he secretly recognizes the importance of *candi* in terms of ‘healing’ (personal communication, May 25, 2014),

Dalai Lama already said, we don’t need a cleverer person, we need a healer, wisdom teller, etc., and that’s why I join Tarot. When I hear that temple became a place of our meeting, I am very happy. I want everybody to know that Tarot is also related to philosophy of Buddhism, and probably Javanese people. If you learn Buddhism, you will know that structure of temple represents structure of human’s unity with God. But, as a Tarot reader, I don’t think more. I help clients, never think of the philosophy.

In relation with the issue of reducing social stereotype of Tarot, I attempt to compare modern Tarot esoterism and traditional Javanese belief system in terms of *kahanan* and *rasa*. The practice of Tarot is actually alike “institutionalization” of *kahanan* in terms of clients, readers, and cards. *Kahanan* refers to clients’ problem, and through Tarot reading, it could be resolved. *Kahanan* could also refer to Tarot reader’s situation, and through reading signs of nature as God’s cosmology, it could be reenergized. *Kahanan* also refer to Mysterious behind the cards, and through Tarot

readers' concentration and focus, it could be revealed. In short, *kahaman* represents a relationship within Tarot. Meanwhile, the idea of *intuition* (as modern term) has a close relationship with Javanese belief system of *rasa*. The intuitive consciousness (*kesadaran intuitif*) involves feeling and thinking as fundamental instruments of human being. This consciousness is aimed to reach *kasunyatan* (a real truth). In Javanese tradition, the intuitive thinking is known as *menggalih* (analyzing by using *rasa*), and it is what one practices during reading Tarot cards.

Although the levels of ambivalence are different from where one approaches to practice of Tarot, it is clear that this ambivalence has provided a cultural gain for Javanese Tarot practitioners, not only in relation with their own competitors, but also with Javanese acceptance to them in the larger cultic milieu. The symbolic ambivalences are important, although these are very superficial, because they have no support from certain national Tarot association. They protect themselves, not by having a legal note under the formal association, but rather by making use of such 'cultural ambivalence' to survive in Javanese society. In some extents, this strategy is inevitably necessary for them as people living in a postcolonial country where inward and outward influences are making a continuous cultural mixture that we live by.



Figure 13 Leonardo Rimba (using blue T-Shirt with white symbol of 'flying bird') and other 'spiritual' practitioners held meditation, in *pura candi*, at Thirta Empul, Manukaya, Tampaksiring, Gianyar, Denpasar, Bali (10/8/2014). For Master Leo, meditation is aimed—among others—to increase intuitive knowledge (or *rasa*), either for Tarot in specific or for mental health in general.

‘Politics of Localization’ in Global Scale

As mentioned before, using ‘localization’ as key concept brings us to ‘globalization’ as dynamic one. Globalization is defined as process of integrating not only product and practice, but also culture and word views of people. Javanese Tarot practitioners attempt to respond it, for instance, by involving with global market and network. They take a financial transaction to buy or sell products, such as Tarot deck, through e-commerce or international providers. Andhika Wijaya’s *Javanese Folktale Tarot* is firstly for sale in Adam McLean’s website [http:// www.alchemywebsite.com /Tarot/art Tarot20.html](http://www.alchemywebsite.com/Tarot/art_Tarot20.html). At the first time, Bunda Ani also corresponds with American Tarot practitioners before having international award as CTGM. They also have to recognize their use to ‘global’ name, such as Master, Madame, Lady, or other outside terms (such as The Wishper, Orachles, etc.), commonly used by European or American Tarot practitioners.

The involvement with a broader network of e-commerce, for instance, makes them possible to have higher ‘economic’, and therefore cultural, modals that Javanese traditional *dukun* does not have. This is a reason why they—in some extents—successfully attract middle-class consumers. However, if one consider about ‘homogenization’ as an effect of globalization, their different and contested cultural performance during *macak Tarot*, for instance in a fact that they have used traditional dressess, such as *Javanese* or *Dayak* or *Kalimantan* costumes, it brought them into ‘marginal’ groups differently compared with other ‘modern’ professions, such as doctor, bussiness, lecturers, etc. In the middle of global market and capitalism, globalization broght them into ‘periphery’, not only in financial aspect, but also in cultural one.

To respond this challenge, they take a cultural subversion strategy, for instance, by issuing ‘codes of ethics’ to be professional, mastering modern knowledge (such as psychology, hypnotherapy, even Marxism), performing modern dresses, while at the same time they also present themselves as ‘common’ people, going to shopping center, watching TV, learning ‘traditional’ knowledge (such as *kebatinan*), etc. These are—what Bourdieu (1991) said—‘cultural modal’ to survive in the middle of economic and cultural contestation of globalization. The attempt to deal with such ‘global homogenization’ through presenting ‘hoterogenity’ of cultural performatives, and they come into a ‘market segment’ that other professionals are not engaged with. For instance, they attempt to annoy modern psychologists and traditional *dukun* by offering something different from both of them, but also something similar with them. They are, in

short, in-between psychologist and dukun. While offering 'cheaper costs' rather than the two professions, they are also moving from one to another to economically and culturally survive as long as they are possible.

In regards with localization as an effect of globalization, or vice versa, it is important to consider about possible view of 'localization' in the plural work. It indicates how globalization can mean the reinforcement of or go together with localization, as in "Think globally, act locally" (*glocalization*). In the case of Tarot, this kind of tender operation of local/global dynamics is at work in the term of Javanese Tarot practitioners who attempt to transnational human rights standards beyond state authorities, or indigeneous people who find support for local demands from transnational networks. Besides e-commerce of Tarot product in the global market, the common esoteric ideas inside Tarot, such as Theosophy, Tionghoa, or *Kebatinan*, become more complex, as Javanese practitioners assert local loyalties, but want to share in global values and lifestyles. The effect of such *glocalization* is 'universalization of particular estorisms', including Theosophy, Tionghoa, or *Kebatinan* as religious movements to indicate Tarot revival in Java.

It is important to consider about 'politics of localization'. The common discourse in postcolonial studies is—among others—hybridity which Homi K. Bhaba (1994, p. 32) calls as 'politics' to destabilize total boundaries of the nation. However, taking Bhaba's argument as point of departure, I attempt to position 'localization' as politics of stabilization, politics to create 'magic imagination' of the nation, a kind of collective consciousness in a global scale. By stabilization, I refer not to an imperative of 'imperialism', but a condition in which Javanese or Indonesia Tarot could be a possible process of multivocal and heterogeneous movement in international scale. For instance, Bunda Ani's participation in American Tarot Association (ATA), or her deck with Andika Wijaya's and Hisyam's ones commercialized in international websites, have provided a spectrum of global hybridity with Javanese as 'part of it'. This phenomenon makes a juncture between global culture and local culture which is always being contested to celebrate *differences* between the categories, forms, beliefs that go into the mixture, rather than an affirmation of *similarity*. Their involvement in global networks makes them possible to highlight political engagement of Javanese Tarot practitioners in 'global sociology' (Pieterse, 1994, p. 172). Both Javanese Tarot and global Tarot are always interdependent, making new forms of co-peration and evoke new cultural imaginaries in terms of new competition and cultural hybridization of Tarot.

Concluding Remarks

As a global occult phenomenon, Tarot has been practiced by local people, including Javanese practitioners, and it is perhaps that a study of localization is necessary to determine how strongly influential Javanese belief system has been upon Tarot practitioners, or how Javanese Tarot practitioners have adopted and modified Javanese occult practices into Tarot. My thesis is that localizing Tarot could be possible in terms of adaptation, acculturation, indigenization, or—in some extents—hybridization in Javanese society.

By using ethnography as method of research, this paper suggests that Western Tarot practice is intertwined with Javanese esoteric and occult one. In Javanese society, for example, there is a popular idea of *kebatinan* or *kejawen* as a central part of Javanese esoterism, and from this idea Javanese people carry out many occult practices, such as *tapa*, *samadi*, *mutih*, *traditional healing*, *wayang performance*, etc., on the basis of their acceptance to *kebatinan* in their daily life. However, since Javanese society is closely associated with such esoteric and occult practices, and at the same many Muslims puritanists have extremely grown up in the area, Javanese Tarot practitioners must deal with any negative stereotype to their practices as *syirik*, *klenik*, or *dukun* (in terms of soothsayer, not healer).

Instead of responding it by providing a counter-argument from Javanese esoterism, they precisely produce many sources and books based on Western Jungian psychology, and since then a broader social gap between both of them is inseparable. From such concern, this research attempts to reduce these stereotypical views, not by providing ‘scientific knowledge’ of psychology, but rather by analyzing a cultural relationship between Javanism and Tarot practice. For that purpose, this research inevitably deals with some social challenges to ethnographically describe the practice of Tarot in Java. The challenges are regarded with the fact that Tarot practitioners are not ‘panoptical’ subjects who are easily counted and tracked in social life. In some ways, they are secretive, but in other ways they are very open to public.

They are involved with psychic fairs to commercialize not only Tarot service, but also their knowledge, their openness to public. It is where they can communicate their ‘professional’ jobs with community. They prefer to be public in order to familiarize Tarot in the larger cultic milieu of Java. However, some of them prefer to be secretive, not because they are like *dukun*, but they want to make their services more exotic. Either secretive or opened Tarot practitioners have a similar goal: to ‘commercialize’ Tarot.

But, this goal is not as simple as we observed because they have to deal with another issue: no national Tarot association in Indonesia. It demands a complex negotiation among Tarot practitioners to have not only economic modal, but also cultural one. This cultural negotiation has certain effects and challenges. One of them is that they became ambivalent individuals.

Because not every Tarot practitioners are individually open to people, I focus on the community of Tarot in Yogyakarta, Dewaroetji, and it is the only Tarot community in this area. The members of Dewaroetji I have talked with have practiced different approaches to Tarot, and their practices have represented some forms of localization in different ways. For instance, the ways they prefer to choose names such as “Master Krisna” and “Lady Sita” as mythological figures of Hindu tradition, the ways they achieve a consensus to name their community “Dewaroetji” as a name of Javanese God to symbolize a ‘Submission’ and ‘Success’, the ways they practice meditation, yoga, or other Javanese rituals to advance their *rasa*, or the ways they mix modern Tarot and traditional *primbon* for getting more accurate result of reading, etc., suggest that they are constructing and constructed by Javanese culture, consciously or unconsciously.

However, because they play Tarot, a playing cards game coming from Western world, they found themselves difficult to separate from outward influences. In the case of “alias”, they are modern people who have a little concern on the effects of alias, but at the same time they quietly hold a hope for them by using them in daily Tarot activity. In the case of community name, they have to use modern (Tarot) and traditional (*primbon*) Javanese strategies at one to decide the name. In the case of *macak* Tarot, they try to mix ‘Western’ psychological strategy with Javanese fortune-telling method *Sedulur Papat Limo Pancer* in order that not only an accurate result is possible, but also a relationship between Tarot and Javanism is strongly built. In the case of Tarot deck, *Tarot wayang*’s Ani Sekarningsih, *Tarot nusantara*’s Hisyam A. Fachri, and *Javanese Folktales Tarot*’s Andhika Wijaya are still influenced—with different levels—by Western standards, values, and knowledge. In terms of advancing intuition, they practice mediation, and in some extents, also do some Javanese rituals, such as *mutih* and religious liturgical praying Al-Fatihah or Mantra Gayatri, but at the same time they have different arguments on the relation between *meditation*, *samadi*, and *yoga*.

In relation with the issue of reducing social stereotype of Tarot, I attempt to compare modern Tarot esoterism and traditional Javanese belief system in terms of *kahanan* and *rasa*. The practice of Tarot is actually alike “institutionalization” of *kahanan* in terms of clients, readers, and cards.

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Although the levels of ambivalence are different from where one approaches to practice of Tarot, it is clear that this ambivalence has provided a cultural gain for Javanese Tarot practitioners, not only in relation with their own competitors, but also with Javanese acceptance to them in the larger cultic milieu. The symbolic ambivalences are important, although these are very superficial, because they have no support from certain national Tarot association. They protect themselves, not by having a legal note under the formal association, but rather by making use of such 'cultural ambivalence' to survive in Javanese society. In some extents, this strategy is inevitably necessary for them as people living in a postcolonial country where inward and outward influences are making a continuous cultural mixture that we live by.

In the broader context, localization of Tarot makes it possible to involve with globalization as dynamic one. It consists of those who attempt to globalize Javanese Tarot in international market and those who attempt to familiarize Tarot as global occult practice in Javanese society. This idea takes an issue of 'localization' as vulnerable and interchangeable with idea of globalization. Localizing Tarot is functional to familiarize Tarot in Javanese society, but at the same time it provides a new space of making Tarot 'more globalized' since it is not played only by international people, but also by Javanese ones. Conversely, through presenting Tarot in global market, as Bunda Ani and Andhika Wijaya practiced, it enables 'particular Javanese Tarot' to be a globalized standar in the broader international community. It means that localization is also universalization and, therefore globalization, of particularities.

This study, of course, does not cover up all issues of Tarot in Java, and I recognize that Tarot is a unique world in which the religious and cultural identities are always being interplayed. The problem of contested meaning on spirituality among Tarot practitioners, for instance, is not

entirely explored here. The members of Dewaroetji are those who hold different religious beliefs, and it perhaps will be an interesting topic for further researchers to investigate their religious backgrounds (and their spiritual journeys) and how these became influential on the ways they define and approach to Tarot. It will be a window to entrance a cross-religious discourse on Tarot in Javanese cultic milieu.

Endnotes:

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² Sultan’s statement has been cited by Madame Tabitha, founder of TarotArcanum, during personal interview at Yogyakarta (17/06/2014). It was used to suggest that some Tarot practitioners, including Tabitha, claimed themselves as *kejawen* practitioners. A pivot point of contestation between Tarot and Javanism has started here.

³ *Syirik* or *dukun* or *klenik*; these are traditional practices representing antithesis of modern knowledge or formal religion (for instance, how many commentators accused Tarot by using that terms in <http://sosbud.kompasiana.com/2012/01/10/Tarot-musyrik->

[428921.html](#)), while most of Tarot readers have accessed many Western literatures and participated in 'global' events.

⁴ The books such as *Meramal dengan Kartu Tarot* (2007), *Tarot for Beginners* (2011), *Tarot: Next Lesson 1, 2, 3* (2012 - 2014), *Psikologi Tarot* (2009), *Tarot dan Psikologi Simbol* (2011), etc.—besides providing “step-by-step” techniques of “how to” play Tarot— presented ‘psychological science of Tarot’. Although other books, including *Panduan Tarot Wayang* (2000), *The Real Art of Tarot* (2009), or *Tarot Psikologi* (2010), attempted to promote an idea of ‘Indonesian’ Tarot deck, they offered indifferent argument with other sources. Usually, they provided an introductory concern about Javanese stereotypes such as *dukun* or *klenik* or *syirik*, responded it by giving a ‘psychological recipe’ to Tarot, and figured out a relationship between Tarot and psychology.

⁵ Javanese people who practice *kebatinan* usually imply *rasa* with the practice of *Sumarah*, “the state of total surrender”, firstly founded by Sukinohartono and his friends in the mid 1930s in the court city of Yogyakarta and today became a practice which provides its own focus. See Mulder, Niels J. A., “Aliran Kebatinan as an Expression of the Javanese Worldview”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (September, 1970), pp. 105-114. In his article, “The Logic of Rasa in Java” (1984, p. 119), Paul Stange described a relationship between Javanese *Sumarah* and intuitive knowledge: The sense of “*rasa*” I am concerned with is that of the “organ” or “agent” of perception, or, if you like, the “function”, of “intuition”. Within *Sumarah* “*rasa*” is considered an organ or constituent of our psychology in precisely the same sense as “thought” is. In fact it is commonly said that “mind” is the tool through which we register and process information received through the five senses from the outer world, *alam lahiriyah*, while “*rasa*” is the tool through which we apprehend inner realities, that is *alam batiniyah*. See, Stange, Paul, “The Logic of Rasa in Java”, *Indonesia*, No. 38, (October, 1984), pp. 113-134

⁶ Their literary works are categorized as ‘cheap and low quality’ (*sastra picisan*). Their language are identified as low Malay (*lag Maleisch*), market Malay (*passermaleisch*), babbling Malay (*brabbelmaleisch*). The ‘politics of identity’ (*politik identitas*) has marked a distinct demarcation between *peranakan* and ‘Indonesian’. In 1930, according to *Volkstelling* (population census), Chinese has reached 1.233.000 (2.03 percent) of overall Indonesian people. G. W. Skinner, American anthropologist, has estimated 2.505.000 (2.5 percent) of Chinese living in Indonesia on 1961. See, G. W. Skinner, “The Chinese Minority”, in Ruth McVery (ed.), *Indonesia*, (New Haven: Yale University, 1953), pp. 97-117. The production of knowledge, including occultism, has been increasingly extended by Chinese before the Independence Day of Indonesia. They have a central role in building a certain cultural belief system in this country, not only in terms of occultism, but also literary works.

⁷ The publisher, N. V. Tjermin, published particular topics such as *primbon* and *old Javanese wisdom*, and it was at Jl. Penghela 2 Surabaya. It published many *primbon* books. One of them was *Primbon Mbah Nyata* by Suhu Tan Swie Hong Toodjin (1961), and now accessible in library of Monash University. At that time, guidebooks on occult practices, including *primbon*, *petungan*, *prewangan*, etc. were more considerable than magazines. To mention a few, *Primbon Nasib* by R. Tedjohadisumanto (Solo: Pustaka Adi, 1959), *Poetsaka*

Adji Saka by Ki Adjar Windoesana (Semarang: Bookhuis “Lecta” v/h Terminus, 1933), *Primbon Nudjum Djawa Sedjati* by R. Mugihardjo and Al. mBah Lantip (Semarang: Toko Buku Keng, 1958), *Hway Yong Primbon: Faal, Firasah, Ramal, Astrologie, Tjap Tjie Shio* by anonymous (Surabaya: Pustaka Gaja Baru, 1950), *Ngimpi Keduten dll.* by N. A. Srimaya (Surabaya: Marfiah, 1960), *101 Kedjadian Aneh dan Gaib* by Han Ngo Bie (Liok An Tjoe) (Semarang: Toko Buku Ho Kim Yoe, 1948), *Surja Gesang* by Sapphire (Kudus: Kwa Giok Djing, 1950), *Sapta Pudjangga (Ramalan dari Tudju Pudjangga dan Kenjata’annja)* by Sapphire (Kudus: Kwa Giok Djing, 1949), *Hwang Yong Nudjum & Hway Yong Poo Kam* (a testament book about inner illumination) by Go Hway Yong Sian Seng (Surabaya: N. V. Tjerman, 1951), or *Poestaka Radja* which still uses spelling of van Ophuysen (without cover, but including 94 pages), etc., are some examples of works authored by Chinese *peranakan*.

⁸ Through *PAKEM*, government calls that activities as *klenik*, and that causes division in society, that are “unregular”, that threaten law and order, that insults established religion by wrongly interpreting the true nature of God, or that are suspected of being “Communist” cells. See, Ismiatu Ropi, “Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa: The Politics of the State-Religion Relationship,” in Tim Lindsey & Helen Pausacker (eds), *Religion, Law, and Intolerance in Indonesia*, (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 141.

⁹ Moreover, during my preliminary observation, I found a fact that some Javanese people regarded them as ‘*psikopat*’ (victim of psychopathology), to refer somebody with acute psychopathological problem. In Javanese’s term, they are *agak gila* (little crazy). They are fake and con artists, amateur entertainers and entrepreneurs who use their magical acrobat to attract clients. In some extents, they are not different from *dukun* (in terms of soothsayer, not healer).

¹⁰ It is not easy to track a historical ground of Tarot community in Java. There are some reasons. Firstly, the community is fluid, and its development is not panoptical easily counted on statistical data. Secondly, until now, the first emergence of Tarot in Indonesia is debatable, even among Tarot readers, and at least they are divided into three assumptions: oral tradition, Mama Laurent, and Ani Sekarningsih (seemingly, the last one seems to be more *discursively* proven than others, that I will discuss later). Thirdly, Tarot is not regarded as ‘professional’ carrier as like other professions, such as medicine and engineer, in many industries and corporations. Fourthly, it is related to the previous reason, there is no legal Tarot association under Indonesian government’s policy, so its communities are difficult to be statistically administrated. Fifthly, no empirical study was focusing on Tarot and its community in Indonesia, while many studies have been undertaken in United States and Europe to register development of occult practices, including Tarot. The major studies of Tarot in Java—as mentioned in Chapter I—commonly took technical-psychological forms of ‘cook books’, ‘guide books’, or ‘manual books.’

¹¹ In Yogyakarta, some Tarot services (*buka lapak*) could be found in public places. Some of them are labelled under certain branding identities, some of them are not because they take only an appointment at that places for certain days. Some of them are “Hypnotherapy and Tarot Nusantara”, Jl. Selokan Mataram (a co-member of Hisyam’s group); Café Newyorkyokarto, Jl. Nologaten (Mas Almany); Cinema Bakery, Jl. Prawirotaman (Mas Almany); Alive Fusion Dining, Jl. Timoho (Madame Tabitha);

Prambanan Guest House, Jl. Prawirotaman (Madame Tabitha); Kongkalikong Café, Jl. Taman Siswa (Lady Neeya); Sahid Rich Hotel, Jl. Magelang KM 6 (Master Krishna, Mister Ryan, Lady Neeya, Mister Arren); RRI, Jl. Grand Aston (Jayandi Wiyono alias Pak Je); “Rumah Momo”, Jl. Seturan (Madame Momo); “Tirana House”, Jl. Suryodiningratan (Andianna); BBC Plaza, Jl. Ruko BBC Plaza, Babarsari (Loh Ami); Kopi Item Café, Jl. Babarsari (Yoga Ki Ngaco); Griya Sentana Hotel, Jl. Gowongan Lor, No. 65-67, Tugu Yogya (Endang); “Lotus Management”, Jl. Kaliurang KM 8,5 Ngasem Slatan, Yogyakarta (Panda Putih); Café Blackbone, Gang Karangwuni, Jl. Kaliurang (Dewi Tarot); District Café, Seturan Plaza, Jl. Selokan Mataram (Dewi Tarot); Watu Café, Jl. Urip Sumoharjo 3 (Tante Ve); “L’ayuverda: Neospiritual Energy & Tarot Reading”, Jl. Perum Dayu Permai P-18, Nganglik, Sleman (Djoko Pramono); Paris Bakery and Café, Jl. Sanghaji No. 68 A (Madame Virgo). The last access to this data was on September 9th, 2015. It is highly possible that some of them have changes.

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