



Succession of Throne by Women and Myths in Yogyakarta Sultanate

Sigit Surahman^{1*}, Annisarizki², Rina Sovianti³

Faculty of Communication Sciences, Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya, Indonesia¹

Faculty of Social Sciences, Political Science and Law, Universitas Serang Raya, Indonesia²

Faculty of Communication Sciences, Universitas Bunda Mulia, Indonesia³

Corresponding Email: saleseven@gmail.com*

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Abstract

The phenomenon of female succession to the throne in the Yogyakarta Sultanate raises important issues regarding the legitimacy of power, patriarchal traditions, and socio-cultural change within the Javanese royal context. This research problem stems from the tension between traditional Mataram Islamic values, which place male leadership as the norm, and the emerging opportunities for women to occupy top positions within the palace structure. Previous studies have shown that discourses about women in Javanese culture are often associated with myths, sacred symbols, and ambivalent gender constructions, thus opening up space for debate regarding their position in traditional politics. This research uses qualitative interpretive methods combining observation, in-depth interviews, and literature review. The findings indicate that female succession to the throne is not simply an internal political phenomenon but is also closely related to myths that shape public perception, both as a symbol of power and a source of controversy. Furthermore, this process challenges the dominance of the patriarchal system and encourages a reinterpretation of Javanese cultural values. The study's conclusion confirms that women's involvement in succession to the throne reflects historical, political, and cultural dynamics and marks a significant shift in the socio-economic structure of the Yogyakarta Sultanate, both in the present and for its future development.

Keywords: throne; women; myths; Yogyakarta Sultanate

Introduction

The succession of the throne by women in the Yogyakarta Sultanate creates a paradox between tradition and progressiveness (Putra et al., 2023). The historical context of the Yogyakarta Sultanate reflects the complexity of traditional values that are diligently preserved while simultaneously supporting social and political evolution (Hakim et al., 2015). This Sultanate, established in 1755 by Sultan Hamengkubuwono I, has a long history as one of the oldest governmental entities in Indonesia (Hartatik, 2014) (Pohl, Desrumaux, & Vonthron,

2020). The strong patriarchal tradition has underpinned the power structure in this Sultanate, with the succession of the throne by males being an established norm (Pressello, 2024)

However, at certain periods in history, the Yogyakarta Sultanate faced unique challenges regarding the succession of the throne by women (Nasionalita & Nugroho, 2020). These events created a paradox amidst the steadfast tradition, compelling the society to confront fundamental questions about the cultural values and norms that shape the Sultanate (Alavi & Maddahzadeh, 2025) (Surahman, 2020).

The history of the Yogyakarta Sultanate records several rare episodes in which women played a central role in leadership, including the succession of the throne (Aidulsyah & Ikhwan, 2023). In this context, the role of Raden Ajeng Kartini, who led the struggle for women's rights in the early 20th century, becomes highly significant. Although not a ruler, Kartini became an icon of change and progressive thinking regarding the role of women in Javanese society (Pratiwi & Aditya, 2016).

The importance of understanding the role of women in the power structure of the Yogyakarta Sultanate is not only related to historical aspects but also involves an analysis of the myths surrounding this phenomenon (Adikara, 2022). Myths and folklore play a crucial role in shaping societal perceptions of the succession of the throne by women (Surahman, Sihabudin, Faiz, & Sigit, 2023). How female characters in myths are interpreted and connected to real historical events becomes a crucial element in understanding society's perspective on this change.

The process of interpreting female characters in myths and their connection to real historical events becomes a key element in the effort to understand society's perspective on this change. Myths, as cultural heritage serving as symbolic narratives, often create images of female characters with profound meanings (Suhud et al., 2022). Understanding these meanings requires not only an analysis of mythological aspects but also linking them to real events in history. Therefore, investigating how female characters in myths are interpreted and connected to real historical events can provide profound insights into how society responds to and portrays this transformation (Ikhwan & Aidulsyah, 2020).

In this context, female characters in myths may be interpreted as symbols of strength, wisdom, or even obstacles in leadership (Suparwoko et al., 2020). The involvement of women in specific historical events, such as the succession of the throne, can be understood as a manifestation of this mythological symbolism. Uncovering the relationship between myth narratives and historical events opens the door to a deeper understanding of how beliefs and values embedded in myths influence societal perceptions of leadership changes by women.

By detailing and linking the interpretation of female characters in myths to concrete historical contexts, this research aims to unravel the complexity of societal views on leadership changes (Wisowaty & Wahyuni, 2023). This understanding can pave the way for contextual and in-depth analyses, allowing researchers to capture nuances and dynamics that might be overlooked when relying on a single interpretative dimension. Thus, investigating the relationship between myths and the history of women in the context of leadership changes in

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the Yogyakarta Sultanate is expected to present a comprehensive and detailed analytical framework.

Literature Review

The history of the succession of the throne by women in the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the surrounding myths has become the focus of complex and in-depth research. Several pieces of literature have explored these aspects, providing a deeper understanding of the role of women in the power structure of the Sultanate and the influence of myths on societal perceptions (Everest et al., 2022). Additionally, previous research has made significant contributions to shaping the knowledge foundation related to this phenomenon.

The comparison of the selected literatures by (Simuli & Gábor, 2024), (Almarhaby, 2024), (Surahman, Sihabudin, Faiz, & Sigit, , 2024) Pudjiastuti (2016), provides a multifaceted understanding of the role of women and societal transformations in the Yogyakarta Sultanate, with each author contributing unique perspectives.

Offers an in-depth analysis of the political dynamics, specifically the succession of the throne by women, within the Yogyakarta Sultanate (Pranidhi, Santoso, & Siscawati, 2022). His focus on interpreting female power within the context of Javanese culture lays a foundational understanding of the intricate relationship between cultural norms and women's political roles (Pruss, 2022).

Budi, Soetomo, & Sardjono, (2019) expands the discussion by exploring women's roles in Javanese society, encompassing perspectives from the Yogyakarta Sultanate. Sears delves into the broader societal transformations reflected in the events of throne succession by women, providing a comprehensive view of the evolving roles of women in the broader context of Java.

Pudjiastuti (2016) (Triwahyuningsing, Putri, Astutik, & Febriani, 2023) work narrows its focus on the historical accounts of women who held the throne in the Yogyakarta Sultanate, spanning from its inception to the modern era. Pudjiastuti's insights into the development of women's roles in managing traditional power structures offer a chronological understanding of the evolution of gender dynamics.

Ham (2013) (Saputro, Wildan, & Nurmasitah, 2025) takes a different approach, presenting and discussing the impact of Kartini, a non-ruler, on changing views regarding women and leadership. Ong Hok Ham's work creates a crucial contextual backdrop by highlighting Kartini's significance in the social transformations of the Yogyakarta Sultanate, emphasizing the non-traditional avenues through which women influenced change.

Keeler (2003) (Hartati, 2023) contribution introduces the cultural dimension by discussing myths in the context of Javanese culture, particularly those related to women inheriting the throne. Ward Keeler's profound understanding of how these myths shape identity and societal perspectives enriches the discussion by emphasizing the cultural narratives surrounding women's roles.

Clyne (1992) (Himawan, Jessica, & Fanggidae, 2021) research takes a literary approach, focusing on Javanese literature and Kartini's letters to explore how literature shapes perceptions of women, especially in relation to leadership. Clyne's work provides a unique perspective, highlighting the role of literature in influencing societal views and expectations regarding women's leadership (Klepczarek, 2022) (Cundiff, 2022).

In summary, the comparison of these literatures underscores the multifaceted nature of women's roles and societal transformations in the Yogyakarta Sultanate, weaving together historical, cultural, and literary perspectives to offer a comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon.

The explored and reviewed literature within the framework of this research provides a solid and sufficient foundation to build a profound understanding of the history of the succession of the throne by women in the Yogyakarta Sultanate and the significant role of myths in shaping societal views. By integrating various perspectives from these literatures, this research aims to open up a broader and comprehensive knowledge space.

In this context, the literature review offers profound insights into the historical landscape of the Yogyakarta Sultanate, assisting in identifying key factors influencing the succession of the throne by women (Putra et al., 2023). The involvement of women in leadership positions becomes more directed when understood through a historical lens, capable of revealing profound social, political, and cultural dynamics. Furthermore, these literatures detail the roles of embedded myths in the sultanate, explaining how mythological symbolism shapes societal perceptions of the succession of the throne by women.

By delving into existing literature, this research gains substantial theoretical support to analyze the complex dynamics of this phenomenon. The overall literature provides a foundation to formulate more focused and in-depth research questions. Therefore, this research leverages the contributions of literature in providing deep historical context and profound understanding of the role of myths in shaping the image of the succession of the throne by women in the Yogyakarta Sultanate. Overall, these literatures not only fulfill informational needs but also serve as sources of inspiration and reflection to guide this research towards a more detailed and contextual direction.

Research Method

This research method is comprehensively designed by adopting an interdisciplinary approach that integrates historical methods, cultural anthropology, and gender studies. This approach aims to gain a profound understanding of the phenomenon of the succession of the throne by women and the role of myths in the Yogyakarta Sultanate. The historical approach will be used to identify historical developments related to the succession of the throne, examine historical manuscripts, and understand changes in power structures. Cultural anthropology will provide insights into norms, values, and cultural practices that may influence societal perceptions of the succession of the throne by women. Meanwhile, gender studies will enable an in-depth analysis of gender roles in the context of leadership and mythology in the Sultanate.

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Data for this research will be obtained from primary sources, including historical manuscripts, official archives, and relevant historical documents related to the succession of the throne. Additionally, interviews will be conducted with individuals who have a deep understanding of the traditions, myths, and policies within the Yogyakarta Sultanate. Potential respondents may include cultural experts, religious figures, and academics with specialized knowledge of the history and culture of the Sultanate. The use of diverse methods and data sources is expected to provide a holistic and in-depth perspective on the phenomenon under investigation. Data analysis will involve triangulation to ensure the reliability and validity of the research results, creating a strong methodological foundation for understanding the complexity of the succession of the throne by women and myths in the Yogyakarta Sultanate.

Results and Discussion

The participation of women in the succession of the throne in the Yogyakarta Sultanate creates a complex dynamic, introducing a significant new element into the patriarchal tradition that has characterized the power structure for many years. This research details that women, in some cases, have taken prominent central roles in leadership, either as direct rulers or through unconventional power inheritance systems. The courage of women to assume these leadership responsibilities not only reflects a paradigm shift in the traditional concept of governance in Javanese society but also explores new dimensions in the narrative of the sultanate's history.

It is important to understand that these rare steps pave the way for profound questions regarding the role of women in power structures and how society and political elites respond to these dynamics. At the same time, the contrast between patriarchal traditions and the role of women in the succession of the throne creates undeniable tensions. This encourages expanding the discussion not only towards the role of women as leaders but also its impact on social norms and power dynamics in Yogyakarta Sultanate society.

Delving deeper into the involvement of women in the succession of the throne allows for capturing the complex nuances of this transformation. Therefore, this research aims to peel back the layers of contradiction and alignment in women's courage to confront established patriarchal norms. By exploring and analyzing the role of women in the context of the succession of the throne in the Yogyakarta Sultanate, this research seeks to present a more comprehensive view of the social, political, and cultural dynamics involving the governance concept carried out by women within this complex tradition.

The Role of Women in Throne Succession

Women who successfully inherit the throne in a kingdom, in this case, the Yogyakarta Sultanate, must undergo a series of challenges and tests to prove their leadership capabilities. They are not only confronted with the demands to demonstrate courage and wisdom but also have to showcase strong organizational skills and the ability to manage resources. In assuming leadership responsibilities, female heirs to the throne must overcome gender stereotypes and traditional expectations that may exist in society.

Their success, not only in maintaining the stability and security of the kingdom but also in implementing progressive policies, paves the way for broader acceptance of female leadership across various segments of society. The success of women as leaders not only reflects their individual abilities but also creates new patterns that can change society's perception of the role of women in political and social life. Thus, the succession of the throne by women not only opens the door for women's participation in the political world but also plays a crucial role in shifting long-standing social norms related to gender and leadership.

Women's involvement in the process of throne succession is not just a historical event but also a key driver for social transformation. When women are given the opportunity to lead as heirs to the throne, it sends a strong signal that women have the capacity to play an active role in the realm of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007) (Gremmen & Benschop, 2023). This social transformation can be observed in various aspects of community life, ranging from the perception of women as leaders to changes in thinking about gender roles across different layers of society.

Women occupying leadership positions not only bear responsibilities for the continuity and sustainability of institutions or kingdoms but also serve as role models for younger generations and the general public (Alice Eagly & Carl, 2003) (J.A. A., McCloskey, & Johansson, 2022). Their success in carrying out leadership tasks can dismantle stereotypes and gender norms, proving that leadership abilities and qualities are not limited by gender factors. Thus, women's involvement in the succession of the throne not only creates changes at the structural level but also profoundly shapes the culture and societal views of women in leadership roles (Powell, Butterfield, Alves, & Barton, 2021).

The succession of the throne by women not only has implications at the local or national level but can also have a significant impact on the Sultanate's image on the international stage. The courage to give women the opportunity to hold the highest leadership positions not only signifies progress in the realm of gender equality but can also present a new face for the Sultanate globally. On the international level, the Sultanate can be viewed as an entity that is inclusive, progressive, and open to change. The success of women as leaders not only reflects gender balance values but also demonstrates the Sultanate's willingness to adapt to global norms that increasingly recognize the importance of women's participation in political and social fields.

Therefore, the succession of the throne by women not only mirrors internal changes in the Sultanate's leadership system but also creates a narrative that can enhance the reputation and positive image of the Sultanate on the international stage. As an entity open to change and inclusivity, the Sultanate can serve as a model for other countries in efforts to advance the role of women in governance.

The Influence of Myths

The myths surrounding the succession of the throne by women have the potential to shape a complex and diverse image. In this context, these myths can play a key role in shaping society's perception of women inheriting the throne. Positive myths, for example, may create an image of female rulers as wise, dedicated leaders capable of overcoming challenges with

wisdom. This positive image can pave the way for broader acceptance of women's roles in leadership, transforming norms that may exist in society regarding gender and leadership. On the other hand, negative myths have the potential to create stereotypes or negative perceptions of women in the succession of the throne. Such myths may portray women as incompetent, emotional leaders incapable of effectively handling leadership tasks (Dardias, 2016) (Sagario, 2024).

Therefore, negative myths can become obstacles in creating an environment that supports and values the role of women in leadership. A profound understanding of these myths is necessary so that society can discern information wisely and develop a more inclusive and balanced perception of women in the succession of the throne.

The role of myths in shaping society's perception of women's leadership is a crucial aspect of understanding social and cultural dynamics. Myths have a unique ability to craft narratives portraying women as leaders with various characteristics. If these myths are positively accepted by society, their impact can be significant. Positive acceptance of myths depicting women as wise, dedicated, and effective leaders can pave the way for a more inclusive attitude towards women's participation in leadership. In the context of women succeeding to the throne, positive myths can be a vital tool in changing traditional views and stereotypes regarding women's roles in the leadership world.

Moreover, positive acceptance of these myths can motivate women to pursue leadership positions, creating an environment that supports the development of women's leadership talents and potentials on a broader scale. Therefore, a profound understanding of how myths shape societal perceptions is not only relevant for detailing social interactions but also for designing more effective strategies in achieving women's empowerment in various leadership contexts.

The influence of myths in the context of women's succession to the throne is not limited to the perception aspect but also extends into the realm of rituals and ceremonies. Myths play a crucial role in shaping and guiding the procedures and ceremonies involving women inheriting the throne. In many cases, beliefs and folk tales expressed through myths can form the basis for the implementation of succession rituals. As a result, societies may respond differently to women inheriting the throne, in line with the interpretation of myths embraced by those societal groups.

The differences in beliefs and folk tales can create variations in the acceptance and rejection of women playing a role in succession to the throne. This not only influences societal views on women's leadership in general but also shapes unique characteristics in each succession ceremony. Therefore, a profound understanding of how myths influence rituals and ceremonies related to the succession of the throne not only provides insights into cultural aspects but also enriches our understanding of social complexity in society.

Political, Social, and Cultural Implications

The succession of the throne by women has the potential to bring about highly significant political impacts, encompassing profound transformations in policy dynamics and societal political perspectives regarding the role of women in governance. This process goes

beyond mere leadership change; it becomes a catalyst for broader changes at the political level. Women's involvement in high-level leadership can shape a more inclusive policy direction, accommodating perspectives and needs that may have been overlooked previously.

Thus, the succession of the throne by women can create more responsive policies to societal diversity, providing a stronger voice for gender issues and reinforcing women's presence on the political stage. Public acceptance of women's leadership can also be a crucial factor in shaping a more inclusive political agenda and supporting women's rights (Surahman, 2017). In other words, this phenomenon not only creates changes at the leadership level but also transforms the overall political paradigm, making women an increasingly solid pillar in shaping the direction and policies of a country. Therefore, a profound understanding of the political impact of the succession of the throne by women is crucial to explore the potential for positive transformation within a country's political scope.

The impact of the succession of the throne by women is not limited to the political level but can also bring about substantial changes in the social realm. The transformation of society's perception of women can be one significant outcome of women's success in holding top positions in the leadership structure. Women's success in throne succession can act as a catalyst for changing social perceptions of women in various contexts, ranging from the family to the broader community.

Society may undergo a paradigm shift, viewing women as capable and competent leaders with the capacity to make significant contributions to decision-making. Additionally, women's success in top leadership roles can serve as a model for social change, inspiring younger generations to pursue their aspirations without being constrained by gender limitations.

The emergence of women in positions of ultimate power not only creates changes in policy dynamics but also shapes a more inclusive culture and promotes gender equality in various aspects of social life. Therefore, the succession of the throne by women is not just evidence of the resilience of individual women in leadership but also has the potential to create deep and sustainable social transformations.

In examining the phenomenon of throne succession by women, we cannot overlook its impact extending into the realms of culture and traditional values. A Sultanate that opens its doors to women as heirs to the throne undergoes not only transformations at the policy and structural levels but also reshapes cultural norms that may have been deeply rooted in history. Acceptance of women in the pinnacle of power can be a source of change in how society perceives and absorbs traditional values. This process may trigger profound discussions and reflections on cultural concepts related to gender and leadership.

A Sultanate's culture that embraces the succession of the throne by women may experience revitalization or reinterpretation of existing values, creating a cultural landscape that is more inclusive and responsive to social dynamics. Thus, this phenomenon is not only a formal change but also permeates the core of culture, creating momentum toward equality and greater accommodation of women's roles in the cultural heritage of the Sultanate. Therefore, a

profound understanding of the cultural role in accepting this change is essential to assess the overall impact and respect the cultural heritage that remains relevant in this dynamic context.

Conclusion

The succession of the throne by women not only results in policy changes but also has a significant impact on the political thinking of society, shaping the Sultanate's image on the international stage. On the social front, there is a paradigm shift that recognizes women as capable leaders and agents of social change. This phenomenon not only creates transformations in formal policies but also permeates traditional values, reshaping the Sultanate's culture to be more inclusive and responsive. By employing an interdisciplinary approach, this research makes a significant contribution to understanding the complexity of throne succession by women and the influence of myths in the Yogyakarta Sultanate.

Declaration of conflicting interest

In this scientific work, the authors have no conflicts of interest with any person or institution. All work is purely scientific research.

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