

**SUBJECTIVITY IN COLONIAL ARCHIVES:  
A CASE IN BATAVIA GOVERNMENT’S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE SULTAN OF  
BANTEN IN EARLY XIX CENTURY**

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**ABSTRACT**

On January 14<sup>th</sup> 1808, there was a change of power in the East Indies (the term for the Dutch East-Indies in early nineteenth century) from Governor-General Albertus Henricus Wiese to Herman Willem Daendels. The change of power was considered unusual since the position of governor-general had been always elected from one of the Dutch East-Indies’ officials. However, this time the governor-general came directly from Europe and had never served in the territory of this colony. In carrying out its duties, the new governor-general used instructions that had different structure from the previous period, which already had standard rules. In addition to the different structure of the letter, the instructions used words which had unusual connotations used in the preceding instructions created by Governor General Daendels. This paper would deal with subjectivity in colonial archive between 1808 and 1811, both from the sociolect and chronolect point of view. All words would be patterned in both type of language varieties and the connotation could be analyzed so that the tendencies would appear. The data which is used in this paper come from the Governor General’s instructions to The Sultan of Banten in the Dutch East Indies during 1808-1811.

Keywords: *Structure, instruction, component of meaning, connotation, Javanese king.*

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background of Study**

The Colonial area of the East Indies (read Dutch East Indies) in the end of the XVIII century up to the early XIX century was having a tremendous political turbulence. In a relatively short period (20 years), the colonial territory of the East Indies went through several changes of power, either within the main country (The Netherlands) or the outside ones.

From the Dutch History, it shows that in 1795, the Batavian Republic (*Bataavsche Republiek*) was built in the Netherlands, after the French-Dutch united army managed to overthrow the state and managed to get rid of their leader, Willem van Orange, outside the Dutch to flee to England. In that year, a new government of Batavian Republic was established in 1795. The Dutch-based democratic government in the Netherlands was under the command of Jan Rutger Schimmelpenink, who adopted the *Directoire* system of government which had been stood a few years earlier in France. The Batavian Republic lasted from 1795 up to 1806, when Napoléon Bonaparte assumed that the geographical position of the Netherlands was very strategic for the arch-enemies of France (read: England) since it was an access for England and its coalition to enter Europe. Considering that after the Treaty of Amiens (March 25, 1802) was failed, both of these superpower countries were fighting to each other more violently than before.

On May 1806, under Napoléon Bonaparte's command, he summoned the leaders of Batavian Republic and the Dutch parliament to come to the Tuilleries Palace in Paris. In this occasion, Napoléon Bonaparte conveyed that the condition of the Dutch colonial area was in a critical condition. In fact, Tanjung Harapan (Cape of Good Hope) in South Africa, which had been under Dutch colonial area since January 1805, had been dashed by England, and the Governor, Jan Willem Janssens<sup>1</sup>, was arrested. In addition, Ceylon had also been under controlled of England even before the Treaty of Amiens being signed. Therefore, the Batavian Republic is declared unsuccessful in defending the colonial territory. During the meeting, Napoléon Bonaparte issued three decrees, they are:

1. The government of the Batavian Republic was dissolved and replaced by the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, expecting that the royal government could immediately decide to save the Dutch colonial territory from England's impudence;
2. Appointing Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, Napoléon Bonaparte's younger brother, as the King of Netherlands, with full recognition of his status as the King of Netherlands;
3. Finding a governor-general to be placed in Java who is capable to defend the French's interests and dignity from England's impudence.

The realization of Napoléon's decree was replacing the Dutch system of government from the Batavian Republic into the Kingdom of the Netherlands by appointing Louis Napoléon Bonaparte as the King of the Netherlands. Afterwards, the Batavian Republic's efforts in replacing the Governor-General Albertus Henricus Wiese by sending Carel Hendrik van Grasvelt to replace Johannes Sieberg and C. Th. Elout to serve as the Director General in Batavia (Chairman of *Raad van Indië*) should be withdrawn. Both of the high official candidates in the colonial region of the Dutch East Indies were recalled to the Netherlands<sup>2</sup>. Both of the official candidates had previously traveled to Java via the northern route (through American continent), since the eastern path was considered very dangerous because of England's blockade to the east of Tanjung Harapan, such as India, Malacca and Java. Having arrived in North America, both candidates were called back to the Netherlands. As a result of a debate between King Louis Napoléon and Napoléon Bonaparte, a man who was considered capable in defending the French's dignity and interests in the East Indies was elected. Java must be led by a powerful military general who is able to defend against England's attacks and potentially able to make changes. As a result, a Colonel General who was much experienced in defending the Netherlands against England-Russian coalition, Herman Willem Daendels was finally elected. He received an Appointment Letter as the Governor-General of King Louis Napoléon on January 29, 1807. As the new governor-general, he had to carry on two main tasks: saving Java from England's impudence and fixing the administrative system in the region as a result of the rampant corruption in the region.

Prior to his departure to Java on February 9 1807, he received 3 instructions to be done in the East Indies colonial territory: Instructions for the Governor-General, Instructions for the Governor-General and the Indies Council (*Raad van Indië*) and instructions to dismiss the high government (*hooge regeering*) in Batavia. Given the wide scope of his duty, that is from Tanjung

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Willem Janssens on 16 May 1811 replaced Herman Willem Daendels as Governor-General of the East Indies. His government lasted only a few months, because on September 18 1811, he had to sign the Capitulation Tuntang whose contents are the handover of the island of Java and other islands of former colonies of the Dutch to General Auchmuty as leader of the expedition conquered the island of Java.

<sup>2</sup> F.W. Stapel. 1940. *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indie*. Volume V. Amsterdam: Uitgeversmaatschappij, p. 20.

Harapan up to the east, and he was obliged to protect all the Europeans in the region, King Louis finally raised his position from Colonel General to Marshal by the time of his departure from the Netherlands to Java.

Considering that the sea was very vulnerable, Daendels took 10 months from Europe to Java. He departed from Den Haag on January 9, heading to Paris to face Napoléon Bonaparte. From Paris, he headed to Bordeaux in order to search for ships heading for Java, but there was no ship which was dared to go to Java because of the English navy's threats. Then, he headed to Spain, to the port of La Paz. He boarded the ship from there to Kanari Islands and continued to Java.

On January 1 1808, he landed in Anyer along with 5 aide de camps. He and his entourage were greeted by the Military Commander of Attack Pieter Philip Dupuy who had got the task of representing the governor-general. Having arrived in Batavia on January 4 1808, he stated that all letters he had brought had been seized by the England ship, so that when he went to the Governor-General, he was still well received, even on January 14 1808, there was a handover of position from Albertus Henricus Wiese to Herman Willem Daendels. Eventhough without any paper to sign, Wiese kept willing to give his power to Daendels since he already heard it from American crew who informed that there was a change of plan according to the Dutch newspaper. Thus, since January 14 1808, the highest power in the East Indies was held by Herman Willem Daendels.

### **The Murder at Surosowan Banten Palace**

The territory of Banten Sultanate was out of Batavia's concern. It was caused by several things, such as: Banten region was no longer a good quality pepper-producing region, so that traders who want to trade in Banten was rare. Because of this condition, Banten Sultanate seemed to be out of Batavia's concern; secondly, Batavia *Ommelanden* (Batavia and the surrounding areas) such as Tangerang up to Cisadane River, which was the Banten Sultanate boundary, was known as an unsafe area. Many robberies were carried out by the citizens towards those who pass through the region, so that Europeans were reluctant to enter the region.

The new Governor-General wanted to immediately realize the article 11 of the King's Instruction to the Governor-General, who would establish a suitable port of war in Java. He was more excited to realize the construction of the war fleet base once Admiral AA Buyskes arrived from the Netherlands. Along with Buyskes, he divided the task on finding a suitable place to serve as a fleet port of war. They agreed to build two fleet bases in the west and east. In the West, the port plan would be built at Meeuwen Bay in Ujung Kulon. While in the eastern port of the fleet would be built in Madura Strait. The project officer for the construction of the western fleet base was held by the Governor-General, while the construction of the fleet base in the east was held by Admiral Buyskes.

Since the time was urgent and no one knew when England will start attacking Java, the construction of the western and eastern fleet bases was prioritized. Therefore, the construction of both bases of this war fleet must be hastened. As the person in charge of the construction of the war fleet base in Meeuwen Bay, the Governor General immediately issued an order to request assistance to The Sultan of Banten in order to deploy mandatory workers directly under his command. This project passes through an area where the population was still very rare, through a jungle filled with swamps. The Sultan mobilized 1,500 workers per day to work on this project. Given such a heavy nature, many of the workers became sick and even died. Although many victims have fallen, the Governor-General insisted that the Sultan should send 1,500 workers

every day. Unable to bear to see his people sick and even died, the Sultan sent some nobles to ask for mercy from the Governor General. They were escorted by Military Commander of Attack Pieter Philip Dupuy to go to Batavia to meet the Governor-General in order to request that people of Banten were released from such mandatory work. However, the meeting did not provide a way out and it caused anger of the Governor General to Patih Wargadiredja, one of The Sultan of Banten's messenger. He alleged that Patih Wargadiredja had masterminded all this. Therefore, through the Banten military commander, he filed four demands to The Sultan of Banten:

- a. Sending Patih Wargadiredja, The Sultan of Banten's uncle who became Patih in Banten Sultanate to Batavia;
- b. The Sultan still had to provide 1,000 people a day;
- c. The Governor General intended to move the Surosowan Palace from Banten to Anyer on West Java Coast;
- d. Delivering Raden Aria who was the ruler of Lampung both alive and dead.

This demand was considered insulting to the Sultan. On 10 November 1808, the Military Commander of Attack Pieter Philip Dupuy along with the Sultan's envoy departed for Batavia. Having arrived there on 12 November, he reported that the Sultan was willing to accept and grant the demands of the Governor-General to surrender Patih Wargadiredja, to provide 1,000 labor per day and to the submission of Raden Aria. However, the Sultan refused to move his palace to Anyer on the ground that his ancestors had occupied the palace for 300 years.

Dupuy failed to persuade Patih Wargadiredja to come to Batavia. Dupuy immediately met The Sultan of Banten who was accompanied by several envoys. However, he was killed in front of the palace with stabbing spears, and his corpse was dragged and thrown into the river. Along with Dupuy, a European military and three people of bumiputera were killed. The murder took place on Friday, November 14, 1808. The news of the murder reached Batavia in the afternoon of November 14th. On November 16th, the Governor-General was accompanied by 1,000 soldiers departing from Batavia to Banten. They traveled for 25 hours. On November 21st, Daendels ordered to destroy the palace of Surosowan. The next day, The Sultan of Banten descended from his throne and the territory of Banten Sultanate was controlled by the Dutch colonial government. It was the condition that the Governor-General issued several instructions for The Sultan of Banten in the early XIX century.

## METHOD

This research uses linguistic research methods, especially in terms of the connotation and denotation. Meanwhile, in this research, speech acts will also be used, which is used in taking the oath for the Sultan. The connotative word or phrase is a word or phrase having an explicit meaning or not the real meaning. Connotative words or phrases usually contain certain allegory allusions, both positive (*meyorative*) and negative (*peyorative*). Connotative words or sentence are widely used in literary works such as poetry, novels, short stories and other literary works. Meanwhile, denotative word or sentence is a word or phrase containing a literal meaning.

The notion of connotative and denotative meanings is related to the meaning of words and the usage in language both oral and written. Thus, in the use of language, the selection of words or sentences that have connotative or denotative meaning used by the speaker must have a certain purpose. Also, in this paper, the concept of speech acts from Harimurti Kridalaksana (1984) will be used. A speech or speech act is *a meaningful speech strain between two actual*

*and potential abilities.* Speech act means spoken sentence or part of sentence. Speech act can be in a form of performative speech showing completed action at the moment. Performative speech is not evaluated as true or false, but rather as appropriate or inappropriate (Leech, 1993:280).

This paper was based on colonial archives made by the Dutch colonial government in early XIX century, precisely in the form of:

- Instruction of voor de Koning van Bantam on 22 November 1808
- Instruction of Voor de Koning van Bantam on 27 November 1808, and
- Instruction dated on 7 Desember 1808.

Out of the three instructions, 45 words or group of words or a chapter were quoted. The details are as follows: Instruction on 22 November 1808 for 10 data, instruction on 27 November 1808 for 22 data, and the rest are instruction on 7 Desember 1808.

All data was taken from Daendels' accountability as General Governor to King Willem van Oranye in 1814. The accountability is entitled *Staat der Nederlandsche Oostindische Bezittingen, Onderhetbestuur van den Gouverneur Generaal Herman Willem Daendels in de jaren 1808—1811*. The data were found in the second attachment (*bijlagentweedestuk*) published by 'S Gravenhage.

## ANALYSIS

This paper would try to discuss words and sentence used in these instructions using connotative-denotative meaning analysis and using the performative speech act analysis which already stated in sub-section method. Out of the 45 data obtained from three instructions for the King of Banten issued by the colonial government in November up to December 1808, there were data which were very subjective expressed using words or connotative sentence.

### a. Expressing using connotative words or sentence

The majority of government instructions for The Sultan of Banten, according to the existing rules, they should use a denotative word or sentence. As an instruction, it should not contain multiple interpretations. Multi interpretation is not usually contained in an instruction. However, in these three instructions, there are many words or sentences containing connotations.

Problems behind the emerge of these instructions were the murder of Banten Military Commander, Peter Philip Dupuy, along with several European bodyguards and *bumi putera* bodyguards which has been already described in previous sections. The General Governor considered that this incident was very painful and hurting the colonial officials at that time. The consequences of the murder were that the Sultan of Banten who was aware of the incident refused to accept any representatives from Batavia. The threats taken by the representative of the colonial government along with 1000 troops were ignored by the Sultan of Banten. Therefore, they felt like being forced to destroy the Surosowan Sultanate, and adjudicate the Sultan at Benteng Speelwijk. Thus, the hateful atmosphere of the colonial government was embodied in the three instructions as a research object for this research.

Some of several instruction parts contain connotations that should not be contained in an instruction made in normal condition.

"The incident took place with Europeans and other *bumi putera* troops being killed, in addition, the actions taken against Lieutenant Kohl who guarded the palace, was a plan and a *betrayal meeting that led to the murder*". (1-3)

The betrayal meeting which stated in data part 1-3 convinced that the incident was a part of betrayal action toward incumbent government at that time.

"Because after hiding all night, Kohl was arrested by Sultan, he was caught during the day and *slaughtered cruelly without any prevention or prohibition by the Sultan*". (1-4)

The use of the words *slaughtered cruelly without any prevention or prohibition by Sultan* indicated that the presence of the colonial government in Banten was meaningless, therefore without much consideration, Banten Military Commander Officials were not considered as the respected officials for Banten people.

"Sultan was obligated dutifully and faithfully to submit to His Majesty of the Dutch, as a king and legitimate ruler of the Banten Sultanate and to His Majesty Marshal and General Governor and Council of the Indies who represent him".(1-17)

This sentence was an obligation that must be obeyed by the Sultan of Banten obediently and faithfully to the King of Netherlands.

**b. Several performative speech acts were contained in the following snippets:**

"Kingdom of Banten is declared as an area under the Dutch King". (1-8).

Along with this statement, Kingdom of Banten was taken by the Dutch colonial government. In other words, Banten Sultanate was already disbanded and was taken over by the King of Netherlands.

"The Majesty of Marshal as the representative of the Dutch King felt obligated to defend the honor and dignity of the Dutch Government in order to force him in taking military action (1-14)

Using the sentence above, the Dutch colonial government took every military way to control the Banten Sultanate, which was in contrary to the instruction given by the Dutch King to the General Governor. The word *force him* was a harsh words in order to catch the Sultan of Banten who was already powerless.

By using the word "decided" and the word "declared", so that the action as the impact of those words was occurred.

"it was decided to prescribe at the ceremony for the *Prefek* of Banten as authorized on behalf of the general government of the King". (3-34)

Meanwhile, the crown prince must replace his father who was deposed by the Dutch colonial government. He was required to take the following vow:

"Vow for the Sultan:

I pledge and swear to show obedience to the King of Dutch as the authorized and lord, and to Marshal and General Governor other than the Council of Indies who represents it to contribute all demanded from me. I, in every aspect, will obey and as far as my ability will follow anything commanded in this instruction to me and further regulated. With acknowledgment from the bottom of my heart, I will act worthy as the good

fortune given to me, treat well the Banten people who were under my authority and advance their prosperity, no longer expel them from their property or fixed their labor and taxes for those who are cultivated by government. Then, I will act as a king which will pay attention to the prosperity of all his subordinates, all with disposition as given by the Dutch government as my lord or Marshall and Governor General as the following lord after him, I swear in front of the all mentioned representative, Prince Ratu Muhammad Aliudin, who took a vow under Holy Quran, as confirmed by my signature and royal seal of Banten”.

The Sultan of Banten did the vow to maintain the integrity as the Sultan of Banten to always obey and loyal to the government. If Sultan violates this vow, the government will easily take decisive action and if necessary, depose his throne in order to secure their interest either from economic, political, security, and all the point of view related to the interest of the colonial government.

## CONCLUSION

From this little research, it can be concluded that behind the emergence of this instruction, it plays the role in determining the diction in the form of words containing many connotations. The murder towards the military commander of attack was a blow to the General Governor and his staff, assuming that their dignity and prestige were declining in Banten resident's mind.

The use of unusual instruction format as used in other instruction is to show high subjectivity and arbitrary impression which actually have no correlation with the incident. The murder of Peter Philip Dupuy was countered by the murder of Prince Wargadireja which considered as the mastermind and the perpetrator of the murder. Given that the incident occurred in front of the palace of Surosowan, Sultan who was considered incapable to resist Prince Wargadireja was blamed because he was considered incapable in preventing the bloody incident. All these incidents must be taken by The Sultan of Banten which caused him to be trialed in Speelwijk fortress and exiled to Surabaya.

Many elements of subjectivity in these three instructions indicate that the act was very detrimental and disturbing the integrity of the colonial government. The expropriation of the status and the area was considered as the balanced repayment of events that is considered as detrimental for the existence of the colonial government. The takeover of Banten region has long been waiting by the colonial government but then had been come true after the incident.

The Sultan of Banten's integrity against the colonial government must be accompanied by a performative speech in the form of taking vow for Sultan. No matter the condition, the colonial government runs the politics of imperialism and colonialism as the factor to control the area authorized long with the citizens. The inhabitant factor is vital because at that time, the division of the region was not based on the extent of its demographic territory but rather, it was based on the number of labor available which in Javanese called as *karya*. In Banten's case, this colonial government had gone far in disobeying the instruction from the King of Dutch to General Governor.

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