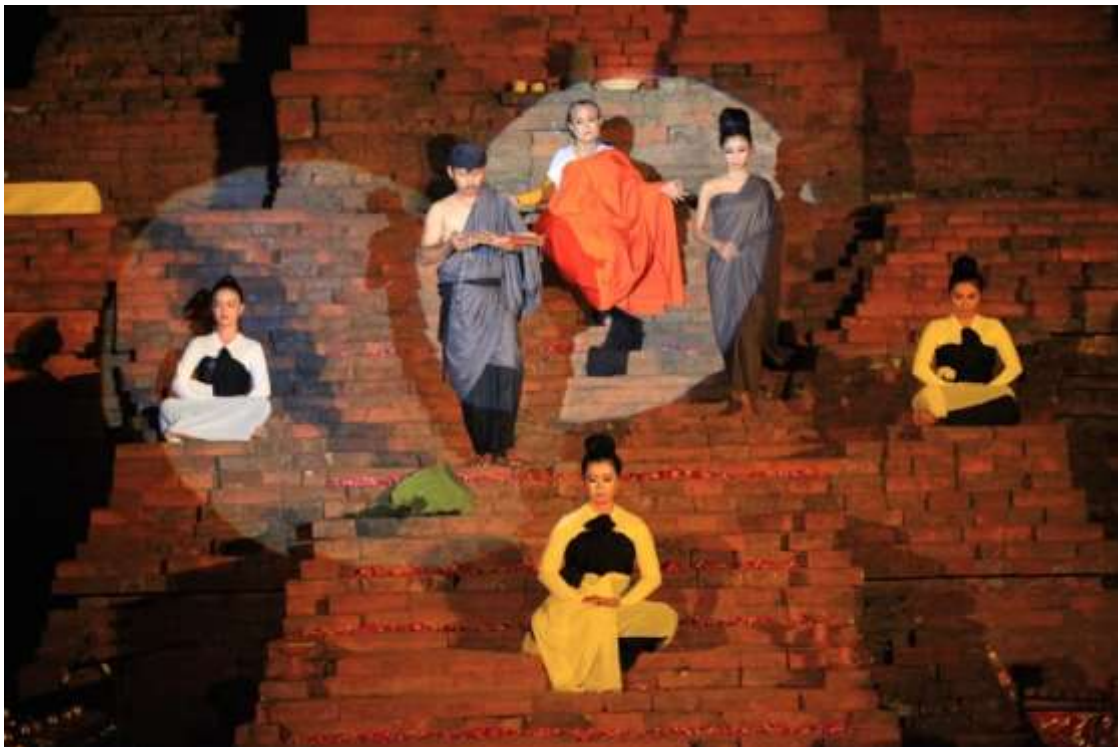


Trowulan Majapahit Festival 2014, Celebrating the Harmony in the Diversity of Nusantara

Background

Founded in 1293 by Nararya Sanggramawijaya on the island of Java, the Majapahit Empire was considered to be one of the greatest and most powerful empires in the history of Indonesia and Southeast Asia. It reached its golden age from 1350 to 1389 during the reign of Hayam Wuruk, aided and abetted by his prime minister Gajah Mada.

In the epic poem Nagarakrtagama, written by Mpu Prapanca in 1365, Majapahit is described as a vast empire stretching from Sumatra to New Guinea, consisting of present-day Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, southern Thailand, Sulu archipelago, the Philippines and East Timor. Historians, however, continue to debate the true nature of the Majapahit influence on the region.



Gayatri Rajapatni

Never in doubt though is the majesty of Majapahit, described glowingly in annals and travel logs by poets and storytellers, extolling its conquest of Southeast Asia under one banner of sovereignty. The triumph of Majapahit was in expanding the boundaries of its empire and in the ensuing prosperity and flourishing of trade, art, architecture and civilization in its territories. Indonesians draw inspiration from the greatness of this Javanese empire, which united a diverse and rich plurality of cultures, traditions, languages, resources and peoples into one nation. *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, the Indonesian motto meaning “unity in diversity”, is line from a poem by another Majapahit poet, Mpu Tantular.

It is important to understand the role of Majapahit in the blossoming of the world’s nations. The diplomacy and alliances fostered by the Majapahit Empire in the 13th century were a lesson in how to develop commerce and cooperation. History reveals the aculturation of art, literature, tradition, thought and belief systems, which established the identity of nations in the world within the dynamics of life up until today. This legacy lives on in the role of Indonesia in the international community, in its proactive pursuit of cooperation in fields ranging from the social, cultural, economic to the political, not only in bilateral relations between governments, but also among societies.



YAD Chairman, Mr. Hashim, giving a speech

Conservation of Majapahit Heritage

Trowulan, considered the cradle of Majapahit, was known for its grand annual festivities. Today’s residents, weaned on the myths and legends of Majapahit on the very sites of former capital, have taken an active interest in safeguarding their heritage. Together with scholars and other agencies and institutions, they have joined with Mandala Majapahit, created by Yayasan Arsari Djojohadikusumo (YAD) to carry out a variety of conservation activities to cover not just the temples and other physical evidence of Majapahit remains but also its cultural traditions, arts, performance, rituals as practiced by the people of Trowulan for generation. In consultations with YAD, it was

decided to celebrate the birth anniversary of the Majapahit Empire in November, as it is believed the empire was established on the full moon around November 10-12, 1293, during the coronation of its founder, Raden Wijaya.

Trowulan Majapahit Festival (TMF) 2014

The people of Trowulan, in particular those from Watesumpak and Bejijong villages, in cooperation with YAD's Mandala Majapahit, organized the first Trowulan Majapahit Festival (TMF) from 6-23 November 2014 to celebrate the 721st anniversary of the Majapahit Empire. With the theme "Harmoniousness of the Diversity of Indonesia", TMF showcased the work and performances of the villagers of Watesumpak and Bejijong together with other Majapahit heritage lovers. Art groups from outside Trowulan, other Esat Java areas, Solo, Bali and Sulawesi were invited to participate. Dancers and artists from India, Singapore and Mexico also flew in for the event.



People's Bazaar

There have been various Majapahit Festivals through the years, but they do not involve local residents in their programs. TMF 2014 is the first true Majapahit Festival conceptualized, created and organized by the people living in Trowulan, especially those of Watesumpak and Bejijong villages, site of the royal Majapahit Empire. It is the festival from the people, by the people of Trowulan for the proud preservation of their heritage.

The program of the TMF 2014 were conducted every weekend of November 2014 and included art performances, exhibit, rituals, book discussion, seminars, dialogues, heritage explorations and workshops on photography and heritage. An international

seminar on archaeology was attended by experts from universities in Indonesia, Singapore and Australia.



Participants of book discussion

YAD Executive Director Catrini Pratihari Kubontubuh is hopeful that TMF 2014 and subsequent festivals become an effective tool for: “establishing the national heritage Area of Trowulan as a Kota Raja (Royal Capital City) of the Majapahit Empire; raising the potential of diverse heritage, both tangible and intangible, in Trowulan specifically and with Nusantara culture in other regions; initiating an annual event that rekindles the unity and pride of the nation, to be convened annually so as to become an icon for Trowulan, Majapahit and ultimately Indonesia; provide a platform to continue the historic Majapahit legacy of strengthening regional and global alliances.”



Jatilan Dance, village art performance at Watesumpak archaeological site



Kids and lantern, art performance at Brahu Temple

YAD Chair Hashim Djojohadikusumo, his family and the YAD team were at Brahu Temple on November 21 to watch the collaborative theatrical performance of “Kidung Gayatri Rajapatni” based on the epic Nagarakrtagama. Together with hundreds of people in a magnificent setting, they enjoyed a “flawless” show that highlighted the role of Gayatri, the wise and skillful princess as daughter of King Kertanegara, her leadership role as King Raden Wijaya’s empress, her mentoring of Queen Tribuana Tunggaladewi (her daughter), and her stewardship to King Hayam Wuruk (her grandson). A tribute to the women behind the grandeur of the Majapahit Empire!

(Text by Catrini Pratihari Kubontubuh & Diane Butler)

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