



Embedding Nationalist Values in History Education Through Early Human Cohabitation in Java Caves

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Abstract

This study investigates the presence of nationalist values within the narrative of early human cohabitation in cave shelters in Java, positioning it as a potential educational resource. The objective of this research is to examine how interactions between distinct racial groups, specifically Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid populations can be utilized to foster students' nationalist consciousness. Employing a qualitative literature review approach, the study seeks to identify the embedded nationalist values in the inter-racial coexistence of prehistoric human communities in Java and assess their potential as learning materials to reinforce national identity among students. The findings of this research suggest implications for educational practice, advocating for the integration of prehistoric cohabitation narratives into the curriculum as a means to cultivate a deeper understanding of national identity and promote social cohesion among learners.

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INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia aims to equip the younger generation to participate actively and productively in social and national life (Lalo, 2018). The compulsory education program represents the government's commitment to fulfilling the mandate of the 1945 Constitution, particularly the goal of enhancing national intellect. At the elementary level, history education introduces students to the foundational concepts of national identity. This continues at the secondary level, where historical learning strengthens the competencies developed earlier (Hasan, 2019).

In learning history, students examine past events through narratives reconstructed by historians (Hartati, 2018). While historical facts are central, the core aim of history education is not rote memorization but the development of historical consciousness. This involves cultivating students understanding, values, and attitudes toward societal change with relevance to current and future contexts (Dewanto et al., 2023). Such awareness helps students form informed perspectives and make responsible decisions (Azhari, 2023).

Teachers play a vital role in building historical awareness by encouraging students to reflect on the relevance of historical narratives in their personal and collective identities. One promising historical case is the cohabitation of prehistoric cave dwelling humans in Java. Archaeological sites such as Binangun, Leran, and Song Keplek offer evidence of early interactions between distinct racial groups, notably the Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid populations. These interactions occurred long before Indonesia's political formation and suggest early forms of biological and cultural integration, pointing to the roots of a shared identity within diversity (Handini & Widiyanto, 1998; Kasnowihardjo, 2013; Kasnowihardjo, 2016). This aligns with the modern interpretation of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* which remains a core principle in Indonesian national ideology. In modern Indonesia, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is reflected in efforts to embrace ethnic, cultural, and religious plurality within a unified national identity (Hartanti & Sundrijo, 2022). By highlighting its historical roots, students can better appreciate the longstanding nature of Indonesian

diversity and its relevance to contemporary social harmony.

This material can be taught to students at the tenth grade level as part of the history curriculum under the Kurikulum Merdeka framework, specifically within the topic "Human Origins and Early Migrations in the Indonesian Archipelago". The integration of general content on the origins of early humans with the narrative of prehistoric human cohabitation in Java serves as a medium for exploring embedded nationalist values, such as the archaeologically substantiated concept of racial intermixing. Through this approach, history education not only introduces the biological origins of the nation but also instills an understanding of unity in diversity that has existed since prehistoric times.

Despite its significance, research addressing nationalist values in prehistoric cohabitation narratives remains limited. Existing studies focus on ancestral migrations and their impacts on cultural diversity and identity (Wiradnyana, 2015; Fibryanto et al., 2021). Others have explored how historical sources can support students understanding of local and national history (Krismawati et al., 2018; Sofiani & Andriyani, 2020).

However, these studies leave critical gaps. First, most focus on genetic and anthropological aspects of early migration, with limited exploration of its educational relevance in fostering nationalism. Second, few have linked prehistoric racial coexistence in Java directly to the development of national identity. This study addresses these gaps by exploring the nationalist values embedded in prehistoric cohabitation narratives. It also examines how these narratives can be utilized as learning materials to promote national identity and social cohesion among students.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a literature-based approach to examine how the communal life of prehistoric humans in Javanese caves can be utilized as educational material to foster students' sense of nationalism. Following the stages of literature research outlined by Zed (2008), the main theme addressed is "the communal life of prehistoric humans in Javanese caves" as a historical source that reinforces national identity.

Data were collected from academic books and peer-reviewed journal articles, focusing on archaeological findings, prehistoric life, and the formation of national identity. A systematic search was conducted through scholarly databases and digital libraries using keywords such as *prehistoric humans in Java*, *prehistoric caves*, *Indonesian archaeology*, and *national identity*. The collected sources were thematically organized and critically reviewed to strengthen the theoretical foundation.

The selection of literature was based on academic credibility, thematic relevance, and its contribution to discourses on the origins of Indonesian society. Priority was given to works that present empirical data, interpretative models, or critical perspectives on the lives of prehistoric humans.

Analysis was conducted through in-depth reading of selected literature, with particular attention to descriptions of material culture, social structures, and symbolic behavior of prehistoric communities. This study highlights how narratives surrounding community, adaptation, and identity can be strategically incorporated into education to enhance students' national awareness.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Waves of Migration of the Ancestors of the Indonesian Nation

As an archipelagic country, Indonesia is bordered by two major continents, Asia and Australia, and surrounded by two oceans, the Indian and Pacific Oceans. This strategic location has made Indonesia a cultural bridge and migration crossroads since ancient times. Consisting of 13,600 islands, Indonesia is home to a rich diversity of cultures, which can be attributed to the geographical mobility initiated by the ancestors of the Indonesian people thousands of years ago. These early migrations brought with them a wide array of cultural elements, such as language, kinship systems, social structures, economic systems, and belief systems (Brown, 2003).

To understand the origins of the Indonesian people, Misjberg and Jacob introduced the hypothesis of waves of migration. According to this hypothesis, two major waves of migration occurred in ancient Indonesia, involving the Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid groups. This

hypothesis is based on paleoanthropological findings, particularly the discovery of the Wajak fossils, which serve as a reference point in the analysis. The migration of the Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid groups is linked to the process of population hybridization in Indonesia, offering an explanation for the diverse ethnic groups present in the country (Glinka et al., 2007).

Paleoanthropological findings support the hypothesis of migration by two primary racial groups in the Indonesian archipelago. By the end of the Late Pleistocene, the Australomelanesoid group still inhabited Southeast Asia and began spreading eastward and southward into Indonesia. In contrast, the Mongoloid group began arriving during the Late Neolithic and Early Metal periods, pushing the Australomelanesoid population further east. This shift led to a racial polarization, with the Australomelanesoid majority residing in the eastern and southern parts of Indonesia and the Mongoloid population becoming more prominent in the western and northern regions (Koesbardiati & Suriyanto, 2007).

Who are the Australomelanesoid / Papuan Melanesoid race?

The first migration of modern humans from Africa occurred around 200,000 years ago. This migration, known as the "Out of Africa" theory, posits that modern humans began leaving Africa to spread across the world. From Africa, they moved into Asia and eventually to Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. This migration explains why the population in Eastern Indonesia appears physically distinct from that of Western Indonesia (Wiradnyana, 2015).

The early spread of the Australomelanesoid race in Indonesia occurred during the glacial period. During this time, the Earth's temperature dropped, causing the sea levels in the northern hemisphere to freeze and lowering the sea levels around the equator by up to 100 meters. The landmasses above the Sunda Plate to the west and the Sahul Plate to the east merged into a single landmass, forming a land bridge. This land bridge facilitated the migration of early humans (Irawan, 2017). The land route between mainland Asia and islands such as Sumatra, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Kalimantan, and

Sulawesi transformed into a cultural bridge connecting the eastern and western parts of Indonesia. Through this route, ancient humans traveled, spread, interacted, and established migration patterns that led to the formation of diverse ethnic groups in Indonesia.

The Wajak findings suggest that *Homo sapiens* inhabited Indonesia around 40,000 years ago. It remains uncertain whether the Wajak race directly evolved from *Homo erectus*, as a time gap of approximately 250,000 years separates the two. Interestingly, Wajak humans did not only inhabit Western Indonesia but also spread to Eastern Indonesia. Scholars believe that the Wajak race gave rise to human populations identified as Melanesid and Australid subgroups, which are predominantly found in Eastern Indonesia (Poesponegoro & Notosusanto, 2019).

Peter Bellwood (1997) distinguished two Australomelanesoid groups in Indonesia. The first group occupied prehistoric caves in Flores and is considered the ancestor of the local population. This group includes the Liang Toge and Morotai findings. The second group spread to Western Indonesia, including Sumatra, Java, and Kalimantan. Their wide distribution suggests they were cave dwellers during the first half of the Holocene (Bonatz et al., 2009).

The Australomelanesoid groups that inhabited Western Indonesia can be identified through various skeletal remains found in regions such as Anyer Lor (West Java), Puger (East Java), Gilimanuk (Bali), and Plawangan (Central Java). The remains from Anyer Lor and Puger exhibit characteristic Australomelanesoid traits, while the findings at Gilimanuk, which consist of over 100 individual skeletons, show a mixture of Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid features, especially in facial structure and dental morphology (Kasnowihardjo, 2013). This hybridization of races in Indonesia is evident in the skeletal remains from Gilimanuk.

Genetic research by Herawati Sudoyo from the Eijkman Institute has revealed that the Australomelanesoid race carries older genetic traces than the Mongoloid race. These genetic markers are predominantly found in the indigenous populations of Papua, Alor, and Mentawai. Additionally, the

Australomelanesoid groups residing in the islands of Nusa Tenggara East were settled there even before the arrival of the Mongoloid migrants to these regions (Koesbardiati & Suriyanto, 2007).

Skeletal characteristics of the Australomelanesoid race include a dolichocephalic skull with vertical sidewalls, narrow faces, and a prominent alveolar prognathism, causing the mouth area to project forward. The skin color of this group typically ranges from dark brown to dark chocolate, with wide to medium-sized noses, deep nasal bridges, and wavy to curly hair (Irawan, 2017).

Evidence of the Australomelanesoid presence in Central Java can be seen in the excavation results from the Binangun site. The remains discovered at this site, which include bones from the legs, hips, spine, ribs, and skull, belong to a male individual. Analysis of the facial morphology of this individual reveals the narrow face and dolichocephalic head typical of the Australomelanesoid race (Kasnowihardjo, 2013).

A distinctive feature found in the Binangun remains is the practice of tooth sharpening and scraping, specifically on the upper incisors. This practice, which is also observed in prehistoric populations at the Semawang site in Bali, is still evident among the Mentawai people today (Kasnowihardjo, 2013).

Who are the Mongoloid race?

The migration of the Mongoloid race to Indonesia, particularly the proto-Malayid (Proto-Malay) and deuteromalayid (Deutro-Malay) subgroups, is believed to have occurred in two major waves. The first wave, involving the proto-Malayid group, arrived around 1500 BC via the Malay Peninsula. The second wave, comprising the deuteromalayid group, began around 300 BC (Fibryanto et al., 2021).

Mongoloids are known to be speakers of the Austronesian language family. Their migration into Indonesia occurred through two primary routes: the western and eastern pathways. The "Out of Taiwan" theory explains that the Austronesian migration began in Taiwan around 3000 BC. The Austronesian speaking people spread eastward, moving from Taiwan to the Philippines and then continuing their journey to Sulawesi. From Sulawesi, the migration

branched out, with one route heading westward to Kalimantan, Java, and Sumatra, and the other continuing eastward to the eastern regions of Indonesia. This migration pattern suggests that the Mongoloid race spread from southern China to Taiwan (Formosa) with migration into Indonesia occurring in several stages (Wiradnyana, 2015).

An alternative theory suggests that the Mongoloid migration did not follow the eastern route via Sulawesi. Instead, they may have traveled through southern China, then moved westward into Thailand and the Malay Peninsula, eventually reaching the northern parts of Sumatra. Other migrations may have entered Indonesia via Taiwan, the Philippines, and Kalimantan, then spread westward to other parts of the archipelago. This route is supported by the cultural similarities observed between the Holocene and Neolithic populations of Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia, suggesting a continuous migration pattern (Wiradnyana, 2015).

In general, Mongoloid skulls are characterized by a brachycephalic shape with rounded sidewalls. Their faces are broader with a dominant flatness, and their prognathism is less pronounced compared to the Australomelanesoid group. The skin color of Mongoloids is typically light to medium brown, with medium to wide noses and shallow nasal bridges. Their hair is usually straight or slightly wavy (Irawan, 2017).

Within Indonesia, there is a noticeable physical difference between the two Mongoloid subgroups. The proto-Malayid subgroup has medium to dark skin, wavy or curly hair, and a dolichocephalic face with narrow foreheads and jaws. On the other hand, the deuteromalayid subgroup has lighter skin, ranging from yellow to light brown, with straight hair or slight waves, and a brachycephalic face with a broader jaw, thicker lips, and a flatter nose (Fibryanto et al., 2021).

The Mongoloid race is spread throughout Indonesia, with three major morphotypes. The proto-Malayid group, the first to migrate, settled across the archipelago from west to east. The second group, the Dayakid, evolved primarily in Kalimantan. The Dayakid group was eventually displaced by the deuteromalayid migration. The deuteromalayid group is believed to have originated

from mainland Asia and entered Indonesia via the west, moving eastward and southward, with waves of migration spreading throughout the population (Glinka et al., 2007).

Cohabitation of Cave Dwellers in Java

Insights gained from prehistoric Rembang reveal the long history of racial interactions in Indonesia, which have contributed to national unity. Paleoanthropological research indicates that various human groups inhabited this region during prehistoric times, including both Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid races. Sofwan Noerwidi identified 23 skeletal samples from the Binangun and Leran caves in Rembang. Among these, four samples belong to the Mongoloid group, three to the Australomelanesoid group, and two are classified as “gracile”, a category not belonging to either the Mongoloid or Australomelanesoid groups. These “gracile” individuals are characterized by slender body types and likely represent a different racial group not directly associated with the Mongoloid or Australomelanesoid races (Kasnowihardjo, 2016).

Similarly, the Keplek Cave in the Gunung Sewu region houses prehistoric remains from around 6,000 to 7,500 years ago. These remains provide important information about the coexistence of both Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid races. Most individuals buried at Song Keplek show Australomelanesoid features, such as a dolichocephalic skull, prominent prognathism, and larger teeth. However, recent discoveries of skeletal remains with Mongoloid features, such as a brachycephalic skull, flatter face, and smaller teeth, indicate the coexistence of both racial groups. This finding opens new perspectives on the interactions and cohabitation of different races in the Gunung Sewu region, with the Australomelanesoid group being more dominant in Southern Indonesia (Handini & Widiyanto, 1998).

Historical Narratives as Instructional Materials in History Education

The subject of history examines human life across spatial and temporal dimensions, encompassing a range of historical events in the development of the Indonesian nation (BSKAP, 2022). Within history education, the effective

transmission of historical knowledge is essential. This knowledge is primarily delivered through instructional materials, which consist of systematically structured content in either written or unwritten form, designed to support the learning process (Krismawati et al., 2018). The design and implementation of such materials play a critical role in shaping students' understanding and interpretation of historical events (Krismawati, 2019; Wiyanarti et al., 2020).

One key form of instructional material in history education is the historical narrative. Defined as the presentation of historical events in story or descriptive form for educational purposes, historical narratives combine factual content with interpretative elements that support student learning (Safi & Ode Bau, 2021). Presented chronologically, these narratives do not merely inform, but also serve as a medium for ideological transmission, embedding values and perspectives that contribute to the construction of collective memory and national identity (Susanto et al., 2022).

Narratives constructed by historians aim to reflect societal events with coherence and pedagogical purpose (Sofiani & Andriyani, 2020). When systematically developed, historical narratives can enhance students' critical thinking by encouraging them to examine events from multiple perspectives. Each historical event offers diverse interpretations that students can explore based on their cognitive development (Krismawati, 2019). Through inquiry and evaluation, students are guided to question historical content, thereby strengthening their critical reasoning skills.

To effectively teach the topic of prehistoric human cohabitation in caves across Java, it is essential first to understand how the History subject is structured and delivered within the Kurikulum Merdeka. This curriculum introduces the concept of *Learning Outcomes*, which represent the core competencies that students are expected to achieve. As a reference for intracurricular instruction, these outcomes are developed and established based on the National Education Standards, particularly the Content Standards. At the senior secondary level, the Learning Outcomes are organized from Phase E (Grade 10) to Phase F (Grade 11, continuing to Grade 12) (BSKAP, 2022).

To accommodate students' learning needs, Learning Outcomes must be translated into more specific Learning Objectives. This process aims to provide educators with a systematic, measurable, and contextual reference for designing effective classroom instruction. These objectives should be directly linked to the scope of the instructional content. As instructional materials, the content can be analyzed using the distinct approaches of historical studies, such as diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Within the Kurikulum Merdeka, topics related to the origins of Indonesia's ancestors are introduced in Grade 10, making the prehistoric human cohabitation content highly relevant for integration. Furthermore, the transformation of historical knowledge can be delivered in a comprehensive and multidimensional manner through various innovative, technology-based teaching models, methods, and media to enhance student motivation (BSKAP, 2024).

The Nationalism Values in the Co-habitation of Cave Dwellers in Java

The term *nationalism* originates from the Latin word *nation*, which means "birth". Over time, its meaning has evolved to refer to "nation" (Smith, 2003:88). In relation to the co-habitation of cave dwellers in Java, nationalism within the study of history can be framed through the interaction between the Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid races, which coexisted since prehistoric times. Paleoanthropological data indicates that the presence of these two groups marks a process of cultural and biological hybridization, forming the foundation for Indonesia's national pluralism. According to Walker Connor (1994), nationalism is rooted in psychological bonds and common ancestry that unite members of society into a single nation (Smith, 2003:88). This cohabitation phenomenon serves as a concrete manifestation of this theory, where racial diversity does not hinder the formation of social unity but rather enriches the collective identity of the nation.

The cohabitation of early humans in the Rembang and Gunung Sewu regions illustrates how inter-racial interactions promoted the formation of societies with strong bonds of unity. Hans Kohn (2015) emphasized that nations are formed based on

shared language, religion, race, and civilizations, all developing from common historical roots (Ubaid & Bakir, 2015:17). The diverse physical and cultural traits found among these two groups indicate that they shared living spaces and created a social synergy that strengthened a sense of unity in diversity. This evidence supports the idea that the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) is not merely an idealistic thought originating from the Majapahit court scholars, later adopted by Sukarno and his contemporaries for the Indonesian state slogan, but rather a historical reflection that can be traced back to the cohabitation of cave dwellers in Java at that time.

From Kartodirdjo's perspective (1993), cultural nationalism should be seen as a product of the ethos and way of life that reflects national identity. The migration and geographical mobility of Indonesia's ancestors, involving different racial groups, demonstrate an ethos of cooperation across groups, fostering social harmony. In this context, cohabitation in prehistoric times became a source of strengthening national identity, consistent with the principles of nationalism that accommodate ethnic diversity.

Furthermore, the process of migration and racial hybridization between the Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid groups contributed to the genetic and cultural diversity that became a social capital in the development of the nation. Smith (2003) argues that nationalism aims to awaken the moral community of a nation, with an emphasis on cultural identity and moral objectives. Therefore, from archaeological and anthropological findings, it can be affirmed that the cohabitation that occurred since prehistoric times was a social process that resulted in a national identity rooted in pluralism.

Teaching Nationalism Values in the Classroom

A significant contemporary social phenomenon is the fading of nationalism and moral values among the younger generation. This issue can be understood by examining the complex variables influencing the integrity of the nation, such as the negative impacts of globalization and Westernization, which have infiltrated the nation's fragile sociocultural foundations. During times

when national integrity is under threat, the younger generation is often preoccupied with practical and transient concerns. The noble cultural values inherited from the founding fathers have been uprooted. As a result, many youths today have become detached from their national identity and their role as heirs to the ideals of independence. In this context, the indicators of independence must be built on strong national values such as nationalism, patriotism, religious competence, collectivism, and a foundation of noble cultural values (Aman, 2014).

To address this concern, education plays a strategic role in cultivating nationalism values among the youth, particularly through the teaching of history. History education not only transmits knowledge, but also shapes students' character and worldview. It allows them to understand their national identity and social responsibility (Mas'ad & Munandar, 2024). Therefore, the curriculum must integrate narratives of national struggle, cultural achievements, and traditional values that highlight Indonesia's journey as a nation (Aprilia, 2024). A well designed history education should not only inform but also inspire pride in the nation and foster a sense of belonging.

In strengthening the pedagogical approach to nationalism, it is essential that history teaching is grounded in both broad ideological frameworks and concrete historical examples. One such example is the prehistoric life of cave dwellers in Java. The story of their cohabitation provides an entry point for understanding early forms of social harmony and collective living. These early human groups lived side by side in various cave sites across Java, such as the Binangun and Song Keplek Sites (Handini & Widiyanto, 1998; Kasnowihardjo, 2013; Kasnowihardjo, 2016). Archaeological findings indicate that these communities were already diverse in terms of race and culture, as evidenced by bone fossils and stone tools. This diversity and coexistence since prehistoric times serve as a powerful metaphor for modern Indonesia.

By drawing parallels between past and present, students can learn that Indonesia's strength lies in its diversity. The prehistoric example affirms that unity in diversity is not a modern construct, but a deep rooted value that has sustained the archipelago since its earliest periods. In turn, this

understanding can help mitigate present-day threats of national disintegration, particularly those fueled by regionalism or identity politics.

The use of this historical material in the classroom should go beyond rote memorization. Discussions around the lives of prehistoric humans should be framed to provoke reflection on values such as cooperation, tolerance, and harmony. These can be reinforced through interactive teaching strategies such as multimedia learning, group projects, and contextual assignments (Suryani, 2016). Reflective activities that encourage students to link historical narratives with everyday social realities are particularly effective (Al Haris All & Bahri, 2025). This approach helps students appreciate that history is not merely about the past, but also a guide for navigating current societal challenges and fostering a stronger national identity.

CONCLUSION

Historical narratives serve as effective pedagogical tools for shaping students' understanding of the past through critical, multiperspective analysis. The migratory patterns of Indonesia's ancestors, involving Australomelanesoid and Mongoloid groups, reveal the nation's plural origins and form a foundation for its national identity. The communal life of prehistoric humans in Java reflects the early stages of cultural hybridization, embedding core national values in shared human experiences. To incorporate these insights into education, history teaching must be aligned with the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and implemented through interactive learning strategies, such as group projects and reflective activities, to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

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