Collective Memory of Java's North Coast Road (Pantura) in Central Java in the New Order Period: A Historical Study

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Abstract
Jalan Raya Pantai Utara (commonly referred to as Pantura) has given rise to a multitude of phenomena that have since embedded themselves as shared memories among the communities residing along its route, as well as those who have journeyed along this roadway. These collective recollections encompass a range of elements, including the historical Jalan Raya Pos, notorious for the harsh policies enacted during Daendels' era, instances of criminal activities, traffic accidents, the presence of prostitution, vibrant graffiti art, the distinctive strains of Pantura's Dangdut music, and various others. However, this reservoir of collective memory is gradually dissipating, largely due to the Pantura highway making way for the Trans Java Toll Road. The distinctive phenomena and symbols that once adorned the landscape of Jalan Pantura have the potential to be pieced together into a comprehensive narrative within the annals of collective history. Employing historical methodologies and conducting oral history interviews served as the foundation for sourcing information in this study. Through meticulous exploration of archival records and engaging in dialogues with carefully selected informants, this research underscores that the intricate web of recollections surrounding the complexities of Pantura's history was shaped incrementally, parallel to the evolution of its economic, social, political, and cultural facets. The findings of this research underscore that the collective memory encapsulating the multifaceted essence of Pantura's past has been an evolving creation intertwined with the progression of economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions. Significantly, we continue to encounter traces of this collective memory in a myriad of artistic expressions, melodious songs, and numerous other manifestations that persist even today.

Keywords
History; Pantura; Highway; Collective Memory

INTRODUCTION
Society serves as a living witness to the phenomenon of modernization, encompassing both abrupt and gradual shifts (Khalil et al., 2023; Yeganeh, 2021). One facet of modernization is technological advancement orchestrated by the government through the establishment of barrier-free toll roads in Java, exemplified by the Trans Java Road connecting the western and eastern regions. This toll road aims to alleviate congestion and reduce travel durations in comparison to the Jalan Raya Pantura route (Hartatik, 2018; Hartatik, 2018b).

Conversely, Jalan Raya Pantura, also known as Jalan Raya Daendels, has birthed a diverse array of collective memories. This collective memory encompasses narratives about the eerie Roban Forest/alas, tales of criminal incidents involving jumping squirrels, legends of Sunan Kuning, Gambilangu, and Banyuputih, as well as Compreng's notoriety as a hub for prostitution. It also encapsulates the tradition of accidents frequently occurring
just prior to Eid Al-Fitr, along with the
tion of restaurants boasting delectable
menus. Regrettably, this collective memory
is gradually fading into obscurity, primarily
due to the Trans Java Toll Road’s
displacement of Jalan Raya Pantura from its
central role. The tales that were once
associated with the Pantura highway are
now transitioning to narratives of events
transpiring at rest stops, the utilization of
cashless payments at toll booths, designated
stopping points, picturesque mountain
vistas, and more. Moreover, this collective
memory is now accessible mainly to those
traversing the Trans Java toll road,
particularly individuals operating four-
wheeled or larger vehicles (Kurniastuti et
al., 2020).

This societal collective memory is
evolving into a historical narrative, serving
as both an enjoyable account of the past and
a record of events that should be
meticulously documented to preserve their
authenticity. Durkheim (Fowler, 2007: 26)
posits that collective memory is a dimension
of memory existing collectively, imparting
social significance through individual
interactions with symbols, thereby forging a
collectivity. These symbols undergo a
process of externalization from individuals
to the collective whole, culminating in the
formation of a collective symbol. This
memory becomes embedded within the
fabric of social and group realities,
assuming authoritative resonance. Over
time, this symbol is transmitted to
subsequent generations through memory,
solidifying into a collective memory.

Halbwachs (1992: 25), on the other hand,
defines collective memory as a social
construct, molded by contextual influences
and empowered by the contributions of its
members. He asserts that every member of
a social group is engaged in recalling and
reconstructing the past, leading to the
development of distinct collective memories
among various social strata over extended
periods (Halbwachs 1992: 42). The present-
day societal landscape gains depth by
tapping into the collective memory of the
past, effectively uncovering historical social
dimensions. Consequently, it’s undeniable
that contemporary issues can find solutions
through the reconstruction of past collective
memories. This concept is observable in
instances such as the eerie robes, highway
crimes like the jumping squirrels, graffiti art
on truck backs, rhythmic melodies played
by drivers, and others.

Similarly, Roudiger and Abel (2015: 359-
361) contend that collective memory, as a
relic of the past, triggers diverse perceptions
across distinct groups. A shared experience,
such as a crime along the Pantura highway,
may evoke dissimilar memories among
individuals from various backgrounds,
ages, and geographical locations. Robust
societal memory contributes to long-
landing identity and convictions, whereas
memories that remain unarticulated are
prone to fading. Golf (1992: 3-4) underscores
that collective memory has the potential to
shape an individual’s future life. This
influence is feasible because the past
actively informs collective memory, which
possesses the capacity to transcend
individual recollections. This dynamic
arises from the intertwining of tradition and
learning, as exemplified by the behaviors of
those traversing the Pantura highway to
prevent crimes and accidents (Hartatik,
2021).

RESEARCH METHOD

Conducting a study necessitates the
acquisition of data and factual details for the
writing process. Given the historical nature
of this research, historical methods were
employed to gather these data and facts,
chiefly through oral history techniques and
interviews (Wasino & Hartatik, 2018). This historical approach encompassed data collection from multiple documentation centers in Semarang, including the Suara Merdeka Archive Depot, the Central Java Archives, and the Library Service. Furthermore, research extended to other significant repositories like the Press Monument in Solo, the Kanisius Library in Kota Baru Yogyakarta, the library at Gajah Mada University, the National Library, and the National Archives in Jakarta. Subsequently, the collected data underwent critical evaluation for authenticity, content accuracy, and relevance, all in preparation for their utilization in the writing process. To complement the written data, oral history interviews were conducted with carefully selected informants. These interviews took place individually or within group settings, often through the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method.

Quantitative data, encompassing figures related to crime rates, population, livelihoods, and accident frequencies, were sourced from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS). Visual records and documented accounts of accidents occurring on the Pantura highway were secured from repositories like the Suara Merdeka Archives Depot and the Press Monument. Moreover, to enrich the discourse on the collective memory of the Pantura highway, relevant articles were retrieved from esteemed documentation institutions. These institutions included the National Library, the Gadjah Mada University Library, and the Jakarta National Archives. In sum, meticulous curation and analysis of this multifaceted data provided a comprehensive foundation to inform the subsequent development of this research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The communities residing alongside the Pantura highway are enriched with a tapestry of diverse stories and testimonies, a diversity that stems from the distinctive locales of various cities. This localized perspective becomes evident in the tales shared by individuals recounting the eeriness of the densely wooded Roban region. Accounts frequently narrate the presence of spirits inhabiting these woods, often associated with occurrences of crime (Interview, Sofyan, 2022; Interview, Farid, 2022; Interview, Rukuan, 2022). Sutrimo and Warsito further elaborate that certain locations draw particular attention when embarking on journeys along the Pantura highway, particularly the curve within the Tugu Mangkang vicinity and the uphill stretch in Plelen, situated within the Subah area. Similarly, in the eastern segment of Central Java, the sharp bend spanning from Lasem to Sluke merits special vigilance due to its perceived haunted nature, which often correlates with accidents. This phenomenon can be attributed logically to drivers who lack comprehensive understanding of the geographical and physical nuances of such treacherous curves (Interview, Sutrimo, 2022; Interview, Warsito, 2022). The collective memory retained within the community subsequently functions as guidance, urging travelers to maintain vigilance and exercise caution, particularly during nocturnal journeys.

Another facet of collective memory tied to the Pantura highway pertains to the graffiti art adorning the rear surfaces of trucks, buses, and public transportation during the 1990s. These graffiti artworks comprise depictions accompanied by textual elements conveying invitations, cautions, appeals, and other messages. The imagery etched onto these vehicles captivates attention due to their portrayal of enticing women, joyful children, endearing animals, and the like. Furthermore, graffiti art assumes a socio-cultural role for the vehicle owners and drivers. For drivers,
such artistic expressions serve as a conduit for self-expression, manifest through a spectrum of visual compositions. Those drivers with an affinity for images of alluring and elegant women will utilize their favored images to convey sentiments of delight. Examples include phrases like "I'll wait for your widow" and "Sentir Lengo Potro Tiwas Mikir Ora Rumongso" (Interview, Wasito 2015); Nano deep (Hartatik, 2018: 320-22).

These depictions vary based on the values and lifestyles of the drivers; those embracing a modest and religious way of life will create artwork featuring virtuous images accompanied by correspondingly decorous text, such as "Mother’s Prayers Accompany You" or "Mother’s Love Along the Way Children’s Love Is Everywhere,” and others. Usually, these images are conceived by the driver, who then seeks approval from the vehicle’s owner to display their preferred visuals and words. According to Amurnarni’s research, graffiti images serve multifaceted functions, including expressing personal lifestyles, communicating ethical values, and alluding to certain behavioral patterns (Admunarni, 2008). Instances of lifestyle expressions include phrases like "exercise if you want to be healthy," while allusions to behaviors are encapsulated in statements such as "be healthy" or "I'll wait for your widow." The subsequent image portrays examples of graffiti art found on tailgates.

Traveling over long distances undoubtedly induces boredom among drivers. Consequently, it becomes imperative to cultivate a more relaxed atmosphere during the journey to ensure its safe completion. One effective method to establish this serene ambiance is through the enjoyment of music; drivers commonly find solace in the tunes of Dangdut Koplo. Dangdut Koplo, a rhythmic variation of traditional Dangdut songs, emerged during the reform era as a counterpoint to the standard Dangdut style popularized by artists like Rhoma Irama, Elvie Sikaesih, Mansyur S., and others. This genre, notably prevalent along the North Coast region of Java, is often referred to as "Pantura Dangdut Koplo.” Distinguished by its invigorating rhythm, underscored by the resonating beat of drums or ketipung, this musical style effectively counteracts drowsiness and provides dynamic entertainment for drivers on extended journeys (Interview, Supar, 2023). For truck drivers transporting goods and inter-provincial bus drivers, Dangdut music, specifically the sub-genre known as Koplo Pantura, predominates as their musical preference. This variant boasts spirited rhythms and straightforward lyrics, often interspersed with light-hearted jokes. Such musical selections offer a pleasant and engaging travel companion. The lyrical content of Koplo Pantura songs frequently aligns with the drivers’ experiences, reflecting their separation from loved ones and families due to work commitments. These verses adeptly employ satire, invitations, and other rhetorical elements. A few illustrative examples of Pantura Dangdut Koplo lyrics are as follows:
Kartonyono Medot Janji

Kok kebangeten men
Sambat blas ra ono perhatian
Jelas kabutuh atimu butuh awakmu
Kog kebangeten men

Loro ati iki
Tak takbarno karo tak enggo Latihan
Suk yen wis oleh gantimu, wis ra kajok aku
Mergo wis tau, wie tau jero

Mbiyen aku jek betah, suwe- suwe wegah
Nuruti kekarepanmu sansoyo bubrah
Mbiyen wis tak wanti- wanti, ojo ngasi lali

Tapi kenyataannya pergi
Kartonyono ing Ngawi medot janjimu
Ambruk cagakkuurutu angan-anganmu
Sak kabethane wis tak turuti tapi malah mblenjani
Budalo malah tak duduhi dalane (Putra, 2020).

Translation:
Kertonyono Breaks the Promise

How dare
Complaining is absolutely no concern
In fact, I need your soul and body
How outrageous

This heartache
I’m done to get used to it
Tomorrow, when there is a replacement for you, I will not be surprised
Because it’s been, it’s been very deep

In the past, I was still resistant, long, lazy
Follow your desires increasingly scattered
I didn’t remind you before; don’t betray

But the truth is betrayal
Kartonyono in Ngawi broke your promise
Collapse my stance to follow your dreams
I have followed all, but you deny

Go home I will show you the way (Translation, Hartatik, 2023).

The following is also an example of Dangdut poetry that drivers on the Pantura listen to.

Ambyar

Sak umpomo koe ngerti
Isi neng jero ati
Roso nyaman mergo perhatianmu
Nanging aku ora iso
Blas ora duwe kuoso
Mergane koe sing duwe
Uwong liyo dudu aku
Cukup ati kroso ayem
Yen weruh koe mesem
Senadyan treno
Aku mung iso meneng
Op wae tak lakoni
Opo koe ora ngerti
Tresno iki tulus suci
Yo ben aku ajur Anggone nunggu atimu
Tulung ojo ilang (Putra, 2023)

Translation:
Untidy

If only you knew
Fill in days
Feel comfortable because of your attention
But I can not
Absolutely no power
Because you have
Other people, not me
Enough to feel at peace
When I see you smile
Although love
I can only be silent
What do not do
Don’t you understand
This love is pure
Yes, I’m broken, waiting for your heart
Please don’t disappear (Translation, Daughter, 2023)
When analyzed from the perspective of the world of Dangdut music, the lyrics of Pantura Dangdut Koplo songs often appear more explicit in portraying situations. They possess a raw and unrefined quality, akin to the musical and lyrical stylings of Dangdut luminaries such as Rhoma Irama, Imam Nawawi, Fazal Dath, and others (Interview, Rohendi, 2015). For bus and truck drivers who indulge in Dangdut Koplo music, the significance of the song’s lyrics pales in comparison to the primary importance of the melodious strains that accompany them during their travels (Interview, Sukarman, 2023; Interview, Supar, 2023). What holds paramount importance for these drivers is the capacity of the music’s rhythm and beat to dispel the weariness that often sets in during lengthy journeys, thereby ensuring an enjoyable experience whether traveling near or far.

A book authored by Hartatik (2016: 262) underscores a profound and enduring connection between the social and cultural fabric of Jalan Raya Pantura. This intricate web of social and cultural norms is constructed upon the foundation of long-standing interactions among regulations, road users, and law enforcement entities. In an endeavor to curtail the escalating numbers of daily criminal incidents that impede national security and order, the government embarked on a strategy of shock therapy for individuals who disrupted society through enigmatic acts of violence (Petrus). President Soeharto himself declared that the crimes perpetrated by these individuals, both within homes and on the streets, constituted a resurgence of inhumane brutality, instigating widespread fear and harboring the potential to sow destabilization. This apprehension emanates from malevolent individuals, encompassing thieves, robbers, and murderers, prompting swift action to liberate the populace from fear and cultivate a sense of security (Siegel, 1998, 155). Daily newspapers, whether in the capital or regional locales, frequently recounted instances of individuals, often bearing tattoos and plastic restraints, succumbing to gunshots (Tempo, April 16, 1983; Pos Kota, September 12, 1983). These concerted efforts contributed significantly to the drastic reduction of crime by the close of the 1980s.

Another collective memory etched within the community’s recollection when the Pantura highway is mentioned pertains to the surge of criminal activities committed by culprits who pilfer cargo from trucks. These incidents encompass a range of goods, including electronics, rice, and other manufactured items, often orchestrated by groups of perpetrators. Their modus operandi involve individuals boarding trucks to abscond with goods, transferring them to alternate vehicles, and vigilantly evading detection from law enforcement and other potential obstacles. Nevertheless, instances of these criminals are now rare, as cargo-laden trucks have migrated to the Trans Java road, free of hindrances. The Pantura route has fallen into disuse due to safety concerns and protracted travel times. Additionally, weighbridges, once synonymous with corrupt transactions on the Pantura highway, have been shuttered, consigning memories of their mismanagement to the annals of history, as the weighing of truckloads is no longer practiced. Restaurants that once thrived along the Pantura highway in Central Java now stand deserted, as many buses, trucks, and private cars veer towards the swift and unobstructed Trans Java toll road, effectively truncating travel durations.

Accidents along the Pantura highway predominantly make headlines in the lead-up to Eid Al-Fitr, coinciding with an upsurge in vehicle traffic. Two-wheeled
motorized vehicles are particularly prone to accidents, often due to driver fatigue induced by extensive journeys. Human errors, such as non-compliance with traffic regulations—for instance, exceeding speed limits or disregarding traffic signs—also contribute to accident occurrences.

CONCLUSION

Collective memory refers to the recollections held by a society that are tied to specific events. The ongoing evolution of Central Java's North Coast Highway, spanning decades, is poised to engender and perpetuate such collective memories within the societal fabric. When individuals inquire about the Pantura highway, their thoughts will likely conjure images of frequent accidents, criminal incidents, the musical and artistic expressions that flourished in the vicinity, the customary pit stops of drivers, and more. This reservoir of memories stands at risk of fading away as the community transitions away from the highway and embraces a novel toll road devoid of obstacles. This transition will inevitably usher in fresh collective memories in the years to come. Narratives recounting bustling restaurants and winding paths will be supplanted by the smooth thoroughfares of unobstructed travel, punctuated by rest areas designed to cater to travelers' needs.

REFERENCES


