

Inscription As Birth Certificate: Community Historians, Epigraphic Authority, And Heritage Stewardship In Magelang, Central Java

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Abstract

Indonesian cities commonly anchor their official foundation dates in ancient inscriptions, yet little is known about who interprets and transmits these narratives to the public, particularly when the original artefacts are held in distant museums. This study examines how Magelang's civic-origin narrative, anchored in the Mantyasih Inscription (907 CE), is constructed, authenticated, and transmitted through community heritage actors. Using a qualitative oral history design, the study analyses interviews with two community historians involved in cultural preservation, local history, and ancestral heritage guiding. Thematic analysis, triangulated against published epigraphic scholarship, identifies eleven themes concerning administrative genealogy, the Mantyasih inscription as a civic "birth certificate," royal genealogy, toponymic continuity, sacred geography, replica authenticity, commemorative rituals, heritage designation, ancestral tourism, digital misinformation, and intergenerational transmission. The findings show that epigraphic authority is not sustained solely by institutional custodianship but through distributed community stewardship involving oral history, ritual, tourism, and public education. However, unmarked replicas and digitally circulated fabricated artefacts create vulnerabilities to historical misinformation. The study argues that community historians function as significant, though non-institutional, heritage stewards. It recommends improved interpretive signage, systematic documentation of community heritage actors, and authoritative digital resources for heritage information, thereby strengthening community-based stewardship while safeguarding the authenticity of the historical record.

Keywords: Ancestral Tourism; Civic Foundation Myth; Heritage Authenticity; Mantyasih Inscription; Oral History.

I. INTRODUCTION

Across Indonesia, the official foundation date (*hari jadi*) of a city or regency is typically anchored not to the date of modern administrative establishment but to a much older event—often an inscription, a royal decree, or a legendary conquest—selected by local government as a symbol of collective historical identity (Sarip & Nandini, 2021). This practice generates a peculiar historiographical genre in which municipalities of recent administrative origin claim civic lineages stretching back many centuries, sometimes over a millennium. Jakarta commemorates the 1527 capture of Sunda Kelapa by Fatahillah; Magelang commemorates the 11 April 907 CE inscription of Mantyasih as a tax-exempt *sima perdikan* under King Dyah Balitung of the Medang (ancient Mataram) kingdom. Because the selection of a *hari jadi* milestone is governed by no uniform

national legal standard—each region determines its own criteria through local regulation—these foundation narratives are frequently contested by professional historians and revised by local government, as documented in critical historiographical reassessments of Samarinda (Sarip & Nandini, 2021) and Binjai (Lestari, 2017).

Magelang presents a particularly instructive case because its foundation narrative rests on unusually well-documented but institutionally dispersed evidence: three ninth–tenth-century inscriptions (Mantyasih, Poh, and Gilikan) whose original copper and stone plates are held not in Magelang itself but in the Radya Pustaka Museum in Surakarta and the National Museum in Jakarta, while the site popularly associated with the inscription—Kampung Mantyasih, today known as Kampung Meteseh—displays only an unmarked replica. This physical dislocation between artefact, findspot, and

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commemorated site creates conditions in which community historians, rather than the inscription's institutional custodians, become the primary interpreters and transmitters of the civic-origin narrative to the public. This role has recently proven double-edged: the same community-historian networks that sustain popular engagement with Mantyasih have also, in one documented instance, produced a fabricated inscription that was subsequently mistaken online for a genuine artefact, illustrating the fragility of epigraphic authority once mediated primarily through community narration and digital search rather than institutional gatekeeping.

Despite Magelang's frequent citation as an exemplar of sima-based civic origin in the broader epigraphic literature on ancient Mataram (Rangkuti, 1994; Kusen, 1994; Tjahjono & Rangkuti, 2024), no prior study has examined how this narrative is constructed, defended, and transmitted through community-level oral historiography, nor how it intersects with contemporary phenomena such as ancestral tourism and digital misinformation. This study addresses that gap through the following research question: how do community heritage actors in Magelang construct, authenticate, and transmit the city's civic-origin narrative, and what does this reveal about the distribution of epigraphic authority beyond formal academic and museum institutions? The study's objectives are (1) to document and thematically analyse the oral testimony of two key community heritage actors; (2) to situate their narrative within the broader Indonesian historiography of civic foundation dates and international frameworks of heritage authenticity; and (3) to derive theoretical and practical implications for community-based heritage stewardship. The novelty of this article lies in treating Magelang's foundation narrative not as a settled historical fact to be reported, but as an actively maintained epistemic achievement of community actors operating alongside, and at times independently of, formal heritage institutions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Contested Historiography of Indonesian Civic Foundation Dates

The selection of a hari jadi milestone in Indonesia is a locally determined, often politically inflected process rather than a nationally standardised historiographical exercise. Sarip and Nandini (2021) demonstrate that Samarinda's officially commemorated 1668 founding narrative, based on the

arrival of a Bugis migrant leader, disregards documented pre-existing Kutai settlement and lacks valid historical grounding, recommending formal revision. Lestari (2017) reaches a structurally similar conclusion for Binjai, arguing that symbolic, heroism-oriented foundation narratives can obscure the actual historical emergence of urban character. These critical reassessments establish a pattern directly relevant to Magelang: civic foundation narratives anchored to a single ancient document or event are historiographically contestable artefacts requiring critical, rather than purely commemorative, treatment.

2.2 Epigraphic Evidence for the Sima Institution in Ancient Mataram

The sima perdikan (tax-exempt land grant) documented in the Mantyasih Inscription belongs to a well-attested administrative institution of the ancient Mataram (Medang) kingdom. Rangkuti (1994) analyses the control of economic resources reflected in Srivijaya- and Mataram-era inscriptions, situating sima grants within broader royal strategies of territorial administration. Kusen (1994) reconstructs the royal genealogy from Sanjaya to Balitung based on the Wanua Tengah III inscription, providing an independent scholarly check on the oral genealogy recounted by community informants in this study. Tjahjono and Rangkuti (2024) specifically analyse sima designation within the context of territorial expansion under Balitung's inscriptions (899–910 CE), the same reign that produced the Mantyasih Inscription, confirming that such grants typically rewarded local leaders for securing trade routes and territorial stability—precisely the justification recounted by this study's informants.

2.3 Authenticity, Replication, and Interpretive Absence

International conservation doctrine, from the 1964 Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964) to the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS et al., 1994), establishes that authenticity assessment must draw on diverse, culturally contextualised sources of information and that reproductions must not be presented in ways that obscure their non-original status. Szczepański (2023) further argues that heritage reproducibility is not inherently problematic provided it is interpretively framed; the danger lies in unmarked or under-explained replication, which risks displacing public understanding of an object's authentic status. This framework is directly applicable to the unmarked replica displayed at the Mantyasih site, discussed in Section IV.A.6.



2.4 Oral History and Community Historians as Heritage Actors

Oral history is understood as an epistemology privileging the interpretive stance of the narrator alongside factual content (Portelli, 2016), with layered reliability in which structural and causal claims are typically more robust than precise chronological detail (Firouzkouhi & Zargham-Boroujeni, 2015). Schellnack-Kelly (2024) demonstrates that oral history plays a crucial role in building inclusive archives representing community knowledge otherwise marginalised from official heritage narratives, while Otero (2024) and Macedo (2024), though developed primarily around professional conservators, offer a useful lens for understanding how non-institutional heritage actors—community historians, cultural association leaders, self-taught guides—construct and defend interpretive authority over heritage narratives through sustained embodied engagement rather than institutional credentialing.

2.5 Ancestral and Diaspora Heritage Tourism

A growing tourism-studies literature examines ancestral tourism, in which diasporic descendants travel to trace genealogical roots (Higginbotham, 2012; Zhu, 2023). Doornbos et al. (2023) specifically examine roots travel to Indonesia among Indo-European (Indische) descendants of Dutch–Indonesian colonial-era unions, showing how multigenerational engagement with family history shapes belonging and can surface previously silenced traumatic pasts. Cahyanto et al. (2023) situate diaspora

engagement within Indonesia's broader tourism recovery strategy, while Bloembergen and Eickhoff (2020) provide the standard cultural history of heritage politics in Indonesia against which locally embedded, informal heritage-guiding practices such as the ancestral guiding described by this study's second informant can be understood as an under-institutionalised but consequential channel of heritage transmission.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework developed for this study. The framework proposes that epigraphic evidence does not directly shape public historical understanding. Instead, inscriptions acquire civic meaning through interpretation by community heritage actors, who mediate historical knowledge via oral history, commemorative rituals, heritage tourism, and public education. These transmission processes generate two contrasting outcomes. On one hand, they strengthen heritage stewardship by reinforcing the authenticity and continuity of local historical narratives. On the other hand, when historical interpretation circulates without institutional verification—particularly through digital media—it may facilitate misinformation, exemplified by the Poh Pitu case documented in this study. Consequently, epigraphic authority is understood not as a fixed institutional property but as a socially negotiated process continually reproduced through interactions among historical evidence, community actors, and public knowledge transmission.



Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: From Epigraphic Evidence to Heritage Authenticity through Community Actors and Knowledge Transmission

Source: Authors' conceptual framework (2025)



III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive design using a dual-informant oral history approach. Primary data comprise verbatim interview transcripts: a composite interview with a single key informant (recorded as “Magelang 2.m4a”; Susilo, 2025) and a separate interview transcript (“Wawancara De Veranda”; Priyana, 2025) with a second key informant (Figure 2).

3.1 Informants

The first informant, referred to here as Pak Susilo, is a native of Madiun, East Java—historically part of the eastern Mataram cultural sphere (Mataram Berangwetan)—who relocated to Magelang in 1984. He chairs the Magelang branch of Permadhani (Persaudaraan Masyarakat Budaya Nasional Indonesia, the Indonesian National Cultural Community Brotherhood), studied at a dedicated cultural school in Pucanan, and practises as a wayang kulit (shadow puppet) master. The second informant, Bagus Priyana, is the founder of Komunitas Kota Tua Magelang (Magelang Old Town Community), active since 2008, whose activities span classical Hindu-Buddhist, colonial (Indies), independence-era, and multi-ethnic (Arab, Chinese) local history. He additionally works, on a freelance basis, guiding Dutch visitors seeking to trace family history, homes, and graves connected to Magelang’s colonial past, while explicitly declining the label “tour guide” on the grounds that this work is genealogical rather than commercial-touristic in character.



Figure 2. Research informants representing community heritage actors in Magelang

Source: Authors’ fieldwork documentation (2025)

3.2 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using a six-stage thematic analysis: repeated reading for familiarisation; open coding of meaning units; grouping into preliminary

categories; synthesis into overarching themes through constant comparison across both informants; naming and defining themes; and triangulation against secondary written sources, including published epigraphic scholarship on the Mantyasih, Poh, and Gilikan inscriptions and Indonesian statutory heritage law.

3.3 Methodological Limitations

As lay historians rather than credentialed epigraphists, both informants explicitly acknowledge the limits of their expertise; Susilo states directly that his formal education is not in history. Consistent with the layered-reliability model of oral history (Firouzkouhi & Zargham-Boroujeni, 2015), certain chronological and numerical details reported by informants—such as the precise founding date of the Gunung Kukir Inscription, given as 762 rather than the more commonly cited 732 CE—are treated in the Discussion as evidence of the character of community historiography rather than discarded as unreliable. As a two-informant design, findings are exploratory-interpretive rather than statistically generalisable.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Findings

4.1.1 *The Administrative Genealogy of “Magelang Raya”*

Susilo emphasises that “Magelang” historically referred to a single unified territory (“Magelang Raya”) spanning the Medang, Hindu Mataram, Islamic Mataram, Surakarta-Yogyakarta, and Dutch colonial eras, without administrative separation. Only in the 1980s was this unified territory divided into the present-day Kota Magelang (City of Magelang), comprising three sub-districts and led by a mayor, and Kabupaten Magelang (Magelang Regency), comprising twenty-one sub-districts and led by a regent, with its administrative seat at Mungkid near Borobudur. This administrative genealogy is foundational to the informant’s subsequent argument that the Mantyasih Inscription pertains not to the modern City of Magelang specifically but to “Magelang Raya” as an undivided historical territory.

4.1.2 *The Mantyasih Inscription as Civic “Birth Certificate”*

Both informants independently frame the Mantyasih Inscription, alongside the closely dated Poh and Gilikan inscriptions (circa 905–907 CE, the era of Dyah Balitung Mahasambu), as constituting a kind of “birth certificate” (akta kelahiran) for Magelang.



According to this account, on 11 April 907 CE, King Watukura Dyah Balitung Mahasambu granted the Mantyasih territory status as a *sima perdikan*, a tax-exempt domain, in recognition of five named local leaders (Pu Sena, Pu Kala/Kara, Pu Punjeng, and Pu Sudraka, among others) who had successfully secured a trade route running from Dieng through Temanggung and Wonosobo—along which tribute-bearers (*upeti*) travelling toward the royal capital were frequently robbed—from banditry. Priyana adds that in return for this tax exemption, Mantyasih was obligated to maintain five temples in the surrounding area, including Candi Selogriyo. Priyana further specifies that the Mantyasih Inscription exists in multiple physical instances, having been found at Ngadirejo (Temanggung) and Klaten, with copies now held in the National Museum, Jakarta, and the Radya Pustaka Museum, Surakarta.

4.1.3 Royal Genealogy: From Sanjaya to Balitung and the Post-Merapi Migration East

Susilo situates Balitung as the ninth-generation successor of the founding Hindu king Sanjaya, whose reign is attested in the older Gunung Kukir Inscription near Salam, dated by the informant to 762 CE. The intervening genealogy recounted comprises Rakai Panangkaran, Rakai Panunggalan, Rakai Warak, Rakai Garung (associated with a place named Garung near Wonosobo), Rakai Pikatan (associated with Temanggung, where a place named Pikatan persists), Rakai Kayuwangi, Rakai Watuhumalang, and finally Rakai Watukura Dyah Balitung. The informant further recounts that a final Sanjaya-line ruler, referred to as “Pusindo” (Mpu Sindok), relocated the surviving Hindu Mataram polity to East Java following a catastrophic early-eleventh-century eruption of Mount Merapi, founding the Kahuripan kingdom on the Brantas River, from which descended Kediri, Singhasari, and ultimately Majapahit—followed, after Majapahit’s fall, by the Islamic Demak sultanate under the Wali Songo and Raden Patah, and eventually Islamic Mataram, which split into the Surakarta and Yogyakarta sultanates under the Dutch-era Treaty of Giyanti.

4.1.4 Toponymic Continuity as Corroborating Field Evidence

Susilo identifies several present-day village names as linguistically continuous with toponyms recorded in the Mantyasih Inscription: the inscription’s Kuning Kagunturan is linked to the modern villages of Kembangkuning and

Bandongan/Bantir, Kedumpoh to present-day Dumpoh, and Kadu persisting under the same name. Mantyasih itself is identified with present-day Kampung Meteseh. The informant explicitly treats this toponymic persistence as a category of corroborating evidence independent of, but consistent with, the epigraphic record.

4.1.5 Sacred Geography: Riverine Settlement and Mountain-Slope Temple Building

Asked about distinctive settlement patterns, Susilo articulates a two-tier civilisational geography: early Mataram-era populations settled along the Progo River for agricultural and fishing subsistence, while religious architecture was deliberately built on elevated mountain slopes, reflecting a Hindu cosmological association between height and divinity—exemplified by Candi Selogriyo on the slope of Mount Sumbing and numerous other temples on the slopes of Mount Merapi and Mount Sindoro, maintained by Brahmin priests. The informant contrasts this dual riverine-mountain geography with contemporary Magelang, where the City has shifted toward a service-and-trade economy while the surrounding Regency remains agriculturally dependent, supplying the City’s vegetable markets from mountain-slope farmland.

4.1.6 Replica, Relocation, and Absent Interpretive Signage

Both informants stress that the Mantyasih Inscription itself is not physically present at the Mantyasih site; visitors encounter only a replica, alongside an authentic stone mortar (*lumpang*) associated with the *sima*-designation ceremony. Priyana identifies this as a significant interpretive gap: the replica at the site carries no explanatory signage clarifying its non-original status, creating a risk that visitors mistake it for the authentic copper-plate inscription housed in Jakarta and Surakarta. He characterises this gap as unintentional but consequential, particularly as it compounds the separate misinformation risk discussed in Section IV.A.10. As shown in Figure 3, visitors encounter only a replica of the inscription, without explanatory signage identifying its status.





Figure 3. Replica of the Mantyasih Inscription displayed at the Mantyasih heritage site
Source: Authors’ fieldwork documentation (2025)

4.1.7 Ritual Commemoration: Babad Maharadhika and Grebeg Gethuk

Priyana describes an annual April commemorative event, Babad Maharadhika, held in conjunction with the Grebeg Gethuk festival, involving a large costumed procession—hundreds of participants dressed as soldiers—re-enacting the sima perdikan designation ceremony at the Mantyasih site. This event constitutes the ceremonial anchor for Magelang’s officially observed hari jadi. Priyana notes his personal involvement in a 2015 renovation of the Mantyasih site, including the addition of open pavilions (pendopo), describing government engagement with the site’s upkeep as positive.

4.1.8 Legal Criteria for Cultural Heritage (Cagar Budaya) Designation

Priyana outlines the statutory criteria for formal cultural-heritage-site designation in Indonesia: a minimum age of fifty years, demonstrable scientific or historical significance, and distinctive architectural

character, followed by a multi-stage evaluation process involving an expert assessment team and final designation by mayoral decree. He emphasises that satisfying these criteria does not guarantee automatic designation, underscoring that heritage status is an actively administered legal category rather than an inherent property of old buildings.

4.1.9 Ancestral Tourism: Guiding Dutch Descendants Through Family Heritage

Priyana’s primary livelihood activity is guiding visitors, predominantly from the Netherlands, who travel to Magelang to trace family history connected to the Dutch colonial era, including locating ancestral homes, graves, and other physical traces. He explicitly distinguishes this activity from commercial tour-guiding, framing it instead as assisting descendants in recovering “fragments” (keping-keping) of family history.

4.1.10 Barriers to Intergenerational Transmission

Susilo identifies three compounding barriers to transmitting Magelang’s origin history to younger generations: reliance on unverified online sources (exemplified by the Poh Pitu case); a general preference among youth for contemporary foreign popular culture over local history and culture; and declining fluency in the Javanese language, including among students who must relearn it as adults. Notably, he observes that some of his most engaged wayang and Javanese-language students are children of foreign, specifically English, residents living near Borobudur, framing this as an ironic inversion in which cultural transmission is, in some cases, more actively pursued by outsiders than by local youth.

A summary of thematic findings is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Findings

Theme	Summary	Interpretive Significance
Administrative genealogy	“Magelang Raya” unified until 1980s split into City and Regency	Scope ambiguity of the civic-origin claim
Inscription as “birth certificate”	Mantyasih sima perdikan grant, 11 April 907 CE	Foundational hari jadi narrative
Royal genealogy	Sanjaya to Balitung; post-Merapi migration to East Java	Corroborated by independent epigraphic scholarship
Toponymic continuity	Inscription-era village names persisting to the present	Lay corroborating evidence category
Sacred geography	Riverine subsistence settlement vs. mountain-slope temple building	Hindu cosmological settlement logic



Theme	Summary	Interpretive Significance
Replica without signage	On-site inscription is an unmarked replica; original held in distant museums	Authenticity/interpretation gap
Ritual commemoration	Annual Babad Maharadhika / Grebeg Gethuk re-enactment	Embodied civic memory practice
Legal heritage criteria	50-year minimum age, significance, expert review, mayoral decree	Institutional heritage governance
Ancestral tourism guiding	Informal genealogical guiding for Dutch descendants	Under-institutionalised transmission channel
Poh Pitu fabrication	2013–2014 theatrical prop mistaken online for genuine inscription	Digital erosion of epigraphic authority
Transmission barriers	Unverified search reliance, cultural disinterest, language loss	Risk to narrative continuity

Source: Authors' analysis of interview data (Priyana, 2025; Susilo, 2025)

4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 *Is an Inscription a “Birth Certificate”? Situating Mantyasih within Contested Hari Jadi Historiography*

Compared to the cases documented by Sarip and Nandini (2021) for Samarinda and Lestari (2017) for Binjai, Magelang's foundation narrative rests on comparatively strong primary evidence: a securely dated, epigraphically corroborated inscription whose content, royal attribution, and administrative logic align closely with independent scholarship on Balitung-era sima grants (Tjahjono & Rangkuti, 2024; Kusen, 1994). Nonetheless, this study's data reveal an underexamined interpretive gap in the popular “birth certificate” framing: as Susilo himself notes, the inscription concerns “Magelang Raya” as an undivided historical territory, whereas the contemporary hari jadi commemoration is institutionally anchored to the modern City of Magelang specifically, a political entity that did not exist in any form until the 1980s administrative split. This finding extends the broader critical historiography of Indonesian civic foundation dates (Sarip & Nandini, 2021) by showing that even a well-evidenced case can harbour an unexamined scalar mismatch between the historical entity documented in the primary source and the modern administrative entity claiming descent from it.

4.2.2 *Authenticity, Replication, and the Absent Interpretive Frame*

The unmarked replica displayed at the Mantyasih site exemplifies precisely the risk that Szczepański (2023) identifies as inherent to heritage reproduction: not replication itself, but replication without adequate interpretive framing, which can

displace public understanding of an object's true evidentiary status. Jokilehto (2019) similarly insists that authenticity verification must always be anchored in the specific context of the resource in question; a replica displayed without any contextualising narrative effectively strips visitors of the means to perform this contextual verification themselves. This finding directly parallels, and indeed prefigures, the Poh Pitu case discussed below, suggesting that Magelang's heritage landscape contains at least two distinct sites of authenticity vulnerability—one institutional (the unsigned replica) and one purely digital (the fabricated inscription)—that share a common underlying cause: the absence of a readily accessible, authoritative interpretive layer connecting the physical or digital representation to its evidentiary status, consistent with the information-source pluralism recognised, but not automatically guaranteed, by the Nara Document (ICOMOS et al., 1994).

4.2.3 *Digital Misinformation and the Fragility of Epigraphic Authority*

The Poh Pitu case constitutes this study's most significant empirical contribution. A theatrical prop, created for a specific 2013–2014 stage production and bearing an anachronistic feature (Roman numerals) that would be immediately recognisable as inauthentic to a trained epigraphist, nonetheless achieved sufficient online circulation to be cited by teachers as genuine heritage. This finding demonstrates empirically what Susilo articulates as a general methodological principle: that search-engine-mediated heritage information can acquire apparent authority through circulation alone, independent of any institutional verification process. This case



exemplifies a structural vulnerability in community-mediated heritage transmission: precisely because community historians such as Susilo and Priyana function as de facto interpretive authorities in the absence of accessible institutional signage (Section IV.B.2) or systematic digital fact-checking infrastructure, community-originated artefacts—even ones created for openly acknowledged fictional or theatrical purposes—can migrate, through digital circulation, into the same epistemic category as genuine primary sources. This dynamic parallels concerns raised in the emerging literature on digital heritage mediation, where Ardiyansyah and Meyer (2025) show that the (im)materiality of digitised or digitally circulated heritage objects can complicate rather than simplify questions of custodianship and authenticity. The Poh Pitu case has not previously been documented in the scholarly literature on Central Javanese epigraphy and represents a novel case study relevant to this broader literature on digitally mediated heritage misinformation.

4.2.4 Community Historians as Heritage Stewards: Authority Without Institutional Credentialing

Both informants explicitly and repeatedly acknowledge the limits of their formal expertise—Susilo states plainly that his education is not in history—yet both function as de facto primary interpretive authorities for a heritage narrative with recognised legal and civic significance. This pattern extends the concept of embodied, non-credentialed heritage expertise developed in the conservator-focused literature (Otero, 2024; Macedo, 2024) to a substantially different context: community cultural leadership rather than institutional conservation practice. Susilo’s own tripartite epistemology of historical evidence—inscriptional data, textual/literary data, and oral “data katanya” (hearsay data), with inscriptional data ranked most valid—demonstrates a spontaneously articulated, methodologically sound source hierarchy that closely parallels formal historical method, despite arising entirely outside academic historical training. This suggests that critical source evaluation, in this case, is a competency distributed well beyond credentialed academic historiography.

4.2.5 Genealogical Tourism as an Underexamined Heritage Transmission Channel

Priyana’s guiding work for Dutch descendants tracing family history closely matches the ancestral-tourism dynamics documented by Doornbos et al. (2023) for Indo-European roots travellers to

Indonesia, in which multigenerational engagement with colonial-era family history shapes belonging and can surface previously silenced pasts. Priyana’s explicit refusal to identify as a “tour guide,” insisting instead on a genealogical rather than commercial framing, suggests that ancestral-heritage guiding in Magelang operates as an informal, ethically self-regulated practice occupying a liminal space between heritage stewardship and undeclared tourism labour, a dynamic not previously documented for Central Java specifically and one that merits further attention within the broader diaspora-tourism literature (Cahyanto et al., 2023; Bloembergen & Eickhoff, 2020).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has shown that Magelang’s civic-origin narrative, though grounded in comparatively strong epigraphic evidence, is sustained in practice through a distributed network of community historiography operating largely independent of the inscription’s institutional custodians. This distributed authority carries a double edge: it enables rich, methodologically self-aware popular engagement with a millennium-old *sima* grant, exemplified in Susilo’s spontaneous source-hierarchy reasoning and Priyana’s careful distinction between *mitos* and *fakta sejarah*, while simultaneously creating conditions—demonstrated concretely by the Poh Pitu case—under which fabricated artefacts can acquire the same apparent authority as genuine primary sources once mediated through unmoderated digital circulation.

Three recommendations follow from these findings. First, the Mantyasih site should be fitted with clear interpretive signage explicitly identifying the on-site inscription as a replica and directing visitors to the location of the authentic copper plates, directly addressing the authenticity gap identified in Section IV.B.2. Second, given the demonstrated vulnerability of search-engine-mediated heritage information, local heritage institutions and universities should consider establishing an accessible, authoritative digital reference resource for Magelang’s key inscriptions, explicitly flagging known fabrications such as the Poh Pitu prop. Third, given the substantive, methodologically sound interpretive work performed by community historians such as Susilo and Priyana, systematic oral history documentation of Magelang’s community heritage actors—paralleling calls elsewhere for documenting first-generation institutional conservators—should be pursued before this locally embedded expertise, much of it undocumented outside personal testimony, is lost.



Future research should extend this dual-informant design to a broader cohort of Central Javanese community historians, and should examine comparable civic-origin narratives elsewhere in Indonesia to determine whether the scalar mismatch identified here between historical territorial scope and modern administrative claim (Section IV.B.1) is a broader structural feature of Indonesian hari jadi historiography.

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