It is no exaggeration to say that the forms and significance of written language have changed dramatically with the rise of the internet and its ongoing development. On the world wide web, the focus of this essay, English and the cultures of Euro-American societies are overwhelmingly dominant. Yet, albeit largely restricted to secluded locations, Javanese takes part in these changes. The number of Javanese-language websites is very small and their contents are heterogeneous, but I believe that certain tendencies are emerging. Some of these are remarkable from the viewpoint of the history of the Javanese language and Javanese writing, worth pointing out here, and worth inquiring into further.

Why is there so little?

The first thing to note is that websites containing texts in Javanese are minute in number considering that eighty million people use some variety of Javanese on a day-to-day basis - while this language, moreover, has a written tradition reaching back almost 1200 years. The list of sites below, at the end of this essay, is unlikely to be exhaustive, but it is the harvest of over three years of websurfing and some specific searching by two enthusiasts. Nonetheless it contains only about 45 sites. I cannot say much about the numbers of people who visit these sites, let alone actually peruse the pages, but they are likely to be small as well, as is the frequency with which they do so. The numbers of those who have opened the articles of the online version of the weekly periodical Mekar Sari and the weekly newspaper column Banyumasan are suggestive. These are low: usually around ten and rarely more than 15, even up to three months after publication. Similarly, the largest and most active Javanese e-group that I know has a membership of a mere 226 people at the moment of writing (18 February 2003). This number has fallen slightly in the course of a year, from 240 to 270 in the period between mid-July and early November 2001, and it probably includes a good many who bin most new messages or digests unread. Those who actively contributed postings in the period mentioned numbered only about 90. They have been productive, though: at the time of writing the archives contain 15102 entries. (The e-group in question is called jawa; see <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/jawa/>. It is not in the list of websites below because it has limited membership and such e-groups will be compiled for a later issue of Caraka.)
Astonishing though the dearth of Javanese textual activity on the web may seem, reasons for it are not difficult to find. Important constraints are the expense of the necessary computer equipment and the lack of an adequate technological infrastructure - especially a relatively fast telephone network - in Indonesia, where, as one might expect, many of the sites that do exist seem to be based. Even in Java internet access is not universal. It is also expensive and slow, except in some major cities. Small wonder, then, that the e-group just mentioned has several contributors who live in Japan, Europe, the United States, and Australia. (There are other reasons for that too; see below.)

Technological limitations are not the sole factor that holds down the use of Javanese on the internet. Cultural limitations play a role as well. Although there is sound on the internet, it is a space for written text in particular. Now as it happens Javanese is not a language that Javanese speakers are used to reading, and undoubtedly the number of writers is smaller still than that of readers. This has been so for a long time, and especially in the past six decades.

A historical interval

Given the size of the potential readership of Javanese material, the number of websites and users strikes one as very small, even if technological obstacles are taken into account. But another view on the matter is possible too. It can actually be deemed surprising that Javanese is found on the internet at all, considering that some extremely powerful political factors in Indonesia have resulted in what could be called the deliterization of the Javanese language, particularly in Java, Madura, and Lombok, less so in Bali. These factors are especially the government promotion of Indonesian and the concomitant folklorization of "regional" languages in most spheres of public life and education, as well as understandable publishing-market preferences for Indonesian, after all a language with over two and a half times as many potential readers as Javanese. Once a means for both oral and written discourse, Javanese has turned into a more exclusively spoken (and sung) language. This historical process has been going on for sixty years. I do not mean to suggest that Javanese was ever, at any one time, written and read by the majority of Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Balinese, and Sasaks. I do not know, but I doubt it. I do believe, however, that the sight of Javanese text has become less and less common and important in the lives of ordinary people since the Japanese occupiers took measures to discourage the use in print of the languages of Indonesia other than Malay/Indonesian. It is true that the audio and audiovisual media, especially since around 1970, have circulated an unprecedented quantity and variety of recordings and broadcasts of recitation, plays, and songs in diverse sorts of Javanese, all based ultimately on written texts. But unlike the sounds the writing rarely reached the public outside the studios.

If the language is now, after some three generations, beginning to be used in the environments that the internet creates, part of the result is a new written Javanese. Through a deep and prolonged break in the continuity of literary tradition, Javanese-as-written has become detached from the poetic stylization that was the norm, in various ways, for centuries - not only in classical letters but also in twentieth-century European- and Indonesian-inspired poetry and prose. The interval of over half a century has been a time for forgetting. Now the void enables renewal.

Not only the stylistics, the very genres of Javanese writing on the internet are in considerable part different from what was known before. Besides the historical gap, another stimulus for renewal is technological. Though as noted in the beginning most internet language is written language, writing - the cultural practice - has itself changed in the internet context. The dependence on technologically given symbolic possibilities, the increased relevance of time, the promises and threats of publicness, and the decreased relevance of place are cases in point. They affect internet Javanese as well.
Established genres

It is not all new, of course. There are several sites on the world wide web - and by no means enough, as far as I am concerned - with well-established genres and well-known texts. We find, for instance, short stories, geguritan poems, texts in prose and tembang macapat, and newspaper columns - not to mention what seems to be the entire content of Mekar Sari (founded as a paper magazine in Yogyakarta in the 1950s) since mid-2001, amounting at the time of writing (16 January 2003) to some 490 articles and growing weekly by about ten. A few texts are in Javanese characters, but these are scanned images and do not make use of computer fonts. Like a number of other Indonesian scripts, Balinese, Javanese, and pegon scripts are not supported by the Unicode standard for character encoding. Balinese and Javanese are classed as "archaic or 'dead' scripts (or obsolete written forms of modern languages)" (<http://www.unicode.org/standard/unsupported.html>, accessed 18 February 2003). However, Javanese is among the scripts that "have been proposed for addition to Unicode and are being worked on by Unicode Technical Committee Working Groups" (<http://www.unicode.org/pending/pending.html>, accessed 18 February 2003). Pegon script does not seem to be recognized at all.

Some recordings of sung and spoken Javanese can also be accessed, including classical Surakarta gamelan concerts and a Christian audio play. With the right equipment and software one can hear, at certain times of day, live radio webcasts produced by a Surinam Javanese station based in the Netherlands. Javanese audio in itself is hardly unusual, but its presence in textual and pictorial environment such as the web's is quite revolutionary. It probably will be some time, however, before the web's multimedial potential is taken advantage of more fully.

The world wide web as storeroom and arena for publicity

Technologically, the WWW allows something that no medium has ever allowed with such ease and on such a scale, namely to combine the different modes of mediation into one: the registration (recording) and exhibition or playback of material, its transmission, and its multiplication. The WWW stores as well as spreads. In cultural terms, therefore, it has the potential of serving both trends and traditions.

The web has of course been adopted for precisely this purpose, also using Javanese. In the collection of websites below, sites that are meant to disseminate ideas are quite prominent. Missionary purposes are conspicuous.

Collections

Missionary writings of various denominations have been part of the Javanese literary corpus for a considerable time. Viewed monolingually, these texts are therefore unremarkable. But they tend to be part of sites that contain the same texts in many different languages. Pawartos Kabingahan, to single out an example, has a link "Read the Four Spiritual Laws in Your Language", leading to a long list of languages. (Sundanese and Madurese are not included; Javanese, Indonesian, and Malay are). It is their multilingual makeup that makes these sites interesting. They try to communicate to the whole world, reaching outwards from a centre, often a centre that is located conceptually outside the cultural spheres they aim to penetrate. That in most cases they are also physically located outside those spheres is perhaps less relevant. I suspect that such multilingual collections are a new context for the use of Javanese, and have become feasible in connection with the WWW.

Not all missionary sites are multilingual. Nor are multilingual collections always missionary. In radically different realms, too, one finds sites that try to exhaust a range of languages. The Universal Declaration
of Human Rights is on the web in Javanese for the same pragmatic reason, and this might go also for the Plènsbreg 2002 - Panjenengan Ka-aturan! site and for 1st Intern. Collection of Tongue Twisters - Javanese. On 17 January 2003 the homepage claimed that this site had the world's largest collection of tongue twisters, containing 2080 entries in 90 languages, compiled over the period from 1996 to 2002; it also provided the possibility to contribute new ones. The last two examples suggest that besides the pragmatic desire to reach the entire world, one also finds the passion for collecting - instances of languages rather than the proverbial stamps or butterflies - reflected in these websites.

So Javanese is included in a number of sites because it is known to exist and perhaps to have many speakers, while some people make a game or necessity of reaching as many people (conceived as readers of particular languages) as possible, or representing their interests in as many languages as possible: this reveals interesting attitudes to language and languages. The only search engine that is available in Javanese, Google, has probably made itself available in this language for commercial reasons, as part of the same effort to reach the whole world. But whether intentionally or not, it also has placed itself in the category of curiosities, if not howlers. How else can one judge a site where "I'm Feeling Lucky" has been rendered as "Kula Kroso Bejo" - hardly a sentence that would entice a Javanese surfer to venture a gamble!

New genres and the prominence of marginal varieties

A number of web-based discursive phenomena, including genres, that are new from the point of view of the Javanese language have already been mentioned, and more can be noted. For instance, some genres of writing are markedly interactive or dialogic. This is especially so in the Javanese e-groups with their daily multidirectional flow of messages, and also on a few message boards and guestbooks which are publicly accessible and used as forums for written dialogue. (Again, the e-groups are not in the list below, but the message boards that we found are.) Such series of notes continue to expand, pointing to another generic characteristic that is found in several kinds of writing on the web, in Javanese as in other languages. Many texts are perennially in progress, with webmasters adding bits and pieces when they feel inspired or on a regular basis. (Renungan with its daily Christian meditations is a persistent case of the latter.) The archives of e-mail lists belong in this category of texts in progress too. As textual repositories these belong to the richest sites on the web, containing as they do a pot-pourri of monologues and dialogues on many different topics, anecdotes and other narratives, jokes, poems, and much more.

On the other hand some texts on the web are plainly unfinished. They are there in their unfinished state to invite comments or they were abandoned because the maker lost interest or lacked the opportunity to continue. The sites on the list below have many examples, from a newspaper column (Pringgidan) that alternated between Indonesian and Javanese but whose supply of Javanese contributions appear to have dried up after only four of them, to the script of a wayang performance that was put online in instalments but did not proceed beyond the opening audience scene. (This is on the site titled Wajaseta under the link "pagelaran"). The WWW is also an archive of frozen initiatives, testimony to the ambition and drive to begin and the difficulty of concluding.

Sites and pages not only grow or change internally, they can disappear altogether. In fact many of them do, as was brought home to us repeatedly while we were compiling the list below. The Javanese-reading world, however tiny, sighed when on a whim Mastoni removed his site Pawartos Jawi from the web in June 2002. On the other hand there are also new appearances, as we found out too.

Among the most striking features of Javanese on the internet - striking when viewed against the background of the Javanese writing tradition, less so from the point of view of the internet - is the presence of various dialects, on WWW sites and also in e-groups. In the latter case at times the overall result is a multidialectal dialogue of a kind that would be most extraordinary in face-to-face interaction and that is difficult to imagine in other kinds of writing. In the written conversations of the jawa group,
for instance, contributions in East Javanese are quite common besides Yogyakartanese and Solonese. When recently a new member wrote in a dialect close to Banyumasan (but not Banyumasan, as he pointed out), this was greeted in central Javanese with obvious delight. Banyumasan and neighbouring varieties - kinds of Javanese that are marginal geographically - seem to be better represented on the web than other regional forms. Apart from this group and the weekly column in *Kedaulatan Rakyat* mentioned above, I also found texts in Banyumasan and closely related varieties in the texts and message boards of several local websites, in the transcript of the lyrics on a CD first issued in the USA, and in messages on the Malaysia-based websites Laman web bahasa Jawa and Komuniti Cyberjawa.com, presumably due to the fact that the Javanese who migrated to Malaysia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century hailed from Banyumasan-speaking areas. There is furthermore at least one active e-group that uses Banyumasan and Indonesian. The missionary page Jawa contains a Banyumasan link and a few others naming Javanese dialects, but these are dead, and in fact they look as though they have never been alive.

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### Why write Javanese on the internet?

If I had been examining one of the internet's prominent languages a question analogous to that which heads the present section would have been misguided. Often one writes in English, Dutch, or Indonesian quite simply because it is the language one writes in by default. In the Javanese case, querying the rationale is always appropriate, for the opposite reason. In addition to the purposes that have already been mentioned in passing, to do with reaching as many people or collecting specimens of as many languages as possible, it is my first, rough impression that people use Javanese because it is variably felt to be distinctive as an intimate, familiar language or as the language of a civilization (both of these are of course ideas one often hears expressed about Javanese and a few other "regional" languages of Indonesia), and occasionally as a secret or at least an in-group language.

The basic pleasure of communicating with like-minded others in the Javanese language, the language of home, family, and childhood, is undoubtedly the main rationale for taking part in e-groups in Javanese and for the use of Javanese varieties on message boards. The musings found on some personal websites seem close to this as well. It turns out that a fair number of writers do not live in a Javanese social environment, but outside Indonesia or in Jakarta. There are technological reasons for this (the internet is more common and more easily accessible in some of these places than in most of Indonesia or in Surinam, as I suggested above), but surely feelings of nostalgia and for some perhaps the fact of being outside the sphere of the Indonesian state play a role as well in the move to write in Javanese.

In several cases, however, it is obvious that the creation and maintenance of a site in Javanese grow from a more focused enthusiasm for that language or the broader culture (or certain aspects of culture) connected with it. The makers of such sites are often individuals, which helps to explain the volume of annoying adverts in the shape of popups or banners that one gets sent by certain of these sites.

It is interesting that the idea that only Javanese (or people from a particular region who speak a variety of Javanese) will understand while others, outsiders, will not be able to follow is sometimes quite prominent. Javanese gets used as an exclusive language even on the public WWW and in spite of there being tens of millions of potential readers. This can be illustrated by the phrase "Special page for the Javanese" on the page titled *Javanese*. The preface on *Daftar Wong Gombong Ngrantau Sing Terdaftar* is in Gombong Javanese, including the statement


The webform one should use to do this, on the other hand, is in Indonesian. This is a telling reflection of the division of labour between the two languages in Indonesian life. Similar is the Muhammadiyah site which refers to itself as "bulletin informasi pemuda Muhammadiyah Surabaya dalam bahasa Jawa"
which refers to itself as "bulletin informasi pemuda Muhammadiyah Surabaya dalam bahasa Jawa Suroboyo-an".

One of the meanings, then, of opting for Javanese on the world wide web is as a symbolic gesture, a statement made in a context where sites about Javanese culture are naturally in Indonesian in the same way that books, articles, lectures, etc., about Javanese culture are naturally in the national language. It took 76 issues of Sang pamomong, the column on things Javanese in the online Sunday edition of the Semarang-based newspaper Suara Merdeka, and 75 issues of Pringgitan, the other Sunday column on this subject matter, for the authors and editors to realize that

Basa Jawa aja mung dirembug, nanging uga digunakake. Mula, ora ketang klungsu-klungsu, Mardi Jawi kaangkah bisa melu uduh marang upaya ngurip-nguripis basa Jawa.

That was on 22 September 2002. Since then both columns have alternated between Indonesian and Javanese, although, obeying a pattern pointed out above, the Javanese issues of Pringgitan seem to have ceased after 15 December.

What is listed

The following is not a complete list of links. Sites come and go, and relevant ones are difficult to find in the gigantic maze that the internet has grown into. The editors would welcome notification of other relevant sites so that they can include an updated list of links in a later edition of Caraka.

The list is short, though it must be said that several of the sites are richly varied. It contains sites with text, either written or audio-recorded, in varieties of Javanese, especially when these are a medium of communication or a focus of attention. We have not included Old Javanese/kawi language for the time being. E-groups and their websites, too, have been reserved for another issue of Caraka. The list is restricted to those sites that we found to be online on the dates mentioned.

For the selection of the URL to quote in the case of a website comprising more than one webpage, we have tried to identify the page as high up as possible in the site's hierarchical structure that still contains direct links to pages with Javanese content. Often this is the index page. Where webpages are generated dynamically from a database, as is the case for Banyumasan and Mekar Sari, we have identified the search terms that result in the list we mean.

The sites are given in alphabetical order by title (that is, the TITLE in HTML), and if that is lacking or too general, instead or additionally by a title or subtitle found on the front page of the site.

List of websites in Javanese


preservation of nature. The periodical has, *inter alia*, articles, poems in tembang macapat, and links to a comic strip in Javanese.]


text and translation and a Real Audio recording of a performance of the piece.


Jawa. <http://gospelgo.com/p/Jawal.htm>. [Last accessed 18 February 2003. A list of pages that is part of a larger website, “GospelGo”, apparently maintained by a USA-based missionary organization, which contains Christian material in many languages. The Javanese list has a number of dead links but also links to texts of prayers in Roman and Javanese script, teachings with Bible quotations, a translation of St John’s gospel and the first epistle general of John, and a long audio play (in Real Audio format) about the life of Jesus.]


LIVE RADIO rotterdam fm. 2002. <http://www.slor.nl/liveradio.html>. [Last accessed 20 January 2003. This page has four buttons linked to internet radio stations. The first is for, *inter alia*, Radio Mondial Setasan which according to the programme schedule broadcasts from 9-10.30 AM local time (the Netherlands) and which sometimes does so in Surinam Javanese. The broadcasts can be listened to with Windows Media Player, circumstances permitting.]

mumet. [http://www.antasena.blogspot.com/]. [Last accessed 18 February 2003. Personal website containing musings in Javanese. There are also links to the websites of the author’s fellow “bloggers”, some of whom also write in Javanese. (These sites have not been entered separately in the present list.])


Music of Indonesia, Volume 1 -- Transcriptions. [http://www.folkways.si.edu/Indonesia/40055top.htm]. [Last accessed 13 January 2003. Contains transcriptions of 10 gandrung Banyuwangi texts, sung and spoken on Volume 1 of the Music of Indonesia series published by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. There is also a Microsoft Word file downloadable containing all the transcriptions and notes.]


PORTAL Kebudayaan Jawa Dalam Peradaban Dunia: [http://www.jawapalace.org – e-mail:nino@jawapalace.org]. [http://www.jawapalace.org/]. [Last accessed 18 February 2003. A website containing a huge number of pages, in Indonesian and Javanese, relating to Javanese language, literature, script, performances, history, beliefs, etc. There are also many links to other sites.]


SUARA MERDEKA - CYBERNEWS. [PRINGGITAN.]. [http://www.suaramerdeka.com/cybernews/pringgitan/index.html]. [Last accessed 30 January 2003. Pringgitan is a column in the Sunday edition of the Semarang-based daily newspaper Suara Merdeka. The column, to which several authors contribute, is devoted to aspects of Javanese culture. Initially it was in Indonesian, but from 22 September to 15 December 2002 it was in Javanese every other week.]
SUARA MERDEKA - CYBERNEWS. [SANG PAMOMONG.]. [Last accessed 30 January 2003. Like the previous entry, this column in the Sunday edition of Suara Merdeka is devoted to aspects of Javanese culture, and from 22 September 2002 onwards has been in Javanese every other week. In this case Javanese essays have continued to appear.]

Wajaseta. [http://io.spaceports.com/~wojoseto/]. [Last accessed 13 January 2003. A website maintained by of Mbah Soeloyo in Javanese and Indonesian. There is a link to sign up to the Wajaseta mailing list.]


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