



From Surakarta to Leiden: Transfer of Colonial Knowledge through Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal, 1832–1850

Luthfah Eta 'Aini,^{1*} Muhammad Ibnu Majah¹

¹Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

*luthfahetaaini@mail.ugm.ac.id

Received: 28-06-2026; Revised: 26-07-2026; Accepted: 28-07-2026; Published: 31-08-2026

Abstrak: This article examines the Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal (IVJT), established in Surakarta in 1832, as an early institutional site of epistemic colonialism in Java. Building on the observation that, following the Java War (1825–1830), Dutch colonial power increasingly relied on the hegemony of knowledge rather than military coercion alone, this study asks how the IVJT institutionalized an asymmetric division of intellectual labor between European philologists and Javanese court literati, and how that asymmetry was subsequently transferred to Leiden and consolidated as the epistemic foundation of Dutch Indology. While existing scholarship has extensively examined Dutch Orientalism after the formal establishment of Indology as a university discipline at Leiden from the mid-nineteenth century onward, the earlier institutional history of the IVJT (1832–1842) as the empirical seedbed of that tradition remains comparatively under-examined, particularly through the combined analytical lens of Michel Foucault's power/knowledge and Edward Said's Orientalism. Using historical research methods (heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography), this study finds that the IVJT functioned as a colonial laboratory in which the collaborative labor of Javanese poets such as Ronggowarsito and Yasadipura III was systematically reclassified as native assistance rather than authorship, while European scholars such as F.C. Gericke and Taco Roorda retained exclusive scholarly recognition. The 1842 closure of the IVJT and the subsequent transfer of its manuscripts and philological apparatus to Leiden mark a concrete instance of epistemic transfer, through which colonial knowledge produced in Java became the institutional foundation of academic Indology in the metropole. The article argues that this genealogy has continuing relevance for contemporary decolonization-of-knowledge efforts in Indonesian historiography, insofar as it demonstrates how disciplinary infrastructures inherited from the colonial period continue to shape what counts as legitimate knowledge about the archipelago.

Keywords: colonial education; decolonization; epistemic colonialism; Leiden; Surakarta

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal (IVJT), yang didirikan di Surakarta pada 1832, sebagai salah satu situs institusional awal kolonialisme epistemik di Jawa. Setelah Perang Jawa (1825–1830), kekuasaan kolonial Belanda semakin mengandalkan hegemoni pengetahuan, bukan hanya kekerasan militer. Studi ini mempertanyakan bagaimana IVJT melembagakan pembagian kerja intelektual yang asimetris antara filolog Eropa dan punggawa keraton Jawa, serta bagaimana asimetri tersebut kemudian ditransfer ke Leiden sebagai fondasi epistemik Indologi Belanda. Sementara kajian yang ada telah banyak membahas Orientalisme Belanda setelah berdirinya Indologi sebagai disiplin akademik di Leiden, sejarah institusional IVJT yang lebih awal (1832–1842) sebagai semai empiris tradisi tersebut masih kurang dikaji, khususnya melalui lensa gabungan power/knowledge Michel Foucault dan Orientalisme Edward Said. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian sejarah (heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi), studi ini menemukan bahwa IVJT berfungsi sebagai laboratorium kolonial tempat kerja punggawa Jawa seperti Ronggowarsito dan Yasadipura III diklasifikasikan ulang sebagai bantuan pribumi, bukan kepengarangan,

sementara sarjana Eropa seperti F.C. Gericke dan Taco Roorda tetap memperoleh pengakuan ilmiah eksklusif. Penutupan IVJT pada 1842 dan pemindahan naskahnya ke Leiden menandai contoh konkret transfer epistemik, tempat pengetahuan yang dihasilkan di Jawa menjadi fondasi institusional Indologi akademik di negeri induk. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa genealogi ini tetap relevan bagi upaya dekolonisasi pengetahuan dalam historiografi Indonesia, dengan menunjukkan bagaimana infrastruktur disipliner warisan kolonial terus membentuk apa yang dianggap sebagai pengetahuan sah tentang Nusantara.

Keywords: Colonial Education; Knowledge/Power; Surakarta; Leiden; Epistemic Colonialism; Decolonization.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Introduction

Colonial education in Java since the early nineteenth century was not merely an administrative project, but also an epistemological strategy to conquer the intellectual and cultural life of the indigenous population through language, manuscripts, and organized knowledge. Following the Dutch moral and political defeat in the Java War (1825–1830), colonial officials became increasingly aware that military control alone was insufficient to subdue Javanese society over the long term. The colonial government required a deeper and more systematic understanding of Javanese culture, language, and value systems in order to govern more subtly, efficiently, and durably (Ministerie van Koloniën, n.d.). It was within this context that, in 1832, the Dutch East Indies government established an institution known as the Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal (IVJT) in Surakarta through Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië No. 26 of 1832 (Government of the Netherlands East Indies, 1832). Its official purpose was to improve knowledge of the Javanese language, customs, and literature for the interests of governance and relations with the Javanese princes. Substantively, however, this institution functioned as the first colonial laboratory that designed a program of education based on the study of local culture, primarily in service of imperial administration (Kraemer, 1932).

Surakarta was selected as the seat of the institute because it was regarded as the symbolic and cultural center of the Javanese world, home to the Kasunanan Palace and its accumulated literary and courtly traditions. Through this institution, the colonial government sought systematically to understand the social and cultural structures of the court, including the krama inggil register, systems of aristocratic titles, and Javanese bureaucratic etiquette, so that Dutch officials could interact with the priyayi elite on terms the elite itself would recognize as legitimate. Under its first director, the German missionary-philologist F.C. Gericke, the institute drew on the collaborative labor of Javanese court poets, most prominently Raden Ngabehi Ronggowarsito and Kyai Yasadipura III, to produce instructional and reference materials such as the *Javaansch Leesboek* and the early groundwork for what would later become, in collaboration with Taco Roorda, the *Javaansch-Nederlandsch Handwoordenboek* (Carey, 2007; Gericke et al., 1875).

Research on colonial knowledge production in the Indies has developed along several distinct but overlapping lines. A first body of scholarship examines Dutch language and education policy in the Indies as an instrument of colonial governance rather than a neutral pedagogical enterprise; Maier's (1993) philological study of Malay-language literature under colonial supervision shows that decisions about which linguistic register was cultivated and published tracked administrative anxieties about control rather than purely scholarly

considerations, a pattern that Suratminto (2013) situates within the broader arc of Dutch educational policy across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A second line of scholarship traces how colonial linguistic standardization intersected with the formation of new social categories: Hoogervorst & Nordholt (2017) show how language and image together produced the identity of an urban middle class in early twentieth-century Java, while Suwignyo (2021) argues that language functioned as a network binding together, and simultaneously ranking, the cultural communities of colonial Southeast Asia. A third line of work examines how colonial-era scholarly categorization produced classifications that long outlived the colonial period itself: Ricklefs (2008) demonstrates that the now-familiar *santri-abangan-priyayi* trichotomy of Javanese religious identity was itself a historically contingent product of a particular moment of ethnographic categorization rather than a timeless indigenous distinction, a finding Burhani (2017) extends by tracing how this colonial-era category continued to structure scholarly and popular discourse about Java for decades afterward.

Within this literature, the specific institutional history of the IVJT itself has received comparatively little sustained scholarly attention. The most detailed existing account remains Kraemer's (1932) contemporary institutional history published in the journal *Djawa*, which is descriptive rather than analytical and does not engage the theoretical vocabulary of power/knowledge or Orientalism developed decades later. Behrend's (1993) codicological study of nineteenth-century Javanese manuscript production comes closest to an analytical treatment, but focuses on the wider transmission of Javanese literary manuscripts to European collections rather than on the IVJT as an institution in its own right. Meanwhile, the broader literature on Dutch Orientalism and Indology (Hoogervorst & Nordholt, 2017; Suwignyo, 2021) tends to treat the field's institutional history as beginning with the formal establishment of Indology as a university discipline at Leiden from the mid-nineteenth century onward, with the earlier Surakarta-based institute mentioned only in passing as an antecedent. This creates a gap: the IVJT functioned, in effect, as the empirical seedbed from which the later academic discipline of Indology drew both its archive and its working assumptions about the relationship between European philologist and Javanese informant, yet this formative decade (1832–1842) has rarely been examined in its own right as a case of institutionalized epistemic hierarchy.

This gap is not merely a matter of historiographical completeness. Understanding the IVJT as an institutional case matters because it allows the mechanisms of asymmetric knowledge production to be traced at the point of their initial institutionalization, before they became naturalized as ordinary academic practice. The urgency of this study is heightened by contemporary debates within Indonesian historiography about the decolonization of knowledge: Purwanto (2001) argues that Indonesian historiography needs a deconstructive self-awareness capable of interrogating the categories it inherited, whether from colonial or from early nationalist scholarship, while Broere (2020) and Dannari et al. (2021) show that debates over how to decolonize historical knowledge and history education in Indonesia remain active and unresolved rather than settled matters of the past. Tracing the genealogy of these structures back to a concrete institutional origin such as the IVJT provides an empirical anchor for what might otherwise remain an abstract critique. An institutional history of education under colonialism reinforces this urgency (Suwignyo, 2019), arguing that pedagogical infrastructures established in the early nineteenth century continued to structure hierarchies of authority within Indonesian education long after formal independence.

Based on this background, the present study addresses three interrelated research questions: first, how did the IVJT institutionalize an asymmetric relationship of knowledge production between European philologists and Javanese court literati between 1832 and 1842? Second, how do Foucault's concept of power/knowledge and Said's concept of Orientalism

illuminate the mechanisms through which this asymmetry was normalized as legitimate scholarly practice? Third, what did the 1842 transfer of the IVJT archive to Leiden contribute to the epistemic foundations of Dutch Indology, and what does this genealogy imply for present-day efforts at decolonizing historical and educational knowledge in Indonesia?

This study employs Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge and Edward Said's concept of Orientalism as complementary analytical tools rather than as background references. Foucault's argument, developed most directly in *Power/Knowledge* (1980), is that knowledge is never produced independently of power relations; institutions that appear to pursue disinterested scholarly inquiry simultaneously constitute a regime of truth that determines who is authorized to speak, whose statements count as data, and whose count as authoritative interpretation. Applied to the IVJT, this framework directs attention to the institutional mechanisms, such as job titles, publication conventions, and archival practices, through which Javanese court poets were positioned as sources of raw linguistic material while European scholars retained the authority to interpret, classify, and publish that material under their own names.

Said's *Orientalism* (1978) complements this institutional focus with an emphasis on textual practice: the process by which a non-Western society is transformed into a body of text that can be studied, catalogued, and thereby possessed by Western scholarship, independent of the living social context from which that text was drawn. In the case of the IVJT, this concept is used to analyze how Javanese court literature, oral literary practice, and courtly linguistic registers were converted into grammars, dictionaries, and reading primers structured according to European philological conventions, in a process Said terms textualization. Together, these two frameworks allow the study to move between the institutional level (who occupied which position, whose labor was recorded and how) and the textual level (how Javanese language and literature were reorganized as an object of study), and they are returned to explicitly in the Discussion and Conclusion sections below to assess how far they account for the empirical findings of this study.

The purpose of this study is accordingly twofold: to reconstruct, at the level of institutional practice, how the IVJT organized and legitimized an asymmetric division of intellectual labor between 1832 and 1842, and to trace how that asymmetry was subsequently naturalized as the epistemic foundation of academic Indology through the 1842 transfer to Leiden. This purpose carries a methodological urgency that extends beyond filling a gap in institutional history. Spivak's (1988) critique of the native-informant position cautions that even sympathetic historical scholarship risks reproducing the hierarchy it describes if it treats Javanese-derived material solely as evidence about the colonial encounter rather than as intellectual labor in its own right; reading the IVJT's own archive against this caution is one way of guarding against that risk. Stoler's (2010) methodological argument that colonial archives should be read along the grain, as artifacts of governance rather than transparent windows onto the past, similarly underscores why the administrative categories the IVJT used to classify Javanese and European contributors deserve scrutiny in their own right rather than being taken at face value. Beyond its historiographical contribution, the study speaks to Chakrabarty's (2008) broader call to provincialize European categories of knowledge, since restoring visibility to the labor of Ronggowarsito and Yasadipura III is one concrete way of unsettling a disciplinary genealogy, Indology, that has long presented itself as a neutral outgrowth of philological science rather than as a product of the very asymmetry this study documents.

Research Methods

This study employs historical research methods comprising four stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography, combined with approaches drawn from intellectual history and the history of colonial education. In the heuristic stage, primary sources were identified from official colonial archival materials, including the *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië* No. 26 of 1832 (Government of the Netherlands East Indies, 1832), the *Koloniaal Verslag* of 1831–1833 (Ministerie van Koloniën, n.d.), and the contemporary institutional account by H. Kraemer, 'Het Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal te Soerakarta,' published in the journal *Djawa* in 1932. These sources are accessible through the Digital Library for Dutch Literature (DBNL). In the source criticism stage, each primary document was assessed for its provenance, authorship, and institutional position, since colonial administrative reports such as the *Koloniaal Verslag* were themselves produced from within the perspective this study seeks to interrogate; wherever possible, claims drawn from Dutch official sources were cross-checked against the philological output of the institute itself (the *Javaansch Leesboek* and the *Handwoordenboek*) and against secondary institutional histories (Kraemer, 1932; Susiyanto, 2012) to identify points of convergence and divergence.

In the interpretation stage, the study draws on two principal theoretical works examining the relationship between knowledge and power, Michel Foucault's *Power/Knowledge* (1981) and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), alongside Indies-specific studies of colonial philology, language policy, and knowledge categorization (Behrend, 1993; Burhani, 2017; Hoogervorst & Nordholt, 2017; Maier, 1993; Ricklefs, 2008; Suratminto, 2013; Suwignyo, 2021) and Indonesian historiographical scholarship on the decolonization of knowledge (Broere, 2021; Dannari et al., 2021; Purwanto, 2001). Peter Carey's *The Power of Prophecy* (2007) provides essential political context for the Java War and its aftermath. In the historiographic stage, findings from these strands were synthesized into a narrative account structured around three empirical themes, corresponding to the institutional founding of the IVJT, the internal knowledge-power hierarchy of the institute, and the transfer of its archive to Leiden, each of which is examined below in light of the theoretical framework outlined above.

Research Result

Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal as the Beginning of Colonial Education in Java

The establishment of the Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal (IVJT) in Surakarta in 1832 emerged directly from the political aftermath of the Java War (1825–1830). The moral and military costs of the war against Prince Diponegoro exposed the limits of the colonial government's understanding of Javanese society and, by extension, the limits of coercive rule as a sustainable governing strategy (Carey, 2007). Surakarta was chosen as the location for the new institute because it was considered the symbolic center of Javanese high culture; under the continued, if diminished, authority of the Surakarta Kasunanan, court poets and language experts could be drawn upon as local instructors and informants. The colonial government's underlying calculation was that mastery of Javanese language and courtly culture constituted the most effective instrument for managing the traditional elite without resorting to further military confrontation. Governor-General Johannes van den Bosch expressed this logic directly in correspondence with the Minister of Colonies, describing linguistic mastery as the most subtle instrument for governing without violence, a formulation echoed in the *Koloniaal Verslag*'s assertion that command of Javanese language and custom was a requirement for orderly governance (Ministerie van Koloniën, n.d.).

The IVJT was accordingly conceived as a training school for prospective Dutch officials assigned to Java. Its curriculum centered on the *krama* register, the system of Javanese noble

titles, and canonical texts such as *Serat Wulangreh* and *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Kraemer, 1932). Its first director, F.C. Gericke, framed the purpose of this instruction in explicitly evaluative terms, describing language learning as a means of filtering Javanese wisdom from what he characterized as its superstitions (Gericke, 1835), a formulation that already signals the institute's underlying epistemological stance: Javanese knowledge was treated not as an autonomous body of thought to be understood on its own terms, but as raw material to be sorted, refined, and rendered useful within a Western rationalist framework. The institutional structure of the IVJT was correspondingly modest but hierarchically organized, comprising one European director, two Dutch instructors, and several Javanese court poets engaged as local assistants (Kraemer, 1932). Court poets such as Ronggowarsito and Yasadipura III supplied linguistic data, textual interpretation, and access to manuscript sources, yet in the institute's administrative records they were classified only as *tolk*, or translators, and all published outputs of the institute appeared under the names of the European scholars (Kraemer, 1932).

Table 1 below summarizes the institute's principal published outputs and indicates the extent to which Javanese contributions were institutionally absorbed into works credited exclusively to European authors.

Tabel 1. Principal Published Outputs of the Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal and the Attribution of Authorship (1835–1850)

Title of Work	Year	Notes
<i>Javaansch Leesboek</i>	1835	First instructional reader for learning Javanese, published under Gericke's name (Gericke, 1835).
<i>Grammatica der Javaansche Taal</i>	—	A grammar that subordinated Javanese structural categories to Latinate grammatical logic.
<i>Javaansch-Nederlandsch Handwoordenboek</i>	1847–1850	Gericke–Roorda dictionary; standardized Javanese vocabulary, published without acknowledgment of Javanese informants (Gericke et al., 1875).

Source: Gericke, 1835; Gericke et al., 1875

Read through Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, the institutional design of the IVJT was not incidental to its scholarly output but constitutive of it: the same institutional apparatus that produced grammars and dictionaries also produced the categories *tolk* and *author*, and it was precisely this administrative classification, not any difference in the substantive contribution of Javanese and Dutch participants, that determined whose name appeared on the published works listed in Table 1. In this sense the IVJT functioned less as a neutral school than as what may be called a proto-colonial institution: it imitated the external forms of European higher education, including graded instruction, examinations, and certification, while directing its output not toward the formation of independent scholars but toward the formation of administratively competent officials. It thereby anticipated, and arguably supplied the institutional template for, the later *Opleidingsschool voor Inlandsche Ambtenaren* (OSVIA), the training school for indigenous civil servants established toward the end of the nineteenth century. From the perspective of the history of education, the IVJT can accordingly be understood as combining three layers of function: a practical function of preparing colonial officials, an ideological function of constructing the colonial administration as the legitimate bearer of knowledge about Java, and an epistemological function of producing a body of knowledge about Java that presented itself as scientific while remaining deeply embedded in political interest. This layered function is consistent with broader findings on Dutch colonial education policy, which show that instruction, examination, and certification were consistently

organized around the administrative needs of the colonial state rather than around the intellectual development of those being educated (Suratminto, 2013).

The Relationship Between Knowledge and Power in Colonial Education

The working relationship between Dutch instructors and Javanese literary informants at the IVJT offers a concrete illustration of what Foucault terms a regime of truth: an institutional arrangement that determines who is authorized to speak as a source of truth and whose statements require validation by another authority before they can be recognized as knowledge (Foucault, 1981). Within the IVJT, Javanese court poets functioned as providers of empirical linguistic and literary data, while European scholars occupied the position of epistemic subjects who selected, verified, and published that data (Behrend, 1993). In the *Javaansch-Nederlandsch Handwoordenboek*, for instance, Ronggowarsito's name does not appear as a contributor, even though a substantial proportion of the dictionary's illustrative sentences are understood to derive from material he supplied. Van der Molen's codicological research further shows that manuscript collections assembled through the IVJT were subsequently transferred to Leiden and deposited in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek without systematic acknowledgment of the Javanese scribes and literati who had produced or transmitted them (Behrend, 1993).

This asymmetry, however, did not amount to a wholly one-directional imposition. Even within an unequal institutional structure, Javanese court poets retained a degree of interpretive agency: their literary and linguistic choices inevitably shaped the material that entered the institute's published output, inserting local literary sensibilities into texts that were formally credited to European authors. This observation is consistent with Maier's (1993) finding that colonial-era Malay-language literary production, even when tightly supervised, still carried traces of the perspectives and priorities of its indigenous contributors, which colonial editorial control could rarely erase entirely. The IVJT should therefore not be understood simply as a mechanism of one-way extraction, but as a site of unequal negotiation in which the terms of exchange were set overwhelmingly, though not absolutely, by the colonial institution.

Read through Said's concept of textualization, the linguistic practices developed at the IVJT reveal a further dimension of this process: they transformed a living, socially embedded language into an object of scientific classification. Said describes this general mechanism as the conversion of the East into a text that can thereby be read, interpreted, and ultimately controlled by the West (Said, 2003). At the IVJT, Javanese language and literature were subjected to precisely this kind of conversion, becoming a system of signs that could be measured, standardized, and monitored through grammars and dictionaries structured on European philological models. The epistemic legacy of this process extended well beyond the IVJT's own institutional lifespan: the later OSVIA curriculum reproduced the same underlying pattern of discipline, memorization, and hierarchical transmission of knowledge (Suratminto, 2013; Susiyanto, 2012), such that colonial education, from its earliest institutional form, functioned less to cultivate independent critical inquiry than to reproduce administrative obedience organized around a standardized body of officially sanctioned knowledge about Java. This pattern, in which a colonial-era scholarly classification hardens into a taken-for-granted category, closely resembles what Ricklefs (2008) documents for the *santri-abangan-priyayi* trichotomy of Javanese religious identity, a classification whose enduring analytical authority Burhani (2017) shows persisted long after the ethnographic moment that produced it had passed.

The institute's major scholarly achievement, the *Javaansch-Nederlandsch Handwoordenboek* (1847–1850), compiled principally by Gericke and Taco Roorda, exemplifies this dual character. As a reference work it served an obvious communicative

function, but it simultaneously operated as an instrument of standardization that fixed Javanese vocabulary within a colonial linguistic framework, establishing conventions of spelling, definition, and usage that would shape how Javanese was taught, studied, and administratively deployed for decades afterward. From the perspective of colonial education theory, this illustrates how curricula, textbooks, and teaching materials functioned not merely as neutral instruments of instruction but as active mechanisms of what might be termed mental structuring, reinforcing colonial categories of thought even where their stated purpose was descriptive or pedagogical.

Epistemic Transfer to Leiden and the Formation of Indology

Within the epistemological structure of the IVJT, the relationship between European instructors and indigenous assistants reflected a concrete institutional hierarchy of knowledge. Javanese participants were present as sources of knowledge, functioning in the role that later ethnographic literature would term the native informant, yet they were rarely, if ever, acknowledged as producers of knowledge in their own right. Instead, knowledge was treated as legitimate only after it had passed through processes of translation, classification, and validation performed by European authorities. Javanese court poets such as Ronggowarsito and Yasadipura III, who formed the intellectual backbone of the institute's scholarly activity, were not recorded in official institutional reports as authors or researchers; they were designated inland helper or *tolk*, while the works to which they contributed substantially were published under the names of Dutch scholars such as Gericke, Winter, or Wilkens.

Among the institute's most consequential practices was the systematic collection and transliteration of Javanese manuscripts drawn from the royal courts. These manuscripts were rendered into Dutch or Latin script and subsequently sent to Leiden for deposit in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek. This process amounted to more than an act of cultural preservation; it constituted a form of epistemic extraction, in which authority over knowledge about Java was transferred from Javanese hands into colonial and, subsequently, metropolitan institutions. As a consequence, what came to be recognized internationally as authoritative knowledge about Java belonged institutionally to the Dutch academy rather than to the Javanese literary tradition from which it had been drawn. Within this colonial epistemic logic, mastery of the Javanese language was understood as equivalent to mastery over the broader symbolic and cultural world that language expressed; Javanese was treated as an exotic object of study to be domesticated through grammar, dictionary-making, and Latin transliteration, a set of practices that converted a living, orally transmitted, and performatively embedded language into a fixed written system amenable to external control. In this sense, the IVJT operated as what may be termed a disciplinary apparatus, a space in which both European officials and, indirectly, Javanese participants were trained to think and speak about Java within the categories and logic of colonial power.

This process aligns closely with Said's concept of the textualization of the Orient, whereby the non-Western world is rendered into a body of text that can be read, interpreted, and thereby possessed by Western scholarship, and with Foucault's regime of truth, the institutional system that determines what counts as true and who possesses the authority to make that determination. Understood through these frameworks, the knowledge about Java produced through the IVJT cannot be regarded as a neutral or disinterested body of scholarship; it was itself a product of unequal power relations, and this helps to explain why, throughout the institute's operation, no Javanese scholar achieved formal recognition as an author of a Dutch-language publication, even in cases where the substantive research had originated largely from Javanese sources. Knowledge production in this setting thus operated as a further, less visible

register of colonization, extending into language, textual authority, and collective intellectual memory.

The IVJT was formally closed in 1842 on the grounds of institutional inefficiency (Kraemer, 1932). Its archives, dictionaries, manuscripts, and linguistic reports were nonetheless transferred to the Netherlands, where they became foundational to the establishment of the Indische Letteren department at Leiden University in 1851 (Leiden University Libraries, n.d.). This transfer marks the concrete institutional moment at which what this study terms an epistemic transfer of colonial knowledge occurred: knowledge assembled in the colony was reconstituted as academic scholarship in the metropole. Students at Leiden subsequently studied manuscripts authored by Javanese literati using European philological methodologies developed in part through the IVJT's earlier practice (Catalogus Indische Letteren, t.t.), and this reconstituted knowledge later returned to the Indies in the form of textbooks and curricula for institutions such as the HBS and OSVIA (Carey, 2007). Foucault's concept of the *dispositif*, a network linking discursive production to concrete practices of power, captures this circulatory movement well (Foucault, 1981): authority over knowledge about Java shifted decisively toward Europe, local knowledge was absorbed into the colonial archive, and when a modern Indonesian education system began to take shape in the early twentieth century, its epistemic structure remained substantially rooted in this earlier Indological worldview (Behrend, 1993).

Discussion: Reading the IVJT through Foucault and Said

Taken together, the findings presented above address the three research questions posed at the outset of this study. In response to the first question, the evidence indicates that the IVJT institutionalized asymmetry through concrete administrative mechanisms rather than through explicit doctrine: job classifications (tolk versus director or scholar), authorship conventions on published works, and archival practices that recorded Javanese contributions as source material rather than scholarship. In response to the second question, Foucault's power/knowledge framework accounts for how this asymmetry was reproduced and normalized as ordinary institutional routine, since the IVJT's regime of truth made European authorship of Javanese-derived material appear self-evidently correct rather than a contestable outcome of institutional design, while Said's concept of textualization accounts for the specifically linguistic and literary dimension of this process, explaining why the conversion of Javanese oral and manuscript literature into standardized grammars and dictionaries could be experienced by contemporaries as scholarly advancement rather than as a form of appropriation. In response to the third question, the 1842 transfer of the IVJT's archive to Leiden demonstrates that this asymmetry was not confined to Surakarta but was carried forward, materially and institutionally, into the formal academic discipline of Indology, such that the working assumptions embedded in the IVJT's practice, including its implicit hierarchy of European interpreter over Javanese informant, were inherited rather than reinvented by the later Leiden tradition.

At the same time, the case of the IVJT suggests a modest qualification to a purely top-down reading of colonial power/knowledge: because Javanese court poets retained interpretive discretion over the material they supplied, the textualization Said describes was never fully complete, and traces of Javanese literary judgment persisted within works formally attributed to European authors. This does not diminish the underlying asymmetry documented above, but it does indicate that the two frameworks are most productively used together, with Foucault's account of institutional regimes of truth explaining the structural conditions of asymmetry and Said's account of textualization explaining its specific cultural-linguistic mechanism, rather than treating either framework as sufficient on its own.

Conclusion

This study set out to answer three interrelated research questions concerning the Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal (IVJT) in Surakarta (1832–1842): how the institute organized an asymmetric relationship of knowledge production between European philologists and Javanese court literati; how Foucault's power/knowledge and Said's Orientalism illuminate the mechanisms through which that asymmetry was normalized as legitimate scholarly practice; and what the 1842 transfer of the IVJT's archive to Leiden contributed to the epistemic foundations of Dutch Indology. In response to the first question, the evidence shows that the IVJT institutionalized asymmetry not through explicit coercion but through routine administrative architecture: appointment letters, publication title pages, and internal correspondence consistently registered Ronggowarsito and Yasadipura III as native assistants rather than authors, even where their expertise supplied the substantive content of the Javaansch Leesboek and the groundwork for the Handwoordenboek, while Gericke and Roorda were positioned from the outset as the scholars whose names, judgments, and careers the institute was designed to advance. In response to the second question, the two frameworks prove mutually reinforcing. Foucault's power/knowledge explains why this asymmetry could be reproduced across generations of officials without being experienced as domination, since the IVJT constituted its own regime of truth that determined in advance who was authorized to speak as a scholar; his concept of governmentality further clarifies that this regime operated through ostensibly neutral administrative routines rather than direct coercion, making the asymmetry efficient and largely invisible to its own participants. Said's Orientalism supplies the textual half: the conversion of Javanese oral literary practice into grammars, dictionaries, and reading primers, what Said terms textualization, transformed a living tradition into a fixed, externally classifiable corpus that could be possessed and reproduced by the metropole independently of the Javanese literati who generated it. Read together, institutional design and textual conversion reinforced one another: the hierarchy determined whose knowledge could be textualized under whose name, while the textualized product then stood as apparently self-evident proof of European authorship. In response to the third question, the 1842 closure of the IVJT and the transfer of its manuscripts to Leiden did not disperse this template but exported and consolidated it, transforming knowledge produced under institutionalized inequality in Surakarta into the founding archive of academic Indology and, subsequently, the template for later colonial training such as the OSVIA. Because the disciplinary infrastructures used to study Java, including the archives and classificatory categories historians still consult, were shaped by this founding asymmetry, decolonizing historical knowledge requires more than substituting a nationalist narrative for a colonial one; it requires reinterpreting the colonial archive itself and restoring the historical visibility of Ronggowarsito and Yasadipura III as co-producers, not mere informants, of the knowledge their institutional successors inherited.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan/LPDP), Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, for the scholarship support that made our graduate studies and the research underlying this article possible.

References

Behrend, T. E. (1993). Manuscript production in nineteenth-century Java; Codicology and the writing of Javanese literary history. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* /

- Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 149(3), 407–437. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003115>
- Broere, S. (2021). Auto-activity: Decolonization and the Politics of Knowledge in Early Postwar Indonesia, ca.1920-1955. *Lembaran Sejarah*, 16(2), 143-164. <https://doi.org/10.22146/lembaran-sejarah.66956>.
- Burhani, A. N. (2017). Geertz's Trichotomy of Abangan, Santri, And Priyayi: Controversy and Continuity. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 11(2), 329-350. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2017.11.2.329-350>.
- Carey, P. (2007). *The power of prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the end of an old order in Java, 1785-1855*. KITLV Press.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2008). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference* (Reissue, with a new preface by the author). Princeton University Press.
- Dannari, G. L., Ulfa, M., & Ayundasari, L. (2021). Dekolonialisasi: Menuju pembebasan materi pembelajaran Sejarah di Indonesia abad 21. *Jurnal Integrasi dan Harmoni Inovatif Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, 1(4), 425–436. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um063v1i4p425-436>.
- Foucault, M. (1981). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. Pantheon Books.
- Gericke, J. F. C. (1835). *Javaansch Leesboek*. Landsdrukkerij. Diambil dari <https://www.dbnl.org>.
- Gericke, J. F. C., Roorda, T., & Vreede, A. C. (1875). *Javaansch-Nederduitsch Handwoordenboek*. Johannes Müller.
- Government of the Netherlands East Indies. (1832). *Staatsblad van Nederlandsch-Indië 1832*. (No. 45). Landsdrukkerij.
- Hoogervorst, T., & Nordholt, H. S. (2017). Urban Middle Classes in Colonial Java (1900–1942): Images and Language. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 173(4), 442–474. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17304002>.
- Kraemer, H. (1932). Het Instituut voor de Javaansche taal te Soerakarta. *Djawa*, 12(4), 261–275.
- Leiden University Libraries. (n.d.). *Catalogus Indische Letteren*. <https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/>. Diakses tanggal 20 Mei 2026.
- Maier, H. M. J. (1993). Beware and reflect, remember and recollect; Tjerita Njai Soemirah and the emergence of Chinese-Malay literature in the Indies. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 149(2), 274–297. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003127>.
- Ministerie van Koloniën. (n.d.). *Koloniaal verslag van het jaar 1831-1833*. Landsdrukkerij. <https://www.delpher.nl>. Diakses tanggal 20 Mei 2026.
- Purwanto, B. (2001). Historisisme baru dan kesadaran dekonstruktif: Kajian kritis terhadap historiografi Indonesiasentris. *Humaniora*, 13(1), 29-44. <https://journal.ugm.ac.id/jurnal-humaniora/article/view/709>.

- Ricklefs, M. C. (2008). The birth of the abangan. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, 162(1), 35–55. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003673>.
- Said, E. W. (2003). *Orientalism*. Penguin Books.
- Stoler, A. L. (2002). Colonial archives and the arts of governance. *Archival Science*, 2(1–2), 87–109. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435632>.
- Stoler, A. L. (2010). *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7rtrg>
- Suratminto, L. (2013). Educational Policy in the Colonial Era. *Historia: Jurnal Pendidik dan Peneliti Sejarah*, 14(1), 77-84. <https://doi.org/10.17509/historia.v14i1.1923>
- Susiyanto. (2012, Juni 7). Pembaratan Jawa: Kasus Instituut voor de Javaansche Taal. <https://hidayatullah.com/kajian/sejarah/2012/06/07/1004/pembaratan-jawa-kasus-instituut-voor-de-javaansche-taal.html>. Diakses tanggal 20 Mei 2026.
- Suwignyo, A. (2019). *Pendidikan, Kekuasaan, dan Kolonialisme*. Selarung Institute.
- Suwignyo, A. (2021). Bahasa sebagai Jejaring Budaya Asia Tenggara. *Jurnal Sejarah Citra Lekha*, 6(2), 90–101. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jscl.v6i2.41438>.