



Badhaya Katawang dancers in full ceremonial dress.

THE BADHAYA KATAWANG: A TRANSLATION OF THE SONG OF KANGJENG RATU KIDUL

Nancy K. Florida

Twenty-five years ago, Nusjirwan Tirtamidjaja published the Badhaya Katawang litany in Javanese as an appendix to his article, "A Bedaja Ketawang Dance Performance at the Court of Surakarta."¹ Preceding the litany was a call for its translation; the present article ventures a translation of this difficult and complicated lyric as a belated response to that call. To the English-language reader this translation serves as a needed supplement to Tirtamidjaja's article, an article in which he wrote that "although the dance itself has no plot or story to tell, the litany sung by the female choir conveys the essential meaning of the whole ritual."²

The dance, music, and litany of the Badhaya Katawang belong to Kangjeng Ratu Kidul, the spirit "Queen of the Southern Ocean," and to her serial consorts, the dynasts of Mataram. This queen, whose official court title is Kangjeng Ratu Kencanasari,³ rules over the Javanese spirit world from her marvelous palace in the depths of the Indian Ocean off Java's southern coast. She is popularly called "Nyai Rara Kidul" or "Venerable Maiden of the South." A wondrous character of terrible and marvelous powers, this Queen of the Southern Sea is still venerated and feared by many Javanese.⁴

Tales concerning the origins, antecedents, and early personal history of Ratu Kidul are many and varied.⁵ One of the better known and more widely repeated versions of her past

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¹Nusjirwan Tirtamidjaja, "A Bedaja Ketawang Dance Performance at the Court of Surakarta," *Indonesia* No. 3 (April 1967): 31-61.

²*Ibid.*, p. 34.

³"H.R.H. Flower of Gold" or "H.R.H. Essence of Gold."

⁴For a good introduction to Ratu Kidul and especially to her relationship with the rulers of the Karaton Ngayogyakarta, see Jan Hostetler, "Bedhaya Semang: The Sacred Dance of Yogyakarta," *Archipel* 24 (1982): 127-42.

⁵For a modest sampling, see, for example, *Poenika Serat Babad Tanah Djawi wiwit saking Nabi Adam doemoegi ing Taoen 1647* [Meinsma edition] (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1941), pp. 16-17; *Manikmaya* III, ed. Endah Susilantini, B.A.

holds that she was born a human daughter of Prabu Sindhula, the supernaturally endowed legendary thirteenth-century ruler of the West Javanese kingdom of Galuh. Later, as a result of her intense asceticism and her chosen chastity,⁶ this princess of Galuh transformed to spirit, and became queen of Java's spirit world. Removing to her numinous kingdom in the depths of the Southern Ocean, she would thenceforth be called Kangjeng Ratu Kidul, "Queen of the South." From her palace deep beneath the waves of the treacherous Indian Ocean, she was to rule over all Java's spirits for all time. Virgin for centuries, the spirit queen was destined in the "last age" finally to "marry,"⁷ taking as her mate a great and mighty Moslem king, and after him each of his successors—all the kings of the last age—until the end of time.

Since, according to Javanese traditions, it was that marriage which would determine royal power in the last age, Ratu Kidul's relationship to Javanese kingship in this period is veritably organic. These kings of the last age are the Mataram dynasts. Thus, from the very beginning, the reign of the Mataram kings has been, by definition, intimately related to the Queen of the Southern Sea. Despite (or perhaps because of) the tenuous status of Javanese kingship in contemporary Indonesia, the relationship continues in some form or another. Notably, it is still reactualized annually in the mandatory ritual performance of the complete *Badhaya Katawang* at the Karaton Surakarta upon every anniversary of the Susuhunan's ascension to the throne

Ratu Kidul and Mataram Kings: The History of a Relationship

I would like to preface my translation of the lyrics of the *Badhaya Katawang*, this empowered song of Ratu Kidul and Mataram kings, with a brief history of their relationship. The story begins with Panembahan Sénapati, the late sixteenth-century founder of the Mataram dynasty. This version of his story is derived from the so-called Major Surakarta Babad, a history of Java which developed from a variant of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* textual corpora which was supposedly codified at the Karaton Surakarta in the years between 1788 and 1836.⁸ Often attributed to the Surakarta court poet, R.Ng. Yasadipura I (1729–1803), this babad's version of the romance of Ratu Kidul and Mataram's founding king is, as it happens, reflexively related to the *Badhaya Katawang* litany. Precisely because this telling is clearly informed by that song, it may in turn illuminate our understanding of the song's sense.⁹

[part three of an unattributed transliteration of M. Ng. Rongga Panambangan's *Serat Manikmaya dumugi Demak* (composed Surakarta, 1813; inscribed Surakarta, [mid 19th c.]). Ms. Reksa Pustaka, Istana Mangkunagaran, Cat No. B100; Cornell University Surakarta Manuscript Project [henceforth SMP] Cat No. MN184] (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Proyek Penerbitan Buku Bacaan dan Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah, 1981), pp. 55–57, 89–93, 130–32; K.G.P.H. Hadiwidjojo, *Bedhaya Ketawang* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Proyek Penerbitan Buku Bacaan dan Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah, 1978), esp. pp. 22–25 & 48–54; Ny. Yoharni Harjono Totong Tirtawidjaja et al., *Sastra Lisan Jawa* (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1979), pp. 208–24; and Roy E. Jordaan, "The Mystery of Nyai Lara Kidul, Goddess of the Southern Ocean," *Archipel* 28 (1984), pp. 99–115.

⁶Another major variant of her story holds that this transformation followed upon her suicide by jumping off a cliff into the sea after being stricken with a horrible skin disease.

⁷"Marry" is the best word I can come up with to characterize this union, a profound spiritual and sexual union which was never, however, to be subsumed under the the codified laws of mortals.

⁸That is the Balai Pustaka *Babad Tanah Jawi*, a colonial edition of an eighteen-volume manuscript (Leiden Cod. LOr 1786) produced at the Karaton Surakarta for export to the Netherlands in 1836 (*Babad Tanah Jawi*, 31 vols. [Batavia: Balai Pustaka, 1939–41]). For more on the so-called "Major Surakarta Babad," see my "Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: Exile and Prophecy in an Historical Text of Nineteenth-Century Java," 2 vols. (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1990), 2: 607–12.

⁹For example, after reading this particular rendition of the Sénapati-Ratu Kidul romance, I recognized and appreciated the court-poet's reading of several thorny lines in the second part of the *Katawang* litany which had

The first of the Mataram kings, Panembahan Sénapati (reigning. ca. 1585–1601), was not yet a king when he first met the Queen of the South. Shortly after the *wahyu* (divine light) of kingship had fallen upon Sénapati as he lay sleeping upon the black stone of Lipura near Java's southern coast, he was borne by the waters of the Opak river, and by the king of the fishes, to the edge of the Southern Ocean. There, at the portal of the then still obscure Spirit Queen's fabulous kingdom, Sénapati meditated. Because of the hero's excess of power, it is said that his meditation caused the oceans to churn and boil, smiting the fish and the creatures of the sea. Thinking perhaps that Judgment Day had come, Kangjeng Ratu Kidul came forth from her watery palace. What she found instead was a solitary man of prowess meditating on the shore of the ocean. Apparently recognizing her destined mate, the queen fell at Sénapati's feet, entreating him to cease his meditation lest, foolishly, he utterly destroy her realm. She in turn pledged her troth to him, promising that henceforth she would forever be his vassal and he forever would enjoy overlordship of all she ruled.¹⁰

Sénapati did cease his meditation, and the creatures of the sea were restored to life. The hero then followed Ratu Kidul home to her golden palace in the depths of the sea, where she entertained him in her fabulous jewel-encrusted halls. The beautiful spirit queen—said to be like unto the Goddess of Love in appearance—and the handsome hero fell in love and soon thereafter into bed with each other.¹¹ Sénapati remained in the underwater palace of his lover for three days, during which time it is said that the spirit Queen taught him the knowledge of kingship, the secrets of authority over both human and spirit realms. When the time came for Sénapati to take his leave, Kangjeng Ratu Kidul tearfully instructed him how to summon her. When in need, he was to assume a posture of meditation and to gaze up into the heavens (*tawang*), and she and her spirit legions would come to him. Walking on the surface of the ocean, Sénapati returned to shore. In the wake of his leaving, the distraught Ratu Kidul retired to her bed chamber to mourn this separation from her beloved. Flanked by bolsters (*guling*) and covered with [his] dark red skirts (*kampuh jinggané*) she was blinded by tears.¹²

It was not long before Sénapati heeded his lover's instructions; his need for her came during the Battle of Prambanan where he was faced off against his foster-father and erstwhile overlord, the Sultan of Pajang. With the assistance of Ratu Kidul and her armies, Sénapati defeated the Sultan, eventually succeeding him as "ruler of all Java."¹³ Thus established was the supremacy of Mataram.

Sénapati's grandson, Sultan Agung, was Mataram's third and mightiest king (r. 1613–46). Of Ratu Kidul's subsequent relationships with Mataram's later rulers, it is upon the one with Agung that the Javanese historical traditions tend to dwell. According to the "Major Babad" the Queen of the South was so devoted to Sultan Agung that shortly before his death, she tempted him to cheat fate and remain forever with her under the sea. When he refused, as a Moslem king with human obligations, she asked him to exorcise her enduring

long puzzled me. Based on the babad author's reading, I then revised my preliminary translation of these lines.

For a slightly different version, not obviously informed by the Katawang lyrics, see (for example) *Serat Babad Mataram, angka 3, wiwit Kangjeng Panembahan Sénapati Mengsah Pajang dumugi Kangjeng Pangéran Harya Mataram Kajumenengaken Nata wonten ing Mataram* (composed [Surakarta], s.a.; inscribed Surakarta, [late 19th–early 20th c.]). Ms. Sasana Pustaka, Karaton Surakarta [henceforth SP] Cat. No. 158 Na; SMP KS 36, pp. 11–24.

¹⁰*Babad Tanah Jawi*, vol. 5 (Batavia, 1939), pp. 20–26.

¹¹The babad's treatment of the "seduction" is entertaining. Having managed an invitation to her bedroom, Sénapati wooed the queen first with compliments on her skills at interior decoration. The two then mutually enjoyed an extended dialogue of seduction and several rounds of empowered drinks (*ibid.*, pp. 29–34).

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 35–36.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 68–69.

spirit reality to mortal humanity. But, as she was fated for all time to (a markedly carnal) spirit form, the Sultan explained that he was powerless to help her. For such was the Will of God. However, the king promised that at time's end, upon Judgment Day, she would be returned to her originally human reality; at that point, he said, they would be reunited. Sultan Agung then carried the sorrowful spirit queen off to gardens and bed where he consoled her with tender love-making. When it came time for him to return to his earthly palace, she asked and was granted permission to accompany him. She stayed with him in the palace of Mataram for a short time before returning to her underwater realm.¹⁴

Stories concerning that momentous visit, the first of the underwater queen's countless journey's to her earthly lovers' terrestrial palaces, are still repeated in the Karaton Surakarta today. Among other things, it is said that it was during this visit that Sultan Agung, in consultation with Ratu Kidul, composed the *Badhaya Katawang* and choreographed its movement.¹⁵ The King of Mataram and the Queen of the Southern Ocean composed the lyrics of the song and the movements of the dance to repeat the passion of Ratu Kidul for her original Mataram lover, Panembahan Sénapati, and—through performance—to reactualize that passion in her serial sexual/metaphysical unions with each of her successive lovers, these "kings of the last age." The song, in essence, sings and thus is meant to realize the (erotic and other) potency of Javanese kingship.

In 1755, a little over one hundred years after the death of Sultan Agung, the old kingdom of Mataram was split into the two realms of Surakarta and Yogyakarta. Over the succeeding 236 odd years, the serial rulers of each of these realms have claimed to enjoy a special relationship with the Queen of the South.¹⁶ After the split, the *Badhaya Katawang* devolved upon the Surakarta Karaton; while Ratu Kidul's "other" sacred dance, *The Bedhaya Semang*, fell to Yogyakarta.¹⁷ In early 1985, some four hundred years after Ratu Kidul's original liaison with Panembahan Sénapati, the central portion of the Karaton Surakarta burnt to the ground. Some witnesses to the fire, claiming to see Ratu Kidul dancing in the flames over the main pavillion as it crashed to the ground, interpreted the fire and her dance as the queen's final desertion of the Mataram dynasts—as the end of the last age. And yet not three months after the fire, the reigning Susuhunan Pakubuwana XII was again ritually reenacting the old alliance, sitting enthroned on an alternate throne in an alternate throneroom before yet another performance of the empowering *Badhaya Katawang*. Again in late 1988, with the death of Yogyakarta's beloved Sultan Hamengkubuwana IX, rumors of the imminent possibility of the discontinuation of Ratu Kidul's relationship to Yogyakarta kingship were rife. But when the late Sultan's son succeeded to his father's throne in March

¹⁴*Babad Tanah Jawi*, vol. 10 (Batavia, 1940), pp. 31–36.

¹⁵A little-known variant tale of the *Badhaya Katawang's* creation, written by an important Karaton Surakarta courtier in the early twentieth century, claims that the litany was instead co-composed by Sultan Agung and the legendary Moslem saint, Sunan Kalijaga; see K.R.T. Warsadinigrat, *Wédha Pradangga*, vol. 2, trans. by Susan Pratt Walton, in *Karawitan: Source Readings in Javanese Gamelan and Vocal Music*, vol. 2, ed. Judith Becker and Alan H. Feinstein (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Michigan Papers on South and Southeast Asia, 1987), pp. 80–83.

¹⁶Whether or not the relationship has remained a connubial one is questionable. Hamengkubuwana IX, the late Sultan of Yogyakarta, though claiming to have met with Ratu Kidul, referred to her as his *Éyang*, or Grandmother, and did not mention (publicly at least) any sexual union. See Mohammad Roem et al., *Tahta Untuk Rakyat: Celah-celah Kehidupan Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX* (Jakarta: Gramedia: 1982), pp. 102–3. Many Javanese maintain that the Surakarta kings' real sexual relations with Ratu Kidul ended early in the reign of Pakubuwana X (r. 1893–1939), when by unfortunate accident the queen found herself in a maternal relationship with her would-be royal lover. See John Pemberton, "The Appearance of Order: A Politics of Culture in Colonial and Postcolonial Java" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1989), pp. 193–94.

¹⁷See Hostetler, "Bedhaya Semang: The Sacred Dance of Yogyakarta," *passim*.

1989, the local and national presses were full of stories implying Ratu Kidul's invisible presence in the young king's "coronation coach."¹⁸

Introductory Notes on the Song

The Badhaya Ketawang litany is not a narrative poem. Written in a cryptic and sometimes impressionistic style, this song is not meant to tell a story. Rather, the Badhaya Katawang lyric evocatively suggests the mysteries of erotic transport, kingly power, and ultimately of death and eternity. The litany is complex and difficult; a major portion of the song is composed in *wangsalan*, or "answering riddles." These *wangsalan* tend to work through several levels of sound and sense association and often between and across languages. For example, the first line of the riddle may comprise a "nonsense" phrase, containing an Old Javanese word which sounds like another Old Javanese word which is not present in the text. In the second "answering" line of the riddle then may come the Modern Javanese "translation" of the absent Old Javanese word. Or perhaps an obscure reference may evoke an image, which suggests a Modern Javanese word, which word in turn sounds like a Old Javanese word which is to follow in the subsequent "answering" line.¹⁹

The language of the poem is an archaic form of literary Modern Javanese, with a greater admixture of Old Javanese, or Kawi, vocabulary than most literary texts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Java. Its lyrics, due both to their studied obscurity and their antiquity, are largely unintelligible to Javanese today.

The Badhaya Katawang litany is composed in traditional Javanese verse. Written in both Kawi (or *sekar ageng*) and macapat (or *sekar alit*) metres, the song is divided into three sections, as is the musical accompaniment and the choreography.

The initial section, in macapat verse, is composed in the impassioned and sometimes martial seven-line Durma metre. It describes the richly adorned figure of a Javanese hero setting forth—as if to battle—on (or perhaps from) an erotic encounter.

The second section is composed in the Kawi meters Candrawilasita, Suraretna, and Retnamulya. This second section, the most arcane of the song, is written almost entirely in the form of *wangsalan*. The riddles evoke the depth of Kangjeng Ratu Kidul's passion for Panembahan Sénapati and his royal successors, as well as the profundity of her despair and sorrow upon separation from these her serial lovers.

The final section of the song, in the Kawi Salisir meter, sings Ratu Kidul's praises for the sexual, political, and ultimately metaphysical potency of her lovers, the Susuhunan.

Note on the Javanese Text

The text presented here is transliterated from a Javanese script manuscript produced at the Karaton Surakarta nearly 130 years ago.²⁰ That manuscript, *Serat Pasindhèn Badhaya: Kagungan-dalem ing Kadipatèn Anom ingkang kaping IV*, was copied by a noble of the Karaton, one R.M.Panji Ranaasmara, from a manuscript which had belonged to his king, I.S.K.S. Pakubuwana IX (r. 1861–93), prior to his accession to the throne. The manuscript copy is

¹⁸See, for example, the coverage of the coronation in the nationally influential *Tempo* magazine. The report, slyly titled: "Daag . . . Kanjeng Sultan, They Shouted," has as its headline: "Hamengkubuwono X is enthroned and cheered by hundreds of thousands of the masses. This proves that he is indeed a popular figure. Did Nyi Roro Kidul join in the procession?" (*Tempo*, 18 March 1989).

¹⁹See my notes to the translation, for the concrete and detailed workings of the actual *wangsalan* of the Badhaya Katawang litany.

²⁰*Serat Pasindhèn Badhaya: Kagungan-dalem ing Kadipatèn Anom ingkang kaping IV* (composed [Kartasura] and Surakarta, s.a. and 1858–60; inscribed Surakarta, 1862). Ms. SP 159 Na; SMP KS 544A, pp. 41–43.

dated 26 Sawal Jé 1790 (April 26, 1862) by the *sangkala*, or chronogram, “sonya [0] ingkang wiwara [9] pandhita [7] sang ngaji [1].” The inscription, in a fine quadratic Karaton Surakarta script, is upon paper watermarked: “WS.TZ” and “CONCORDIA RESPARVAE CRESCUNT.” The prototype manuscript was dated 7 Sura Jimawal 1789 (July 26, 1860). The text is a compendium of ten badhaya and two srimpi dances from the Surakarta Karaton. Seven of the lyrics were signed and dated original compositions of the Crown Prince (Pakubuwana IX).²¹ The Badhaya Katawang text is the last-inscribed lyric in the compendium. This was not the oldest Badhaya Katawang text in manuscript I have seen; it was, however, perhaps the most carefully produced.

Although I have made no attempt here to produce a philological edition of the text with critical apparatus, I did find it useful to consult several other manuscripts during the preparation of my transliteration and translation. Among these was a very early text of the Badhaya Katawang, dating from 1772. Following are descriptive notes on this early Surakarta manuscript and other manuscript sources of the song text I consulted to produce this article.

I. From the Sasana Pustaka, Karaton Surakarta, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

SP No. 86 Na (SMP KS 427.3) *Serat Pasindhèn Badhaya*. Vocal lyrics for six badhaya dances of the Karaton Surakarta. This Badhaya Katawang text was inscribed at the Karaton Surakarta circa 1772. The text is bound back to front in a volume which also contains the *Kekawin Ramayana* (inscribed 1753; 1770), *Serat Pakem Ringgit Purwa* (inscribed 1770) and *Kekidungan Dhangyangan* (inscribed 1772). The manuscript, in archaic script, is inscribed on Ponorogo bark paper.

SP No. 206 Ha (SMP KS 549). *Serat Pasindhèn Badhaya saha Sarimpi ingkang kagem Sampéyandalem ingkang Wicaksana*. Collection of vocal lyrics for forty-seven badhaya and srimpi dances from the Karaton Surakarta. Ms. is dated 19-I-Jé '62 (6 June 1931) and signed “pun Atmamardawa.” Scribal styles from the court of I.S.K.S. Pakubuwana X (r. 1893–1939).

SP No. 241 Ca (SMP KS 338.5). *Serat Sindhèn Badhaya*. Lyric erotic poem in macapat verse. The poem (in three parts/cantos) derives from vocal lyrics for badhaya dances at the Karaton Surakarta, including the “Badhaya Katawang” and “Badhaya Kuwungkuwung.” The text is part of a volume titled *Serat Wulang Warni-warni*. This volume, comprising sixteen titles, belonged to Bandara Radèn Ayu Adipati Sedhahmirah, Prayantun-dalem I.S.K.S. Pakubuwana X and head of the Karaton zenana. The copy, in Karaton Surakarta Kadipatèn script, probably dates from the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.

II. From the Museum Radyapustaka, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia

RP No. 9 carik (SMP RP G15). *Serat Sindhèn Badhaya*. Vocal lyrics for eight badhaya dances from the Karaton Surakarta. The text is dated 1801 AJ (1872–73 AD). The scribal style of this copy dates it to the reign of I.S.K.S. Pakubuwana X (r. 1893–1939).

²¹For further notes on this manuscript, see my *Javanese Literature in Surakarta Manuscripts*, 4 vols., Vol. I: *The Manuscripts of the Karaton Surakarta* (Ithaca: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, forthcoming).



The Susuhunan Pakubuwana XII, seated to the right, watches the dance.

The Badhaya Katawang: A Javanese Text²²

Sindhèn Badhaya Katawang

Raka pakenira sampun atengara
sira puniki kari
angling Jayèngsekar
lah bapa tengoro
tumulya tengara nitr
sumreg atata
saparannya ngajap sih

Alancingan pethak alus kampuh jingga
sabuk pathola wilis
akris cinitrèng mas
sengkang maniking toya
binapang ing mas angrawit
sekar cempaka
gegonda amrik minging

Akekacé cindhé binggel mas rinengga
ya urap-urap sari
jamang mas tinatrap
ing retna adikara
asumping swarna lar rumbing
sumarsana-bra
sumer gandanya amrik

* * *

(Mendhak muni kenong arang)²³

Semang-semang asaréya let geguling
déwa dharat apit-apit ing gapura
kadrawasan guguling angglar ring jogan
ning wong agung Susuhunan

Sapa baya kang ngawelasa ing brangti
pandamingrat kusuma dinanurwènda
kawistara nanging sira ing papreman
ning wong agung Susuhunan

Danu madya ambara lali sih jiwa
dèn-asamar awèta anuwun pada Susuhunan
Léléwané yèn prapta geteri ati
wiyanggalit rondhoné sira tilarsa
dèn-alilih salira sapa darbéya
ning wong agung Susuhunan

²²The text is a transliteration of *Serat Pasindhèn Badhaya: Kagungan-dalem ing Kadipatèn Anom ingkang kaping IV* (composed [Kartasura] and Surakarta, s.a. and 1858-60; inscribed Surakarta, 1862). Ms. SP 159 Na; SMP KS 544A, pp. 41-43.

²³Marking the beginning of a section, provided here are abbreviated directions for "musical accompaniment" and choreography, which read: "[The dancers] bowing, *kenong arang* sounds."

Poma-poma yèn babàr aja nglingsiri
tuduhena gèn manira angawula
sun anuwun pada baya
sunbalinga yèn katona dadi lara
dadi édan baya
Susuhunan

Kapan baya wong agung babo sun apanggih
ing papreman ning wong agung
balé atma tunjung alit sinaroja
lamun kangen tumutur pundi parannya

Saturuné wong agung babo ing papreman
pramadya tangis nimbok dhangur
cinawisa saraga temah wiyoga
bok langak temah wiyoga
tan apanggih yèn boya sor raga-jiwa²⁴

* * *

(Nunten mendhak nembah mungel kenong arang)²⁵

Bebagusé wayuha sanambang
dhé
sindura pinipis pindho
Susuhunan
anglawat akèh rabiné
Susuhunan
dhé
anglawat kathah garwané
Susuhunan
dhé
sosotya angglar ring méga
Susuhunan
kadi lintang kuwasané

Ananangis tumengèng tawang
dhé
kadya lintang pakartiné panembahan
tanu astra kadi ta agni urubé
kantar-kantar kiyahi
yèn mati ngendi surupé kiyahi

* * *

The Badhaya Katawang: A Translation

I.
Your brother has sounded the signal
You are left behind

²⁴A more frequent variant reading of this line (Karaton Mss. SP 86 Na, SP 206 Ha and Museum Radyapustaka Ms. RP 9 carik) is: "tan apanggih yèn boya sarana jiwa."

²⁵Marking the beginning of a section, provided here are abbreviated directions for "musical accompaniment"

Jayèngsekar²⁶ spoke²⁷

O Father, give the sign

Then the signal sounded

In ever clashing clamor

All along the way mad with love

Clad in fine white trousers, in skirts²⁸ of deep red hue²⁹

With dark green silken belt³⁰

With gold encrusted *keris*

Brilliant diamond earrings

Set in fine gold filagree

Frangipanni blossoms

Of redolent fragrance sweet

With flowing sash³¹ of *cindhé*³² silk, adorned with golden bracelets

Yea, annointed with fragrant balms

[His] golden diadem studded

With rarest precious jewels

And gracing his ears, gossamer wings of gold³³

Frangipanni blossoms bright

So redolent of fragrance sweet

II.

Heart veiled with care, when [we together] lay parted by a pillow

Earth-descended gods aflank a mighty gate

and choreography, which read: "[The dancers] bowing with a *sembah*, *kenong arang* sounds."

²⁶The proper name Jayèngsekar is an appellation of Prince Panji, hero of the historical romances celebrating the legendary twelfth century East Javanese kingdoms of Jenggala and Daha. The word *jayèngsekar* can be translated as "victor of the flowers"; "flowers" in this instance, signifying women.

²⁷The poem's first three lines allow for multiple readings. The paucity of "context" here makes the translator's choice a difficult one. My choice among the variant possibilities is based upon a division of lines 1-2 and then 3-4 into separate units of sense as is suggested by the conventions of the Durma verse form. The variant possibilities are:

- line 1: a. Your brother has sounded the signal
- b. Your brother has given the sign
- c. O Brother, do not sound the signal
- d. O Brother, do not give the sign
- line 2: a. You are left behind
- b. For you it is left
- c. Stay behind
- line 3: a. Jayèngsekar spake
- b. [to] speak, O Jayèngsekar
- c. [to] speak: "O Jayèngsekar. . ."
- d. [to] tell Jayèngsekar

²⁸That is *kampung*, batik skirts draped elegantly and according to set rules for formal attire in the Karat.

²⁹To wear the *kampung jingga* (dark red *kampung*) means to be prepared for battle. Perhaps here it signifies erection, readiness for the "battle" of sexual intercourse. K.R.T. Hardjonagoro, personal communication (1984).

³⁰The silk is *pathola*, a kind of *cindhé*. See below, note 7. Dark green is the color most associated with Kangjeng Ratu Kidul.

³¹That is, *kekacé*, the Kawi word for *sondhér* ("dance sash").

³²*Cindhé* is a kind of fine patterned silk.

³³That is, *sumping*, wing-shaped ornaments worn behind the ears.

All is lost—the pillow lies fallen on the floor³⁴
O mighty Susuhunan

Who then shall take pity on the transport of [my] love?
Light of the world, flower of enlightenment:
Manifest bright are but thou in the bed³⁵
O mighty Susuhunan

The enthralling arrow soars to oblivion in soulful love³⁶
Secreted deep within the heart; ever may [I] fall before the Sunan's feet³⁷

The allure of his approach stirs my heart
Little frog, thou *tilarsa* leaf
Be [thou] calmed; to whom then does [my]self belong?³⁸
O mighty Susuhunan

O! Never once risen let [it] set again
Show me how to serve [thee]³⁹
I shall beg to lie beneath [thy] feet perhaps
Were it manifest in truth I would fall sick

³⁴The pillow falls to the floor when Panembahan Sénapati (and after him the serial Susuhunan) steal away from Kangjeng Ratu Kidul's bed; hence her lament.

However, because the word *guguling*, which has come to denote "pillow" or "bolster," has an older meaning of "to sleep" or "to lie," an alternate reading of this line is: "All is lost; [we? /I?] lay exposed upon the floor." In this case the line would sing either of the lovers' having been lost together to the abandon of their passion, or to Ratu Kidul's having fallen to the floor in distraction and grief at separation from her lover.

My reading of the riddle (*wangsalan*) embedded in the verse is as follows. The image "earth-descended gods flank a mighty gate" brings to mind two scenes. First, following the minimal discursive sense of the poem, the image suggests the lovers lying upon either side of the pillow which separates them, a pillow, which for impassioned "heart(s) veiled by care," is a gate begging to be opened. The same image, however, brings to mind a very different scene as well: the replication of the gates of heaven on earth. Standing on either side heaven's portal, to guard or watch over its entrance, stand the gods Cingkarabala and Balaupata. Replications in statue of these gods ("earth-descended gods") guard (*ngawasi*) the major portals of Javanese Karaton. *Ngawasi*, the proper function of the "earth-descended gods flank a mighty gate" in the verse's second line, sounds like and presages the *kadrawasan* ("all is lost") of the third line.

³⁵In this riddle, *pandamingrat* ("light of the world") suggests *kawistara* ("manifest bright"). *Kusuma dinanurwénda* ("flower of enlightenment") obliquely presages *papreman* ("bed"). The word *papreman* derives from the root *rem* ("closed of eyes"); the eyes are closed in meditative practices associated with the quest for enlightenment. It is significant to note that in nineteenth-century Java *danurwé[n]da* (from the Sanskrit *dhanurweda* = "the science of archery") was understood to refer specifically to an enlightenment associated with kingship (C. F. Winter Sr., *Kawi-Javaansch Woordenboek* [Batavia: Landsdrukkerij, 1880,] p. 162).

³⁶The line has an alternate sense held in tension with the more dominant erotically suggestive reading rendered here. The alternate reading is: "Darkening cloud in the center of the skies; the oblivion of a soulful love." The poetry turns upon the polysemic character of its words: *danu* (bow, arrow, darkening cloud, darkness), *madya* (middle, center, trunk [of body]; intoxicating drink [or drug]), *ambara* (the heavens; to soar, to rove). This line, with its (at least) double reading, constitutes a daunting challenge to the translator.

³⁷As explained above in note 11, the word *danu*, may (and probably should) be read here both as the intoxicating phallic "arrow," and as "darkness" or "darkening cloud" Both the penetrating arrow which plunges deep inside a secret space and the darkening cloud with its connotations of "hiddenness" suggest the *dèn-asamar* ("to be secreted") of the verse's second line. The phrase *lali sih jiwa* ("oblivion in/of soulful love") in the second half of the first line, as an image of death and eternity, presages the *awèta* ("ever may") of the second line.

³⁸The riddle works through a progression of sound and sense associations. The Kawi word *wiyangga* ("frog") points to the word *salira* ("body" or "self"), because *wiyangga* sounds like *angga*, which is the Kawi "translation" of *salira*. The young leaf of the *tilarsa* plant (Kawi for *lempuyang*; Zingiber Americans) is called the *lirih*. The word *lirih* sounds like *lilih* ("calm").

³⁹In this riddle, the absent subject which rises and (wishfully) never to set again recalls the moon (*wulan*). The word *wulan* sounds like *angawula* ("to serve" or "to be in a state of servitude").

Perhaps [I would] go mad
Susuhunan

When, O Mighty Lord, shall I meet [thee]
In the bed, O Mighty Lord?
Seat of the soul, little lake-borne lotus bloom
When lost in longing, whither must [I] call?⁴⁰

All thy scions, O Mighty Lord—Ah! in the bed
Blinded by tears is she Dhangur⁴¹
[Her] body wholly yielded, it is but sorrow in the end
[And] to stand with head held high means but sorrow in the end
There is no meeting save surrender body and soul.⁴²

III.

O! His beauty, may a thousand be his wives
As if

His crimson sash is edged on either side⁴³

The Susuhunan

Wanders,⁴⁴ many are his wives

The Susuhunan

As if

Wandering, many are his queens

The Susuhunan

As if

Jewels strewn among the clouds

The Susuhunan

His power is like the stars

Weeping [I] gaze upon the heavens

As if

Like the stars, thy works, Panembahan⁴⁵

The arrow's shaft, like fire its blaze

A rage of flames, My Lord

Should death come, where in shall it steal,⁴⁶ My Lord?

⁴⁰*Tumutur pundi parannya* could as well be read "whither must [I] go?", "tell [me] what to do," "tell [me] where to go," or "tell [me] where he's gone." In this riddle, *balé atma* ("seat of the soul") is by suggestion the *angen-angen* ("thought, imagination"), which sounds like *kangen* ("state of longing"). I have not yet been able to conjure a "solution" to the second part of the riddle.

⁴¹My conjecture here is that *dhangur* is a proper name, presumably for Kangjeng Ratu Kidul.

⁴²The translation of the more frequent variant reading of this line (see Note 2 to the Javanese text) is: "There is no meeting save by way of soul."

⁴³The word *sindura* means "crimson." The *sindur* is a long crimson sash with white borders. The sash symbolizes the (fertile) union of male (white) and female (red). In modern Java, this sash is worn by the parents of the bridal couple and is displayed as a decoration bordering the site of the wedding ceremony.

⁴⁴The "wandering" (*anglawat*), here and below, suggests an erotically interested royal progress or tour. For an interesting discussion on the meaning of royal progresses for Javanese kingship, see Anthony Day, "Meanings of Change in the Poetry of Nineteenth-Century Java," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell, 1981), pp. 108–12.

⁴⁵Panembahan is a royal title, which might translate as "Most Revered." Here it must refer to Panembahan Sénapati.

⁴⁶The word *surup* ("to enter or slip into") as in the case of the setting sun or of an (unwanted) spirit into someone's person/body, is rendered here as "to steal in."