BRILL

BIJDRAGEN TOT DE TAAL-, LAND- EN
VOLKENKUNDE 175 (2019) 59–66

brill.com/bki

Short Note

The Sweat of the King

*State Wealth vs. Private Royal Wealth in Pre-colonial Islamic
Javanese Kingdoms*

M.C. Ricklefs

The Australian National University, Canberra

prof@ricklefs@hotmail.com

Abstract

Eighteenth-century Javanese sources indicate that in pre-colonial Javanese kingdoms, a distinction was drawn between the monarch's personal wealth—called monies that were 'pure in intent, from the sweat of the king'—and the revenues of the kingdom as an institution. The distinction was probably of Islamic origin. It seems probable that only such personal royal wealth was acceptable for funding acts of personal religious merit.

Keywords

Java – Javanese monarchy – Javanese Islam – royal wealth – *Babad kraton* – Amangkura II

We may imagine pre-colonial Javanese monarchs as being capable of arbitrary conduct, and their kingdoms as places only partly constrained by either principles or laws. There are examples in the historical record to support such images. Many Javanese *susuhunan* or sultans would have agreed with Louis XIV, who is supposed to have proclaimed, 'The state, that is I' (*l'état, c'est moi*).

© M.C. RICKLEFS, 2019 | DOI:10.1163/22134379-17501020

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the prevailing CC-BY-NC license at the time of publication.

Downloaded from Brill.com04/26/2023 02:17:15PM
via free access

But there is also evidence that there were conventional distinctions, expectations, and restrictions on royal authority. There can be little doubt, for example, that a monarch was expected to consult his senior family members and courtiers about major decisions. Failure to do so could lead to the monarch losing the legitimacy others ascribed to him and—in the poorly institutionalized kingdoms of Java—losing also his throne (and life) to rebellion.

Here we will examine evidence that there was a specific distinction drawn between revenues that pertained to the kingdom and those that were the personal wealth of the monarch. The Javanese ruler, it seems, may not have been as free as some present-day despots to treat the state's revenues as available for plunder.

My curiosity about this matter was piqued by a passage in the chronicle *Babad kraton*, a text from the Yogyakarta court in the 1770s.¹ This tells of events after the death of Amangkurat II (r. 1677–1703), which is dated on f. 503^v. as occurring on the eve of Saturday-Kliwon, 23 Dumadilakir, at sunset (that is, at sunset on the Friday evening by CE reckoning), the year Alip, with the chronogram *ardi kalih rasa tunggil* (AJ 1627). This date is internally consistent and almost certainly correct, equivalent to around sunset on the evening of 2–3 November 1703, although the numeral varies by one day from standard date conversion tables and Ian Proudfoot's *Takwim*.²

On the *Babad kraton*'s f. 504^v.,³ we read of the dead monarch's body being taken to the royal graves at Imagiri. The entourage included his widow Ratu Kancana, who took along 1,000 *reyal* (to reward those saying prayers for the deceased). This money is described as *kaskayan ing Nata pribadi, dudu wētuning praja, reyal muklis wau, saking karingĕt Sang Nata* (the wealth of the king himself, not the income of the kingdom, that is, *reyal* pure in intent, from the sweat of the king). The same text (with insignificant variants) is found in the so-called *Major Surakarta babad*, compiled in Surakarta in 1836.⁴ So this episode

1 British Library Add. MS 12320. See the list of Javanese MSS at the end of this note for more details. It has been published in transcription in Pantja Sunjata, Supriyanto and Ras 1992. It is accessible online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_12320 (accessed on multiple dates, October 2018).

2 This Javanese date is given in all the Javanese sources known to me. Variations of one day between actual Javanese usage and standard conversion tables are not unusual. Such tables and Proudfoot's *Takwim* give this combination of 5- and 7-day-week days as occurring on 22, not 23 Jumadilakir, equivalent to Saturday 3 November. See the discussion in Ricklefs 1978:190–191. Ian Proudfoot's *Takwim* is found as a CD-ROM in Proudfoot 2006 and on the Internet (<http://mcp.anu.edu.au/proudfoot/Takwim.html>); I do not access this Internet version myself and some users have reported difficulty in getting it to work.

3 Text also in Pantja Sunjata, Supriyanto and Ras 1992, 11:179.

4 Published in Bale Pustaka 1939–1941, XVI:41: *kaskayanya nata pribadi, dede wĕdaling praja*,

in the chronicles clearly distinguishes between the monarch's private wealth—that which originated from 'the sweat of the king'—and the income of the kingdom as an institution.

I have translated the Javanese word *muklis* here as 'pure in intent'. We might also say, as Gericke and Roorda put it (1901, 11:492), referring to the Arabic root, 'pure in heart, not hypocritical'. This is the Qur'anic term *mukhlis*, derived from the Arabic *ikhlas*, 'sincerity'. Zayd (2018) comments that '*mukhlis* best approximates the notion of worthy and well-directed "intention". Sincerity is the foundation of all acts of worship [...] acceptable to God and of all forms of prayer'. The appearance of this term in the *Babad kraton* indicates that money that was *muklis*—that was from the 'sweat of the king' rather than from state revenues—was more appropriate, meritorious, and undefiled when praying for the dead king, more born of pure intent and acceptable to God. Such monies were regarded as undefiled for a pious purpose, unlike money which might have derived from the state treasury.

That a crucial term in the *babad* account is the Javanese/Arabic *muklis*/*mukhlis* leads to the suspicion that this distinction between private royal wealth and state revenues entered Javanese law and practice with the coming of Islam. Our knowledge of such matters in pre-Islamic times is limited by the nature of the surviving evidence. Neither Old Javanese charters (*praśasti*) nor works of literature (*kakawin*) shed light on such an issue, as far as I am aware. That the distinction is so clearly linked in the *Babad kraton* account with obsequies for the dead king also suggests a specifically religious—that is to say, Islamic—setting for the concept.

A similar distinction between the kingdom's revenues and the monarch's personal estate was applied at the time when Pakubuwana II (r. 1726–1749) was dying in December 1749. This was in the midst of a bitter civil war—already raging for nearly a decade by that stage—and the ailing monarch appears to have trusted no one around him. Instead, he turned to the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, Dutch East India Company) governor of Java's northeast coast, J.A. Baron van Hohendorff (whom Javanese sources commonly name Undur, 'Retreat'). Remarkably, the dying king proposed that, in the transition to the next monarch, it should be Van Hohendorff who took charge of the court and of the king's personal wealth rather than any Javanese lord.

royal muklis tuhu, saking karingĕt Narendra. The online transcription of this passage by Sastra.org has a rare error, reading *dene* rather than *dede*, which confuses, indeed inverts, the meaning of the passage; see <https://www.sastra.org/kisah-cerita-dan-kronikal/babad-tanah-jawi/1025-babad-tanah-jawi-balai-pustaka-1938-41-1024-jilid-16> (accessed 31-10-2018).

The Dutch and Javanese texts of the treaty which Pakubuwana II and Van Hohendorff signed on 11 December 1749 draw this distinction. The Javanese text distinguishes between the kingdom with all its dependencies (*karaton Matawis [...] sarta sawēwēngkonipun sēdaya*) on the one hand and the king's heirs, including the crown prince, on the other (*putra-putra kawula kang kantun-kantun punapa dening Pangeran Adipati Anom*). The Dutch text makes the same distinction between *het Mattaramsche rijk [...] met ap- en dependentie* on the one hand and *mijne na te laten kinderen voornamentlijk den Kroonprins Pangeran Adipati Anom* on the other. The former, the kingdom, was surrendered without limitation to the VOC, an arrangement which proved to be a dead letter in the military-political realities of the day. The latter, the monarch's heirs, were entrusted to the care of the VOC. The latter arrangement was common Javanese practice, so that someone trustworthy would ensure that heirs received their proper inheritances.⁵ Thus, here again we see a distinction drawn between the institutions of the kingdom and the personal property of the monarch and his family.

Prince Mangkunagara I (a.k.a. Mas Said) was then in rebellion and not present at the Surakarta court when Pakubuwana II died. He recorded what he learned at second-hand in his autobiographical chronicle, the *Sērat babad Pakunēgaran*. He seems to have given no attention to the surrender of the entire kingdom to the VOC—perhaps recognizing that as a concession without significance in the midst of a brutal civil war—but did hear something about the treatment of Pakubuwana II's personal legacy. There we read, *titilare Sri Bupati, kang dunya pinaratiga, mring Dēler ingkang amaris, kang saduman Narpati, ingkang kalih dumanipun, pinēndhēt ing Wala[n]da, Dēler Udur ingkang ambil, nulya Dēler upamit dhatēng Sang Nata* (the legacy of the king [Pakubuwana II], his worldly goods, were divided into three by the Hon. Gentleman, who transmitted them. One part went to the king [Pakubuwana III], two parts were demanded by the Dutch; it was the Hon. Gentleman Van Hohendorff who took them. Then the Hon. Gentleman took leave of the king.)⁶ No other sources known to me support this depiction of Van Hohendorff's avarice—which is not to suggest that there was any shortage of avarice in the ranks of the Company's

5 This matter is discussed in Ricklefs 1974:49–52, with extracts from the texts of the treaty. Both texts are published in Soekanto [1952]:178–181. The Dutch text is also in De Jonge and Van Deventer 1862–1909, x:159–160. The Javanese text is also in Soeripto 1929:188–189, but this version is not taken from the original and shows some differences from Soekanto's version.

6 *Sērat babad Pakunēgaran*, British Library Add. MS 12318 (see the list of Javanese MSS at the end of this note for details), f. 201^v.

officers. The passage is of interest because again it seems to treat the monarch's personal wealth as something separate from the kingdom itself.

The *Babad Giyanti* may also shed some light on the issue, but it does not do so as clearly as the previous examples. This is a chronicle conventionally ascribed to Yasadipura I (1729–1803), who—if the ascription is correct—lived through the events it describes over the tumultuous years from the 1740s to 1757. The *Babad Giyanti* generally views things from the perspective of Prince Mangkubumi (Sultan Hamengkubuwana I, r. 1749–1792), who was in rebellion at this time and in alliance with Mangkunagara I.

The *Babad Giyanti*'s account of the succession in Surakarta in 1749 has some similarities with that in the *Sĕrat babad Pakunĕgaran*. It describes the dying Pakubuwana II—flickering in and out of consciousness—saying to Van Hohen-dorff: *Gupĕrnur iya sukur, dene sira tĕka pribadi, prakara sutanira, Ki Dipati iku, ya mongsa bodhowa sira, sadurunge sawise pasrah mami, iya marang ing sira, /o/ lajĕng kendĕl tan ngandika malih* ('Governor, thank God that you have come in person. The case/affair of my son the crown prince I turn over to your judgement: what comes before and what comes after, I surrender to you.' Then [the king] stopped and said no more.) (Yasadipura I [ascribed to] 1937–1939, VI:31). Again, the king is depicted as asking Van Hohendorff to handle matters to do with his son, the crown prince. It is not entirely clear what was meant here. Was this about the governor deciding whether the crown prince should succeed, or about the transmission of the dying monarch's personal wealth to the next generation, in accordance with the distinction we have seen in the texts of the treaty itself?

Subsequently, the *Babad Giyanti* depicts Van Hohendorff as announcing to the assembled court, *yen mangke Sang Prabu, seleh karaton maring wang* (that the king [Pakubuwana II] has transferred the *kraton* to me) and then that *lamun wong gĕdhe-gĕdhe Bĕtawi, tuwan Jendral ngadĕgakĕn raja, Pangran Dipati Anom* (that the Hon. Gentlemen of Batavia and the Governor General install as king the crown prince) (Yasadipura I [ascribed to] 1937–1939, VI:32). There is room for debate here, but it is possible that the *Babad Giyanti* also treats the transmission of the dying king's worldly goods to the next generation and the installation of a new king as separate matters.

Further Queries

If we accept that there was a distinction drawn between the monarch's personal private property and the state treasury, questions remain for which the evidence known to me cannot provide entirely satisfactory answers. Readers

may find it instructive to turn to Ann Kumar's attempt to make sense of the Mangkunagaran finances in the later eighteenth century (Kumar 1980:26–36), based on the ms *Babad tutur*. G.P. Rouffaer (1931:299–311) also did his best to untangle such complexities. Neither of these discussions resolves the two following questions:

What revenues were regarded as pertaining to the monarch's private income?

On this question, we gain most assistance from later eighteenth-century Javanese documents of the court of Yogyakarta, edited by Carey and Hoadley. There we find records of the sultan loaning money and being paid house rents (Carey and Hoadley 2000:314, 349, 350, 364, 367). We might therefore guess that the king had private property in the form of housing and that from his cash balances he earned returns as a moneylender. As the money used when praying for the dead Amangkurat II was undefiled '*reyal* pure in intent', we may assume that the king's earnings from moneylending would have been structured so as to avoid Islamic law's condemnation of usury. The Javanese terms used in Carey and Hoadley's documents are *bungah* and *sĕkar*, both of which could simply refer to a lawful 'increase' rather than to usurious interest. What other forms of private royal income might have existed we could only guess.

For what purposes were such private royal resources to be used?

On this question, we can only speculate. The most obvious purposes would probably be acts of personal, religious merit and family expenses, such as the costs of weddings, circumcisions, burials, the support of royal family members without adequate income from appanages, and so on. We should expect that acts of religious merit could only convey that merit to a king personally (whether living or dead) if the costs were met from his personal royal wealth. We recall the key comment in the *Babad kraton*'s f. 504^v, cited above, that the 1,000 *reyal* accompanying the dead king's cortege to Imagiri (to reward the religious praying on the deceased's behalf) was *reyal muklis saking karingĕt Sang Nata* (*reyal* pure in intent, from the sweat of the king). Thus, rewards to those who took part in group prayer and Qur'anic recitations in the palaces, performances which conveyed religious merit, presumably should also have come from those pure *reyal* derived from 'the sweat of the king'.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to Peter Carey and Barry Hooker for their suggestions.

References

- Bale Pustaka (1939–1941). *Babad tanah Jawi*. Batawi Sentrum: Bale Pustaka. [Thirty-one vols.]
- Carey, Peter and Mason C. Hoadley (eds) (2000). *The archive of Yogyakarta*. Vol. 2: *Documents relating to economic and agrarian affairs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy. [Oriental Documents 11.]
- Gericke, J.F.C. and T. Roorda (1901). *Javaansch-Nederlandsch handwoordenboek*. Revised ed. Edited by A.C. Vreede and J.G.H. Gunning. Amsterdam: Johannes Müller; Leiden: Brill. [Two vols.]
- Jonge, J.K.J. de and M.L. van Deventer (eds) (1862–1909). *De opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag in Oost-Indië: Verzameling van onuitgegeven stukken uit het oud-koloniaal archief*. 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff. [Sixteen vols.]
- Kumar, Ann (1980). 'Javanese court society and politics in the late eighteenth century: The record of a lady soldier. Part 1: The religious, social, and economic life of the court', *Indonesia* 29 (April):1–46.
- Pantja Sunjata, I.W., Ignatius Supriyanto and J.J. Ras (eds and translit.) (1992). *Babad kraton: Sejarah kraton Jawa sejak Nabi Adam sampai runtuhnya Mataram, menurut naskah tulisan tangan*. The British Library, London, Add 12320. Djakarta: Djambatan. [Two vols.]
- Proudfoot, Ian (2006). *Old Muslim calendars of Southeast Asia*. Leiden and Boston: Brill. [Handbuch der Orientalistik section 3, vol. 17].
- Ricklefs, M.C. (1974). *Jogjakarta under Sultan Mangkubumi, 1749–1792: A history of the division of Java*. London, etc.: Oxford University Press.
- Ricklefs, M.C. (ed. and transl.) (1978). *Modern Javanese historical tradition: A study of an original Kartasura chronicle and related materials*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.
- Rouffaer, G.P. (1931). 'Vorstenlanden', in: *Adatrechtbundels*. Vol. 34: *Java en Madoera*, pp. 233–378. 's-Gravenhage: Nijhoff.
- Soekanto ([1952]). *Sekitar Jogjakarta 1755–1825 (Perdjandjian Gianti—perang Dipanagara)*. Djakarta and Amsterdam: Mahabarata.
- Soeripto (1929). *Ontwikkelingsgang der vorstenlandsche wetboeken*. Leiden: Boek- en Steendrukkerij Eduard IJdo.
- Yasadipura I [ascribed to] (1937–1939). *Babad Giyanti*. Batawi Sentrum: Bale Pustaka. [Twenty-one vols.] Also published at <http://www.sastra.org/kisah-cerita-dan-kronikal/70-babad-giyanti> (accessed on multiple dates in October 2018).
- Zayd, Nasr Hamid Abu (2018). 'Intention', in: Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*. Leiden: Brill. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3-EQSIM_00225. Consulted online on 31 October 2018.

Javanese MSS Cited

Babad kraton. British Library Add. MS 12320. A chronicle of the *Babad tanah Jawi* family, as far as is known the earliest text to have survived which extends from Adam to the fall of Kartasura in 1742, but with a major lacuna at f. 631^r., omitting material for the years 1719–1741. Written by R.Tg. Jayengrat in Yogyakarta in AJ 1703–1704 [AD 1777–1781] and taken by the British at the sack of the Yogyakarta *kraton* in 1812. 717 ff. From the collection of John Crawfurd, acquired by the library in 1842. Available online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_12320 (accessed on multiple dates, October 2018).

Babad tutur, KITLV Or. 231. A copy of a hybrid chronicle-diary kept in the Mangkunagaran palace, extending from [Rĕjĕb] AJ 1707 [July 1781 CE] to Mulud AJ 1718 [November 1791 CE]. Anonymous, but clearly copied in the Mangkunagaran palace. 303 ff. Held in Leiden University library.

Sĕrat babad Pakunĕgaran. British Library Add. MS 12318. Composed by Mangkunagara I; this copy was made in Surakarta in AJ 1705 [1779 CE] for his 55th birthday. 418 ff. From the collection of John Crawfurd, acquired by the Library in 1842.