Pilgrimage to the south coast, circa 1805

_Lelana:_ spiritual wanderings as rite de passage

Dipanagara’s emergence into manhood, as we have seen, was marked by a number of significant events: the passing of his great-grandmother on 17 October 1803, his inheritance of the Tegalreja estate, his investiture with his new adult name of Radèn Antawirya on 3 September 1805, and finally his lavish _kraton_ nuptials with the daughter of the Yogya _bupati_ of Panolan on 27 February 1807. These last could be perceived as something of an official court _rite de passage_ between his teenage years under the tutelage of Ratu Ageng and the beginning of his young adult life as a Javanese nobleman. But, whereas for most of his contemporaries such a young adult life would most likely have entailed family and official responsibilities around the Yogya _kraton_, for Dipanagara there was an added dimension. A second and more meaningful _rite de passage_ – this time an extended form of _lelana_1 or spiritual wandering – was now required for him to come into his own and confirm the spiritual practices of his youth as well as to clarify his prophetic destiny. Just exactly what this entailed has been well expressed by the celebrated historian of pre-colonial Java, Soemarsaid Moertono (1976:20-1):

To set off on wanderings when one’s age was approaching adulthood meant to find wisdom in the sense of finding a teacher who could guide one’s development in a fashion in which one’s powers would outstrip those of ordinary men. It also sometimes entailed acquiring tranquility […] so that on one’s return one would be able to withstand all temptations. It was even occasionally a time of testing of the knowledge and wisdom which one had already acquired [through youthful spiritual and meditative practice]. This tradition was continued during the Islamic period in Java when people set off on long journeys – sometimes from west to east Java and back again – to find esoteric knowledge at religious schools.

We have already seen how the first sultan, Mangkubumi’s, image as a _satria lelana_ (wandering knight), so impressed Dipanagara’s contemporaries.2 We

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1 For a general discussion of _lelana_ in Modern Javanese literature, especially wandering student romances, see Pigeaud 1967-80, I:227-35.
2 See Chapter II note 8.
also know from inscriptions on Radèn Mas Said (Mangkunagara I’s) heirloom sword (*pedhang*) and his court *gamelan*, Kyai Kanyut-Mèsem (‘Venerable Attempted to Smile’), that he also set great store by his wanderings in the time before his appointment as an independent ruler in 1757. Such testing journeys were the making of both his and Mangkubumi’s spiritual power. So it was with Dipanagara.

The exact timing of the prince’s wanderings away from Tegalreja and his pilgrimage to the south coast is unclear. In his autobiography, he states that he started visiting *pesantrèn* at the age of twenty (Javanese) years, hence sometime after April 1805, visits which led on to his pilgrimage. The next events related in his *babad* after his return to Tegalreja following his description of his journey to the south coast are the description of the changes in the position of the Dutch Residents (post-July 1808, ministers) at the courts brought about by Marshal Herman Willem Daendels’ (in office 1808-1811) decrees – Ordnance on Ceremonial and Etiquette – of 25 February and 28 July 1808. If the chronology in Dipanagara’s *babad* is correct – and we have no reason to doubt it – then his journey to the south coast must have taken place sometime before the early months of 1808. In the present author’s view, it is likely to have occurred even earlier, namely before his 27 February 1807 marriage after which date he may have spent more time at Tegalreja and visited Yogya more often. We can thus surmise that his journey took place in circa 1805, probably in the dry season (May-October) when travelling was easiest.

*Preparations for a pilgrimage*

In preparation for his journey to the south coast, Dipanagara described in his *babad* how he departed at the age of twenty (Javanese years, post-April 1805) on a series of visits to mosques and religious schools in the Yogya area. The importance of these visits was to complete his education as a student of religion and to find appropriate teachers to guide his further spiritual and religious development. The prince also prepared himself for his spiritual quest by taking a new name, Sèh Ngabdurahim, which he was to use on his wanderings. This was derived from the Arabic Shaykh ‘Abd al-Rahim (Ricklefs 1974b:231-2), and may have been suggested to Dipanagara by one of his re-

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3 Gomperts and Carey 1994:22. See S.Br. 37, 719, for a reference to the special Mangkunagara *pusaka pedhang* with the inscription *Jeng Gusti Pangèran Adipati ingkang rawuh saking lelana* (‘His Lordship the Pangèran Adipati who has returned from his wanderings’); and the Kyai Kanyut Mèsem *gamelan* inscription on the bronze bars of the *saron demung*, *satriya kang lalana*, 1700 (‘the knight who went on his wanderings, AJ 1700 [AD 1774-1745]’). Radèn Mas Said’s original *nom-de-guerre* in 1745 when he began his campaigns in the Panambangan area to the east of Surakarta was: Sultan Adiprakasa Lalana Jayamisësa, Pringgodigdo 1950:354.

4 BD (Manado) II:120-5, XIV.62-5, 84.