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Abstract

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This paper explores the position of Nyai Roro Kidul in the local pantheon of ancestral and other spirits in the fishing village of Puger on the south coast of East Java. It notes how the spirit queen serves as an explanation of the perils faced by fishers in the dangerous Indian Ocean currents and her connection with various aspects of their daily lives. The paper also maps specific locations of spirits within Puger, sorting them into those associated with the village and those belonging with Nyai Roro Kidul, defining a boundary across which interaction between these two domains takes place. Finally the offers brought to the spirit queen are looked at in terms of how these return to her some of the prosperity she has given, by symbolically offering her the essence of the community itself.

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Robert WESSING

Nyai Roro Kidul in Puger : Local Applications of a Myth ⁽¹⁾

Introduction

Just as historical persons may have all kinds of actions and ideas posthumously ascribed to them, eventually giving them a legendary position, so too may mythological figures become a focus for all kinds of social values and fears. One such mythological figure in Java is the goddess Nyai Roro Kidul, the Spirit Queen of the Southern Ocean. Nyai Roro Kidul is known all along the southern coast of Java where the island faces the sometimes horrendous waves of the Indian Ocean, and is relevant to the lives of categories of people as different as the rulers of Yogyakarta and Surakarta, fishermen, and bird's-nest gatherers, each of which observes particular rules in its relationship with her.

This paper presents data dealing with beliefs about Nyai Roro Kidul that are current in the fishing community of Puger in East Java. These beliefs both provide an explanation to the villagers of the dangers of the fishermen's trade as well as a way of allaying the fears that these dangers arouse. The figure of Nyai Roro Kidul is furthermore related to such fundamental aspects of life as the family, specifically wives, and aspects of the human soul. Before presenting these data, a general overview of beliefs about this Spirit Queen is in order.

1. I would like to thank my many informants as well as Drs. Dominikus Rato of the Universitas Jember, Mr. Halim and Mr. Musta'in of Puger for the help they gave me while collecting this data. Thanks are also due to Dra. Kalsum of the Universitas Pajajaran for the information she sent me about various aspects of Nyai Roro Kidul and to Ibu Nahariyah of Jember and Drs. Kusnadi of the Universitas Jember for their letters about the tidal wave that hit the south coast of East Java in the summer of 1994. Finally I am indebted to discussions with Dr. Jos Platenkamp and Dr. Roy Jordaan as this paper was developing. The maps were drawn by Hans Borkent of Studio Metafoor in Oegstgeest, The Netherlands.

Nyai Roro Kidul

Nyai Roro Kidul⁽²⁾ is often described as a beautiful young woman although, according to Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX, her appearance varies with the phases of the moon; young and beautiful when it waxes, old and ugly when it wanes (*Tempo* 1988:156). She is variously said to have been a virgin princess of, among others, Kediri, Pajajaran or Galuh, who did not wish to marry or, alternately, became ill with a skin disease and thus could not marry.⁽³⁾ In both cases she was expelled from the palace and ended up on the south coast of Java where she entered the ocean and became the ruler of the spirit world of Java, including the spirits of the dead (cf. Anonymous 1918; Jordaan 1984; Pigeaud 1960-1963, IV:211).

She is often depicted riding a golden carriage with a *naga* (dragon) motif through towering waves, pulled by a black and a white horse. Her favorite color is said to be green and people visiting the shores of the Indian Ocean are advised not to wear this color as she is thought to become jealous and take the offender away to her underwater palace, to be made into a servant or one of her warriors or lovers. In fact, according to an informant, even viewers of movies about her are loath to wear green. In advertisements for these films, scales or a fish-like lower body are sometimes suggested, tying in, as Jordaan discusses, with the notion of skin disease.

Her palace, located at the bottom of the Indian Ocean, is thought to be iridescent and sumptuous, looking just like the *kraton* (palace) of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta (*Intisari* 1991:130). It is filled with "the wondrous beauties of the deep" and is staffed with courtiers and ladies-in-waiting who fulfill the Queen's every wish (De Cock Wheatley 1931:205).

While, as I will briefly discuss below, Nyai Roro Kidul is part of a mythological and symbolic pattern with roots deep in Southeast Asian history, she became well-known in Java in the late 16th century when, according to the *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Olthof 1987:80-82), Panembahan Senapati went to meditate on the south coast of Java at Parang Kusumah. His meditation had such power that the ocean boiled and its tranquillity was disturbed. Nyai Roro Kidul is said to have come to the surface to ask him to temper his meditation,

2. She is known under a variety of names. Ricklefs (1974:200, n. 67, 203, n. 74) mentions Retna Dewati, Prabu Rara Rat Jawi, Sang Retna, Prabu Kenya, Sang Dewi, Sang Prabu Wanodya, Sang Retna Dewi, Sang Retna Tanah Jawi, Sang Prabu Dewi, and Prabu Rara Surya Dewati while; Van Hien (1912:173) calls her Rara Wudu and Dra. Kalsum (letter, 5 June 1990) mentions Nyi Gelereng Putih.

3. Rara Kidul's name is often also written Nyai Lara Kidul. Pigeaud (1960-63, V:315) glosses *lara* with maiden, a gloss given by Zoetmulder (1982, II:1510) for *rara*. *Lara*, however, can also have the meaning of sickness, sadness, and suffering (Zoetmulder 1982, I:985), adding the possibility of suffering, i.e. from a skin disease, to Nyai Lara Kidul's name. Dra. Kalsum (letter, 3 September 1990) notes that in the 18th century in Surakarta *lara* and *rara* tended not to be differentiated, a phenomenon not unknown elsewhere in the case of /r/ and /l/. She feels, however, that the original name was Rara Kidul, as *ra* is an appropriate honorific prefix for her, found as well in words such as *ratu* (king) and the like. In regard to her virginity, there are stories in which she was married, even several times, before entering the ocean to become the Queen of the Spirits (cf. Dominikus Rato 1992:18-20; Wachtel 1977:19-20). In Puger it was told that she had a son named Raden Panji, although it was uncertain who the boy's father was. In spite of this and her frequent marriages, she remains, as Jordaan (1984:106) points out, "an ever-rejuvenating virgin."



Map of East Java

which he did. They then went to her palace where she instructed Senapati in state-craft and they made love for three days and nights, although this latter detail is sometimes omitted or denied (cf. Purbatjaraka 1962, I:21). Since then she has been the consort of each successive ruler of the 17th century Muslim state of Mataram and its successor states of Surakarta and Yogyakarta, functioning as the protectress of these realms.

While there are those who feel that Panembahan Senapati, or perhaps his grandson Sultan Agung, created this story in order to gain legitimacy for what was in effect an upstart royal house, it is clear that some of the details of the story were not made up for the occasion. Rather, as De Graaf and Pigeaud (1974:222) point out, the veneration of a divine power resident in the southern (Indian) ocean predates the arrival of Islam in the area (cf. Purbatjaraka 1962, II:19). This divine power is part of a wider pattern of belief in chthonic beings in Southeast Asia and symbolic connections can be made between Nyai Roro Kidul and the rice goddess (Dewi Sri) as well as other mythological figures like Nyi Blorong and snake spirits who will bring a petitioner wealth at a price (cf. Jordaen 1984:101; Wessing 1988b).⁽⁴⁾ The details of these various

4. Nyi Blorong, said to be either the daughter of Nyai Roro Kidul (Jordaen 1984:109; Bamar Eska n.d.:58) or to be one of her followers (Hermanadi 1992:18), seems to be positioned between Nyai Roro Kidul and the *ipri* (snake spirit). Both Nyi (sometimes Kyai) Blorong and the *ipri* bring wealth for a certain period to male petitioners who marry them while they are in human form.

mythologies also tend to spill over into each other. Purbatjaraka (1962, I:20), for instance, has people obtaining wealth from Nyai Roro Kidul and suffering the subsequent tortures usually associated with Nyi Blorong (cf. Van Hien 1912:173).

Marriage between a ruler and a chthonic being, such as a snake or a maiden coming out of the ocean foam was not unknown in wider Southeast Asia (Jordaan 1984:109; Wessing 1990) or China (Lai 1992) and India (Jordaan 1987:124-5).⁽⁵⁾ In India snakes are further associated with leprosy and other skin diseases as well as with childlessness in women (Crooke 1955:413-5), which we can relate back to Nyai Roro Kidul's origin as an unmarried princess suffering a skin disease.

One aspect of Nyai Roro Kidul that is noted time and again is the ambiguity⁽⁶⁾ that adheres to her character (cf. Jordaan 1984:104); she is venerated and feared at the same time (SJs et al. 1992) : an old man I attempted to interview said that the hairs on the back of his neck stood up when I asked my questions, a definite warning not to talk, he said. It is *pantang*, forbidden.

She is connected with demons and death as well as protection and prosperity. She is associated with fertility; Tisnawati, a form of the rice goddess Sri, is said to be her sister (De Cock Wheatley 1931; 209; cf. Wessing 1988b) and she is venerated by hunters (Wormser 1920:211), fishermen (De Cock Wheatley 1931:206), and bird-nest gatherers, the latter marrying a woman belonging to Nyai Roro Kidul's court in order to assure safety and a good harvest (*Tempo* 1982:75). Finally, she is the consort and protectress of the kingdoms of Java.

At the same time, however, she is also said to send storms and big waves when angered⁽⁷⁾ and has a reputation for being jealous and lustful (*pengemis cinta*) (Gow 1992:1) with an insatiable appetite for sex with handsome young men, whom she gathers from those foolish enough to venture too far away from shore. This aspect is played up time and again in both popular magazines

After this time the petitioner dies and must become part of the house of his benefactor, either as aservant or literally as part of the structure (cf. Wessing 1988b; Van Hien 1912:145). While the *ipri* is always a were-snake (itself an ancient motif; cf. MacCulloch 1955) who lives in caves or holes, Nyi Blorong may be found in a swamp (Van Hien 1912:145) or in an underwater palace off the southern coast (Jordaan 1984:108) and may appear as a woman with a snake-like lower body (Drewes 1929:23) or even as a snake (SJs and Fury 1992:16).

5. Even on Java the House of Mataram and its successors are not the only ones to have sexual relations with female spirits of the southern coast. As reported in the news magazine *Tempo* (21 April 1990, p. 42), an ancestor of a well known Javanese family was once visited by a *putri jin* (spirit girl) while meditating at the shore of the Indian Ocean. They married, resulting in the birth of the ancestor of this house, who was physically a normal person but had supernatural powers.

6. One reader of this paper interpreted the word ambiguous to mean unclear or vague. It is used here, however, in the sense of "an expression that admits of two or sometimes more interpretations ... [and] does not in itself suggest [a] ... lack of explicitness..." (Webster's 1973:38).

7. In the summer of 1994 several villages were totally destroyed when the south coast of East Java was hit by a tidal wave resulting from an earthquake near the island of Bali. Informants wrote that she had been angered because the wrong *wayang* story (*lakon*) had been performed at a circumcision at Pancer, one of the worst hit villages. Ceremonies were held afterwards in several villages in order to ward off further disasters.

and the films made about her and her daughter, Nyi Blorong (cf. *Kartini* 1986; *Intisari* 1991:127; Wis 1992). Every time a young man is washed away by the strong undertow, people say that Nyai Roro Kidul gathered yet another sexual partner to her palace under the waves.

Both the fertility and the disasters can best be understood as aspects of her power. As Woodward (1989:169) mentions, Nyai Roro Kidul's power, as well as that held by rulers is "simply one of the forces of nature" and therefore neutral, capable of being used for both good and evil. As was shown by Bowen (1993:187), the same is true of supernatural power in general and it is its very ambiguity that makes it both fearsome and desirable (cf. Anderson 1972). Lai (1994:34-35) points out in a different context that "there are two sides or faces to nature ...the river can be good and evil. When water flows in an orderly fashion, it is good; when the same water floods, it is evil. ...The river and its god are one : the same river with two faces that can nurture as well as kill. ...Good and evil are not moral opposites : they could just as well be the river in its two moods." These same observations could just as well be made of the Indian Ocean.

As was mentioned earlier, Nyai Roro Kidul is the ruler of the spirits who live along the south coast as well as, at least temporarily, of all the spirits on Java (Stange 1975:171; Ayiek Syarifuddin 1989:15). These include both the spirits of the ancestors, generally perceived to be a force for good, and those who inhabited Java before the coming of humans. Many of the latter were caused to move from their original habitation and sent to stay on the south coast (C. Geertz 1960:24; Woodward 1989:168) and, partly because of the ambiguity of their power and partly because they have been disturbed, these spirits are often feared. In popular film and belief these spirits are often depicted as brutal, cursed beings, adding to the general aura of fear that surrounds them (cf. *Intisari* 1991:127).

In her role as protectress of the House of Mataram, Nyai Roro Kidul acts as one of the quarter guardians of the state (Woodward 1989:199; Triyoga 1991:94). As such, as well as in her function of *penunggu* (tutelary spirit) of the Indian Ocean, she can best be understood as a *dhemit*, a place spirit with functions on the national level (see below). Others (Bocquet 1980:58) have classified her as a *lelembut* (a kind of troublesome spirit) and these days, under the growing influence of Islam, she is often said to be a *jin* (Ar. *jinn*; genie). Muslim purists, who frown on all beliefs of this sort, tend to classify all these spirits with the devil (Bamar Eska n.d.:7, 10, 132), even though there is a general understanding that some *jin* have embraced Islam and may be called to the aid of those in need (Bamar Eska n.d.:12; Julizar Kasiri et al. 1992:32). Some disagree with calling her a *jin* for technical reasons. Hermanadi (1992:19), for instance, writes that she is not a roaming spirit (*gentayangan*), as *jin* are, and that it is therefore more correct to call her a tutelary spirit (*penunggu*), which elsewhere seems to be how *jin* are defined as well (cf. Tim Liberty 1992b:16).

In any case, Nyai Roro Kidul "has been Islamicized to a remarkable degree" (Woodward 1989:261, n. 27), as have other spirits on Java (Wessing:

1995). Some even propose to see her as a special envoy from God, who for this reason cannot be considered evil (Hermanadi 1992:19; *Intisari* 1991:129). Aside from the fact that Mataram, of which she is the protectress, was an Islamic state, and that she was prophesied to be destined to marry a Muslim (Purbatjaraka 1962:23) there are stories of her urging the Javanese to read the Koran and to pray to Allah (Ricklefs 1974:203) while she is said to have told Prince Diponegoro, who rebelled against Dutch rule on Java in the 19th century, to adopt the name Ngabdulhamid, "Servant of God" (Wachtel 1977:20).

To summarize, Nyai Roro Kidul is an Islamised chthonic being, functioning as *dhemit* (tutelary spirit) of the Indian Ocean, who rules the spirit world of Java in the absence of Semar. She has relations with the underworld and water, power over life, death, and fertility and is of a two-faced or ambiguous nature (Jordaan 1984:10G-7).

With this description as a background, we can now take a look at the information from Puger, in order to see how these local data fit into the general picture and to what use the myth is put there. While these local beliefs to a considerable degree reflect the general pattern described above, they are adapted to local circumstances. I will not attempt a Lévi-Straussian exercise in transformations between these local data and the general pattern, as I believe this to be unnecessary for an understanding of the local data. Local elements do indeed enter local versions of myths, as Lévi-Strauss has eloquently shown (1968), but rather than as transformations, one may see this as a local myth-maker's exercise, interweaving mythic elements from a general reservoir with local observations for the explanation of the local facts.

Puger

The community of Puger consists of two villages, Puger Kulon and Puger Wetan, located at the mouth of the Bedadung river, about 38 kilometers south of the regency capital of Jember in East Java. In 1990 they had a combined population of 17.212 persons; 8.438 men and 8.774 women (Tim Peneliti 1990:6). Ethnically this population is made up of Madurese, Javanese and Bugis people with an additional sprinkling of Osing from the Banyuwangi area and in the past people of Mandarese and Malay extraction (De Stoppelaar 1927:81). As Tim Peneliti (1990:6) points out, these days the Javanese and Madurese dominate, the others having been absorbed by these two ethnic groups. The majority (99,49 %) of this population is Muslim while the remainder are Catholic and Hindu (Tim Peneliti 1990:15).

Even though over half the population of the two villages claims to make its living from agriculture and only roughly 39 % is involved with fishing (Tim Peneliti 1990:7), the general aspect of the villages, and especially of Puger Kulon, where the fishers quay is located and the greater part of this research was done, is that of fisheries. Between 1984 and 1988 the size of the fishing fleet increased from 150 to 281 larger boats⁽⁸⁾, driven by auxiliary motors

8. The majority of these are Madurese type boats that are said to handle better in the rough seas common on the south coast (Dominikus Rato 1991:10).

(*motor tempel*), while the fleet of smaller, oar-propelled boats went from 135 to 171 in the same period, with a high of 205 in 1987 (Anonymous 1988:57). The figure of 39 % is in any case somewhat deceptive in that it only counts the persons actively involved with catching fish or the owners of boats. An undetermined number of people are active, either full or part time in processing or drying fish and shrimp to make, among other things, the *trasi* (a pungent condiment), for which Puger is well known.

At its mouth the river Bedadung becomes quite broad, aided by the fact that at this point the rivers Besini and Kapuran, which flow together a short distance away, also empty into it. Because of the angle at which these two waters come together, a comparatively calm bay is created with a relatively narrow opening to the Indian Ocean, protected on the western side from the ocean's onslaught by a narrow peninsula (see map). Opposite this, the eastern edge of the opening is the steep slope of Mt. Watangan. The opening is called the *pelawangan* (lit. gate keeper) and it is this point that forms one of the foci of the relationship between the people of Puger and Nyai Roro Kidul.

The width of the gate varies with the tides. During flood tide this is about 15 meters while at ebb tide the effective width is reduced to 7 meters, with the deepest channel right near Mt. Watangan (Soetikno 1990:1).

Aside from the narrowness of the passage, there is a further problem. Along the eastern edge of the gate, between 15 and 8 meters from the mountain wall, lie nine large rocks, some individually named; the first (counting from the Indian Ocean) is the Watu Lumbung, the second the Watu Rasul and the third the Watu Mandi, the bathing rock. The distance between these rocks varies from 20 meters between the first and the second to a couple of meters between the others, with the exception of number 9, which lies about 55 meters from number 8. These rocks form a considerable navigational hazard to fishing boats coming home to port, particularly at times of low water.

The season in which the fishers can expect good catches (*musim ikan*) comes between July and October, which is also the dry season in the Puger area (Van der Stok 1897:charts) and this, according to informants, is both when the river's water is at its lowest and thus when the channel is at its narrowest, and the season in which big waves occur. These latter are not continuous, however. There may be days on end when the waves are high, up to several meters, they say, and then a week or so of calm weather, followed again by large waves.

The fishermen cannot predict, therefore, when it will or will not be safe to leave port; they might sail when the sea is calm and catch a lot of fish and on returning find that the wave action has suddenly picked up. They could, of course, stay out and ride it out, but since they have no refrigeration on board, their catch would certainly spoil. And thus they head in, taking to the deepest channel near Mt. Watangan and risk hitting the rocks. If this happens, they jump overboard and are carried by the current. Should this current be going inland, they end up in the bay and are safe. Should, on the other hand, the current be out, there is a heavy suction from the ocean and they are carried away, often never to be seen again. It is no wonder that the rocks are called

watu mayit (corpse rocks) and the gate is known as *pelawang maut* (the gate of death) (Tim Liberty 1992c:16; Fury Afrianto 1990:31).⁽⁹⁾

Reliable figures are difficult to come by, but accidents and deaths are regular occurrences. Local authorities gave me the following figures : 1986 - 17 dead, 1987 - 37, 1988 - 30, 1989 - 29 and 1990 - 13 dead (to August 5th). Others claimed 32 dead in 1987 and 29 in 1988 (Fury Afrianto 1990:33) and a local newspaper reported that 10 people died between August and October 1992 (*Surya* 1992b:9). The worst months, according to local information, are July and August, which are also the months of least rain and thus lowest water in the rivers (Van der Stok 1897:charts).

Clearly, going out to sea brings significant hazards from which the fishermen need protection and which need an explanation. While people in Puger are aware of some of the tales about Nyai Roro Kidul mentioned above, and some even referred to the story of her liaison with Panembahan Senapati, their explanations of local events tended to involve the spirit world encompassed by the local area of Puger and its relation to the Spirit Queen. One young man in Puger told me that he thought that the beliefs about Nyai Roro Kidul had originated in Puger, because, he claimed, this area receives, comparatively, the largest waves in East Java.

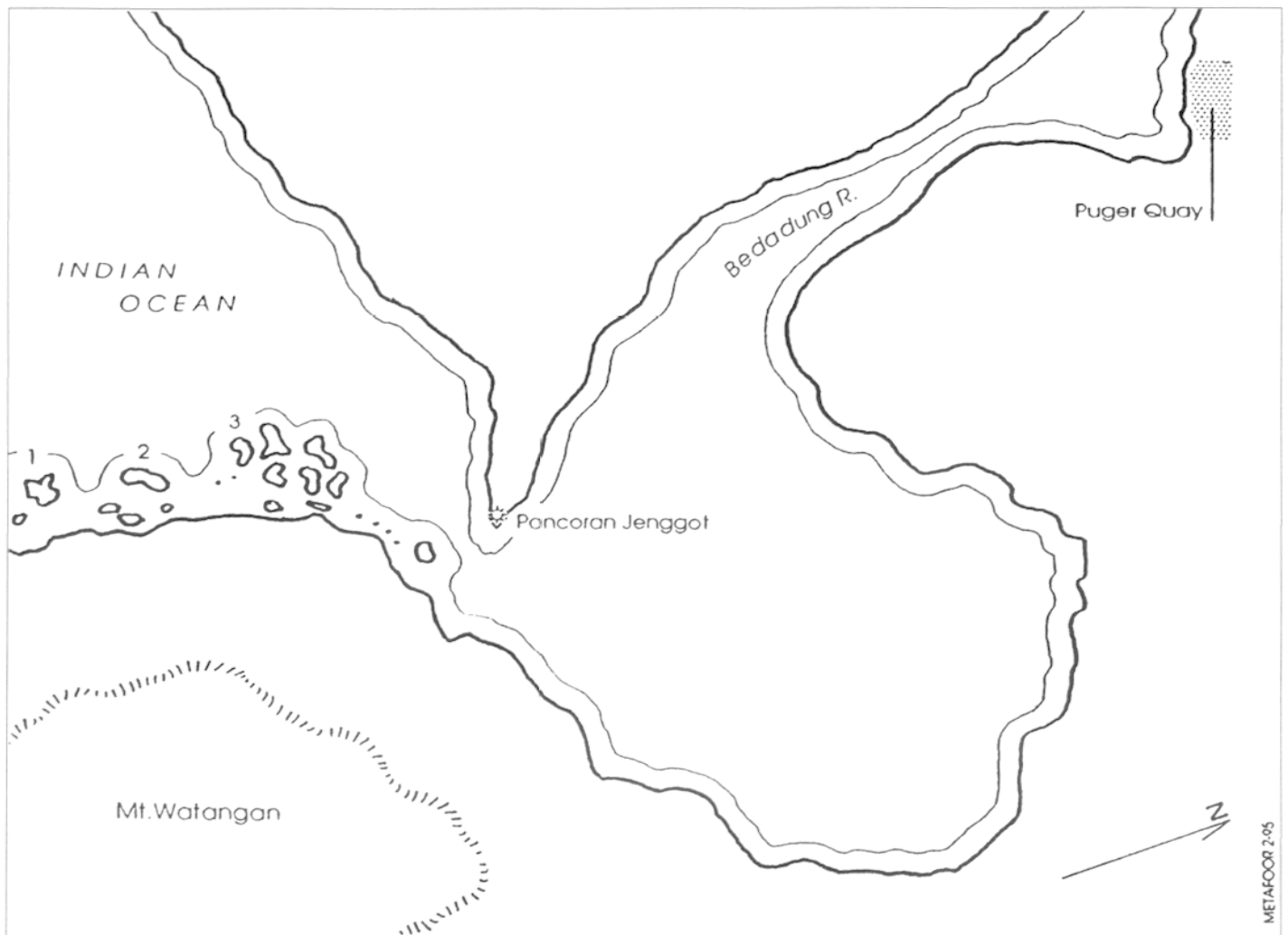
The Queen, the Pelawangan and the Spirit Guards

Nyai Roro Kidul, then, is thought to be the ruler of all the spirits on Java, especially the ones along the southern coast. Some special ones among these have a permanent location along the coast, while others are her palace servants, warriors and the like. In addition to those taken at sea, people in Puger are often possessed by Nyai Roro Kidul and some who work in her palace do not go there in body, but only in spirit. There they cut grass, herd cattle and the like.

One occasionally hears tales of women being taken, even invited, to join the courtiers in her underwater Palace; according to local lore she wants a virgin each year. Primarily, however, she takes young men, whom she is said to marry, one after the other. Should the victim already have a family ashore, his body is returned to wash up on the beach. The bodies of single men are never found again; they were invited to come and play in the palace.

As was mentioned, she does not like people to wear green along the beach, as this is her favorite color, worn by her warriors, and she is likely to take an offender in anger (*Intisari* 1991:129). She also does not just take any kind of man, but prefers young, good-looking ones for her prospective husbands (Sentot Js. 1992:15). Their personality seems to matter less, however. Local

9. It has been suggested, among others by the *Bupati* (regent) of Jember (*Surya* 1991a:9) that this hazard might be removed by, for instance, exploding the rocks. A study to this end was made by the Indonesian navy in 1990, but while a detailed report, including cost estimates up to Rp. 15.000.000 (ca. US \$ 7.500.-) exists, nothing had been done about it by the time I left East Java in 1993. Objections to this project included environmental concerns as well as the idea that if the rocks were removed the boats would only run into Mt. Watangan instead. Local people further objected that these rocks belong to Nyai Roro Kidul's servants and to disturb them would be to invite disaster (cf. Soetikno 1990:2-3, 5).



The Mouth of the Bedadung River and the Pelawangan

informants claim that those taken at sea tend to be over-confident and careless. *Intisari* (1991:129) calls them hotheads (*kemendèl*) and those pretending to be superior (*sok jagoan*), even screaming to Nyai Roro Kidul to show herself.⁽¹⁰⁾ Inside, adds *Surya* (1992a:8), they are empty and reckless.

Even though they have gone to the Queen's palace, the victims are not necessarily dead. Panembahan Senapati, it must be remembered, spent three days and nights there before returning to found his kingdom. Those who now live in the palace may be contacted in a trance, while unconscious (*semaput*) or in a fever.

Another reason she demands these victims is as a sacrifice (*tumbal*) in return for the abundant harvest of fish that she allows to be caught. She

10. Such behavior, said to especially occur among young men, is felt to be quite improper in Javanese culture, which demands respectful behavior from the young. In acting "un-Javanese" therefore, these young men somehow stand outside, beyond the protection of society and are thus liable to punishment by the spirit world (cf. Wessing, 1995).

determines as many victims as she wants and until she has taken her fill, usually somewhere around 25 lives, there will not be large catches. The victims, then, can be seen to serve the dual functions of sexual partners as well as payment for the wealth she provides.

To summarize, Nyai Roro Kidul is commonly thought to take lives, especially of young men, as a sacrifice in return for the abundance she provides from her realm. These young men serve in her palace as either lovers or soldiers, or perhaps both.

These are not the only ideas about her current in Puger, however. She is the ruler of the ocean and protectress of the villagers. She is a mother and we are her children, who honor her, they say. Sentot Js (1992:17) similarly reports that not all agree with the picture of her as a harvester of sexual partners and he claims that Nyai Roro Kidul is not an evil being. Perhaps, he continues, those who take the young men are devils or her servants, but not Nyai Roro Kidul, because she is not cruel. She brings wealth, Sentot's informants said, but for this she demands a sacrifice which may consist of an offering or, if this is not forthcoming, a human life.

This idea of protection agrees with her own presentation of herself as the patroness of the sea (Olthof 1987:80), which was beautifully depicted in a painting I saw in a restaurant in Probolinggo, in East Java. In this picture, in which she was dressed in green with half her body above water, she towered over a three-mast ship that lay in the protection of the crook of her right arm while her left arm was stretched out, holding off a storm. One possible conclusion, therefore, is that she is indeed seen not as evil but as beneficent, if one obeys her rules. Those taken at sea were perhaps bad sailors who with their reckless behavior endangered the lives of their ship-mates.

Local Guardians

We must now turn our attention to the spirits along the coast and in Puger that are ruled by Nyai Roro Kidul. Among these we must differentiate between spirits belonging to Puger proper, i.e. those of the founder and his companions, who here do not have a direct connection with the Spirit Queen, and those that stand in an immediate relationship to her.

Village Spirits

First of all, the southern coast is not an undifferentiated whole. Rather, it is divided up among different spirits that each have their own territory. The area around Ambulu, to the east of Puger, is thought to belong to the spirit Sri Tanjung, who originally came from Banyuwangi, further to the east.⁽¹¹⁾ To the west, Puger's borders are guarded by Joko Tamu (or Embah Jaduk), who lies

11. Sri Tanjung, according to informants, was the wife of the *Patih* (chief minister) of the kingdom of Banyuwangi. The king of Banyuwangi desired her and sent her husband away on a mission. When the *Patih* came back, the king told how Sri Tanjung had tempted him which she denied. The *Patih* took her into the forest near a river and persisted in the accusations. Finally she told him to kill her. If her blood stank this would be evidence of her guilt but if it were fragrant, it would prove her innocence. The *Patih* killed her and threw her body into the river, giving the

buried at Mojosari. Even further west, at Ngliyep, the coast is guarded by Kanjeng Ratu Mas who always wears purple and is said to be Nyai Roro Kidul's right hand (Ayiek Syarifuddin and Fery Afrianto 1992:40). Finally, the offshore island of Nusa Barongan is the territory of the spirit of a dragon (Surya 1991b:8).⁽¹²⁾

Pembabat, Dhanyang and Dhemit

Before introducing the various local spirits, three general types must be pointed out. It is generally believed on Java that before the arrival of people, the whole island was populated by spirits. With the coming of humans and their settlements some of these spirits are said to have been asked to move elsewhere, both to the mountains and to the south coast. With other spirits, the incoming human communities forged an alliance, usually through the agency of the founder (*pembabat*) of the community, the one who first opened the forest in an area.⁽¹³⁾ The spirit with whom the alliance was entered into was the tutelary spirit or owner of the territory brought into the human domain. This spirit, in cooperation with the spirit of the founder, is thought to protect the community from natural disasters and to maintain the fertility and thus the prosperity of the human group as well as safeguarding the spirit world beyond the community from unwarranted intrusions by humans. On the village level this spirit is called *dhanyang* while on a higher, state level it is called *dhemit*. *Dhanyang* have relationships with village founders and the succeeding village heads while *dhemit* have similar relations with the founders of states and the ruling dynasty that follows them. From the foregoing discussion, then, Nyai Roro Kidul would be classified as a *dhemit*, as is indicated by her relationship with the rulers of Java.

The spirit of the founder of a village also plays a crucial role, in cooperation with the *dhanyang*, in the future welfare of the community. Often indeed the spirit of the founder merges with the *dhanyang* into a *dhanyang-luluhur*, the ancestral *dhanyang*. The founder's spirit is responsible for the maintenance of custom (*adat*), these days including a proper adherence to the tenets of the dominant religion, Islam, as a village can only prosper, both materially and spiritually, through a faithful observance of ancestral rules. In order to keep these spirits well disposed toward the villagers, offerings were traditionally made at the location where these spirits were thought to reside, a spot indicated by an offering stone (*punden*). These days, under pressure of Islamic teaching, these offerings have been abandoned or are made less obviously (cf. Wessing:in preparation) All three then, *pembabat*, *dhanyang*,

water a sweet scent, which lent its name to the river, Banyuwangi (fragrant water). Her soul became a tutelary spirit of that area (cf. Priyono 1938). For a rather different myth about the origin of this name, see Clifford (1931).

12. Nusa Barongan is also where most of the spirits of the whole area seem to have moved after electric lights were installed in the villages and the whole of East Java became too *ramai* (lively) for the spirit's tastes (cf. Wessing, 1995).

13. This definition of the *dhanyang* as a nature spirit is the usual one given in the literature which, since the point is not crucial, I will follow here. There are, however, reasons for doubting this characterization that will be discussed further elsewhere (Wessing in preparation).

and *dhemit* protect and watch over their respective territories and assure the continued welfare of the inhabitants.

Embah Tanjung and Kapten Srampon

In the area between Sri Tanjung and Joko Tamu, the area of Puger proper, a number of spirits are found that have a direct relationship to the existence of the village. The primary one is called Embah Tanjung, the founder (*pembabat*) of Puger.

Most refer to him as a man who is locally counted among the *wali* (holymen) who brought Islam to Java and was there before the *Wali Songo*, the nine holymen traditionally credited with converting Java to Islam. It is said that he was either a man of Mandar or Buginese extraction, a ruler (*raja*) from Blambangan in the east or that he came from Surakarta, on the run from the Dutch whom he opposed before Prince Diponegoro did so.⁽¹⁴⁾

His grave used to be located on Mt. Watangan, along with that of his wife, Dewi Sadih. For the convenience of the many pilgrims who come there seeking his spirit's blessing for health and wealth, it was said, they were moved to a more accessible location in the Watangan forest. As founder of Puger, his spirit is dominant among the ones said to reside there and, like founders of villages elsewhere on Java, he is thought to guard the environs of his village, here Mt. Watangan and all of Puger, and to protect those who live in the village that he founded, as long as they obey the customary rules.

When founding Puger, Embah Tanjung had several companions, one of whom was called Kapten Srampon. This Kapten was reportedly caught by the Dutch and tortured. Even though the Dutch wanted him dead, the tale goes, they could not kill him. Finally, tiring of all this, Kapten Srampon told his captors to cut him into three pieces and bury these quite far from each other, otherwise he would come alive again. This they did; his head lies buried in Jakarta, his body in Puger and his legs in Mojosari.⁽¹⁵⁾ It is sometimes said that his spirit now guards the *pelawangan* from one of the rocks.

14. He died while leaning on a *tanjung* tree (*Mimusops elengi*), which is why he is now known as Embah Tanjung. Important figures are often known by the place where they are buried or by some special circumstance surrounding their death. There is some confusion about the identity of this person, who is variously also known as Senapati Pangeran Puger, Suryonoto, Hadisuryo, and Sayid Al-Hinduan. Of these, Pangeran Puger was a historical personage who, contrary to the wishes of the V.O.C., the Dutch East Indies trading company, was made Susuhunan of Mataram in 1677. This caused a conflict with the Dutch that was not resolved until 1681 (Stapel 1930:114-116), probably giving rise to the current tale that the founder of Puger was on the run from the Dutch. It is, however, not clear that Pangeran Puger was the founder of Puger, as his grave does not lie near Mt. Watangan. It is likely that various persons are collapsed into one in this folk-history. Others say that King Tawang Alun of Blambangan at the very eastern tip of Java meditated (*bertapa*) on Mt. Watangan, accompanied by a woman, Sekar Tanjung, who in this tale is the same person as Embah Tanjung. This could, of course, also refer to the Sri Tanjung figure mentioned above. The connection with the Tanjung tree mentioned above is further interesting because, as De Casparis (1956:304, n. 94) points out, in Old Javanese literature this tree is connected with temple sites and royal courtyards and is considered as "the place where God would descend when coming to earth, using it both as a ladder and as a *payung* [parasol] (1956:304, 324).

15. These themes of the hero who could not die and had to advise his captors on how to kill him and the hero who had to be cut up are common themes in Indonesian mythology (cf. Wessing 1988a:161-163; 1988b:50).

It is possible, however, that Embah Tanjung and Kapten Srampon were the same person. Like the Kapten, Embah Tanjung is sometimes said to guard one of the rocks in the *pelawangan*, and the identical tale of the butchery of his body is told of Embah Tanjung, except that the enemy was Adipati Ronggo Jali.

Embah Demang

Another companion was Embah Demang, a Madurese from Sumenep whose function was to prepare offerings for Embah Tanjung. The Javanese word *demang* means secondary official or district-head, something like a *camat* today. He was therefore probably a lesser member of Embah Tanjung's court, perhaps in charge of ritual matters. Offerings are brought to him every *Senin/Manis* and *Kamis/Manis*.⁽¹⁶⁾ A person having bad dreams should bring an offering to him and recite certain Koranic verses while looking three times to the left and right and spitting. He used to have a *punden* (offering stone) but this was destroyed during the political troubles of 1965.

Pancoran Jenggol

The above two or three spirits are what might be called the "village spirits" of Puger. The other ones frequently mentioned relate especially to the *pelawangan*. Of these Pancoran Jenggol is an interesting case, because he is listed as an associate of Embah Tanjung who stood watch on the coast against attacks by the Dutch. Because his grave is underneath the water, near the *pelawangan*, he is known as the man in the sea (*lelaki dalam laut*). His spirit guards the gate from a position on the peninsula opposite the rocks. Because of his guardian position on the land and his otherwise ill-defined relationship with Embah Tanjung, this figure may well be the local *dhanyang*, although he was not indicated as such by local informants, who did not mention the *dhanyang* as such at all.

Embah Jirin and Embah Jiem and Srigati

The guardian (*penunggu*) of the Watu Lumbung is Embah Jirin, who is venerated by the people. He was able to walk on water and could calm the waters when it stormed. He died near the *pelawangan* and now guards it from his rock.

His wife was Embah Jiem, who also had supernatural powers (*sakti*). Her name is probably a form of the word *jin* (genie), which in current Javanese usage indicates spirits in general. Her location is not clear.

The rock Watu Rasul is the seat of Srigati, the spirit of a person with great supernatural powers, who now waits on Nyai Roro Kidul with great devotion.

16. The Javanese know several kinds of 'weeks,' one of which corresponds to the western seven day one (*Minggu*, Sunday; *Senin*, Monday; *Selasa*, Tuesday; *Rabu*, Wednesday; *Kamis*, Thursday; *Jumat*, Friday; *Sabtu*, Saturday) and another one that has five days: *Pon*, *Wage*, *Kliwon*, *Manis* and *Pahing*. Both types of days have numerical values and are cosmologically charged in different ways. Combinations of them are used in fortune telling and to determine ritually auspicious days.

According to Van Iperen (1825), Srigati is the hero-son of Dewa Vishnu from a marriage with the beautiful human maiden Putri Midang from the court of Watu Gunung, the first ruler of Java. The Watu Rasul is also the rock that is the focus of many offerings and ceremonial meals (*selamatan*; Jav. *rasul*; Mad. *rasol*) because it seems to create most problems.

Telenges

Telenges (also Celenges) is a member of the Spirit Queen's entourage, who resides on the rock Watu Mandi. The Javanese word *teleng* means the deepest point of, for example, a lake or the sea (Pigeaud n.d.:560), and thus the name seems to point to the dangerous channel that the fishermen must use when they come in. She was a person who became *murca* (possessed) and whose body disappeared. Her spirit may still sometimes be seen on the shore, in the form of an old woman, walking with a cane. Contrary to when she was alive and used to cure people, Telenges is not a helpful spirit, but a rather ambivalent *lelembut*. One should be polite to her or she will become angry and curse one. In Puger it is told that Telenges, Embah Jirin, like Nyai Roro Kidul, wanted to live forever which is the reason they became spirits. Note that Embah Jirin, Srigati, Telenges, as well as Pancoran Jenggut and the *dhanyang-leluhur* mentioned above, are all spoken off as having been living people of some renown even though they now function in the realm of the spirits. This phenomenon, in which the spirits of people turn into nature spirits instead of ancestors is not unknown elsewhere in Southeast Asia (cf. Heine-Geldern 1917:26) and may be accounted for by the fact that the two categories are in some way related to each other, on Java through Semar (C. Geertz 1960:23; cf. Schefold 1989).

If we combine the figures of Embah Tanjung and the Kapten and place them on the mountain, where they properly should be, along with Embah Demang, the primary guardians of the *pelawangan* are Embah Jirin, Srigati, and Telenges on the east side, and Pancoran Jenggut in the water and on the peninsula opposite. These, according to a local curer (*dukun*) are the only spirits to have any direct connection with Nyai Roro Kidul. The others, such as Embah Demang and the Kapten are part of the local spirit population and have their own functions, such as bringing cures and watching over the general welfare, and are, of course, always remembered when offerings are brought to the spirits.

When necessary these primary guardians are aided by Nyai Roro Kidul's legions, because, according to local belief, the *pelawang* is the gateway to the realm of the Southern Ocean. There are some, Fury (1990:33) reports, who have seen the cluster of rocks suddenly change into a large gate, guarded by many soldiers.

The *Pelawangan* must therefore be seen as the interface between the community of Puger, successor to Embah Tanjung's domain, and the realm of Nyai Roro Kidul. Both sides supply spirit guardians to watch over this boundary because, looked at from another perspective, the *pelawangan* is also the gate to Puger, and thus properly guarded by the spirits of the founder's companions. This may be the reason why Embah Tanjung and the Kapten are

sometimes said to be at the rocks as well; as founders they have the duty of guarding the vital access to the village, while as spirits all of them fall under the rule of Nyai Roro Kidul as well.

These spirit guardians receive frequent homage in the form of offerings that are brought to Embah Demang every *Senin/Manis* and *Kamis/Manis*. This may not be forgotten because spirits generally, and perhaps especially boundary guardians, tend to be very touchy about being paid the proper respect. Nyai Roro Kidul and her followers are honored once a year during *Sura*, the first month of the Javanese year.

Nabi Khidir and Nabi Ilyâs

The two domains of land and sea are also spoken of as divided between two Muslim saints, Nabi *Khidir* and Nabi Ilyâs (or Ilias). Nabi *Khidir*, who originated in the Middle East is said to be green, Nyai Roro Kidul's favorite color, a condition he attained after bathing in the spring of eternal life. He lives on an island and may originally have been a marine entity. He is referred to as the patron of sailors and may be appealed to during storms (Wensinck 1978:905). He is also called God's representative on the sea and his *wakil* (deputy) on the dry land, who protects people from theft, drowning, fire, snakes, scorpions, kings and devils (Hooykaas 1937:183), some of which we saw earlier as functions performed by Nyai Roro Kidul.

In his search for the spring of eternal life, Nabi *Khidir* is said to have been accompanied, among others, by Alexander the Great and by Elijah, the latter also being known as Ilyâs (Wensinck 1978:904), who also became immortal (Hooykaas 1937:182). The two are also said to be brothers (Borotov 1986:5) and may even be the same person (Wensinck 1978:904). In any case, they share many attributes, such as responsibility for fertility and abundance and the care for those who are in danger on the sea (Borotov 1986:5).

Tradition holds that the tasks of caring for the land and the sea were divided among them; Ilyas was to be the guardian spirit of the sea and *Khidir* of the land, but these positions are usually reversed (Borotov 1986:5); in Java Nabi Ilias, the ruler of the forests, was traditionally asked for permission to make a clearing in the forest for a new settlement by the founder (Boeke 1937:806) while Nabi *Khidir* is the ruler of the sea. In Puger therefore, Nabi Ilyâs and Embah Tanjung form a natural combination, while both Nabi *Khidir* and Nyai Roro Kidul (as well as the spirits on the rocks) are entities who originated on the dry land, he as its protective spirit and she as a princess of a kingdom, who were then transformed into guardian spirits of the sea.

Aside from their similarity as rulers of the sea, there is also a mythological connection between Nyai Roro Kidul and Nabi *Khidir*, primarily via the Indian version of his myth in which he is a river-god on an island in the river Indus (Hooykaas 1937:182). Nabi *Khidir* married the daughter of Batara Gangga (the Lord of the Ganges) and this union produces the Putri Jungjung Buih, who is one incarnation of the Spirit Queen (Jordaan and De Josselin de Jong 1985:285).

In the spirit-geography of Puger, when Nabi *Khidir* and Nabi Ilyas are not mentioned, Nyai Roro Kidul is depicted as being in all of the sea as well as on

the whole of the southern shore. The central position is then taken by her spirits that guard the shore and the *pelawangan*. When the *nabi* are mentioned, *Khidir* controls all of the sea and Ilyâs the land, while Nyai Roro Kidul is portrayed in the central position, between the sea and the shore. In this case, according to one informant, she is located at the first three rocks in the *pelawangan*, and thus she is subsumed among the spirits that she rules, both those of the sea and of the land.

Women and Spirits

At this point we must shift our focus from the concerns of sailors at sea to life in the community, because, as ruler of the spirits of the land, Nyai Roro Kidul influences affairs there as well. In this part of the discussion, two things must be kept in mind : first, that Nyai Roro Kidul is a spirit and that spirits are somehow related to people and second, that this Spirit Queen is a woman. For this reason we must briefly look at the role of women in the development of the human spirit on Java. These are obviously very broad topics that can only be touched upon here and are being developed in greater detail elsewhere (Wessing in preparation).⁽¹⁷⁾

To begin with, we may discern two categories of spirits on Java : nature spirits and human ones, the latter category subsuming two sub-categories, namely ancestors and living people. The two major categories are in some way related to each other. While these days people are said to have souls (*ruh*, *jiwa*, *sukma*, etc.), the relation of the Javanese to the spirit world in fact becomes much clearer if we understand people to be just another category of spirits, those inhabiting bodies. The source of this human spirit for each individual is the person's mother. From her flow the person's inner qualities (*batin*) that are the essence of the spirit. These, however, do not originate with her, but flow through her from the ancestors, especially those in the female line. It is only when we keep the above in mind that we can understand the informants' statements that follow.

The home, as has been discussed before (i.e. Wessing 1978:53-63), has two aspects, namely a male, outer one and a female, inner one. Within the home it is generally the wife or mother who has the dominant spiritual influence, while outside it the men commonly have a primary voice in political and public matters. It is in fact the woman who is seen as primarily responsible for the proper upbringing of the children, ensuring that they know the ancestral customs (*adat*) on which the welfare of the community is based (H. Geertz 1961:105-107). In seeking wives for one's sons one looks at the mother of the prospective bride, to see how she maintains the traditions, including, from a man's point of view, whether she is devoted (*berbakti*) to her husband. Thus

17. It should be pointed out here that these data were collected from male informants and that a female point of view, to which I did not have access, might well be quite different. It should also be noted that some of the data to be presented in this section did not come from the general 'man in the street'. Rather, they were obtained from some of the more spiritual leaders of the community who serve as reference points for the larger population.

Gow (1992:1) writes about Nyai Roro Kidul that she is depicted as the stereotype of the traditional woman, dedicated to her husband.

Nyai or *nyi*, observed one of my informants, can indicate both a married woman and a *penguasa* (holder of power). The Javanese conception of married women is as a symbol of fertility through their *wadah* or *rahim* (womb). The woman is the *konco wingking*, the friend at the rear, innermost part of the house. She is the one who cools one's frustrations but also the one who holds the purse strings and pressures one for money.⁽¹⁸⁾ She may at the same time be *lemah lembut* (graceful, kindhearted) and *murko duroko* (angry, selfish and sinful), the cause of the breakup of the home⁽¹⁹⁾, especially when she is unfaithful.

This ambivalent view of women, who, according to both male and female informants, are moreover often seen as sexually much more passionate (*bernafsu*) than men (H. Geertz 1961:119)⁽²⁰⁾, corresponds closely with the picture of Nyai Roro Kidul as a good woman who is the source of fertility but at the same time represents danger, both physical and sexual (cf. Jordaan 1984:104). Given that the women shape the spirits of the children, these are important considerations.

Nyai Roro Kidul symbolizes the human being, said an informant, in that she reflects the person's physical desires. The human being consists of three things; the body or self, life and sustenance, and awareness or intelligence, which he called *Nur Ilahi*, the ray of godliness. If these three are in balance, the person's life will be harmonious and the search for life and sustenance (i.e. the relationship with Nyai Roro Kidul) will be *selamat* (blessed).

If, however, one seeks prosperity without reference to *Nur Ilahi* or to the self, the body will be destroyed. This, he went on, is what is meant by Nyai Roro Kidul's anger and greed. Without *Nur* people are not aware of their limitations so that they become arrogant and get into accidents at the *pelawangan* and at sea. This is where the danger lies.

Given that the woman is seen as shaping the human spirit, including its awareness of the spiritual, i.e. *Nur Ilahi* in the Islamic context or more generally *kesakten* (cosmic power), her position is of considerable importance. She represents the link between the world and the supernatural (*manunggaling duno*), said the first informant. She is the fount of cosmic power because there is much of *alam sakti* (supernatural realm) within her.

Nyai Roro Kidul is seen as located between the (physical world) *bawono lahiriah*, the *bawono lenggeng* (realm of the gods) and the *bawono rohaniyah* (the place of the ancestral spirits). She is the boundary, which is why she is located on the border, at the *pelawangan*, the meeting point between the river

18. Keeler (1987:53) notes that the husband's failure to keep money coming into the family coffers is the most common reason for divorce on Java.

19. This is reminiscent of the tales in which the princess who is to become Nyai Roro Kidul is forced to leave the palace owing to a woman's machinations.

20. For a similar perception of women in Thailand, see Terwiel (1994:18) : "...those [spirits] who had a great amount of greed in matters of sensual craving changed into women, while those who had a lesser amount of greed in sexual matters became men..."

Bedadung and the Indian Ocean. She stands between the sea and the land, between Nabi Khidir and Nabi Ilyas, and this is, of course, precisely the source of her ambiguity.

Acts of Assuagement

This ambiguity, which lies at the very heart of human life in Puger, cannot be resolved. Attempts are made, however, to alleviate it at least temporarily. Sailors seek protection from amulets made for them by local *kyai* (person learned in Islam). These might consist of green bells containing yellow kernels of maize and green or yellow flags that, properly prayed over, offer protection against large waves.⁽²¹⁾ Offerings are furthermore made, both to the spirits at the rocks and to the protector of Puger, Embah Tanjung.

It is recognized that Nyai Roro Kidul must be recompensed for the bounty the sea provides and that this is the reason that she takes human lives. How many she will demand is uncertain, but it is hoped that the number can perhaps be limited by offering her a public sacrifice in a ceremony called *selamatan pancer* (a feast of thanksgiving and an exorcism of the beach), held during the month *Sura*. It would take us too far afield to describe this ceremony fully here, but it must be noted that *Sura*, as the first month of the Javanese year, is a liminal period which according to Tim Liberty (1992a:15), has an aura of sacredness to the Javanese. It is a month full of challenges and people believe that during this month more accidents, evil, and disasters happen than at other times. It is also the month during which amulets must be cared for and bathed (Bamar Eska n.d.:181-182).⁽²²⁾

The ceremony centers around the launching (*labuhan*)⁽²³⁾ of a model fisher's boat, laden with offerings symbolizing various aspects of the life in Puger. Two of these, a red umbrella and king's bananas (*pisang raja*; a form of *Musa paradisiaca*) refer to Nyai Roro Kidul and her royal status. Two others, consisting of various fruits of the earth, indicate fertility and the agricultural aspect of life in Puger. A further four, black coffee, betel leaf and its accompaniments (*sirih*), ritual flowers (*kembang telon*) and sweets are the gifts usually given to spirits invited to ritual events.

A next category deals with Islam and consists of porridge (*jenang*) in five colors : red, to indicate the soul, black as a symbol of light (*nuriyah*), white refers to the light of the Prophet (*Nur Muhammad*), green to the Prophet's authority (*Wahyu Nabi*), and yellow indicates guidance or leadership (*Nur Mahdi*), placing these proceedings centrally under the banner of Islam.

21. It is not allowed, on the other hand, to bring a life-vest aboard the boat, as this would be a prediction of disaster. Other prohibitions include bringing a rice-cooking pot aboard which would bring on large waves. Eating fish while at sea causes the catch to be small.

22. This is also done during *muludan*, the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth and death day (cf. Wessing 1978:98).

23. Pigeaud (n.d.:225) links *labuh* with offerings, i.e. on a mountain or in the water, but further on also glosses it with the start of the rainy season (Sept-Oct), a time of beginnings, i.e. a liminal time. Since most of the accidents seem to occur as a result of low water during the dry season, the *labuhan* ceremony may also be a plea for rain.

The fifth and last category refers to people : a goat's or buffalo's head and its blood as a substitute for the lives the Queen takes at sea; two dolls made of dough (*golekan*) representing a bride and groom, for the virgins and young men she desires; *kupat lepet*, rice cooked in leaves, symbolic of joy and sorrow; *kelapa gading*, a kind of coconut, representing the body and the soul; a red and white flag as well as red and white porridge, indicating femaleness and maleness (blood and semen); a live, white chicken and a black, roasted one, signifying life itself and the sacrifice of it in the offering; and finally *damar kambang* (incense) symbolizing the spiritual tie to the ancestors. Note that almost all the items in this final category refer to either sexual duality (male and female) or to the duality of the body and the soul.

The launching of the model boat is preceded by an all-night *wayang* (shadow puppet) presentation⁽²⁴⁾ in the *balai desa* (village hall) as well as, for the younger people, a *gandrung* dance performance, featuring beautiful, nubile but (at least in theory) virginal dancers (Scholte 1927). During this time the laden model boat stands at the rear of the *balai desa*, surrounded by model houses into which the next day food offerings brought by the general populace are placed. These are decorated with symbols of domesticity and the ancestors, the latter in the form of a tiger.

At first light, a second, special *wayang* using the story (*lakon*) Murkawala is presented, to *ruwat* (exorcise) evil and disorder from the village. After this, the model boat and the structures filled with food are carried around the village, preceded by the *gandrung* dancers, likely symbolic of fertility, and accompanied by village officials and the general public. A stop is made at the *kecamatan* (district) office where the district head makes a speech, invoking such national symbols as development and national unity (*Panca Sila*), placing these events symbolically in a national context. After this the model boat is brought aboard one of the fishing boats of Puger's fleet and a prayer is said by one of the ritual specialists, in which God, the earth, sky, Adam and Eve are addressed and offered the fruits in the boat, begging their aid in securing protection from all evil for the people of Puger.⁽²⁵⁾ This boat, followed by a large part of the fleet, then sails to the peninsula at the *pelawangan*, the location of Pancoran Jenggut. Here the offerings are landed, more prayers are said, and the dancers dance in the possible presence of the village *dhanyang* until the model boat is brought back aboard the fishing boat which then sails through the

24. I use the word presentation rather than the more commonly used performance or play (cf. Keeler 1987:3; Ulbricht 1970:xv) because *wayang* is a making *present*, an actualization of events that, from another point of view, did not necessarily occur at the same time or in the present. I am indebted here to a long-ago conversation with Dr. John Emigh of Brown University. See also Becker 1979:223-224.

25. *Dumatheng bumi pertiwi, bopo koso, ibu pertiwi, bopo Adam ibu Hawa, sampun kaget gingsir kulo asum pasugatan ngaturi kasumerapan segul suko prawito saringe dupo, monggo.*

Ageng ingkang kulo suwun kedhik ingkang kulo athuraken milo kulo ngaturi kasumerapan dathang panjenengan sedaya, kulo suwun sawipipun lan dayanipun mugi sageto ingkang sedaya kawilujenganipun sedaya rakyat Puger Kulon ingkang dathos wewengkonipun Bapak Imam Djoeremi ingkang wonten pertanian soho ingkang wonten nelayan sedaya sageto angsal pangayomanipun Gusti ingkang Maha Agung sampun ngantos wonten balak sengkala ingkang tumomo.

pelawangan out to sea. Here, about 150 meters out, the offerings are launched, after which the fishing boat returns to port and the ceremony is over.

Conclusion

In Puger, as we have seen, Nyai Roro Kidul embodies the various contradictions and vicissitudes of life; in her those aspects of life that are locally most important are highlighted and accounted for. Like any supernatural or Cosmic power, hers is both a positive and a negative force, depending on the context. She is the demure, faithful, loving woman within whom a sexual wanton may hide. She is the source of a great part of the community's livelihood and prosperity, within which lie danger and death. She brings disaster along with abundance, and yet, because she is a protectress as well as a good mother, disaster is visited on those who deserve it; the vain and arrogant (*takabur*), in the words of one informant, who are out of touch with God's light. When one's soul is in balance, he said, in touch with Nur Ilahi, good things come forth from Nyai Roro Kidul. However, when one is out of touch with God, and becomes arrogant, she brings one down (*diterjang*). This is where the danger lies.

The exchange across the *pelawangan* is one of life for life, because for the life she provides in the form of good catches, she demands sacrifices from the community; the lives of fishers and/or an annual offering. Note that the contents of the offering-boat mirror the community of Puger and can be understood to be a model of that community. It contains substitutes for humans in the form of a goat's head and the two dolls while life itself is represented by the live chicken. It furthermore contains symbols of rulers, sociability, religion, the agricultural component of the village, and humanity that taken together and placed in a model fishing boat, form a statement about what and who the people of Puger are. These are paraded around the village and placed in a wider, national context by the speeches made at the *camat*'s office. After this they are carried across the *pelawangan* in a fisher's boat which, as Dominikus Rato (1991) has shown, is itself a model of the larger cosmos of which both Puger and Nyai Roro Kidul are part, and they are offered to the spirit world in the hope that all will be well. But as the Spirit Queen waxes and wanes with the phases of the moon and the cycle of the seasons, discrepancies and chaotic elements reappear in the social fabric of the community that must, in the end, be expelled with another *ruwatan* (exorcism) and another offer (cf. Hubert and Mauss 1981:89, 93).

Sageto kales lir ing Sambikala. Penghasilan ingkan wonten laut, sageto malimpah-limpah lan sadaya nelayan bidal lan wangsulanipun sageto pinaringan rahayu selamat. Selamat sangking kersani Gusti Allah. Kados sampun cekap athur kulo, pilih wonten lepet kula mugi dingampunten langkulonyun gungik pangaksami. Assalamalaikum.

Such offerings are not unknown elsewhere as well. Cf. Hosen Hory (1992); Ahmad Baraas 1992; Schipper n.d.; Kusnadi 1992). As Dr. Roy Jordaan pointed out to me, the word *pasugatan* in this prayer may be an indication that the ceremony is much older than the Islamic era on Java. He linked the word with *sogata* (Buddhist) and *kasogatan* (the Buddhists, Buddhist foundation, monastery) (Zoetmulder 1982, II:1802-1803).

Yet, informants say that the prayers are made to God and that Nyai Roro Kidul is His instrument. The scope of her rule, under God, over both spirits of the land and of the sea, added to the contradictions she embodies, allow her to participate in the power of Islam and give her an extraordinary multi-vocality, which is the source of her power as a mythological figure who cannot be denied, because the myth in which she lives gives expression to the truths of life in Puger.

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