

CLARA BRAKEL

Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, The Netherlands

Sandhang-pangan for the Goddess
Offerings to Sang Hyang Bathari Durga and
Nyai Lara Kidul

Abstract

This article examines the offerings that are regularly presented by the rulers of the court of Surakarta to the Hindu-Javanese goddess Durga and her counterpart, the Queen of the Southern Ocean. It is based on my observations of ritual actions, which are placed in the historical context of Javanese written sources. While the central issue is the remarkable continuity of these cults, the description of the offerings and the manner in which they are presented is intended to help determine the identity of these two spirit queens and explain how they have maintained their relevance for Javanese society.

Keywords: spirit cults—offerings—Durga—Nyai Lara Kidul—exorcism

THE TITLE OF THIS ARTICLE mentions two powerful female spirits who are both feared and worshiped in contemporary Java. The goddess Sang Hyang Bathari Durga, considered to be the female ruler of the spirit world, is still often associated with the former East Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, and dwells in the woods or in cremation grounds in the wild. Nyai Lara Kidul, also called the Queen of the Spirits, dwells in the ocean to the south of Java. The question has been raised as to whether Durga and Nyai Lara Kidul could be regarded as two (northern and southern) manifestations of one and the same “death-goddess” (HEADLEY 1979, 50). While this assumption is based on contemporary Javanese myths that associate both goddesses with human death and disappearance, it seems doubtful that they are in fact considered as one. That they are conceived to be two separate beings is indicated not only by their different names and shapes but also by the fact that they have different domains and are worshiped separately at different times and places.

The elaborate offerings that are regularly presented to these two “rulers of the spirits” by Javanese rulers prove that even in the present time they are highly esteemed in Java. The following investigation of the objects offered and the terms, the manner, and the location in which these offerings are presented may help to shed more light on the concept of “female rulers of the spirit world” and its role in Javanese society.

THE GODDESS DURGA IN JAVA

The goddess Durga, whose name is of Hindu origin, has in the past been depicted in much Hindu-Javanese statuary and temple relief as a beautiful young woman slaying the buffalo demon Maésasura. The corresponding myth has, as far as I know, not been found in written or oral form in Javanese literature (HEADLEY 1979, 56), indicating that the myth was not well known in Java.¹ However, even in South India the image of the goddess killing the buffalo demon does not necessarily depict the goddess Durga, but may represent another goddess with a similar function, i.e., to protect a city from

“darker powers which are more especially connected with death and disease, and whom the Goddess is warding off” (VAN DEN HOEK 1979, 119). Thus it is possible that in Java the image was not directly related to the myth, and that the icon was used in a general fashion to represent a protective goddess or female spirit.

In Java, Durga is considered to be the consort of the supreme Hindu-Javanese deity Bathara Guru, and as such she is addressed with the honorific title of Sang Hyang Bathari. She is primarily associated with dangerous demonic spirits (*buta*, *kala*) who lack a fixed location, and who are called her “followers” or “army” (*bala*). The most terrifying of such spirits is the man-eating demon Kala. According to Hindu concepts the name Kala may be used to refer to Yama, judge of the dead, and also to the god Śiva or Bhairava in his destructive role. In Javanese mythology both Kala and Durga are connected with the anger of Bathara Guru that arose because of his consort’s unwillingness to have sexual intercourse.

At present, Bathari Durga is represented as a fearsome demoness, the changed form of the beautiful goddess Uma (see figure 1). The myth



FIGURE 1. Bathara Durga (left) and Dewi Uma (right) according to wayang iconography (source: HARDJOWIROGO 1968, 26–27)

explaining this change of appearance forms part of the exorcistic shadow-puppet play *Murwaḳala*, which tells the origin of the man-eating demon Kala.² The creation of both Kala and Durga is told during this play in the first of a series of mantra recited after the first dialogue between Kala and the puppeteer (*dhalang*) Kandhabuwana. The mantra tells of the creation of the world “before heaven and earth existed” and explains the origin of Durga as follows:

Then after Sang Hyang Wisésa [the Supreme Being] has vanished, Bathara Guru [the divine Teacher] makes a counterpart, a consort named Déwi Uma. Then he creates all the thirty gods with their spouses. Then the earth is separated from the sky. Hyang Pramèsthi [i.e., Bathara Guru] then appoints the nine deities in order to fix the world, and likewise the mountain Jamurdipa. Then Bathara Guru makes the heaven and all that it contains. Now [when] Sang Hyang Pramèsthi wishes to have sexual intercourse [literally, “investigates his own creation of male and female”] with his spouse Déwi Uma, his sperm drops down without being received. This is why Bathara Kala exists. Hyang Pramèsthi is angry with his wife Déwi Uma, and this is why Bathari Durga is associated with Kala. Then Sang Hyang Guru creates food on earth in Medhang Kamulan. Therefore Bathara Kala goes to Suralaya [heaven] with his wife, children, and army.³ (TANOYO n.d., 36)

The *wayang* puppet of the goddess Durga represents her as a demoness with fangs and a coarse appearance; she is often surrounded by decorative jungle (*alas-alasan*) motifs of plants. She dwells at Sétra Gandamayit, a spooky place in the wild filled with stinking corpses and haunted by blood-thirsty spirits, which are portrayed as malformed, naked creatures of weird appearance. Here she is sometimes invoked by desperate people who feel incapable of achieving their ends in a more ordinary way. The word *sétra* refers to a funerary custom that does not use burial grounds or cremation fields (which probably existed in Hindu-Buddhist times and have nowadays been replaced by Islamic graveyards), but that leaves the corpse in the wild. This might explain why the goddess Durga is associated with the wild jungle and with the disappearance of people in such jungles, either for short times or forever.

Durga’s connection with the woods may have deeper roots, however. There is a place dedicated to her worship (*pepundhèn*) in the formerly sacred woods of Krendhawahana in the vicinity of the village Kalioso, to the north of the court-city of Surakarta, which is her domain (WINTER 1911, 1–2; HARDJOPANDOJO 1941). Its center is formed by a group of ancient “white”

waringin trees, where an elaborate food offering (*sesajèn*) is regularly presented to her by the rulers of Surakarta (HEADLEY 1979).

Again, according to popular belief the goddess Durga may be regarded as a ruler of the local spirits inhabiting the island of Java. This is obvious from a collection of incantations or prayers for well-being (*kidungan*) compiled in Surakarta by Ranggasutrasna and considered to be an heirloom from one of the Javanese proselytizers of Islam, the famous Sunan Kalijaga. One of these incantations, published by TANOYO (1975) and entitled “Dhanghyangan” [Spirits], mentions all the local spirits (*dhanghyang*, *lelembut*, or *dhedhemit*) of the island of Java. The opening verse emphasizes its usefulness as a charm. Starting with the goddess Durga from Majapahit and the mysterious guardian spirit Baureksa as rulers of the spirits (*ratuning dhedhemit*), the spell consists of the names of all the local guardian spirits and the places where they reside, ending with the spirits of the southern coast, which are all related to Nyai Lara Kidul (TANOYO 1975, 8–11).

THE ROYAL SACRIFICIAL OFFERING TO THE GODDESS DURGA

In January 1983 I was invited⁴ to the performance of an ancient ritual offering to the goddess Durga by the court (*kraton*) of Surakarta, a ritual that people referred to as *sesaji maésa lawung* (offering of buffalo and lance).⁵ Although I was told that the ritual had not been performed for a long time, the reason for its resumption that year was not explained. Officials of the Istana Mangkunagaran (the other large palace in the same town) told me that they performed this sacrifice in commemoration of the founding of their palace only once every eight years, and that they did not “join in” this year because they had made the sacrifice the previous year.⁶

The dishes for the *sesaji maésa lawung*, prepared in the royal kitchen under the supervision of the hereditary palace official Ibu Gandarasan and her daughter Ibu Suryo Santono, were mainly based on animal flesh: soups made from geese or chicken in four different colors (white, yellow, red, and black), soup and *saté* of buffalo meat and liver, and fish-soup. Prominent was a large earthenware vessel containing a mixture of buffalo, chicken, and goose-blood mixed with alcohol (*arak*). Although the name of the sacrifice may be explained by one of its main ingredients, a buffalo, my informants in both palaces emphasized that this sacrificial offering must contain all sorts of living creatures—flying, walking, crawling, or swimming—as well as many other ingredients. As this is also stated in Javanese manuscripts describing the sacrifice,⁷ the importance of the sacrificed buffalo must not be exaggerated, the more so as the head of the buffalo did not even form part of the sacrificial offering.⁸

Early the next morning, on Thursday 10 January, the various sacrificial

dishes stood neatly arranged on bamboo racks at the entrance of the Gandarasan kitchen, in shiny metal containers ready to be carried around the corner into the royal court proper. The *maésa lawung* offering prepared in Gandarasan that year consisted of the following items:

- 1) a sunflower bridegroom (*pengantèn kəkung bunga*) in a container with wedding offerings:
 - a leaf-bowl with betel
 - incense (*benzoin*)
 - face powder
 - red and white roses
 - small objects, including a small red-and-white piece of cloth, white thread, two tiny combs, and mirror
- 2) a special tray with additional wedding offerings:
 - two combs of “royal” bananas
 - incense
 - face powder
 - red and white roses
 - round pieces of the *gambir* plant and betel leaves
 - tobacco
 - benzoe*
- 3) snacks bought in the market (*jajan pasar*), such as:
 - bananas
 - cooked turnips
 - peanuts
 - porridge cooked in a leaf, etc.
- 4) cones of (cold) white rice (*tumpeng*) with side-dishes
- 5) two young coconuts decorated for a wedding
- 6) pot with blood of chicken, geese, and buffalo mixed with alcohol (*arak*)
- 7) roasted chickens of white, yellowish, brown-red, and black colors—the feathers and legs are also used
- 8) meat and liver of the buffalo on skewers
- 9) a dish of cooked goose and chicken meat
- 10) carp soup and liver soup
- 11) a pair of rice-flour dolls, male and female (*bekekak*)

When these food-offerings were brought into the first courtyard they were placed in their bronze containers on the floor of one of the two pavilions (Smarakata), on mats spread at the east side of the floor. There they were blessed with Islamic prayers⁹ by an old court priest (*abdidalem Suranata*) seated on the floor next to a senior member of the royal family and facing the

rest of the group. In attendance were a group of male and female court servants seated in lines at respectively the south and the north side of the pavilion. I was told that this group of approximately fifty court servants included delegates from all regions of the kingdom, such as Boyolali, Jatinom, Klatèn, and even faraway Salatiga; they had come as representatives of their areas, dressed in formal batik hipcloths and dark jackets, their heads covered by batik headcloths. Following the Islamic blessings, which lasted approximately fifteen minutes, a procession with a royal umbrella shading the main offerings was arranged outside the pavilion. They then went (by car) to the sanctuary of Durga in the formerly sacred wood of Krendhawahana, north of the town of Solo, the *abdidalem* all packed in a special bus.

Having arrived at the village of Kalioso, the procession of *abdidalem* carrying the offerings (the main food items, still shaded by a royal umbrella) first crossed a small bridge over a stream, then walked in a stately manner to Durga's *pundhèn*, where they were formally received by the village headman. After the member of the royal family acting as the leader of the procession had explained the purpose of this visit to the headman in very formal Javanese, the procession came to a halt on the open space in front of the large banyan tree. This space was covered with mats on which the *abdidalem* sat down in lines facing the tree-sanctuary.

First the sunflower bridegroom was placed in a hollow space at the foot of the large tree, atop a small hill lined with a few terraced steps. The bronze containers with food offerings were placed on a lower step in front of the tree. Incense was burned as a Suranata priest started to recite the solemn opening exclamation "Hong wilahèng," a variant of the well-known Indian mystical vowel *om* that is often used in incantations or (religious) recitations. This was followed by the phrase "Ngawigena tata winanci—mas tuna mas sidem," a derivation of the formula "Awignam astu namas sidem" (let there be no disturbance). Both expressions are of Hindu origin and usually occur at the beginning of ancient Javanese literary works. Each of the following formulaic, repetitive clauses was answered with mumbled responses of "Rahayu" (well-being) by the group of *abdidalem* seated cross-legged on the mats facing the tree-sanctuary. The prayers uttered on this occasion also contained the passage on the origin of Durga that forms part of the exorcistic *Murwakala* play mentioned above (with a few minor variants), ending again with a long extended "Rahayuuuuu."

Then two women sat down next to the pot with burning incense and prayed in silence; others followed. One by one all the *abdidalem* climbed the few steps to the tree and squatted in front of it, apparently mumbling prayers. Next tea and cakes were distributed on trays from a small kitchen built to the side of the sacred spot. One of the leaders of the event, a noble-

man named Muliodiarjo, then commented on the ceremony, which he called *sesaji Rajasurya*, that is, *maésa lawung*. His speech mentioned the young man offered to Durga, as in the story of Sudamala, which is sometimes (or at least used to be) performed for exorcistic purposes (*ruwatan*). Then he referred to the Pandhawa as royal ancestors, and to the more recent anticolonial heroes Susuhunan Paku Buwana VI and Pangéran Dipanagara, both of whom were said to have meditated at this spot in order to receive strength for their (unsuccessful) struggles against the Dutch. In fact, this sacred place is said to have always been popular with people who wanted to make their weapons especially powerful. In this particular ceremony the *pusaka* weapon named Muliadipura, belonging to the heroine R. A. Sumirah, had been brought along; wrapped in a yellow cloth and looking like a sword, it rested against the tree near the *sajèn* (offerings).

When the speech was over, all persons present paid a visit to the sacred spring a bit further down, and to the large flat stone called *séla banguntapa* (enhancing asceticism) where famous heroes (including Paku Buwana VI and Dipanagara) had meditated in the past. After respectfully rubbing the stone, many people also took water from the spring. Then the food of the offerings was distributed and either eaten on the spot or taken home.

THE ROYAL MAÉSA LAWUNG OFFERING IN THE PAST

An earlier description of the *maésa lawung* offering in a manuscript compiled by Kraemer and stored in the library of the Rijksuniversiteit Leiden¹⁰ characterizes the ritual as a “state religious meal” (*wilujengan nagari*) in honor of Sang Hyang Bathari Durga, celebrated on the last Thursday of the Muslim Javanese month Rabingulakir. The prayers are said to be both “Arabic and Buddhist.” The collection of notes contains the following elaborate description of this sacrifice in Kraemer’s own handwriting:¹¹

The *Maesa Lawung* offering takes place on the last Thursday of the month Rabingulakir. On the previous Tuesday the “*kebo lawung*” [the sacrificial buffalo] is slaughtered in the Kapatihan by the butcher(s) (*kalang*). The *kebo lawung* is taken from [the wood named] Krendhawahana. There are three or four *kebo lawung* that are set free when they are still calves, because they may not have been made to work. They are driven into this wood and are stabled at night. Sometimes the calf is brought along with its mother. If it is already separate, its mother is found.

When [the buffalo] has been slaughtered, its blood (its intestines) are cast away at Krendhawahana near a spring. Krendhawahana used to be a wood with seven white banyan trees, but there are fewer of these now.

The wood has been turned into fields and swamps. Formerly it was really foreboding (*angker*) but now it is already less so, it has become neutral (*tawar*); [the word] *tawar* is used mainly with reference to “earth that causes mishap when trodden upon,” “magic wood,” and “magic roots.”

After [the animal] has been slaughtered, the meat is as usual brought to the *kraton*, to the Reksa Sugala building [the kitchen], then it is cooked. On Thursday it is put into ordinary or decorated banana-leaf bowls and placed in more than twenty-four round brass containers. Besides the meat of the *kebo lawung*, these brass containers are filled with various kinds of cooked food, fruit from trees, collected fruits, and fruits from the earth. Also flowers, two containers of palm wine, four young coconuts, flowers and perfumes, and burning incense. There are various types of cooked food such as [the meat of] elephant, rhinoceros, wild buffalo, and deer, which is called all the various living creatures (crawling insects, cattle, and fish).

Nyai Tumenggung [a high-ranking female court official] is called forward, then Kangjeng Susuhunan [i.e., the ruler] tells her to make [the officials] sit around the *maésa lawung* communal meal. [Then] Nyai Tumenggung asks the *bupati anom gandèk* [high-ranking court officials] of the left and of the right. When these have been invited, they leave for the Pagelaran Suméwa [a large assembly hall] with their insignia of office carried in a basket. So the four messengers of the king walk to the Suméwa and pass the [king's] order to the *patih dalem* [royal chancellor]. These *gandèk* are followed by all the [dishes of the] communal meal [in the brass containers], which are carried by the *keparak* servants, [and are] then arranged on the northern side of the Semayana hall [i. e., the Sitinggil]. Moreover, all the officials, the old and the young *bupati*, the *panèwu*, and *mantri*¹² assemble behind and take their places at the east side of the Semayana. When the *gandèk* have given the order to the *papatih dalem* they return to the Sri Penganti hall (now called Smarakata) to report to Nyai Tumenggung [that] the aim of the mission [has been fulfilled]. The *papatih dalem*, the old and the young *bupati*, *panèwu*, *mantri* of the Javanese realm leave for the Sitinggil and sit around the meal. When they are properly seated the *papatih dalem* gives order to the *bupati juru* Suranata, named R. T. Pujadipura: “R. T. Pujadipura, His Majesty orders you to say prayers for the royal *maesa lawung* meal, the sacrifice of the royal palace (*kraton*) and of the whole country.” The answer is: “Yes I will do so.” Then he says the prayers. After this the meal is divided between those who are present (one, two, or three leaf-bowls, to be either eaten on the spot or taken home).

The *maésa lawung* is a sacrificial meal for the whole country. It also exists in Yogya, but there it coincides with the birthday of the ruler. It does not have a special name, and there also is no [sacrificial] buffalo.
(Manuscript LOr 10.846-4)

Although in 1983 the procedure differed considerably—the food of the ritual communal meal (*slametan*) was not consumed in the palace grounds, but at Durga’s sanctuary near the sacred tree—and the ruler was not present in person, it is clear that the food offered as a sacrifice to the goddess Durga conformed to that described from the first part of this century, although on a smaller scale. It is therefore remarkable that two important elements of the 1983 offerings—the sunflower bridegroom and the rice-flour dolls (*beḡakak*)—were not listed in these earlier descriptions.

PARALLEL OFFERING BY THE MANGKUNAGARA

A separate offering was also presented annually by the Mangkunagara, the second Javanese ruler in Surakarta, until Indonesian Independence did away with the formal power of these rulers. Hardjopandojo¹³ describes the annual *labuhan* for Bathari Durga at the *sanggaran* (a place for worship) of Krendhawahana by Prince Mangkunagara on the last Thursday night before the ruler’s birthday (i.e., the fourth Sapar). This offering consisted of the following food items:

- 1) rice boiled in coconut-cream (*seḡul wuduk*)
- 2) ordinary boiled white rice on two large trays
 - dishes of the meat of one buffalo (*maésa*) complete with intestines and organs
 - small fried sea fish
 - fried fermented soybean
 - wrapped meatballs
 - meat with fried coconut and dried meat
 - fried pepper
 - bean sprouts and green beans
 - roasted spiced coconut
 - fried egg
- 3) various kinds of porridge: red, white, thick, yellow, green, etc.
- 4) different kinds of snacks from the market (*jajan pasar*):
 - flowers
 - (edible) roots
 - cooked (edible) earth
 - waffle and kapok
 - rice colored red, green, white, black, and yellow, and rice-parcels

(*kupat*)

side dishes: millet, cassava-cake, glutinous rice, dried rice, sweet potato, banana, peanuts, different roots, fruits etc.

(HARDJOPANDOJO 1941)

This sacrificial meal was prepared in Kalioso, in the house of the court official (*panéwu*) Ng. Hardjopandojo. It was carried in procession to the tree-sanctuary by local villagers and the local Muslim official responsible for wedding ceremonies, a village leader with the rank of nobleman, other village officials, and a palace official carrying the clothes of the Mangkunagara and his spouse. A goat was then slaughtered in the vicinity of the sacred tree near the stone and the well, its blood offered to the Goddess, and its (uncooked) flesh distributed amongst the villagers with the contents of the meal. The special non-Islamic prayers (*donga Buda*) over the ritual meal were pronounced by the local caretaker (*jurukunci*) of the Durga sanctuary, who as the (hereditary) guardian of the sacred place also explained its purpose.

This ceremonial offering differed not only in size and complexity from the *sesaji maésa lawung* presented by the Surakarta *kraton*, it also lacked two essential ingredients of the latter offering: the sunflower-bridegroom with the accompanying wedding offerings and the rice-flour couple. Moreover, there were no special palace priests; the local caretaker said the prayers.

Another remarkable difference is that during the *slametan* at the site of the tree a palace official spread a set of clothes owned by the prince and his wife on the earth in the shadow of the tree in order to be blessed, apparently by absorbing the special power of the place and the occasion. On the following day these clothes were returned to the Mangkunagaran palace by a person of noble rank, to be worn by the royal couple on the ruler's birthday.

DURGA AND RITES OF EXORCISM

Whereas nowadays only a few Javanese seem to be aware of the royal *maésa lawung* offering, it is still common knowledge that the goddess Durga appears in the exorcistic *wayang* play mentioned above. The exorcistic *Murwakala* play has by no means become irrelevant in modern times; there even seems to be a renewed interest in its performance. In view of the ritual character of this play, it must be presented by an especially qualified professional puppeteer, and the text and actions of the puppets follow strict rules. In addition to the text and action of the play, Tanojo's handbook lists the offerings that must be prepared and the circumstances that require an exorcistic performance (primarily unlucky births, inappropriate actions, and mishaps).¹⁴

A less well known occasion for an exorcistic play featuring the goddess Durga is described in the *Serat Centhini*, where Durga and Kala are men-

tioned in the context of a *ruwatan* following a wedding ceremony. The contents of this play are very similar to the *Murwaḳala* text discussed in the beginning of this article, where Durga is also presented as the wife of Sang Hyang Kala, the ever-hungry destroyer of mankind. During the performance Kala is restrained and instructed by the puppeteer (*dhalang*) Kandhabuwana—in fact the god Wisnu—whom he addresses as “father.” Then it is his wife’s turn to be instructed:

Sang Hyang Kala went back
and spoke to his wife:
“*Nimas*, you must pay homage to father
and to all the courtiers.

And you must ask for
the food that you like.”
Durga came forward and embraced the [father’s] feet:
“I pay homage to you, father.”
“Yes girl thank you.
I make you a place
in the northeast.

It is called Krendhawahana;
following Mount Kendheng
it stretches in one line
with the Tengger mountain.
The gods have decided
that it is intended for the day
when one’s lifetime is over and one is dead.

This place where one leaves corpses
let me make it yours;
that is what you may wish to have.”
“Yes father, as you say.
I ask an allowance (*sangu*)
in money [as much as] sixty coins
and all sorts of kitchen utensils.

And household effects,
soft (banana) leaves to spread out,
and four kinds of breastcloth,
the first one in light-and-dark green colors,

the second one in banyan-tree green,
 the third one in the pattern named *songèr*,
 the fourth and last one in the *dringin* pattern.

If in the future [my] children and grandchildren
 wish to wear
 cloths in these colors,
 my answer is, let them wear these.
 As [for how] long they [may] wear [them],
 I allow them to be used [only]
 by newlyweds.

If they do not do this,
 I am not happy;
 let them receive my curse.”
 “Yes, girl, it is appropriate;
 you may be followed by those who are left.”
 Dyah Bathari Durga went back,
 Hyang Panyarikan moved forward.

(*SERAT CENTHINI* 2, 334)

The reference to Durga seems ambiguous here, as she is connected on the one hand with faraway fields for the disposal of corpses, and on the other hand with newlyweds setting up homes complete with kitchen utensils, banana leaves (serving as plates or mats), and cloth in patterns that are usually offered to Nyai Lara Kidul. It is emphasized that their use is restricted to newlyweds. Most of the food items requested by the demonic followers of Durga and Kala in the remaining verses of this *Serat Centhini* passage are part of the offering for an exorcistic shadow play as specified in TANOJO (n.d., 13–14). Although, as far as I know, it is not customary nowadays to perform an exorcistic play (*ruwatan*) after a wedding ceremony, the purpose of this *ruwatan*—to prevent disharmony between husband and wife—definitely fits the occasion.

The *Serat Centhini* example indicates that in the past exorcism was performed not only in the case of the kinds of mishap specified in the *Murwakala* play, but may also have been frequently carried out in connection with important events in people’s lives, as was suggested by INGGRIS (1923, 45). In any event, the fact that the prayers directed to Durga during the exorcistic shadow play also form part of the *maésa lawung* ritual at the foot of the sacred banyan tree indicates the exorcistic character of this state ritual.

NYAI LARA KIDUL, QUEEN OF THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

The title of “female ruler of (various types of) spirits” (*ratuning jim, peri, per-ayangan*) is also frequently used to refer to the Virgin Queen of the South, Nyai Lara Kidul, who resides on the bottom of the Southern Ocean. Although she is said to be invisible to human beings and is not usually represented in the form of a *wayang* puppet, most Javanese imagine her as a charming young woman.¹⁵ As Queen of the Southern Ocean, she is held responsible for the disappearance and death of human beings near or in this ocean. Thus, like burial grounds and enchanted woods, the ocean may also be regarded as a dwelling place for the spirits of the dead, especially of people who die unnatural deaths by drowning (WESSING, 1997).

Although Nyai Lara Kidul is primarily worshiped by people living along the coasts of the Southern Ocean, her cult is not limited to ordinary fishermen and collectors of bird nests, who have to face the dangers of the ocean in order to earn a living. It is also intimately connected with Javanese kingship: the rulers of the two main court cities in Central Java, who as descendants of Panembahan Sénapati, the founder of the Mataram dynasty, are considered to be Nyai Lara Kidul’s husbands, regularly present offerings to her at the ocean’s shores. Upon their accession to the throne, the Susuhunan of Surakarta have offerings presented to Nyai Lara Kidul on the south coast at Brosot Praga, and at Pulo Bandhung Donan (Nusa Kembangan), a small island in the southern ocean near Cilacap where there is said to grow a unique flower (*wijayakusuma*) with the power to revive the dead.¹⁶ Every year the Sultan of Yogyakarta presents a large offering to Nyai Lara Kidul on the coast near Parangtritis, on the occasion of his birthday; this offering consists mainly of fragrant flowers, incense, and various types of cloth that are carried in procession to the shores of the ocean and abandoned to the waves.¹⁷

OFFERINGS TO NYAI LARA KIDUL BY THE RULERS OF SURAKARTA

Similar to the food offerings prepared for the goddess Durga, food for the Spirit Queen of the South is regularly prepared by the cooks of Gandarasan on sacred Tuesdays (*Selasa-Kliwon*, also named *Anggara-Kasih*).¹⁸ The offering on this day is connected with the *Bedhaya Ketawang*, a sacred female court dance performed at the ruler’s enthronement and on its anniversaries. It must be performed in the main dance pavilion of the *kraton*, accompanied by choral singing and by a special gamelan ensemble (*kemanak*) (BRAKEL-PAPENHUYZEN 1992, 36–37).

On 14 April 1983, when I visited the Gandarasan kitchen during the week preceding the commemoration of the ruler’s enthronement, I saw the following food offerings prepared for the *sajèn Anggara-Kasih*:

- 1) a tray made from plaited leaves containing:
 - two cooked white rice cones (*tumpeng*) and two leaf-wrapped rice parcels (*sekul kolong*)
 - chicken in sauce
 - soup with small grains
 - side-dishes (beans, chips, pickles)
- 2) a tray containing:
 - glutinous rice in four different colors (white, red, yellow and blue) with shredded coconut boiled with sugar
 - small red-and-white pancakes
 - one cylinder of palm sugar
 - one cylinder of shredded coconut
- 3) a tray of plaited leaves with snacks from the market (*jajan pasar*)
- 4) a large dish containing:
 - yeast and soybeans
 - fermented soybean paste
 - dried beef
 - fish
 - fried peppers
 - a leaf-bowl with *bami*
 - a leaf-bowl with fried chips
- 5) blue sticky rice with sweet shredded coconut
- 6) one cone of rice (*tumpeng*) cooked in coconut cream and filled with egg
- 7) one *tumpeng* of ordinary cooked white rice
- 8) rice cooked in coconut milk (*sekul wuduk*) with fried chicken meat wrapped in leaves
- 9) a pair of dolls (male-female) made of rice flour (*bekakak*)

Additional fragrant items, such as a bowl with flowers in water, a small water pot and incense burner, (fragrant) leaves and flower offerings, were prepared in the women's quarters of the court and added to the offerings inside the main dance pavilion.

For the ceremony commemorating the ruler's ascension to the throne, these food offerings are complemented with offerings of special types of cloth decorated with colors and patterns said to be liked by Nyai Lara Kidul. These are kept for her visits to the *kraton*,¹⁹ and when they are worn out they are cast into the ocean (*dilabuh*).²⁰ Cloth offerings are also mentioned in a description of this same *sajèn* in the *Serat Titi Asri*, a treatise on musical practices in the Surakarta *kraton* (SAPARDAL HARDOSOEKARTO 1925).²¹

THE *SAJÈN ANGGARA-KASIH* IN THE PAST

Sapardal Hardosoekarto mentions the *sajèn Anggara-Kasih* in connection with the performance in the Surakarta *kraton* of the sacred *Bedhaya Ketawang*, a work said to have been composed by Panembahan Sénapati, founder of the Mataram dynasty, as a charm to protect the Javanese court:

When the *bedhaya* dance is played,
 there are only nine [dancers].
 If indeed it takes place,
 it is played in the great dance pavilion;
 there are piles of offerings,
 all sorts of food:
 rice and meat, both [rice] cooked in coconut-milk and wrapped in leaves.

The *inthuk-inthuk* [offering]²² and snacks from the market,
 white and red rice-cone(s),
 fruits growing in trees, roasted chicken,
 different kinds of rice-porridge, red and white,
 red and white glutinous rice with shredded sweet coconut,
 porridge in seven colors,²³
 red and white porridge, blood,
 raw and cooked meat dishes
 covered with different types of colored cloth.²⁴

Checkered, *sindur* [bright red], the burnt wood [black with red center],
 yearning Panji [purple with green and red center], *gadhung*-and-jasmine
 [dark green-and white],
ꦏꦁꦏꦸꦁ-flower [purple with white center], flowering *gadhung*,
 pulled-out *pandhan* [dark-and-light green], *blimbing* flower [green with
 purple center],
bangun tulak [dark-blue with white center], *teki*-grass flower,
widaraga, colored,
 like a glow covering the east [red center, green border decorated with
 triangle patterns],
 short hipcloths with *parangsuji* [diagonal batik pattern],
 large and small *parangrusak* and *kenanga* flower [batik patterns].

Fabrics for newlyweds,
 the *podhang* bird entering into the essence [red with yellow center],
 Panji madly in love [purple with green and yellow center], striped *pandhan*
 red *sindur* of the hibiscus flower with

a decorative border in a beautiful [golden] color,
 a long [cloth] with a border of the crocodile emerging above the water
 [pattern],
 flowery *cindhé* silk,
 the overflowing mountain [a *semèn* batik pattern having plants and
 mountains] and tie-dye [a multicolored cloth],
 multicolored *cindhé* silk with a shining gold-painted border.

Rajaniti [cloth] lined with
 a refined yellow color,
areca-palm blossoms,
 and striped woven hipcloths [in] royal [patterns],
 extra long [cloth] [in] cane [stripes] alternating with
 young coriander broken and speckled [patterns],
 wet earth [color pattern] surpassed by
 fish emerging above the water, a border of golden triangles (*tumpal*)
 complete with *madu-dhengklung* and golden water [patterns].

A ceremonial *bangun tulak* cloth decorated with patterns
 of the wood in beautiful gold paint,
 a breastcloth of flowery silk
 and a *cendhalagiri* breastcloth,
 a dance-shawl(s) of tie-dye silk,
 yellow, purple, and light green,
 fragrant ointment with flowers,
gambir flowers to decorate the hair,
 and jasmine buds strung in a chain.

A mixture of fragrant flowers,
cempaka, *kanthil*, and *melati*,
 fragrant *pandhan* leaves and red flowers,
 roses, red leaves, and hibiscus-flowers,
 mixed, with a pleasant odor,
 and an offering with face-powder,
 yellow body-ointment with added
sirih-quids and fragrant cigarettes, in turn
 well-closed and with a strong perfume.

A couple of closed *kanthil* flowers,
 a mirror and a comb,
 jasmine flowers [strung] like a crescent,

arranged within a container,
 all this is offered
 with *benzoe* and powdered incense and
 when it is complete,
 the offering and the incense, then
 one burns *benzoe* invoking the spirits.

(SAPARDAL HARDOSOEKARTO 1925, 23)

Although invocations are made to the founder of the Mataram dynasty and the composer of the sacred song, the description does not specify whether some of the items are meant for these individuals or if they are meant entirely for Nyai Lara Kidul and her followers. The offering in the 1920s was more elaborate than the one prepared in 1983, yet it contains essentially the same food elements: white rice in various forms (cones or wrapped) with side-dishes of meat and vegetables, multicolored rice and coconut with palm sugar, as well as different fruits and flowers. Remarkable is the absence in the list of the pair of rice-flour dolls (*bekakak*), often considered to be a bridal couple. This offering, which is typically intended for harmful spirits²⁵ and which also forms part of the annual offerings to Nyai Lara Kidul at Puger on the coast of the Southern Ocean (WESSING, 1997), is clearly visible in my photographs, yet it was neither mentioned by my informants in 1983 nor listed in the 1925 treatise.

A significant difference between the offerings presented to the goddess Durga and those presented to Nyai Lara Kidul are the various types of cloth presented to the latter, decorated with specific colorings and patterns thought to be liked by Nyai Lara Kidul.

OFFERINGS TO NYAI LARA KIDUL ON THE SOUTH COAST

Detailed information on offerings presented to Nyai Lara Kidul and other spirits by the rulers of Surakarta is given in a manuscript written by Radèn Ngabèi Hardjapradata in 1890. This Javanese manuscript²⁶ distinguishes two main categories of offerings: *pelabuhan*, offerings that are left behind (that is, cast into the sea or into the fire), and *sadranan*, offerings to holy places (those that must be presented to various types of spirits by the rulers of Surakarta on the occasion of their enthronement).

Pulo Bandhung Donan

The first place discussed in the manuscript is Pulo Bandhung Donan (Nusa Kembangan), which, as mentioned above, is an island in the southern ocean near Cilacap where a delegation of sixteen court officials led by the Suranata court priest is sent to fetch the *wijayakusuma* flower for the newly enthroned

ruler of Surakarta. During this journey they present *labuhan* offerings at a few places in the vicinity of Cilacap, consisting mainly of cloth and fragrant substances.²⁷ When these gifts have been received from the main court official (*wedana*) holding office at the Srimanganti gate they are placed in boxes carried by workmen and shaded by royal parasols.

The party travels first to Banyumas, where they meet the caretaker (*jurukunci*) of the grave site of Kyai Ageng Giring at Gumelem, pay him one hundred *rupiyah*, and worship at the grave. Next they all (including the *jurukunci*) report to the Kabupaten of Banyumas and hand over their official letters, whereupon they continue to Cilacap, accompanied by a religious official (*ketip*) from Banyumas.

In Cilacap they go to the local ruler (*adipati*) and pay two hundred and fifty *rupiah* for the worship of prophets, saints, and the ancestors of the king from both his father's and mother's side, as well as for the trip to Pulo Bandhung. The whole party then travels by ship to a number of holy sites that are in the care of the *jurukunci* of Cilacap. On the way to the stone mosque of Pulo Brambang they distribute money, after which they spend the night there in meditation. The following day they go to meditate at the grave sites of Kyai Ageng Majalangu and Panembahan Tlècèt.

The next day they dress in plain white clothes. The Suranata priest, the *ketip*, and the *jurukunci* of Cilacap board the ship to Pulo Bandhung, while the others stay behind on the beach. At Cape Sapurègèl they scatter money mixed with yellow rice, and the following clothes are thrown into the sea: four striped hipcloths, two colored hipcloths, and one hipcloth of dark-and-light green coloring. This is repeated three times.

The shore of Pulo Bandhung is reached in a small boat. There the *jurukunci* of Cilacap prepares the following clothes: one long *cindhé* cloth, silk tie-dye cloth, the above-mentioned colored cloths with borders and the dark-and-light green hipcloths with border. They change into these clothes, the *jurukunci* burns incense, and they sing (Islamic) hymns together, as a result of which the *wijayakusuma* flower is said to appear on the tree.

While the clothes that have been worn are afterwards given to the *jurukunci*, the Suranata priest uses the yellow silk cloth to carry the precious flowers. The party returns to the Kabupaten of Cilacap, where the clothes worn during the meditation under the tree are left in the keeping of the Adipati. The money for distribution and fees totals 107.5 *rupiah*, plus 17 *ringgit* (2.5 guilders) as compensation to the participants for performing the task.

They quickly return to Surakarta, via Banyumas and Purwadadi, and there they send a message to the court chancellor (*patih*). The following day a group of priests and court servants arrives from the *kraton* to accompany them in a ceremonial manner as they meet the king, who awaits them.

Thus we see that in this sacred mission the two types of offering, *labuhan* and *sadranan*, are not necessarily separate but may be combined. In this case the worship at ancestral graves precedes the ceremonial fetching of the flower. It is remarkable that the offering list includes all the various types of cloth from precious silk to simple striped cotton, yet only the simpler types of cloth are cast into the sea. The more precious silks as well as the colored cloths that are worn during the ceremony under the tree are given to the Adipati of Cilacap after having been worn.

Praga Brosot

The second place on the south coast mentioned in the manuscript is Praga Brosot, where similar gifts of cloth and perfumes are presented by about seven Suranata court servants, accompanied by a female messenger of noble rank named Nyai Mas Adipati Sedhahmirah and a nobleman of the rank of Bupati who functions as S napati (founder of the Mataram dynasty). They travel via Kartasura and Klath n to the burial-ground at Kotha Gedh , where they burn incense in honor of the ancestors of the Mataram dynasty, and then spend four nights at Imogiri where the royal graves are visited, including those at Girilaya and Bengku. From there they travel to the village of Nguwarau, and, after resting, go to the beach where the ceremony is performed.

The list of the offerings²⁸ contains many of the cloths mentioned in the offering at Nusa Kembangan, with some differences, namely a white mat, two conical headdresses worn by men (*kuluk*), and a shiny gilded umbrella. On the shore where the river Praga flows into the ocean the gifts are placed on a raft of banana-tree trunks. Incense is burned by the *jurukunci* of Brosot while they are prepared. Then they are presented with the following formal address by the leading Suranata priest, the two noble delegates sitting at his side: “With your permission, your servant has been sent by your elder brother [i.e., your husband] His Royal Highness Susuhunan Paku Buwana the... of Surakarta Hadiningrat, in order to present an offering of clothes to Your Excellency.”

The raft is pushed into the waves. After this the royal servants return in three days to the Surakarta court, where they report to the Srimanganti office that they have successfully completed their mission.

ANOTHER DESCRIPTION OF THE *LABUHAN* AT THE SOUTHERN OCEAN

R. M. Ng. Tikhoprano, a former government official, discusses some traditions and customs with regard to kingship during the reign of Susuhunan Paku Buwana X of Surakarta. His description of the *labuhan* on the ocean shore near Brosot—part of the enthronement ceremonies for a new ruler—discloses an aspect that is not mentioned by Ng. Hardjapradata: the ritual

abandoning (*melabuh*) of the clothes of the deceased Susuhunan in the Southern Ocean.

On 11 October 1939, TIKNOPRANOTO relates (n.d.), a female and a male member of the royal family took the clothes of the deceased Paku Buwana X from Surakarta via Yōgja to Kotha Gedhé, where they stopped to make an offering at the grave sites of the royal ancestors. Having spent the night with the Bupati of the royal burial place of Imogiri, they traveled to the Opak River, then south from Bantul until they reached the village of Ngentak. From there the party went on foot; the clothes, placed in approximately five boxes, were carried on the shoulders of workmen in palanquins (*joli*), shaded by royal parasols. Thousands of people are said to have been watching from the roadside.

In a temporary construction (*tarub*) on the beach they arranged the food offering (*sesaji*) that had been brought from Imogiri, and the chests were placed on rafts, still shaded by royal parasols. Then the rafts were carried into the open. The leader of the mission, Raden Ayu Adipati Tasikwulan, and her followers sat cross-legged on the sand, burned incense, and offered the clothes to the Queen of the South in a formal address. When the rafts were abandoned to the waves, they are said to have floated calmly in a file towards the middle of the ocean (i.e., the location of Nyai Lara Kidul's palace).

Tiknopranoto next describes the mission to Pulo Bandhung. The ceremonial journey for Susuhunan Paku Buwana XI's enthronement differs in some respects from the description in the Leiden manuscript. The royal messengers prepare themselves by fasting before their departure, and the mission travels by railway directly to Cilacap, omitting the visit to Banyumas.

In Cilacap the messengers spend the night at the Kabupatèn, where they have a ceremonial meal (*slametan*). When they enter the boat to the island the messengers dress in white, like *hajji* during the Islamic pilgrimage. In spite of the large waves they reach it safely and go to the one tree right in the middle of the island, which does not bear a single flower when they arrive. They spend the night sitting beneath the tree meditating and burning incense. As a result, in the middle of the night they observe a radiant light shining upon the tree: the *wijayakusuma* flower. In the morning, the leading messenger picks the flower and puts it into a special box, which is then locked.

After a night spent back in Cilacap they send a message to the king in Surakarta. When they arrive at the railway station they are formally received by a group of courtiers. The box with the flower is carried in a stately palanquin, shaded by a parasol and accompanied by festively dressed courtiers, into the *kraton* where it is offered to the king. Besides the messengers and the king, nobody knows what the mysterious flower looks like; when the king dies, the flower also disappears.

Although Tiknopranoto pays attention to the dangers of boarding a small boat while the sea is wild and the waves are roaring, there is no mention of cloths being offered to the ocean. Neither does this author mention the special cloths worn by the delegation during their meditation under the tree as described by Hardjapradata in 1890.

DLEPIH: AN ENIGMATIC OFFERING IN THE SOUTHERN HILLS

According to Hardjapradata, offerings (*pelabuhan*) for the enthronement of a new Susuhunan are presented at three more places: the waterfall of Dlepih in the district of Wanagiri²⁹ in the Southern Mountains (Gunung Kidul), the crater of Mt Merapi, and the top of Mt Lawu. While the offerings to the two high mountains at the east and west side of Surakarta are presented to male spirits and therefore do not concern us here, the description of the *labuhan* at Dlepih raises a few questions about the identity of its spirit.

Hardjapradata says that the offering at Dlepih is brought by a group of six court priests accompanied by a number of secular officials and also two servants from the Mangkunagaran.³⁰ It consists of the following items, which are characterized as women's clothing:³¹

- one wide silk hipcloth
- one silk hipcloth with gold thread
- one hipcloth of striped cotton in two-colored threads (with gold thread)
- one cotton hipcloth with *barkutut* pattern
- one cotton hipcloth with orange-pink-and-yellow stripes
- four *kati* of sweet incense
- two pots with yellow ointment
- two pots with fragrant oil
- one flask of powdered incense

(Manuscript KITLV Or 240 [tr. LOr 10.670])

These items are arranged at a place near the waterfall by the *jurukunci* of the place and, while incense is burned, offered with the following formal address to a male[!] spirit named Kyai Widongnangga: "Permit me, Kyai Widongnangga, your servant offers you a message from your grandson His Royal Highness Susuhunan Paku Buwana the... of Surakarta, he is sent to offer clothes to Your Excellency." Thereafter these clothes are said to be given away and kept at the caretaker's house, apparently until the next *labuhan*.

The items listed in the Leiden manuscript do not help us determine whether the offering is presented to a female or to a male spirit, as they may be used by both males and females. In order to solve the apparent contradiction it is necessary to obtain more information about the identity of the spirit named Kyai Widongnangga at Dlepih.

Some background information may be found in ADAM's article on the Sultan of Yogyakarta's offering to Mt Lawu, since the article includes a description of a similar *labuhan* brought by the Sultan at Dlepih in the first year of a *windu* cycle of eight years (1940). According to Adam, this offering was presented to a male and a female spirit, Kyai and Nyai Hudanangga. From the different stories about the identity of these spirits, it is clear that the place was also connected with Ratu Lara Kidul. She is said to have had a secret rendezvous here with her beloved Panembahan Sénapati, meeting on a stone in the river Wiraka. The sultan's offering of cloth and fragrant items³² was presented at two stones (one of which was once situated in the middle of the river, but has since been carried off by the current) where the couple was seen by a certain Kyai Hudanangga, a local villager, whose wife used to bring food there to Sénapati on Fridays.³³ It is surprising that cloth and fragrant ingredients should be presented to the spirits of two deceased local residents rather than to Nyai Lara Kidul, who is nevertheless connected to the place in local mythology.

DLEPIH: ANOTHER JAVANESE DESCRIPTION

Among the de Roo de la Faille notes kept in Leiden there is a Javanese manuscript (KITLV H778) that gives information about the pond at Dlepih. It does not refer to any spirits, but explains that common people go there to present offerings and worship at the sacred pond "to ask for prosperity, promotion, etc., by burning incense and bringing offerings of fragrant flowers and ointment in honor of Kangjeng Sunan Kalijaga."

Visitors to the pond must be accompanied by the caretaker, who will present the offering and explain the origin and the names of all the objects. Then one may bathe in the pond. Some people dive under the "floating rocks" and look for pebbles that are like agate and may be used as stones in rings. These much sought-after stones are round as marbles, with a hole, and are said to have belonged to the rosary (*tasbèh*) of Sunan Kalijaga, which broke and spilled into the water when he was purifying himself. People who are able to obtain such beads value them highly and guard them carefully, just like an amulet or ancestral heirloom, because they are believed to protect the bearer when he enters dangerous and deserted places, "so that he is not pestered by ghosts (*lelembat*) or jungle spirits (*brekakaan*)."

There are also shiny dark stones called *bolot* or *banglot* that are even better than the rosary beads; these are said to come from the dirt rubbed off the skin of Sunan Kalijaga when he cleansed himself. They are used to treat fevers by immersing them in water and burning incense while saying, "*Kyahi banglot!* I ask your blessing on the medicine for fever." After the sick person drinks some of the water the rest is rubbed on his body.

THE QUEEN OF THE SPIRITS AT DLEPIH

While the above manuscript reflecting the common people's interest in Dlepih deals primarily with its sacred stones, more information on the female spirits supposed to dwell at the site is found in the *Serat Centhini*, composed at the court of Surakarta in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This romance gives a detailed description of the inaccessible Dlepih area, which is visited by the main character of the book, the Islamic saint Sèh Amongraga. He sits meditating for days on a shiny stone in the middle of the pond, then enters the cave of the source, which is said to resemble an open mouth with teeth-like rocks.

A raised platform of coarse stone is in the middle of the road,
bulging to the east and the south;
it is like a tongue pressing against the rows of teeth.
At the exit are visible
smooth precious stones,
as large as a piece of material.

Pieces of white cloth,³⁴ left long ago, are arranged
like a curtain hanging over
the teeth-stones, with a small source.
The Jatha cave is the palace of the virgin queen
of Dlepih together with
Ratu Kidul.

The story of the ruler of the spirits is:
Ratu Widanangga of Dlepih
has her court in the Jatha cave.
She is the daughter of Ratu Kidul,
whose court is in Tunjungbang [red lotus];
they are both rulers of the spirits.

The daughter Ratu Dlepih became the co-wife
of Ratu Kidul;
she was the child of
the spirit Prabu Angin-angin.
When the Gods made him disappear,
Ratu Kidul ruled in his place.

She married the revered king
Panembahan Sénapati

Ingalaga of Mataram,
 who respects the religion of the Prophet,
 who has divine power, is valorous and victorious in battle,
 who is worshiped in Mataram.

Ratu Dlepih and Ratu Kidul
 were [both] taken as wives by Kangjeng Sénapati,
 so mother and daughter are co-wives;
 they protect the king's divine power
 all over the island of Java,
 Ratu Dlepih on the land,

Ratu Kidul in the ocean.
 Both guard King
 Sénapati Ingalaga
 who is married to spirits and nymphs;
 [they are] the rulers of the spirits
 on the land and in the ocean.

And this agreement
 includes the following
 kings of Java
 who are descendants from Kangjeng Sénapati;
 they still become their wives
 and similarly protect [them].

(*SERAT CENETHINI* 8, 18–19)

By revealing the identity of the spirit at the source of the Solo River as yet another queen of the spirits, the passage in the *Serat Centhini* also makes it clear why the new ruler of Surakarta (a city located on the banks of the Bengawan Solo) presents an offering at this place. The offering serves to reconfirm the bond of the ruling Susuhunan with the spirit queens Widongnangga and her mother Nyai Lara Kidul, and proves that the ruler has the same esoteric powers as his illustrious predecessor and controls the spirits of the jungle, the river, and the ocean.

CONCLUSION

In the above descriptions of the offerings originating from the court city of Surakarta and presented to Durga and Nyai Lara Kidul, the complementary relationship indicated by the fact that the presentations occur in opposite directions (north for Durga, south for Nyai Lara Kidul) is mirrored by the

substances that are presented: the goddess Durga receives primarily food and Nyai Lara Kidul receives primarily clothing. Both food and clothing are essential for people setting out on journeys, and this holds true also for the journey through the cycles of life and death.

The idea that the goddess Durga comes from the former East Javanese realm of Majapahit probably stems from the time when myths of Durga and her husband (Maha)Kala were widespread in Java (the late Hindu-Buddhist era) and tantric practices were incorporated into court ritual.³⁵ The notion that Durga is associated with trees in the wilderness may reflect ancient burial practices in which corpses were left in uninhabited places belonging to spirits in the form of hungry animals.³⁵

Human beings fear the goddess Durga because she represents the process of separation of body and soul: the disintegrating corpse, the unresponsive female, the sperm that is wasted. Nevertheless, people may try to use Durga's negative power to assist them in achieving their frustrated desires, desires that are usually harmful to their fellow men. As it is the king's task to avert any danger that might threaten his subjects, he organizes an annual sacrifice to Durga that is essentially an annual purification ceremony. In order to appease the hungry goddess he offers her a complete meal prepared from all the various life forms in his domain, including rice in all forms and varieties, various side dishes, the flesh of the various species of animals, a bridal couple, and a bridegroom complete with wedding offerings.

Durga's counterpart, Nyai Lara Kidul, represents the process of (re)union or reincarnation; her dwelling place, named "red lotus" (*tunjung bang*), symbolizes the womb. The wedding cloths presented to her by the new ruler of the Mataram dynasty indicate that he, being the reincarnation of its founder, reconfirms their union. This is also shown by the ritual abandoning of the deceased ruler's clothes in the ocean and by the fetching of the *wijayakusuma* flower. The sacred *Bedhaya Ketawang* dance for the ruler's enthronement, when the court dancers are dressed in the green and white³⁶ ceremonial cloth decorated with the various species of animals, is also closely associated with Nyai Lara Kidul. The same type of cloth is also worn as a protection against harmful influences by bridal couples during the traditional Javanese wedding ceremony.

Whereas the offerings of blood and animal flesh to the infertile goddess Durga are brought into the forest on behalf of the entire state, the offering of cloth and fragrant items expressing the ruler's union with the young and fertile Nyai Lara Kidul are presented inside the *kraton*. The king's control over the universe needs to be confirmed regularly by averting danger from inside and outside.

The offerings and myths show that Javanese concepts of the spirit world

are diverse enough to allow for more than one female ruler, with different places of worship and complementary functions and shapes. One of the shared characteristics is their connection with human death as well as with marriage. Just as the very concept of “ruler of the spirits” is not restricted to one spirit entity, it may also vary in different contexts, and may very well have undergone changes in the course of time. This is true also for the relationship between Durga and Nyai Lara Kidul and their significance for Javanese kingship.

NOTES

* I would like to thank Roy Jordaan for his warm encouragement to me in writing the present article.

1. The name Maésasura does sometimes crop up in Old Javanese literature or in the context of *wayang* stories, but, as far as I know, not in connection with the Indian myth telling how he is conquered by the goddess Durga.

2. See Hariani Santiko’s contribution to the present volume.

3. The Javanese text according to Tanoyo reads:

Mangka samuksané Sang Hyang Wisésa, Bathara Guru akarya titimbangan garwa wasta Déwi Uma. Nunten ayoga para déwa 30 sarta sajodhoné. Nunten bumi pisah lan akasa. Hyang Pramèsthi nunten amatah déwa nawa sanga amrih jejeg ing bumi, sarta gunung Jamurdipa wus warata. Nunten Bathara Guru ayasa kahyangan lan kaswargan lan saisiné. Mongka Sang Hyang Pramèsthi anyatakaken jeneng ing lanang lan wadon, lan garwa Déwi Uma reta (=kama) korut tan ketadhahan, mila wonten Bathara Kala. Hyang Pramèsthi adeduka mring garwa Déwi Uma. Mila wonten Bathari Durga jodho lan Kala. Nunten Sang Hyang Guru anitahaken rejeki ing marcapada Medhang Kamulan. Mila Bathara Kala minggah mring Suralaya saputra-garwa balané.

TANOYO (n.d., 36)

4. The only two non-Javanese participants, Stephen Headley and the author, received permission to witness and photograph the preparations for the sacrificial meal in the royal kitchen at the Southwest side of the *kraton* complex on 9 January 1983, and to follow the performance of the ritual offering with royal servants (*abdidalem*) the next day.

5. In an earlier publication, HEADLEY points out that the first word, which is now used to refer to a buffalo, is reminiscent of the buffalo-demon Mahisha, who, according to Hindu mythology, was conquered by the goddess Durga (1979, 50). The word *lawung* indicates a lance, as carried by royal soldiers in the annual *garebeg* procession to the main mosque.

6. Particulars of the offering presented by the Mangkunagara at the Krendhawahana sanctuary more than fifty years ago will be discussed below.

7. MS Or 10.846–2 in the library of the Rijksuniversiteit Leiden states that meat of all living creatures, raw and cooked, must be part of the offering.

8. This was pointed out by Ibu Gandarasan, the old lady who was the head of the royal kitchen of Gandarasan.

9. The same is confirmed by MS 10.846 in the library of the Rijksuniversiteit Leiden.

10. The Javanese manuscript Or 10.846 contains information on customs and popular Islamic religion in Surakarta collected by the Dutch scholar Kraemer, probably during the

1920s and 1930s.

11. The original Javanese text is rendered here in my English translation.
12. An explanation of various court ranks is given in VAN DEN BERG 1887.
13. The author was a court official of Kalioso, the village near the Durga sanctuary.
14. While the list is headed by mishaps with dropped rice steamers and broken pestles, people in need of an exorcistic shadow play are mainly those who suffer from “unlucky births,” such as only children, twins, and albinos; the list ends with wrong types of behavior, such as being asleep at sunrise and sunset.
15. A picture of Nyai Lara Kidul was published in VELDIUISEN-DJAJASOEBRATA (1984, 88).
16. See also Jordaan’s article in the present issue, note 21. In TIKNOPRANOTO’s booklet this flower is said to be an heirloom (*pusaka*) from Sri Bathara Kresna, king of Ndarawati, which can revive people who die “before their allotted time” (n.d., 41). The *Encyclopaedia van Nederlandsch-Indië* (STIBBE 1919, 412) identifies the tree as *pisonia sylvestris* and says that in Java this small and crooked tree only grows on two small, hard-to-reach islands on the east side of Nusa Kambangan. It also notes that the leaves may be eaten as a vegetable and are a well-known medicine. OCHSE (1931, 539–40) gives the additional information that the spouses of the ruler used to eat a salad of these flowers when they were pregnant, hoping to give birth to a son and heir to the throne.
17. According to BIGEON, in 1980, during the reign of Sultan Hamengku Buwana IX, the day was 25 Maulud or Rabingulawal, the third month of the Javanese year according to the Islamic calendar (1982, 117). In 1930, during the reign of Sultan Hamengku Buwana VIII, the date of the offering was 30 Jumadilawal 1857 (ADAM 1930, 158).
18. The Javanese have several kinds of weeks, including a seven- and a five-day one. The latter, consisting of the days Pahing, Pon, Wage, Kliwon, and Legi, is used, in combination with the seven-day one, to stipulate ritual days in a thirty-five-day cycle.
19. Meetings between Nyai Lara Kidul and the ruler are said to take place in the tower in the *kraton* where the Susuhunan is supposed to regularly meditate.
20. Although I did not see these pieces of cloth being used, some can be seen in a photograph in VELDIUISEN-DJAJASOEBRATA (1984, 129), where they are used as covers on the *tingalan jumenengan* offerings.
21. I quote from a typescript of this book, made in 1959 and again in 1968 for students of the Academy of Music and Dance (Konservatori Karawitan Indonesia and Akademi Seni Karawitan Indonesia).
22. A small food offering prepared for wedding ceremonies.
23. In the 1983 offering there was rice-porridge in four colors, with sweet shredded coconut in the center, representing the basic four points of the compass.
24. I am grateful to Rens Heringa for identifying several of these patterns.
25. The *bekakak* offering is mentioned in connection with the annual purification of the royal executioner’s sword in an article describing celebrations at the court of Yogyakarta. HAAR (1922) describes describes the offering of a pair of *bekakak* in the month Sapar in the limestone mountains to the northwest of Yogyakarta.
26. MS KITLV Or 240 (tr. LOr 10.670).
27. The manuscript lists the following items:
 - one long piece of flowery silk (*cindhé*)
 - one long piece of yellow flowery silk
 - two wide pieces of purple silk (*limar*)
 - two pieces of green tie-dye (*plangi*)
 - two pieces of breastcloth in dark blue-and-white coloring with border

two pieces of silk breastcloth
 two pieces of breastcloth in dark-green and white colors, with border
 two pieces in burned-wood coloring, with border
 two pieces in newlyweds' coloring, without border
 two pieces in dark-and-light green coloring, without border
 idem with border
 four wide pieces of striped cotton cloth (*lurik*)
 five hundred *rupiah* in cash
 one *hati* [0.617 kg.] of sweet incense
 one oblong box with powdered incense
 one flask of sandalwood oil
 one flask of flower-scented oil
 one little pot with dark oil
 one little pot with musk oil

28. The following items are listed:

one wide hipcloth
 same in green (*pandhan surat*) coloring
 same of wide silk
 same of silk with gold-threads
 same in dark green coloring with border
 same in bright red color
 same in dark blue-and-white coloring with border
 same in dark green-and-white coloring with border
 same in red-and-green coloring with border
 a short cloth with batik patterns
 matching wide checkered hipcloth
 same of silk with gold threads
 same of speckled striped cotton
 same of cotton with orange-pink-and-yellow stripes
 same of striped cotton with two-colored threads and scarce gold thread
 same in dark green-and-white coloring
 same in dark-and-light green coloring without border
 same in red-and-yellow coloring
 same in dark blue-and-white coloring
 same with dark blue stripes on white background
 one white mat [or hide]
 one new black [official] conical headdress
 one white conical headdress
 one brilliant umbrella
 the total number of cloths and accomplishments is twenty two [items]
 four pots with (fragrant) oil
 one hundred guilders [worth] of incense
 one flask with powdered incense

29. The stream that is regarded as the source of the Solo River in Gunung Sewu forms the border between the districts of Wanagiri and Pacitan (see TIKNOPRANOTO, n.d., 78–79).

30. Many parts of Wanagiri and Mt Lawu belong to the territory of the Mangkunagaran.

31. Hardjapradata lists women's clothes with a hipcloth, breastcloth without a blouse, and a feminine [style] hair bun.

32. According to Adam, the sultan's very similar offering contained the following items:

one hipcloth in red and green colors
 one striped hipcloth with *mindî*-flower pattern
 one striped, speckled hipcloth
 one woven girdle in double-colored thread with gold thread
 one woven girdle with multi-colored threads
 one girdle in *songèr* pattern
 four pots with fragrant oil
 six wrappings filled with stones
 one flask with powdered incense
 two bags filled with twenty *rupiah* worth of money.

(ADAM 1940)

33. According to another Yogyanese source, also quoted by ADAM, he was actually Sunan Kalijaga (1940).

34. This refers to the custom that pilgrims visiting a sacred place or grave site decorate it with a piece of white cloth (*langsé*). One of the caves at the coast of the southern ocean is even named *guwa langsé*.

35. I am grateful to Bert van den Hoek for suggesting this connection.

36. Alternatively, the dark blue-and-white (*bangun tulak*) pattern is often used.

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