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THE EVOLUTION OF BABAD TANAH JAWI TEXTS: IN RESPONSE TO DAY*

Anthony Day's article in vol. 134 of this journal (Day 1978) has made a considerable contribution to the study of Javanese texts of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* type. At last the discussion appears to have moved away from assertions about the nature, functions, or reliability of *babads* in general (mostly based on the Meinsma *babad*, without regard to its dubious origins; cf. Ricklefs 1972: esp. 286-9) to an analysis of particular texts and their interrelationships. Day's analysis is partly a criticism of this writer's views as expressed in an article published in 1972. That article concerned *Babad Kraton* (written in Yogyakarta in AD 1777-8), the so-called Major *Babad* (written in Surakarta sometime between AD 1788 and 1836, available in a copy made in 1836), and the condensed prose *babad* edited by Meinsma and first published in AD 1874 (but apparently based primarily on the Major *Babad*). Since that article appeared, Day has been at work on still more recent MSS, while this writer has studied still older ones. As a result, the universe of analysis has greatly expanded and new light has been shed on the issues. Day's article reflects this new light, and has greatly aided this writer in defining his own views about the evolution of *Babad Tanah Jawi* texts more sharply.

Before beginning the present discussion, it must be made clear that this is not a defense of that part of the 1972 article to which Day objects. In a book published about a year before Day's article, this author him-

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self rejected what Day finds objectionable: "I regard a part of the historiographical argument about the story of the fall of Majapahit in Ricklefs, 'Consideration', to have insufficient documentary foundation. A far larger number of MSS with a far greater range in age would need to be analyzed. It is true that the Meinsma *babad* cannot be regarded as a primary historical source ('Consideration', p. 293), that none of the texts analyzed there are of great value as sources for the fall of Majapahit (*ibid.*, p. 294), and that they are important sources for the point of view of their authors and/or patrons (*ibid.*). But it cannot be argued that these texts can show 'a growing consciousness of Islam as a part of the Javanese identity over the period 1777-1836' (*ibid.*, p. 295). This may have been so, but the texts considered there cannot show it to have been so." (Ricklefs 1978: 167 n. 57).¹

It will become clear below that new evidence which this writer has discovered since 1972 is the basis for rejecting the suggestion concerning "growing consciousness of Islam", and indeed that this new evidence is stronger than Day's. It will also be seen that, although *Babad Tanah Jawi* MSS are important sources for understanding Javanese views of the distant past, documentary problems lead this writer to doubt whether in practice one can use particular variations among MSS to define differences in "the point of view of their authors and/or patrons" with much success. The issues do not, however, concern Islam itself but rather the questions of how *Babad Tanah Jawi* texts were constructed and, consequently, of how they may be used as evidence.

Day's treatment suggests that two points about evidence and argument require clarification:

(1) Evidence is never simply evidence; it is always evidence of or for something. Defining the relevance of evidence is a fundamental aim of the criticism of evidence. Day misunderstands this when he objects (Day 1978: 445) to this writer's judgement that *Babad Kraton* is "free from problems of doubtful origin" or "later interpolation" (Ricklefs 1974: xxiii). This statement was made concerning *Babad Kraton* as evidence for "kraton tradition in Jogjakarta during Mangkubumi's reign" (Ricklefs 1974: xxiii). As evidence for this, the judgement is correct; the same is not true of the two other *babads* being described along with *Babad Kraton* in that passage. It is interesting that, although Day objects to this judgement, in his article he nonetheless employs *Babad Kraton* as evidence for Yogyakarta *babad* tradition, thus accepting it as a source in a much more general context than this writer has ever done. Indeed, Day's belief that there was such a thing as a Yogya-

karta *babad* tradition, as opposed to a Surakarta tradition (Day 1978: 434, 440, 441, 449), will be questioned below.

(2) There is a difference between assumptions and conclusions. Day misunderstands this when he says that this writer's 1972 article implicitly reveals "two interconnected assumptions: (1) Islamic influence on *kraton* culture was in fact stronger in 1836 than in 1777-78; (2) Javanese texts written in 1836 are more embellished and interpolated than those written in 1777-78" (Day 1978: 447 n. 2). Neither of these was an assumption. Both were conclusions based on the evidence considered in that article (although the second, upon which Day concentrates, was of no importance in the argument of the article). The assumption which was in fact implicit there was that by arranging *Babad Tanah Jawi* MSS according to the date of their composition one could show the development of a particular episode. This now seems to be an erroneous assumption about what the MSS were evidence for, based upon inadequate evidence about how they were written. Day in fact accepts this assumption, as can be seen in his proposal "that a comparative study of Yogyakarta *babad* texts from different periods is desirable, in order to trace the development of Yogyakarta thinking about Java's early past..." (Day 1978: 441). By making this same assumption, Day comes to conclusions which may be as misleading as those of this writer in 1972. For instance, he shows that the scribe of *Babad Kraton* (1777-8) at one point abandoned a model from which he was copying in favor of a more concise version, and that this abandoned model was essentially the same version as is found in the Major *Babad* (1836) and *Babad Kandha* (1860). He concludes that, at least in this passage, *Babad Kraton* is therefore "less 'original' than the more elaborate nineteenth century" MSS (Day 1978: 444-5). Having shown that the later *babad* version is substantially the same as a text which anteceded *Babad Kraton*, he concludes that this is therefore the older or more original version. He is thus assuming that by arranging texts according to the date of their composition the evolution of a particular episode is revealed. The reasons for questioning this assumption will be clear below.

Before turning to the evidence which leads this writer to reject part of Day's argument as well as part of his own, a basic term requires definition. Both Day and this writer speak of "textual traditions". As the term is used in the present article, it may be defined as follows. Two (or more) MSS may be said to share the same textual tradition if both (or all) could have been based upon the same original MS. It

is not necessary to show that they are actually derived from the same MS, merely that the texts are so similar that they could derive from some shared original (perhaps through several intermediary copies). Thus, scribal errors, minor scribal freedoms and peculiarities (cf. the example in Day 1978: 443), and the like are irrelevant. Indeed, within limits even a difference of metre need not mean that the textual traditions differ.² Clearly the concept is a rather loose one. While two (or more) texts which are virtually identical can easily be seen to share the same textual tradition, subjective judgements may be required about how different two versions must be before they are said to represent different textual traditions.

The new evidence which is of interest here is an India Office MS numbered IOL Jav. 36 A, described by the present writer in a recent book (cf. Ricklefs 1978: esp. 165-6, 263). This fragmentary and mis-bound *babad* appears to begin in the time of Kyai Agěng Mataram (the predecessor of Senapati Ingalaga) and ends with the fall of Plered to Trunajaya in AD 1677. It contains 348 ff. A scientific analysis of the paper (manufactured in AD 1733), the ink, the type of pen used, and the pressure and stylistic features of the copyist's hand, as well as a comparison of paleography, all lead to the conclusion that this text is contemporaneous with the *babad sangkala* MS IOL Jav. 36 B (the main subject of the book), which is dated AD 1738, and indeed that the two texts are probably from the same hand.

With IOL Jav. 36 A now identified, scholars have access to MSS of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* family from the 1730s onward. Day's analysis has extended the discussion to 1860. Thus, a comparison of texts over a much greater time span is now possible. Unfortunately, the three exercises in comparison which have so far been undertaken all concern different episodes. This writer's 1972 article used the fall of Majapahit as an example, Day's article concerns episodes which precede the fall of Majapahit, and IOL Jav. 36 A only contains episodes which follow it. Nonetheless, some significant preliminary conclusions emerge.

This writer has only undertaken a rather superficial analysis of IOL Jav. 36 A, and all suggestions here are therefore tentative. But it has been briefly compared with *Babad Kraton* (1777-8) and the Major *Babad* (1836) on three episodes, with interesting results.

For the traditions concerning Kyai Agěng Mataram and Senapati Ingalaga (cf. Ricklefs 1978: 166), IOL Jav. 36 A (ca. 1738) and the Major *Babad* (1836) appear to reflect the same textual tradition; *Babad Kraton* (1777-8) differs, and in general is briefer. For the stories con-

cerning the end of the sieges of Batavia and the execution of Sultan Agung's commander (the curious event which came to be dated AJ 1571),³ IOL Jav. 36 A, *Babad Kraton*, and the Major *Babad* all reflect the same textual tradition. For the fall of Plered in AD 1677,⁴ IOL Jav. 36 A represents one textual tradition; *Babad Kraton* and the Major *Babad* share a different tradition.

Thus, in these three *kraton* MSS spread over about a century, in the few cases which have been examined the texts seem either to be the same or to fall into two textual traditions. No case has yet appeared where they represent three different traditions. Although a considerable amount of material is concerned here, of course these conclusions cannot be said to be certain until a more definitive and detailed comparison is undertaken. The preliminary analysis of these three *babads* does, however, suggest that at least by 1777-8 and (as will be seen in the following paragraph) probably already in Kartasura times, there were two textual traditions of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* stories available in the courts. It appears from Day's table of MSS (Day 1978: 435-9) that his texts, too, never represent more than two textual traditions.

Particular importance attaches to the episode concerning the fall of Plered. Here the textual tradition found in the Major *Babad* and *Babad Kraton* is very extensive, while the IOL Jav. 36 A tradition is the briefer version. The degree to which the two traditions differ can be gauged from the fact that the period from the battle of Gogodog (Masahar) to the fall of Plered is covered in only five pages of IOL Jav. 36 A (ff. 346r.-348v.; stanzas 1-27 of the final canto of the MS), whereas in the printed text of the Major *Babad* this period occupies 25 pp. (vol. XII, pp. 7-32) and in *Babad Kraton* it occupies 28 pp. (ff. 341v.-355r.). If one assumes that a Surakarta text such as the Major *Babad* and a Yogyakarta text such as *Babad Kraton* would preserve the same textual tradition only if that tradition originated in the period before the division of Java between these two courts, then the Major *Babad*/*Babad Kraton* tradition must be from Kartasura times. Since IOL Jav. 36 A is a MS from the Kartasura period, this episode appears to confirm the existence of two textual traditions (at least for this episode) in Kartasura *Babad Tanah Jawi* MSS.

For purposes of argument, let the existence of two textual traditions within the *Babad Tanah Jawi* family be posited, and let them be called "Tradition A" and "Tradition B". No MS of either tradition exists, so far as can be known, but traces of two traditions are evident in the extant MSS. All of the MSS analyzed both by Day and by this writer

seem to be mixtures of hypothetical Traditions A and B. If, for example, one were to pretend that the version in IOL Jav. 36 A always represents Tradition A, then *Babad Kraton* appears as Tradition B on Kyai Ageng Mataram and Senapati, as A on the event of AJ 1571, and as B on the fall of Plered; the Major *Babad* appears as Tradition A on the first of these, as A on the second, and as B on the third. IOL Jav. 36 contains the oldest original *babad* MSS so far discovered, and therefore nothing at all can be demonstrated about Javanese *babads* before 1738. But it would be reasonable to guess that IOL Jav. 36 A was in fact already a mixture of hypothetical Traditions A and B.

A point of elementary logic needs to be made clear. Where IOL Jav. 36 A (ca. 1738) and the Major *Babad* (1836) represent one tradition and *Babad Kraton* (1777-8) represents another, this does not mean that the Major *Babad* necessarily carries an older version than *Babad Kraton*, for *Babad Kraton* may carry a version still older than IOL Jav. 36 A. Since parts of the Major *Babad* appear within this set of examples to be older than *Babad Kraton*, then logically parts of *Babad Kraton* could appear to be older than IOL Jav. 36 A (i.e. their antecedents could be found) if one had MSS older than 1738.

The manuscript record of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* traditions begins only ca. 1738 (although one may hope that still older MSS will one day come to light). Somewhere in the documentary vacuum which precedes this point, somewhere amongst the vast number of MSS which must have been written before this time but which are now lost, Tradition A and Tradition B presumably originated. Contemporary scholars have only rather late (1730s and after) MSS to work with, and very few even of these until after the 1770s. The preliminary analysis of IOL Jav. 36 A, *Babad Kraton*, and the Major *Babad* suggests that these texts were based upon already-established traditions, from which a selection between versions was (or had already been) made. If this is so, then one cannot arrange variants from the extant MSS by the date of their writing and hope thereby to reveal how any episode originally evolved. And if one cannot reveal when or how a variant evolved, of course one cannot establish its antiquity relative to other variants or guess what considerations led to its evolution.

On the basis of the evidence as it appears so far, there are no grounds for saying that either of the hypothetical Traditions A and B is older than the other, or more verbose than the other, or more literary, or more esteemed. They simply appear to be different. Both probably already existed in Kartasura times. Both Yogyakarta and Surakarta MSS

reflect both Tradition A and Tradition B; there is no evidence for associating either court with either of the hypothetical traditions.

It will be noted that Day's Yogyakarta MSS (one of which, *Babad Kandha*, is identified as such solely on the basis of the similarity of its contents to other Yogyakarta MSS) sometimes have the same tradition as the Surakarta Major *Babad* and sometimes differ from it (Day 1978: 435-9). Thus, in terms of the derivation of texts of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* type, there is no evidence to posit the existence of distinct traditions in these two courts.

Of course the evidence described above is still too limited to support very definite conclusions of a positive nature. It is worth noting, however, that the idea that there were two textual traditions within the *Babad Tanah Jawi* family is similar to the conclusion reached by Djajadiningrat (1913: 225-31), who also split his *Babad Tanah Jawi* texts into two groups. But Djajadiningrat's distinction is only partly the same as the distinction between textual traditions here. For instance, he includes the Major *Babad* and the Meinsma text together in his first group (Djajadiningrat 1913: 228). His attempt to identify whole MSS as belonging to either one group or the other also fails in the face of variants which appear to cross his group lines (cf. Djajadiningrat 1913: 230-1). But his general impressions clearly have something in common with those of the present writer.

A few other scholars have also examined variations in *babad* MSS, but their results contribute little to the particular issues here. Vreede's catalogue of MSS provides brief extracts from various published and MS texts on several early episodes. These generally fall into either one or two textual traditions. Unfortunately, most of these cases are inconclusive since Vreede only offers two texts for comparison (Vreede 1892: 70-7). Concerning Jaka Tingkir, Sunan Prawata, and the installation of various officials by Pakubuwana I (Vreede 1892: 101-2, 104-6, 108-9), however, the number of compared texts varies from three to six. Here again one encounters either one or two textual traditions, except in the case of the Jaka Tingkir story where there seems also to be a third textual tradition. In all of Vreede's examples, however, the extracts are too brief for the comparison of traditions to be conclusive.

Djajadiningrat split his eleven *Sajarah Bantěn* MSS into three redactions, but in fact they are all closely related to each other and it is unclear whether they represent different textual traditions at all (Djajadiningrat 1913: 2-7, and appendices for examples of texts). Kumar divides her East Javanese *babads* into two "Lines" within a

single family, plus one MS which seems to be a conflation of the two Lines (Kumar 1976: 10-16). It is not immediately clear, however, whether Kumar means two "textual traditions" as the term is used here. Her study has also produced a unique "West Javanese" text (which in fact has some East Javanese features, and the provenance of which is therefore not certain) which appears to represent another (second? third?) textual tradition (Kumar 1976: 8-10). Finally, the relationship between Kumar's MSS and Central Javanese *kraton* traditions, which seem to have much in common with her East Javanese MSS, has yet to be studied in detail (cf. Kumar 1976: 385 *et seq.*).

Vreede, Djajadiningrat, and Kumar thus offer much important material, but it has little conclusive relevance to the specific discussion here. The degree to which the analysis is complicated by considering texts from elsewhere than the Central Javanese courts is also not yet clear. The work of these scholars does, however, at least suggest that *babads* do not always represent a single textual tradition of which the extant MSS merely show variant readings, nor do they reveal such a degree of individual variety that they cannot be shown to be related to one another. This is not, however, of much direct support for the suggestion in this article that in the specific case of *Babad Tanah Jawi* stories from the courts about earlier Javanese history there appear to be two textual traditions, except for Djajadiningrat's general distinction between two groups of such stories.

If further research confirms the preliminary evidence described in this article, then the following suggestions would be implied:

(1) There were two (or, at least two?) textual traditions within the genre which is called *Babad Tanah Jawi*. Consequently, the term can only refer meaningfully to a family of texts and not to a specific text.

(2) There are no satisfactory grounds for labelling any variant found in the earlier passages of an extant *Babad Tanah Jawi* text as more original or older than any other. Day therefore has no satisfactory grounds for concluding that "a close comparative reading... shows beyond a doubt that some of the most elaborate sections of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* belong to the oldest portions of the poem which we can identify as such with certainty" (Day 1978: 446).

(3) All extant MSS of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* type may be mixtures of (at least?) these two main traditions.

(4) There is no evidence for distinguishing between a Surakarta and a Yogyakarta tradition within the *Babad Tanah Jawi* family.

(5) There is so far no evidence that any variant found in a text of

the *Babad Tanah Jawi* family concerning events before the eighteenth century is new or original to an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century scribe. Some passage which may not have an antecedent in an earlier MS known to modern scholars may nevertheless be from such a MS. Where the MSS have been compared so far, they seem to fall into two traditions and not (or, not normally?) into a larger number suggesting significant individual creativity. If this is true, then this writer was wrong to suggest that when a scribe copied one of these texts "he allowed himself considerable freedom to elaborate or alter the older versions" (Ricklefs 1972: 289), or that a difference between two texts might reflect "a change in interpretation" during a given period (Ricklefs 1972: 290); Day is equally wrong to suggest that *Babad Kraton* "was unique because of the variations introduced by the copyist" (Day 1978: 448 n. 11), or that the less ornate style of one passage "is rather a stylistic effect created by the omission of narrative and poetic embellishments" (Day 1978: 445). So far, the evidence suggests that copyists did no more than make a choice between two versions when they were available to them. Indeed, the documentary problems surrounding *Babad Tanah Jawi* MSS are such that it would be virtually impossible to demonstrate conclusively that any given passage was original, for even if it could be found in no extant antecedent MS, one could never be certain that it was not taken from some MS which is no longer extant. The choice made by a copyist from antecedent versions may be significant for understanding his (or his patron's) view of the past, but this significance cannot be defined unless one has before one the same variants which the scribe had, and understands these variations in the same way as the scribe (or his patron) understood them. When one returns to the question of what these textual variations are evidence for, at this point the conclusion can only be that the variation itself appears not to be evidence for very much at all, since one is unlikely to be able to define how or why a choice was made between antecedent variants.

(6) Although there was a shared general understanding of Java's past, there was not a single textual tradition and there is therefore little possibility of producing the critical edition of *Babad Tanah Jawi* which scholars have so long desired. There was apparently no single tradition of which a critical edition could be made. Instead, there were (at least?) two traditions, and in practice there is no means of identifying any variant of an episode as either Tradition A or Tradition B. Any attempt to do so would produce a text which in all probability

would itself be a mixture of the traditions, but now according to the taste of a modern scholar rather than a Javanese scribe.

It is clear that one is facing documentary problems of great magnitude. This writer suspects that many of the questions about *Babad Tanah Jawi* texts which one would like to answer may, in fact, be unanswerable. The available evidence has some peculiarly difficult problems. The extant MSS, the items of evidence, are limited in age and origin, and are poorly served by external controls on provenance. Yet each of these MSS tends to be of inordinate length: the Major *Babad* is published in 31 small volumes; *Babad Kraton* is 717 ff. long; IOL Jav. 36 A is 348 ff.; they are all in verse, and in one of the more difficult languages of the world. Scholars are in some danger of encountering exhaustion before enlightenment. Furthermore, these MSS were composed in a society in which the basic facts of what happened — let alone why — are only beginning to be clarified. Looking back on his own 1972 article in the light of new evidence, this writer is struck by the naiveté of its methodology. Day's discussion seems to suffer from a similar fault.

It must be emphasized that all of this has concerned only the *Babad Tanah Jawi* family of texts. Javanese historical writing is a much larger subject than this, and Javanese literature as a whole is very much larger still. There are other distinct chronicle genres. The *babad sangkala* genre is the primary focus of the present writer's recent book (Ricklefs 1978). As is also the case in Day's article and the discussion here, that book considers the issue of the transmission of older historical traditions, and the evidence considered there leads to conclusions which are quite different from the suggestions about *Babad Tanah Jawi* variants offered in this article. Other *babads* were written about events which occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and have been used by Carey and others, including the present writer, as historical sources (see esp. Carey, forthcoming, and Ricklefs 1974). The sections of *Babad Tanah Jawi* MSS which describe events in the eighteenth century are probably to be seen as analogous to these newer *babads*. Such texts raise quite different issues, for here one encounters the writing of new works to describe new occurrences, as opposed to the transmission of older traditions. There are also texts which mix what scholars regard as *babads* with things which are not usually regarded as such. British Library Add. MS 12308, for instance, contains an amalgamation of *Babad Tanah Jawi* and *Aji Saka* stories.⁵ As Day and

this writer have both observed, *Baron Sakendher* stories are also found in *Babad Tanah Jawi* MSS. Such texts sometimes raise questions about what Javanese scribes understood the boundaries of the *babad* genre to be.

Given the documentary problems involved in the study of *Babad Tanah Jawi* texts, it is inevitable that some false turnings will be taken. This writer's article of 1972 contained such false turnings, Day's article does as well, and this present article may also prove to have them. This writer has indeed devoted considerable time to the investigation of what seems to be a wrong turning, albeit one of some significance. Beginning with the discovery of *Babad Kraton* in the British Museum (now British Library) some twelve years ago, he felt that much light might be shed on the evolution of early *Babad Tanah Jawi* traditions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the location and study of older MSS. As will be clear from the present article, the discovery of IOL Jav. 36 A has now led him to doubt whether these early *Babad Tanah Jawi* traditions can be said to have evolved at all during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Whatever the case, he has come, to doubt whether there are any acceptable means to establish the antiquity of the various versions of the early *Babad Tanah Jawi* stories.

In this writer's view, more certainty about the questions raised in this article will only be possible after many more MSS have been studied in detail. It will be necessary for the provenance and antiquity of all such MSS to be identified precisely. Given the rarity of older (pre-1770s) MSS, the relative rarity of precise controls upon antiquity and provenance, and the general ignorance which still surrounds Javanese history and literature, much preliminary work will be needed before MSS can even be satisfactorily identified in significant numbers. The use of scientific analyses of paper, inks, etc., and a much more rigorous investigation of the history of Javanese paleography would be the first basic steps. And when the MSS have been identified, and the thousands of pages have been turned, compared, and analyzed, this writer fears that the conclusions might still be those which are suggested above: that the early stories in the extant MSS of the *Babad Tanah Jawi* family reflect selections among variants which were established in the period before the run of MSS begins. If this should prove true, then a great deal of effort will have been invested for a very small result. Students of *babad* literature will not, however, find this to be a unique experience.

NOTES

- ¹ I presume that Day's article had progressed too far for any reference to this book to be added.
- ² See Day 1978: 436, 440, where he points out that *Babad Kandha* has a passage in Pangkur metre which seems to be essentially the same as a *Babad Kraton* passage in Durma metre.
- ³ See Ricklefs 1978: 250 *et seqq.* A part of the *Babad Kraton* text immediately prior to this passage is printed in Ricklefs 1974: 356-7 n. 42 (the canto is incorrectly numbered LIX there, whereas it should be LXIII).
- ⁴ See Ricklefs 1978: 184 n. 140. In Ricklefs 1974: 180-1 n. 20, readers will find parts of the *Babad Kraton* and Major *Babad* passages; the latter is abbreviated *BTdj(BP)*.
- ⁵ See Ricklefs 1974a: 242-4. The MS was written in Yogyakarta in AD 1813.

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