The song of Samsu Tabriz in Ronggasasmita’s Suluk Acih

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ABSTRACT

The article contributes an excerpt from the Karaton Surakarta poet Ronggasasmita’s Suluk Kutub (also known as Suluk Samsu Tabriz) along with an annotated translation of the text into English. Suluk Kutub is one of the metaphysical poems that belong to this Sufi poet’s Suluk Acih, a text that he compiled in Aceh in 1815. The poem is a Javanese rendition of the meeting of Jalaluddin Rumi (Jav. Mulana Amir Kaji Rum) with his beloved, Shamsuddin Tabrizi (Jav. Samsu Tabriz). The commentary forms a short meditation on, and guide to, the specific practices of translating Javanese poetry into English – performed in part in dialogue with Ronggasasmita.

KEYWORDS

Javanese literature; Islam; Sufism; suluk; Ronggasasmita; Samsu Tabriz; translation; transmission.

INTRODUCTION

This excerpt is drawn from the opening section of Suluk Kutub (The song of the Axial Saint), a Sufi poem that tells the story of the meeting of Sheikh Samsu Tabriz with the king of Rum (Turkey). Though more famously known as the Persian teacher and beloved of the renowned thirteenth-century Anatolian poet Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), Shamsuddin Tabrizi is here presented as

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a Javanese saint who suddenly plops down in the sacred mosque of Mecca in the form of a naked three-year-old boy. The child engages the “Hajji King of Rum” (the Rumi figure) in a metaphysical debate of sorts. The tiny child eventually wins the debate, first by posing questions that the learned king cannot understand and then by manifesting himself as the embodied truth of a form of experiential knowledge of the Absolute that the bookish Maulana Rum could never have imagined. This excerpt is from the opening section of the suluk: it begins with a brief introduction of Samsu Tabriz as a Javanese saint, continues with the tale of his arrival in Mecca and his meeting with the King of Rum and, finally, recounts the opening section of their debate.

_Suluk Kutub_ belongs to a compilation of suluk (Sufi songs) titled _Suluk Acih_ (The songs of Aceh) that were compiled and, at least sometimes, composed by the Surakartan court poet Mas Ronggasasmita in 1815, at a time he found himself stranded in Aceh in the course of an interrupted hajj. A son of Yasadipura II, Ronggasasmita was a member of the prolific Yasadipuran family that was at the heart of literary production in the early nineteenth-century Surakartan Kadipaten. Ronggasasmita, an uncle of the _pujongga_ Ronggawarsita, was deeply involved in the Shattariyah _tarekat_ and was almost certainly exiled along with Ronggawarsita’s father in 1828 for covert participation in the rebellion of the Yogyakartan Prince Dipanagara (Florida 2019: 153-184). Ronggasasmita’s version of _Suluk Kutub_ forms a significant reworking and expansion upon an earlier rendering of the tale in macapat verse. That earlier version dates back to at least the early eighteenth century and can be found in a manuscript that was produced for the Kartasuran queen Ratu Mas Blitar in 1729-1730.2 In addition to _Suluk Acih_, Ronggasasmita authored _Serat Walisana_, a history of the early period of Islamization in Java and a work that incorporates several of the suluk from _Suluk Acih_.3

This excerpt is taken from a manuscript witness of _Suluk Acih_ that is stored in the Karaton Surakarta. The manuscript, which is comprised of some seventeen suluk texts in 2822 lines of verse, was inscribed in 1867 on commission of Ingkang Sinuhun Kangjeng Susuhunan (ISKS) Pakubuwana IX (r. 1861-1893). In the preface to the compilation, the copyist reveals that Pakubuwana IX produced this codex in order that the hearts of those who are “clouded by forgetfulness, puzzled by profundity” may be “opened and filled”. The manuscript is inscribed in Karaton Surakarta Kadipaten script, on paper that is now very darkened and brittle with age (see Figure 1).4

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2 This version, which is discussed by M. C. Ricklefs (1998: 108-110), is found in Radya Pustaka MS. 348 (1729-30: 48-51).
3 Ronggasasmita (1955).
4 M. Ronggasasmita, _Suluk Acih_ compiled in Aceh, 1815; inscribed in the Karaton Surakarta, 1867. MS. KS 502/Sasana Pustaka 15 Ca. For a fuller description of the manuscript and its contents, see Florida (1993: 280-283).
Figure 1. M. Ronggasasmita, *Suluk Kutub (Suluk Seh Samsu Tabriz)*, composed in Aceh, 1815; inscribed in the Karaton Surakarta, 1867. MS. KS 502/Sasana Pustaka 15 Ca: 34.
The Excerpt: The first 31 stanzas of Mas Ronggasasmita’s 72-stanza Suluk Kutub (also known as Suluk Seh Samsu Tabriz) from a Suluk Acih witness that was inscribed on commission of ISKS Pakubuwana IX (r. 1861-1893) in the Karaton Surakarta in 1867 (MS KS 502/Sasana Pustaka 15 Ca): 34-46.\(^5\)

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Gambuh

7u, 10u/12i/8u, 8o

1. Wontĕn malih kojah ingsun*
lah ta iki carita Wali Kutub**
saking Jawi nama Seh Sangsu Tabariz***
langkung wantĕr tekadipun
tur karamate kinaot

2. Myang warnanira bagus
dĕdĕg pidĕksa rada arangkung
alalana mring Ngarab pindha rarya lit

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Gambuh\(^6\)

(Melodic mood is vibrant and rather brash)

1. I’ve yet another tale to tell –
this, the story of the Axial Saint:7
from Java he came; Seh Samsu Tabriz, his name.8
Most bold were his convictions,9
and his powers,10 unsurpassed.

2. And very handsome, he was
elegant, stately, tall and slender,
wandering far\(^11\) to Arabia in the form of a little
boy,
who was but three years of age,
and was completely naked too.

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5 With variant readings from renditions of the text found in Sĕrat Suluk warni-warni, compiled by Sĕmantri (Surakarta, 1886), MS. RP 332: 57-67; Sĕrat Suluk warni-warni tuwin wirid Syattariyah, compiled by K.G.P.H. Cakradiningrat (Surakarta, 1864), MS. RP 333: 70-83; and Soeloek Samsoe Tabarit, in Drewes (1930: 267-330). For variant readings of the Javanese lines marked with asterisk, see “Notes to Javanese Text” following the excerpt and translation.

6 In Gambuh verse, the melodic form “tends” to divide the five-line stanza into three semantic units: lines 1-2, line 3, lines 4-5. The divisions fall where the singer would take her breath.

7 The Axial Saint (Wali Qutb) is the polar saint about whom the whole world revolves. There is said to be one in every age.

8 The historical Sheikh Shams al-Din Tabrizi (ca. 1185-ca. 1247) was a learned scholar and Sufi dervish who became the beloved muse and teacher of Jalal al-Din Mohammad b. Mohammad al-Balkhi al-Rumi (Jalaluddin Rumi [1207-1273]). Shams was born in the city of Tabriz in what is now northwestern Iran. According to hagiographical traditions, he met Rumi in the Anatolian city of Konya in 1244. For full biographical details, see Lewis (2000: 134-202).

9 Alternative translations of the line would be, ’Most determined was his resolve’ or ’Most intense, his grasp of Knowledge’. Indeed, while the word tekad, which I translate here as ‘convictions’, is more commonly understood as ‘resolve’ or ‘daring’ in contemporary Javanese usage, I have come to note, however, that tekad, in suluk literature often means something different from, or much more than, the tekad (resolve) of ordinary usage. Originally from the Arabic i’itiqād (’belief’ or ‘doctrine’), or, as William Chittick says in his Sufi path of knowledge, “a knot tied in the heart” (Chittick 1989: 335), the sense of the word tekad in suluk often connotes something like ’spiritual understanding’ or ’grasp of esoteric knowledge’. It can also denote [religious or spiritual] persuasion[s]’ or ‘principle[s]’. See, for example, the debate on tekad among the various wali in Suluk Musawarat, another of the Suluk Acih compilation (KS 502: 61-67). At times, the word tekad also appears to connote ’behavior, action, or practice’.

10 The word translated as ‘powers’ is kramat (Ar. karāma). Kramat denotes preternatural powers that emanate from, or can be miraculously produced by, a spiritually empowered individual or thing.

11 Rendered as ‘wandering far’ is the word alalana, a word that connotes purposeful wandering,
3. Ing praptanira nuju
ari Ju/mngah pĕpak kang pra kaum (35)
myang ulama lĕbe modin lawan kĕtip*
muwah saleh para jamhur
neng mafṣljiḍ dil kharam kono
3. Now, his coming fell upon
a Friday, when all of the observant,12
and the ulama, lĕba, modin and kĕtip,13
with the pious and the learned,14 were
in the sacred Mosque of Mecca15 yon,

4. Lan pandhita gung-agung
miwah Mulana Amir Khaji Rum
dereng kondur demnya saking munggah kaji
ing ari Jumngah kumpul
kang rare prapta dumrojog
4. with the greatest of the scholars,16
and the Mulana Hajji King of Rum,17
[who’d] yet to return from making his hajj.
On that Friday they were gathered,
when the child appeared, a sudden,

5. Tanpa larapan uluk
ing salame asalam ngalekum
ya tuwanku Mulana Rum Amir Khaji
lan para jumngah* sadarum
pan samya jawab gumoroh
5. without warning, tendering
greetings, “Asalam ngalekum,”18
my Lord, Mulana Hajji King of Rum,19
and all ye that are gathered here”.20
All of them answered, thundering:

6. Ya ngalayi salamu
eh ralya-lit linggihia sireku
lajĕng lĕnggah ing ngarsane Amir Khaji
ngandika Sang Mulana Rum
eh para jumngah sapa wroh
6. “Yea, ngalayi salamu.21
Hey, little boy, it’s well you take a seat.”
So he sat down in front of the Hajji King.
The Mulana of Rum then spoke,
“O, all ye assembled, who among you knows

often in search of metaphysical knowledge (ngelmu).
12 The word translated as ‘the observant’ is kaum, a word that without a modifier usually means
the “professional” Muslim religious community, those who live about the mosque, and can be
“hired” to perform prayers.
13 I have chosen not to translate these technical terms, designating different officials among the
Muslim religious. The ulama are ‘the [religious] learned’; in Javanese, the ulama are usually
understood as those learned in Islamic law or fikh, those who are qualified to give juridical
opinions, or fatwa. The lĕba are mosque officials, whose duties often include record-keeping.
The modin are the mosque officials who call the faithful to prayer. The kĕtib (khatib) are the
readers (and the preachers) in the mosque.
14 The word translated as ‘the pious’ is saleh and the word translated as ‘the learned’ is jamhur.
15 The Meccan Mosque, the Mesjid al-Ḥarām that surrounds the sacred cube (the Ka’ba) toward
which all Muslims orient their prayers, forms the holiest site in Islam.
16 The word translated as ‘[Muslim] scholars’ is pandhita, a Sanskrit word that usually, but
certainly not always, indicates non-Islamic priests.
17 Maulana/Mulana is a Muslim religious leader, sometimes rendered in English as mullah. The
word translated here as ‘King’ is amir (Prince or King). A hajji is one who has performed the
pilgrimage to Mecca. Rum is (Ottoman) Turkey. This is the Rumi figure: Maulana Jalaluddin
Rumi (1207-1273). According to hagiographical traditions Rumi and Shamsuddin Tabrizi met
not in Mecca, but in Konya.
18 The child tenders, in Arabic, the standard Muslim greeting assalam[u] alaikum.
19 The child addresses the Hajji King as tuwanku (‘My Lord’); the register is krama.
20 The texts of both RP 332 and RP 333 have nujum (fortune teller; one who divines fortunes
from the stars), instead of jumngah (those assembled for Friday prayer). The tone of Samsu
Tabriz’s question, of course, in considerably different in the two versions.
21 Those assembled in the Mosque respond to the child, in Arabic, with an approximation of
the standard response, ngalaikum salam.
7. Rare kang darbe sunu
para jumngah sadaya umatur
dluh pukulun datan wontën kang udani
sudarmeng rare puniku
ing Ngarab ngriki tan tumon

7. just whose son this child could be?”
All those assembled there did answer,
“O, Majesty, there’s none who knows
the father of this child in Arabia here, he is unknown.

8. Inggih prayoginipun
tuw an dangu pribadi puniku
asalipun rare saking ing ing-ngendi
ngandika Amir Kaji Rum
eh thole ingsun tatakon

8. And so indeed, it would be best
that my Lord do ask of him yourself
from whence it is the child does come.”
The Hajji King of Rum then spoke,
“Hey little one; I ask you now

9. Ing ngendi pinanangkamu
dene tan para larapan praptamu (36)
lare matur ya Tuwanku Amir Khaji
dereng purun jarwa ulun
purwane ing praptaning ngong

9. from whence it is you come –
for your coming caught us unawares.”
Humbly did the boy answer, “Oh, my Lord, King
Hajji,
I’m not yet willing to reveal
just how I’ve come to be here.

10. Amba tanya rumuhun
lawan para saleh para jamhur
angandika Mulana Rum Amir Khaji
yo thole apa karëpmu
abëcik takona mring ngong

10. First, let me put a question to
all the pious and all the learned here.”
Then spoke the Mulana Hajji King of Rum,
“Now, boy, whatever you will,
’tis well, then, that you ask me:

11. Apa kang dadi luhung
apadene mas’alah ing ngelmu
ingkang ngékak miwah ingkang gaip-gaip
kang ra[rm]ya lit alon matur
gampil tuwan yen wus sagoh

11. whether it be matters high and noble
or matters of knowledge (ngelmu) that concern
Ultimate Truth (ngékak) and the Innermost of
Mysteries (gaip-gaip).”
The tiny child then softly said,
“That’s easy, Sir, since you agree.

22 Translation note: this line points in two directions, serving as the predicate of the previous
line and the subject of the following one.
23 The endearment ‘little one’ is a translation of thole. The word thole (from konthole ['his penis'])
is a common endearment for little boys.
24 At the outset of their dialogue, the king of Rum refers to himself with the first-person personal
pronoun ingsun that is normally reserved for kings and God. He speaks “down” (ngandika)
to the child, in the register of ngoko. The child Samsu Tabriz speaks “up” (matur) to the king,
addressing him in krama inggil. For himself, he uses the krama andhap first person personal
pronoun ulun in the first instance and the kawi ngong (sometimes used to speak “down”) in the
second. In this early part of the dialogue, the King consistently speaks “down” to the child in
ngoko, while the child, inconsistently, speaks “up” to the king in krama and in ngoko basa-antya.
This speech pattern continues up through stanza 19.
25 The word kak (Ar. haqq) designates the ultimate truth and the ultimate reality that belong to
God. The Javanese gaip-gaip (Ar. ghayb, the unseen) here, and elsewhere, indicates the innermost
mysteries of the divine in His hiddenness.
12. Dene têtaken* ulun
gaibing Allah lan malihipun
gaib ingkang Mukhamad inggih kang
pundi**
ngandika Amir Khaji Rum
eh jabang yen sirarsa wroh***

12. My question then is this:
the Innermost Mystery of God, and
the Mystery of Muhammad – where and what are
they?” 26
Spoke the Hajji King of Rum,
“O child,27 since you’d like to know –

13. Gaibing Allah iku
pan Mukhamad de Mukhamad iku
il ha’ibing pan iya Allah sayêkti*
iku yen sirarsa wêruh
rare gumujêng turnya lon

13. the Innermost Mystery of God
is Muhammad, whereas Muhammad is
the Mystery, indeed, of God, in truth.
There it is, since you wished to know.”
The child laughed, his words were soft,

14. Dhu tuwanku nateng Rum
tuwin para jumngah para jamhur
panjawabe Mukamad ghaibing Widdhi
kaakên punapa iku
Mukamade ing Ywang Manon*

14. “O, my Lord, Ruler of Rum,
and all ye assembled, ye learned,
you answer that Muhammad is the Mystery of
the Almighty – 28
acknowledged, then, as what
is Muhammad (of/to/by) All-Seeing God?29

15. Punapa/dene lamun (37)
Allah ingaran gaibing Rasul
Allah iku kaakên apating nabi*
eh thole ingsun tan ngrungu
kaya ujarmu mĕngkono

15. And the same goes for this: if
God is called the Mystery of the Messenger,
then what (to/of/by) the Prophet is God claimed
to be? 30
“Hey, little one, never have I heard
the likes of what you say!

16. Mara jarwa gupuh
sêka ngêndi pinangkanireku
rare matur ya tuwan Mulana Khaji
dereng purun jaraca ulun
malih amba atêtakon

16. Hurry now, do tell us
from whence it is you’ve come.”
The child replied, “O, my Lord, Mulana Hajji,
not yet willing am I to reveal.
Rather I’d put a question again

26 The Javanese kang pundi includes the senses both of where and what.
27 Rendered as ‘child’ is jabang (infant, newborn baby); in the RP 333 and Drewes readings, the
king addresses Samsu ‘Tabriz as ‘dwarf’ (bajang).
28 Translated as ‘the Almighty’ is Widdhi, a Kawi word used to indicate the greatest of the gods.
29 The final two lines of stanza 14 are extremely difficult to translate. Alternatively, they may
be read: ‘What is Muhammad recognized to be in relation to (or by) All-Seeing God?’; ‘What
then is the Muhammad of All-Seeing God claimed to be?’; or ‘What then does All-Seeing God
recognize this Muhammad to be?’ In the variant reading of these lines in RP 333 (kaangkĕn
punapa iku / Mukhamad dening Hyang Manon), the meaning tends more toward: ‘Acknowledged
then as what / is Muhammad by All-Seeing God?’ Translated as ‘All-Seeing God’ is the Kawi
Ywang Manon.
30 The translation of lines 2-3 of stanza 15 is, again, difficult. Alternatively, when read together
these lines could be glossed: ‘God is recognized to be what [in relation] to/by/ of the Prophet?’
Both of these questions (What is Muhammad to God? and What is God to Muhammad?) ask
the king – and the readers – to reflect upon how we are to understand the relationship between
God and the Prophet – and, by extension, the relationship between God and man.
17. Ing tuwan Sang Amir Rum
miweh para saleh para jamhur
salat jumungah kang tuwan sĕmbah punapi
lawan salat limang wĕktu
ulun arsa wruh kang yĕktos
17. to you, my Lord, O Prince of Rum,
and to you, ye pious and learned ones:
in your Friday prayers (salat), to whom is it
you pray?
And in your daily prayers of five?
This I’d like to know in truth.”

18. Ngandika Sang Amir Rum
tuwin para jumungah sadarum*
iya thole sun salat jumungah iki
lawan salat limang wĕktu
tan liyan nĕmbah Hyang Manon
18. Then spoke the Prince of Rum,
along with all those gathered there,
“Indeed, little one, in my Friday prayers
and in my daily prayers of five,
none do I worship save All-Seeing God.

19. Lamun nora kadyeku
nora ĕsah sĕmbah pujinipun
wus mutamat ingkang iki dalil kadis*
kang ralya lit duk angrungu
guguk wĕntise den-ĕntrog
19. For were it any other
invalid would be that worship, that prayer.
For thus it is ordained in the Qur’an and Hadith.”
The little child, when he heard this,
guffawed and slapped his thigh,

20. Sun sidhĕp tan kadyeku
ya tuwanku mulana nateng Rum
ing panĕmbah tuwan anĕmbah Ywang
Widdhi
luwih saking sewu luput
prasasat nĕmbah ing dhe/yos (38)
20. “I do not think it to be like that,
my Lord, Mulana King of Rum.
The prayers you pray to Almighty God
are a thousand times wrong and more –
‘tis the like of praying to idols.33

31 Salat (Ar. ṣalāt) are the canonical prayers (practices of worship) that, as one of the “pillars of practice”, must be performed in a prescribed manner according to strict rules by every observant Muslim at five specified times every day. The Friday noon salat should be performed in the mosque in the company of other members of the Muslim community.
32 Although the question is put to (and, it is written, answered by) the king and all the assembled worshippers, the answer is in the singular voice of the king owing to the first-person singular pronoun (ing) sun in the third line.
33 There is a marked shift in register in this stanza on the part of Samsu Tabriz: The child abruptly speaks down to the king in a mixture of ngoko and madya krama, while, for the first time, using the royal (ing) sun first-person pronoun for himself. The child’s tone is cheeky and rather coarse. The king, however, does not respond in shifting his register, but rather continues mostly in ngoko to the child with krama inggil references for himself. And yet his language is growing more respectful in tone. This speech pattern continues through stanza 30. According to Gericke and Roorda (GR) and Poerwadarminta, these deyos would be Chinese idols (GR I 1901: 598; Poerwadarminta 1939: 103). Gericke and Roorda note that deyos is derived from the Spanish dios (god). Edwin Wieringa, however, has suggested to me that it is much more likely to have been adopted from the Portuguese (and Latin) deus (personal communication, June 2021).
21. Panĕmbah tuwan ngawur
siya-siya tan wrin gĕnahipun
ing asale sĕmbah tuwan saking pundi
dhatĕng pundi purugipun
pundi ĕnggon ing Hyang Manon

21. Your worship, Sir, is such a sham.\textsuperscript{34}
It is worthless,\textsuperscript{35} for you don’t understand
from whence your worship comes,
and whither it is going,
and where Almighty God does dwell.”

22. Dhĕlĕg Amir Kaji Rum
para jamhur kapeh ting palinguk
dennya kaluhura[n] sabda lan ralya lit
dangu-dangu mojar sang Rum
ya thole ingsun tan wĕroh

22. Stunned was the Hajji King of Rum,
and the learned ones, left slack-jawed,
bested by the words of a little boy.
Finally, Noble Rum did speak,
“Yea, little one, I do not know

23. Ing ĕnggon ing Ywang Agung
paraning sĕmbah ingsun tan wĕruh
miwah witing sĕmbah ingsun tan udani
nulya rare iku muwus
eh tuwan-ku Rum kang katong

23. where it is the Almighty dwells.
Whither my prayers, I do not know.
And from whence my prayers, I’m unaware.”
At that the child then did declare,
“Hey, my Lord, you King of Rum,

24. Miwah pra saleh jamhur
pangucape kaya rare timur
anggurayang tanana ingkang amirib
anuji nĕmbah Ywang Agung
tuwan jarwakna maring ngong

24. and all ye pious learned ones,
you speak like little children,\textsuperscript{36}
groping about, there’s none of you that’s meet
in your worship of Almighty God.\textsuperscript{37}
Now, Sir, just explain to me –

25. Kaakĕn apa iku*
Allah dene paduka Amir Rum
angandika molana Rum Amir Khaji
ya kunthing marna sun sĕbut
sun mulya-mulya Ywang Manon

25. what, then, is considered to be
God, (to/by) you, my Lord, O honoured
Prince of Rum?”\textsuperscript{38}
Spake the Mulana, Rum’s Hajji King,
“See here, dwarfling, I do call to
and do praise Almighty God

\textsuperscript{34}The word translated as ‘sham’ is ngawur, a word with no English equivalent. In at least one sense of ngawur, to ngawur is to do something pretending that one knows what one is doing, when that is not at all the case. In order to ngawur, however, one needs to have enough knowledge of the practice to “fake it, to get away with it, to pull it off”. An alternative translation would be, ‘Your worship, Sir, is bullshit’. For a consideration of the kind of “bullshit” this would be, see Frankfurt (2005).

\textsuperscript{35}The compound word siya-siya here is used in its Malay sense as ‘worthless’ or ‘in vain’. This repeats the usage in the 1729–1730 version of the poem. See Suluk Seh Samsu Tabred, in Sĕrat Ngusulbiyah lan sapanunggulanipun: Yasan-dalĕm Kangjĕng Ratu Mas Balitar, compiled and inscribed Kartasura, 1729-1730. MS. RP 348: 49.

\textsuperscript{36}Note the change in register. The child Samsu Tabriz is now addressing the king and the company of worshippers predominately in ngoko, thus speaking “down” to them.

\textsuperscript{37}Alternatively: ‘There’s none of you that’s meet / to worship Almighty God’.

\textsuperscript{38}Or: ‘What, then, acknowledged to be is God (by/to) you, my Lord, O honoured Prince of Rum?’ In effect, by asking the king how he understands his relation to God, the child repeats, in a more personal register, the questions he put forward in stanzas 14 and 15.
26. Ya dene gawe ingsun lawan gawe manungsa sadarum andadekkĕn bale aran buni langit /miwah ing saisininipun (39) dinadekakĕn Hyang Manon*

26. because He did create me and did create all mankind; He made the chambers called heaven and earth, and everything they do contain\(^{39}\) were made by the Almighty.

27. Myang swarga narakeku awal akir lahir batin iku nora liyan kabet titah ing Ywang Widdhi rare alit asru guguk alt gĕnah apa Sang Katong

27. And heaven and hell, beginning and end, outside and inside – all these are none other than the creations of the Lord.\(^{40}\) The little boy howled with laughter, “Ah! What’s this, Your Majesty?”

28. Pangucapira iku para saleh tuwin para jamhur pamuwuse tanana ingkang pĕrmati moreg mung pijĕr katungkul padha dhikir lenggak-lenggok

28. These words that are uttered by all the pious and the learned – there’s nothing discerning in what they say: rocking to and fro, ever consumed in zikir,\(^{41}\) their heads swinging back and forth,

29. Pijër sujud arukuk wus marĕm sĕmbah ing pujinipun tangeh lamun praptaa ingkang ginaib pĕngrasane wus pinunjul tanana grahiteng batos

29. always bowing and prostrating themselves,\(^{42}\) satisfied with their prayers, their worship; there’s not a chance they’ll ever reach the Hiddenness.\(^{43}\) Thinking themselves already arrived, none understanding the depths within.

30. Eh Mulana Kaji Rum tuwin para saleh para jamhur* rare alit kewala pasthi udani kang kaya ujarmu iku yen kabet titah Ywang Manon

30. Hey! Mulana Hajji Rum and all ye pious, all ye learned, any little child is sure to already know the likes of what you say – that God created everything.

\(^{39}\) This line faces in both directions – serving as part of the predicate of the first words of the preceding line (“He made...”) and, at the same time, as the subject of the line that follows (“Were made by the Almighty”).

\(^{40}\) Note here the marvellous metaphysical multivocality of the word titah. While titah means ‘creature[s]’, it also indicates ‘the word or command (of God)’, reminding us of the Quranic kun fa-yakūnu (‘Be! and it becomes’). The Javanese titah thus affirms in a single word the direct creative power of God’s Word. I am grateful to Edwin Wieringa for reminding me of the metaphysical import of this particular instance of multivocality (personal communication, June 2021).

\(^{41}\) The practice of zikir comprises the repetition of set formulae (such as la illaha illallah) accompanied by prescribed bodily movements and breath control.

\(^{42}\) The prostration (sujud) and the bowing (rukuk) are prescribed movements/positions in the performance of canonical prayer (salat).

\(^{43}\) That is, the Mystery, the truth that is Hidden within each man (ginaib).
31. But all of you are surely shams, saying you know not the end, the way.”

32. The king spoke humbly, “O my Lord, sweet child, Majesty, please, reveal it now– from whence, in truth, my Lord, you come.”

32. Then declared Seh Samsu Tabariz, “Hey, Mulana Hajji Rum, from ‘who knows – who could ever know’ come I. Nothing was created yet – I was the first to come to be,

33. the deepest Mystery of One; before Allah and His Prophet came to be – they were not yet – I was first to come to be. I am He that is still more high than the whole of all creation.”

***

In the Javanese text above left, the symbol ( / ) marks page breaks in the primary manuscript (page number in parenthesis at the end of the line). The asterisk ( * ) after a word or at the end of a line indicates the presence of a variant reading or readings from the other manuscripts/ texts consulted.

The primary manuscript consulted:
KS 502. MS inscribed for ISKS Pakubuwana IX at the Karaton Surakarta in 1867 (Florida 1993: 280-283).

Other manuscripts/texts consulted:
RP 332. MS inscribed by Sĕmantri in Surakarta, 1886 (Florida 2012: 238-240).
RP 333. MS inscribed by R. Panji Jayaasmara for K.G.P.H. Cakradiningrat in Surakarta, 1864 (Florida 2012: 240-245).
Drewes edition. Compiled by G.W.J. Drewes from six MSS of undetermined provenance (Drewes 1930: 290-317).

44 The word whose sense I take as ‘being a sham’ is ngawur; see note to stanza 21 above.
45 That way, that end (paran) would be man’s way from his origin in God and the way of return back to Him, that is, the end – and the beginning.
46 Following this lengthy rebuke from the learned child, there is a sudden shift in register on the part of the hajji king: the king now “speaks humbly up” (matur) to the child in the register of krama inggil, addressing the boy as ‘majesty’ (paduka). For the remainder of the dialogue, Samsu Tabriz’s “speaking down” to the king intensifies: he addresses the king in ngoko lugu, addressing him as sira, while referring to himself with the royal ingsun, the imperious ingong, and, occasionally, the intimate mami. Their roles and positions have been reversed. Alternative translation for the final line: ‘What is your true origin’?
47 That is the ghaibul guyub, the “coming together” of the Mystery or the Hiddenness of the One.
48 Translated as ‘high’ is the Javanese mulya (august, exalted, noble, splendid, glorious).
Stanza 1
* The line has one too many syllables. Variant reading, RP 333 (70) and Drewes (292): lah iki kojahingsun.
** The line has one too many syllables. Variant reading, RP 333 (70) and Drewes (292): wontén caritaning wali kutub.
*** Variant reading, RP 333 (70): Seh Samsu Tabriz. Drewes (292): Samsu Tabarit.

Stanza 3
* Variant reading, RP 333 (71): myang ngulama lève modin marbot këtib.

Stanza 5
* Variant readings, RP 332 (58) and RP 333 (71): nujum, instead of jumngah.

Stanza 8
* Variant reading, RP 333 (71): asalipun pun rare saking ing ngêndi. Drewes (294): asalipun pun rare saking ing pundi.

Stanza 10
* Variant reading, RP 333 (72) and Drewes (294): lawan para jumngah sadarum.

Stanza 11
* Variant readings, RP 332 (58), RP 333 (72), Drewes (294): Apa kang adiluhung.

Stanza 12
* Variant reading, RP 333 (72): patakon, instead of tĕtaken. Drewes (294): patanyan.
** Variant reading, RP 333 (72) and Drewes (296): gaibing Mukhamad punika kang pundi.
*** Variant reading, RP 333 (72) and Drewes (296): mesĕm ngandika Amir Rum/ eh bajang yen sira tan wroh.

Stanza 13
* Variant readings, MS RP 332 (59): ing ghæbing pan iya Allah sayêkti; and Drewes (296): ing ghæibe pan iya Mukhamad sayêkti; RP 333 (73): ing ghæibe pan iya Mukhamad yêkti.

Stanza 14
* Alternative transliteration: Mukamad de ing Ywang Manon. Variant reading, RP 333 (73) and Drewes (296): kaangkên punapa iku/ Mukhamad dening Hyang Manon.

Stanza 15
*Variant reading, RP 333 (73): Allah iku kang kênapa dening nabi; Drewes (296): Allah kaakên punapa dening nabi.

Stanza 18
* Variant reading, RP 333 (73) and Drewes (296): saha para saleh para jamhur.
Stanza 19
* Variant reading, RP 333 (74) and Drewes (298): *wus muhtamad kang muni ing dalil kadis.*

Stanza 25
* Variant reading, RP 333 (75): *Kaangkĕn napā iku*; Drewes (300): *Kaakĕn apa iku.*

Stanza 26
* The stanza is repeated in the primary manuscript, the second time with a minor correction, that is, the addition of the *ing*, in the penultimate line.

Stanza 30
* Variant reading, RP 333 (75) and Drewes (302): *miwah para jumungah sadarum.*

**Commentary**

It seems fitting to begin this commentary with a brief note on some of the principles that guide my practice of translation. These principles are, in part, extrapolated from the words of the author of the excerpted *suluk* above. In another of the *suluk* that belongs to the same compilation of metaphysical teachings, Ronggasasmita provides his readers with specific principles to guide the “correct” reading of difficult texts. He then discusses the connection between adherence to those principles and the permissible transmission of esoteric knowledge. Translation may be rightly thought to be a particularly intense, and possibly perverse, form of reading. It is certainly tied to knowledge transmission.

I have drawn these principles from the closing stanzas of *Suluk martabat sanga* (The song of the nine levels), a text that concerns the nine levels of being encompassed by the Prophet Muhammad. In these stanzas, Ronggasasmita addresses four admonitions to those who would come after him – his future readers. The admonitions concern the reception and dissemination of the Sufi teachings that his poetry discloses. Ronggasasmita cautions his readers to be discrete (*den-agĕmi*), thoughtful (*den-nastiti*), diligent (*den-tabĕri*), and careful (*den-ati-ati*) with this esoteric knowledge. By exercising discretion, he means that readers need to hold it fast, that is, to keep these teachings to themselves, to be ever judicious in choosing with whom to share the knowledge. By practicing thoughtfulness, he means that his readers should exercise the bravery and strength of will that is necessary to hold to these teachings both “inside and outside”, both in their spiritual practices and in their worldly pursuits. Before turning at last to the need for carefulness, Ronggasasmita spills by far the most ink on the merits of diligence; and it is from his musings on the meaning of diligence that I have distilled the principles that guide my practice of translation. For in this *suluk*, Ronggasasmita explores diligence specifically as a form of reading practice.

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49 Ronggasasmita, *Suluk martabat sanga*, in *Suluk Acih* (inscribed on commission of ISKS Pakubuwana IX, in the Karaton Surakarta, 1867), MS. KS 502/Sasana Pustaka 15 Ca: 46-55. The principles and the discussion are to be found in stanzas 67-85, at the end of the eighty-five-stanza poem.
In his directives on diligence, Ronggasasmita begins by admonishing his readers that it is of utmost importance to study the “venerable laid-by works” (the \(\text{lĕpiyan}\)), that is, those works that have been laid aside to be venerated but perhaps are no longer read. For him, it is imperative that they be taken off the shelf, opened, and read with careful attention – if possible, he says, one should read them both day and night.\(^5\) He goes on to tell us to “study [them] with utmost loving care” and to “taste and feel the meaning (\(\text{murad}\)) and the (intended) sense (\(\text{maksud}\))”.\(^5\) Indeed, he calls us to active participation in the “making sense” of what we are reading. “Draw them together (that is, the thoughts inscribed in the text and those developing in the understanding of the disciplined reader), daring to bring out the sense.”\(^5\) In effect, he invites, even demands, readers (and, by extension, translators) to engage in reciprocal dialogue with his works in order to bring forth their meaning. He also calls readers to attend to the difficulty of these works, cautioning us that it is not only those passages that are immediately apprehended as complex whose meaning can be tricky. The apparent “easy marks” too can just as well trip one up.\(^5\) In short, he admonishes us, his readers, both to take the time to recognize complexity (especially when it is not immediately evident) and to sweat out the meanings that we participate in making.

Ronggasasmita then goes on to remind those who would come after him that successful, meaningful textual interpretation, or the making of deeper sense from what we read, requires a foundation of knowledge that can only be acquired by the extensive reading of a host of texts in the pertinent field (in Ronggasasmita’s case, that would be in the field of Islamic metaphysics). Those who transmit knowledge, say by translation, without such “diligence”, he says, are frauds and deserve to have their mouths stuffed with rocks.\(^5\) In his final words on “diligence”, Ronggasasmita notes that reading texts, especially the “venerable laid-by works” that comprise the Sufi literature that he focuses upon, are useful (possessed of \(\text{faedah}\)) and that they form “teachings for the future”.\(^5\) Lastly, in the brief fourth admonition, he tells us that we must “take

\(^{50}\) Siyang-dalu, den-tatelen maca iku / sagung kang \(\text{lĕpiyan}\) (By day and night, read with care and diligence / all the venerable laid-by works), KS 502, stanza 70: 55.

\(^{51}\) Den-srĕgĕp ngiling-ilingi / rasakěna murade lan [\(\text{mahsudira}\)], KS 502, stanza 71: 55. \(\text{Murad}\) usually indicates the extended sense or significance of a passage, discerned by interpretation; \(\text{maksud}\), on the other hand, points to intended meaning (of a word, a chunk of text, or of a behavior).

\(^{52}\) Den-gumathuk, ing tekadnya nyambut-nyambut / manawa kapiran / utawa kang tutul pĕtis (Draw the concepts together, daring to bring out the sense/ If you’re at a loss [confused]/ Or they seem like easy marks), KS 502, stanza 72: 55. Alternative, and, I think, equally apt translations: ‘Draw the thoughts together, your practice is to bring out the sense’ or ‘Draw the thoughts together, from within your deep understanding, bring out the sense’. The differences in the three translations come from three different interpretations/understandings of the word \(\text{tekad}\); for more on \(\text{tekad}\), see note 8 to the opening stanza of the excerpt above.

\(^{53}\) Den-gumathuk, ing tekadnya nyambut-nyambut / manawa kapiran / utawa kang tutul pĕtis (Draw the concepts together, daring to bring out the sense/ If you’re at a loss [confused]/ Or they seem like easy marks), KS 502, stanza 72: 55.

\(^{54}\) See KS 502, stanzas 75-8: 56-57.

\(^{55}\) Mokal bae ingkang para aoliya // Nyanggit suluk, yen tan ana pedahiu / pan pasthi kinarya / wawulanjang wuri-wuri (It is absurd to think that the holy wali // Would have composed these suluks, were they of no use / For surely, they were writ of old / As teachings for the future), KS 502, stanzas 83-84: 57.
care”, and by this he means that we should put into practice, in life, what we as a community of readers can learn from the dusted-off manuscripts that we should be reading.

The members of the “New directions in Javanese literature” group formed one such community of readers. Many times, over the course of our year in Jerusalem (2018-2019), those of us who formed this community self-consciously aspired to adhere to at least some of Ronggasasmita’s principles, pouring out our collective “brain sweat” in more-or-less-successful attempts to make sense of the Javanese texts that we read together. Excerpts of those texts are provided in this collection of readings. The hope, of course, is that in the end we will not have earned ourselves mouths stuffed with rocks.

MAKING SENSE OF JAVANESE POETRY THROUGH TRANSLATION

Guided by these general principles, in my actual practice of translation I attempt to make sense of whatever it is I am reading by heeding the following twelve “rules” I have made for myself.

(1) Trust the poet whose work I am translating. If the poetry does not seem to make sense, it is almost certainly because of my own lack of understanding. Confusion is a sign that I need to think and work harder. Javanese poetry is not easy and is often self-consciously complex.

(2) Do not presume an easy understanding of the gist of a stanza (or even a line) and then imagine that the rendering of the gist in prosaic paraphrase would form an adequate translation.

(3) Do not be fooled by the seemingly simple.

(4) Unless it proves truly impossible, translate each line as a unit of meaning. Respect the paratactic construction of the poetry.

(5) Respect the form of the poetry, its musicality, and its economy of language. Attempt to replicate these in the translation.

(6) Attempt to replicate the syllable counts and the rhythms of the Javanese in the translation.

(7) Make every attempt to allow the syntax of the Javanese to dominate the syntax of the translation.

(8) Pay heed to how the melody and the singer’s breaths contribute to producing the sense of a line or lines.

(9) Pay heed to ambiguity; if possible, render the ambiguity in translation. If that proves impossible – or lacking in grace – call attention to the ambiguity in a footnote.

(10) Pay heed to the multivocality of words – Javanese poetry often plays on this multivocality. It is, however, almost never possible to adequately and artfully render this play in translation. For this reason, it is often necessary to note the alternative sense or senses of the word or line in footnotes.

(11) Pay attention to the silences in the Javanese, for example, the frequently “missing” or “obscured” agents of actions. The subjects of predicates are often undesignated and sometimes subject to slippage.

(12) Take note of the impossibilities of translation, for example, the problem
of conveying the differences and shifts of register that are important parts of meaning-making in Javanese but that are absent in English.

I will spend what space remains to me to bring forward just a few examples to illustrate how I work, wrestle, and sometimes play, with these idiosyncratic “rules”. First, let us turn to the very difficult lines in stanzas 14-15 in which the child Samsu Tabriz poses the question that stumps the self-assured Hajji King of Rum. Indeed, the Prince of Rum voices his confusion, saying that he has “never heard the likes” of such words, and so he does not even try to answer. The Javanese boy’s question to this Rumi figure follows immediately after the king has rattled off the oft-repeated Sufi platitude that Muhammad is the mystery and/or inner hiddenness (ghaib) of God and that God is the mystery and/or inner hiddenness (gaib) of Muhammad. In response to this rote recitation, the child then asks the king to elucidate how he understands the relationship between God and the Prophet and, at the same time, asks how the Almighty Himself – and then the Prophet – understand that relationship. What are they to each other, and of each other? The questions that Samsu Tabriz poses, by extension, challenge the king and the assembled scholars to consider the nature of the reciprocal relationship that attains between God and man, God and His creation.

14. Dhuh tuwanku nateng Rum
   tuwin para jumngah para jamhur
   panjawabe Mukamad ghaibing Widdhi
   kaakĕn punapa iku
   Mukamade ing Ywang Manon

15. Punapa/dene lamun
   Allah ingaran gaibing Rasul
   Allah iku kaakĕn apaning nabi
   eh thole ingsun tan ngrungu
   kaya ujarmu mĕngkono

14. “O, my Lord, Ruler of Rum,
   and all ye assembled, ye learned,
you answer that Muhammad is the Mystery
   of the Almighty –
   acknowledged, then, as what
   is Muhammad (of/to/by) All-Seeing God?

15. And the same goes for this: if
   God is called the Mystery of the Messenger,
   then what (to/of/by) the Prophet is God
   claimed to be?”
   “Hey, little one, never have I heard
   the likes of what you say!”

The lines are deep, rich, and overdetermined by ambiguities. My struggle with the translation is evident in the choices offered among English prepositions in the final line of stanza 14 and the third line of stanza 15. In stanza 14, the child’s question encompasses the questions of Muhammad’s ontological status as a “part” of God, Muhammad’s relation to God, and the nature of Muhammad’s acknowledgement by God. Again, in the following stanza, the question challenges the hajji king to consider what God is in relation to the Prophet, what He is of the Prophet, and what He is claimed or acknowledged to be by the Prophet. For the English language reader, these are all different questions; the Javanese encompasses and expresses all of them simultaneously.

In the first instance (stanza 14), the child saint dares the king to consider what the Prophet is to God and the nature of God’s relation to Muhammad.
Is the Prophet a part of God, a participant in Him? At the same time, Samsu Tabriz is asking the king to speculate on what it is that God acknowledges the Prophet to be and on what the ontological status of the Prophet is within the divine intellect. Is God the grammatical object of the prepositional phrase [of/to] or is God the acknowledging agent [by] – or is He both at the same time? In the following stanza, the tiny child asks the hajji king to answer the same or similar questions concerning the nature of God in relation to the Prophet. For further evidence of the ambiguities, and of my wrestling with them, see the multiple alternative translations I offer of these poetic lines in footnotes 29 and 30. My attempts to negotiate these complexities in the notes may serve to elucidate the imperatives that drive some of my idiosyncratic rules: for example, rule one (on the confusion being mine, not the poet’s and on the self-conscious complexity of Javanese poetic text); rule nine (on the place of ambiguity); rule ten (on the importance and effects of multivocality); and rule eleven (on silences between languages). But not these rules alone.

My translation of these two verses also demonstrates the workings of rules two (the gist is under erasure), three (it’s never simple), and four (take each line as a unit) – along with rules six (approximate the syllable count), seven (follow the Javanese syntax), and eight (find meaning through breath). For example, in translating stanza 14, it would have been simpler (and smoother) to mingle and rearrange the last two lines of the verse, thereby supposedly determining their “gist”, then to render those lines as, ‘What does God acknowledge Muhammad to be?’ or ‘What do you take Muhammad’s relation to God to be?’ But it is, I think, a mistake to assume that one can determine a simple gist or meaning of Javanese poetic text under the surface of the poem’s presumably transparent language. For poetic language is not transparent, but translucent – its form works to shape its sense. It is also wrong to think that meaning is simple. Perhaps most dangerously, it is a mistake, I think, to flatten complexity, especially when working with metaphysical texts. Though giving rise to its own problems, respecting the integrity of individual lines (rule four) helps to avoid these and other potential pitfalls.

My work and play with rules six and seven (syllable count and syntax) here should be evident: one can see that I have attempted to replicate (or, at least, approximate) syllable counts of the Javanese in my English and, excepting the third line in stanza 15, that I have rather slavishly followed the syntax of the Javanese in my English translation. Rule eight (meaning is produced by melody and breath) is one that is fundamental to understanding “classical” Javanese poetry. It is through breath and melody that semantic units can be distinguished. In the Gambuh verse form, the melody and breath divide the stanza into three units: the divisions falling where the singer would take her
breath. The first two lines are joined melodically as are the last two, with the third line standing more on its own. The melodic expression participates in the production of meaning. So, for example, in stanza 14, the fourth line does not form an evaluation of line three (‘You answer that Muhammad is the Mystery of the Almighty’). If it had been an evaluation, I would have translated this line (kaakēn punapā iku) as something like, ‘What do you mean by that?’ Rather, it opens a new melodic line to connect with the final line of the stanza and is thus translated, instead: ‘Acknowledged then as what...’.

I have yet to mention rule five on the formal considerations of my “composition” that concern musicality and the economy of language. That I strive to respect the poetic form of the Javanese poetry in my translations is a constant. In my efforts to do justice to the Javanese poets with whom I am in dialogue as I write, I aspire to assonance and alliteration and attempt to shape my language into a kind of rhythmic prose. Brevity and economy are crucial in this endeavour. My successes and failures at these efforts are to be judged by others.

Finally, I would like to touch upon one of the impossibilities I encountered in the course of translating this excerpt. And here I turn to my rule twelve: take note of the impossibilities of translation, for example, the problem of conveying the differences and shifts of register that are important parts of meaning-making in Javanese but that are absent in English. The sometimes-subtle shifts in register over the course of the dialogue between the Rumi figure and the child Samsu Tabriz are important markers in the progress of the debate itself and in the evolving revolution in power relations between the two characters. It is impossible to render these shifts adequately in English. I was sorely tempted to render the “low Javanese” (ngoko) utterances in a coarser or more colloquial English than those in “high Javanese” (krama or krama inggil). This, however, would have been a mistake. Gods and kings are revered as the most refined of beings, and because they are at the pinnacle of the hierarchy, they “speak down” in ngoko to almost all those whom they address. But, as refined beings, their language is, of course, elegant. The most flowery krama vocabulary comprises the utterances of those who are situated below their interlocutors, who are in the position of speaking up to their “betters”. How, then, can one mark this linguistic complexity in translation? How might these differences in voice and register to be rendered in a way that conveys the economic elegance and hauteur of the “low Javanese” spoken by the nobility and distinguishes it from the (differently elegant) refined flowery “high Javanese” spoken to them by the humble folk in their service? I have yet to arrive at a solution. (For the excerpt above, I have marked the major shifts of voice and register in the notes to the translation.)

At the outset of the dialogue, or debate, the lofty king of Rum consistently refers to himself as ingsun, the first-person singular pronoun that is reserved for kings and gods. He calls the child by a number of epithets, most frequently thole, a familiar endearment for a small boy (it is a shortened form of konthole ['his penis']), but he also calls him jabang ('newborn infant') and kunthing
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Nancy Florida, The song of Samsu Tabriz in Ronggasasmi’s Suluk Acih (‘dwarf’). In these opening stanzas, the linguistic register of the august king is a haughty ngoko; that of the naked child Samsu Tabriz, a humble krama inggil. But the child’s language is not entirely consistent in this and never attains the refined heights of sustained krama inggil/krama andhap. Then, in the twentieth stanza there is a marked change in the child’s linguistic register. At this juncture in the debate, after the king has been stumped by the boy’s initial questions, Samsu Tabriz alters his speech register, moving away from the predominantly krama inggil forms that he had been using to shift among the intermediary language levels of krama, ngoko basa-antya, and madya krama in his subsequent addresses to the king. And it is not just the register, but also the tone of the child’s language that grows ever cheekier as he rebukes the learned hajji king. In stanza 21, he goes so far as to denigrate the king’s worship as a sham, or even as “bullshit”. Yet the Rumi figure stubbornly persists in his kingly ngoko. It is not until the very end of the excerpt (stanza 31) that the utterly chastised king of Rum, having finally recognized the spiritual superiority of the child, shifts to address the saint in the register of krama inggil.

31. [...] amir matur ya tuwanku rare alit paduka jarwa rumuhun asal tuwan kang sayektos

31. [...] The king spoke humbly, “O my Lord, sweet child, Majesty, please, reveal it now – from whence, in truth, my Lord, you come.”

Responding to the chastened king, the little boy proclaims:

32. Angandika Seh Samsu Tabari eh Mulana Kaji Rum saking ėmbuh saking tanbuh prapta mami kabei kadadeyan [d]urung kang dadi dhingin pan ingong

32. Then declared Seh Samsu Tabariz, “Hey, Mulana Hajji Rum, from ‘who knows – ‘who could ever know’ come I. Nothing was created yet – I was the first to come to be,

33. Ingkang ghaibul guyub durung dadi Allah lawan Rasul durung dadi ingsun kang dadi rumiyin kang luwih mulya pan ingsun saking sakeh ing dumados

33. the deepest Mystery of One, before Allah and His Prophet came to be – they were not yet – I was first to come to be. I am He that is still more high than the whole of all creation.”

It is clear from both the content and the linguistic forms of their utterances that the positions of the child and the king are now reversed. The king, with the humble matur, embraces his inferiority to the boy. And Samsu Tabriz, taking on the haughty kingly/godly ngoko that had previously marked the address of the king, completes the linguistic and ontological revolution. At one and at the same time, the tiny, naked Sufi saint verbally declares and linguistically

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56 See stanza 21, line one and, especially, footnote 34. Samsu Tabriz calls the king himself a “sham” or perhaps a “bullshitter” in the opening line of stanza 31.
signals the existential perfection of his attainment of mystical union with the One. And it is because of the phenomenological, supra-discursive reality of that attainment that Samsu Tabriz is now manifest as “the deepest Mystery of One”. Being so manifest, he both declaims and linguistically demonstrates that he (the imperious ingong) is ontologically prior both to Allah (here, the name of God) and to the Prophet, and that He (ingsun) – though a tiny naked child who came out of nowhere – is more exalted still than the whole of creation, prior to and encompassing all things, persons, and concepts that have ever, or will ever, come to be.

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