

KOENTJARANINGRAT MEMORIAL LECTURE XI/2014

Pangeran Diponegoro (1785-1855) & Masalah Kepemimpinan Nasional¹

Senin, 19 Mei 2014, 09:00 – 12:00

Auditorium Gedung X, Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya, Universitas Indonesia – Depok

Pangeran Diponegoro & Masalah Kempimpinan Nasional Masa Kini [Pangeran Diponegoro (1785-1855): A Leader Made not Born]

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Introduction

The case of Diponegoro is an interesting one because he exemplifies how leaders are made not born.

True, he was born the eldest son of a sultan (HB III, reigned 1812-14) and inherited all the privileges of his rank as a member of the Yogyakarta ruling family. However, if he had just relied on his birth and status, he would not have got very far in the Java of the early nineteenth century. The rapid humiliation of the south-central Javanese courts and the inexorable expansion of European colonial power following the destruction of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) regime by Marshal Daendels (in office, 1808-11) and his British successor, Thomas Stamford Raffles (1811-16), had greatly reduced the power base of the south-central Javanese rulers. If Diponegoro had depended on the court alone he would have made little headway against the colonial regime.

In fact, the salient features of Diponegoro's profile as a leader were shaped by his unique upbringing *away* from the court.

1. Adoption & Upbringing – The Rural Dimension: A Tegalrejo Childhood (1792/3-1803)

At the age of seven in circa 1792-3, he was adopted by his great-grandmother, Ratu Ageng (circa 1735-1803), a descendant of the first Sultan of Bima, Sultan Abdulkadir (1583-1640; reigned, 1621-40) to accompany her to live in a rural environment at Tegalrejo some three kilometers from Yogya. Not many early nineteenth-century Javanese princes were so brought up – although interestingly most of the founders of new Javanese dynasties in the pre-colonial period shared this background. One thinks here of Ki Pamenahan, the toddy (palm-sugar) tapper founder of Mataram (his son, Panembahan Senopati, would be the kingdom's first ruler, 1575-1601), and of Joko Tingkir [1549-82], who established Pajang and shared DN's childhood upbringing and experience, having been brought up in a village environment by the widow of

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the famous *dalang*, Ki Ageng Tingkir. One can also cite King Airlangga [The one 'who crossed the water'] [991-1049]: at the age of sixteen following the slaying of his entire family in Bali during the great *pralaya* (cataclysm) he retreated into the forests for thirteen years (1006-1019) as a recluse before founding the kingdom of Kahuripan in 1021 in East Java.

The Javanese saying '*Aja Dumeh*' (don't be proud) is significant here. These were humble people, men and women who had experienced the hardships and suffering of village life. On her deathbed on 17 October 1803, Ratu Ageng is said to have remarked to her son, the second sultan (reigned, 1792-1810/1811-12/1826-8): 'The path I now set aside is difficult and now I feel that I am in essence no more than an ordinary person. My son! Be conscience of that and do not believe that although you are now ruler, after your death you will be anything more than a common *kuli*. So live accordingly!'

As regards Diponegoro himself, contemporaries – both Dutch and Javanese - commented on Diponegoro's 'common touch'. One such was the Leiden lawyer and adviser to Commissioner-General Du Bus de Gisignies (in office, 1826-1829) – Willem van Hogendorp (1795-1838) who remarked that:

'A special characteristic about Diponegoro in the view of the Javanese, who are always extremely exalted and distant in their dealings between superiors and inferiors, is that he consorts as easily with the common man as with the great ones [and] because of this has made himself much loved everywhere.'

Diponegoro himself commented that 'in emulation of what the 'priests' [*ulama*] do, I often went to Kota Gede, Imogiri, the south coast and Selarong [...] to the two last places I always took a large mounted escort with me [...] to help cut and plant *padi* which [helped] popularize the chiefs with the people [...]'.
'

2. Family Connections - Kyai/Ulama Networks in the Nusantara

Ratu Ageng, along with Diponegoro's own mother, Radèn Ayu Mangkorowati (c. 1770-1852), were daughters of rural *kyai* (rural *ulama* and/or adepts in spiritual/religious practices) who connected him with the village world. Diponegoro's ancestry also interestingly made him a citizen of the Nusantara (post-1945, Indonesia) rather than just a Javanese – Ratu Ageng had family connections with the Sultanate of Bima in Sumbawa and his grandmother, Ratu Kedaton, was a Madurese, a lineal descendant of Panembahan Cakraningrat II (*sedha* Kamal) of Pamekasan, who died in 1707. So, as well as having illustrious Javanese forebears, he was a quarter Madurese and one eighth Bimanese (Sumbawanese), thus linked by blood with royal and religious dynasties outside Java.

3. Practical Competencies – Administration & Finance

He grew up on a rural estate which traded its products (mainly rice) as far afield as the north coast (Semarang). We know this from the Yogyakarta court archives captured by the British in June 1812, which indicate that the Tegalrejo estate was producing some fifty tonnes

(*hangmatten* – pikul loads) of rice every year. This meant that from an early age he was introduced to matters of management and administration of people and land. This endowed him with a very practical side – he was exceptionally careful with money and was renowned as a very good administrator of his apanage lands (1,000 households) after he was appointed a *pangeran* in July 1812. He was also very well-off compared with his Yogya contemporaries at the time of the outbreak of the Java War. He used his money to finance the early stages of the war, and was keen eyed enough to discern the dangers inherent in giving army commanders responsibility for tax collection and administration: *lamun tiyang nyepeng pedhang/ dipunsambi nyepeng arta kadospundi/ punapa tan kapiran?* (If he who wields the sword, is also given the holding of money/ how would that be?/ Might that not lead to confusion?). In exile, he was proverbial for his tight-fistedness – he upbraided the Dutch Resident – Nahuys – for spending so much of his own money on building a lavish country villa on the flanks of Mt Merapi. Just a few years before his death the Governor of Makassar, Pieter Vreede Bik (in office, 1849-52), was writing that the prince and his family were living in conditions ‘bordering on poverty!’ in their two officers’ quarters in Fort Rotterdam.

4. Mental Culture: Physical and Mental Self-Strengthening

The creation of leaders is nowhere more evident than in the *rite de passage* (transition) between adolescence and full manhood. One thinks here of the future Sultan Mangkubumi (HB I, reigned 1749-92), as a young man, who, according to the *Serat Cabolang* (1815), throwing his gold and diamond rings into the rushing torrent of a cold mountain river and continued diving for them until he had found them again, an exercise designed to enhance his resolve and tenacity. One thinks too of Diponegoro’s own 70-kilometre round trip (on foot and with no escort) to the south coast in the dry season of 1805 to commune with the guardian spirits of the south-central Javanese courts – Sunan Kalijogo, Ratu Kidul, Senopati etc. This was in the truest sense a *lelono* – a spiritual journey designed to give him direction in his life and to harden his commitment and resolve. At the end of the Java War, when he was on the run in the mountain fastnesses of southern Kedu (Gowong), and northern Bagelen and Banyumas, with just his two *panakawan* (intimate retainers), Bantengwareng (circa 1810-58) and Joyosuroto (‘Roto’), the Dutch commander-in-chief, Lieutenant-General Hendrik Merkus de Kock (1779-1845), wrote to his chief engineer officer and deputy, Colonel Frans David Cochius (1787-1876), that ‘Diponegoro must be made of iron when one reads the descriptions of the terrain in which he is holding out and of the shacks (*gubuk*) where he rests his exhausted body [...] everything is utterly desolate [...]’.

This physical and mental strength lay at the heart of Diponegoro’s capacity as a leader and his tenacity as a human being. What is remarkable here is the prince’s capacity to ‘move on’ – leaving behind one world and finding a habitation in an entirely different one – what in Javanese-Islamic culture might be called ‘*hijrah*’ (purposeful flight). One thinks here (1) his move from the Yogyakarta *kraton* at the age of seven to the rigours of his great-grandmother’s newly established country estate at Tegalrejo; (2) his *hijrah* from Tegalrejo to Selarong on the

night of 20/21 July 1825 – curtain-raiser to the Java War - his epic five-year struggle with the Dutch - and his brief rule as a *Ratu Adil*; and (3) his arrest by General de Kock at Magelang on 28 March 1830 when he began his life as a prisoner and exile, his position as Sultan Eurucokro or Javanese 'Just King' (*Ratu Adil*), exchanged for two 'miserable, hot rooms' first in Fort Nieuw Amsterdam (Manado) and then Fort Rotterdam (Makassar).

This is what might be called the 'flight from the physical to the intellectual' as the prince moved from the physical realm of the Java War to the intellectual sphere of authorship and the meditative and artistic domain of *daérah* (mystical diagram) drawing and the copying of the *Qur'ân* which marked his early years in exile. Those who observed these transitions spoke of the prince's 'unchanging indifference, resignation or submission,' emotions which Diponegoro himself described more poetically in his babad as being like 'gold carried along by water' (*lir mas kintaring toya*). The more restrictive the outer physical space which the prince inhabited, the more spacious his inner realm seemingly became. The sheer scale of his literary outpouring in Manado and Makassar bears witness to this fact. The sixteen-year-old son of the Dutch king, Willem II (reigned, 1840-1848), who visited the prince in Fort Rotterdam in Makassar in March 1837, described him as still 'full of fire'. Here there are similarities to others such as Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), whose own physical world was also frequently contracted down to a prison cell only to find the blossoming of a new inner creativity transforming his jail into a place of spiritual retreat or ashram.² In his chronicle, the fruits of Diponegoro's asceticism can be seen in his appreciation of the arts and of nature, as well as his skill in reading character and personal relationships from the study of human faces (*ilmu firasat*). The chronicle depicts Diponegoro's wisdom as that of a simple man, cognisant of complexity yet utterly direct. Janus-faced, he also looked forward as well as back: acknowledging the modern world, while remaining at heart

² The following description of Gandhi's arrest during Lord Irwin's Viceroyalty (1926-31) can serve as an example here:

'Gandhi was staying at Mani Bhavan (house of a supporter at Lavender Road in Bombay). There was great excitement in the city: the Viceroy (Lord Irwin, in office 1926-31) had finally rejected the Congress offer of peace. Bapu was at his wheel quietly spinning. He had already begun his weekly silence. I felt I had to keep vigil and for hours I was under those splendid stars that rose, tier upon tier, above me, while beside me Bapu slept like a child committed to his Father's Land. I thought of Christ going up to Jerusalem, his eyes filled with determination and courage; and I seemed to see the spirit of Christ travelling the centuries like a bright sword turned against all wrong and injustice. The spirit of love was manifest and unconquerable.

At 3 a.m. I saw the Commissioner of Police at the foot of Bapuji's bed and Bapu just waking, a little bewildered, looked old, fragile and rather pathetic with the mist of sleep on his face: "Mr Gandhi! It is my duty to arrest you!" A beautiful smile of welcome broke out on Bapu's face and now he looked young, strong and confident.

They both laughed heartily. The Commissioner laid his hand on Bapu's shoulder with a gesture so full of affection that I thought it was an embrace until I realized it was the formal token of arrest. When he was ready, Bapu sat in the midst of us for prayers. Then he stood up to take [his] farewell. It was a strange sight: Mrs Gandhi with tears running down her cheeks saying "can't you take me with you?" Gandhi was in very good spirits: he might have been going to a festival rather than a jail.

The tiny figure got into a car. It was a wonderful tribute to India's non-violence that there were only a few policemen and they were able to be in the midst of the crowd without fear or danger. Then the crowd scattered as the car bearing the very soul of India drove away through the darkened and deserted streets'.

From 'Bapu: The Soul of India', *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, 2000), vol.V Part 54, p.467.

deeply conservative, the paradox of his life shaped by the extraordinary times through which he lived.

5. Living a Cruel Destiny in a Time of Transition

It is a truism that men and women are shaped by the age in which they live. Diponegoro was no exception. Nine years before the prince's birth, Thomas Paine (1737-1809) had written that 'these are the times that try men's souls', a reference to the troubled onset of the American Revolution (1776-84). Such 'interesting times', as the Chinese adage has it, certainly characterised the epoch through which Diponegoro lived half a world away in Java. Born into the seemingly immutable 'Old Order' of the late eighteenth-century Principalities, he died in the high colonial era of Governor-General Duymaer van Twist (in office, 1851-56), an era when steamboats had begun to ply the inter-island sea routes and the new commercial system of free ports had replaced the closed monopoly of the Dutch East India Company. The Agrarian Law (1870), which would open the Indies up to massive private investment, was only a decade and a half away. This was the age when the Dutch were reaping unimaginable wealth from the Cultivation System (1830-70), at the expense of Javanese peasant cultivators who in certain areas, such as Grobogan and Demak, were experiencing terrible famines (1849-1850) and typhoid epidemics (1846-1850) (Elson 1994:99-127), an age when, as the artist Raden Saleh Syarif Bustaman (c. 1811-1880), laconically put it, the only conversation amongst colonial Indies society was '*café et sucre, sucre et café*' ['coffee and sugar, sugar and coffee'] (The full quote reads: '*café et sucre, sucre et café, c'est tout-ce qu'on parle ici. C'est vraiment un air triste pour une artiste*' ('coffee and sugar, sugar and coffee, this is all that people talk about here. It is really a sad atmosphere for an artist').

What price then a mystic prince in such a universe? Not much for the Dutch judging from the rather brief paragraph published in their colonial and national newspapers at the time of his death, but what about the Javanese? What did Diponegoro mean for them? It is clear that he was a pivotal figure in the history of modern Java, his death occurring at almost the exact mid-point between the treaty of Giyanti (1755) and the declaration of Indonesian independence (1945), but how much of this was due to his own innate qualities and how much the times in which he lived? Just imagine for a moment that he had been born a hundred years earlier in 1685 or a century afterwards in 1885. The first would have placed him full square in the turbulent decades of the Kartasura period (1680-1742) which, if he had survived and not suffered the fate of his namesake, the first Pangeran Diponegoro (exiled to Cape Colony by the Dutch East India Company in July 1723 following an abortive rebellion, 1718-23), might have seen him emerge as one of the luminaries of Pakubuwono II's (r. 1726-1749) court with an interest in the type of Sufi-inspired Javanese-Islamic literature favoured by the circle around the queen mother, Ratu Pakubuwono (died 1732). But would he have been cast in heroic mould of a *Ratu Adil* ('Just King') leading a popular uprising against the colonial power? Hardly! The second would have situated him at the heart of the founder generation of the Indonesian 'national movement' with the likes of Dr Tjipto Mangunkusumo (1885-1943), Radèn Mas Soetomo (1888-1938), and Radèn Mas

Suardi Suryoningrat (Ki Adjar Dewantara) (1889-1959) as his direct or near contemporaries. Given Diponegoro's personal abilities, his deep root of faith, administrative and financial acumen, as well as his interest in the modern world - witness his fascination with the navigational instruments on the Corvette *Pollux* which transported him from Batavia into exile in Manado. It is likely that he would have made his mark in some capacity on modern Indonesia. But it is unclear whether he would have emerged as quite the crucial figure which he became at the time of the Java War.

The unusual epoch in which Diponegoro lived is thus vital for an understanding of his life. His experience underscores the truth of Karl Popper's dictum that history is the struggle of men and ideas, not just the material conditions of their existence. Had it not been for the peremptory violence visited on the south-central Javanese courts by Daendels and Raffles in the four short years between 1808 and 1812, violence which tore the heart out of the Yogya *kraton*, one can imagine Diponegoro living in relative obscurity at Tegalrejo, attending to his religious duties and dying in mid-century as a quirky *santri*' prince, scourge of the Yogya aristocracy and the *kafir* (heretic) Dutch. Despite his evident abilities, the fact that he rated not a single reference in the British reports (1811-1816), a period when he was supposedly functioning as a key adviser to his father, the third sultan, and mentor to his younger brother, the fourth sultan, indicates that he was not quite the prominent figure in the political life of the sultanate he sought to portray in his *babad*. The post-1816 Dutch Resident of Yogyakarta, H.G. Nahuys van Burgst (in office, 1816-22), probably had his measure better when he described Diponegoro and his uncle, Pangeran Mangkubumi, before the Java War as men who 'stood quite neutral and were universally considered as good quiet persons without the least ambition'. The agrarian crisis of 1823-1825 and the ineptitude of the Dutch representatives in Yogyakarta in the two years leading up to the Java War were the twin catalysts for the prince's emergence as a major political figure, much as Governor-General Van Imhoff (in office, 1741-1750) and the issue of the leasing of Mataram's coastal dependencies had been at the time of Sultan Mangkubumi's rebellion in 1746.

Once cast in a leadership role, however, Diponegoro brought to his task a competence and appeal greater even than that of his revered great-grandfather, Mangkubumi. A devout Muslim, who believed himself part of the international community of Believers, he was what Ricklefs has described as the personification of the 'mystic synthesis' in Java - a Javanese Muslim who saw no problem with contacting the goddess of the Southern Ocean, undertaking pilgrimages to holy sites associated with Java's spirit guardians and rulers, and drinking bottles of 'medicinal' sweet Cape wine, while maintaining a staunch commitment to his Islamic duties. Part of the 'long shadow of Sultan Agung' (Merle C. Ricklefs, 'Islamising Java: The long shadow of Sultan Agung', *Archipel* 56:469-82), Diponegoro fought both for the restoration of an idealized Javanese past, and the establishment of a new moral order in which the teachings of Islam, especially its legal codes, would be enforced. This was the essence of his popular appeal for the religious communities and his importance for the future, where his particular form of 'mystic synthesis' would form one of the key strands of Islamic piety in post-1830 Javanese society. His insistence on Javanese cultural norms in language, dress and etiquette also cast him in the role

of a proto Javanese nationalist. Here was a man who, in the words of the former Governor of Java' Northeast Coast, Nicolaus Engelhard (in office, 1801-1808), was 'in all matters a Javanese and followed Javanese custom'.

But one cannot pursue this too far. There is no indication that he entertained any notions of national independence in the modern sense, not even for his native Java. Indeed, it would be nearly another century after the Java War before such ideas gained universal currency amongst the Indonesian nationalist elite. The most Diponegoro could conceive was a return to the seventeenth-century status quo. From the evidence of Hasan Munadi and Basah Pengalasan, he had in mind the era when the Dutch had been confined to the northeast coast of Java as traders and were not involved politically in the affairs of the south-central Javanese courts. He even talked, Munadi suggested, of allocating the Dutch two north coast cities – Batavia and Semarang – where they would be allowed to reside and pursue their commercial interests unhindered, just so long as these did not exploit the local population (Diponegoro's insistence on market prices being paid for Javanese products and land lease contracts was prescient considering what would happen under Van den Bosch's Cultivation System). This harked back to the situation which existed during Sultan Agung's reign (1613-1646) before the political disasters of his successor, Amangkurat I (r. 1646-1677), had opened a high road to Dutch intervention in the Javanese hinterland.

6. At the Cross-Roads of Java: The Four Worlds of Diponegoro

Finally, one can reflect that uniquely, Diponegoro inhabited four worlds and had the facility to enter and engage with them each in their separate ways: **(1) the world of the south-central Javanese courts**, in particular his native Yogyakarta – even though all the indications are that he did not feel entirely comfortable in those circles – witness his reluctance to attend the thrice-yearly *Garebeg* ceremonies to celebrate the Prophet's birthday (*Mulud*), the end of the Fasting Month (*Puasa*) and the *Haj* to Mecca (*Besar*) – which he described as a 'great sin' (*dosa ageng*) – and the speed with which he extricated himself from his temporary quarters in the keraton following the British attack on 20 June 1812 and the appointment of his father, the crown prince (*putra mahkota*), as the third Sultan on 21 June; **(2) the village world of farmers and artisans** – *desa* dwellers – which encircled his estate at Tegalrejo and with which he had daily discourse and with which he felt entirely at ease. Witness Van Hogendorp's remark about his ability to mix with all classes – a form of *blusukan* long before this was popularised by the current PDI-P presidential candidate, Haji Joko Widodo (Jokowi); **(3) the world of the pesantren** – which also interpenetrated his Tegalrejo childhood and adolescence – witness the way in which the estate was laid out to accommodate visiting *santri* and visiting religious teachers; his own journeys on foot to the local *pondok* and *pesantren* (in particular his long journey to Delanggu to search for his eldest son who had become a pupil of Kyai Mojo in 1817-22); and his marriages to daughters of local *Kyai* (religious teachers) at the *pondok-pesantren* of Kasongan and Dadapan – all contacts which would stand him in good stead when he came to wage the Java War. His admiration for his religious teachers and the *pesantren* style education he received can also be

seen in the way in which he educated his own children in exile in Makassar and the types of teaching material he requested for their own instruction – and the reports of various Governors of Makassar on how some of his children had become ‘devout Muslims’. There was finally **(4) The world of the new European colonial power** (post-January 1818, the Netherlands East Indies state / Hindia-Belanda) which all commentators mentioned that he had a considerable facility and knowledge of – his military escort Major François Vincent Henri Antoine Ridder de Stuers, for example, speaking of how politely he ate at table with the Resident of Semarang on his passage to Batavia in early April 1830 and his ‘genteel manners’ (*in zijn omgang zeer fatsoenlijk*). On all occasions, Diponegoro showed himself perfectly at ease in the company of Europeans and he even developed a liking for a particularly delicious type of sweet Cape wine from the world-renowned Constantia vineyard in South Africa. During the British period (1811-16), he claims that he negotiated directly with the British Resident, John Crawfurd (in office, 1811-14, 1816), and his great public presence is even remarked on in the contemporary Javanese chronicles. Hence this passage in the chronicle of the fall of Yogyakarta’s (*Babad Bedhah ing Ngayogyakarta*):

Di antara putra-putra sultan
dia yang paling dikedepankan
ialah Pangeran Diponegoro,
karena dialah yang tertua,
[dan] hatinya satu dengan ayahnya.

Dia cerdas, murah hati [dan] bersemangat,
tidak gentar di hadapan orang banyak.
Ia bicara lancar [dan] lembut dengan sosok yang akrab
[dan] sangat peduli dengan semua orang di kerajaan itu,
karena dia diberi kepercayaan oleh ayahnya.
Besar [dan] kecil, muda [dan] tua,
semua berada di bawah kekuasaannya.

Dia menangani urusan dengan Keresidenan:
pada setiap Senin [dan] Kamis sang pangeran
mengunjungi Keresidenan didampingi oleh
Pangeran Dipowiyono,
adik sang Sultan.

XXIV (Asmaradana) 21. [...] *ingkang kinarya pangarsa/ Pangran Dipanegara/ dhasar ingkang putra sepuh/ kang tyas condhok lan kang rama.* 22. *lantip bèranyak bèrbudi/ tan ulap dhateng ing kathah/ sabda luwes manis ajèr/ anjangkahing wong sapraja/ dhasar kaidèn ngrama/ gedhé cilik anom sepuh/ samya winengku ing karsa.* 23. *ngadani prakarèng Laji/ mila Senèn Kemis Pangran/ sowan ing Laji rowangé/ Pangran Dipawiyana/ rinta Sri Naranata/ [....].*

Peter Carey
Jakarta, 19 May 2014