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Panel 2

Prophecy and Eschatology

(Fri 26/03/2010; 9.30-11.00am)

Spiritual Imagination and Societal Change in Indonesia: The Prophecies of King Jayabaya

Thomas Reuter
University of Melbourne

*When carriages drive without horses,
ships fly through the sky,
and a necklace of iron surrounds the island of Java
When women wear men's clothing,
and children neglect their aged parents,
know that the time of madness has begun.
From the Ramalan Jayabaya, Oral transmission, my translation.*

Abstract

This paper provides a brief account of the sources, social history and philosophical underpinnings of prophecy in Java, leading on to a critique of modernist rationality. Most Indonesians are familiar with prophecies attributed to 12th century king Jayabaya and 14th century king Brawijaya V, and use prophecy as a means to both apprehend and shape the future. While my research has shown these texts have been in circulation for at least 300 years, they have drawn no Western attention to date, except briefly from Dutch colonial administrators who noticed the centrality of these prophecies in Indonesian's struggle for independence. The popularity of these texts consistently has increased in response to crises, including recent political upheavals and global warming.

The widespread popular use and high public profile of prophecy as a means of articulating political and spiritual aspirations for the future has few parallels in contemporary Western societies. Science has given us such a powerful description of the world, as it (supposedly) really is, that any other interpretation we may have is quickly dismissed as ‘mere belief’ or ‘subjective bias’. There are as yet few scientists who recognize that we, as human subjects, may need to integrate the objective knowledge we have gained from science into our personal experience. This is because such integration implies there are alternative means of apprehending reality, other than through pure reasoning though not necessarily opposed to it. While such alternatives are familiar, they are largely dismissed as pre-modern mysticism and not afforded any epistemological status. Popular prophecies such as those of Nostradamus thus tend to be marginal, or they are given unofficial recognition among select groups, as in the case of the highly politicised prophecies of Fatima.

Prophecy as a cultural practice challenges science’s hegemonic power to define reality, in two ways:

1) Prophecies and other forms of creative imagination rely on positing a belief of what the world will, could or should be, and motivate us to act in such a way as to change the real in line with what is imagined. Scientists tend to ignore this teleological dimension of reality, and thus exclude imaginary intent from the realm of the real. Even social science tends to dodge the paradox of imagination by seeking refuge in the layered reality concept of phenomenology, whereby imagination is considered real as a social phenomenon only rather than corresponding to an objective truth.

2) Prophecy in Java, more specifically, is imbedded in an ancient and profound mystical tradition whose proponents seek direct access to the truth through rigorous spiritual practices. These practices aim to cultivate the conscious exercise of “intent”, a human faculty that is said to differ from language-based reasoning and produces a form of awareness incorporating up to eleven dimensions rather than the usual three dimensions of human language-based consciousness. From the perspective of this form of awareness, the future can be apprehended.

Keywords: prophecy, imagination, social imaginary, rationality, politics, Java, Indonesia

Introduction

This paper is a preliminary introduction to the rather unusual literary genre of prophecy texts in Java, Indonesia. Following a brief social history of this genre, I will argue that these texts function as a means not simply of predicting but of imagining and actively shaping the future in the present. I combine this analysis with a critique of modernist notions of rationality, from the perspective of which prophecy texts would otherwise be all too easily dismissed as mythology. I will argue, instead, that texts of prophecy too base some of their rhetorical power on a rational analysis of historical facts and on careful observation of patterns of change across time, as does modern science, and that science in turn has its own apocalyptic and millenarian mythology. The difference is that the prophetic genre rests on the assumption that human beings, or at least some particularly gifted human beings, can draw on a mysterious source of intuitive insight to find answers where rationality cannot reach or tends to fail us for other reasons. While there have been a number of studies of millenarianism in Java (Kartodirdjo 1970, Suwandi 2000, Florida 1995), this literature tends to ignore the epistemological status of the phenomenon of prophecy as such, or explains it away in sociological terms.

A social history of the Jayabaya corpus of prophecy texts

There are two major sets of prophecies in the Javanese literary tradition, those attributed to the 12th century king Jayabaya of Kediri and those attributed to Sabdapalon, a royal counsellor to King Brawijaya V of Majapahit at the end of the 14th century. In this paper I will be discussing mainly the Jayabaya corpus of texts. First of all, I would like to examine this corpus of literature historically, both as a narrative and as a political tradition.

Almost every contemporary Indonesian has some familiarity with these major texts of Javanese prophecy. We are thus dealing with a popular genre, even though their knowledge may be confined to some of the prophecy's most pithy statements, such as the one cited above, which are circulated orally or in the media. The actual texts have had a more esoteric character in the past, but cheap reprints have been made widely available to the public at least since the late 19th century. The prophecies on the whole have been extremely popular, politically influential and contentious for at least 300 years.

In my very extensive search for the original literary sources of this tradition, I have collected, transcribed and translated more than sixty different early versions in Javanese language, none of which were published at the time when they were written. Later published versions of some of the texts are available in Indonesian language, but they are often incomplete or selective, and often fail to mention the source document. The earliest complete written Jayabaya prophecy text I was able to locate is from the royal library at the Pakualaman palace in Yogyakarta¹. The scribe notes that he is transcribing this text in 1835, and hence it is evidently a copy of an earlier text (date unknown). The 1835 transcription has a foreword, wherein the scribe complains that his predecessor has Islamised the narrative, warning that such a manipulation of sacred knowledge can lead to dangerous personal consequences and misinterpretations. It is not difficult to see what the concerned scribe is referring to. For example, the narrative names the Sultan of 'Rum' (Constantinople / Istanbul, Turkey) as the one who initiated the original human settlement of Java rather than the Hindu saint Aji Saka, who is commonly named as the founder of civilization in Javanese folk tradition. A royal scribe would have been well aware of this. Nevertheless, this Islamised narrative still follows the general plot of the earlier, Hindu version quite closely in many respects. Fragments of the original Hindu version can still be found today, but most written versions I was able to collect show similar signs of a superimposed Islamic theology, cosmology and eschatology. Of these, the writings of the Surakarta poet and royal scribe Ronggowarsito, who first popularised the genre in the late 19th century, are perhaps the most well known. Meanwhile, oral versions of the Jayabaya prophecy are more conservative and retain many of the earlier Hindu themes.

¹ The text (local catalogue code 0061 / PP / 73; or Girardet 58560) is called *Serat Piwulang* and the relevant subsection of this collection is called *Jangka Jayabaya*. An unnamed palace scribe created this annotated collection from a variety of earlier manuscripts, upon the request of King Paku Alam II (1829-1858 M).

I therefore do believe it is possible to reconstruct the original version. This would be a complex philological project rather than an anthropological one, however, and would lead us away from the reality of the prophecies as they are read in Javanese society and used in politics. From this same, more practical perspective, it could also be argued that the fusion of Islamic and Hindu ideas in the prophecy texts did them no harm but made them all the more inclusive and effective, as a means of political mobilisation in a slowly Islamising society. If the texts have changed it is because Javanese society has also changed, and this in itself is a demonstration of how alive this literary tradition continues to be.

Java's great prophet Jayabaya has been compared to Nostradamus in the Western world, but the Jayabaya phenomenon is different in that his prophecies are not at all marginal but immensely popular and politically significant. Indeed, what little attention the text received in the West came from Dutch scholars of the mid 19th century (Hollander 1848). This is because one of the predictions in the prophecy is that Java would be freed from the oppressors from '*Nusa Prenggi*' (Europe) by a "Just King" or *Ratu Adil* who – like Jayabaya – shall come to earth as an emissary of Allah (similar to the Imam Mahdi of Islamic prophecy) or, in the original Hindu version, as a living incarnation of the supreme deity Vishnu. This prophecy inspired a number of rebellions against the Dutch colonial regime. The most famous one, perhaps, was under the leadership of Diponegoro, who was widely believed to be the predicted saviour or *ratu adil*. Another designation for this saviour is *satrio piningit*, the 'hidden knight or warrior'. Rumours of the appearance of this figure circulate periodically and until this day, especially at times when the country is seen to be in a state of crisis.

In my extensive search for references to the Jayabaya's prophecies through many hundreds of newspapers and magazines published during the 20th century, I have found countless attempts to relate the texts to current events and political struggles. Importantly, I discovered that an unusually high frequency of such references occurred during every major political crisis.

The first of these crises was the struggle for national independence. The prophecies were incredibly important at this time, and frequently mentioned in the political speeches and propaganda material of the independence movement. Indeed, after the initial departure of the Dutch, its leader, Sukarno, commissioned the publication of a curious book entitled "The Role of the Jayabaya Prophecies in Our Revolution". When the Dutch made their short comeback after WW2, they seized the book at the printers, and destroyed it, but it was later republished. In his foreword to the book, the former resistance leader - now the first President of independent Indonesia - identifies himself with the prophesised liberator, Ratu Amisan, but simultaneously stresses that ultimately the "just king" of the prophecies is none other than democracy, or in other words, a nation state based on equity and justice. This is a philosophical interpretation shared by many contemporary Indonesians, but the personalistic element is never quite relinquished because a just state is rightly seen to require a leader or a class of leaders who are able to "embody" such principles. Indeed, every time Indonesia has a new president he is identified as one of the future rulers predicted by Jayabaya. For example, interim President J. Habibie was frequently identified as the ruler whose reign the prophecy had predicted to last only "as long as a life cycle of the maize plant" (*sepanjang umur jagung*), or approximately 9 months.

A second major crisis that sparked interest in the prophecies took place in 1965 when General Suharto replaced President Sukarno in a military coup. Suharto was more closely associated with the prophecies of Sabdapalon than those of Jayabaya. He was widely believed to be the reincarnation of Sabdapalon, who in turn was an incarnation of the timeless literary figure Semar (or Dewa Ismaya), the royal advisor to the righteous Pandava princes in the Javanese shadow puppet theatre. Soeharto and his inner circle, under the leadership of a Javanese spiritual leader (*tokoh kejawen*), practiced a veritable cult of Semar. I gained first hand information about the immense influence Suharto's spiritual teacher had on political decision-making in an interview with former Secretary of State and Suharto's right hand man, Murdiono. I also had the chance to visit some of the sacred sites associated with this cult, especially at Mt Tidar and Mt Srandhil, two sacred sites near Semarang and Cilacap. In the prophecies of Sabdapalon the latter had promised to return and take charge of Java once more around the year 2000, 500 years after the great Hindu empire of Majapahit had fallen due to the introduction of Islam and subsequent civil war. He also promised that upon his return he would restore the old religion or *agama budi*, which is variously interpreted as signifying Hindu-Buddhism, or the religion of Javanese spiritual knowledge (*budi*), or even modern science. The prophecy is thus rather hostile toward Islam and, indeed, so was Suharto for the greater part of his reign. Most importantly, he ensured that the Indonesian state was based not on Islam but on the principle of *pancasila*, which in turn has its roots in Javanese mysticism. Until today, his successors have left this principle intact despite much renewed pressure from Islamic political movements in recent years.

Finally, the period leading up the fall of Suharto in 1998 and also the early years of the subsequent *reformasi* period witnessed another major resurgence in the popularity of the Jayabaya and Sabdapalon prophecies. Numerous re-publications of the texts appeared around this time, most of which were very inexpensive productions and have sold large numbers of copies. I have already mentioned Habibie, but similar stories were circulated about how his successors Abdurahman Wahid (alias 'Gus Dur') and Megawati Sukarnoputri ought to be situated within the chronology of the prophetic texts. I was also able to determine that, during their candidature, both of these presidents visited sacred sites associated with the prophecy, such as the Loka Moksa Jayabaya in the village of Pamenang, Kediri. This is the site where the prophet king Jayabaya is said to have vanished, having achieved *moksa* or 'liberation', and leaving no mortal body behind.

These and many other leading politicians also have visited spiritual leaders whose knowledge of prophecy is profound, though they may not bother to study texts. Rather, their knowledge is based on having direct access to the world of spirit (*alam gaib*), that is, to the same source from which Jayabaya drew his knowledge in the first place. Indeed, these contemporary Javanese masters of the spirit world are charged not only with interpreting but also with implementing the prophecy, and are believed to have the spiritual power to decide who will become the next president. Here the prediction of the future becomes inseparable from the making of the future because the personal will of such persons is in alignment with the divine intent (*karsa*) of the macrocosm. Whatsoever such a spiritual master utters is therefore expected to become true, whether it be a curse or a blessing.

Megawati and Gus Dur, for example, were given ‘the power to rule’ Indonesia (*wahyu raja*) by one of the most influential of these leaders at a sacred site on a beach in Gunung Kidul, and built monuments at this site to show their gratitude after their subsequent election². The current president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, is also no stranger to this world, but I am not prepared to elaborate on this while he is still in office.

Herein we see prophecy manifested as part of a living, contemporary tradition and active political process (see also Quinn 2009). In principle, this is made possible by a still popular Javanese cosmology that acknowledges the spirit world, and in practice, the process relies on consultation between political figures at all levels and people who are reputed to be expert mystical practitioners. It is therefore important here to understand what Java’s spiritual experts are capable of. It is also impossible to appreciate this if we confine ourselves to conventional forms of understanding, which include conventional social science. Thus, all I can do here is provide some of the core elements of Javanese mystics’ ‘beliefs’, even though in their own view belief has absolutely nothing to do with it.

Prophecy cannot be separated from Java’s ancient and profound mystical tradition, whose proponents seek direct access to the truth through rigorous spiritual practices. These practices cultivate a capacity for the conscious exercise of “intent” (*karsa*), a human faculty that differs from language-based reasoning and produces a form of awareness spanning up to eleven dimensions rather than the usual three dimensions of human language-based consciousness. From the perspective of higher forms of consciousness the future can be apprehended because time, the fourth dimension, forms a “curve” rather than a straight line. Time is said to curve and ultimately to form a dynamic “circle” from the eternity-based perspective of awareness in the fifth dimension, a dimension that reveals the pulse-like nature of a cosmos between being and emptiness (*alam awang uwung*, ‘the realm that is empty and yet full’), just like the roundness of three-dimensional space can only be recognised from the higher perspective of ordinary time-bound consciousness. One could say that higher dimensions reveal ever more profound and near unimaginable degrees of ‘roundness’, or integration. In relation to the fourth dimension, “intent” allows a direct encounter with the real that is beyond time and yet includes it, leading to an experience of a kind of hyper-spherical reality³. The capacity to prophesise thus provides one kind of evidence to show that the inner Self (*sukma*) has awoken and achieved mastery of intent. Note that it is not for a ‘person’ (*orang*) to achieve mastery of divine powers, rather it is the divine that achieves mastery over the finite personality and manifests itself in this way, with the conscious permission and participation of the person concerned. Incidentally, I am here breaking with Javanese tradition, according to which it is quite futile to try and put such experiences into mere words except in a context of practical instruction.

² The spiritual leader in question has expressed his wish not to be named for the time being, due to concerns that he may suffer persecution or risk the enmity of competitors, particularly among Muslim leaders.

³ The use herein of terms such as ‘curve’, ‘roundness’ or ‘sphere’ is metaphorical.

On the science of prophecy and the mythology of science

The political use of prophecies in Java is interesting as a social practice that has few parallels in contemporary Western societies. I say few rather than none, because there are notable exceptions, such as the prophecies of Fatima, which have had an enormous political impact, inspiring covert political initiatives in Poland and beyond, that contributed to the fall of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War. Another pertinent example is the biblical prophecy of Armageddon and the second coming of Christ, which is very important to premillennial dispensationalists and Christian Zionists in the USA. The latter have had significant influence on the US government and its policies, especially under Presidents Carter and G.W. Bush. For example, they have lent much support to the Israeli occupation because presumably one of the preconditions for the second coming is that Jerusalem be returned to the Jews (in its entirety, according to their interpretation).

In their everyday life as well, many people in the West still turn to astrology and other esoteric systems of understanding for personal guidance and to predict the future, because science is seen as rather unhelpful in this regard. In general, however, since the Renaissance modern science has provided the dominant model of truth in Western society with regard to the natural world, while an equally dominant and important socio-political model of human relations has been provided by the modernist Protestant ethos of capitalism, as described in the classic work of Max Weber (1958[1904]). Gradually, science has provided us with such a powerful description of the world as it (supposedly) really is, that any other idea anyone may have about the nature of reality is immediately ridiculed and dismissed as a false proposition; as a mere belief. This conservative attitude fails to give credit to the fact that, precisely because the prophetic imagination can motivate us to act in accordance with scientifically 'false' claims about the future, it helps us to change the world and the future in the process. As Castoriadis (1998) has observed, the imaginary is as important as our awareness of the manifestly real when it comes to providing motivation for action and social change.

What is held to be 'real' in contemporary late modern society, following Baudrillard's (2005), is in fact no more than an imagined, simulated form of reality that has fossilised into what he calls the 'hyper-real'. To the extent that our reality is made to appear to us as a natural state of affairs, rather than being recognized as a human creation based on imaginative human actions in the past, we are no longer free to re-imagine and recreate reality. Apart from the scepticism bequeathed upon us by neo-Newtonian scientific conservatism, we find it difficult to question and challenge the experience of the hyper-real through new, active imaginings because this is a heavily mediated experience. As our attention is drawn increasingly into a mediated and virtual reality over which we have little creative control, the imagination is colonised by vested interests. At the same time, we are constantly distracted by the media from the material conditions of modern life, even in the face of much evidence of an impending environmental disaster. We have become entrapped in the iron cage of a totalising myth that still wears the mask of descriptive realism but is no longer scientific in the genuine explorative sense, and is further entrapped by the distractions of a medi-

ated social imaginary that discourages us from creatively imagining millenarian future realities.⁴

In Javanese prophecy, the modern condition is depicted as a reversal of the natural order of things and as a state of madness. Indeed, the inability to recognize our human capacity for envisaging and creating a new reality, a future, is noted in the texts as a key indicator that we now live in a *kali yuga* or 'dark age', the low point in the spiral of time. Here despondency and fatalism are the norm, and those who ask questions and maintain virtue are scorned or persecuted. Expert interpreters of the prophecy texts lament that worldly greed, and the shallow intellectualism that cleverly serves its ends, have usurped the throne that rightly belongs to the inner Self (*sukma sejati*) which alone is capable of experiencing truth, because it is truth. From this inner-worldly perspective, the real *ratu adil* or saviour is none other than the *sukma sejati* returned to its throne, and when this occurs a golden age of spiritual insight commences for the individual concerned. If this kind of awareness is more widely cultivated, on a societal scale, then it becomes a golden age in the exoteric, socio-political sense, emulating the conditions that prevailed during the reign of King Jayabaya. Unlike the millenarianism of Marxism, this eschatological model does not separate individual spirituality and socio-political advancement because the former is considered a prerequisite for the latter.

The prophecy texts of Java present a rational argument to their readers. Like scientific theories, they too aspire to be descriptive of reality. Indeed, the content of the texts – if we assume the temporal perspective of their eighteenth-century authors – consists of approximately ninety percent historical description and ten percent future prediction. This is not dissimilar from the scientific method, whereby rational predictions of future events are also deemed possible. Scientific prediction is based on observation of a sample set of past events, on determining patterns of recurrence in these events, and defining these patterns mathematically. In short, scientific predictions rely on the formulation of natural laws or, at least, where that is impossible, on the statistical description of observable historical patterns. Similarly, the prophecy texts strive to establish a historical pattern. Observing the fluctuations of the political fate of Java, the prophecy texts note alternations between righteous and tyrannical governments, and also point to a second, more long term pattern or trend whereby the low points in these short cycles increase in depth and become more frequent. This pattern is predicted to continue into the future, leading to a gradual decline of civilization and a global cataclysm. This cataclysm is predicted to occur in the year 2100. Before the reader breathes a sigh of relief, because the bitter end appears to be scheduled for a future moment that lies beyond our life-span, let me hasten to add that the meaning of this date is uncertain and disputed. To begin with, several different calendars are used in Java. The difficulty lies in pinpointing where exactly the present moment is described in the text. Most contemporary expert interpreters of the prophecy say that a terrible cataclysm – in the form of a massive natural disaster - will occur very soon.

⁴ An example is the captivation of tens of millions of young adults, teenagers and children by mediated imaginary experiences in on-line interactive computer game worlds such as 'Call of Duty'. The players are provided with the opportunity to make decisions within a virtual reality, which they share with other 'real' players as well as computer generated figures. But their imagination is not required to become creative. Rather, the rules of engagements and the imagery are all provided for them, and lead the players into a world wherein brutality is normalised. Not even the international rules of warfare are enforced in this apocalyptic scenario. Unthinking violence towards anyone designated from above as enemies, including civilians, and self-interested loyalty to one's own horde of fighters appear to be the only principles. The popularity of this game is a mark of how strong the apocalyptic archetype has become in the collective unconscious of late modern society, and what kind of future we are being prepared for.

Current debates about climate change show, however, that we have not abandoned the art of prediction and that we cannot afford to do so, or even to restrict our foresight to four-year election cycles. Many a scientist would scoff at this and say that the future cannot be predicted with any certainty, or at least not far in advance. The main obstacles are indeterminacy and complexity.

Predicting the future of humanity is a bit like trying to beat the bank in playing roulette. Gamblers reject the notion of indeterminacy and fancy they can predict what numbers will come up next on the basis of observing past results. Generally they are defeated by the limits of memory and processing power, and because the time span over which an apparently random number series can be observed may be too short to observe any regularities operating on very long cycles. Nevertheless, casinos acknowledge that some punters do have uncanny winning streaks, to the extent that they regularly choose to evict such people.

So what do we make of the Javanese prophecies in the light of all this? Is it possible to know the future? What and where is the future anyway? The capacity of the mind, of rational, language-based thought, is so limited that the future as a whole would definitely seem inaccessible, even to a causal determinist, because the sheer complexity of the cosmos makes it impossible to take full account of all causes. The calculator would need to be as large as the cosmos itself. Nevertheless, recent scientific research in neuropsychology has shown that human beings do have an unconscious holistic intelligence that far surpasses their faculty of conscious analytical reasoning, and is able to deal with complexity more effectively. In one experiment, subjects who were distracted from thinking about a complex problem came up with more accurate solutions than others who were encouraged to analyse the information provided (Association for Psychological Science 2008). From a *kejawen* perspective, this non-analytical intelligence is deemed to belong to the cosmos as a whole. A person, who knows themselves to be deeply connected to, and at one with, all existence is thus privy to a knowledge that may well seem supernatural to others. The basic reason why the future is knowable in this way, they say, is because linear time is an illusion, and every moment and every possibility is equal and exists simultaneously and contiguously from the perspective of an eternal and infinite divine reality.

This kind of hyper-dimensional model of reality is not entirely at odds with post-Newtonian scientific theory, and much contemporary spiritual literature has recognised these parallels. The difference is that even the scientists concerned usually do not “know” that kind of science to be true at a level of direct somatic experience, the way Javanese spiritual practitioners know it. Scientists only “believe” higher dimensions to be true on the basis of indirect evidence, and such belief is rejected within the spiritual tradition of Java. Scientists and those who hire them certainly can make practical, instrumental use of such advanced scientific cosmologies, as the abuse of Einstein’s and Oppenheimer’s work for the production of nuclear bombs has famously illustrated. Few people in the scientific or wider community, however, allow such advanced cosmological insights to improve their self-understanding as human beings. The critique of some Javanese spiritual masters is, therefore, that we must stop merely “believing” in science and bring discoveries to bear on our direct experience of life. This, they claim, will lead us to the same conclusions about time and prophecy and related matters that they themselves have reached through their science of the spirit.

Regardless of whether we are willing to pay heed to this kind of argument or not, there is a more mundane, phenomenological sense in which the power of prophecy is only too 'real'. In our rational, scientific worldview there may be little room left for presumably "irrational" spiritual worldviews such as the one the Jayabaya prophecies rely on. But despite their apparent irrationality, or because of it, prophecies may produce positive outcomes in human terms insofar as they dare to posit a future which is based on values and ideals rather than observed facts. It seems that we in the West find it difficult to give ourselves permission to imagine and thus produce a world in our own image, to our own human liking and commensurate with our own real needs. That is because the world is now altogether outside us, and only apprehensible - through our senses and scientific devices - in the mental mirror of a transcendental subject or Ego. In the world of Javanese prophecy, by contrast, the subject knows the world because it is the world; it knows from the position of an immanent subject who is inseparable from the greater subject of the universe and in whom the spirit of the entire universe resonates. This is a formless kind of knowing, without separation and hence without information.

Human aims such as creating happiness, beauty or goodness, are not necessarily well served by forms of rationality based on a transcendental subject, and certainly not by the instrumentalised rationality of capitalist modernity, wherein the subject views everyone and everything as a mere object and life's purpose as a fool's quest to reunite with the object through consumption. Seen from this perspective, our modern worldview contains a great deal of irrationality and fetishism. It may seem that a commitment to scientific realism will ensure that our worldview is sound and objective. However, such realism can cause us to lose sight of the deeper truth that - as Clifford Geertz (1973) famously observed - worldviews are 'models for' (achieving goals), not just 'models of' (reality). For example, if we think that inequality is simply a natural consequence of market competition then the way the capitalist system operates at present may appear to be the only way it could operate. Such pseudo-realism truly constitutes a mythologising of reality, and is due to a failure to recognise how we choose to make things real, how we produce and reproduce them.

The ideal political economy envisaged in Javanese prophecies is rather different. It is essentially based on a spiritual model of righteous government, whereby the a government's success, and of the virtue of those at the top of the hierarchy, kings and presidents alike, can be measured by the extent to which the wong *cilik*, the 'little people', the man and woman on the street, are able to live in peace and prosperity. Jayabaya's reign is reputed as a period where such conditions prevailed, because he was an enlightened, spiritual ruler, and hence in tune with the needs of the many. The prophecies thus envisage the possibility of a new golden age, when once again the forces of light will rule supreme on earth, though it may be preceded by a time of great turmoil. No more than a beautiful fanciful dream, some may say. But woe is us, if we do not dare to dream.

Of course, the dominant late modern discourse of instrumental rationality is not uncontested in the West, nor is Indonesia removed from its influence. If I have somewhat dramatised the differences it is only for the sake of illustration. Nevertheless, the degree to which in Indonesia the world of spirit is acknowledged in everyday life, and even in national politics, is truly remarkable. Nowhere is this attitude more

evident than in the great importance the Indonesian people and national elite alike attribute to the prophecies of Jayabaya and Sabdapalon.

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