

ANCIENT JAVANESE RECORDING OF THE PAST

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“**V**OLUMEN quoddam Javanicum ex remotissimo orbe cum aliis mercibus huc per mercatores anno nonagesimo sexto (read: septimo) adlatum. Quid contineat, prorsus ignoratur. Sunt qui leges esse Sinarum volunt, nonnulli Alcoranum censent, alii alia divinant. Character nostris hominibus numquam est visus. Folia sunt Palmae Indicae oblonga, numero LXXV, utrimque quatuor lineis sculpta. Tempus certius quid docebit.”

This was the description by Merula, the first librarian of Leyden University's Oriental Manuscripts Collection, of the first manuscript originating from Indonesia.

It came from Java in 1597 with the first fleet which left the Netherlands in 1595 to explore the Far East under the command of Cornelis de Houtman. The commercial profit which was the main purpose of the expedition was disappointing. However, the fact that this “*Merces litterae*”, the above mentioned seventy-five inscribed palm leaves, was placed at the disposal of the University by an Amsterdam “*cruydenier*”, a merchant in spices and condiments, shows how learning could be benefited by trade and commerce.¹

The co-operation between scholarship and trade did not end with this case. After that, the Dutch East India Company favoured the University several times with gifts of “rare books”, acquired during the voyages to far-away countries. Later (in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) the relation between research in the Netherlands and fieldwork in the Colonies was maintained particularly by missionaries and civil servants. However, Indonesian and Malayan Studies were still in the pioneering stage of their development.

The part played by the participants of the early voyages of discovery is well known, as far as descriptive accounts of the countries that these Portuguese, Spaniards, Englishmen and Dutchmen visited are concerned.

However, not before manuscripts, i.e., original records written by the autochthonous people themselves, were made accessible could an attempt be made to disclose their past and their literature. Such attempts were made indeed. The most spectacular resulted in *The History of Java* by Thomas Stamford Raffles. During his office as “Lieutenant Governor of the Island of Java and its Dependencies” he made a considerable collection of mostly Javanese and Malay manuscripts. To my

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¹ See B. J. O. Schrieke, *Het Boek van Bonang* (Proefschrift. R.U. Leyden, 1916).

mind, credit should be given to him in the first place for his evaluation and his appreciation of manuscripts as being the key sources from which historians could disclose the past. It did not occur to Raffles, whose book was for a great part based upon the manuscripts collected in Java, that the Javanese manuscripts kept in the neighbouring island of Bali are of greater importance in quality for the early history of Java.

This insight was gained at the beginning of the twentieth century, when scholars like Dr. J. L. Brandes and Dr. H. N. Van der Tuuk devoted themselves intensively also to the Hindu-Balinese culture. We may say that this marks the beginning of the scholarly study of Javanese linguistics, epigraphy and history.

Yet the study of the historical development of Javanese literature was still at a pioneering stage. Even at present a comprehensive history of Javanese literature, although desirable, is not extant, although source material has accumulated considerably. This fact is due to several circumstances. The number of students engaged in the field of Javanese linguistics, literature and history was, and still is, relatively small, compared with those studying Malay and Modern Indonesian. The reason for this is not only that the latter is an international discipline, also taught outside the Netherlands, but also that, for practical reasons, Malay and Indonesian are more choice subjects. Further, one can master Malay and Indonesian easily, but it is difficult to acquire a command of Modern Javanese with its Ngoko and Krama or social differentiation reflected in the language. Another crucial factor in this respect is that Javanese grammar belongs to the archaic and complicated section of the Indonesian linguistics. Old Javanese, known from inscriptions and manuscripts, is a language no longer understood by the average Javanese of today. Nevertheless, knowledge of this ancient language is rewarding as it gives access to the inscriptions (the oldest dating from the fifth century) and manuscripts (going back to their original versions of about the tenth or eleventh century) and so allows the historian to extend the Javanese historic perspective beyond that of any other Indonesian region. Malay history, for example, cannot be traced back earlier than the fifteenth century, as there are no documents available dealing with earlier past events with the exception of a few Old Malay inscriptions found in Sumatra.

As to the reasons why Javanese history occupies such an exceptionally advantageous position in the Indonesian and Malayan area, these I intend to point out in the following pages which, in a nutshell, may give an outline of the course of Javanese literary history, albeit a fragmentary one. The main objective of my paper is to give an evaluation of ancient Javanese recording of past events.²

² As to cross-references, I shall confine myself as much as possible to English-language literature. For detailed references I recommend: *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography*, ed. Soedjatmoko and M. Ali, G. J. Resink and G. McT. Kahin (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1965).

The construction of Java's historical picture is mainly based on (1) epigraphical material and (2) manuscripts.

As at present we are dealing with Javanese historiography, our primary interest lies in the field of that part of the Old Javanese literature which originated from a certain urge to record past events.

Javanese historiography was a creation of and emerged from the centres of authority, which were in the first place the *kratons*, the residences of the *ratu* or rulers. The royal, even divine nature of the Hindu-Javanese maharaja and later the Moslem sultan needed legitimizing. Therefore, literates, the clerical priests, were a necessary asset for the well-being of the king's majesty, his kraton and his dynasty. They were entrusted with the recording of the king's genealogy, the sequence of the ruling dynasties, and the history of the successive kratons beginning with the creation of the world. As long as there was a continuity in the successive dynasties, we may suppose that the authors could have consulted their predecessors' works to take over from them historical facts. When there were breaks in the continuity, the duty of the court *pujangga* (the clerical priest) was to link up the disruptions and to "recreate" the sequence of preceding kratons. However, we have to bear in mind that the prevailing note was reinforcing their own king's glory and magical power. In other words that means: reshaping the past events whenever the chronicler deemed it necessary.

Our first concern is to find out if there were breaks in the sequence of the Javanese kratons during the course of history. This can be done by making use of the epigraphical material.³

These inscriptions were, for the greater part, deeds of land grants or records of economic transactions. They were certainly not state documents dealing with general administration, but dealt rather with specific local affairs. Although they were mostly issued by a sovereign ruler who bestowed a grant upon religious communities or allodial lords, the latter were particularly concerned with the proper maintaining of the grant embodied in an inscription. The exact date (according to the Hindu as well as to the Javanese calendar) on which immunity and other privileges were given and guaranteed "for all time" is mentioned. No wonder that these documents were written on durable material: stone and bronze.

There are several copies of earlier inscriptions. These copies were made sometimes even centuries after the date of issue of the original inscription. We know from the *Nāgarakṛtāgama* that "honoured experts in history" were instructed by the king to keep in order land grants bestowed in the past, and that "a charter should be made for anyone devoid of such a charter".

Amongst the deeds just mentioned we have, in fact, copies made in Majapahit's heyday. For example, we may take an inscription dated 860 A.D. On that date a

³ For a comprehensive list of inscriptions see: Louis-Charles Damais, "Etudes d'Epigraphie Indonésienne", *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, Tome XLVI (1952), pp. 1-103.

land grant was bestowed by the then ruling king upon a priest. In the same inscription we read that in 1367 A.D. a noblewoman proved that she had a title to this land grant of 507 years before. The ruling king of Majapahit issued in 1367 a "new deed according to the contents of the previous one". So our comprehensive inscription consists of two parts: one, the copy of the deed issued in 860 A.D., and the other mentioning that in 1367 the first one was legalized.

From this we can draw the following conclusions.

1. The Javanese had the appropriate means for recording events.
2. They were exact in transmitting the once recorded facts and events.

However, I should like to point out that in these cases the interest in events of the past was essentially determined by factors of an economic nature.

For that reason these inscriptions are the most authentic documents for historians—also because they are originals, written on the dates mentioned at the beginning of each of them. Carefully kept by the grantees living at some distance from the kraton, the inscriptions had a good chance of surviving the misfortunes which did affect several kratons in the course of history.

Guided by the geographical locations of the finds, these inscriptions enable us to distinguish at least three areas, which during certain periods were dominated by a Hindu-Javanese kraton:

(1) West Java, (2) Central Java, and (3) East Java. Of West Java we have only a very few inscriptions, covering a period of nine centuries from the fifth up to the fifteenth century A.D. The historical picture of this part of Java is fragmentary, due to, among other things, the small number of inscriptions found in this region. Much more coherence in respect of the ruling dynasties is disclosed by the numerous epigraphs found in Central and East Java. Beginning with a Sanskrit stone inscription erected in the heart of Central Java, memorizing the founding of the dynasty of King Sañjaya in 732 A.D., an uninterrupted stream of inscriptions name the successive rulers of this part of Java. They were responsible for the building of Buddhist and Shivaite sanctuaries, belonging to the greatest achievements of Hindu art and architecture in Asia. However, the year 928 is the latest date known of an inscription found in Central Java. Epigraphs as well as sculptures and other pieces of Hindu-Javanese art of later date are met with exclusively in the eastern part of Java.

We have no direct evidence of the reason why Central Java, where until the beginning of the tenth century Hindu culture flourished, is destitute of any archaeological remains stemming from a later date. The factors which were responsible for the abandoning of the Central Javanese kraton in the tenth century cannot be given yet with certainty. Several hypotheses concerned with this problem exist. A volcanic eruption could have motivated the king to move his kraton eastward. It may be not because destruction of the area was involved, but merely

because such a natural phenomenon was considered an evil omen. Professor Schrieke's hypothesis is based upon the assumption that the statute labour required for the building of the huge monuments within two centuries, imposed by the rulers upon the villagers, was such a heavy burden that many subjects migrated to regions beyond the ruler's grip. These regions were found in East Java. Consequently the kraton—the nucleus of the consumer-class—had to follow the producing peasantry, without whom the first could actually not have maintained itself.⁴

To my mind, however, apart from the economic unproductivity which resulted from the immense building activity, another factor should be taken into consideration to explain the shift from west to east: the drift from the interior to the coast. The economy of the Central Javanese kratons was mainly agrarian—locked in by mountains, its possibilities for extension were limited. Moreover, together with the development of the international sea trade, the necessity was felt for more accessible approaches to coastal areas. East Java offered both opportunities. Its hinterland consists of wide plains, through which the well-navigable Brantas River streams. The delta of this river was—and still is—perfectly situated for sea harbours. As to the continuity of the Hindu-Javanese culture, we may assume that the shift of the kraton did not affect previous literature, because, as we know from inscriptions, the realm of the dynasty, founded in 732, passed through three stages. It first covered Central Java, then Central Java and at the same time East Java, and finally, since 929, only East Java. Thus apparently the eastward move of the kraton took place gradually, so that once settled in East Java, the kraton then already possessed a traditional culture, and a highly developed literature. The learned men of the kraton had at their disposal the writings of their predecessors dealing with art, science and history.

The break that apparently brought about serious consequences in connection with the Old Javanese literature took place in 1016.

In a stone inscription, issued in 1041, King Airlangga decreed that the monastery of Pucangen would become a free estate; this means that it would have immunity from royal duties. This favour was bestowed because the young Airlangga had received shelter and had been well treated by the monks of the monastery when the "great catastrophe" took place in 1016. In that year Airlangga's predecessor was killed and so were the people of the kraton, which was destroyed by the enemy. Prince Airlangga, implored by the priests to regain the realm of the previous king, began his wars of revenge, supported by a few devoted allies. Finally his hardships were overcome and Airlangga was established as Maharaja.

⁴"The End of Classical Hindu-Javanese Culture in Central Java" in *Indonesian Sociological Studies: Selected writings of Professor B. Schrieke*, Part 2 (The Hague, 1957), pp. 285-301.

With King Airlangga a Hindu-Javanese culture emerged in East Java, different in several respects from the previous Hindu-Javanese culture of Central Java. Architecture and sculpture differ from those of Central Java in that the autochthonous Javanese characteristics predominate in this later East Javanese period over the strong Hindu element, so striking in the Central Javanese art.

We may assume that the literature prior to 1016 embodied in palm leaf manuscripts was destroyed during the "pralaya": the "great catastrophe". The manuscripts we have at present go back to originals later than this great catastrophe, with probably a few exceptions which survived this eventful date. Contrary to the abundance of manuscripts originating from East Java, a very few—if any—could be attributed to the pre-pralaya period. However, it would be erroneous to conclude from this poor yield of writings that literature was absent in Central Java, taking into consideration that the many temple sculptures presenting Buddhist holy stories on the Barabudur and the *Rāmāyana* on the Prambanan — to mention only these amongst other stories well known from Sanskrit texts—could not be portrayed in stone unless their written originals were extant. We can imagine that in that time a flourishing literary life did exist in Central Java. Assumably two events were responsible for the disappearance of these texts: the gradual move of the kraton from Central Java to East Java which set in at the beginning of the tenth century and "the Great Catastrophe" in 1016.

However, when the Moslem influx from the Islamic parts of India became stronger in the sixteenth century, Hindu-Javanese culture came to an end. The kraton of the last great Hindu-Javanese empire of Majapahit, situated in East Java, like all the preceding kratons since the beginning of the tenth century (as we pointed out before), slowly died from cultural and economic starvation. It was gradually shut off by the emerging Moslem settlements at the coastal areas. Fortunately Hindu Java maintained close political and cultural relations with the neighbour island of Bali—in any case since the reign of Airlangga, who, as a matter of fact, was born on that island. Thus the Hindu-Javanese literati had had sufficient time to move to Bali. Here they could live amongst people of kindred spirit.

As the culture of Bali even at the present time is Hinduistic, although in lesser degree than centuries ago, the Old Javanese literature recorded in many manuscripts is still in high esteem. Having their origins in East Java and transmitting literature from as remote ages as King Airlangga's reign, these manuscripts passed through an almost uninterrupted sequence of dynasties, including the last Hindu-Javanese empire of Majapahit. So, when at the beginning of this century, Western scholars took an interest in Java's past, these manuscripts appeared to be of eminent importance for our knowledge of the culture and history of Hindu Java, be it only for the second half—that is five centuries of the Hindu-Javanese period, and dealing with East Java mainly.

The manuscripts represent various genres of Old Javanese literature. Amongst them several of the Old Javanese *parwas*, which are versions of the original parvas of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, mention the name of the king under whose rule they were written: King Dharmawangsha Teguh. At the end of the *Wirāta parwa*⁵ the priest (*paṇḍita*) stated that this parwa was told by him in "one month minus a night". He began to read on the fourteenth of October of the year 996 and finished on the twelfth of November of the same year. Apparently it was customary to read aloud the *Mahābhārata*. It is also said that it is beneficial to attend and listen to the reading of these parwas. This book of the *Mahābhārata* could have survived the disaster of 1016, whereby King Dharmawangsha's kraton was destroyed.

As regards the *kakawin*, a poetic form modelled on the Hindu *kāvya*, opinions are at variance as to its value as a historical source, although from a number of them some historical data could be derived. The *Arjuna-Wiwāha*⁶—"Arjuna's Wedding Feast"—obviously is meant as a kind of allegory of Airlangga's stirring time. The plot runs as follows: The gods, attacked by the demons, called on the hero Arjuna, who at that time was practising asceticism. His endurance proved that he was the right person to fight the demons. Indeed he succeeded in defeating the demons. He was rewarded by the gods with heavenly maidens, whom he married. Hence the name of the poem: *Arjuna Wiwāha*. It is easy to recognize in this poem the hero Arjuna as an allegorized Airlangga.

As I pointed out before, we could check the contents of this kakawin *Arjuna Wiwāha* against the stone inscription issued by Airlangga when he granted the freehold to the faithful priests who gave him shelter during the disaster of 1016. Unfortunately, there are only a few other instances where we can guess the historical events behind the allegory of a kakawin. The *Bhāratayuddha kakawin*⁷ may have served as a justification of King Jayabhaya's (twelfth-century) war. The *Smaradāhana kakawin*⁸ could contain an allusion to certain events in the life of King Kameshwara of Kadiri (c. 1185). But we are almost in complete darkness in this respect regarding several other kakawins which may contain clues concerning historical facts which were allegorized. There are kakawins apparently written for no other purpose than poetical enjoyment. Several, however, treat a purely technical subject in a more attractive way, e.g., a grammar, or hand-book, dealing with all kinds of metres. And then there is the *Nāgarakṛtāgama*, a kakawin written by Prapañca, dealing with the realm of Majapahit in 1365.⁹ As the author gives

⁵ *Wirātaparwa*, ed. H. H. Juynboll (The Hague, 1912).

⁶ *Arjuna Wiwāha*, ed. and trans. R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka (The Hague, 1926).

⁷ *Bhāratayuddha*, ed. J. G. H. Gunning (The Hague, 1903).

⁸ *Smaradāhana*, ed and trans. R. Ng. Poerbatjaraka (Bandoeng, 1931).

⁹ Cf. also the opinions of Professor J. E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw: "The Beginnings of Old-Javanese Historical Literature", in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, vol. CXII (1956), pp. 382-94, and Professor P. J. Zoetmulder T.J.: "Kawi and Kekawin", in the same periodical, vol. CXIII (1957), pp. 50-69.

contemporary descriptions, this unique book is considered to be a valuable source for our knowledge of the heyday of Majapahit. To my mind here again the kakawin style was applied to give a picturesque account of the administrative system of the kingdom. Special attention is paid by the author to particularities of free estates, obviously because he was supervisor of these free estates.

My conclusion about the Old Javanese kakawins is: they were written for one or other of a number of purposes; certainly *not* for recording events to be used by later generations as historical sources.

Distinct from these writings are products of literary activity which I would classify in another category. Since they deal with events some time after they occurred, we may call them collectively "historiographies", on the understanding, however, that they were not intended to be used by future historians. Besides, if they are used as historical source material, we have to contend with factors due to the time gap between the events and their recording. One characteristic these Javanese historiographers have in common is that apparently legitimization of authority was the main objective. A distinct feature they share is what I tentatively would call aggregation, by which I mean that such historiography has been written by an author who collected from several kinds of sources written as well as verbal accounts, aggregating them together in his own narrative in order to support his objective of legitimization.

Illustrative of such a procedure is the composition of the above mentioned *Nāgarakṛtāgama*, written by Prapañca, who finished his work "at an auspicious time by full moon in the months September-October of the year 1365". His intention was "to praise in a poetic form the tale of the Sovereign, His Majesty the King of Majapahit, the Ruler Rājasanāgara". After having identified the king with God Shiwa-Buddha, Prapañca proceeds with an account of Rājasanāgara's family and a description of the court of Majapahit. He also informs us about the government system of the kingdom and its dependencies in Java as well as abroad. Also important contemporaneous events are recorded. However, the greater part of the *Nāgarakṛtāgama* is taken up with the *deshawarnana* or "description of the country" as Prapañca calls it. Attending his king during royal visits to free estates and sanctuaries, where previous rulers were entombed, he, as superintendent of the Buddhist foundations, was the proper man to record such a description and as a poet he did it in a poetical manner. Occasionally the history related to a foundation is told. In these cases the deeds kept by the custodians were shown to him. A visit was made to an old abbot—called Ratnāngsha, "thousand months of age"—of a Buddhist foundation because Prapañca wished to be informed about the successive ancestors of his king "who were entombed in the various sanctuaries, approached with due veneration, to begin with the Lord of Kagenengan". This Lord of Kagenengan was king Rājasa, the founder of the Singhasari-Majapahit dynasty, who was buried in the temple of Kagenengan. Honoured by this request,

the old abbot answered: "The Poet" (that is Prapañca) "should listen in a spirit of indulgence to the oral tradition. Maybe much is false, but one should adhere to the wisdom of the elders. There might be too much or too little (told), but it has been resolved."

This passage sheds a clear light on the appreciation of oral traditions: they were accepted as such, they were mentioned by clerical priests of yore, who passed on the narratives which they had received from their predecessors.

Prapañca aptly incorporated the abbot's account in his poem and thus linked the past with the present. Apparently he codified it, in order to enhance the majesty of his royal protector.¹⁰

Parallel to this narrative runs the first part of the *Pararaton*: "The Book of the Kings".¹¹ Of this prose writing no author is known, and we are also in the dark as to its origin.

Many more tales are told in connection with the leading figures, and more legends too are interwoven in the text. It could have passed through several authors, each of them adding his part to a gradually growing collection of stories. Sometimes an author elaborated by adding to the text he received from a previous writer. From this arose the tales describing in detail the adventures of important persons or events. The first narrative, for instance, is called the "Ken Angrok Tale". It deals with the life history of Ken Angrok, the adventurer, who gained the throne and who as king Rājasa became the founder of the dynasty. It proceeds with the history of the successive rulers down to king Wisnuwardhana. From this period, apparently a new story—or chapter—begins with the famous empire builder Krtanāgara and with the founding of Majapahit. In most instances the *Pararaton* is not only much more detailed, but it also deals with a longer period than that covered by the narrative of the abbot Ratnāngsha in the *Nāgarakṛtāgama*. The last part of the *Pararaton* consists of a kind of calendar. Here the events are told briefly, followed by the dates of their occurrence. Abruptly the *Pararaton* ends with: "After that there was an eruption in the month Watugunung in the Shaka year 1403" (that is 1481 A.D.). The last author apparently had not had the opportunity to elaborate this calendar into an essay.

To me it seems most likely that the *Pararaton's* function was also one of legitimization. The first kraton scribe opened "The Book of Kings" with: "As follows runs the tradition about Ken Angrok, at the beginning, when he was called into existence . . ." "God Brahma looked for someone through whom he could procreate a child". A farmer's wife became the medium of the god's intention.

¹⁰ *The Nāgarakṛtāgama*, ed., trans. and comment. by Dr. Th. Pigeaud in *Java in the Fourteenth Century*, 5 vols. (The Hague, 1960-3).

¹¹ Ed., trans. and comment. by Dr. J. L. A. Brandes (with the co-operation of Professor N. J. Krom and others). *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van K. en W.*, vol. LXIII, 1920).

Thus according to the tradition, told in the *Pararaton*, the founder of the dynasty was Brahma's son. By this story the divine origin of the house of Ken Angrok/Rājasa was stated.

Compared with what we learn from the epigraphical sources, we may say that in general the sequence of the kings in both sources is in agreement. However, of the first three rulers—including the founder of the dynasty—dealt with in the *Nāgarakṛtāgama* and the *Pararaton* we have no evidence from the inscriptions neither mentioned as donors who issued the deeds, nor in the preamble of such a deed of a landgrant in which one sometimes can find a genealogical list of previous rulers.

This discrepancy between the contents of the two books and the data available from the inscriptions gave rise to a controversial hypothesis. Based upon several studies, the almost unanimous opinion which is reflected in the handbooks on Javanese history is that, as to the sequence of the kings, we can rely upon the *Nāgarakṛtāgama* and the *Pararaton*. About thirty years ago, however, Professor C. C. Berg in his impressive contributions to the early history of Indonesia developed an hypothesis in which he denies that the accounts of the Singhasari and Majapahit dynasties given in the two books are historical.¹²

My personal opinion in this respect is the following :

As a matter of fact the oldest inscription issued by a king belonging to the Singhasari and Majapahit dynasty is a deed of a landgrant of king Krtanāgara, dated 1267 A.D. Another deed was issued under the auspices of his father, King Wisnuwardhana, dated 1267.

The genealogical list in the preambles of all inscriptions issued by the following kings never goes further back than Wisnuwardhana.

We do not know why Wisnuwardhana did not mention his royal ancestors, not even his grandfather, king Rājasa (before his enthronement called Ken Angrok), the founder of the dynasty. We can only guess that in his time the kraton policy might have created a special reason for leaving out their names.

So, when the successors of king Krtanāgara issued deeds, their experts of juridical affairs could not authenticate these deeds by referring to the royal ancestors before Wisnuwardhana. In their function of lawyers they had no legal statements of evidence at their disposal about the existence of these oldest ancestors.

I assume that the standard applied to the validity of recorded past events, judged by lawyers, differs from that of clerical priests. Hence the different historical value regarding past events recorded in inscriptions—being deeds of economic transactions—and traditions written for any purpose but legal transactions.

¹² See C. C. Berg in *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography*, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-117.

So far, the Old Javanese writings examined have stemmed from kraton circles. Besides these centres of authority, where legitimization of temporal rulers gave birth to the historical texts just discussed, there were during the Hindu-Javanese period other autonomous communities. In certain respects such a community is comparable with an allodial estate of the European Middle Ages. It is understandable that it jealously defended its independence against other powers—above all against the kratons and their vassals.

The *Tantu Penggelaran*—according to Pigeaud who published the text with a Dutch translation and commentaries—is a kind of ecclesiastical history.¹³ It begins with a myth of the creation of Java and its inhabitants. The legendary origin of the first communities and holy places is told, and the emergence from these of daughter communities. Of their consecrated chiefs it is said that they originated from gods and supernatural beings.

The contents of this text give us the impression that the legendary tales were meant “to explain” the names of holy men and sacred communities by applying folk etymology obviously with the aim of proving their authenticity. The unknown author made use of traditional stories as he states: “Such is what is told in days of old.”

We know several named communities also from other documents, like the *Nāgarakrtāgama* and the *Pararaton*, and some of them are mentioned in the inscriptions as well. Besides a number of geographical names can still be located at present.

The author was certainly acquainted with the communities of his time. However, he was apparently only interested in recording the myths related to their respective origins.

The *Tantu Panggelaran* is more a collection of myths and legends than a record of past events. The date has been estimated by Pigeaud as being the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

By that time Islam had already a strong foothold in Java. With Hinduism fading and the native culture gradually regaining its original place, Javanese society was ready to accept the new faith of Muhammad. During this transition period Java provided fertile soil for the growth of legends and myths.

The course of our argument has brought us as far as the sixteenth century. By that time Java saw a new religion introduced, in consequence of which, great social and cultural changes took place.

Hindu-Javanese literature has for the greater part taken refuge on the neighbouring island of Bali. Here several episodes of East Javanese historical literature were used for purposes of extolling the status of Hindu-Balinese kratons

¹³ Th. G. Th. Pigeaud, *De Tantu Panggelaran* (Proefschrift R. U. Leyden, The Hague, 1924).

and their rulers, by linking their dynastical history with that of East Java, in particular with the Majapahit State history. This gave birth to several historical poems called *kidung*. The language is still a variation of Old Javanese, but it has already developed into Balinese. The subject matter runs parallel with that of the tales found in the *Pararaton* just mentioned. For example: the Angrok tale has its parallel in the *kidung Angrok*.

However interesting it may be to follow the Hindu-Balinese historical literature in its development, it is beyond the intended scope of this paper to discuss peripheral Old Javanese literature.

Our concern is now to try to answer the question whether besides these records originating from East Java after the catastrophe of 1016, which deal mainly with East Javanese past events, we historians have documents at our disposal which could provide us with data of occurrences from before 1016. This very question is also pertinent to that of the history of Central Java after 928—the latest date of an inscription found in that part of the island.

After Central Java fell silent from 928 onwards, the first pieces of contemporaneous information were provided by foreigners: Portuguese and Dutch. Apparently a vigorous Hindu-Javanese culture, favoured by a powerful kraton, no longer existed. Instead, several Moslem traders from overseas—mainly from North Sumatra—were disseminating their faith, which they received from India. Islam with its international orientation was well suited to gain adherents among the coastal vassals of the Hindu-Javanese kratons, as they were aspiring after political independence. So several petty Moslem principalities emerged in the coastal regions.

In the furthestmost western part of Java the Hindu-Javanese kingdom of Pajajaran had to surrender to the Moslem ruler of Banten. Pajajaran's kraton still existed indeed in seclusion, but finally it was absorbed by this Moslem harbour kraton of Banten. Even Majapahit in East Java, once *the* powerful empire, was also fated to disintegrate gradually. It happened under almost the same circumstances. The Hindu-Javanese culture, no longer nourished by devoted Hindus from India—instead Indian Moslems took over their missionary task—died from cultural starvation.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century in Central Java one of the petty kratons gained the hegemony over a number of native principalities. That was Demak, situated on the North Coast. Claiming that its first ruler was the son of the last king of Majapahit, it was thus considered to be the legal "successor" of Majapahit. However at the end of the sixteenth century Mataram took over the hegemony. This Moslem Mataram was destined to become the last independent kraton in Java.¹⁴

¹⁴ Its kraton was situated in the same locality where almost nine centuries before—in 732—the Hindu-Javanese kraton of the same name was founded by King Sañjaya, Prince of Mataram.

Our knowledge of the history of Central Java is fragmentary. Until the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the Dutch East India Company was dealing with Mataram and therefore had to take interest in Central Javanese political affairs, our knowledge of its history is based only on foreign sources, mainly Portuguese, supplemented by data from the huge *Javanese Babad Literature*.

What is a *babad*? For a clear understanding of the *babad* literature, which in our view appears bewildering, the following short outline of the political structure of ancient Java could be helpful.

Our handbooks on Indonesian or Javanese history mostly deal with one dynasty or one kraton at the one time. This could create a distorted view of the actual significance of other existing political powers. As a matter of fact, most of the documents at our disposal originated from *one* kraton or dynasty, viz., the one which during a certain period had the hegemony over a certain number of principalities. These were all loosely bound together by family ties. Even the inscriptions were for the greater part issued by the paramount kraton, which held sway over several minor kratons. The princes of the latter formed a kind of landed aristocracy.

In the later Moslem period, inscriptions dealing with economic transactions comparable to those we have from the Hindu-Javanese period are few in number. But then we are well informed, at least about the names of these landed aristocrats and their respective realms, by the *babads*.

There are numerous local *babads* known, of which the greater part is still only accessible in manuscripts. We may assume that each kraton had its own *babad*. They consist, in their most simple form, of the genealogy of the ruling prince, whose ancestry is derived from legendary characters, together with the history of the kraton. Each generation of chroniclers continued the work of its predecessor, making it up-to-date by adding the events occurring during its time and also by reshaping the narrative if the policy of the kraton made it necessary. Reading through a *babad* as it has thus come down to us, it is understandable that the latter sections contain more reliable information than the earlier parts.

Mataram was the paramount kraton, controlling almost the whole of Java, its power being felt even abroad. This Mataram left us the *Babad Tanah Djawi*—the “History of the Island of Java”. In principle the structure of this work is the same as that of a local *babad*. Many studies have been devoted to this particular work and it was the main source used by Raffles when he wrote his “History of Java”. It was probably codified earlier than Sultan Agung’s reign (1613-45), but several more authors were responsible before it developed into its final form. As we have it at present, the historical narrative goes as far as 1743. As Mataram was the central kraton, several local *babads* are included in the *Babad Tanah Djawi*.

The first editor of the *Babad Tanah Djawi* was a Moslem, who gave shape to the first codified part of this *Babad*. Probably he made use of what he knew from

oral tradition. The stories recorded by him pretend to deal with the oldest time of Java: pre-Hindu Java, followed by the Hindu-Javanese period.

“This is the genealogical history (Sejarah) of Java, beginning with the prophet Adam . . .” Thus runs the first line of the *Babad Tanah Djawi*. The last author of the Babad, the *pujangga* or clerical scribe of the dynasty of Mataram, making use of the Babads by scribes of preceding kratons, drew the line of ancestors of the kings of Mataram from Mankind’s first father: Adam. In this line of ancestors we soon find Batara Guru, who ruled over the kingdom of the gods. It is told that the heaven of Batara Guru, that is Shiwa, was threatened by an enemy, but with the help of Wisnu this enemy was defeated. We shall not follow the early “historical” accounts in the *Babad Tanah Djawi*. According to our Western view they belong to the category of legends and myths, although sometimes names are mentioned, known from the inscriptions.

Even the history of Majapahit, as it is told in the babad, cannot bear examination following the principles of Western historiography. We would say that it is merely a fantastic reminiscence of the record of events between the founding and the downfall of that empire. Did the author of the *Babad* know the *Pararaton*? The theme of the founding of Majapahit is the same in both books.

According to epigraphical sources, Majapahit was founded in 1293 by prince Wijaya. The above mentioned *Pararaton* gives us as one detail of the founding, that it happened after Wijaya was permitted to clear the forest of Trik, to settle there with his men from Madura. The little settlement was called Majapahit after the bitter (pahit) maja fruit, which was eaten by one of the men clearing the forest. This settlement soon became a flourishing *desa* and eventually the great kraton of Majapahit.

The same story, with a few variations, is also told in the *Babad*, but in this version it is preceded by a prediction given by the prophetess Cemara Tunggal—“Go right to the east and you will find in the jungle a maja tree. There you should clear the forest and there will be your kraton.”

The *Babad* author could have known this history—or story?—of the founding of Majapahit from the Old Javanese chronicle I just mentioned, but he could also have heard it from an oral tradition.

This theme of clearing the forest as the first step in founding a kraton is met several times in babads.

The story of the first Moslem kraton begins with a prediction given by the saint of Ampel Denta to Raden Patah: Raden Patah should go straight to the east and settle with his men where he found sweet-smelling reeds. When he acted on this advice, he found the reeds in the forest of Bintara. On that spot the forest was cleared and a settlement made. More and more people came to settle there, a mosque was built and, after the break-down of Majapahit, this place—Demak—became the first Moslem kraton in Java.

The Sultan of Demak was succeeded by the Sultan of Pajang, who divided his realm between two pretenders to the throne. The elder, Ki Pamanahan, was permitted to make the first choice. He said: "Because I am the elder, it is appropriate that I give way and choose Mataram, which is still a forest. Brother Panjawi can take Pati, which is already a town with inhabitants."

As was later proved—according to the *Babad Tanah Djawi* of course!—it was the right choice for Pamanahan. Mataram was due to become the powerful Moslem empire, while Pati later had to recognize Mataram's hegemony.

I have to restrict myself to one of the many historical events dealt with in the *Babad Tanah Djawi*, namely the founding of kratons or dynasties during the late Hindu-Javanese and early Moslem-Javanese history.

Two characteristics of the author's presentation of these analogical events in his work strike us:

1. The founding of a new kraton goes together with the clearing of a forest.
2. The founding is preceded by a prediction.

We may wonder if, in all the cases of the founding of a new dynasty, it happened as the author of the *Babad* told us, and we are even sceptical about the "predictions".

Obviously, the author inserted these predictions.

Why did he write history in this manner, we would like to ask? Such a question is wrongly expressed as the word "History" is used in the wrong sense. Because, first of all, the pujangga, the court clerical scribe, was not intending to write down on paper historical facts. Apart from, perhaps, lack of historical sources, he was depending on babads written by the pujanggas of preceding kratons. And all of them wrote their individual kraton babad with the aim of legitimizing kingship. For several different reasons, the pujanggas could not afford to tell of the birth of a new dynasty in another way.

Starting a dynasty of kraton from scratch—"from clearing the forest"—is the most neutral and harmless way of starting the history of his kraton: harmless in the respect of legitimizing kingship. Besides, a preceding prediction by a saint strengthens the legalization of the newly born dynasty.

We have to bear in mind that the *Babad* is dealing with history only so far as this history suited to legitimize the kings of Mataram. In this respect we may say that the babad literature is canonical history writing.

In the preceding pages there was much to convince us that a great deal of the written tradition was a continuation of the oral tradition. In connection herewith a short digression may be allowed. Oral tradition par excellence is kept in the *wayang*, the culture element which is indissolubly inherent in the Javanese civilization. It is a refined and sophisticated feature of the Javanese culture. Although the wayang was and still is the subject of many scholars, we are not

certain yet about its genesis. It has spread all over Indonesia and abroad as far as Thailand.

The Javanese themselves distinguished the various wayang repertoires according to their history. The *wayang purwa* deals with the oldest time up to the Kadirian period (c. 6th-11th centuries). The Kadirian period (11th-13th centuries) is represented by the *wayang gedog*. The Majapahit period (c. 1300-1500) is played as *wayang kerutjil*.

Although wayang is mostly translated as "shadow play" and wayang indeed means "shadow", not all forms are performed by projecting the shadows of leather puppets upon a screen. The wayang kerutjil for instance has flat wooden puppets.

It is interesting to note that several of the stories told in the kakawins found their way into the repertoire of the Javanese wayang play. One of these shadow plays is based upon the poem *Arjuna Wiwāha*, which, as we have pointed out, is the allegorization of the history of king Airlangga's life.

This shadow play is still performed today as the wayang *Mintaraga*, particularly at royal weddings. It forms part of the wedding ritual. The bride and bridegroom, by attending the performance, are initiated into their future life of wife and husband. The evoking and reviving of the past event by the performer of the wayang play—the *dalang*, who originally was a priest—is done by him with the conviction that the actions of yore will continue in the future of the married couple. With this ritualistic function of the wayang, we enter into the category of "prediction".

In his function as a priest, the *dalang* links the past with the future through his ritualistic performance of the present. Thus we may say that the wayang play not only shows us a piece of history, but at the same time is a prediction.

So the wayang stories have been transmitted orally from generation to generation. Originally based on historical facts, only the "cores" of these events are retained. Mostly the actions of the persons are attributed to gods, demi-gods, demons, etc.

It is understandable that only the basic structure of the story is retained as the *dalang* has to generalize the plot of the story to make it suitable for the particular purpose of the wayang performance.

If I was asked the function and meaning of the wayang—this typical element of Javanese culture—I would refer to the late Professor Hazeu's doctoral degree thesis in which, stated briefly, he said it is a sacramental performance whereby the actions of the ancestors are commemorated to advise today's community how to shape their lives for a beneficial future.

So far it has been possible to follow the evolution of a once-recorded historical event (Airlangga's adventures), namely, as it was written on an inscription and then allegorized in a poem (*Arjuna Wiwāha*) by a contemporary poet. We also

found it—only the structure of that event—used in a wayang play, as a wedding ritual.

Moreover this theme is also applied in the *Babad*; it was echoed by the author of the earliest part as we have seen on page 43. Wisnu, implored by Shiwa to beat off the enemy, succeeded in defeating this enemy.

The occurrence of one and the same theme, depicted from four different sources—namely: 1. from the authentic stone inscriptions of 1041; 2. the kakawin *Arjuna Wiwaha*; 3. the wayang play *Mintaraga*; 4. the *Babad Tanah Djawi*—leads us to the conclusion that there was an interplay between oral tradition, found in the wayang, and written tradition of the *Babad*; or as the Javanese put it: between “wayang” and “layang”. Layang means document: letter, book, etc.

In a way, we have to see in the works of the court pujangga—the author of the babad—the same function as the dalang—the performer of the wayang—has in his ritualistic performance of the wayang play. That is the function of legitimizing the reign of a king by adapting appropriate events of the past towards that purpose. Another task of both the dalang and the pujangga is initiating the legitimate person into his future function.

The Old Javanese could record contemporary events and could transmit them accurately, namely, as we have seen above, in their deeds of economic transactions. But in either case if they recorded past events in a unique manner, then we, historians of the twentieth century, have to accept this of them, because it was done purposely for reasons we have to respect.

Assessing the babads, and literature akin to babads, by means of the principles of Modern European historiography is to either deny or fail to recognize an independent and original way of thinking.

The Javanese history writing of the old pujanggas, however, also belongs to the past. With the “last pujangga” of the kraton of Surakarta, Ranggawarsita, real Javanese historiography died.

As the Javanese say: “With Ranggawarsita, the *wahyu* has gone.” We would say: with the impact of Western culture the real Javanese spirit of history writing disappeared. Nevertheless, as an organic part of the Old Javanese cultural heritage it has permeated a new ideology: Indonesian Nationalism. An additional chapter is being written by the new generation of historians as a contribution to a future historiography.