

Wacana, Vol. 12 No. 2 (October 2010): 386–398

INAUGURAL LECTURE

Dharmawangsa's heritage

On the appreciation of the Old Javanese Mahābhārata

WILLEM VAN DER MOLEN

Inaugural Lecture, 15 June 2010
Adjunct Professor in Old Javanese
University of Indonesia

A SHORTENED DERIVATIVE WITHOUT ADDITIONS?¹

In the *Ādiparwa*, the first book of the Mahābhārata, we read about Hiḍimbī who fell in love with Bhīma. The question was: would she obey her brother and deliver Bhīma to him, as he had ordered her to do, or would she choose Bhīma?

Yan wvatakngkw iki panganĕnya, anghing sakarĕng pawehanya inak âmbĕk lâwan suka ning kenuman ing râhnya. Yapwan pakaswâmya ta ya, malawas aku sukâ de nikâ (Juynboll 1906:141)

If I hand him over to be eaten by [my brother], the satisfaction he gives and the enjoyment of drinking his blood will last only for a while. If I took him as my husband he would give me joy for a long time.

She decides in favour of Bhīma.

This glimpse of a woman's view on men is quite instructive: how can she make the most of them? I should add that this is a very old view which may no longer be valid. Moreover, it has come down to us through a text written by a man. It reminds us that the Old Javanese Mahābhārata is still largely untapped as a source for gender studies. Maybe I should also add that Hiḍimbī, the lady concerned, is not a human being but a demon, a *rākṣasī*.

¹ In formulating my ideas I have been greatly helped by Rita DeCoursey, Tineke Hellwig, Roy Jordaan and Korrie Korevaart, who were so kind to go critically through the text. Munawar Holil skilfully took care of the lay-out when this article first appeared as an inaugural lecture. I wish to thank them all.