INAUGURAL LECTURE

Dharmawangsa's heritage

On the appreciation of the Old Javanese Mahābhārata

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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 wwatakngkw iki panganěnya, anghing sakarěng pawehanya inak âmběk 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 *rākṣasi*.

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.

Now that I have your attention, I would like to turn to the topic of my lecture today. As we all know, the Old Javanese Mahābhārata was not created from scratch by a Javanese author but was translated (in some sense) from the Sanskrit. The story of Hiḍimbī reveals an interesting difference between the Old Javanese version and the Sanskrit version of the text. In the latter² Hiḍimbī appeals to Kuntī, Bhīma's mother, after Bhīma keeps rejecting her. However, it is not Kuntī who gives the answer but Yudhiṣṭhira, her son: he is the one who gives permission to Hiḍimbī to take Bhīma as her husband. We should remember that Kuntī at this point in the story is a widow; her husband died a long time ago. Yudhiṣṭhira is her eldest son. In the Old Javanese version it is Kuntī herself who answers Hiḍimbī.

This difference between the Sanskrit Mahābhārata and the Old Javanese Mahābhārata is interesting, because it reflects a well-known difference between traditional Indian and Indonesian societies concerning the position of women. It is archetypical for the difference between the two versions of the text in general: the Old Javanese version follows the story faithfully but gives its own twist to it. This interpretation, I have to admit, is not generally accepted. The established scholarly opinion has it that the Old Javanese Mahābhārata is a shortened derivative, meaning that it copies or imitates the Sanskrit story, shortening it without adding anything new to the story. Today, I would like to demonstrate that this claim is true only to a certain extent. The Old Javanese text bears its own stamp, as we see in the story of Hiḍimbī. Therefore, the Old Javanese text deserves to be appreciated and studied for its own sake, alongside the various versions of the Sanskrit text.

In the following pages I shall first discuss the established view, with reference to some recent historical surveys of Old Javanese literature. Then I shall argue how the *parwas* or books of the Mahābhārata manifest themselves as mature literary texts and how the adaptation from Sanskrit to Old Javanese involved a conscious strategy aimed at supporting and enhancing the glory of its patron, King Dharmawangśa Tēguh Anantawikrama.

THE ACCEPTED VIEW

The Old Javanese adaptations of the Indian Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata reveal different approaches as to how they have been rendered from the source language into the target language. The Old Javanese Rāmāyaṇa, written some time after the middle of the ninth century, is a beautiful, generally admired poem of the *kakawin*-type, of such a high quality that people have wondered how it could have appeared out of the blue with no traces of a preceding literary development leading up to it. Except for one other *kakawin*, equally mature though much shorter,³ no other *kakawins* are known to have been written at the time. The *parwas* of the Mahābhārata of about 1000 A.D. and

² I have used the English translation of the Sanskrit text by Kisari Mohan Ganguli of 1896, in the edition of 1990.

³ This other *kakawin* has no name. It is a stone inscription, dated 856 A.D. See De Casparis 1956: 280-330.

later are prose texts, a category for which there was not much of a tradition either, except for use as official documents. The *parwas* are written in a kind of prose whose most important quality is that it is simple and fluent.

Actually, the difference between the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata is a matter of literature and non-literature. Literature in the Javanese context was always poetry, for many centuries, whereas prose was for non-literary texts. This distinction remained in force until far into the nineteenth century. The literary devices used in the Rāmāyaṇa such as choice of words, figures of speech and metre are so exuberant that the text has been called an *ādikakawin*, an exemplary *kakawin* for other poets.⁴ The *parwas* in their turn supplied the material used by later poets for their *kakawins*; according to modern literary historians it did not matter how they told their stories. In modern research the *parwas* are valued precisely because they are in prose, as this enhances their usefulness for linguistic analysis. It is clear that the relevance of the *parwas* has always been somewhere else.

This view is reflected in published literary histories. Zoetmulder's well-known book of 1974 contains an extensive discussion of the Rāmāyaṇa and other *kakawins*. In addition to their content, Zoetmulder's book also discusses prosody, forms of poetry and literary ideas, and the religious aspect of literature.

In the chapter on the *parwas* none of these aspects is addressed. Zoetmulder is only interested in the stories told by the *parwas*: these stories return in the *kakawins* and therefore Zoetmulder describes their content. But an extensive discussion of the literary aspects, as Zoetmulder provides for the poets and their works, he apparently considers not necessary for the *parwas*.

Supomo's short but thorough survey of 1996 is similar in this respect. Most of the author's attention is directed to the *kakawins*, how the poets went about their work, what kind of *kakawins* there are, their politico-religious significance, and so on. For the *parwas*, no such information is given. Supomo does pay attention, however, to the literary context of the *parwas*. Starting from the famous recital which had the Wirāṭaparwa as its subject, at the court of King Dharmawangśa in 996, Supomo draws a comparison with other practices of reciting prose stories at the time in ancient Java, referred to in the sources as *macarita*, and the Indian tradition of *harikatha* (a combination of recitation and explanation by a priest much like the practice of *mabasan* in more recent times in Bali, Supomo [1996]: 16).

In 2005 a new approach to Old Javanese literary history was launched by Kenneth Hall, that aiming to achieve a balanced account of that literature as a whole. Until recently, Hall claims, the various works of literature have been treated as separate entities with no attempts to identify general trends surpassing the individual works, which he thinks is an important task of a literary history. Hall focuses on the East Javanese period, between 1000 and 1500. Although this period begins with the Old Javanese translation of the

⁴ Supomo [1996]: 15, and compare the title of Hooykaas's publication of 1958: *The Old Javanese Rāmāyaṇa, an exemplary kakawin as to form and content*.

Indian Mahābhārata, he ignores the *parwas* and starts his analysis with the oldest *kakawin*.

In my view these literary historians are mistaken in assigning to the *parwas* the function of mere repositories of stories for poets (if at all: Zoetmulder allows for the possibility that the poets had direct access to the Sanskrit sources, Zoetmulder 1974: 68). The *parwas* influenced not only the content but also the form of the *kakawins*, and contrary to what has always been assumed, the *parwas* themselves do exhibit literary qualities as well. Consequently, our idea of the literary heritage of Java will never be complete as long as we ignore the literary side of the *parwas*. Let us now turn to the *parwas*.

CREATIVITY

Scholars of Old Javanese literature have always been intrigued by the question which Sanskrit text was the source of the Old Javanese versions of the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. The answer is important for our understanding of what happened in these particular cases and, more generally, for our understanding of the nature and location of the early contacts between Indonesia and India. For the Rāmāyaṇa the problem has been solved. Since then, comparative research has led to a better insight into the knowledge, creativity and originality of the Old Javanese poet who composed the Rāmāyaṇa.⁵

In the case of the Old Javanese *parwas* no one has yet solved the mystery. It became clear at an early stage that there is no point searching for an identical text in Sanskrit, as the Old Javanese text is clearly a much shortened rendering, keeping less than half of the original text. On the other hand the Old Javanese text is interspersed – for purposes not yet understood – with Sanskrit citations, complete and incomplete sentences and separate words that seem to have been copied directly from the original text and therefore seemed to offer a key to the solution of the problem. Scholars went to work on this. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries various versions of the Sanskrit Mahābhārata were proposed in turn as the most probable source of the Old Javanese translation – and then rejected when the arguments turned out not to be sufficiently convincing.

This disappointing outcome was inevitable, due to insufficient textual materials and a wrong approach. Scholars did not work from critical editions and, moreover, limited themselves to the Sanskrit citations without taking the complete texts into account. Therefore the results were doomed to be unsatisfactory. But even after critical editions had become available (in 1947 Belvalkar provided a comparative study of the Bhīṣmaparwa based on critical editions of the Sanskrit and the Old Javanese texts), the results remained vague and unconvincing (Zoetmulder 1974: 93-94).

As early as 1937 Gonda had warned against the assumption that the Old Javanese *parwas* were simply shortened versions of Sanskrit originals, broadly imitating one of the Indian versions (Gonda 1937: 47). Zoetmulder,

⁵ See for example Khanna and Saran 1993; Van der Molen 2009.

in 1974, sided with Gonda. His view was that the Javanese authors had not made a translation, whether free or literal, nor had they handled the subject in an independently created text of their own concoction. Rather, the Javanese authors had rendered the content of the original Sanskrit story in their own words (Zoetmulder 1974: 88). Zoetmulder therefore did not believe that the original could be found:

But I do not think that it is being unduly pessimistic if one doubts whether further investigation, however rigorous, will throw much more light on the problem as to from which region the Sanskrit prototype originated (Zoetmulder 1974: 94).

I would like to state even more forcefully than Gonda and Zoetmulder: 'the' Sanskrit original does not exist. Researchers have been looking for something that has never been there. It is impossible to pinpoint one particular Sanskrit version because the Old Javanese authors did not translate one version in particular but proceeded in a creative way. They may have done so on the basis of one version or more than one version, or even without a particular version, because the story itself, in many many versions, had been around for centuries.

STRUCTURE

Although it is a shortened derivative, the Old Javanese Mahābhārata nevertheless shows a high degree of structuring, using many devices. There is structuring at all levels: of the story as a whole, of the individual *parwas*, and of smaller units within the *parwas*. This structuring must no doubt result from an intentional design, carefully retained from 'the original' and further developed in the Javanese setting. Let me illustrate this with two examples, one at the level of the main story and one at the level of the smallest sub-story.

The Mahābhārata as a whole is presented in the form of a conversation between a number of holy men and their guest, also a holy man. The hosts are busy performing a sacrifice when their guest calls in. He is received with due respect. The company engages in conversation, in which the guest tells about two other sacrifices he knows of, one of which he witnessed himself. That latter sacrifice failed, however, while the first sacrifice was equally unsuccessful but for a different reason: it had been turned down. All this rouses the hosts' curiosity and they want to hear more. From the point of view of narrative technique: a problem has been created, setting the story into motion.

Now the guest tells about the sacrifice that was not accepted, what kind of sacrifice it was and why it was rejected. This gives him the opportunity to elaborate on sacrifices in general and on holy places.

The other sacrifice, the one that was carried out and failed, was the snake sacrifice ordered by a certain King Janamejaya. The guest tells what happened, why the ritual failed, and how it turned out that the king was compensated for this failure by being treated to a recitation of the story of the Mahābhārata. Now the hosts become really curious: they want to know how that happened and what the Mahābhārata story is all about.

Summarizing the above, the Mahābhārata is a story about three sacrifices. These three sacrifices are the reader's main points of reference. They remind him of what the text is about: on the meta-level of the main story and in the far-off corners of the sub-stories. But the reader needs more support, in order to keep track of the plot line and not be overwhelmed by an overdose of information. Modern means such as a table of contents or an index did not exist at the time. But the narrator does use a device that functions like a table of contents or an index: he uses a genealogy. Before the Mahābhārata story begins, the king to whom the story is being told is given a list of descendants of all the characters in the story, and this list is then filled in step by step. This is by no means a mechanical process, it is done at times with more details, other times with fewer details, while sometimes a generation is skipped or the order is changed. An example of a change in order is when the next to youngest generation (that is, the generation of the king's father) is filled in before the older generations.

Further techniques help the reader keep track of the lower level of the *parwas* and the smaller units. These techniques are lexical, grammatical, and literary (for example, particular words, but also tense and repetition, summarizing). Especially on the level of the smallest unit, grammatical and literary markers are woven into the narrative in a subtle way.

Take for example the story of Ekalawya, who was a better archer than Arjuna but who had to sacrifice his right thumb in order to redress the balance in favour of Arjuna. The story opens with the stock phrase *hana ta sang Ekalawya ngaranya*, 'now there was one Ekalawya', and concludes with the observation that Arjuna is the best archer again (*lěwih lāghawanireng dhanurweda*). Although it is an ultra-short story of only one page, it is stuffed with information: on the situation and its history, on the different characters and their relationship to each other, on the problems they see and the solutions they find. No unnecessary words and expressions are used, not even auxiliary words to mark the turning points in the story. Instead, the narrative itself is used for this purpose; this is done by referring to the successive moods that Arjuna goes through:

kapūhan ta sang Arjuna
manastāpa ta sang Arjuna
enak tāmbeḱ sang Arjuna

Arjuna was broken
 Arjuna was dejected
 Arjuna felt delighted

It is the repetitive quality of their near-similarity that gives these three phrases their episodic power: returning at set intervals in the story, these phrases are recognized as the markers of where a sub-story begins or ends, while at the same time they are part of the narrative and contribute to its progress (Van der Molen 2003).

These examples give an impression of how the authors of the *parwas*, while resizing their text to manageable proportions, took care to give it a clear structure by all necessary means.

MANGGALA

In the *Ādiparwa* the main story is preceded by the following introduction:

Hana pwa ya mangke wuwusēn, ikang kâla tan hanâditya candra nakṣatra bâywâkâsâdika, pralaya ri wêkas ning sanghârakalpa, prâpta mwang sargakâla pratiniyata mijil saprakâranya ngûni, iccâ sang hyang tinûtnyân hana katêkan śabda sanghâradharma, sang hyang Śangkara atah kêranyân hana lâwan bhaṭârî dehârdha, kêraṇa nira mapisan lâwan bhaṭâra Trinetra sira, an munggwî ng Kailâśaśikhara sadṛśa utungga siddha pratiṣṭa, sâkṣât maṇḍalam sabhuwana ikâ tang parhyangan sthâna sang hyang.

Sang hyang Śrî Deweśwara sira ta śadgaṇa mwang bhaṭârî, karēngwan ing pûrwaka ning kathâ, pûrwastotra ri sirân pangâjñâ śrî Dharmawangśa tēguh Anantawikramottunggadewa, prabhu pinagawayakēn prâkṛta parwa, tan sangkeng wruh mangartha sarasa ning ślokapadârtha (Juynboll 1906: 1-2).

There is something we should tell about now, the time when there were no sun, moon, stars, wind or firmament or anything, annihilated at the end of the era of destruction. Then came the time of creation, without fail, appearing with all things that belong to it, following the will of God that they undergo the word of the preordained law of destruction. God Sangkara is the cause of their existence, together with the goddess, in one body, who because of Him was one with God Trinetra, dwelling on top of Mount Kailasa as the highest sanctuary, like a mandala for the whole world, being heaven, His abode.

May God Lord of the gods emerge together⁶ with the goddess, as heard in the beginning of the story, the opening hymn of praise⁷ to Him by order of Dharmawangśa Tēguh Anantawikramottunggadewa, the king for whom I made a *parwa* in the local language, not because I understand all that is written in the *slokas*.

Three elements can be discerned in this passage: the god Śiwa and the goddess Pārwatī are glorified, the text is said to be the outcome of an instruction given by King Dharmawangśa, and the one who executed the instruction admits a lack of competence.

As is known, such an introduction is called a *manggala*. The three elements just mentioned are easily recognizable as those elements identified by scholars as characteristic of a *manggala*: 1. the appeal to an *iṣṭadewatā* (the god of choice of the author), 2. the glorification of the king who is the author's patron, and 3.

⁶ 'Emerge together': my tentative translation of *sādṛgana*, proposed by Zoetmulder instead of the incomprehensible *śadgaṇa* of the text. See Zoetmulder 1982 s.v. *śadgaṇa*.

⁷ Does 'hymn of praise' mean that the preceding lines contain a metrical text? Quickly scanning the text I found that the passage running from *ikang kâla tan hanâditya to sthâna sang hyang* consists of 2 x 4 lines, like the stanzas of a *kakawin*. Although I do not see metrical regularity in the first two lines of each stanza, the last two lines of each stanza show a metrical pattern, once of the metre Sragdhara (with two syllables missing in one line) and once of an unknown metre, admittedly after some slight adjustment of the spelling. More thorough research should also include the manuscripts (I based myself on the standard edition, Juynboll's edition of 1906, which is known for its poor quality).

the author's expression of humbleness and self-deprecation (Supomo [1996]: 19). It may be that all three of these elements are present in a *manggala*, but they do not need to be.

Zoetmulder and Supomo explain the *manggala* in the context of the *kakawin*. The three elements represent the essence of a *kakawin* as a combination of literary beauty, politics and religion. A *kakawin* is not just a beautiful poem but contains magical power: by the way it represents things it is able to influence reality. The explicit aim of many a *kakawin* is to bring the royal patron victory over his opponents: this aim is more than just a poetic cliché. Similarly, the poetic beauty of a successful poem is more than a demonstration of the poet's ability. The poet looks for beauty (in Old Javanese: *langö*) because in it resides his god, the god of beauty with whom he tries to become united, whose help he needs in order to create beauty as a means to bring about the desired unification. A specific god of beauty does not exist; any god can fulfil that function, and which god it is depends in each case on the poet, as is indicated by the term *iṣṭadewatā*, 'god of choice' (Zoetmulder 1974: 165-185; Supomo [1996]: 23-25).

This is how *manggalas* operate in *kakawins*. Apparently, *manggalas* are also found in *parwas* as we saw earlier. In line with the treatment of *parwas* in literary histories, the *manggalas* of the *parwas* receive very little attention in literary histories. That *manggalas* do occur in *parwas* is well known, of course. But again, literary historians have sought their significance outside the texts in which they occur: literary historians value the *manggalas* because of what they can tell us about chronology (through the dates and historical names they mention). It is remarkable that when Zoetmulder discusses the *parwas* he does not even mention the word *manggala* but merely speaks of 'introductions'.⁸

In the *Ādiparwa* and other *parwas*, the element of the mystical experience of *langö* is lacking. This does not mean, however, that the *parwas* are devoid of literary beauty. Looking forward to future research on this aspect, I would like to point out that the authors embellished their works with literary means like similes, figures of speech, alliteration and assonance. Please note that in Old Javanese, the author of a *parwa*, like the author of a *kakawin*, is called a *kawi*; see for example the *manggala* of the *Wirāṭaparwa* (Juynboll 1912: 8). The translation of the word *kawi* given by dictionaries ('poet') is too narrow. If admittedly the authors of *parwas* were not aiming at the mystical experience of beauty, like their colleagues of the *kakawins* did, their texts certainly created an effect: a beneficial influence on those who read or listened to the *parwas*. One's sorrow will be dispelled, one's sins expiated. A *parwa* will bring victory to a king, love among kindred, prosperity to all, so the *Ādiparwa* promises, and the other *parwas* say the same.

The *manggala* does not occur in older *kakawins*, those of Central Java. In East Javanese *kakawins* the *manggala* is present right from the beginning. The literary histories point this out as a characteristic difference between Central and East Javanese literature. To my way of thinking, this representation of

⁸ Zoetmulder 1974: 95-100. Supomo, however, does use the term *manggala*.

history is incomplete because it leaves out one important step. The innovation of inserting a *manggala* started in the *parwas*, not in the *kakawins*. It is in the *parwas* that the *manggala* manifested itself for the first time, and it is from the *parwas* that the *kakawin* poets borrowed it in their turn. It is true that the function of the *manggala* is not exactly the same in both cases, but this does not change the chronological order. In terms of literary development, it is a clear example of the influence of the *parwas* on the *kakawins*.

A CONSCIOUS CHOICE

The Old Javanese translation of the Mahābhārata was made by order of King Dharmawangśa. One question, as yet unanswered, is how many *parwas* were translated. Nine are known to exist, three in the name of Dharmawangśa, and six without the name of a patron. Were all eighteen Sanskrit *parwas* translated and nine of them subsequently lost, or were there never more than nine translated? Were all the *parwas* meant to be translated, or only those that were indeed translated? Another question is why not all the *parwas* that were translated bear the name of Dharmawangśa. And why was this particular king interested in having the *parwas* translated? Here I would like to say a few things on Dharmawangśa's relation to the *parwas*.

Dharmawangśa not only commissioned the translation, we know that he showed profound interest in the results. A famous passage in the Wirāṭaparwa, often quoted in scholarly literature, reports that the king was present when the text was recited (for the first time?) in a series of meetings held during a whole month in the year 996.

Was Dharmawangśa's interest inspired merely by a cultural concern, or were there also other motives? I suspect there were. I see two other possible motives. One is in the domain of what might be called the myth of descent. It is well known that Javanese princes of later times used to trace their descent along two lines, one leading to Adam and the other to the Pāṇḍawas. In the *parwas* we find the first signs of that tradition. In Dharmawangśa's day, Adam was still beyond the horizon of the Javanese, but they were familiar with the Pāṇḍawas. It appears that Dharmawangśa considered the Pāṇḍawas to be his ancestors, at least this is how he referred to Janamejaya, the king to whom the story of the Mahābhārata was told, who himself was the great-grandson of Arjuna:

Ya ta matang yan âdimûrtti ra putu sang paṇḍita, aminta pinacaritâkĕn tĕkap maharṣi [...]
(Juynboll 1912: 97-98).

Now I see why my ancestor asked [the story] to be told to him by the great seer.

There is a lexical problem here. The expression *âdimûrtti*, translated as 'ancestor', is a bit unusual; see the discussion in Zoetmulder 1982: "*âdimûrti* (*adhimûrti*?) first, to begin with?; superior, principal?", with only three occurrences reported, two of which are in the Wirāṭaparwa. In 1974, referring to this word, Zoetmulder writes in a note: "Literally: 'the manifestation in

former times of your Reverence's grandson'" (Zoetmulder 1974: 515 note 29).

Relying on Zoetmulder's explanation of the word *âdimûrtti*, we can conclude that Dharmawangśa had personal reasons to be interested in the *parwas*: they contained the history of his forebears.

But there must have been another motive, one equally strong. This is suggested by a detail in the same passage of the *Wirāṭaparwa* which says that the king missed one meeting due to other affairs. In what capacity did he attend the meetings – as a (personally) interested observer, or was it more than that? I ask this question because the passage containing this detail is interpreted differently by different scholars. Supomo summarizes: "The importance of the occasion is evident from the fact that the king himself attended all the sessions except for one, when he 'was prevented by other affairs'" (Supomo [1996]: 17). Zoetmulder, citing the Old Javanese passage, translates: "On the fifth day Your Majesty did not order a session to be held, because Your Majesty was prevented by other affairs" (Zoetmulder 1974: 95). Both interpretations, however, leave out an aspect found in the Old Javanese:

[...] *ring kaping lima rahadyan sanghulun kasĕlangan tanpagoṣṭi, kewyan deni kâryyanta* (Juynboll 1912: 98).

On the fifth day something intervened and Your Majesty did not join the discussion, being prevented by his affairs.

The term *magōṣṭi* (in *tanpagoṣṭi*) does not mean 'to attend a session' or 'to order a session to be held', but 'to participate in a discussion'. The word is used two times in this passage: the line cited above is uttered by the person who rendered the *Wirāṭaparwa* into Old Javanese, who is answering King Dharmawangśa's question as to how much time they have spent; when asking his question the king had used the same expression *magōṣṭi*. Other words are available in Old Javanese to express 'to attend' as an observer or listener, or 'to order a session to be held'. *Magōṣṭi*, however, implies active participation in a discussion.

In other words, Dharmawangśa's interest was of a different nature than Supomo and Zoetmulder suggest: he was not merely an observer or an important guest at the recital but he was engaged in discussing the text while it evolved. (Here one is reminded of Supomo's remarks on *harikatha* and *mabasan*; see above.)

Why would the king actively participate in the discussion of the new text?

In the first place he was imitating his ancestor, King Janamejaya, who had acted in the same way (Juynboll 1912: 8). Second, it was of the utmost importance for the king to come as close as possible to a full understanding of the text, or perhaps even to make sure that its rendering was correct. This had to do with Dharmawangśa's other activities. Literature was not the only field he was actively involved in. He expanded the realm inherited from his

predecessor to the whole of East Java, and he forged his old and new subjects into one people by introducing a new code of law. In addition, his aims went beyond East Java. First he enlarged his kingdom to the east by conquering Bali. Then he looked westward, where the Śailendras ruled. Victory over their empire would give him supreme power in the archipelago.

This is where the *parwas* come in. The Wirāṭaparwa, in its *manggala*, calls Dharmawangśa a *cakrawarti*, 'world-ruler'. In 996 he had not yet achieved that status. He needed the magical power of the new text to achieve it. The text of the Wirāṭaparwa (that is, the main body of the story, as distinguished from the *manggala*) provided him in various places with references to the concept of *cakrawarti* (see Juynboll 1912: 10, 32, 45). So did the Ādiparwa and Bhīṣmaparwa (see Juynboll 1906: 68, 69, 72, 85; Gonda 1936: 9, 28). That is why Dharmawangśa commissioned these *parwas*. Of the other *parwas* surviving in Old Javanese, the Sabhāparwa and Udyogaparwa mention the word *cakrawarti* several times, but we do not know whether or not these two *parwas* were written on behalf of Dharmawangśa; this kind of information is normally given at the beginning of the *parwa*, but in both cases the beginning is missing.⁹ The other surviving *parwas* do not bear the king's name because they do not refer to *cakrawarti* and therefore did not arouse his interest. Most probably these other *parwas* were not commissioned by Dharmawangśa.¹⁰

Before leaving King Dharmawangśa I would like to raise one more point. It has puzzled me for a long time why Dharmawangśa would opt for a prose text rather than a *kakawin*. The *kakawin* format had been available since the days of the Rāmāyaṇa and before, and fitted the king's purpose perfectly well; furthermore, poetry was an established genre of literature and prose was not. One explanation I can think of is that Dharmawangśa wanted to establish a new genre of his own. Such an undertaking would certainly befit his stature. The *parwas* are at once an illustration of his success and his failure. He succeeded in moulding prose into a tool of literature, which is Dharmawangśa's contribution to Javanese literary history. But he was too far ahead of his time: after he died, the idea of literary prose was abandoned, not to return for the next thousand years, this time under foreign influence.

CONCLUSION

The Old Javanese *parwas* have traditionally been appreciated not for their own sake but for their usefulness for other purposes. The *parwas* might be able to shed light, so it was hoped, on the cultural relationship of ancient Indonesia with India, the *parwas* contain the stories on which the poets built their *kakawins*, the *parwas* offer ready-to-use material for linguistic analysis, the *parwas* helped in establishing the chronology of Old Javanese literature.

Without denying the benefits that can be had from the *parwas* in all these

⁹ For the Udyogaparwa see Zoetmulder 1993: 58 and 148. The Sabhāparwa has not yet been published.

¹⁰ Another text, the Uttarakāṇḍa, however, was. It refers two times to the concept of *cakrawarti*; see Zoetmulder 2006.

respects, I think our benefit will be greater once we realize that the *parwas* are the precious products of literary art themselves. I have offered several arguments why we should consider them as literary productions. They follow the Sanskrit story closely but not slavishly, they do not seem to follow one version of the Sanskrit story in particular but betray an individuality of their own. They are structured in a well-designed and innovative way. Like the *kakawins*, they use the literary devices of the Old Javanese language, they open with a *manggala*, and they influence reality magically by their way of presenting reality. They are even written by *kawis*, just like their poetic counterparts.

The study of the *parwas* up to now has been seriously hampered by wrong views. Their scholarly study started more than one hundred years ago, yet we find ourselves still in the early stages of philological spadework. At present, there is no reason to think that things will take a turn for the better. After a long period of almost no progress, interest in Old Javanese literature worldwide has declined to almost zero. However, the study of Old Javanese is first and foremost an Indonesian responsibility. The growing interest and expanding facilities that can recently be observed in Indonesia are the reassuring signs that this responsibility is being taken up. The establishment of the position of adjunct professor of Old Javanese and philology at Universitas Indonesia is one such sign. I feel honoured to be called to this position.

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