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ANDREA ACRI

## On birds, ascetics, and kings in Central Java *Rāmāyaṇa* Kakawin, 24.95–126 and 25

Section 95-126 of Sarga 24 and most of Sarga 25 of the Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa* Kakawin (hereafter RK) represent a most fascinating example of ‘localization’ of originally Indic themes into a thoroughly Old Javanese framework.<sup>1</sup> These sections, featuring a difficult and allusive language rich in puns (*śleṣa*) and alliteration (*yamaka*), should no doubt be regarded as the most formidable and least understood pieces of poetry in the whole of Old Javanese literature.<sup>2</sup>

The section 24.95-126 describes the idyll in Lan̄kā after Wibhīṣaṇa had succeeded Rāwāṇa as king, where both nature and human society are dominated by harmony. In spite of the paradisiacal situation, various animals – mostly birds – allegorically representing ascetics of different schools even take the opportunity to tease one another about their respective behaviours and religious observances. Sarga 25 provides a lively account of the scenery as seen by Rāma and Sītā from the aerial chariot *puṣpaka* along the way from Lan̄kā to Ayodhyā. Several stanzas are devoted to the description of sage Bharadwāja’s hermitage and of the banks of the river Sarayū, both populated by all kinds of birds and plants allegorically representing human characters.

I begin this article by tackling the textual and linguistic problems posed by these two sections. Then, following the main lines of the interpretive

<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the Conference on Early Indian Influences in Southeast Asia: Reflections on Cross-Cultural Movements (Singapore, 21-23 November 2007) organized by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), the National Library Board (NLB), the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), and the Asia Research Institute (ARI). I would like to thank Arlo Griffiths and Roy Jordaan for their useful comments on various drafts.

<sup>2</sup> On the difficulty of such stanzas, see Zoetmulder 1974:230; Hooykaas 1958b:288; Santoso 1980:32; Robson 1981:10. The quotations from the RK in this article follow Santoso’s edition; the translations are mine.

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approach advanced by Aichele (1969) in his masterful article 'Vergessene Metaphern als Kriterien der Datierung des altjavanischen *Rāmāyaṇa*', I analyse the closely interconnected literary, religious, and politico-historical motifs the two sections display. On the basis of a comparison with similar motifs found in Sanskrit and Old Javanese textual sources, as well as in Central and East Javanese temple reliefs, I try to contextualize, and fine-tune, some of Aichele's hypotheses. My conclusion concurs with Aichele's, namely that these sections should be regarded as important historical documents throwing new light on mid-ninth century Central Java.

### *Sarga 24-25 and the problem of interpolation*

While the historical dating of the RK is still a matter of debate, the text is now generally regarded by scholars to be the earliest Old Javanese Kakawin that has survived.<sup>3</sup> The debate about the dating of the text has often centred on interpolation; for, however old the text may be, it is quite clear that in the course of time it has undergone textual additions. The sections discussed in this article, namely stanzas 95-126 of Sarga 24 and the best part of Sarga 25, were considered late interpolations by the first generations of scholars. Kern (1900) regarded stanzas 95-126 of Sarga 24 and 7-34, 40-49, 54-117 of Sarga 25 to be spurious and enclosed them between square brackets in his edition. Poerbatjaraka (1932) cut stanzas 97-123 of Sarga 24 and no less than 106 of the 117 stanzas of Sarga 25. The latter Sarga was deprived of 102 stanzas by Juynboll (1936). These scholars adduced as proof of interpolation obscurity of content, encyclopedic enumerations of names such as those of animals and plants, and artificiality of language which abounds in reduplications and other complex stylistic figures (see Uhlenbeck 1989:325-6). Hooykaas (1958a:287, 1958b:383), who translated Sarga 24.87-126 and 25 in two articles, expressed a rather different view. Drawing upon an earlier article by Aichele (1929:17), Hooykaas remarked that the poetical conventions they display were borrowed from the Sanskrit Kāvya, which already had a long past in India before the RK was composed. The Dutch scholar, in a short post-scriptum to his article (Hooykaas 1958b), noted the similar use of complicated stylistic figures featured in parts of these Sarga and in the Central Javanese Śiwagr̥ha inscription of 856 AD,

<sup>3</sup> This is based on the richness of Sanskrit-derived metrical patterns of the text and its idiosyncratic use of the Old Javanese language, which set the poem apart from the other belletristic works originating in East Java from the eleventh to the fifteenth century AD. An analysis of the literature on the issue of the dating of the text may be found in Zoetmulder (1974:230-3) who, following Poerbatjaraka (1926, 1932), considered the poem to be anterior to the first half of the tenth century AD. Others, such as Aichele (1969:142) and Robson (1981:8), have suggested an even earlier date of composition, that is the middle of the ninth century AD. I subscribe to the latter view.

the earliest attested dated piece of metrical Old Javanese.<sup>4</sup> This similarity, according to Hooykaas (1958b:383), proved that Sarga 25, 'far from being the pottering work of a late epigone, only continues an older Javanese tradition'. This notwithstanding, Hooykaas (1958a:291) did not rule out the possibility of a different, but still early, authorship for the whole block 24.95-126.<sup>5</sup> These ideas were further developed by Aichele (1969), who carried out a detailed comparison between parts of the RK and the Śiwagrha inscription, thereby effectuating several ameliorations to the existing translations. The similarities existing between the two documents in the domain of language and contents, and especially the allegorical mention of certain historical figures, led Aichele to assume that Sarga 24 and 25, and probably the whole RK, were composed at an earlier date than previously assumed, namely in mid-ninth century AD at the latest.<sup>6</sup>

As shown by Hooykaas (1958c), the story narrated in the Old Javanese poem is not based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Vālmīki, but on another Sanskrit prototype, namely the difficult *Rāvaṇavadha* by Bhaṭṭi (seventh century AD), commonly known as *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (hereafter BhK), which it closely follows up to Sarga 17.<sup>7</sup> After that point, the author appears to have continued on his own until the last Sarga (26), significantly moving away from the Sanskrit text, seemingly in a more 'Javanese' direction. Hooykaas's thesis on the relationship between the BhK and the RK remained unchallenged until Khanna and Saran (1993) called for a partial revision, arguing that the Javanese poet turned, albeit with more freedom, to the BhK also in later Sarga, most notably Sarga 19 through 24. With regard to the latter Sarga, the authors noted that the situation is a complex one, for the correspondence is limited to the first 30 stanzas or so, while farther along the poet allows himself more or less total freedom. The most substantial deviations from the prototype are stanzas 24.47-86, based upon the

<sup>4</sup> The inscription was edited and translated by De Casparis (1956:280-330). The Old Javanese passages of the inscription reproduced in this article are based on De Casparis's edition, unless stated otherwise; translations are mine.

<sup>5</sup> Zoetmulder (1974:230) maintained a similar position, assuming the Sarga to be composed by a different author, though he did not conclude that different authorship necessarily implies a later date of composition.

<sup>6</sup> Post-Aichele contributions discussing the problem of interpolation in the RK include Uhlenbeck 1989 and Santoso 1980:17-32. The latter author, on the basis of apparent similarities between the RK and presumably later Old Javanese texts such as the *Nitiśāstra*, the *Kuṭāramāṇava*, and the *Nāgarakṛtāgama*, argued that the text underwent a process of remodelling until the very late years of Majapahit (late fifteenth century AD). Even though many of Santoso's assumptions seem plausible, the problem is that, given the uncertainty reigning over the chronology of Old Javanese sources, it is very difficult to establish what influenced what.

<sup>7</sup> Although the discovery of a striking similarity between a few stanzas of the RK and the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* was already noted by Manomohan Ghosh (1936), Hooykaas is to be credited for a systematic study that convincingly proved that the author of the RK chose the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* as his prototype. In the present study I have made use of the new translation by Fallon (2009).

Sanskrit *Manusmṛti*, and stanzas 24.91-126, for which no parallels have hitherto been identified. The author turned once again to his model in the last part of the Sarga, but with a declining degree of faithfulness (see Khanna and Saran 1993:231-2). This is summarized in the following table:

Substantial parallels	Structural connection with BhK narrative	No correspondence	Metres
1-30 (= BhK 17.85-112)			≠
	31-42 (= BhK 18.1-36; 19.1-6)		Prṭhwī
		43-86 (cf. MS 5.96; 9.303-311)	43-80: Sāriṇī 81-86: Wañśastha
	87-89 (= BhK 19.23)		Puṣpitāgrā
		90-91	"
	92-93 (= BhK 21.19-21)		Śārdūlawikrīḍita
		94	"
		95-126	Suwadānā
127-134 (= BhK 20.1-7)			Udgatawisama
	135-156 (= BhK 20.8-28)		"
157-161 (= BhK 20.29-33)			"
		169-186	169-173 Punar- māda
	188-198 (= BhK 20.34-37; 21.1-12)		174-187 Wañśastha ≠
200-201 (= BhK 21.16-17)			Śārdūlawikrīḍita
	202-260 ...		≠

It is undeniable that Sarga 24 displays a heterogeneous textual structure, probably reflecting a complex process of composition. The fact that this Sarga, with its 260 stanzas, is the longest in the poem betrays the possibility that it underwent significant additions. Several structural features of the allegorical stanzas 95-126 suggest that they are among such additions. In particular, the use of a single metre (*suwadānā*) for 31 stanzas seems significant in a Sarga in which changes of metre otherwise occur every few stanzas.<sup>8</sup> Other pieces of evidence are to be found in the internal coherence of the narrative of the section, which presents a few 'incongruities':<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Another example is the *nti* passage 43-80 in Sāriṇī, also not found in the BhK.

<sup>9</sup> In this and the following table, the capital letters (A, B, C, etcetera) indicate narrative blocks featuring different thematic units, whose logical sequence I have arranged according to alphabetical order. The capital letter X indicates the allegorical and descriptive passages. The individuation and grouping of related blocks are effected through indentation.

89	Wibhīṣaṇa consecrated King	[A]
90-92	Restoration of nature in Laṅkā	[B]
93-94	The monkeys revive, and the heroes fallen in battle go to heaven	[C]
95	Wibhīṣaṇa installed as King	[A]
96-100	Idyll in Laṅkā. Virtues of the King	[B]
101-110	Peace and harmony among the animals were once enemies	[B <sub>1</sub> ]
111-114	Birds despise each other	[X]
115-123	Satirical/humorous description of birds	[X <sub>1</sub> ]
124-125	Animals love each other. Virtuous King influences his subjects	[B <sub>1</sub> ]
126	Praise of the King	[B]
127	New topic starts	[D]

The above table shows that stanzas 95-126 constitute a further elaboration on the subject of stanzas 89-94. Stanza 24.89 refers to the consecration of Wibhīṣaṇa as King, and 90-92 to the revitalization of nature in Laṅkā. Stanza 94 praises those who had died on the battleground and ascended to heaven, clearly marking the end of a narrative block. Stanza 95 again takes up the installation of Wibhīṣaṇa as King, describing the ceremony just after its conclusion. Verses 96-110 elaborate in detail the newly revived nature in Laṅkā and the harmony among the animals, which were once enemies, living under the virtuous King. Then suddenly in 111 the birds start insulting each other. Stanza 124, which observes the extent to which the animals were faithful to each other, appears to be in striking contrast with the general tone of the previous stanzas, not to speak of the adjacent 123, where monkeys escape from a hairy animal whose appearance terrifies them. A praise of the King follows until 126, and it echoes stanza 90. Stanza 127 clearly introduces a new topic, opening with the sentence 'Let us leave the king who succeeded [to the throne]; let us narrate about the son of the Wind [Hanumān]'.<sup>10</sup>

The departure from the BhK reaches its apex in Sarga 25, a 117-verselong allegorical excursus that elaborates in a totally original way two verses of the BhK (22.25-26).<sup>10</sup> In this Sarga different strands can be detected. The narrative function is implemented in the sections where Rāma addresses Sītā, showing her the landmarks they encounter along the way (forested mountains, rivers, and hermitages); Rāma's direct narration continues up to verse

<sup>10</sup> See also Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* 6.123 which mentions Rṣyamukha (vv. 38-39); Pampā (40); the hermitage of Śarabhaṅga (46); Citrakūṭa (49); Yamunā (50); Bharadvāja's hermitage and Gaṅgā (51).

9 of Sarga 26.<sup>11</sup> These stanzas contain deictic particles marking direct speech (that is *kuya*, *nā*, *nāhan*, *ikā*) and exhortations to look (*wulati*, *tonton*, *tontonĕn*). However, the text features a number of descriptive passages, some of which strike us as disproportionately lengthy. These provide detailed allegorical – and often clearly satirical – visual descriptions of birds and plants, which are based on wordplay hinting at the ascetic characters of such humanized natural elements. These passages generally appear to be marked off by changes in metre:<sup>12</sup>

1-3	Rāma describes the Windhya and narrates the story of Agasti	Mattamayūra	[A]	
4	Rāma points at the Mālyawān, Ṛṣyamūka, Daṇḍaka	Turagagati	[B]	BhK 22.25
5	Rāma points at lake Pampā	Suwadanā	[C]	
6	Rāma and Sītā take a bath <sup>13</sup>	Drutawilambita	[C <sub>1</sub> ]	
7	Rāma points at the forests inhabited by hermits	Praharṣiṇī	[D]	BhK 22.26-1
8-9	The hermitage of Śarabhaṅga	Pramitākṣarā	[E]	
10	Citrakūṭa	Pramitākṣarā	[E <sub>1</sub> ]	BhK 22.26-1
11-17	Bharadwāja's hermitage	Pramitākṣarā	[E <sub>2</sub> ]	
18-34	Humorous description of birds	Pramitākṣarā	[E <sub>3</sub> ]	
35-39	Rāma mentions Yamunā, Gaṅgā, Tamasā, Sarayū	Śardūlawikrīḍita	[F]	BhK 22.26-2
40-49	Description of the virtues of ascetics and plants	≠	[X <sub>2</sub> ]	
50-55	Rāma points at the Sarayū. Girls bathing and playing in the river	Drutawilambita	[G]	
56-61	Description of various birds and satire on herons	Drutawilambita	[X <sub>1</sub> ]	
62-71	Description of birds as an allegory for ascetics	≠	[X <sub>1</sub> ]	
72-77	Allegorical description of plants	≠	[X <sub>2</sub> ]	
78-81	Rāma points to the girls sporting in the river	Kusumawicitra	[H]	
82-105	Allegorical description of plants	≠	[X <sub>2</sub> ]	
106-7	Rāma points at the boats of traders from Ayodhyā which is praised	Pramitākṣara	[I]	
108	Rāma points to the fishermen catching lobsters	Rajanī	[I <sub>1</sub> ]	
109-117	Allegorical description of the cattle	Aparawaktra	[X <sub>3</sub> ]	

<sup>11</sup> Sarga 26, the last of the RK, shares with Sarga 24 and 25 a similarly high degree of 'localization', from the point of view of both language and culture (for example, in the detailed descriptions of food). However, in my opinion, the former Sarga does not present sufficient elements of continuity (especially with respect to the allegorical, narrative and political motifs) with the latter two to make their comparative study worthwhile in the present article. A new English translation of Sarga 26, which was accessible to me only after the completion of the first draft of this article, has recently appeared (Ricci and Becker 2008).

<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy that in this Sarga of 117 stanzas we encounter no less than 22 different types of metres and 36 shifts from one metre to another.

<sup>13</sup> The return to direct speech occurring in the following stanza 7 is explicitly pointed out by the poet in the last line of this stanza: 'the King starts to describe again [the sights] along the way' (*atēhēr ojar amarṇana tat hawan*).

The relationship between RK 24.95-126 and 25

Besides sharing the same allegorical motif, sections 95-126 of Sarga 24 and several stanzas of Sarga 25 show striking similarities. Nihom (1995:654) was the first to point out en passant that, on account of the similarity (on a formal or semantic level) of several items of vocabulary, RK 24.95-126 and 25.18-34/56-61 seem be related in several ways. Indeed many of the birds mentioned in the former Sarga have a counterpart in the latter. The descriptions contain technical terms that help the reader to connect the birds to their human counterparts, that is the followers of particular religious sects. This happens to such an extent that, without making use of Sarga 25, it would be exceedingly difficult to decipher many of the problematic stanzas of Sarga 24. The similarities are illustrated in the following table:

Verse and line (Sarga 24)	Birds/ Animals	Lexical items	Verse and line (Sarga 25)	≈ Lexical items	Technical terms
101b	jřwa-jřwa	<i>awajik</i>	11d jřwa-jřwa	<i>awajik</i>	<i>asañghanī</i>
101c	syuñ		16d syuñ		
101d	bayan (= atat)		18a atat		
102c	atat		18a atat		<i>tarka, aji winiścaya</i>
110a	atat		18a atat		
104a	hañsa		24a hañsa		
105a	mrak	<i>maniğēļ</i>	24c mrak		<i>Aji sañ Kumāra</i>
106c	mrak	<i>ağēļēm aniğēļ</i>	24c mrak	<i>ağēļēm maniğēļ</i>	
108a	moñ		29c harimoñ		<i>amogha, muditā, Kāla</i>
108d	harawa		11d hađawa		
109a	walik		19d walik		
109b	pukpuk pakša		70a syuñ		
109b	kwak		70b kwak		
109c	prit		67a prit		
110a	prit		69a prit		
109c	pudañan		19a pudañan		
109d	maniñtiñ		19b maniñtiñ		
109d	maniñtiñ	<i>nitya</i>	55a maniñtiñ	<i>nīti</i>	
109d	alap-alap		65c alap-alap		
110d	haliliñan		33 haliliñan		<i>bhağawānta</i>
111a	jalak		18b jalak		
113b	jalak		18b jalak		
111b	preñjak-preñjak		67a preñjak		
111b	hiji	<i>mañajir umah</i>	14a hiji	<i>pašēsēļ</i>	
112b	puyuh	<i>aramēļ, akipū</i>	20c puyuh	<i>pañēmēļ, makipū</i>	<i>Alepaka, wiku</i>
111d, 112c	kuwoñ	<i>kuwuñ</i>	71a kuwoñ	<i>kuwuñ</i>	
115d	pikatan		13b pikatan		
116a	jañkuñ	<i>marañkuñ</i>	58a jañkuñ	<i>arañkuñ</i>	
116c	kuntul		60a kuntul		
116d	bēsi	<i>bisu, bisa</i>	59a bēsi	<i>bisu, bisa</i>	
117a	wēļa	<i>itēk-itēk</i>	25a hayān	<i>ikēt-ikēt</i>	<i>Pāšupata</i>
	haya-hayān		wēļa hayān		



Verse and line (Sarga 24)	Birds/ Animals	Lexical items	Verse and line (Sarga 25)	= Lexical items	Technical terms
117c	baka		21c baka		
118a	hēlan̄	<i>ahala hilan̄</i>	30cd hēlan̄	<i>hilan̄ hala</i>	<i>trikāya</i>
118d	gagak		33a gagak		
119a	walatuk		11a walatuk		
119c	kalwan	<i>sattwa</i>	23d, 68a kalwan̄	<i>maradin̄</i>	
119d	lalawā	<i>mahapēk</i>	68b <i>mahapēk</i>	<i>apēk</i>	
120b	suluwug		28a suluwug		<i>añimān, laḡhimān</i>
120c	cakrawāka		58d cakra		
120d	pēlun		57b pēluñ		
120d	waliwis		57c waliwis		
121bcd	tilil		33c tilil		<i>wiku luluy mañidan</i>
121c	trik		29a trik		
121d	cucur		33b cucur		
122a	sanku liranān		21d san̄ kalirañan		<i>Aji Sāñkhyā</i>
122b	cod	<i>cod</i>	18 jalak	<i>cumodya</i>	
122c	dok	<i>mamēdi-mēdi</i> <i>wēdi-wēdi</i>	67d dok	<i>mawēdi</i>	
122d	daryas		65c daryas		
123a	wruk	<i>wruh</i>	68c wruk	<i>wruh-wruhan</i>	

Furthermore, the allegorical sections of the two Sarga share the same density of poetical niceties, complex stylistic figures (most notably alliterations and double meanings), and rare lexical items. It is clear that these stanzas stand in sharp contrast with the rest of the poem insofar as they constitute an extremely artificial example of Old Javanese poetry. Many passages are abstruse, presenting onomatopoeic cacophonies, uncommon syntactic constructions, and *hapaxes*. Another remarkable feature is the high degree of linguistic ‘localization’ displayed in the stanzas under discussion. For instance, these sections contain relatively fewer Sanskrit words than are found in the rest of the poem, showing a preference for pure Javanese, especially when it comes to the uncommon names of birds and plants. Also striking is the use of direct speech in section 24.111-123, where birds insult each other.<sup>14</sup> These parts, which are difficult to interpret, are characterized by a colloquial register of language that is rarely found elsewhere in Old Javanese literature.

<sup>14</sup> See especially stanzas 24.116-119, in which the disrespectful second person particle *ko* is used, although the speakers are not clearly marked in the text.

*Analogies with the Śiwaḡṛha inscription of 856 AD*

Direct speech and a common register of language, besides a high density of stylistic figures, are also attested in the Śiwaḡṛha inscription.<sup>15</sup> The abundance of such features, as in Sarga 24 and 25 of the RK, indicate the composer's conscious effort to create a literary masterpiece displaying a beautiful union between meaning and sound. Thus it appears that the poet tried to emulate the elaborateness and artificiality of the most difficult Sanskrit Kāvya by stretching the Old Javanese language to the limits of its poetic and suggestive possibilities. As already noted by previous scholars, this aspect also constitutes a prominent feature of the Śiwaḡṛha inscription, the language of which, as Pollock (2006:326, 388) so aptly explains,

is remarkable for what in Sanskrit is termed the quality of *citra*, or brilliance (it is replete with *yamakas*, *prahelikās*, and the like). Indeed, the text exemplifies the true autotelic nature of *kāvya*, where the real subject of the poem is the poetic use of language itself.

[N]o other idiom than the cosmopolitanized vernacular could have articulated such a sentiment [the praise of the ruler, Rakai Pikatan] in a manner that marries content so seamlessly to form.

It is notable that the inscription, commissioned by Rakai Kayuwaṇi (also known as Dyah Lokapāla) to commemorate the death of his predecessor Rakai Pikatan of the Sañjaya line, is the first extant versified piece of Old Javanese, and one of the very first ones used for political discursive aims.<sup>16</sup> The major vehicle of elite self-presentation in Java had been so far Sanskrit *praśasti*, mostly mentioning the names of Śailendra Kings. The metrical edict was bound to have no followers, for no major tradition of Old Javanese *praśasti* has ever flourished in Java, the majority of the royal edicts being markedly documentary in nature. Instead, we have an extraordinary efflorescence of belles-lettres in the form of Kakawin, unparalleled in the rest of Southeast Asia, the first specimen of which is the RK (Pollock 2006:130-2, 390). Simultaneously, af-

<sup>15</sup> See stanza 22, where direct speech is used to address birds; strophes 19-21 are completely undecipherable, perhaps representing the only attestation of a form of spoken Old Javanese. Interestingly, the return to the literary vernacular in stanza 22 is made explicit by the word *prākṛētasanniweśa* 'composition in Prakrit'. De Casparis (1956:286) interpreted the sentence as meaning 'transition to popular language'; this interpretation is in my opinion incorrect, for the word *prākṛta/prakṛta* is always used in later Old Javanese sources to designate the literary vernacular (such as in the case of the verbal construction *pinrakṛta*, 'transformed [from Sanskrit] into Prakrit (i.e. Old Javanese)' (see also Zoetmulder's *Old Javanese-English dictionary* (hereafter OJED), pp. 1388-9).

<sup>16</sup> The others are an inscription dated 804 AD and a *praśasti* dated 824 AD.

ter the middle of the ninth century AD, we note the progressive reduction of Sanskrit royal edicts in Java. This rather abrupt transfer of literary functions from Sanskrit to Old Javanese in Central Java was noted by Braginsky (1993:16), who distinguished between a 'continental' model, with Sanskrit as the linguistic medium, applied to Old Malay literature, and an 'insular' one, based on the ethnic language, applied to Old Javanese literature. This model has been now supplanted by Pollock's theoretical concept (1996:168, 197) of the 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis', a transregional cultural formation that extended from the Indian subcontinent as far as Central and Southeast Asia. According to Pollock, the Sanskrit language articulated politics not as material but as aesthetic power, being the vehicle of the elite's self-presentation in all the areas belonging to the Sanskrit Cosmopolis. The substitution of Sanskrit with Old Javanese and the efflorescence of Kakawin literature in mid-ninth century Java could then be regarded as a shift to the vernacular for representing epic allegories of local political power. However, no convincing explanation of the reasons that triggered off this process of 'vernacularization' has been advanced so far, with the exception of Jordaan (1999:66-7, 2006:6, note 8), who pointed to various striking synchronisms between historical developments taking place in Java from mid-ninth century, including the shift from Sanskrit to Old Javanese, the end of Buddhist architecture and the transition from silver coinage to an indigenous gold coinage, and the arrival and departure of the Śailendras which Jordaan considers to be a foreign dynasty. In agreement with Jordaan's claim, I suggest that the peculiarities displayed in RK Sarga 24-25 and in the contemporary Śiwagrha inscription could be explained as efflorescences of local, highly perfected specimens of Old Javanese poetry, which marked the disappearance of Sanskrit edicts in Java on the one hand and the shift in the last few Sarga of the RK from a Sanskritic model to a more Javanese approach on the other.<sup>17</sup> These developments, in their turn, could be attributable to the far-reaching political and social changes that took place in mid-ninth century Central Java with the rise of the Sañjaya dynasty and the 30 yearlong reign of Rakai Kayuwani Dyah Lokapāla.

However the relationship between 24.95-126 and 25 is not limited to stylistic and lexical aspects, for it clearly pertains to a deeper structural level. Given

<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that paralleling the process of vernacularization, the number of Old Javanese charters sharply increased after the middle of the ninth century (Wisseman Christie 2001:39), precisely during the reign of Rakai Kayuwani. In fact, the number of edicts (over 60) issued by this monarch 'easily outnumber the surviving inscriptions issued during the reigns of all his predecessors combined' (Wisseman Christie 2001:42). Another interesting fact is that the side of the Śiwagrha inscription that was engraved in Siddhamātrka, the kind of script associated in Java with Buddhist inscriptions bearing the names of Śailendra Kings, appears to have been deliberately damaged so as to render it almost completely illegible. This fact suggests to me a deliberate act of *damnatio memoriae* directed at the Śailendras – and the literary and aesthetic values connected with them. Possibly the engraving of what now is regarded as the 'front' face of the inscription and the damaging of its 'rear' side took place at the same time.

that Sarga 25 seems to be a longer elaboration of the allegorical and satirical theme introduced in 24.95-126, the fact that the author felt the need to dedicate the best part of a Sarga to further elaborate on a topic already appearing in the preceding section 24.95-126, thus creating a disproportionately long digression from the main theme of the poem, cries out for an explanation.

*Sarga 24.95-126 and 25 as satirical documents*

On reading the playful allegorical stanzas of Sarga 24 and 25 one has the impression that the author is consciously, and skilfully, using metaphors to refer to matters of actuality. Robson (1983:303) has described the use of *palambañ*, 'allegory', in Kakawin as follows:

Returning to a discussion of the term *palambañ*, a deeper insight into the nature and function of the genre may be gained if we interpret it as meaning 'a linking or going across'. This naturally implies two sides or parts to be linked. These are then on the one hand the events as told in mythology, and on the other the events as known to the author from history or current happenings. What the *palambañ* does is to create the link, by identifying the one with the other. The text has an obvious, literal, meaning, but also a hidden one, clear only to those who know which identifications have to be made.

Besides the *palambañ*, the stress on *pañlipur*, 'amusement', seems to have been a major concern for the author of the allegorical stanzas of Sarga 24 and 25. Indeed, several of these inspire amusement through a subtle depiction of the comic, which is conveyed through the parodic, theatrical *mise en scène* performed by different kinds of birds representing human alter egos. By treating them with ridicule through the association with the human and animal behaviours, these figures are made the object of satire. It goes without saying that, in this case, the references that seem so abstruse to us would have been more or less easily intelligible to clever contemporary readers. This idea finds some support in the fact that the use of double meaning (*śleṣa*) and veiled or implied sense (*vyāṅgya*) through the depiction of birds and other animals is not only found in the Old Javanese texts discussed here, but also in reliefs of Central Javanese monuments dating back to the same period, that is the middle of the ninth century AD. For instance, birds and animals are abundantly featured in the panels depicting the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic at Loro Jonggrang in Prambanan. According to Levin (2000:68-9),

It appears that the sculptors of Loro Jonggrang were well-versed in the depiction of diverse forms of *alaṅkāra* as well. The reliefs of the *Rāmāyaṇa* at Loro Jonggrang

have long been admired for their details of natural flora and fauna. They accent, punctuate, and lend an element of the humoresque to the story. The inclusion of aviary characters on the roofs of buildings throughout this pictorial narration, may be a realization of *samāsokti* as well and a further accentuation of the *rasa* of the characters in the compositions. [...] Throughout the seventy-two panels of the *Rāmāyaṇa* at Loro Jonggrang, groups of birds appear like a 'Greek Chorus' to comment upon the actors in the drama.

In a stimulating article, Totton (2003) focuses on the animals depicted in the narrative panels of Caṇḍi Loro Jonggrang and a few other Javanese temples. Instead of considering, like previous scholars, these depictions as charming settings and amusing asides, often appearing as illogical 'interpolations' between the main sequences of the narrative, Totton (2003:6, 8) regards them as documents encoding socio-political issues of the day within the world of nature:

Explicitly suggestive of a sophisticated local literary tradition, these narratives predate the earliest Old Javanese textual version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which has been dated to the tenth century [...] interpolations of fauna and flora transform this visual epic into a more complex commentary on Kingship, politics and justice.

I propose that the artists and planners of Caṇḍi Loro Jonggrang not only extended a purely mimetic sculptural language, using a local vocabulary (based on nature) that was probably well established centuries before, but that they also incorporated newer elements with a sense of irony and political savvy, which reflect the local sensibilities of the time.

The caricatural parody of animals representing wicked and deceitful ascetic characters is also found in the Buddhist Caṇḍi Mendut. Besides the relief of a heron – a figure that I will discuss in detail later on, a panel shows a cat bearing the attributes of a Śaiva ascetic of the Ṛṣi order of priests, including a fly whisk, a rosary, and a trident. This relief has been identified by Klokke (1986) as a visual representation of the story of 'the hypocritical cat and the trustful mice', which is narrated in a variety of Sanskrit sources. According to Klokke, the relief may have been intended either as a critique of the Śaiva religion or as a parody of a Central Javanese Śaiva King who disguised himself as an ascetic. The ridiculing of various categories of people, including religious personalities detailed in their peculiar ascetic attire, also appears to be a prominent motif in the reliefs of fourteenth-century East Javanese temples. On Caṇḍi Jago, besides the humouristic depiction of actual human characters (see Hunter 2000), we find several representations of deceitful and mischievous animals. According to Klokke (1993:139), these images convey a satire of

certain contemporary political, religious, and judiciary personalities.

While the documents in question, be they texts or reliefs, display an undeniable Javanese character, I argue that political and religious satire constitutes a theme that is clearly Indic. Satire is the subject of numerous sources belonging to disparate genres of Sanskrit texts such as Kāvya, Epic literature, Buddhist Jātakas, Jaina treatises and fable stories, where inept Kings and bogus ascetics are by far the most favoured targets of mockery (Bloomfield 1924; Rossella 2009).

### *On kings and birds. A political allegory*

Aichele (1969), having suggested a commonality of contents between passages of Sarga 24 and 25 of the RK and the Śiwagr̥ha inscription, regarded the allegorical references to birds as a means of linking the work with certain figures involved in the struggle for succession to the throne and the consequent social and religious upheaval that took place in mid-ninth-century Central Java. As the metrical edict testifies, a conflict arose between the (Śaiva) King Rakai Pikatan and a (presumably Buddhist) prince named Bālaputra, who was defeated at his stronghold, arguably the Ratu Baka hill near Prambanan.<sup>18</sup> The Wanua Tengah III inscription, discovered in 1983, confirms that Rakai Pikatan ascended the throne in 847 AD, succeeding Rakai Garuṅ, and died in 855 AD, as hinted at in the Śiwagr̥ha edict.<sup>19</sup> There it is stated that, after the funeral obsequies had been carried out by his younger brother and successor Dyah Lokapāla, the dead sovereign was worshiped as a divinized ancestor in a Śaiva temple, possibly the main temple at Caṅḍi Loro Jonggrang.

According to Aichele (1969:135-9), the poet intentionally used the word *pikatan* (decoy[ed] bird), found in the RK only twice, precisely in Sarga 24 and 25, to allude to Rakai Pikatan.<sup>20</sup> Sarga 24.115 refers to an ongoing conflict

<sup>18</sup> Bālaputra has been identified by De Casparis as the prince referred to as the Śailendra ruler of Suvarṇadvīpa, son of the former King of Java Samarāgrāvīra, in the Nālandā inscription, which has been tentatively dated between 840 and 860 AD (see Jordaan 2000:2).

<sup>19</sup> On account of the dynastic dispute after the death of Rakai Garuṅ, it is likely that the date of succession of Rakai Pikatan, arrived at on the basis of the Wanua Tengah III inscription, was intended as de facto or attributed in retrospect. Furthermore, according to De Casparis (1956:288), Rakai Pikatan did not pass away but rather abdicated in favour of his successor Rakai Kayuwāni before 855 AD and then became a royal hermit (*rājaraṣi*), assuming the consecration name of Pu Kumbhayoni. The identification of the latter figure with the King, however, has been questioned by several scholars (Jordaan 1999:33; Wisseman Christie 2001:41-2).

<sup>20</sup> Aichele's hypothesis is now supported by additional evidence drawn from the Sanskrit portion of the Wanua Tengah III inscription, where verse 10 presents a translinguistic gloss on the name Pikatan attributed to a Buddhist monastery found in the territory bearing the apanage name (*watak*) of Rakai Pikatan: 'For the rice-field that is at Center Town (Puramadhya = Wanua Tengah), under the monastery whose name is that of a bird (*pakṣi*, apparently referring to the Old



between Pikatan and some of his followers lured by the cry of the *kuwoi*-birds representing, in Aichele's opinion, Buddhist ascetics covertly supporting Bālaputra. In Sarga 25.13b the pikatan bird is said to feel secure as it rests in the peaceful hermitage of the sage Bharadwāja. Aichele (1969:163-6) then proposed further allegorical identifications between the characters of the poem and historical figures. For instance, Aichele identified Rakai Pikatan with Rāma in the story, his queen with Sītā, Rakai Kayuwaṇi with Rāma's younger brother Lakṣmaṇa, and Rāwaṇa, the demonic king of Laṅkā, with Bālaputra. This hypothesis was later supported by Robson (1981:7-9), who added that 'it seems likely that the author [of the RK] has given us the key to understanding the meaning of his composition only at the end, so that the whole can be viewed as a hidden account of how the Śaivite line finally conquered the Buddhist in Central Java'.<sup>21</sup>

Arguably, Aichele's study has contributed to unveiling many of the enigmas in the text, making it clear that a proper understanding of many of the unique features of Sarga 24 and 25 of the RK can only be achieved if the allegorical motifs that they develop at length are taken into due consideration. However, the matter remains far from settled, for Sarga 24 and 25 do not always support the identities formulated by Aichele. A new interpretive attempt is therefore needed, especially because Aichele – like his predecessors – did not deal with the issue of reliance upon similar motifs that are widespread in Sanskrit sources.

The most disconcerting feature is perhaps the less than respectful allusion to King Rakai Pikatan, to whom Aichele ascribed the patronage of the RK, as a *pikatan* bird in Sarga 24.115 and 25.13.<sup>22</sup> Of course, it is hard to imagine that the poet would have been allowed to refer – even by way of allusion – to his King and patron in such terms while he was still alive. This fact was considered by Jordaān (1996:98, note 74) as evidence for a post-Rakai Pikatan dating

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Javanese *pikatan*), was previously donated, with proper ado, by King Panaṅkara' (*puramaddhye hi yat kṣetra[m] vihāre pakṣisamjñāke, panāṅkaranarendreṇa pūrbadatattam yathavidhi*). I thank Arlo Griffiths for having shared with me the results of his study of this inscription, currently being prepared for publication.

<sup>21</sup> Robson 1983:303. Pollock (2006:390-7) shares the same view. He has discussed Old Javanese Kakawins in connection with the phenomenon of vernacularization in the Sanskrit Cosmopolis. According to Pollock, not unlike a wide variety of South Asian vernacular poems, Kakawins constitute (covert) epic allegories of local political power, in which 'the royal patron and the epic hero he represents are ontologically linked' (for the attestation of this feature in Sanskrit poems, see Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1956:390-3). Interestingly, a similar motif is found in the Laotian version of the *Rāmāyana*, where the Rāma-Rāwaṇa conflict has been regarded as an expression of sibling rivalry. The war between the two cousins would correspond to that between the princely house of Indraprastha (Cambodia) and Candrapuri Sri Satta Naga (Vientiane), tracing their origin to a common ancestor (Sahai 1973:xxix-xxxviii).

<sup>22</sup> In 24.115d the *pikatan* is described as acting like a vagabond performer (*mamidu-midu*), very mad (*ardha medan*).

for the RK.<sup>23</sup> I am rather inclined to believe that only the satirical parts of the Sarga under discussion may have been composed after the death of Rakai Pikatan, under the reign of his successor Rakai Kayuwani Dyah Lokapala. What, according to Aichele (1969:165), might be a favourable allusion to the latter character is found in Sarga 21.94, where Rama likens Lakṣmaṇa to sandalwood (*caṇḍana*) and thus, to Kayuwani, which also means 'fragrant wood', namely sandalwood.<sup>24</sup> Things are, however, complicated by the fact that in stanza 24.126 there is what seems to be an allusive reference, not mentioned by Aichele, to Wibhīṣaṇa as a sandalwood tree:

*sobhāgyan bhāgya yāgōn i sira sañ umadēg tā bhīṣaṇa mrēḍu  
sañkā yan śanta tā bhīṣaṇa ya matañ ike kyātīnaran arūm  
r andēl riñ rājya lēñkā kadi taru kanakā riñ nandanawana  
chāyachāyānirātis katitisan amṛtekañ rāt suka mañōb*

The fame of being happy was great for him who reigned, not frightening [but] gentle. Because he was peaceful and not frightening, that was the reason why he was known as 'fragrant', as he was stable in the kingdom of Lanḱa like a sandalwood tree in Indra's forest.

His shade was cool: the world was besprinkled with *amṛta*, happy and looking for shelter.

The playful Old Javanese gloss of the Sanskrit *wibhīṣaṇa* as *tā bhīṣana* 'not frightening' is coupled with the attribution to the appellative (*kyāti*) 'known as fragrant' (*īnaran arūm*) and the explicit comparison to a sandalwood tree (*taru kanakā*),<sup>25</sup> which is reminiscent of the *watak* name of Kayuwani. If my assumption is correct, Rāwana's younger brother Wibhīṣana, who was consecrated as King of Lanḱa, allegorically stands for Rakai Kayuwani of Central Java. As a matter of fact, considerable importance is attributed to the description of Wibhīṣana's coronation and his qualities as the virtuous King of Lanḱa in Sarga 24, in contrast with the infrequent mention of Lakṣmaṇa in Sarga 24 and 25. Rakai Kayuwani Dyah Lokapala, according to lines bcd of stanza 9 of the Śiwagrha inscription,

<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Jordaen (1993) took the apparent anachronism found in Sarga 8.43-63, where we find a description of a complete Śaiva temple complex that can be clearly connected with the temple mentioned in the Śiwagrha inscription, as indicating that the most important parts of the Prambanan temple complex already existed in the days of Pikatan, who thus must have been the royal patron of its construction (see also Aichele 1969:162). Another possibility would be, however, that such a passage was added after his death.

<sup>24</sup> Rama addresses his younger brother Lakṣmaṇa as follows: 'among the mountains you are similar to Malaya, your virtues are like sandalwood, pure and fragrant' (*parwawatopama kitekana malaya, tulya caṇḍana guṇanta śuci marām*).

<sup>25</sup> Compare OJED 788 s.v. *kanaka*: 'gold; several plants (a kind of bdellium; a kind of sandalwood'; *kayu kanaka*, 'probably sandalwood (Sanskrit *kanaka*); same as *kayu mas* (golden tree, yellow and fragrant)'.



was considered a worthy younger brother of Rakai Pikatan and then succeeded him as King (probably in 855 AD):

*rājya karatwan asilih tañanan inahsö  
dyah lokapālar anujā mata lokapāla  
swasthañ prajā sacaturāśrama wipramukhya*

The kingdom and the palace were taken by other hands.

Prince Lokapāla, who was regarded (by Rakai Pikatan) as a younger brother, was King.<sup>26</sup>

The subjects were safe,<sup>27</sup> divided into the four classes with the Brahmans ahead.

According to De Casparis's interpretation (1956:318), the construction *r anujā mata* implies that no actual sibling relationship existed between Rakai Pikatan and Rakai Kayuwani<sup>28</sup> – a fact that mirrors the Rāma-Wibhīṣaṇa relationship in the RK. In Sarga 24.46a Rāma requests Wibhīṣaṇa to re-beautify the whole Lañkāpura (*pulih pahayu tañ salēñkāpura*) and, even though he would not need it on account of his virtues and his intrinsic good qualities (stanza 47), Rāma teaches him a long lesson on good governance (stanzas 48-87).<sup>29</sup> This lessons resembles one that is imparted by an experienced ruler to his younger brother, and one gets the impression that Rāma has substituted the deceased Rāwaṇa in this role.<sup>30</sup>

Now, any reader acquainted with the historical events of mid-ninth century Central Java may form the impression that the descriptions of the revitalized Lañkā after the defeat of Rāwaṇa (alias Bālaputra) in RK 24.107-110 and 124-126 because of the return of the royal power and its embodiment as the King's queen (*śrī, rājalakṣmī*) could be allegories of the triumph of peace and

<sup>26</sup> *Lokapāla*, that is 'ruler of the world'. Another possible translation of this playful line may be: 'Prince Lokapāla, who was regarded (*mata*) as the young brother of the Lokapāla(s) (the guardians of the regions of the space)'.

<sup>27</sup> De Casparis (1956:318, note 20) translated the term *swastha* as 'free' interpreting the line as implying a Brahmanic restoration and a 'national' (Javanese) liberation. However, here the term could simply have the more general meaning attested in Old Javanese, namely 'happy, satisfied, safe', etc.

<sup>28</sup> Pace Aichele (1969:146), who interpreted *mata* not as the Sanskrit *mata[ḥ]* but as the Old Javanese stress particle, in his translation of the clause 'Prinz Lokapāla als jüngerer Bruder wurde Landesherr'.

<sup>29</sup> As I have already pointed out, the whole section in Sāriṇī metre from stanzas 41 to 89 of Sarga 24 has no counterpart in the BhK.

<sup>30</sup> The proposed identities imply that Rakai Kayuwani (= Wibhīṣaṇa) was the brother of Bālaputra (= Rāwaṇa). This interpretation poses no historical problem for, as noted by Worsley (2006), kinship relationships in polygamous Central Javanese royal households were complex and several members of one royal family could have claimed right to succession on the basis of blood relations acquired along matrilinear lines. On this issue, see also Jordaan and Colless (2009:4-43), who tentatively reconstruct Bālaputra's pedigree.



Figure 1. 'Heron, fish, and crab', Cañdi Mendut (OD photo 2007)



Figure 2. 'Heron, fish, and crab', Candi Jago (OD photo 68)



Figure 3. 'Heron, fish, and crab', Candj Ngampel (OD photo 2785)





Figure 4. 'Heron, fish, and crab', Cañdi Surowono (photo by Marijke Klokke)



Figure 5. 'Heron, fish, and crab', Candi Surowono (photo by Marijke Klokke)





Figure 6. Rāwana abducting Sītā, Candi Śiva, Loro Jonggrang (OD photo 3486)



Figure 6a. Two birds standing on top of Rāwaṇa's headdress (detail from Figure 6)



Fig 6b. Two birds standing on Rāwaṇa's headdress (detail from OD photo P-044541)





Figure 7. Fishing herons, Caṇḍi Nandi, Loro Jonggrang (OD photo 4367)



Figure 8. Herons, Caṇḍi Garuda, Loro Jonggrang (OD photo 4376)

religious tolerance that set in after the conflict during the early years of Rakai Pikatan's reign.<sup>31</sup> As described in RK 24.107, the harmony among animals that were once enemies is due to the effort of King Wibhīṣaṇa:

*satwātūt buddhisatwa prasama tan asuwe ta wvāṇnya mapalōṅ  
sīnhāsīn sīnha kāsīh tēka kadi ta kadaṅ kārīn kidān ariṅ  
saṅkā yan trus nikaṅ prih prathama nikana saṅ mairākṣa bhūwana  
tar mewēh de niṅ āmbēk makakamuḍiṅ asih mairī ya banawā*

The animals shared harmony together and a mind dominated by purity; not much time after, the people [too] became bright [in their minds].

The lions, all of them, were suddenly lovable; like relatives, like brothers, were the barking deer, feeling secure.

That is why the paramount effort of Him who protects the world was effective: it is not difficult to achieve for the mind that has love as its rudder in the boat of compassion.

This idyllic description of Laṅkā is reminiscent of the peaceful hermitage of Bharadwāja described in Sarga 25 of the RK. The motif of ferocious animals becoming tame and living peacefully together with their habitual preys in penance-groves is widespread in Sanskrit literature, including epigraphic records,<sup>32</sup> and especially in Kāvya.<sup>33</sup> The reason for such gentle behaviour is due to the soothing and beneficial influence of the holy sages dwelling there (Pontillo 2009).

<sup>31</sup> As already suggested by Aichele (1969:154) on the basis of RK 24.125. As stated in the Śiwagrha inscription, Rakai Pikatan moved his *kaḍatwan* to Mēdaṅ as soon as he was installed in 847, most probably due to political unrest (Wisseman Christie 2001:40). On account of Aichele's reconstruction, Jordaan (1999:70) did not rule out the possibility that 'Central Javanese society was riddled by social tensions in which religious affiliations came to play an ever important part', and that 'the Buddhist clergy and lay people were [not] entirely immune to harassment and violence and perhaps even prosecution and murder'. On the other hand, however, Jordaan (1999:47-54, 2006:6, 10) also argued against the often too simplistic view of ancient relationships between Śaivism and Buddhism in early Central Java propounded by scholars, pointing out that the two religions may have peacefully cohabited and any anti-Buddhist sentiment may be attributable to political reasons, namely the conflict between the Sañjaya and the Śailendra lines of kings.

<sup>32</sup> For example, the Candrehe stone inscription of Prabodhaśiva (724 AD) which describes a hermitage inhabited by holy ascetics in the following manner: 'In this place herds of monkeys kiss the cubs of lions, [and] the young one of a deer sucks at the breast of the lioness. Other hostile animals forget their [natural] antipathy [to one another]; for the minds of all become tranquil in penance-groves' (v. 15, translation Banerji 1930-31).

<sup>33</sup> Allusions to this motif are abundant in the Epics: see, for instance, Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* 88.7, describing the Citrakūṭa mountain inhabited by holy ascetics: 'What a sight the mountain makes, swarming with birds and teeming with herds of beasts, panthers, hyenas, and monkeys, all of them tame' (transl. Pollock 1986:269). Other instances of this topos in the *Mahābhārata* and in Kālidāsa's works are discussed in Pontillo 2009.

The renewed harmony among the animals established in Lan̄kā also constitutes the main subject of stanza 124:

*nā tañ satwātisatyādulu-dulur adilat tulyāśapatha ya  
 āswāsañ wyāghra barwañ barañ agalak arūm rūpanya wēkasan  
 tūsn̄yāmbēk sañ mawañ rāt ya ta dumulurakēñ satwāsiñ atukar  
 kāhinyekañ kaḍatwan dṛha hati mapagēh bhaktinya ri sira*

Thus the animals were very faithful, staying together and licking [one another] as if they were taking an oath.

Wild dogs, tigers, bears, every wild animal had a gentle character at last.

That which flows out from the heart of the ruler of the world causes every animal that [formerly] fought each other to be companions.

How much more the people of the palace:<sup>34</sup> with a firm heart they were fervently devoted to him.<sup>35</sup>

The two passages quoted above are reminiscent of sections of the panegyric of Rakai Pikatan found in the Śiwagr̄ha inscription, such as stanza 11:

*dewānubhāwa salakas<sup>36</sup> ni lawasnira n̄ke  
 tapwan hanaññ musuh asih pañaññnaññ ta  
 pōñpōñ hadēp ni hana niñ wiḅhawāvyayādi  
 dharmā ta rakwa ginawainira sañ widagdha*

All his actions, as long as he was here, were divine blessings.

There were no enemies anymore, love was what was pondered over.

Making use of the availability of an imperishable [store] of wealth, etc.,

It is only natural that temples were built by him, the clever one.

According to De Casparis (1956:319-20), the stanza praises the late period of Rakai Pikatan's relatively short reign, when the conflict was resolved and peace returned. This seems plausible; however, because of the absence of any explicit remark as to the identification of the subject of the stanza, and because it occurs just after the mention of Kayuwani's succession in stanza 9 and after the latter king's apparent orders in stanza 10 concerning preparations for Rakai Pikatan's

<sup>34</sup> Or, more generally: 'of the kingdom'.

<sup>35</sup> Aichele (1969:153-4) opted for the reading *dr̄ḍhapatih apagēh* that hints the end of the turmoil caused by the rebellion of certain nobles among Rakai Pikatan's retinue previously described in *Sarga* 24.112-115. Just as the animals who fought each other now are friends, the members of the palace are faithful to their King.

<sup>36</sup> I follow De Casparis's reading even though the inscription seems to have *ayatas*, which does not make sense. I make an important remark about De Casparis's readings in note 62.

funeral ceremonies, stanza 11 might be understood as referring to Kayuwani himself rather than to his predecessor. In this case, the clause *ni lawasnira nke* in 11a may be translated 'as soon as he (Rakai Kayuwani) was here (that is as consecrated King)', pace De Casparis's 'as long as he (Rakai Pikatan) was here', referring to 'the king when he still was a king among his subjects'. Be this as it may, both possibilities equally support the view that a new era of peace, prosperity, and religious eclecticism was inaugurated right at the beginning of the second half of ninth-century Central Java, merely started by Rakai Pikatan and brought to its height by Rakai Kayuwani Dyah Lokapala. This view concurs with available historical evidence, attributing to the reign of Rakai Kayuwani a much more prominent role than the short and conflict-ridden reign of his predecessor. As pointed out by Wisseman-Christie (2001:40, 43-4), whereas during Rakai Pikatan's reign Śaiva hermitages benefited from royal support at the expense of Buddhist establishments, under the rule of Rakai Kayuwani there was an extraordinary efflorescence of *sīma* charters benefiting religious foundations of both Śaiva and Buddhist affiliation. This was certainly due to the fact that towards the middle of the ninth century AD substantial economic resources became available for the Central Javanese rulers thanks to a combination of raised productivity and depression in overseas Southeast Asian markets, thus providing the royal family with the opportunity to make generous donations to religious foundations as well as to undertake the construction of large temples.

One more point needs to be addressed in support of my interpretation of the already mentioned passages of the RK, namely the identification of the Lan̄kā with an area in Central Java corresponding to, or situated near, the temple complex of Prambanan. Evidence pointing to this identification comes from epigraphic records of the Central Javanese period, where several attestations of the toponym Lan̄kā suggest that it may have been a relatively important place (Damais 1970:740). What is more important, the toponyms Lan̄ka and Lan̄kapura are found in two inscriptions, dating back to the ninth century AD, belonging to the corpus of inscriptions issued by Rakai Kumbhayoni, all found on or in the immediate vicinity of the Ratu Baka hill.<sup>37</sup> The inscriptions directly associate the toponyms with Pu Kumbhayoni, a figure of royal status, often described as a victorious military leader and Śaiva devotee. According to Wisseman-Christie (2001:42), he might have been a fairly close relative of Rakai Pikatan, who played a role in the conflict supporting the latter.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> These inscriptions, all unearthed in the nineteenth or in first half of the twentieth century, but some of which remain unpublished to this day, are now being studied by Arlo Griffiths. The evidence referred to here has been drawn from Griffiths's paper (2009) presented at a workshop on the RK held in Jakarta in May 2009.

<sup>38</sup> It is not impossible that Kumbhayoni himself might have been one of the pretenders to the throne. Be this as it may, the data so far drawn from Central Javanese inscriptions make De Casparis's identification of Kumbhayoni with the 'retired' Rakai Pikatan unlikely (see above, note 19). On the other hand, Aichele (1969:156, 163-6) identified Kumbhayoni with Rakai Kayuwani

*On birds and false ascetics. A religious satire*

On account of the derogatory remarks about the *kuwoṅ*-birds in Sarga 24 and 25, Aichele (1969:131, 138, 154) regarded those birds, with their ostentatious asceticism and luring call, as representing Buddhist agents or dignitaries close to Bālaputra. He then proposed the same identification with regard to the various kinds of herons and waterbirds (*jaṅkuṅ*, *kuntul*, *bisu*, *baka*) which in stanzas 116-117cd of Sarga 24 engaged in deceitful strategy and ate the powerless fish, and were subsequently punished (stanzas 52-60 of Sarga 25).<sup>39</sup> However, I find no elements in the text suggesting that they indeed represent Buddhist characters. On the contrary, in various passages of Sarga 24 and 25 we find allusions to tame birds such as parrots which metaphorically link to Buddhists. In spite of the comic and somewhat derisory tone of the stanzas in question, these birds are depicted as neutral characters, often engaged in philosophical debate with their opponents. The critique seems to be somewhat directed at groups of birds that seem to follow the lifestyle and the weird ascetic observances of wandering Śaiva adepts, such as the Pāśupatas and the Kāpālikas. In short, the opposition in the text is between a mainstream householder-oriented or moderate monastic form of religiosity and the extreme, and often power-oriented, asceticism of the Tantric Siddhas. Such an opposition becomes clear when one compares this theme to Sanskrit prototypes, where, along with the profane, the sacred domain was also subjected to satire. Sources containing parodies of ascetics written by their opponents, who criticized their beliefs and practices, commonly figure in Sanskrit literature that often depict these religious characters as evil ascetics, magicians, and even secret agents disguised as holy men (Bloomfield 1924; Lorenzen 2000). In particular, the *Arthaśāstra* recommends the use of such secret agents as a strategic weapon for Kings, who harbour dreams of expansion. As Davidson (2002:174-5) remarks,

*Arthaśāstra* specifies almost a dozen situations in which an individual might masquerade as a *siddha* using their specific practices to accomplish the ends of realpoli-

himself. It is clear that the issue cannot be solved until new data emerge from the analysis of the available but unpublished epigraphic sources.

<sup>39</sup> This identification was later accepted by Jordaan (1999:69-70; 2006:6) who, however, rightly noted that renewed and careful study of Old Javanese textual sources is much needed in order to achieve more definitive conclusions (Jordaan 2006:16). As a matter of fact, neither Aichele nor successive scholars (with the exception of Nihom 1995) attempted to identify the Sanskrit prototypes of the birds and alter-egos displayed in these Sarga. This might have been due to the fact that, as Jordaan (1999:69) noted, the allusions to the social positions and involvement in the political situation remain simply too cryptic to be understood today. I do think, however, that some of them can be convincingly explained on the basis of Sanskrit parallels: besides Nihom's (1995) study on Sarga 25.25 and 24.117ab, identifying the birds mentioned there with Pāśupata affiliates, see Acri 2008, where I suggest identifying the quail linked in Sarga 24.111bc and 25.20cd to an Alepaka ascetic with an adept of the Vaimala sect known from rare references in Sanskrit Śaiva sources.



tik. Some of the figures are called *siddhatāpasa*, the accomplished ascetic, and many of the citations depict them as skilled in magic (*māyāyogavid*). Agents of the state might be employed to impersonate such *siddhas*, using various devices to entrap criminals through the criminals' own spells, or to entice tribals to rebel against an adjacent state. These agents could formulate real or bogus rituals—and assassinate the king's enemies by infusing their magical concoctions with poison. The *Arthaśāstra* proposes many deceptive activities to be employed exclusively in the destabilization of neighboring states, and these actions frequently involve agents posing as *siddhas* or other religious characters to lure monarchs to secluded spots while promising them wealth, horses, or sex, not necessarily in that order.<sup>40</sup>

In the light of the above Sanskrit documents, Aichele's hypothesis concerning the involvement of false ascetics in covert activities of social and political destabilization going on in mid-ninth century Central Java seems very plausible. The references in Sarga 24 and 25 to the 'deceitful' herons may hint at a group of agents disguised as Śaiva ascetics covertly supporting the cause of Bālaputra, or perhaps even to Bālaputra himself.<sup>41</sup> Far from being a specifically Javanese feature, the motif of the heron-ascetic is derived from Indic sources. The Sanskrit *vaka*/*baka*, meaning 'heron', has taken the figurative meaning of 'a hypocrite, cheat, rogue, the crane being regarded as a bird of great cunning and deceit as well as circumspection' (Monier-Williams 1899:719). Herons are canonical comic characters in fables, being the typical hypocritical ascetics also for the lawbooks and a variety of Sanskrit texts.<sup>42</sup> According to Bloomfield (1919:10), 'the relation of the heron or crane (*baka*) to fish, his 'kill', is abundantly exploited, so as to become proverbial [...] he that publishes his secret when his work is half done, is destroyed as the heron by the crab'. In these stories, a heron poses as a holy man, but has evil intentions. It promises to bring the small fishes of a lake to a safer place but instead it eats them one by one. Finally, a crab discovers the heron's treachery and, in order to avoid the same destiny as the fish, kills the bird by cutting into its neck with his pincers.

<sup>40</sup> The passages of the *Arthaśāstra* which Davidson refers to are: 4.3.40-44; 4.5.1-16; 5.1.33-34; 12.2.1-33.

<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note that Jordaan (2000:10-1), having compared the Wanua Tengah III inscription with the Nālandā edict in the light of the recently revised chronology of the Pāla Kings, argued that Bālaputra was already King in Sumatra before he came to Java, only to advance his claim to succession after Rakai Pikatan ascended the throne in 847. This hypothesis suggests that the contacts between Bālaputra and the Pāla King Devapāla may have been not only of a religious and cultural nature. For instance, the possibility of a political alliance formed by Bālaputra, just a few years before his Javanese expedition, with the Pāla ruler would make perfect sense in the system of alliances among neighboring *maṇḍala* as theorized in the *Arthaśāstra*.

<sup>42</sup> The herons symbolize a group of Śaiva hypocritical ascetics or simulators in Sanskrit scriptures of the Śaivasiddhānta such as *Suprabhedāgama*, Caryāpāda 6.28, and in *Kiraṇatantra*, Caryāpāda 9.22b-23a (see Barazer-Billoret 2001).

The popularity of this motif in ancient Java is attested in several Old Javanese versions of Tantri fables. In the Old Javanese *Tantri Kāmandaka*, based upon Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* texts, 'the heron is said to adopt the behaviour of those who do not kill living beings' (Klokke 1993:212). A more detailed description of such a deceitful heron is found in the Balinese *Tantri Dēmuñ* (III.10):<sup>43</sup>

*akuṅḍala śuddha saḡaṅitry acīwarājaṭālus arjāsawit pēṭak śobha sawilāsāsuci danta lwir paṅḍita sādhubuddhi sahiṣṅu riñ brata tapa yoga samādhi tan prāṅaghāta denyā lumaku*

Wearing earrings, pure, carrying a rosary, wearing the monk's robe, wearing the ascetic's hairstyle, non-violent, pious, bearing the Brahminical cord, white, clean, willing to help, tame: the appearance of a man of religion of virtuous mind, perseverant in ascetic observances, penance, yoga and absorption, behaving like one who does not kill living beings.

Another interesting description of the false ascetic featured in the story of the heron and the crab is found in the Balinese *Geguritan Pañca Puspita* (I.11):<sup>44</sup>

In form he was clearly pure.  
 Wearing the priestly mitre (*kētu*)<sup>45</sup> and robes of white  
 His earrings were the *gūṅḍala* type, worn only by priests,  
 And he wore the ornaments of a Holy Man (*wiku*),  
 He imitated the actions of a learned priest (*paṅḍita*),  
 Pretending all the while,  
 That he was exerting himself greatly in acts of austerity and self-denial.<sup>46</sup>

The motif of the heron represented as a hypocrite or false ascetic is attested also in later Javanese literature. In the last canto of the nineteenth-century *Serat Dermagandhul*, a text which views Islam as foreign to Java, a white-feathered heron (*walikan*) provides a new etymology for the word *wali* (understood as deriving from Arabic and meaning 'friend of God' or 'saint'). The *wali* who are said to have brought Islam to Java are presented in this text as heron-like: deceitful, pretending to be holy aided by their outward immaculate appearance but in

<sup>43</sup> The Old Javanese text is quoted from Klokke 1993:212 (the translation is mine).

<sup>44</sup> Translation quoted from Hunter 1988:71.

<sup>45</sup> The *kētu* is a Balinese adaptation of the turban-like headdress marking Śaiva mendicant ascetics in temple reliefs and Old Javanese sources (Hunter 2000:90). This kind of headdress is also worn by the herons depicted in East Javanese temple reliefs (see further).

<sup>46</sup> It is interesting to note that such characterization of the proverbial heron has survived in Bali to this day. Hunter (1988:71-2) refers to a painting by the artist I Keteg titled *Pedanda Baka* (The Heron High Priest), depicting a heron pinched by a crab.

fact teaching a dangerous and un-Javanese doctrine (see Drewes 1966:311).<sup>47</sup>

Visual representations of the story 'Heron, fish, and crab' are commonly found in reliefs of Javanese temples, like on the ninth-century Caṅḍi Mendut in Central Java (Figure 1) and, later, on the fourteenth-century East Javanese temples of Jago (Figure 2), Ngampel (Figure 3) and Surawana (Figures 4 and 5).<sup>48</sup> According to Klokke (1993:139), this story

focuses on a religious, priestly figure who is represented by a heron. The heron in the relief is provided with the headdress characteristic of sages or priests in East Javanese narrative reliefs, thus making the allusion clear.

The 'sages' mentioned by Klokke stand for the Ṛṣi, a category of priests cited in Old Javanese sources as practising a kind of ascetic-oriented Śaivism peripheral to the official form of mainstream Śaiva Siddhānta prevalent in the royal palace and in urban contexts.<sup>49</sup>

Although the story of the heron and the crab is not represented in any of the temples of the Loro Jonggrang complex, various kinds of water birds such as herons, cranes, storks and egrets do figure in several *Rāmāyaṇa* 'decorative' reliefs (Figures 7 and 8). A more meaningful depiction is that which, according to Totton (2003:13-4), may represent a *baka* or Giant Heron (*Ardea sumatrana*) standing on Rāvaṇa's turban in the scene of Sītā's abduction (Figures 6, 6a, and 6b). There the demon deceives Sītā by disguising himself as an ascetic as, besides wearing the characteristic turban, the demon is surrounded by other typical accessories associated with a Ṛṣi, that is the umbrella and fly whisk. Now, Totton's interpretation of the relief as a political derision made by the sculptors' patrons (the Javanese Śaiva elite) against the deceitful Buddhist Śailendra overlords is sound, and it is also in agreement with Aichele's hypothesis upholding the identity between Rāvaṇa and the historical Bālaputra,<sup>50</sup> however, since the portion of the relief in question is

<sup>47</sup> I thank an anonymous peer reviewer of this article, who brought my attention to the existence of this very interesting motif.

<sup>48</sup> See the images and discussion in Klokke 1993:185, 211-2, 224-5, 242-3. For a comparison with similar images from South Indian temples, see Patil 2000:86-7.

<sup>49</sup> See Hunter 2000:88-98, according to whom the Ṛṣi may represent the descendants of the Pāśūpatas. This view has also been advanced independently by Sanderson (2003-04:376).

<sup>50</sup> Totton, in support of her claim, refers to the contents of RK 24 and 25 as well as the Śiwagrha inscription. Since she makes no reference to previous publications by Aichele and Robson, where the identification of Bālaputra with Rāvaṇa is discussed, I assume she has come to this conclusion independently. After the first version of this article was written, another relevant contribution became accessible to me, namely the article by Worsley (2006), which followed up a study discussing the *Rāmāyaṇa* reliefs at Caṅḍi Loro Jonggrang against the background of the political events and socio-cultural themes of ninth-century Central Java. The author's (again, seemingly independent) conclusion that the reliefs point to the existence of tensions and political rivalries between contemporary polygamous royal households, specifically between the Bud-



not very clear, Totton's identification of the heron on the demon's turban is to be taken with circumspection.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, an indication suggesting the identity between the Śailendra prince and the deceitful demon-king Rāwaṇa comes from a local legend – known to every villager of Prambanan and tour guides – narrating the miraculous building of the temple complex (constituting 1000 temples) in just one night. Although space constraint does not permit a full-length account of the entire plot of the story and its variants, it is relevant to mention here that one of its main characters, the princess Loro Jonggrang, was the daughter of the brutal King Baka, who was defeated in battle by Bandung Bondowoso, the valiant first minister of the king of the Pengging kingdom. The princess, not pleased by the marriage offer of the minister, asked him to carry out the impossible task of building 1000 temples overnight – an undertaking that Bandung Bondowoso failed in as he managed to build only 999 temples. The survival, in modern Prambanan, of a legend linking the temples to the defeat of a mischievous Heron-King and a marriage controversy suggests that those motifs are likely to be connected with important, albeit remote, historical events, the memory of which has remained deeply embedded in the local lore.<sup>52</sup>

After this excursus into the realm of the visual arts, I now turn to the description in RK 24.116 and 117cd of the herons' mischievous pranks on the helpless fishes. Here the aquatic birds are despised by a *kuwoñ*-bird or *manuk widu*:

*joh koñ jañkuñ marañkuñ mara kumira-kirāmor in hurañ-ariñ  
riñ kañkuñ kom pamañkuk katēlēguk aharēp riñ duñhil añilu  
koñ kuntul koñ manuñkul milu mañilu mulat riñ melēm amulay  
weśanyātah wiśeśān bisu si bēsi biśān pañhēlw i sisili*

Hey you, *jañkuñ*, you hunch, go and make a plot mixing with the unsuspecting shrimps!

You squat down among the *kañkuñ* plants, with [your] mouth watering, you desire the eels, salivating!

---

dhist Śailendras (headed by Bālaputra) and the Śaiva Sañjaya (headed by Rakai Pikatan), is in agreement with the findings of previous scholars.

<sup>51</sup> By contrasting the picture used by Totton with another one of the same panel found in Scheltema 1912, one may note that not one but two birds are actually depicted, and the second one does not resemble a heron at all.

<sup>52</sup> A demon-king named Baka is already mentioned in the Old Javanese *Ādiparwa* (chapter 14, see Juynboll 1906). The evil ruler of the country of Ekacakra is described there as an eater of Brahmans demanding human meat from his subjects and for that reason is killed by the mighty Bhīma, one of the Pāṇḍava brothers.

You *kuntul*,<sup>53</sup> you bow down along with them, joining in looking with special esteem at the *melēm*-fishes [deceitfully].

Only his attire is splendid; the speechless *běsi*:<sup>54</sup> – only he is skilled in swallowing the *sisili*-fish.

*měngěp cuṅḍuk cumidreñ dēlēg amulay i koñ caṅḍāla si baka*  
*bañkak-bañkak maměnkěk mamañana ya sěpat hīnān karēhēnan*

Pretending to meet, you catch by surprise the pikes, [which] held you in high esteem – despicable<sup>55</sup> heron!

Making noise, it bends down to devour those *sěpat*-fish, which narrowly fail to outdo him [in velocity].

The *baka* appears again in the section of Sarga 25 describing the hermitage of Bharadwāja. Stanza 21, which mentions the *manuk widu* in line a, contains the following statement (line c): *maněhěr muna ñ baka marin baka ya* (thereupon, the heron keeps silent [or: practices the observance of silence]<sup>56</sup> and ceases to be a heron [or: a hypocrite]).<sup>57</sup> Is this an allusion to Bālaputra after his defeat at the stronghold known till today as Ratu Baka ('the Heron King'), as hinted in the Śiwagr̥ha inscription, stanza 7?

Let us now see how the defeat of the mischievous water birds by their prey is depicted in stanzas 58-60 of Sarga 25:

*sahaja jañkuñ arañkuñ an arañkañan*  
*ya mamatuk hayuyu mragagah magōñ*  
*katakulan ta gulūnya gēlāna ya*  
*makēpěkopěk apan kasupit gulū*

<sup>53</sup> Totton (2003:23, note 35), probably after OJED 925 which gives *Egretta ardea*, identifies the *kuntul* as a Great White Egret (*Egretta alba*). Misled by an imperfect and imaginative translation of the first half of this line ('forever egret, forever the best'), Totton takes this bird as a positive patriotic character. My translation, however, renders a very different picture.

<sup>54</sup> In the light of this description I suggest that this bird may be a Lesser Adjutant Stork, which, as noted by Totton (2003:23, note 37), 'has no voice, and the only sound it makes is the beating of its wings' (a reference to the muteness of this bird is also found in stanza 25.59, see further). Totton (2003:23, note 35), however, tentatively identifies the Lesser Adjutant Stork with the *jañkuñ*.

<sup>55</sup> The word *caṅḍāla* also means 'hunter' in Sanskrit. While this meaning is not found in OJED, there is evidence of its usage in this sense in RK 2.9c, and, as pointed out to me by Arlo Griffiths, in verse 59 of the Sanskrit-Old Javanese lexicon *Amaramālā* (part of the *Caṅḍakiraṇa* or *Caṅḍakarāṇa*, see Lokesh Chandra 1997:202), which glosses it with a variety of Old Javanese synonyms of 'hunter'. In the present stanza, therefore, *caṅḍāla* may also allude to the predatory nature of the heron.

<sup>56</sup> See Bloomfield (1924:205): 'The Timi-fish who lives in sacred waters, practising the vow of silence, devours his own kind, and the heron who is the animal ascetic par excellence, in turn devours the Timi-fish' (my italics). In the Old Javanese version the observance of *muna* (= Skt *mauna*) is attributed, instead, to the heron.

<sup>57</sup> See RK 23.22, where Indrajit accuses Rāma of being like a heron, who only has the appearance of an ascetic doing penance, but in actuality is evil and prone to killing.

As inherent in its own nature,<sup>58</sup> the *jañkuñ* hunches while bending down.  
It pecks the crabs, assuming a posture with legs wide apart,<sup>59</sup> imposing.  
Its neck is held fast; it is dejected [because of the pain].  
It flaps its wings in distress, for its neck is pinched [by the crab].

*si bisu nā si manuk bēsi tan biṣa*  
*mawēdi riñ twikaṭoṭkaṭa karkaṭa*  
*madalihan sumilēm ya masilurup*  
*umilaḡ iñ kala kādbhuta mār supit*

A mute, such is the *bēsi*, powerless.  
It is afraid of a monstrous and fierce crab.  
It is thinking about diving and immersing itself.  
It escapes among [those] terrible [ones].<sup>60</sup> in an imposing way, the pincers widen.

*tēka si kuntul atah manuluñ masō*  
*matuk ikañ manupit kadi yānapih*  
*hana hurañ galah aṅgalah iñ supit*  
*sipi si kuntul umur katawan kawēs*

Thereupon the *kuntul* arrives to help, coming forward  
It pecks those provided with pincers, so as to separate them.  
There are the lobsters, which wound it with the pinches.  
The *kuntul* just disappears, being carried along,<sup>61</sup> overawed.

These stanzas seem to refer to new developments in the situation portrayed in 24.116, implying that the agents who previously were committing mischievous acts undisturbed, have now been discovered and subjected to retaliation from their victims. This is evident from the third quarter of stanza 25.60, where the shrimps (*hurañ*) that were described in 24.116 as unsuspecting, quiet prey, appear to have become, literally, ‘shrimps-with-a-lance’ (see OJED on *hurañ galah*: ‘shrimp, prawn, lobster’), having armed themselves. Line 60d might hint at the defeat of Bālaputra’s agents who were held captive.

It would be interesting to check the reconstruction just proposed against evidence drawn from the Śiwagrha inscription, but the poor, lacunae-ridden

<sup>58</sup> Here the term *sahaja* could also mean ‘on purpose’, comparable to the modern Indonesian *sengaja*.

<sup>59</sup> This translation, proposed by OJED, is uncertain. Note that there are Sanskrit parallels where the heron is described as standing ‘on its two hind legs, to match the human ascetic’s standing on one foot’ (Bloomfield 1924:206).

<sup>60</sup> The term *kala* also means ‘scorpion’ (OJED 767); however, it seems to me more appropriate to the present context to take it as an adjective referring to the crabs.

<sup>61</sup> From *tawan* I: ‘what is carried off, booty, a captive’ (OJED 1956).

state of relevant passages of that document prevents us from doing so unless a new reading of the stone is undertaken.<sup>62</sup> For the time being I call to attention the interesting, as much as obscure, stanza 12 of the inscription, alluding to the end of the evil perpetrated against Rakai Pikatan (*māntan hale sira*) and to some kind of deceit or lie (*duwa = dwa*) associated with that. The existence of a relationship between the stanzas of the RK already described and the Śiwagr̥ha edict is suggested by the mention, in stanza 22 of the latter,<sup>63</sup> of certain birds that are also found in RK 24-25. For instance, herons (*baka*), crows (*kāka*), and geese (*haṃsa*), as well as (foreign) merchants (*waniyaga*) who are ordered to take a purificatory ritual bath (*diyus*) and to 'love' (*asiha*). According to Totton (2003:13), 'the incongruity of the list – herons, crows, geese, and merchants – appears to notify the readers of the intended subtext', that is the Śailendra elite, foreign soldiers, pilgrims, and merchants coming to Java to obtain mystical powers.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, the passage is too obscure to allow any certain interpretation; at present it may be speculated that these birds represent certain ascetic figures that are required to perform a ritual bath because of an unspecified misdeed.<sup>65</sup>

### Conclusion

The apparent discrepancies found within section 24.95-126, and the peculiar alternation between narrative and allegorical descriptive passages displayed in Sarga 25, reflect the composite textual structure of these sections and their unique position within the rest of the RK. Agreeing with Aichele, I maintain

<sup>62</sup> During a visit to the Museum Nasional in Jakarta in November 2009, Arlo Griffiths and I were able to inspect the stone and found that many of De Casparis's readings cannot at present be confirmed, but that in most of the relevant cases his reading cannot be positively rejected either. It is uncertain whether this is due to the condition of the stone having undergone more extensive deterioration after De Casparis read it, or due to De Casparis's decision only to mark the most speculative readings in italics, and to print without any mark of uncertainty many parts of the text which were in fact, already in his day, virtually unreadable but which he nevertheless felt able to restore with confidence. We commenced but had no time to finish a fresh transliteration of the inscription. Among the parts that we did attempt to read was stanza 12, referred to further on, and our reading differed in some important points from that of De Casparis.

<sup>63</sup> Which occurs, interestingly enough, right after the two stanzas which were written in a kind of 'popular' Old Javanese. The stanza, although metrically regular, is nonetheless very obscure and has hitherto defied interpretation.

<sup>64</sup> The latter point is suggested by Totton's interpretation of the phrase *siddha ta yātra* in that way, that is closer to *siddhi ta yātra* (*siddhi* = supernatural powers). This is unlikely, for the compound *siddhayātra* is found in a variety of early Sanskrit inscriptions from the Malay Peninsula and the Archipelago as simply indicating a successful journey or perhaps a pilgrimage (usually defined as *tīrthayātra*).

<sup>65</sup> Note that, besides herons, geese (*haṃsa*, *paramahaṃsa*) commonly stand for denominations of certain kinds of ascetics in Sanskrit literature. For the attestation of this motif in Śaiva sources, such as the *Kiraṇatantra* and the *Suprabhedāgama*, see Barazer-Billoret 2001.

that these problematic sections make some sense only if interpreted as attempts to personalize the narrative of the text in order to introduce a critique of certain political and religious figures of mid-ninth-century Central Java. By comparing the main motifs of these sections of the RK with similar ones detected in the reliefs of the contemporary Caṅḍi Loro Jonggrang, I conclude that these materials, rather than being mere 'interpolations' and digressions from the main subject, must be interpreted as representing a local praxis of nature-inspired satire dealing with matters of actuality, which were skilfully interwoven within the main *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative in both the written and visual texts. The satirical themes displayed there, far from being a uniquely Javanese feature, represent a case of 'localization' of topoi widespread in Sanskrit literature. My interpretation casts new light on the possible identity of the political and ascetic figures represented as birds in Sarga 24 and 25 of the RK and in the contemporary Śiwagrha inscription. In future research I shall try to identify other allegorical characters mentioned there, and in particular the *kuwoi*-bird, with political and religious figures of mid-ninth century Central Java.

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