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Peter Worsley, S. Supomo, Thomas Hunter, and Margaret Fletcher

Mpu Monaguna's Sumanasāntaka: An Old Javanese Epic Poem, its Indian Source and Balinese Illustrations. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013, xviii + 714 pp. Bibliotheca Indonesica vol. 36. ISBN 9789004252035. Price: EUR 119.00 (hardback).

The book presents an edition, translation, and thorough study of the previously unpublished early thirteenth-century Old Javanese *kakawin Sumanasāntaka* ('Death by a Sumanasa Flower') by the East Javanese court poet Monaguna. The main plot of the poem revolves around the events occurring before, during, and after the marriage between Princess Indumatī and Prince Aja.

The *Sumanasāntaka* is one of the twenty so-called 'major *kakawin*' that have survived the ravages of time. Reportedly (p. 27), the poem was the favourite of Zoetmulder, the founding father of modern Old Javanese studies, who considered it 'one of the best specimens of its genre' (Zoetmulder 1974:306). The *Sumanasāntaka* is indeed a superb specimen of Old Javanese courtly poetic work; however, besides its aesthetic and literary merits, it deserves attention for being an important document providing a wealth of information on everyday life, religion, social realities and imaginaries in East Java around the thirteenth century AD.

This long-awaited monumental volume is the result of over twenty years of collaborative work between a team of reputed international scholars (one of whom, Margaret Fletcher, sadly did not survive its publication). This 'team approach' makes full justice to the importance and complexity of this textual document and the constellation of cultural themes revolving around it, which clearly cannot be adequately tackled by a single author. The book is clearly set within a tradition of literary translations of major *kakawin* published in the series Bibliotheca Indonesica in the course of the past century; the authors (p. xiii) indeed declare to have taken inspiration from the similarly multi-authored work on Mpu Tanakung's *Śiwarātrikalpa* (Teeuw et al. 1969). Yet the volume is characterized by an unprecedented level of thoroughness, originality, and intellectual vigour, and seamlessly marries a wide range of expertise on different areas. Besides taking into account the most recent advancements in the field of Old Javanese studies, it is also informed (and welcomingly so) by a wider translocal perspective, such as Pollock's theorization of the Sanskrit Cosmopolis and Vernacular Millenium (2006), and makes intelligent use of recent cutting-edge Indological studies, such as Goodaall and Isaacson's (2003) edition of Vallabhadeva's *Raghupañcikā*.

The book is divided into five parts. In the introduction, Supomo presents an extensive summary of the text, a consideration of its reception in Java and Bali, a survey of previous scholarship, and a discussion of the manuscript sources

and policies informing the edition. The edition and translation (Part II), followed by a detailed commentary illuminating obscure or noteworthy passages in the text, is the responsibility of Supomo, Worsley, and Fletcher. In Part III Hunter explores the relationship between Monagaṇa's oeuvre and its Sanskrit prototype, namely Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*, as well as a wider Sanskritic cosmopolitan tradition of literary exchanges that were informed by oral pedagogical dynamics as much as Sanskrit texts and their commentaries. In Part IV Worsley deals with time, place, and emotionality in the *Sumanasāntaka* and its courtly Javanese setting. Part V, also by Worsley, discusses a late nineteenth or early twentieth century Balinese painting based on the narrative of the *Sumanasāntaka*.

Supomo's Introduction exhausts all the fundamental aspects of the text and its setting, authorship, and audience. The author is to be commended for paying an unusual attention to reception, and for having discussed and contextualized the manuscripts' colophons, which often contain fascinating and important pieces of historical evidence.¹ On the other hand, his treatment of the editorial policies, and of the philological approach governing his edition, is not fully satisfactory. The choice of ten manuscripts, out of the many more known or available, on the basis of criteria such as date (the older the better)² or 'correctness' (the fewer errors or spelling inconsistencies the better),³ is not an ideal procedure, and one that may not work in every situation; however, taking into account the obvious constraints of a real-world scenario, this *modus operandi* can be easily condoned. The use, in both the critical apparatus and the stemma, of italicized roman capitals instead of lower-case Greek letters to label 'hypothetical ancestors' (read: *hyparchetype*) contravenes all philological standards known to me. More importantly, Supomo does not specify which manual of textual criticism informed the compilation of the stemma and the editorial approach; the result is somewhat idiosyncratic, standing midway between an 'eclectic' and 'stemmatic' approach. In hypothetically representing the readings of the 'prototype' (read: *archetype*) in the edition, he follows the principle that 'all those readings which are in agreement with each other must have come

1 A transcription and translation of all colophons is counter-intuitively presented in chapter 2.3, after the commentary; it would have been better placed at the end of Part I.

2 But then I wonder why a complete *lontar* dated 1960, kept at Universitas Udayana, was not used, mainly on account of being a 'fairly recent copy' (p. 30), whereas a *lontar* (with no date or colophon, and therefore arguably recent) purchased by Prof. Stuart Robson in 1971 from an art shop in Klungkung was used (as ms. L).

3 This is true in the case of the PUSDOK *lontar* and especially of the PUSDOK/HKS romanized typescripts, which are often ridden by mistakes, and were therefore not used by Supomo.

from the common source', whereas 'readings which occur only in one of the manuscripts whose immediate ancestor can be established [...] are not likely to come from this prototype' (p. 39). No attempt is made to justify his choice of a 'stemmatic' method against others, or explain, following the procedure underlying a rigorous stemmatic method, the weighing of one manuscript (or variant) against another on the basis of objective criteria. Supomo (p. 41), while acknowledging the principle of *lectio difficilior potior*, states to have applied the 'majority rule' in most cases (indiscriminately, and naively). True, the 'significant' variants among the manuscripts are few, and the metrical organization of the *kakawin* makes it relatively easier to reconstruct a 'correct' text; yet, a more rigorous methodological approach reflecting the state of the art in philology would have been in order.

The translation of the 183 cantos of the *Sumanasāntaka* is conveniently, albeit somewhat artificially, divided into eleven episodes. It flows seamlessly and is reasonably close to the text, although it is—inevitably—not free from occasional blemishes. As it would be impossible to do full justice to it here, suffice it to list a couple of instances where I find myself in disagreement with the authors, if only with respect to minor details or nuances. In canto 1.18d, *anēmwa (śūnyatā)* would be better rendered as 'attain' (the Void) instead of 'discover'; in 15.10c, *sarwasiddhi* 'perfect ancestors' could be more literally translated as '[those possessing] all the supernatural powers': *siddhi* = *siddha* ('any inspired sage or seer', OJED 1756–8) only occurs in late Old Javanese texts. In line 17.3a, the clause *ning japasamādhi n dhāraṇa-dhyānapūrwa* 'of murmured prayers, of meditation and, most importantly, of concentration on and visualization of the deity', could be more correctly rendered as 'of murmured prayers and absorption, preceded by fixation and visualization [of the deity]'; *pūrwa* here denotes chronological precedence of *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna* over *samādhi*, which in Old Javanese texts is invariably understood to be the final stage of yoga. In 113.5b *agēñ-gōñan* is translated as 'competing (to see)', whereas OJED (518) glosses it (with reference to this line of the *Sumanasāntaka*) as 'absorbed in, entering fully into'. Further down, in line d, *kagōman* (OJED 513: 'taken by sudden fright or astonishment ("to fall in the grip of")') is left untranslated, apparently because the translators see an (to my mind, unwarranted) enjambement between lines c and d, and connect the final clause to *mogāwēdi wēkasan* ('in the end suddenly he became afraid') in line c. Line 113.8a is translated as 'all those who had been given vantage points on the edge of the performance space were extraordinary to see' (*sahana nika pinanggung tūt padw ābhinawa katon*). The translators in the commentary explain that they take *padu* to mean 'edge' (OJED 1229) and not 'goat' or 'sheep' (OJED 1230). However, since in stanza 6 a performer and his woman are described to enact a comic performance in which

they acted like mating goats (*wēḍus*), it is not unwarranted to take *padu* in its meaning of ‘goat’, and see the focus of the line on the performers rather than on the audience. My alternative translation would be: ‘All of those who were on the stage joined in acting like goats—what an amazing sight!’

Hunter’s masterful study (Part III) sets a new standard for interpretive (and comparative) studies of Old Javanese (and Sanskrit) literature. He persuasively argues that ‘the works of Kālidāsa had a wider impact on the poetic praxis of ancient Java that can be encompassed by the study of a single literary text, and should be understood in terms of a particular pedagogical practice rather than the occasional accessibility of particular manuscripts to “writers” practicing their craft in isolation’ (p. 533), and that Monaguṇa’s use of the *Raghuvamśa* as a model was ‘part of a larger context of literary and oral exchanges of a cosmopolitan character’ (p. 556). Hunter’s comparison between certain stanzas of the *Sumanasāntaka* and related portions of the main Sanskrit commentaries of the *Raghuvamśa* is enlightening, albeit provisional, and hints at new possibilities for fruitful comparative study; hopefully, the author will produce a more comprehensive survey in the future. Hunter analysis is, as usual, sophisticated, informed as it is by a wider scholarly discourse on the Sanskrit Cosmopolis and Cosmopolitan vernaculars—although not free from occasional, yet minor, problematic points.⁴ To his credit, and unlike most editors and translators of *kakawin* that preceded him, Hunter demonstrates a rare knowledge of the Śaiva religious background of the poem; this is especially the case in his analysis of the *paprasan* and *kraban kalasan* parts of the wedding ceremony, and especially the enigmatic cantos 118 and 130.⁵ Drawing from relevant

4 A case in point are Hunter’s considerations (p. 539, note 12) about the change of the name of the sage Mataṅga (in the *Raghuvamśa*) into Pataṅga (in the *Sumanasāntaka*). To Hunter, this shift is ‘somewhat mysterious’, and may result from a conflation of Sanskrit *mataṅga* ‘elephant’ and *pataṅga* ‘bird’; in fact, in nearly all varieties of Old Javanese and Balinese scripts the graphemes *p* and *m* are similar and can be easily confused, so this shift may, at least in part, reflect a mere scribal confusion. Furthermore: *sādhaka*, rendered as ‘priest-officiants’ on p. 577, would be better rendered as ‘persons performing religious practices (*sādhana*)’ (as per OJED, 1585); on p. 582, *Angguli Praveśikā* should be changed into *Anggulipraveśa* (no text bearing the former title appear in any of the catalogues of Old Javanese manuscripts known to me).

5 My only qualm is about the interpretation of the form *ajiyah* in 130.1c as having some similarities with aorist forms of the Sanskrit root *-ji* (p. 580). As Hunter correctly pointed out, the words *sah* to *te prathamā* proffered by the ‘woman of a Śaiva’ in 130.1d are the ‘singular, dual and plural forms of the masculine gender (*pumliṅga*) form of the 3rd person pronoun *sah*, ‘he’” (p. 580). Now, line c actually reads *aji yah sah*, which obviously mean ‘the

evidence in the *Sumanasāntaka*, Hunter expands on fascinating religious, cultural, and sociolinguistic issues that shaped East Javanese society from ca. 1000 to 1500AD, such as the tension between ‘refined’ (Sanskrit) and ‘rustic’ (vernacular) idioms, and the networks of courtly and rural/monastic centres.

The concluding two studies by Worsley, and in particular Part IV, are also cutting-edge. The former nicely complements that of Hunter in that it attempts to move beyond the categorization of particular elements in the poem as ‘Indian’ and ‘Javanese’, and the question as to whether Indian natural elements in the description of the countryside were ‘fictional’ or ‘imagined’, to ‘see what the *Sumanasāntaka* tells us about the understanding courtier-poets and their audiences had of the space of their lived environment’ (p. 603). His conclusion is that in the crossroads of ‘traffic of vernacular practices and ideas throughout South and Southeast Asia’ that was thirteenth-century Java, other distinctions than that between ‘Indian’ and ‘Javanese’ ‘enlivened debate and informed the mythic scheme of space and time’ (p. 607). Part V testifies to the fruitful and productive reception that the poem enjoyed in Bali, especially in the realm of the visual arts.

Regrettably, the book is replete with printing errors and especially mistakes in the spelling of Sanskrit words.⁶ It is unfortunate that in a philological work of this kind a minimum standard of accuracy could not be attained. On the other hand, the volume’s elegant typesetting, and especially its hard bind, are welcome new features of the first embodiment of the series Bibliotheca Indonesia published by Brill (which took over KITLV Press in 2012). Much less welcome is the book’s price, which is not as affordable as pre-2012 KITLV Press publications.

In spite of a few minor issues and formal blunders, this volume demonstrates an unusually high level of scholarship, and is likely to stand as the definitive work on the *Sumanasāntaka*. Hopefully, it will draw due attention not only from Javanists (and Indonesianists at large), but also Indologists, who will appreciate the poem—and the *kakawin* genre at large—as a fine specimen of Sanskrit-influenced, cosmopolitan vernacular poetry.

teaching/manual (*aji*) of [the Sanskrit relative pronoun] *yaḥ saḥ*’ (see Acri 2011:72, 74; my work is duly acknowledged by Hunter).

- 6 Just to list a few: *kātha* > *kathā* (p. xvii), *puṣpañjali* > *puṣpāñjali* (p. 20), *bhāṭara* > *bhaṭāra* (p. 21), *prakāṣa* > *prakāśa* (p. 541), *avelapa* > *avalepa* and *prīyadarśana* > *priyadarśana* (p. 542), *a-velam* > *a-velām* (p. 547), *Pūraṇas* > *Purāṇas* (p. 549), *brahmāṇa* > *brāhmaṇa* (p. 558, 577), *atimarga* > *atimārga* (p. 576), *bhasmangkura* > *bhasmāngkura* and *Swargarohanaparwa* > *Swargārohanaparwa* (p. 577), *iṣṭādewata* > *iṣṭadewatā* (p. 601), *Rāmāyāna* > *Rāmāyaṇa* (p. 605).

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