

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT GENRE IN OLD JAVANESE LITERATURE.¹

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ABSTRAK

Pada tahun 1983 dan 1988 ketika meninjau ulang puisi epos kakawin dan filologi Jawa, pernyataan Robson menarik perhatian pembaca akan pentingnya genre bagi sejarah sastra Jawa kuno. Dalam studinya tentang kakawin Sutasoma pada tahun 1992, dengan menggunakan konsep “horizon of expectations” (cakrawala sangkaan) Hans Jauss dengan bijaksana, Aoyama menawarkan penelaahan pertama tentang genre karya-karya sastra Jawa Kuno. Esai ini membahas istilah-istilah yang digunakan sendiri oleh mpu Monaguna dan mpu Prapañca, masing-masing adalah penulis kakawin epik *Sumanasāntaka* dari abad ke-13 dan *Deśawarṇana* dari abad ke-14, untuk merujuk pada ciri-ciri karya mereka sebagai genre. Mpu Monaguna menyebut puisi epiknya sebagai karya cerita (*kathā*) yang ditulis dalam bahasa *prakṛt*, yaitu Jawa Kuno, dan dituangkan dalam bentuk puisi *kakawin*, serta juga sebagai tindakan ritual yang dimaksudkan agar penyair dapat menyatu dengan dewa pujaannya, dan agar puisinya menjadi sarana untuk mentransformasikan dunia, khususnya menjamin kesejahteraan para pembaca, pendengar, penyalin, dan pemilik salinan dari karya puisinya. Sementara itu, Mpu Prapañca menggambarkan *Deśawarṇana*-nya dengan cara yang berbeda. Karya ini juga ditulis dalam bahasa Jawa Kuno dan dalam bentuk puisi *kakawin*. Ia menyebut karyanya baik sebagai karya cerita (*kathā*) maupun kronik (*śakakāla* atau *śakābda*) atau puisi pujian (*kastawan*), serta juga sebagai tindakan ritual yang dirancang untuk memungkinkan penulisnya mencapai keadaan ekstase (*alangö*) dan terpenuhi dengan kekuasaan dan kemahatahuan dari dewa pujaannya, untuk menjamin keberlanjutan kemakmuran kerajaan Majapahit dan keamanan pemerintahan rajanya, Rājasanagara. Esai ini mempertimbangkan berbagai kategori sastra tersebut satu per satu.

Kata kunci: *Genre/jenis sastra; Narasi; Kakawin epik; Kronik; Puisi pujian; Ritual*

ABSTRACT

Robson in 1983 and 1988 in his reconsideration of the poetics of *kakawin* epics and Javanese philology drew readers' attention to the importance of genre for the history of ancient Javanese literature. Aoyama in his study of the *kakawin Sutasoma* in 1992, making judicious use of Hans Jauss's concept of “horizon of expectation”, offered the first systematic discussion of the genre of Old Javanese literary works. The present essay offers a commentary on the terms which mpu Monaguna and mpu Prapañca, authors of the thirteenth century epic *kakawin Sumanasāntaka* and the fourteenth century *Deśawarṇana*, themselves, employ to refer to the generic characteristics of their poems. Mpu Monaguna referred to his epic poem as a narrative work (*kathā*), written in a *prakṛt*, Old Javanese, and rendered in the poetic form of a *kakawin* and finally as a ritual act intended to enable the poet to achieve apotheosis with his tutelary deity and his poem to be the means of transforming the world, in particular to ensure the wellbeing of the readers, listeners, copyists and those who possessed copies of his poetic work. Mpu Prapañca described his *Deśawarṇana* differently. Also written in Old Javanese and in the poetic form of a *kakawin*—he refers to his work variously as a narrative work (*kathā*), a chronicle (*śakakāla* or *śakābda*), a praise poem (*kastawan*) and also as a ritual act designed to enable the author in an ecstatic state of rapture (*alangö*), and filled with the power and omniscience of his tutelary deity, to ensure the continued prosperity of the realm of Majapahit and to secure the rule of his king Rājasanagara. The essay considers each of these literary categories.

Keywords: *Genre; Narrative; Epic kakawin; Chronicle; Praise poem; Ritual*

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A confrontation with the practical problems of editing texts will soon cool the ardour of the pedant. The test is whether a usable text can be produced for the reader to study within a reasonable length of time—if it takes forever, then there is something wrong. And our reader will be hoping for a text that leads him forward in knowledge of the literature, so there is no point in immortalizing the silly mistakes of a copyist working centuries later thereby clouding the excellence of the original creation.

Robson [1988, 31]

1. INTRODUCTION

The citation tells us something of the impulse behind what is without doubt Stuart Robson's principal contribution to our understanding of ancient Java's literary history, his edition, translation and commentary on a number of major ancient Javanese epic *kakawin* and *kidung* poems authored between the ninth and fifteenth centuries.² However, it is to two of his other important writings on literary history that I want now to turn: his 'Kakawin Reconsidered: toward a theory of Old Javanese poetics' of 1983 and his *Principles of Indonesian Philology* published in 1988. In the first of these, he prefaces his remarks about ancient Javanese *kakawin* with brief discussion of five steps towards an as yet unwritten history of Javanese literature. These included the need, on the basis of Zoetmulder's chronological framework of major 'belles-lettristic' works (1974, 24–36), of an understanding of genre. This he pointed out would allow us both to establish the influences of one writer on another and whether there existed schools or traditions among writers of Old Javanese works of literature (1983, 291–292). In 1988, he once again drew attention to the importance of genre, this time emphasising its significance in the process of editing and translating Indonesian literary works preserved in manuscripts (1988, 21; 23; 25; 29). On this occasion he ventured a definition of what he understood genre to be: 'a category of texts related to each other by the possession of characteristics of form, content or, both which in turn mark them off from others' (1988, 25).³

In the scholarly literature about ancient Javanese narrative works, we read about *kakawin* and *kidung*, *parwa*, *purāṇa* and *pakēm*, belles-lettres, epics and romances and recognize very quickly that, from the earliest beginnings of European scholarly interest in ancient Java's literature, the links these narrative works have with the Sanskrit epics, the *Mahābharata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and works of *kāvya*, have been a major determinant of the assumptions which underlie inquiries about genre.⁴ However, it was really not until 1992 and Aoyama's study of mpu Tantular's *Sutasoma*, in which he situated the work in the context of the culture and society of fourteenth century Java that we have the

² See Teeuw et al (1969), Robson (1971), Teeuw and Robson (1981), Robson (1995), Robson (2008), Robson (2015) and Robson (2016).

³ My own interest in genre dates back to my study of the *Babad Buleleng* (1972, v–vi). I argued then that there existed a genre of dynastic genealogies in the corpus of Balinese literature and suggested that an understanding of genre would provide a better understanding of an author's rhetorical purpose and reveal those aspects of his view of the world which were central and which were peripheral, and further, that defining genres within the total compass of a literary system might contribute to a better understanding of the various categories of knowledge within the total compass of knowledge, which a particular society had at least chosen to record in a literary form.

⁴ It is worth noting that Pigeaud (1967, I; 2–3; 14–16) in his catalogue of Javanese manuscript collections in The Netherlands did propose an elaborate generic categorization of all that was written in Javanese. His generic categories were based on the content of particular works: "Religion and Ethics", "History and Mythology", "Belles-Lettres" and "Science, Arts, Humanities, Law, Folk-lore, Customs, Miscellanea", each of which contained sub-genres. He distinguishes genre from style, that is verse works from works in prose or rhythmic prose. Zoetmulder on the other hand in his study of Old and Middle Javanese literature was, as he explained, focussed on belletristic works, works which, he explains, were the product of a "cult of beauty" and were produced as the avenue for the poet-priest to achieve apotheosis with his *iṣṭadewata*, momentarily or on a final journey to unity with the Absolute. He distinguishes two genres of this kind of work: *kakawin* and *kidung* (1974, 29; 35; 36; 184).

first systematic discussion of genre in ancient Javanese literature. Aoyama, following Vickers (1986), distinguished three indigenous genres of narrative literature: *parwa*, *kakawin*, and *kidung*. In his endeavour to understand the generic characteristics of historically distant narrative texts, authored, recited and appreciated in fourteenth century Java, Aoyama adapted the ideas of the German literary theorist and scholar of medieval European literature, Hans Jauss. Jauss's interest was focussed on historically remote works of epic, romance and novella in preindustrial medieval European society. Aware of the social and cultural differences between medieval Europe and fourteenth century Java, Aoyama made judicious use of Jauss's categories of analysis, in particular his concept of a 'horizon of expectation'. To suit the historical circumstances in which ancient Javanese narrative works were authored and recited, he adapted Jauss's component set of expectations to suit the Javanese situation. This set of expectations included 'Narration', which concerned the relationships between author, text and audience; 'Modus dicendi' or the forms of representation, which concerned the formal aspects of the text of a work; 'Represented Reality' or elements of the narrated world as they are represented in the story; and Modus Recipiendi or Social Reality', which was focussed on the social function of the narrative text (1992, 9–10).

Aoyama argued there were advantages in pursuing such a strategy. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, was Jauss's insistence that literary texts had to be situated historically if they were to be properly understood in terms of their 'intention and time' in the context of 'those works that the author explicitly or implicitly presupposed his contemporary audience' knew. Audiences of these works appreciated them in the context of their literary expectations and in the context of their wider experience of life, when the literary experience of a work's audiences, as Jauss puts it, 'enters into the horizon of expectations of [their] lived praxis, preforms [their] understanding of the world, and thereby also has an effect on [their] social behaviour.' This required working inductively gathering evidence from the existing contemporary texts rather than imposing preconceived Western categories of literature on culturally distant works (1992, 2). Further, Aoyama argued that Jauss's insistence on understanding texts holistically, in the interrelatedness of their different facets and involvement in a wider set of 'historically determined, delimited and described' generic relationships formed within a holistic literary system enabled us to understand both 'how different genres coexist and perform different functions within a period's literary system to which they connect the individual work' (Jauss 1982a, 106 quoted in Aoyama 1992, 4), and how changes in genre and their dominance, and ultimately in literary systems themselves are effected. This, Aoyama argued, was particularly important in the case of Javanese literature where, as Vickers had already pointed out in 1986, little attention had been paid to a literary system in which 'three indigenous narrative genres, *parwa*, *kakawin*, and *kidung*, coexisted from the pre-Majapahit period onwards' (1992, 4).⁵

It was on this basis that Aoyama identified the epic qualities of *kakawin*, which distinguished them from both *parwa* and *kidung* and able to argue that the epic *kakawin Sutasoma* 'was produced in a transitional period during which we witness the decline in dominance of *kakawin* and a move to centre stage of *kidung* literature. The text of the *Sutasoma* itself, he argued, bore characteristics of a transitional text, as did the *Deśawarnana* written in the same period, and just as importantly, perhaps more importantly, Aoyama's sustained comparison of *kakawin*, *kidung* and *parwa* in the context of his discussion of literary theory (1992, 9–75) opened a way—at least in a preliminary fashion—for a

⁵ Since Aoyama completed his study of the *Sutasoma*, there has been more recent commentary on the poetics of *kakawin* composition. See Rubinstein (2000), who discusses at the hand of Balinese writings the ritual of poetic literacy in Bali and works which explain the craft of composition. Fletcher (2002) in her study of Danghyang Nirartha's *Añang Nirartha* identifies a narrative explanation of the yogic practice of poetic composition involving the manipulation of the sacred syllables (*daśākṣara*). See also Hunter's important contributions (2001; 2007; 2009; 2007; 2011; 2014a; 2014b; 2016).

systematic historical study of the genres of Javanese literature in the period between the ninth and fifteenth centuries and beyond.

In the present paper I do not intend to pursue all the issues which Aoyama's study raises, only to make reference to aspects of his work in passing when I need to. The questions I want to ask now are: How did ancient Javanese authors themselves and their audiences talk about their literature? Did they identify a genre of narrative literature? Indeed, did they have an understanding of 'genre' at all, and when they attached categories to literary works, was there slippage between the categories they named? Were their categories 'pragmatic' ones, lacking the kind of rigorous closure which marks Western philosophical practice? Whose criteria should we be employing to 'define' what genre is, Jauss's set of criteria which he describes as a set of explicitly or implicitly understood expectations about what different genres are, or the criteria which ancient Javanese authors themselves and their audiences understood genres to be? Are these two different sets of criteria or the same? The commentary which follows concerns just two *kakawin* and my hope is that the remarks, which follow about the terms which Mpu Monaguna and Mpu Prapañca employed in the late thirteenth century *Sumanasāntaka*⁶ and the fourteenth century *Deśawarnana*,⁷ to refer to the generic characteristics of their respective works might at least be a beginning to answering these questions.

2. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The *Sumanasāntaka*.

Following Aoyama's criteria, the *Sumanasāntaka* is an epic *kakawin*. In Canto 182.3 Mpu Monaguna refers to his poem as a story (*kathā*) from the Book of Raghu (*ring aji Raghu*), which is written in a *prakrit*, Old Javanese, and in the style of a *kakawin*. Monaguna here has identified a category of narrative (*kathā*) and linked it with the process of 'translating' a work written in Sanskrit into a *prakrit*, Old Javanese, and rendering it into the (poetic) form of a *kakawin*.⁸ In doing so he has chosen to set the life stories he tells of Prince Aja and Princess Indumatī in the distant and vast story time of the epic story of Rāma in the *tretāyuga*—a story time so vast, as Aoyama reminds us, that it cannot be completed in a single narration. The *Sumanasāntaka* therefore takes its place alongside other narrative works set in the same story time as the tale of Rāma himself, works such as the OJ *kakawin Rāmāyana* and the visual narrations of the story found at Prambanan and Panataran. In it, Mpu Monaguna tells the tale of Rāma's ancestral grandfather and mother, and so, like the authors of the *Uttarakaṇḍa*⁹ and the *kakawin Arjunawijaya*,¹⁰ reveals an interest in events from the epic world that Rāma inhabited but which precede the life story of Rāma itself. The *Uttarakaṇḍa* tells the story of Rāwana, Rāma's chief opponent, and contains prophecies, made at earlier moments in epic time than the life story of Rāma. This same work also returns to the later story of Rāma when its author recounts the story of Sītā, who is accused of infidelity, her exile and the birth of her two sons.¹¹ It seems too that mpu Monaguna and his audiences did not think of his epic poem as fictional—belonging in the realm of the fantastic, the unreal, of possibility or the utopic. Rather he thought of it as a repository of a divine power capable of transforming the contemporary world in which the poet and his audience lived in the image of the exemplary heroic world which his epic poem described. Poets were, to use Berg's expression, 'priests of literary magic' and their poems the means by which they worked their

⁶ Worsley et al. (2013 and 2014).

⁷ A number of editions, translations and commentaries of this work have been published, Brandes (1902), Kern and Krom (1919), Poerbatjaraka (1924), Pigeaud (1960–63), Berg (1969) and Robson (1995).

⁸ Robson suggests that might good reason to understand *kakawin* to refer to a stanza of four lines or a style of versification and not as designating a literary genre (1983, 300).

⁹ Zoetmulder (2000).

¹⁰ Supomo (1977).

¹¹ Aoyama (1992, 33–34).

magic on the world.¹² The authoring of a narrative poem was not just telling a tale. It was a ritual act, a meditation by the poet designed to achieve not just an apotheosis with the poet's *iṣṭadewata* but as a means of transforming the world. For Monagaṇa, it was in particular the wellbeing of the readers, listeners, copyists and those who simply possessed a copy of his poem that the magic workings of his ritual are focussed (Sum 183. 2).

The *Sumanasāntaka* begins and ends the life stories of Prince Aja and Princess Indumatī at the moments when the prince and princess are incarnated from the world of the gods and ancestral spirits at the time of their births and of their return there as deified ancestors. However, much of mpu Monagaṇa's story (*kathā*) is taken up with their journeying in the distant and vast time of the *tretāyuga*. However, Prince Aja's journey across a social world of palace (*kaḍatwan*) and countryside (*thāni-dusun*), and a wilderness of seashore (*pasir*) and of forested mountains (*wukir*)—arranged in a chronological sequence—describes a familiar Javanese world. It is this familiarity for poet and audience that signals the possibility of an allegorical reading of the journeying it logs: the work charts a crisis in the life of the prince. Prince Aja, the son of King Raghu of Ayodhyā, leaves the protection of his family home and sets out on a journey in the course of which his poetic and physical ardour as lover and his mettle as warrior are put to the test. He returns home an adult male fit to realize his destiny as ruler of Ayodhyā. We should note here that in the case of the *kakawin Sumanasāntaka*, Mpu Monagaṇa, early in his story, is interested less in Prince Aja and more in Princess Indumatī, the daughter of the king and queen of Widarbha. Indumatī is a princess destined to become queen, and the poet's attention to her displaces the male-focused narrative we have described. Princess Indumatī is separated from her parents—by her father's death and mother's subsequent ritual suicide—and she too undergoes a trial in the form of a *swayambara*, a ceremony in which she is given the awesome and unprecedented responsibility of choosing her own husband from amongst a number of royal suitors before the assembled court of Widarbha. While the poet's interest in these events diverts his audience's attention from the tale of the prince-who-would-be-king, it does not entirely remove it from view. Something of the integrity of this myth remains and the poem's audience is still able to ride and walk with the prince and his escort from the palace in Ayodhyā across the countryside and through the wilderness of seashore and forested mountains to Widarbha and back home again across these same landscapes. When he arrives home in Ayodhyā, tried and tested in war and suitably married, he is ready to assume his destiny as king of Ayodhyā in his father's stead. Clearly the story charts a life crisis in the lives of Prince Aja and Princess Indumatī.¹³ The journeys through the wildernesses of seashore and forested mountains which this epic work recounts, if we accept what the *Jinārthaprakṛti* has to tell us, are intended to be read metaphorically. According to this work, described by its editors as the *A Buddhist Monk's ABC*, the body is to be likened to the earth, to the sea and the forested mountains, and the physical dangers and impediments of both equated to the imperfections of men. Journeying through the wilderness of seashore and forested mountains is, in the understanding of this work, the embodied experience of mastering one's imperfections to achieve a new existential and social status.¹⁴

Identifying the categories of place in which the narrative action of epic *kakawin* works is set, describing their characteristics and ascertaining the narrative and conceptual relationship between them has proved to be a relatively straightforward business. Ancient Javanese imagined a world

¹² See Worsley (2012a) and Worsley et al. (2013, 650–652).

¹³ See Worsley (2012a), (2012b), and Worsley et al. (2013, 600–652).

¹⁴ For the text and translation of the *Jinārthaprakṛti* see Schoterman and Teeuw (1985, 218–220; 225–227). Fletcher (1990) identifies in the story of Wargasari's wanderings and love affairs recounted in the *kidung Wargasari* a patterning which corresponds to the *Jinārthaprakṛti*'s explanation of the metaphor of body and landscape. It is also identifiable in the fifteenth or sixteenth century *kakawin Añang Nirartha* authored by the legendary Balinese pedanda Danghyang Nirartha (Fletcher 2002).

marked by distinctions between a social world consisting of palace (*kaḍatwan*) and countryside (*thāni-ḍusun*) and a wilderness of seashore and forested mountains (*pasir-wukir*). The social world was characterized by the presence of an effective royal authority, the wilderness by its absence. A distinction was also drawn between this world inhabited by human beings and a world where gods, ancestral spirits and other divine beings dwelt (*kadewatan*). Each of these different spaces was considered to possess its own special characteristics—the beings who typically inhabited each one, the architectural structures and topographical features native to each, the activities and emotions which prevailed, and this list can also be extended to include sounds, colours and perfumes which were characteristic of each space.¹⁵ While each of these spaces has been ascribed characteristics of its own, they were considered to be interconnected and the protagonists in the stories these epic works tell pass freely between them. The poem's description of the world is thus holistic and describes the spaces frequented by human beings and gods as an integrated ensemble. While the prince's journey embraces the world of human existence, his life story and that of his queen-to-be embrace the cosmos, the world of human life and that of the gods and ancestral spirits.

The *Deśawarṇana*

Mpu Prapañca's mid-fourteenth century description of the districts of Majapahit, *Deśawarṇana* (*Nāgarakṛtāgama*), has been long recognized for its exceptional character. It is unlike any other extant *kakawin*.¹⁶ Zoetmulder in his commentary on the work in *Kalangwan* provides a useful summary of the ways in which past scholars have characterized the work.¹⁷ Kern and Krom describe it as a panegyric of the contemporary ruler Rājasanagara, as does Robson, writing much later.¹⁸ Pigeaud calls it a court chronicle, and Berg, a praise poem and *śakakāla*, and 'a kakawin of configuration', the central work in a constellation of other works, including amongst others the *Smaradahana*, *Bhāratayudha* and the *Sumanasāntaka*, and intended as a priestly statement describing what he terms 'the officially prevailing picture of the past'.¹⁹ Zoetmulder concedes that there is good reason to acknowledge that the work was a panegyric and that it did chronicle 'events that took place at the court of Majapahit during the years 1339–1363.' However, he claimed that neither description was entirely appropriate.

Zoetmulder's immediate concern at the time he wrote was to ask whether Mpu Prapañca's contemporaries would have judged the work to be 'literary', one suited to be included in the aesthetic category of *kalangwan*. He thought not. In support of his opinion he points out that Mpu Prapañca seems quite deliberately not to have availed himself of the opportunity he had of the long journey he made to Lamajang in 1359 in the entourage of King Rājasanagara to provide his audience with an elaborate description of the landscapes through which he passed as was customary in epic *kakawin* works such as the *Sumanasāntaka* which we have discussed above. He cites an incident which Prapañca recounts along their way when the king stopped to rest at Patuñjungan on Java's southern coast and sat to gaze in wonder at a lake where the lotuses were in full bloom. Rather than avail

¹⁵ For a description of these spaces see Worsley (2012a), (2012b), and Worsley et al. (2013, 600–652).

¹⁶ I Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan is of the opinion that journey narratives and chronogram lists were well-known in medieval Java, and it would be surprising if works more similar to the *Deśawarṇana* were not written. A much more recent work that he thinks is worth comparing to the *Deśawarṇana* is the *Bhāṣa Pralambang Wawatēkan*, from mid-19th c. Klungkung, that has a chronogram list format and describes important court events such as the funerary rites for Dewa Agung Putra I (Personal communication 21st September 2020).

¹⁷ Zoetmulder (1974, 353–355) and (1985, 443–446).

¹⁸ Robson (1995, 8–9) bases his conclusion on three grounds. Firstly, that Mpu Prapañca's stated aim was that he wanted to worship his Lord 'who is both Buddha and Śiwa'; secondly, to do so by 'composing an account of the King (*kathê nareśwara*)' who was King Rājasanagara of Majapahit and an incarnation of Lord Nātha, and whom he, thirdly, describes as an all-conquering ruler of his realm'.

¹⁹ See also Berg 1965, 105–109, Berg 1969, 1A: 27–28; 38; 61; 124–130; 303–322 and compare the English summary of *Maya's Hemelvaart in het Javaanse Buddhism* in Berg (1969 1 B, 692–699).

himself of the opportunity to depict the scene, Prapañca, says Zoetmulder, ‘contents himself with just two lines’ to describe what he saw, informing his readers that he had no intention of speaking any further about ‘the charms of the lake.’²⁰ The absence of similes, a favourite figure of speech in *kakawin*, like the absence of descriptions of the landscape, Zoetmulder also thought was a deliberate decision taken on the part of the author. Certainly, we find no evidence in the work of the metaphorical reading in mpu Prapañca’s descriptions of landscapes. We might conclude therefore, on the basis of these observations, that Mpu Prapañca had no literary (*langö*) pretensions for his poem and agree with Zoetmulder, that mpu Prapañca’s contemporary fellow courtiers would have agreed.

***Deśawarṇana*: a narrative work (*kathā*).**

This was also a view with which mpu Mpu Prapañca would have concurred. He, in fact, refers to a number of literary categories in his *Deśawarṇana*, firstly to what appear to be two prose styles, *wawacan*, and *parwa* (-*sagara*), and then to a number of different kinds of metrical works: *kakawin*, *kidung*, *bhāṣa*, *lambang*, *śloka* and finally praise poetry *kastawan* and to chronogrammatic works, (*śakābda/śakakāla*). These categories, all potentially the names of genres attached to literary works, appear to have been well known in the court of Majapahit, and some at least were no doubt familiar more generally in the courts of Java between the ninth to the fifteenth centuries.²¹

In his commentary on the circumstances in which he authored the *Deśawarṇana*, Mpu Prapañca himself tells us that in the end he had abandoned more ambitious forms of composition to return to the genres of *lambang* and *śakakāla*.²² However, he did not abandon entirely the idea of writing a narrative poem. Remarkably, the model, which he adopted to organize his narrative, is similar to the one we have identified in Mpu Monaguna’s account of the journeying of Prince Aja and Princess Indumatī in the *Sumanasāntaka*, and is one which is also to be found in the OJ *Rāmāyaṇa*, and in Mpu Tantular’s *Arjunawijaya* and *Sutasoma*.

At the very beginning of his poem, mpu Prapañca announces it as a work of narrative: he wants to write a narrative about his ruler, Rājasanāgara (*ahyun umikēta kathē prabhu*), he says. As we have seen, the narratives recounted by the poets of the great works of epic *kakawin* were set in a distant epic story time. Mpu Prapañca’s narrative, in contrast, is one in which the poet himself is a participant in the story he tells and is an eyewitness to the events recounted, and so there is good reason to consider the work to be a factual record of places visited, people met, things said and done, and when. It is precisely this objectively factual character of Mpu Prapañca’s work which has caused Zoetmulder to argue that the poet had no intention to produce a work of poetic quality suited to the aesthetic category of *kalangwan*.

The principal protagonists of mpu Prapañca’s narrative are the historic king Rājasanagara and the powerful kinsmen and kinswomen and high officials who surrounded him. Their story, like that of Prince Aja and Princess Indumatī, commences in the capital, firstly with a record of the kin relationships of the ruler and the royal family, then a description of the palace and its immediate surrounds, and finally a view of the extensive reach of Majapahit’s power across Java and over the Archipelago. Mpu Prapañca’s narrative also ends in the capital as does the story of Prince Aja and Princess Indumatī. There mpu Prapañca is witness to the magnificence of a number of royal occasions, the final obsequies (*śraddhā*) of the Queen Mother, the Rājapatnī in 1362, the death of Majapahit’s

²⁰ DW22.2a: *ndatan wicaritan kalangwan ikanang ranu masurawayan lawan tasik*. See Sidomulyo (2007, 53–54), who notes that Veth (1869 I, 257) identifies a bay named Dampar on the southern coast of Java south of Lumajang on longitude 113 15’ close to the marsh on the estuary of the river Kali Krai which may have been the lake to which Mpu Prapañca refers to here.

²¹ Compare Zoetmulder (1974, 143–151) and (1985, 169–179).

²² DW 94.3.

great prime minister, Gajah Mada, in 1364, the great festivals in the capital in the month of Phalgunā and the sporting events, theatrical performances and feasting at Bubāt in the following month of Cetra.

The great bulk of the poem, however, some forty-five of its ninety-eight cantos, is taken up with stories of royal tours of the realm and with one journey in particular undertaken by the court in 1359 to Lamajang. Mpu Prapañca was in the ruler's entourage and an eyewitness to the events that he describes. Mpu Prapañca's narrative about the journeys of his ruler from palace, across landscapes of countryside, seashore and forested mountain and back again to the palace provides him, as he himself says, not with the opportunity to write lyrically about landscapes but to compile a detailed description of the districts of Majapahit. Many of the places are just names, places passed through on a journey or mentioned in lists. The most notable of the royal progresses he describes, the royal progress of 1359 to Lamajang, passed through some 210 named localities, scattered as Geertz notes, 'over about ten thousand to fifteen thousand square miles'.²³ They pass through villages, overnight at Gajah Mada's estate, inspect and worship at hermitages and sanctuaries—in particular the forest hermitage of Sāgara and a number of royal ancestral shrines: the site of the Rājapatnī's enshrinement, a Buddhist royal ancestral shrine at Kalayu, the Śaiwa-Buddhist temple complex at Kagēnēngan where the founder of the dynasty, Ranggah Rājasa, was enshrined,²⁴ Singhasari where King Kertanagara was enshrined in a Śaiwa-Buddhist statue, the temple in Kiḍal where King Anuṣānātha was enshrined and Jajaghu where King Wiṣṇuwardhana was enshrined in a Buddhist statue. The king gave audiences to groups of his subjects, villagers, priests and local notables and prominent chieftains. He received gifts and reciprocated and feasted with his subjects. The royal party visited the seaside on Java's southern coast (*sagaratīra*) where they amused themselves and received guests bearing gifts and hunted and took their leisure in a forest by the name of Nandanawana before returning to the capital.²⁵ On several occasions the poet himself leaves the main party to go off on his own to visit family and friends and interestingly on one occasion to inquire about the royal family's genealogy.²⁶ The record of this journey also includes lists of royal, Śaiwa and Buddhist sanctuaries that enjoyed freehold status together with those of the Rṣi, along with a range of other institutions.

Mpu Prapañca's description of King Rājasanagara's journeying is of an entirely different character than Mpu Monagūṇa's account the journey of Prince Aja and Princess Indumatī. Certainly, as Zoetmulder has pointed out, Mpu Prapañca has not taken advantage of the opportunities he had to include descriptions of the wilderness (*pasir-wukir*), a key element of epic kakawin in his account of the journey he undertook with his king Rājasanagara. Furthermore, if mpu Monagūṇa's description of

²³ Geertz (1983, 132).

²⁴ Mpu Prapañca tells us that the Buddhist temple in the complex was in ruins and that Rājasanagara planned to restore it. Compare Mpu Tantular's description of King Arjunasahasrabahu's visit to a similar temple complex, a *dharma lēpas* which contained Buddhist and Śaiwa temples, in his *Arjunawijaya* (26.1–31.5) and which Supomo (1977 I, 64) suggests was based on the model of the dharma of Kagēnēngan.

²⁵ According to Pigeaud the text (50.1.c) here reads Nandakawana. According to OJED (1173) Nandakawana is the name of Kṛṣṇa's sword, a bull and an elephant. Kern, who is followed by Pigeaud and Robson, treats this reading as a mistake in the manuscript for Nandanawana (See Robson 1995, 124). The Nandanawana is the forest in Indra's heaven where King Aja and Queen Indumatī live out their ancestral existences after their deaths and return to the realm of God Indra. The forest in this passage, Cantos 50–55.1 is referred to by several words: *paburwan*, *alas*, *wanantara* and *giriwana*. The account which Mpu Prapañca gives of the hunt is intriguing. He describes vividly the violence of the hunt and its gruesome consequences. It raises in the poet's mind the Buddhist precept of *ahimsa* 'non-violence.' He finds himself then in the invidious position of having to reconcile the behaviour of his ruler, whose favours he seeks, with this precept. His way out is the story of the animal conference led by the lion as king of the animals. The Lion decides that the proper course of action is to surrender their lives to the king as the incarnation of Lord of the Mountains (*giripati*). In this way 'the sins of those who are killed by his hand are taken away' (*awas hilanga pāpaning pējaha denirāmatyana*).

²⁶ Canto 38.3–49.8, Geertz (1983, 129–134) and in particular Sidomulyo's valuable detailed identification of the route and the locations visited (2007, 29–109).

Prince Aja's and Princess Indumatī's journeying is a narrativization of their passage through a life crisis, mpu Prapañca's account of Rājasanagara's journeys appear to have had quite a different purpose. The royal progress was, as Geertz describes it, a major social institution and its symbolism 'exemplary and mimetic': it 'conveyed the structure of the cosmos—mirrored in the organization of the court—to the countryside'.²⁷ King Rājasanagara, as he journeyed about the realm, activated and reactivated ties of patronage with his subjects. It provided his village subjects with the opportunity to witness the magnificence of the royal presence and for the notables in the villages and regions through which he passed and the priests and monks who inhabited the various religious institutions he visited to meet with their ruler in audiences in which gifts were exchanged and food shared. His visitations to royal temple complexes and the celebration of his royal ancestors enshrined in them also activated extensive and powerful ritual networks across the kingdom which, incidentally, were also brought into play during the *śrāddha* rites and enshrinement of the Rājapatnī in the Prajñāparimitāpurī at Palungan, at Bhayalangö and in the many other locations across the realm where *weśapurīs* and *pakuwwans* were established to worship her every month of Bhadra.²⁸

The *Deśawarṇana*, a *Śakalāla/Śakābda*

Mpu Monaguṇa set his life story of Prince Aja and Princess Indumatī in the form of a chronological sequence of events in the distant and vast story time of the *trētāyuga* when Rāma lived. Mpu Prapañca, on the other hand, has set the story of his king, Rājasanagara, in the *Kaliyuga*. Interestingly the author dates the beginning of the *kaliyuga* to 3102 B.C.E (= 3179 Before the Śaka era), the *yuga* following the *dwāpārayuga* in which the lives of the Pandawa heroes are set.²⁹ Another important point of contrast with mpu Monaguṇa's epic poem and of others of this same genre, is the way in which mpu Prapañca has attached chronograms to events in the chronological sequence of his narrative. The dates cover the period between 1182 and 1365 C.E. and the events to which the author himself was witness are dated between the years 1359 and 1365 C.E. There are thirty-nine such chronograms, not including the one which indicates the date of the completion of the *Deśawarṇana* in 1365 C.E (=1287 Śaka) and that of a second colophon (1740 C.E. = 1662 Saka). These chronograms are attached to major events: the birth, consecration and deaths of kings, their major military campaigns and victories, each of the royal progresses undertaken by king Rājasanagara. Special note is taken of the date of this king's birth in 1334 C.E. and that of the death of Majapahit's great prime minister, Gajah Mada in 1364 C. E., the date of his appointment as Mangkubhūmi in 1331 C. E., and his expedition to Bali and military victories.

The *Deśawarṇana*, a *Kastawan* or praise poem

Mpu Prapañca tells us that at the very heart of the work is something more: a description of the all-conquering kingly qualities of the ruler Rājasanagara to whom the poem is dedicated. '[W]e have come to the conclusion of my description of the world-conquering kingship of my king over the realm (*ngkā hīngan rakawi n pamarṇana kadigjayanira narendra ring prajā* 94.2b)', he says. Here he repeats something he has already made clear at the very beginning of the poem, where he informs his audience that the story he tells about the king (*kathe nareśwara*) is intended as praise to be offered at the feet of his monarch (*doning umastuti padanira* 1.3a.).

²⁷ See Geertz (1983,129–134) for a vivid account of this royal progress.

²⁸ See DW 63.2–69.3, and 69.1–3 in particular.

²⁹ See DW 43. Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan (personal communication 21st September 2020) informed me that the date 3102 B.C.E (= 3179 Before the Śaka era) is found in the *Sūryasiddhanta* (Burgess 1860,17–18) which may have been the work on which Old Javanese calendrical consultations were based.

It is clear that he intended his poem to be a praise poem for his king and in this he was in the company of many other poets at court of greater ability and reputation than he.³⁰ Indeed there appears to have been quite a flurry of writing poems of this kind and strong competition among the poets who composed them. Of particular interest is Mpu Prapañca's revelation of the presence of foreigners amongst the numerous Javanese poets whom he mentions as authors of praise poems. He mentions two in particular, two scholars (*paṇḍita*) from India (*Jambudwīpa*), the Buddhist monk (*bhikṣu*) Śrī Buddhāditya from Kāñcīpurī situated in the Tamil area of south-eastern India and a Śaiva priest by the name of Śrī Mutali who appears also to have hailed from the same region.³¹ The former is said to have composed a panegyric (*bhogāwalī*) containing numerous *śloka* in praise of the king and the latter a song of praise (*stuti*) in faultless *śloka*—both works of praise which, as Robson suggests, appear to have been written in Sanskrit.³²

Pollock describes praise poems as a 'major part of the Sanskrit culture industry' in India from the Gupta period onwards (2013, 21–22). Many thousands of such works are to be found all over India and further afield. Political *praśasti* in praise of rulers, inscribed on stone slab or pillars, and copper plates, occupied an important place in Pollock's thinking about the development of the Sanskrit oecumene and the vernacular formations that followed.³³ However, it appears that there were many who merited praise poems other than rulers. They included ascetics, merchant guilds, poets and there were also autobiographical varieties which describe the lineage of authors of shastric works and their patrons. The writers of these works, it seems, were not the poets who authored the great court poems and plays, and the genre itself was ignored in the important Sanskrit works of literary theory despite the fact that their shared 'textual properties [...] indicate a stable literary form.' It was only in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries when Vidyādhara, court poet to the ruler of Utkala/Kalinga in north eastern India, composed his *Ekāvalī* in 1307 C.E., that the genre of praise poems became a matter of literary theoretical interest and remained so, both in Sanskrit and vernacular languages until the seventeenth century.

There was, well before mid-fourteenth century Majapahit, an established practice of writing praise poems in honour of the ruling king. It is important to note that the vocabulary which Mpu Prapañca employs to refer to praise poetry is consistent with that found in India and might well be evidence that the genre was well established in Majapahit at the time of his writing the *Deśawarṇana*

³⁰ See Robson (1995, 8–9).

³¹ Robson (1995, 148) notes that the presence of these two priests here in the DW as evidence of contact between the Majapahit capital and south India where the two priests came from. Buddhism was in decline before the 12th century, a period when monasteries like Nalanda were abandoned. Sarao (2002; 2012, 66–67; 164–165; 237–238) attributes the decline of Buddhism to its urban character, its concentration in monastic institutions dependent on the patronage of royal, commercial and bureaucratic elites which were impacted by the decline of urbanization, the political and commercial and at times violent military expansion of Islam. Schalk (2002; 2013, 32–37) argues that, like the Pallava rulers, Cola rulers (850–1300 C.E.) did not promote Buddhism in their courts. However, they did allow the establishment of a large Buddhist institution at Nākapattinam, a major centre of trade with Southeast Asia in the tenth and eleventh centuries. In this period there is evidence of a Śaiva polemic against Buddhism and of Buddhist accommodation with Śaiva theology and devotionalism. After the fourteenth century, Buddhism of various schools continued to exist in small pockets in southern India. A poetical inscription at the Korean Juniper Rock Temple in memory of an Indian priest, Dhyānabhadra, for example, indicates that Buddhism, Mahāyāna and Hīnāyana, was still present in Kāñcīpuram and in the Chola kingdom on the Coromandel coast in the early fourteenth century. In the neighbourhood of Nākapattinam some 350 Buddhist bronze images dated to the period between the ninth and sixteenth centuries have been found and other Buddhist images from the area around Kāñcīpuram, the part of India where the Buddhist monk Śrī Buddhāditya who lived in the Majapahit capital came from, have been dated to the period between the seventh to the fourteenth centuries. See also Verardi (2011). I wish to thank Professor Jun Takashima of the ILCAA at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies who generously shared with me a number of valuable references to the history of Buddhism in southern India.

³² Robson 1995, 148.

³³ Pollock 2006, 115–161.

in 1365. Pollock provides a list of synonyms that designated this genre of praise poems in India. They were referred to as *praśasti*, *praśamsā*, *stuti*, *stava*, *cāṭu* and *viruda*. Mpu Prapañca consistently refers to the genre of praise poems with the words *stuti* and *stawa* or verbal or nominal derivatives of these two words.³⁴ He does not refer to the genre with the word *praśasti* remarkably enough, a word he uses quite consistently to refer to epigraphical documents and this includes the occurrence of this word in Canto 93.2c. I understand the final two lines of Canto 93.2 to mean, ‘In the main, however, praise of the ruler (*stuti nṛpati*) is to be found in epigraphs (*praśasti*) which are the responsibility (*tēkap*) of the Sudharmopapati. He is expert in songs (*gita*). The songs he composes in praise of deities (*stotra*) are widely known in the palace.’³⁵

The new ‘theoretical’ interest in praise poetry in Tamil Nadu in south-eastern India to the south of Orissa, and the presence of two men in religious orders from Tamil Nadu, writing praise poems in Sanskrit, both of whom figure so prominently in Mpu Prapañca’s description of the flurry of writing of praise poems in the court of Majapahit in 1365 are evidence that they and others like them may have been the conduit through which an entirely new interest or a revival of interest in praise poems came into being in Majapahit.

The *Deśawarṇana* as a ritual act: Magical realism

Kakawin poets were, to use Berg’s expression, ‘priests of literary magic’ whose purpose was to influence their contemporary world—at least those aspects of their contemporary world designated by the allegorical references woven into the fabric of their poetic works. This practice may have had its origins in the past in ancient India. Daniel Ingalls, to whom Pollock refers at the end of his article about praise poems in India,³⁶ draws attention to passages from the *R̥gveda*, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, which recount how each morning a king ‘would be awakened by the panegyric of his bards.’³⁷ Ingalls describes the practice as a ritual act, one with a ‘religious-magical purpose.’ The recitation of praise poems was calculated to ensure that a king grew in material might and stature: ‘To say a thing in ritual is to bring it to pass.’

It seems then that there is more to be said about the generic character of Mpu Prapañca’s poem. He tells us that he placed his praise poem and the petition (*prārthana*) it contained at the feet of Lord Girinātha, his tutelary deity. His precise words are:

Canto 94

1. [...]

anḡing stutya ri jōng bhaṭāra girinātha pakēnanika mogha sanmatan,

tan len prārthana haywaning bhuwana mukya ri pagēha narendra ring prajā.

³⁴ Cantos 1.3a; 93.1a,1d, 2c; 94.1a,1b, 4b.

³⁵ I have taken the reference to be to an official, an *upapati*, knowledgeable in the law (*dharma*) and who had as part of his duties the writing of epigraphical records and their documentation and verification. See Robson (1995; 148) for comment on other interpretations. Compare Cantos 35.2, 35.3, 62.1, 73.2, 80.2, 81.1. In all but the last case, *praśasti* clearly refers to some kind of epigraphic record. I have taken the word to mean the same in 93.2. I take the reference to *gita* in the following line which Robson cites as justification of his translation of *praśasti* as ‘eulogies’ to refer to this official’s composition of *stotra* which Pollock points out refers not to praise poems but to ‘a poetic prayer directed to a deity.’ Compare OJED: 1824 where the *Brahmaṇḍapurāṇa* 76.31 and 77.2 is cited. Compare also Berg (1969 1A; 27–28; 61) who, like Robson, argues that *praśasti* here means praise poem (loftdicht).

³⁶ Pollock (2013, 31) and Ingalls (1965, 291).

³⁷ It seems the custom of awakening a king in the morning might have been known in ancient Java (Willem van der Molen, personal communication 23rd September 2020). See the Old Javanese *Uttarakanda* (Zoetmulder 2006, 58–59). Here at dawn, Rāma’s bards (*sūta māghada waitālika*) sang songs of praise (*stutimangala*) which are said to have been composed in *gāndhāra* mode in order to call on King Rāma to awaken (*akon atanghya ri bhaṭāra Rāma*).

The only purpose my poem might happily serve is as a praise poem to be laid at the feet of the Lord Girinātha. I can only hope that it will be graciously received.

It is simply a petition (*prārthana*) that the world should prosper and most importantly that the king remain securely on his throne.³⁸

In these two lines the poet draws a clear link between praise poem and the enhancement of the king's capacity to rule long and successfully. The transaction is to be mediated by the poet's tutelary deity, Girinātha, Lord of the Mountains, who, as Supomo has argued, was the 'national' god of Majapahit and incarnate in the person of the ruling monarch, Rājasanagara.³⁹ Mpu Prapañca was writing not only to ingratiate himself with his king nor just to win fame for himself at court. He wrote his poem, he says, as 'a petition (*prārthana*) that the world should prosper (*haywaning bhuwana*), and most importantly of all that his king should remain securely on his throne (*pagēha narendra ring praja*).'⁴⁰

Mpu Prapañca had reason to think that his petition for the intervention of his *iṣṭadewata*, present in the person of his ruling monarch, was called for. We have seen that he thought of the age in which he lived and in which his story of Majapahit is set was the *kaliyuga*, a time of moral decline and social chaos, and perhaps had good reason to do so. His poem, authored a year after the death of Majapahit's great minister Gajah Mada, is both a celebration of Rājasanagara's rule and a petition that his king, safe on his throne, would continue to rule and ensure the peace and prosperity of his realm. Aoyama (1998:64–66), speaking of the period between the composition of Mpu Tantular's two epic poems, the *Arjunawijaya* and *Sutasoma*, notes that the period spanned the interval between the passing of Majapahit's great chief minister, Gajah Mada, and the death of the ruling monarch, Rājasanagara, in

³⁸ The text of Canto 94.1 c–d is based on Pigeaud (1960–1963) and the translation on Robson (1995) but worded differently.

³⁹ 51 It is quite clear that Mpu Prapañca's king Rājasanagara was the living presence of the Lord of the Mountains whom the poet has petitioned to ensure the prosperity and stability of the realm. In Canto 1.5a we read the remarkable comment that at the moment of his birth, 'the Lord Girinātha became manifest in the form of the most excellent king, Rājasanagara, (*bhaṭara girinātha sakala matemah prabhūttama*) and two verses earlier, the poet tells us that 'the illustrious King of Wilwatikta, King Rājasanagara [...] is plainly an incarnation of the Lord' (*sang śrī nātha ri wilwatikta rājasanagara [...] sāksāt janma bhaṭāra nātha sira*). Earlier in Canto 1.1a Mpu Prapañca pays homage to his *iṣṭadewata* referring to him as *nātha*, 'Lord' and a line further on in Canto 1.1c he again refers to him with the word *nātha*, this time in the compound *parwatanātha*, 'King of the Mountains'.

⁴⁰ I note here references which Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan (personal communication 21st September 2020) pointed out to Canto 49.5b–6 and 67.7. In the first case, mpu Prapañca comments on what Ācārya Ratnāngśa, the Lord of Mungah, whom he visited to learn about the king Rājasanagara's ancestors, told him:

What the old man said was true and his speech was deeply moving—
The excellence of the King in the world was evident,
For he is of divine descent, as well as the incarnation of a divinity.

People who hear the tale of the kings,
If they are content, their devotion increases;
Clearly their evil deeds cease to dominate them,
And suffering, disease and so forth are clearly annihilated.
[Robson's translation 1995].

In the second, commenting on the effect of the obsequies for the Rājapatnī, the poet notes the happiness which these rites would bestow upon the dead queen mother and the hope it brings of her bestowing prosperity on Rājasanagara's reign and his capacity to win victory of his enemies.

1389 C.E.⁴¹ and that of his powerful uncle Wijayarājasa, Prince of Wēngkēr, in 1388 C.E. This was a period in which the great expansion of Majapahit's power and influence under the guidance of Gajah Mada was only a memory and one in which political tensions between the two major branches of the royal family grew as the court anticipated the deaths of Rājasanagara and his uncle Wijayarājasa, Prince of Wēngkēr. Evidence of the rivalry between these two branches of the family is manifest in the records of separate embassies from both to the imperial Chinese court, and Wijayarājasa's practice of issuing decrees in his own name after 1366. Finally, of course, open hostilities between the two lineages broke out in 1406. The period was also one when increasing numbers of Muslims may have been present in the capital and included highly placed people.⁴² The second half of the fourteenth century also witnessed a faltering in international trade between the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and China.⁴³ It was also, as Aoyama (1998:70–79) has reminded us, a time when literary tastes were changing and epic *kakawin* were giving ground to the composition of a new kind of epic in indigenous *kidung* metres and with a Javanese subject matter. This is the period, which Mpu Tantular in his *Sutasoma* alludes to as the *kaliyuga*, a time of moral decline and social chaos and one that required another Buddha king—of the kind that Kṛtanagara had once been (DW 41.4–44.1).

What purpose did Mpu Prapañca imagine his praise poem would serve at this moment in the history of the Majapahit realm? Maria Kekki, writing about fourteenth to fifteenth Lanna inscriptions from northern Thailand, argues that they were not just chancellery documents intended by their authors and understood by their audiences to proclaim the provisions of royal donations and other administrative and political decisions. They were also 'objects of power'. These inscriptions, Kekki argues, were intended to be *saccakiriyā*, 'truth acts', a form of *satyavacana* 'statement of truth,' which possessed an innate power which, when 'combined with an intention or a petition (*pathannā* or *prārthana* DW 93.1d), [had] the power to make that wish come true'. There is always a statement and a wish in the inscriptions from northern Thailand, the statement naming the commissioner of the inscription and noting their merit, while 'the wish specific[d] what was hoped to be gained through the meritorious actions [...]'—most frequently, prosperity and happiness in this life, wisdom and omniscience, the sharing of merit, the attainment of Nibbāna, that the teachings of Buddha would be long-lasting and, most particularly, that the meritorious deeds explained in the inscription would endure.⁴⁴

We have evidence of the same pattern of thought in Mpu Prapañca's statement of purpose in the *Deśawarnana*. As we have mentioned, mpu Prapañca's wish (*prārthana*) for the well-being of the world and the continued rule of the king is made in a statement of truth which names the poet as its commissioner. The miraculous effect of the 'truth act', which this poem was intended to be, was achieved by the merit of the person making it, Mpu Prapañca, who, as he authored his work, did so in a state of ecstatic rapture (*alangö*), filled with the power and omniscience of his tutelary godhead, Girinātha, but also by the merit and power of his king Rājasanagara, who was the very incarnation of

⁴¹ There is some question about the date of Rājasanagara's death. Wayan Jarrah Sastra (personal communication 21st September 2020) suggests that the date of 1399 C.E.) is just as likely.

⁴² Ricklefs (1993, 4–5) and Damais (1968, 570–577). However, this point is disputed. Sidomulyo (2012) questions whether the Troloyo stones support the idea that there were highly placed Muslims living in Majapahit's capital.

⁴³ Reid (1993 II, 10–16).

⁴⁴ See Maria Kekki (2010, 2014) and compare Edgerton 1972 II, 554, s.v. *satyavacas*, *satyavacana*, (= Pali *sacca-vacana*, more often *saccakiriyā*) 'solemn statement of truth as a means of magic control of events' and Buswell and Lopez 2014, 789 s.v. *satyavacana*, 'a solemn declaration or oath in which the truth inherent in its words generates magical or protective powers'. See Edgerton 1972 II, 393 s.v. *prārthana*, 'an earnest wish for enlightenment'. Compare OJED 1715 s.v. *satyawacana*, *satyawada*, *satyawadā*, *satyawkya*. However, the words do not appear to have the same meaning in Old Javanese as in Lanna inscriptions.

the god Girinātha, and whose meritorious deeds Mpu Prapañca records in his story. The linguistic materials which the poet manipulated when authoring his work was a *caṇḍi bhasa*, a ‘temple of words’-a *yantra* or *maṇḍala* to put Sanskrit labels to it - built of letters (*akṣara*), each one saturated with the divine power of a god or goddess. Mpu Prapañca was, to use Berg’s expression, a ‘priest of literary magic’ whose purpose was to influence his contemporary world - at least those aspects of his contemporary world designated by the references to the contemporary world which the poet and his audience inhabited and were woven into the fabric of their poetry.⁴⁵

3. CONCLUSIONS

Literary works are not one thing or the other. They possess a number of characteristics which they share more or less with the works of other authors past or contemporaneous. The *Deśawarṇana* is not just a court chronicle or a praise poem, not a praise poem or a *kakawin* of configuration as Berg would have us believe. Mpu Prapañca tells us that his *Deśawarṇana* has a number of generic characteristics and to his mind is a combination of them. It is first of all a *kakawin*, a work composed in Indian metres and is written in the same *prakrit* other *kakawin* are. These are of course characteristics which this poem shares with Monagaṇa’s *Sumanasāntaka*. If we follow Hooyka as and Supomo, that *kakawin* were modelled on Sanskrit *kāvya*, we will not be surprised to discover that the *Deśawarṇana* shares other generic features with epic *kakawin* and Sanskrit *kāvya*.⁴⁶ Both Mpu Monagaṇa and Mpu Prapañca call their *kakawin* works of narrative (*kathā*). However, the heroes and deeds Mpu Prapañca sings of were not, like those of the *Sumanasāntaka* and other epic works, set in the distant and vast story time of the *dwāpārayuga* and the *tretāyuga* and allegorically referenced to the world in which author and audience lived. Mpu Prapañca’s story is set in the *Kaliyuga* and is an eyewitness account of contemporaneous and dated events celebrating the author’s king, Rājasanagara, the reigning ruler of Majapahit. As such, the *Deśawarṇana* is a *śakābda* or *śakakāla*, and its factual and dated description of contemporary affairs appears to have been one element in its generic makeup which precluded it from being a belletristic work (*kalangwan*) like the great epic *kakawin*. The poem’s preoccupation with the contemporary Javanese world of fourteenth century of Majapahit is a preoccupation which, as Aoyama has argued, it shared with *kidung* poems in which poets sang of Javanese heroes and their deeds. Lydia Kieven’s discussion of the archaeological evidence for the currency of these new narratives, Margaret Fletcher’s study of the *Kidung Wargasari*, Sidomulyo’s commentary on the *Kidung Pañji Margasmara*, Vickers’ account of the *Malat* in Bali, and of course, Stuart Robson’s continuing contributions to scholarship on works of *kidung*—in particular his edition, translation and commentary of the *Kidung Pañji Margasmara*, all enlighten us about the nature and history of these Java-centred interest which these works of *kidung* poetry manifest.⁴⁷

The *Deśawarṇana* does share with the *Sumanasāntaka* and other epic *kakawin* two more important characteristics. Mpu Prapañca tells his audience that his work is a praise poem (*kastawan*) intended both to honour the author’s king, Rājasanagara, and to celebrate this ruler’s deeds as a world-conquering monarch. So too Mpu Monagaṇa acknowledges his gratitude for the support of his royal patron and makes it quite clear that his praise in the form of his epic work is an offering of holy water laid at his royal patron’s feet. The *Deśawarṇana*, its author Mpu Prapañca tells us, is also a work of

⁴⁵ See the various essays in Fox and Hornbacher (2016) for a discussion of Balinese scriptural and textual practices and understandings and Fletcher (2002) for the thinking of one major Balinese poet-priest, Dang Hyang Nirartha, concerning the cosmology which informed the yogic practice of poetic composition and its companion mystic manipulation of syllables (*akṣara*) in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

⁴⁶ Hooykaas (1958, 9–14) and Supomo (1977 I, 42–46).

⁴⁷ See Kieven (2013), Robson (1971), (1979), 1981), (1996), (2000), Sidomulyo (2014) and Fletcher (1990) for a discussion of the archaeological and literary evidence of this new style of narrative, and Vickers (1986) and (2005) for discussion of the Balinese *Malat*.

magical realism whose purpose was to work its magic on the kingdom over which Rājasanagara ruled as it faced an uncertain future following the death of its great minister Gajah Mada and people looked to a future when the passing of their king and that of his powerful uncle, the Prince of Wēngkēr would happen. The magic which Mpu Monaguṇa hopes his work will achieve is perhaps more modest: his intention is to ensure the wellbeing of the readers, listeners, copyists and those who were simply in possession of copies of his epic *kakawin*, who would of course have included his ruler.

ABBREVIATIONS

Awj *Arjunawijaya*
BA *Bomāntaka*
BY *Bhāratayuddha*
DW *Deśawarṇana*
GK *Ghaṭotkacāśraya*
HW *Hariwanga*
OJED *Old Javanese English Dictionary*
SD *Smaradahana*
Sum *Sumanasāntaka*
Sut *Sutasoma*

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