

December 2022

Animals in Javanese manuscript illustrations

Dick van der Meij
DREAMSEA, dickvandermeij2012@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/wacana>



Part of the [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Meij, Dick van der (2022) "Animals in Javanese manuscript illustrations," *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia*: Vol. 23: No. 1, Article 5.

DOI: 10.17510/wacana.v23i1.1125

Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/wacana/vol23/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty of Humanities at UI Scholars Hub. It has been accepted for inclusion in Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia by an authorized editor of UI Scholars Hub.

Animals in Javanese manuscript illustrations

DICK VAN DER MEIJ

ABSTRACT

Most Javanese manuscript illustrations of narrative poems and (pseudo)-historical chronicles (*babad*) depict only one part of the natural world: animals. Animals are portrayed in relation to the characters in the text they illustrate. Some illustrated Javanese manuscripts are discussed below in relation to the way in which they illustrate the natural world: these are the fictive narrative poems *Serat Selarasa*, *Serat Panji Jayakusuma*, *Serat Asmarasupi*, *Serat Jayalengkara Wulang*, and *Serat Damar Wulan*, and the poetic (pseudo)-historical chronicle *Babad Perang Demak*. It appears from the illustrations in the manuscripts discussed that in the narrative poems the *wayang* style is preferred and they depict animals differently from the *babad* for which the *wayang*-style is not used and whose illustrations tend to be more “realistic”. The focus in the narrative poems discussed here is on serpents, crocodiles, and elephants, and in the *babad* on all the animals featured.¹

KEYWORDS

Javanese manuscripts; fictive narrative poems; *babad*; illustrations; animals; *wayang*-style.

¹ I am happy to thank Lydia Kieven and Annabel Teh Gallop for their remarks on earlier versions of this article. I also thank Leiden University Libraries, the British Library, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, and the Indonesian National Library for their permission to include material from their collections in this article. With the exception of copyright material, all photographs were taken by the author.

DICK VAN DER MEIJ studied Indonesian Languages and Cultures in Leiden University and defended his PhD entitled: *Puspakrema; A Javanese romance from Lombok* in Leiden (2002). At present he is Liaison Officer and Academic Advisor of the program DREAMSEA, Digital Repository of Endangered and Affected Manuscripts in Southeast Asia. He is the author of *Indonesian manuscripts from the islands of Java, Madura, Bali, and Lombok* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). His main interest is manuscripts and texts from Java, Bali, and Lombok. Dick van der Meij may be contacted at: dickvandermeij2012@gmail.com.

INTRODUCTION

Javanese illustrations are still very much under-researched, which is a pity as they are often very attractive and enjoyable and offer interesting insights into Javanese aesthetics and ways of pictorial expression. There is still much that we do not know about these illustrations: for instance, why they look the way they do and who drew them and why. We even have little insight into the number of manuscripts or which texts were illustrated. The reasons for this are the limited number of scholars able and willing to study these manuscripts and lack of sufficient numbers of easily accessible illustrated manuscripts. The blame for this might perhaps be traced to two reasons: the collection and digitization priorities of libraries and museums – in the past often too text-oriented and disinterested in other aspects of manuscripts – and because manuscripts, including illustrated ones, have found their way on to the international art market. Nevertheless, many illustrated manuscripts can still be explored, and this article will look at how certain aspects of the natural world are depicted in various illustrated manuscripts from Java, the majority of which date back to the nineteenth century. The emphasis in this article will be on animals as part of the natural world.

The natural world as portrayed in Javanese manuscript illustrations – or indeed any other manuscript tradition in Indonesia – has never been studied in-depth. This having been said, Annabel Teh Gallop included a chapter entitled “Natural history drawings” in her book *Early views of Indonesia* of 1995, in which she included illustrations from manuscripts of a variety of Indonesian cultures and some drawn by foreigners. The chapter offers a starting-point in the study of this fascinating aspect of Indonesian manuscript illustrations and illuminations. Another look at the natural world in Javanese illustrations can be found in my *Indonesian manuscripts from the Islands of Java, Madura, Bali, and Lombok* of 2017, in which a number of illustrations have been provided to give some idea what they look like.

Illustrated manuscripts can be found in Jakarta in the Indonesian National Library, the Museum Sonobudoyo in Yogyakarta, the palaces of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, the Susuhunan of Surakarta, and of the princes of the Pakualaman and Mangkunegaran. Others are held in Leiden University Libraries, the British Library, and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. These are the most important repositories, but individual manuscripts can also be found in public and private collections elsewhere. A definitive inventory of illustrated manuscripts has never been compiled and catalogues of Javanese manuscripts do not always state whether a manuscript is illustrated or not. Because of the lack of digitized manuscripts, it is also not easy to gain access to these manuscript collections from afar. Luckily, many manuscripts from some collections have been digitized and this is especially true of the collections of the British Library and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. Constrained by this problem, a limited number of collections will be explored in this article and, where possible, will be stated how these manuscripts can be accessed on the Internet.

Illustrations in Javanese manuscripts come in a variety of styles and qualities. Some are meticulously executed depicting great detail, whereas others can be said to be comparatively awkward and the work of less talented artists. Examples of crude and unsophisticated illustrated manuscripts are a manuscript of the *Jaransari Jaranpurnama*² in the Indonesian National Library,³ a manuscript of the *Serat Damar Wulan* from Banyuwangi,⁴ and the *Serat Damar Wulan* in Leiden University Libraries shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. *Serat Damar Wulan*.⁵ Cod.Or. 5817, Leiden University Libraries. (Collection of Leiden University Libraries).

An English synopsis of the Damar Wulan story was published in Solo by Lim Yoe Djin.⁶ A Dutch synopsis of the story and descriptions of the manuscripts of the story kept in Leiden can be found in A.C. Vreede's 1892 catalogue of the Javanese manuscripts in Leiden University Libraries⁷ and in Juynboll's

² A brief Dutch synopsis of the story can be found in H.H. Juynboll (1911: 80-82).

³ KBG 248 in the Indonesian National Library. For an illustration see Ann Kumar and John H. McGlynn (eds) (1996: 180).

⁴ This manuscript has been digitized by DREAMSEA (number DS 0038 00001) and can be accessed digitally on the DREAMSEA database: <https://www.hmmcloud.org/dreamsea/manuscripts.php?country=Indonesia&tags=&city=Banyuwangi+%28Jawa+Timur%29&author=&library=&language=&projnum=&writingSupport=&title=&script=&searchType=1>. These illustrations have been discussed by Wiwin Indarti from Banyuwangi and her findings can be consulted on DREAMSEA's blog. See <https://blog.dreamsea.co/author/wiwinindarti/>.

⁵ See for a description: Pigeaud (1968: 345).

⁶ Lim Yoe Djin (n.d.).

⁷ A.C. Vreede (1892: 174-183).

supplement to this catalogue of 1911.⁸ All three manuscripts are illustrated in *wayang*-style (see below for more) but rather primitively and they might have been the work of youngsters as one manuscript of the *Serat Asmarasupi* discussed further on will show. The bulk of illustrated Javanese manuscripts are of poetic fictive narrative texts. There are not many different texts which were illustrated and there was probably a good reason certain texts were illustrated and others not and why certain manuscripts of a specific text were illustrated and not others. For instance, we find beautifully illustrated manuscripts of Panji texts but most manuscripts which contain Panji stories are not illustrated at all.⁹ The same holds true, for instance, for manuscripts of the *Serat Asmarasupi*,¹⁰ *Serat Selarasa*,¹¹ *Serat Angling Darma*,¹² *Serat Dewakusuma Kembar*,¹³ and *Serat Damar Wulan*.¹⁴ Some of them are illustrated but most manuscripts of these texts are devoid of any pictures. We know of these manuscripts as they are part of the major collections in the world. In other places, we unexpectedly come across illustrated manuscripts which are not part of the major collections, such as an illustrated manuscript of the *Serat Jaran Sari Jaran Purnama* from Indramayu¹⁵ and, especially, the *Serat Jatiswara* also from Indramayu which is, as far as I know, the only instance of an illustrated manuscript of this text.¹⁶ The number of depictions of the natural world in these illustrated manuscripts varies and some do not contain pictures of the natural world at all.

A specific characteristic of illustrated manuscripts of fictive narrative poems is that they use the so-called *wayang*-style, in which the depiction of

⁸ Juynboll (1911: 1-5).

⁹ For instance, manuscript *Panji Jayakusuma* Berlin Ms. or. quart. 2112 (Pigeaud 1975: Plate 1; Titik Pudjiastuti and Thoralf Hanstein 2016: 315-317) and Schoemann II 5 which was probably part of a lending library (Pudjiastuti and Hanstein 2016: 500-503). Another example of this text is the illustrated manuscript KBG 139 in the Indonesian National Library (Kumar and McGlynn 1996: 182-183; T.E. Behrend 1998: 199; 336). See also the *Serat Dewakusuma*, Schoemann II 4 (Pudjiastuti and Hanstein 2016: 497-499) and the *Serat Panji Smarabangun* in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester (Ricklefs and Voorhoeve 1977: 75; Annabel Teh Gallop and Bernard Arps 1991: 90).

¹⁰ For instance, Berlin Ms. or. oct. 4033 (called *Serat Semarasupi* rather than *Serat Asmarasupi*), and KBG 543 in the Indonesian National Library in Jakarta (Pigeaud 1975: Plate 5; Kumar and McGlynn 1996: 182; Van der Meij 2017a: 61).

¹¹ For instance, manuscript MSS Jav. 28 in the British Library digitally accessible at: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=mss_jav_28. See also Gallop and Arps (1991: 88-89); Gallop (2014).

¹² For instance, a beautiful manuscript dating to circa 1845, KBG 737 in the Indonesian National Library (Kumar and McGlynn 1996: 181; Van der Meij 2017b: 1; 59).

¹³ KBG 19 in the Indonesian National Library (Kumar and McGlynn 1996: 180; Behrend 1998: 171, 326).

¹⁴ For instance, the extremely interesting manuscript MSS Jav. 89 in the British Library and a manuscript made around 1900 in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Schm. II (Pigeaud 1975: Plate 11).

¹⁵ Collection of the late Ki Tarka Sutarahaja 03/KNI/TS/CL/2015 (Tommy Christomy and Nurhata 2016: 27-29).

¹⁶ Collection of the late Ki Tarka Sutarahaja 05/KNI/TS/CL/2015 (Christomy and Nurhata 2016: 6, 36-38).

many fictional characters is reminiscent of the form of the leather puppets of the Javanese shadow-play and the often-encountered lack of background and props may be attributed to the set-up of *wayang* performances, as remarked by Behrend in 1998.¹⁷ Many manuscripts use the *wayang*-style combined with the depiction of characters in a more “natural” or “realistic” and definitely non-*wayang* style with varying levels of success. At present, any statement on developments over time are hazardous because of the lack of studies about these illustrations and the lack of easily accessible material on the Internet. All this means that one must be careful with making definitive statements. Despite what has been said above, there are manuscripts which do look different. For instance, one manuscript of the *Serat Panji Jayakusuma* in the Indonesian National Library indeed shows *wayang*-like characters but in elaborate and detailed settings, as can be seen illustrated in *Illuminations*.¹⁸ Another manuscript of the same text preserved in the British Library¹⁹ is also illustrated in a much more lively fashion with backgrounds and depictions of the natural world, as is the *Serat Damar Wulan* MSS Jav. 89 in the British Library which is extraordinarily interesting in this regard and deserves a careful study in its own right.²⁰

BABAD

Manuscripts of other texts which contain illustrations, sometimes also of the natural world, are *babad*, historical and (pseudo)-historical chronicles often written in poetic form but also in prose. The illustrations in these manuscripts were drawn to reflect reality more often than is the case with illustrated fiction. A preliminary conclusion is that *babad* illustrations are not drawn in *wayang*-style but in a more naturalistic, realistic way. What the illustrations in these manuscripts share with fictional manuscripts is a predominant lack of perspective and scant use of depictions of the surroundings in which these scenes might have been set. This is evident from just a few examples like the manuscript of the *Babad Blambangan* in the Indonesian National Library (KBG 63) and the exceptionally finely executed illustrations to the *Babad Dipanegara* in the collection of Leiden University Libraries (D Or. 13).²¹ These illustrations are usually character-focused as indeed the people who play a role in *babad* are the reason they were written to begin with. Also, many scenes which are illustrated concern discussions between characters during official visits and deliberations, in which few or no other elements disturb the overall impression

¹⁷ Kumar and McGlynn (1996: 181).

¹⁸ KBG 119, Kumar and McGlynn (1996: 182).

¹⁹ MSS Jav. 68, made in 1805. See Gallop (1995: 59 and 93) for illustrations.

²⁰ MSS Jav. 89. See Gallop (1995: 58 and especially 91) for illustrations of the natural world. See also Gallop (2013). This manuscript is accessible on the internet at: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=mss_jav_89.

²¹ Examples of these illustrations can be seen in the following publications. *Babad Blambangan*, KBG 63 in the Indonesian National Library (Kumar and McGlynn 1996: 183) and the exceptionally finely executed illustrations in the *Babad Dipanegara*, D Or. 13 in Leiden University Libraries (Pigeaud 1968: 824; Van der Meij 2017b: 63-65).

the picture wants to convey. Indeed, in the case of *babad*, most manuscripts are not illustrated at all. In this contribution, I shall use one instance of an illustrated poetic *babad*, the *Babad Perang Demak* which is part of the collection of Leiden University Libraries (Cod.Or. 23.742). It was made in a much less realistic style than the *Babad Blambangan* and *Babad Dipanegara* we have seen above.

OTHER MANUSCRIPT ADORNMENTS WITH ANIMALS: WADANA RENGGAN, PEPADAN, AND PAWUKON

Illustrations are included in manuscripts not only to depict scenes from the texts they contain, but also to enliven or beautify manuscripts in other ways. Manuscripts from collections in high and royal society circles in Java might include *wadana renggan*, elaborately illuminated facing opening and/or end pages or introductory pages to new topics. For a long time, these *wadana* were assumed to be mere adornments until Sri Ratna Saktimulya convinced her readers that there are explicit relationships between the illumination and the contents of the text in the case of manuscripts from the Widyapustaka Library in the Pakualaman Palace in Yogyakarta in Central Java.²² These illuminative adornments might contain illustrations of animals, flowers, and other floral designs. Two examples are in the manuscript entitled *Langen Wibawa* that contains the *lagon* (songs) used in dances performed in the palace of the Pakualaman.²³ The first one concerns the snakes in the *wadana renggan* called *Mahindra Jathaning Teksaka Resmi* of the male *Bedhaya Durma Jaler* dance (in the manuscript on pp. 150-151)²⁴ where the word *Teksaka* refers to the famous serpent Takṣaka in the epic *Mahābhārata*. The entire epic was sung to King Janamejaya because he failed to kill the serpent Takṣaka who had killed Arjuna's grandson Parkesit during the *sarpayajña* as related in the *Āstikacarita*.²⁵ The second example is the crocodiles (on pp. 192-193) in the *wadana renggan* named *Patrasula Gawat Gatining Priya* that adorn the *Banda Baya*, where the word *baya* means 'crocodile'.²⁶

In manuscripts of poetic narratives and other texts, cantos are divided either by simple but sometimes elaborate canto markers to indicate that a canto is ending and a new one commencing. These *pepadan* can be beautifully adorned with flowers, birds, and other elements of the natural world and these can indicate the verse metre of the canto to come. For instance, the name of the verse metre, *dhangdhanggula*, contains the word *dhangdhang* which is a crow and, indeed, when one or more of these birds is included in a canto marker this can indicate that *dhangdhanggula* is to follow.²⁷ Of course, this is

²² See Sri Ratna Saktimulya (2016).

²³ Manuscript L1 20. Saktimulya (2005: 247-249).

²⁴ Illustrated in Saktimulya (2010: 118-119). Digitally accessible at: https://www.persee.fr/doc/AsPDF/arch_0044-8613_2010_num_79_1_4163.pdf (accessed on 30-8-2021).

²⁵ For more on this see Van der Meij (1997: 361-372).

²⁶ Illustrated in Saktimulya (2010: 122-123, 2016: 398-399).

²⁷ For examples see Gallop (1995: 87), Kumar and McGlynn (1996: 197), and Van der Meij (2017b: 252-253).

not always the case and singers of the texts are wise to remain cautious so as not to begin singing the new canto in the wrong melody. For instance, one manuscript of a *Babad Cina* contains many canto markers with flowers and birds but the birds do not herald the arrival of the verse metre *dhangdhanggula*.²⁸ Other canto markers contain animals without any reference to the verse metre such as the picture of the lovely canto marker included in *Illuminations* in a manuscript from the north coast of Java which contains a frog and a snake to introduce the poetic metre *sinom* (Kumar and McGlynn 1996: 191). Almanacs or *pawukon* also contain illustrations of the natural world, especially of animals like tigers, birds, wild boar, deer, buffaloes, insects, and others and examples are to be found in many manuscripts.²⁹

Exceptionally beautiful depiction of animals is found in the various versions of the *Sestra Ageng Adidarma* (*Adidumastra*, *Adi Darmasastra*) from the Pakualaman Palace in Yogyakarta where the finest manuscript is kept, and “copies” of which are in Leiden University Libraries (see Figure 2).³⁰



Figure 2. *Aṣṭabrata*, *Adidumastra*.³¹ Cod.Or. 6388, pp. 84-85, Leiden University Libraries. (Collection of Leiden University Libraries).

²⁸ See Van der Meij (2017b: 260-261) for examples.

²⁹ On *Pawukon* see Van der Meij (2019).

³⁰ D Or. 189 dated AD 1841, Cod.Or. 6388 dated AD 1900 (Pigeaud 1968: 830-831, 365). The manuscript in the Pakualaman Palace is dated AD 1841 (Saktimulya 2005: 108, 2013).

³¹ Pigeaud (1968: 365).

It portrays animals naturalistically. Finally, we should not forget the mixtures between elements from the natural and the supernatural world leading to the creation of mythological beasts which also lend themselves to depiction in manuscripts in much the same way as the natural world itself. Examples are, of course, the gods Ganesha and Narasingha from the Hindu pantheon but also elephant-fish creatures (*gajahmina*), birds or fish with human heads and others like the mythical crowned *naga* and *nagadina* serpents which are part and parcel of Javanese iconographic pictorial style in architecture and manuscripts. They are also found in stunning variations in canto markers³² and in *wadana renggan*. Alas, they will have to wait for treatment on another occasion.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ILLUSTRATIONS AND MANUSCRIPT PRODUCTION

There seems to have been a relationship between the production of illustrated manuscripts and the reason for which these manuscripts were made. This is especially the case among manuscripts from the palaces of Central Java which are often beautifully illustrated and illuminated simply to please the rulers and other palace dwellers and, more prosaically, because neither time nor money was an issue. One example is a particularly beautifully executed manuscript, the sumptuously illustrated *Serat Bratayudha* in the Widya Budaya Collection of the Kraton Yogyakarta which was made in Yogyakarta in 1902-1903,³³ and the finely illustrated *Dewa Ruci*, part of the royal collection in The Hague, which was made in 1904.³⁴ Other manuscripts which tend to be beautified are those kept in lending libraries, as is also the case with the manuscript of the *Babad Perang Demak* used in this article written in 1886-1887. On its end cover it says that borrowing this manuscript costs 10 cent. The public was probably more interested in borrowing manuscripts which looked attractive and were illustrated rather than other manuscripts. Probably the public had its own expectations and people who wished to borrow narrative poems wanted them to have *wayang* illustrations but others, who wanted *babad*, might have expected a more natural style.

ANIMALS

Illustrations in Javanese narrative manuscripts are predominantly concerned with depicting the heroes of the stories and the people with whom they interact. Often the drawings resemble scenes from the *wayang* theatre and, possibly because of this, there are no backgrounds in the illustrations just as there are also no backdrops in *wayang* performances. Scenes often portrayed are audiences in the palaces, discussions between characters, envoys visiting kings or higher dignitaries, or the travels to or from these venues. They appear in total isolation as no background is provided. Animals do feature in *wayang* performances and

³² Such as in the *Serat Jaya Lengkara*, Add MS 12310 in the British Library (Van der Meij 2021). The blog is digitally available at: <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2021/04/an-enigmatic-javanese-manuscript-in-the-british-library-s%C4%95rat-jaya-l%C4%95ngkara-add-12310.html>.

³³ See the illustrations in Kumar and McGlynn (1996: 30, 185).

³⁴ See Van der Meij (2017b).

it is highly likely that for this reason the natural world as depicted in Javanese illustrated manuscripts is mostly limited to pictures of animals. Other aspects of the natural world like flowers, trees, scenery, mountains, and such are much rarer in manuscripts illustrations. Moreover, one of the most salient features of illustrations with animals in fictional texts and *babad* is that these animals are depicted in relation to the human characters in the story, sometimes in dramatic ways. They are either the domestic animals kept by the characters in the story, for instance, mounts such as horses and elephants, or wild creatures which had to be defeated, often serpents, wild bulls, and crocodiles. The number of different animals portrayed in manuscripts is fairly limited because of the restricted roles these animals play in the stories. So, we often see animals like horses, elephants, crocodiles, and snakes because they feature prominently as adversaries in the stories and, although other animals like fish, deer, bulls, and tigers are sometimes also depicted, this is comparatively rare. That the number of animals is limited might also be because we find illustrations of the same or similar texts and therefore, they include the same animals. Artists were probably also inspired by each other's work, leading to the same scenes being illustrated in different manuscripts at different times by different artists. Probably the expectations of the reading public also played a role in which illustrations were drawn and what kind of animals were depicted.

We see that the depiction of animals is often standard and, in some cases, manuscript illustrations were indeed taken over from one manuscript to the next. This leads to fascinating questions as to manuscript ownership, manuscript consultation, borrowing, lending, copying, and many more topics which must be excluded from the present discussion. It also leads to questions about whether manuscript illustrations in the same manuscripts were the work of one individual or not or whether they, like the text, were copied. For instance, Figures 3 and 4 show pictures of manuscripts of the same text, *Serat Asmarasupi*.³⁵ The first is part of the collection of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin³⁶ and the second is kept in the collection of the Indonesian National Library in Jakarta.³⁷ A Dutch synopsis of the contents of the story and detailed descriptions of the manuscripts can be found in Vreede's catalogue³⁸ and in Juynboll's supplement to this catalogue.³⁹ The fight between the story's hero, Asmarasupi, and the serpent is portrayed in exactly the same way in both manuscripts but the setting – if we can speak of a setting – in which the scene takes place is not. The first picture has two trees and the second only one and the trees in both pictures differ. The manuscript in Berlin was made in AD 1884 and that in Jakarta only nine years later in 1893. I believe that in both manuscripts, Asmarasupi and the serpent were drawn by the same individual but the settings in which they were placed were the

³⁵ The manuscript can be consulted digitally at: http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/receive/SBBMSBook_islamhs_00020452.

³⁶ On this manuscript see Pudjiastuti and Hanstein (2016: 245-247).

³⁷ The manuscript can be consulted digitally at: <https://khastara.perpusnas.go.id/landing/detail/97766>.

³⁸ Vreede (1892: 189-193).

³⁹ Juynboll (1911: 79-80).

work of someone else. Other scenes in these manuscripts also look virtually the same and a careful comparison between these manuscripts might show that the *wayang* characters and the animals were indeed drawn by the same artist.



Figure 3. *Serat Semarasupi* (= *Asmarasupi*).⁴⁰ Berlin Ms. or. oct. 4033, p. 57, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).



Figure 4. *Serat Asmarasupi*. KGB 543, p. 55, Indonesian National Library. (Courtesy of Indonesian National Library).

⁴⁰ For a description see Pudjiastuti and Hanstein (2016: 245-247).

The depiction of the way the serpents attack is fairly similar in different manuscripts of different texts made in different times and by various individuals, as can be seen in the following examples. In all cases, the serpent winds itself around its prey – albeit not always in exactly the same way – and bites its victim in an attempt to kill it. The first, Figure 5, is from a manuscript of the *Serat Asmarasupi* written in *pegon* (Arabic script adapted to the requirements of the Javanese language) in the collection of the University of Indonesia.



Figure 5. *Serat Asmarasupi*. CS 4, ff. 17v and 18r, University of Indonesia Library. (Courtesy of University of Indonesia Library).

It was written by the teenager Wiriyadireja in 1912 and illustrated by a 'naughty boy' (*bocah mencul*).⁴¹ In this manuscript, the illustration of the scene is repeated and, in both cases, the serpent has its victim securely ensnared in its embrace. Why the attack has been depicted twice is unclear and both captions say: *ula bulet* on the right and *smarasupi* on the left. The depiction of the serpent and its victim in Figure 6 is from yet another text, the *Serat Panji Jayakusuma* in the collection of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin in Germany.⁴² Although a different text again, the depiction of the attack is as vivid as in the other manuscripts.

⁴¹ On this manuscript see Behrend and Pudjiastuti (1997: 333-334).

⁴² On this manuscript see Pudjiastuti and Hanstein (eds) (2016: 315-317). The manuscript can be consulted digitally at http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/receive/SBBMSBook_islamhs_00013723.



Figure 6. *Serat Panji Jayakusuma*.⁴³ Berlin Ms. or. quart. 2112, p. 55, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).

CROCODILES

Another animal which features in illustrations is the crocodile. In the *Serat Asmarasupi*, the hero, Asmarasupi, must deal with an enormous white crocodile, Bajulsengara, who challenges him to fight. Only if he wins will the crocodile help him to cross a huge river. A fight ensues but whatever tactic the crocodile tries, Asmarasupi is totally unimpressed and he wins the battle. The crocodile then gives him two rings, one to wear on each thumb so that he can walk on water. The crocodile is portrayed locked in an embrace with Asmarasupi in Figure 7. The crocodile firmly grasps him in his paws and, according to the text, they are like ‘like a river-crayfish and a prawn’ (*lir yuyu lan urang*). The crocodile has been vividly portrayed and looks convincingly ferocious while Asmarasupi, as in all *wayang* depictions, shows no emotion whatsoever and seems to be enduring his unusual experience with admirable tranquillity. This is a good example in which the *wayang*-style works very well in combination with the non-*wayang* style.

Crocodiles are included in manuscripts not only to depict scenes in the story. They can also feature in different places such as in elaborate canto divides (*pepadan*) as in the manuscript of the *Serat Jayalengkara* MSS Jav. 24 in the British Library (Figure 8).⁴⁴ It is unclear to me why these crocodiles have been put in the elaborate *pepadan* as I have not found any reference to crocodiles at the end of the previous canto or at the beginning of the new canto. The poetic metre is

⁴³ The manuscript can be consulted digitally at: http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/receive/SBBMSBook_islamhs_00007747.

⁴⁴ The manuscript can be consulted digitally at: https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?index=53&ref=MSS_Jav_24.

pangkur which points to a content of devotion, intense passion and giving advice but that does not explain the crocodiles. The depiction of the crocodiles is of a totally different nature to that seen in Figure 7. The crocodiles look ferocious but less convincing than the *Bajulsengara*.



Figure 7. *Serat Semarasupi*. Berlin Ms. or. oct. 4033, p. 79, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).



Figure 8. *Serat Jayalengkara Wulang*. British Library MSS Jav. 24, f. 104v. (Courtesy of British Library Board).

ELEPHANTS

The last animals in poetic narrative texts we shall have a look at are elephants. They feature quite often in illustrations of fictional texts to depict scenes from the stories or, as in the case with two manuscripts of the *Serat Jayalengkara*, MSS Jav. 24 (folio 57v) and Add MS 12310⁴⁵ (f. 99r, 120r) in the collection of the British library, in the extraordinary large page-wide *pepadan* which mark the commencement of a new canto. Elephant illustrations are also found in the illuminations (*wadana renggan*) in complicated chronograms (*sengkalan memet*) in *babad* manuscripts in the Kraton Yogyakarta such as the *Babad Ngayogyakarta: Hamengku Buwana VIII* Volume 5 made between 1937 and 1941.⁴⁶ Elephants are usually portrayed as the mounts on which the heroes ride into battle or to travel but sometimes also as adversaries required to be defeated, as in Figure 9 from the *Asmarasupi* from the Berlin collection.



Figure 9. *Serat Asmarasupi*. Berlin Ms. or. oct. 4033, p. 286, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).

It would be interesting to investigate the source from which the illustrators derived their inspiration for these elephants as they are not native to Java and therefore would have had to have been seen in captivity. One place in which elephants used to be kept until recently was in Jalan Ngadisuryan at the corner of the Alun-Alun Selatan Kraton Yogyakarta, just outside the royal

⁴⁵ The manuscript may be consulted digitally at: https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?index=11&ref=Add_MS_12310. On this manuscript see also my blog “An enigmatic Javanese manuscript in the British Library: *Serat Jaya Lengkara*, Add 12310” (Van der Meij 2021).

⁴⁶ Manuscript W 102/A55, Slamet Riyadi (2002: Illustrations 49, 53, and 143); Jeannifer Lindsay, R.M. Soetanto, and Alan Feinstein (1994: 125).

palace in Yogyakarta in Central Java, where they were sometimes paraded during specific important rituals like Grebeg during which a huge cones of rice offerings are carried around in procession before being distributed.⁴⁷ They have now been moved to the Gembiraloka Zoo in Yogyakarta.⁴⁸ Perhaps the illustrators saw them in their stables or they were inspired by manuscripts with elephant illustrations they happened to see.

Another occasion on which elephants are depicted as enemies is in a manuscript of the *Serat Selarasa* Ms Jav. 28 British Library 143v in which four elephants which have just been killed are seen lying on the ground (Figure 10).⁴⁹ For a synopsis of the story see Vreede (1892) in Dutch and Pigeaud (1968) in English.



Figure 10. *Serat Selarasa*. British Library MSS Jav. 28, f. 143v. (Courtesy of British Library Board).

Nevertheless, most elephants are shown in a more friendly light when they are being used as mounts as in the following instances. In the first (Figure 11), the elephant is depicted much smaller than in real life, while in comparison the protagonist riding on it is much too large.

⁴⁷ For instance, during the great Grebeg parade in Yogyakarta on 5 October 2014, to celebrate Eid al Adha AH 1435. See <https://thumbs.dreamstime.com/z/abdi-dalem-yogyakarta-palace-riding-elephant-great-grebeg-parade-indonesia-oct-to-commemorate-eid-al-adha-h-228021103.jpg> (accessed on 5-10-2021).

⁴⁸ Information provided by Suharno from Yogyakarta, 5-10-2012.

⁴⁹ The manuscript can be consulted digitally at: https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?index=56&ref=MSS_Jav_28. Vreede (1892: 198-200, not in index!); Pigeaud (1968: 35).



Figure 11. *Serat Semarasupi*. Berlin Ms. or. oct. 4033, p. 209, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).

This juxtaposition is not confined to this instance but seems to have been pretty standard, as can also be seen from the following example in the *Serat Selarasa* from the British Library in Figure 12, in which the elephant is even smaller.



Figure 12. *Serat Selarasa*. British Library MSS Jav. 28, f. 142v. (Courtesy of British Library Board).

Another instance, in Figure 13, also shows the elephant much too small, especially compared to the character on its left which dwarfs it. A small horse and two small elephants are also portrayed in a manuscript of the *Serat Panji Jayakusuma* in the British Library (MSS Jav. 68).⁵⁰



Figure 13. *Serat Panji Jayakusuma*. Berlin Ms. or. quart. 2112 p. 152, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz). (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).

The way elephants are depicted differs greatly between manuscripts. Some are shown in detail; others look rather clumsy in comparison, as in the two instances below. The first, in Figure 14, is included in a manuscript of the *Menak Lare* in the Berlin collection.⁵¹ The elephant is small and drawn rather childishly and its rider's two feet could not possibly have both be seen as this is a physical impossibility. Unquestionably, the figure is still seen as a *wayang* puppet which would indeed have been depicted as having both feet at the same side of the elephant. In this case, the rider is supposed to sit astride the elephant as part of the animal's body covers his upper leg, but his left foot should also be hidden by the elephant. The second, in Figure 15, is from a manuscript of the *Serat Damar Wulan* Berlin Schoemann II 13 and the elephant is likewise much too small and executed in a rather peculiar way.⁵²

⁵⁰ Mackenzie Collection, British Library, ff. 100v-101r. See Lydia Kieven (2021) for an illustration in colour.

⁵¹ For a description see Pudjiastuti and Hanstein (eds) (2016: 504-505). The manuscript can be consulted digitally at: http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/receive/SBBMSBook_islamhs_00007748.

⁵² For a description see Pudjiastuti and Hanstein (eds) (2016: 516-517). The manuscript can be consulted digitally at: http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/receive/SBBMSBook_islamhs_00007755.



Figure 14. *Menak Lare*. Berlin Schoemann II 6, p. 87, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).



Figure 15. *Serat Damar Wulan*. Berlin Schoemann II 13. f. 64r, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz). (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).

The last manuscript is interesting as the *wayang* figures portrayed in its illustrations are not the leather *wayang* puppets of the shadow theatre but the flat wooden puppets of the *wayang krucil*. The illustration comes over as a

rather clumsy attempt which could have been produced by a child or a person not, or not yet, very skilled in the art.

In the next example from the *Serat Panji Jayakusuma* Berlin Ms. or. quart. 2112 in Figure 16, we see that apparently the role and importance of the protagonist decides the size of the elephant.



Figure 16. *Serat Panji Jayakusuma*. Berlin Ms. or. quart. 2112, p. 283, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. (Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin).

In this instance, the elephant is much larger and is more like a real-life elephant. In this picture, it is interesting to see the difference between the royal protagonists who are depicted in *wayang*-style and quite large whereas the mahout and the *payung*-bearer are both much smaller than the *wayang* characters.

BABAD PERANG DEMAK

The illustrations in the manuscript of the *Babad Perang Demak*, Leiden University Libraries Cod.Or. 23.742, were produced in 1886-1887 and are of a totally different nature to those in the narrative poems discussed above. The story is a small part of the much larger *Babad Demak*. For one thing, in this manuscript, there are no pictures whatsoever in the *wayang*-style. The characters are portrayed in a somewhat more “realistic” fashion and are clad in attire consistent with the dress worn in palace and aristocratic circles. The colour palette is limited throughout the manuscript. Perhaps colours have faded over time or this was done purposefully for an unknown reason. The

portrayal of the animals which feature in this text is also somewhat more realistic and their sizes are more realistic in relation to the human characters in the illustrations. All the animals are shown in relation to the human characters in the *babad*, usually in a role which clearly puts them at a disadvantage. In total, the manuscript contains fifty-nine illustrations of which only seven contain animals. The manuscript is probably one of a series as at the end is a note saying that 204 illustrations were drawn, all of which are clearly not included in this manuscript. We shall look at the following pictures in which animals are again portrayed in relation to the characters featured in the story.

The first animal portrayed in the manuscript is a tiger (*sima*) (Figure 17). At the beginning of the story, Jaka Tingkir must prove his prowess and he does so by not being at all impressed by the tiger which he tames in next to no time. The picture shows the Sultan of Demak seated on a dais attended by two retainers sitting below him and Jaka Tingkir with the tiger which he holds in his arms as if it were a domestic cat.



Figure 17. *Babad Perang Demak* f. 21r. Cod.Or. 23.742, Leiden University Libraries. (Collection of Leiden University Libraries).

The second illustration is that of a male deer (*manjangan*) being subdued by Jaka Tingkir (Figure 18). The deer is portrayed in a rather natural style and the artist was apparently cognizant with what a deer looked like. However, the antlers are curious. The animal is clearly seen as an adversary and therefore needed to be subdued. The only other deer portrayed in this manuscript are two male deer confronting Jaka Tingkir who is sitting on a hill on folio 29r.



Figure 18. *Babad Perang Demak* f. 22v. Cod.Or 23.742, Leiden University Libraries. (Collection of Leiden University Libraries).

A more dramatic scene which was illustrated is that in which Jaka Tingkir and his younger brother, Mas Monca, must fight 200 crocodiles. In Figure 19 we see how part of the fight was waged.



Figure 19. *Babad Perang Demak* f. 38v-39r. Cod.Or 23.742, Leiden University Libraries. (Collection of Leiden University Libraries).

Of course, our heroes win the battle leaving some seventy crocodiles dead. On page 38v we see Mas Monca fighting the crocodile king, Baureksa, on the right and the king's vizier, Jalumampang, on the left. On page 39v we see Jaka Tingkir fighting crocodiles in Kedhung.

After his adventure with the crocodiles, Jaka Tingkir had to fight the bull, Kebo Danu, which is threatening to destroy the kingdom (Figure 20).



Figure 20. *Babad Perang Demak* f. 43vr. Cod.Or 23.742, Leiden University Libraries. (Collection of Leiden University Libraries).

Watched over by the Sultan of Demak, Jaka Tingkir manages to kill the bull with one blow of his hand and by so doing restores the trust the Sultan used to have in him. The bull is portrayed in two illustrations, one on folio 43v in which he is stomping about killing people as he goes (Figure 20) and the second, as can be seen in Figure 21, on folios 45v-46r.

The next scene which features animals are two horses on folio 86v. Two protagonists, Radyan Bei and Jipang Penangsang, are fighting each other with spears mounted on horseback (Figure 22). Radyan Bei is clearly considered the lesser hero as he is riding a mare whereas Jipang is riding a stallion.



Figure 21. *Babad Perang Demak* ff. 45v-46r. Cod.Or 23.742, Leiden University Libraries. (Collection of Leiden University Libraries).



Figure 22. *Babad Perang Demak* ff. 86v-87r. Cod.Or 23.742, Leiden University Libraries. (Collection of Leiden University Libraries).

CONCLUSION

Illustrations in Javanese manuscripts do feature the natural world but in a limited way. They are usually restricted to animals in relation to the characters in the story. Illustrations in fictive narrative poems feature characters in *wayang*-style but any animals are drawn in a different style. Usually, the relationship between characters in the story and the animals is clear from the relative size of the latter in relation to the characters. In the *Babad Perang Demak*, we see that in illustrations of texts which are seen to be historical and to reflect “reality” as the Javanese artists interpreted this, the characters are not represented in *wayang*-style and the relative size of humans and animals is more natural. The sample used here is, of course, not enough to draw definitive conclusions but the findings presented here might invite new research.

Illustrations in Javanese manuscripts focus on the characters in the story and very often do not include backgrounds or props which might explain why no detailed depictions of other aspects of the natural world such as trees, flowers, mountains, rivers, and so forth feature in the illustrations.

The possible relationship between illustrated manuscripts and their intended public – lending libraries and their clients, palace circles and their expectations – might explain why illustrations of certain scenes in the stories are depicted and others not. It might also explain the text-illustration lay-out made in the manuscripts.

REFERENCES

- Behrend, T.E. (ed.). 1998. *Katalog induk naskah-naskah Nusantara; Jilid 4: Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, École française d’Extrême Orient.
- Behrend, T.E. and Titik Pudjiastuti (eds). 1997. *Katalog induk naskah-naskah Nusantara; Vol. 3-A: Fakultas Sastra Universitas Indonesia*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, École française d’Extrême Orient..
- Christomy, Tommy and Nurhata. 2016. *Katalog naskah Indramayu*. Jakarta: Wedatama Widya Sastra.
- Gallop, Annabel Teh. 1995. *Early views of Indonesia; Drawings from the British Library/Pemandangan Indonesia di masa lampau; Seni gambar dari British Library*. London: The British Library/Jakarta: Yayasan Lontar.
- Gallop, Annabel Teh. 2013. “Everyday life in Java in the late 18th century; Serat Damar Wulan”, *Southeast Asia Library Group (SEALG), Blog*, 21 March. [Retrieved from: <http://southeastasianlibrarygroup.wordpress.com/2013/03/21/everyday-life-in-java-in-the-late-18th-century-serat-damar-wulan/>.]
- Gallop, Annabel Teh. 2014. “Javanese manuscript art; Serat Selarasa”, *Asian and African studies Blog of the British Library*. [Retrieved from: <https://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/Asian-and-african/2014/12/javanese-manuscript-art-serat-selarasa.html>.]

- Gallop, Annabel Teh and Bernard Arps. 1991. *Golden letters; Writing traditions of Indonesia/Surat emas; Budaya tulis di Indonesia*. London: The British Library/ Jakarta: Yayasan Lontar.
- Juynboll, H.H. 1911. *Supplement op den Catalogus van de Javaansche en Madoereesche Handschriften der Leidsche Universiteits-Bibliotheek*. Deel II. Leiden: Brill.
- Kieven, Lydia. 2021. "Lovers, sailors, fighters in illustrations of Javanese Panji tales manuscripts", in: Irene Schneider and Holger Warnk (eds), *Knowledge, science, and local tradition; Multiple perspectives on the Middle East and South East Asia. In Honor of Fritz Schulze*, pp. 187-214. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Kumar, Ann and John H. McGlynn (eds). 1996. *Illuminations; The writing traditions of Indonesia*. Jakarta: The Lontar Foundation/New York, N.Y. and Tokyo: Weatherhill, Inc.
- Lim Yoe Djin. n.d.. *The story of Damarwulan and Lady of the South Sea (Nji Lara Kidul)*. Solo: Lim Yoe Djin.
- Lindsay, Jennifer, R.M. Soetanto, and Alan Feinstein. 1994. *Katalog induk naskah-naskah Nusantara; Vol. 2: Kraton Yogyakarta*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Pigeaud, Theodore G.Th. 1975. *Javanese and Balinese manuscripts and some codices written in related idioms spoken in Java and Bali; Descriptive catalogue*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Pudjiastuti, Titik and Thoralf Hanstein (eds). 2016. *Catalogue of Indonesian manuscripts; Collection Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*. Jakarta: Museum Nasional Republik Indonesia.
- Ricklefs, M.C. and P. Voorhoeve. 1977. *Indonesian manuscripts in Great Britain; A catalogue of manuscripts in Indonesian languages in British Collections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Saktimulya, S.R. 2013. "Memaknai Sestradi melalui iluminasi naskah koleksi Pura Pakualaman", in: Sudibya and Arsanti Wulandari (eds), *Warisan keberaksaraan Yogyakarta; Naskah sebagai sumber inspirasi*. Yogyakarta: Masyarakat Pernaskahan Nusantara (Manassa) Cabang Yogyakarta.
- Saktimulya, Sri Ratna. 2005. *Katalog naskah-naskah perpustakaan Pura Pakualaman*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia/The Toyota Foundation.
- Saktimulya, Sri Ratna. 2010. "Le manuscrit du Langen Wibawa du palais du Pakualaman (Yogyakarta)", *Archipel* 79: 101-124.
- Saktimulya, Sri Ratna. 2016. *Naskah-naskah skriptorium Pakualaman. Periode Paku Alam II (1830-1858)*. Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia (KPG), École française d'Extrême Orient, Perpustakaan Widyapustaka, Pura Pakualaman.
- Slamet Riyadi. 2002. *Tradisi kehidupan sastra di Kasultanan Yogyakarta*. Yogyakarta: Gama Media, Yayasan Adi Karya, and The Ford Foundation
- Van der Meij, Dick. 1997. "The Story of Jaratkāru on a Balinese Ulun-Ulun", in: Dick van der Meij (ed.), *India and beyond; Aspects of literature, meaning, ritual and thought. Essays in Honour of Frits Staal*, pp. 461-372. London/New York, NY: Kegan Paul International in association with International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden and Amsterdam.

- Van der Meij, Dick. 2017a. *Indonesian manuscripts from the Islands of Java, Madura, Bali, and Lombok*. Leiden: Brill. [Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik, III/24.]
- Van der Meij, Dick. 2017b. "Made for a prince, given to a princess; An illustrated Javanese manuscript of the Dewa Ruci", in: Wiebke Beyer, Zhenzhen Lu (eds), *Manuscript of the Month* 06. Hamburg: Center for the Study of Manuscript Cultures. [See http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/mom/2017_06_mom_e.html.]
- Van der Meij, Dick. 2019. "Gods, birds, and trees; Variation in illustrated Javanese *pawukon* manuscripts", *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* Vol. 20 No. 1: 135-174.
- Van der Meij, Dick. 2021. "An enigmatic Javanese manuscript in the British Library; *Sĕrat Jaya Lĕngkara*, Add 12310". [Retrieved from: <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2021/04/an-Enigmatic-javanese-manuscript-in-the-british-library-s%C4%95rat-jaya-l%C4%95ngkaraadd-12310.html>.]
- Vreede, A.C. 1892. *Catalogus van de Javaansche en Madoereesche Handschriften der Leidsche Universiteits-Bibliotheek*. Leiden: Brill.