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Purwaka

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Purwaka

ELS BOGAERTS AND TONY DAY
WITH A COMMENT BY DANIELLE CHEN KLEINMAN

The articles in this issue of *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* offer readings of Javanese literary texts ranging from a poetical treatise written in the ninth century CE to a short story published in 1997. That literature in the Javanese language has been and continues to be written over a span of more than eleven centuries is itself extraordinary. But the writers of the articles in this volume hope to do more than simply impress the reader with this fact. They hope to suggest “new directions” in how this literature is studied and understood in order to stimulate others to read, explore, and enjoy, as they have, literary works of all kinds drawn from the extraordinary literary treasury of the Javanese people. The issue begins with two articles by young Indonesian scholars of Old Javanese literature and culture, followed by nine articles written by a group of scholars who took part in an international research project that, extending over a full academic year, was dedicated solely to reading and discussing Javanese literature.

Our *purwaka* opens with a comment on the two articles on Old Javanese literature written by another young scholar, Danielle Chen Kleinman, who over the last two years has added Old Javanese literature to her long and abiding interest in Sanskrit poetry and poetics. The *purwaka* continues with comments about the process that led up to the writing of nine articles on literary works written between the sixteenth and the end of the twentieth centuries and some thoughts about the future of collaborative, international research on Javanese literature.

A COMMENT ON “NEW DIRECTIONS” IN THE STUDY OF OLD JAVANESE LITERATURE
In “Rethinking the name; The problem of the name *Candrakirana* in the oldest Javanese prosody”, Zakariya Pamuji Aminullah convincingly establishes the notion that *Candrakirana* was indeed the text’s original title. To prove his argument, Aminullah applies a close reading and analysis of the colophon found in ms L298 along with an examination of the text in light of its literary and religious-philosophical contexts.

Aminullah’s project is a significant contribution to the field of *kakawin* studies from both local and trans-local perspectives. With his outstanding MA thesis, he had traced and edited a complete and undamaged manuscript

of the *Candrakiraṇa*, which forms the first and only comprehensive treatise on *kakawin* aesthetics and provides a rare source of information about *kakawin* prosody, language, and language uses. In his current article, by elaborating on the text's title and dating, Aminullah seals a century-old discussion on the subject, thus making room for a deeper inquiry into the composition. The academic potential of exploring the *Candrakiraṇa* is immense. First, it can shed new light on Old Javanese poetry and forms of knowledge and provide analytic tools through which *kakawin* poetics could be better understood. Moreover, as the text is organized according to categories inspired by the Sanskrit *alankāra-śāstra* tradition, it can deepen our knowledge about the cultural dialogue the Indonesian archipelago shared with the Sanskrit cosmopolis by introducing the forms of reception of Sanskritic models, which included their reconfiguration, adaptation, and intermixture with Javanese concepts to create an entirely new literary language. It is usually said that *kakawin* is a literary tradition abounding in practice (*prayoga*) yet lacking in written theory (*śāstra*); Aminullah's discoveries and analysis might introduce a new and innovative perspective on the subject.

Blasius Suprpta provides the first taxonomy of the typical biota of the late medieval Malang highlands (twelfth-fourteenth centuries CE). Using a multidisciplinary methodological approach that includes ethnozoological, ethnobotanical, and geographic spatial analysis, Suprpta applies a close reading of various Old and Middle Javanese literary sources to create a detailed identification and classification of the region's flora and fauna at that period, along with a description of their forms of agricultural and liturgical utilization by local Hindu-Buddhist societies. Suprpta's article sheds new light on the understudied fields of medieval Javanese geography and ethnobiology. However, his study also holds significant implications for the field of Old and Middle Javanese literature. Relying on aestheticized literary sources such as *kakawin* and *kidung*, Suprpta identified flora and fauna that inhabited not only the Malang highlands but also the minds of the local poets who inserted them into their literary compositions in various ways. Many of the animals and plants identified and classified are widespread in *kakawin* literature and form integral parts of *kakawin* imagery. Suprpta's taxonomy can thus take us a step further to decoding *kakawin* poetics by elaborating on the ways in which Javanese flora and fauna are used in various literary conventions. Moreover, various scholars had demonstrated that the reconfiguration and adaptation of Sanskritic figural devices into local-Javanese preferences included their adjustments to Javanese flora and fauna. As such, Suprpta's article might be helpful in understanding how literary models changed as they travelled across the Bay of Bengal and into the Java Sea.

JAVA IN JERUSALEM

Between September 2018 and July 2019, scholars from Israel, Europe, the United States, Australia, Japan, and Indonesia met for weekly seminars in the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies (IIAS) in Jerusalem to discuss

Javanese literature. They were participants in the project “New directions in the study of Javanese literature; Reassessing ideas, methods, and theories in the study of the literature of Java”, initiated and led by Ronit Ricci, Sternberg-Tamir Chair of Comparative Cultures and Professor of Asian Studies and Comparative Religion in The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.¹ The articles in this collection are one of the outcomes of those stimulating weekly seminars.²

The project sought to revitalize Javanese studies by assembling a group of scholars to read, study, and discuss Javanese literature in a collaborative manner. Examination and analysis of hitherto un- or under-studied texts aimed to provide a broader comparative context for the reading of Javanese literature, allowing for better generalizations and more accurate theorization, as well as make a wider array of Javanese texts accessible for further study. Innovative methodological and theoretical perspectives from such disciplines as Comparative Literature, Religious/Islamic Studies, Cultural Studies, and Performance Studies were considered as the group investigated new texts and revisited ones that received scholarly attention long ago. Another goal of the programme was to reconceptualize and remap major dimensions of the field of Javanese literature, paying attention to periodization, contextualization, literary categorization, and interpretative methods (Ricci 2018: 1). The research programme culminated in the “Java in Jerusalem” conference, held between 17-19 June 2019. Group members and other invited scholars highlighted the richness of Javanese literature in its historical and contemporary contexts, discussing matters of approach and perspective, interpretation and transformation, performance and aesthetics.³ In addition, group members contributed to the expansion and strengthening of Indonesian and Javanese Studies in Israel (where tens of thousands of Christian and Muslim pilgrims from Indonesia visit holy sites every year) by giving talks and taking part in performances of *gamelan*, *wayang*, and dance. Willem van der Molen offered a

¹ We wish to express, on behalf of the entire “New directions” group, our heartfelt thanks to Professor Yitzhak Hen, Academic Director and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, Jerusalem, and all his staff for their extraordinary hospitality and support, in matters academic and personal, throughout the period of our stay in Jerusalem. There can be no better environment for scholarly research, carried out in an atmosphere of warm yet intellectually challenging collegiality, than IIAS! We also want to thank our research assistant, Danielle Chen Kleinman, scholar of Sanskrit and now Old Javanese literature, for her tireless help in countless ways, but also for introducing us, with insight and wit, to the fascinating worlds of contemporary Israel.

² We want to extend our warmest thanks to Edwin Wieringa, who participated in the seminars in Jerusalem as a member of the “New directions” project but was unable to write an article for this issue of *Wacana* because of other commitments. Edwin kindly read and offered incisive critical comments about all the articles presented here. In fact, he has already published an article, in an earlier number of *Wacana*, that is very much in the spirit of those presented here. See Wieringa (2020) for a Javanese text, with English translation and commentary, that offers another intriguing “new direction” for Javanese literary studies to pursue.

³ For a review of the conference, see Lücking (2019).

course in Old Javanese throughout the year, which was attended by graduate students as well as leading Israeli scholars of Sanskrit literature.⁴

For ten months we gathered to read and study Javanese literature, individually and collectively, and to learn from each other. Working as a group on short passages chosen by each of us in order to focus on linguistic, philological, and interpretative issues has not only provided us with new understandings of our own materials, but has also revealed the incredible variety of literary styles and themes to be found in Javanese literary texts from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries, not to mention many of the “new directions” that our project sought to identify and pursue.

Our discussions ranged over issues of language, translation, cultural, historical, and religious background, and literary form. All of us who have been involved in these sessions have found them to be, not to overstate the case, amazingly useful and interesting. What we enjoyed most, and what proved fundamental to the approach to reading Javanese literature that we preview in this issue of *Wacana*, was the close reading of texts as a group in seminar sessions, translating meticulously, analysing vocabulary, grammar, style, taking note of paratexts and historical-cultural contexts, sharing our individual experiences and backgrounds. Following Ronggasmita’s principles for interpretive reading, which he presented in the closing stanzas of the *Suluk martabat sanga* (The song of the nine levels; see Florida’s contribution below; Florida 2018: 166-167), these regular exercises required effort and concentration and, to use Florida’s expression, made our “brains sweat”. A strenuous mental workout, a result of careful and diligent reading, thus became the main object of our weekly meetings. Or as the familiar English expression puts it: “No pain, no gain!”

SHARED THEMES

Over the months we spent together in Jerusalem the “New directions” group worked on a diverse selection of texts spanning several centuries. Yumi Sugahara continued her revisions of G.W.J. Drewes’s translation of a late sixteenth-century text attributed to Sunan Bonang. Bernard Arps prepared a text edition of a sixteenth-century manuscript of the Amir Hamzah story, the *Caritanira Amir*, and worked on a thematic study of the Amir Hamzah tradition in Java. Tony Day investigated minor characters and representations of everyday life in sections of the 1815 *Sĕrat Cĕnthini Kadipaten*. Nancy Florida completed translating and editing a mid-nineteenth-century compilation of *suluk* from the Surakarta kraton, focusing in our group discussions on the *Suluk Acih* written in 1815. Willem van der Molen continued working on his translation of the *Sĕrat Panji Paniba*, composed in 1817, also in Surakarta. Verena Meyer worked on a translation and interpretation of the *Suluk Seh*

⁴ See the two path-breaking articles on Old Javanese literature by Zakariya Pamuji Aminullah and Blasius Suprpta in this issue of *Wacana*. A farewell symposium for Willem van der Molen’s retirement from the KITLV, held in Leiden on 12-13 December 2019, entitled “Towards a History of Javanese Literature”, made an important contribution to the search for “new directions” in the study of Javanese literature.

Mlaya, a poem from another Surakarta compilation of *suluk* dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Ronit Ricci shared work she has been doing on a mid-nineteenth century *pegon* text of the *Sĕrat Ambiya* from a non-courtly, *pĕsantrĕn* milieu as well as a passage from a late eighteenth-century manuscript in Javanese script, the *Sajarahing para nabi*, from the Yogyakarta kraton. Els Bogaerts, also focusing on literature written in the Yogyakarta palace, continued investigating the late nineteenth-century *Sĕrat Nitik* about the life and times of Sultan Agung. Siti Muslifah studied a late nineteenth-century Surakarta wayang story, *Lampahan Dora Wĕca*, in *macapat* verse. Edwin Wieringa continued work on an early twentieth-century prose autobiography of a *mantri guru* from Madiun, Raden Sasrakuśuma. And George Quinn, preparing a collection of contemporary Javanese short stories in translation for publication, read a number of stories by Djajus Pete with the group.

Ranging over several centuries of Javanese writing and covering many different genres – epic, *kidung*, *suluk*, encyclopaedia, romance, *babad*, *nitik*, wayang, autobiography, and short story – the group nonetheless shared several interests in common. In all of the texts we read together Islamic belief was asserted, explained, puzzled over, challenged, or represented as the all-pervasive cultural setting of the literary worlds being depicted. It was fascinating to learn in how many ways “Islam” can be portrayed in Javanese literature, in terms of vocabulary, literary style, characterization, or plot, as well as gain a sense of the ongoing tensions, even at the stylistic level, between Islam and its cultural “others” – Hindu mythology and stories, Islamic sects, colonialism, the modern nation-state, for example.

Although the majority of the writings we examined were written in kraton (court) circles, we also made an effort, with considerable success, to identify individual voices, aspects of everyday life, and non-courtly points of view in the texts we read. The *Suluk Acih*, for example, is a very personal religious statement. The *Sĕrat Cĕnthini Kadipaten* and the *Caritanira Amir* explore life far and wide outside the kraton and beyond the Island of Java, and the *Sĕrat Panji Paniba* is true to its genre as a Panji text in drawing a stark contrast between “Javanese” and “foreign”. The *Sĕrat Nitik Sultan Agung* offers a decidedly popular, and also occasionally humorous, take on Java’s most awe-inspiring Sultan from both inside and outside the palace walls and mixes *nitik*, *babad*, theatrical, and folk-tale literary styles. Village life and attitudes come into view in the *Sĕrat Ambiya*, one of the most popular of all Javanese tales, as well as in the autobiography of Sasrakuśuma and the short stories of Djajus Pete. The *Sĕrat Panji Paniba* and the *Lampahan Dora Wĕca* sparkle with realistic depictions of women’s lives and allusions, sometimes partially concealed in *wangsalan* (riddle) form, to everyday life. Even the princess in the excerpt from the sixteenth-century *Caritanira Amir* that we read with Bernard Arps behaves like a realistically drawn Javanese palace lady, and in Javanese Menak tales generally, “co-wives” and their tribulations are a topic of interest. The readings we “sweated” over during the year surprised us with the range of topics

and perspectives they invited us to consider – Islam seen from many angles, gender relations, the “reality” of daily life brought into view, the artificiality and artistry of literary effects also never entirely absent from even the least pretentiously “literary” poem or short story.

From the outset it was apparent to us that “literary form” and “genre” are complex and fascinating topics in the study of Javanese literature from any era or location. The sixteenth-century *Caritanira Amir*, for example, which is full of Old Javanese words, resembles *kidung* texts from an earlier age in form and language, even though it is written in *macapat* metres and tells about an Islamic epic hero. A comparison Bernard Arps presented to the group between the *Caritanira Amir* and Yasadipura I’s late eighteenth-century Menak poems threw the theatrical quality of Yasadipura’s renditions, a product of Yasadipura’s interest in dance and *wayang gĕdhog* theatre, into sharp relief. Javanese Menak characters, as another presentation by Arps illustrated, have also continued to come to life off the written or printed page as *wayang golek*, dances, and theatrical performances on stage. The *Sĕrat Nitik* is strikingly theatrical, as well as exhibiting characteristics of oral popular story-telling and mystical texts about seekers after *ngelmu*, secret knowledge. “Orality” in the *nitik* texts and the *Sĕrat Cĕnthini*, as seems to be the case in many of the other poems we read, is particularly associated with women and their everyday activities. The oral/written form of *macapat* poetry itself is a topic of major importance. And how do we assign the *Sĕrat Cĕnthini Kadipaten* to a genre? It has been called a mystical poem, an encyclopaedia (encyclopaedic tendencies are also marked in Panji tales, including the *Sĕrat Panji Paniba*), and a *santri lĕlana* (wandering student of religion) tale, but this list hardly exhausts the variety of genres from elsewhere that the poem quotes and incorporates into its genre-defying form. The frequency with which “travel” appears as a theme and plot device in several of our texts, endowed with religious meaning and leading to encounters with the “foreign”, is also striking. Perhaps the Javanese word *laku*, which in its inflected form *lakon* can mean “walk, behaviour, scene of a play, ascetic practice”, is one master term that connects all the literary genres we studied. Didacticism is another unifying thread: from earliest to contemporary times, Javanese literary texts, whatever the genre, offer readers instruction in how to lead their lives.⁵

Not only narratives and their poetics received our attention, but also the stories and messages, instructions, symbols, style, and language usage texts display. As the images of the text fragments presented in this collection of articles demonstrate, the material and paratextual contexts of Javanese texts are important topics in their own right. Both context and paratext open worlds of meaning to the eye of the attentive and hard-working reader.

A closer look at the material context of our texts also revealed information on writing practices, including: the types of scripts used; the deliberate choice for and the development of specific scripts determined by cultural, geographical, and temporal parameters; the tools used for the writing; and

⁵ See Wieringa (2020) for another example of the popularity of didactic literature in Java.

the materials written on.⁶ Paratexts, like the name of the author or copyist, the patron, the title of the work, the context of the writing or copying, including place and date according to various calendars function as “indicators of a range of ideas and practices” (Ricci 2012: 196), reveal how people present and represent the world and give meaning to it. The same holds for illustrations in and illuminations of the texts. Palaeographic and codicological information is also important for the historical study of the Javanese written tradition (T.E. Behrend 1993: 410).

The Javanese texts in *tĕmbang macapat* presented below were written in Javanese script (*aksara Jawa*) or in *pegon* (‘Javano-Arabic script’, Wieringa 2003: 505).⁷ They give us an impression of the various types of scripts, which are determined by the period of writing, the place of origin and the individual hand. Writing tools are another determinant of variation. The use of Javanese script in print used to be common in the nineteenth century, but was almost entirely replaced by Romanized printed letters in independent Indonesia (Van der Molen 1993: VIII; Robson 2011; Wieringa 2021 [Forthcoming]). Hence, *Bedhug* was published in Latin script. The script itself affects the physical and mental ways of how one reads the text. This implies that a transliterated version, printed in Romanized form, reads differently, as it applies the constraints of another textual and cultural realm and invokes different associations.

These, then, are the major themes that held our attention as we “sweated”, always with enormous pleasure, our way through our weekly seminars in Jerusalem.

WHY PUBLISH THIS COLLECTION OF READINGS?

The collection of readings from the New Directions project presented in this issue of *Wacana* has three objectives. Firstly, the authors want to share a sample of the results of our group process of reading, translating, discussing, and interpreting Javanese literary texts in Jerusalem in 2018-2019 with a wider audience and offer it as an example of one productive way of approaching the study of Javanese literature. In fact, our approach has deep roots in Indonesia. Although we do not know how Ki Ng. Ronggasutrasna, R.Ng. Yasadipura II, and Ki Ng. Sastradipura under the direction of the Crown Prince of Surakarta (later Pakubuwana V, r. 1820-1823) set about researching, discussing, and then writing the *Sĕrat Cĕnthini Kadipaten* as a collaborative group, we recognize this approach as a variation on a traditional way of writing and studying literature in Java and applaud it as a model to emulate today, especially by those of us who have not grown up hearing Javanese poetry being sung by our mothers, or reading Javanese manuscripts under

⁶ See further: Ricci 2016; Van der Molen 1993: VII; Behrend 1996: 162; Robson 2011.

⁷ See Wieringa [2021, Forthcoming]; Wieringa [2022, Forthcoming]. Our transliterations of Javanese texts written in Javanese script (*aksara Jawa*) or in *pegon* follow the conventions of Modern Javanese spelling, except for the *pĕpĕt* which we chose to render with *ĕ*. The spelling by George Quinn follows the conventions for Modern Javanese in contemporary publications.

the direction of a master in a *pěsantren* or a shady corner of a palace *pěndhapa*, or participating in ritually specific or secular monthly communal *macapatan*. As we know from studies that have been made of the way literary texts have been studied and performed in Java and Bali (for example, Arps 1992), translating and interpreting literature has been a group process in Indonesia for a long time. It wasn't until the nineteenth century and the arrival of the solitary European Orientalist-philologist-manuscript-collector on the scene that the study and translation of Javanese literature fell into the hands of scholars working largely by themselves, albeit in consultation (which was often competitive and acrimonious) with fellow scholars. Unlike researchers in the sciences, philologists and literary critics have generally thought they need to work alone in order to produce their definitive text editions and write their brilliant critical articles. Our experience in Jerusalem, while in no way denying the magnificent achievements of the great Western scholars and literary critics in the field of Javanese literature since the time of Raffles, who over the last two centuries have worked in solitude (though often with the help of a Panembahan of Suměņěp or a Soegiarto behind the scene),⁸ leads us to believe that there is another, possibly better, and certainly more enjoyable way forward. The articles and translations in this volume attest, in a very modest way, to the joy and enthusiasm with which our work in Jerusalem was carried out, first in the preliminary solitude of our offices where drafts of translations were prepared, then as a collective group in our weekly seminars, where we shared our drafts and subjected them to the constructive criticism of our colleagues, exposed our ignorance, and pooled our knowledge and skills to reach better understandings and achieve improved translations of our texts. We all agree: There's nothing like *gotong royong*⁹ for maximizing brain power, sharing burdens, and accomplishing massive tasks. In this age of the Internet, it would not be difficult, and certainly much less expensive than bringing ten or so scholars to a research institute somewhere in the world, to form international working groups of scholars, studying a single Javanese work or comparing several, that could convene periodically for seminar- and *macapatan*-like discussions via Zoom, to which the academic world has grown accustomed in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

⁸ The Panembahan of Suměņěp assisted Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles in his translation of the Old Javanese *Bhāratayuddha*, published in the first volume of his *History of Java* (1817). J. Soegiarto served as a Javanese language informant and research assistant to successive Professors of Javanese at the University of Leiden from 1929 to 1975 and prepared thousands of Romanized transcriptions, summaries, and lists of first lines of and notes about Javanese, Balinese, and Madurese manuscripts, which are now a part of the Special Collections of the Leiden University Libraries. In both cases, these informants were fully acknowledged as having been indispensable to the Western researchers who relied on their "local knowledge" and expertise. And yet, both remain largely invisible in the historiography of Javanese literary studies.

⁹ A term in both Javanese and Indonesian, *gotong royong*, "community co-operation, mutual self-help", became a common expression in independent Indonesia for the "Indonesian" way of getting the job done.

Secondly, we aim to provide “windows” into unpublished texts by means of excerpts, annotated translations, and brief discussions of selected themes. The inaccessibility of most Javanese literature is due to various factors. Texts often only exist as manuscripts in court libraries or on microfilms, as “invisible” literature which has been written/performed but not published, or in the form of rare Dutch philological editions or Indonesian publications which are inaccessible to a wide readership abroad.¹⁰ Our approach frames and opens “windows” onto texts that we think are highly significant. Our short translations in English not only provide samples of Javanese literary art to those who do not read Javanese (and in any case, translations of any kind of Javanese literature from the post-Old Javanese *kakawin* period up to the present are still extremely rare): they bring into focus many aspects of the pleasures and difficulties of translating Javanese literature into other languages.¹¹ Translating Javanese literature into other languages, it hardly needs stating, is an absolutely essential part of making it accessible to a wider readership as “world literature”. Current digitizing practices offer complementary perspectives and opportunities; they make it easier for specialists to read and study original manuscripts, both as individuals and as members of *gotong royong* groups.

Our third objective is to try out a format for introducing both students of Javanese as well as interested general readers to the variety and beauty of Javanese literature from early to contemporary times. “Javanese literature” has already been offered to the world’s readers in a number of formats: as single texts-with-translation (as in traditional Western philological “text editions”); as anthologies of excerpts (as in J.J. Ras 1979) or collections of contemporary Javanese literature (as in Suripan Sadi Hutomo 1985; Linus Suryadi AG and Danu Priyo Prabowo 1995; Dhanu Priyo Prabowo 1997; or George Quinn [Forthcoming]); as survey histories assembled by literary scholars (like Poerbatjaraka 1952; P.J. Zoetmulder 1974; Suripan Sadi Hutomo (circa) 1975; or Edi Sedyawati et al. 2001); as catalogues of manuscript collections, described, sometimes in great detail, sometimes not, found in Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Jakarta, Leiden, London, and Berlin by scholars like Theodore Th.G. Pigeaud; Poerbatjaraka; M.C. Ricklefs and P. Voorhoeve; T.E. Behrend and Titik Pudjiastuti; Sri Ratna Saktimulya; Jennifer Lindsay, R.M. Soetanto, and Alan Feinstein; and Nancy Florida.

What we present here is a model for a different kind of anthology. We offer articles prepared by a team of scholars, consisting of textual excerpts drawn from a wide range of Javanese literary texts in manuscript and printed form, with short introductions, English translations, and footnotes that discuss issues of translation, followed by critical commentary based on a variety of disciplinary approaches to the study of literature. Our excerpts come mainly

¹⁰ But this situation is changing rapidly. Not only are original manuscripts held in libraries around the world become increasingly available Online in digital form; we now have access to hundreds of Romanized transcriptions of Javanese manuscripts, printed books and dictionaries on John Paterson’s magnificent *sastra.org* website.

¹¹ See also the issue of *Wacana, Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia* Vol. 21 No. 3 (2020), “The art of giving meaning in translation”, devoted to this subject.

from the courts of Surakarta and Yogyakarta in the nineteenth century, but ideally they would be taken from different periods, geographic locations, and cultural milieus, which have been selected to illustrate variations in regional dialect, social setting, literary style, and (in the case of hand-written texts) orthography as well as script (that is, *aksara Jawa* or *pegon*).¹²

Such a “*Gotong Royong Reader*”, placed Online, could, in its best imaginable form, cover more literary-historical ground, more succinctly and with a greater variety of approaches, than any of the modes of presenting “Javanese literature” mentioned earlier. It could serve as an effective way of connecting scholars based in Indonesia to those located elsewhere, professional academics of all ages and nationalities to those who simply love and read Javanese literature whatever they may do for a living. At the same time, such a “Reader” could serve as a primer for students of Javanese literature at different levels of expertise as well as a comprehensive sampler of Javanese literary styles and themes for students of comparative and world literature generally. And if such a “Reader” were to be available Online, it could be regularly commented upon and updated. It could also offer links to digitalized manuscript collections, libraries, and literary blogs for all those interested in further study, whether they are professional academics or simply interested amateurs, in addition to a comprehensive, current bibliography. Moreover, an Online format would allow international teams of students of literature young and old, drawn from academic settings as well as informal groups of Javanese literature aficionados or a mixture of the two, to add links to soundbites, presenting a vocalized reading of a text or excerpts from theatrical, or musical performance (for an example of such a link, see the article by Tony Day below).

HOW TO READ THIS COLLECTION?

Readers will naturally want to begin with the articles that interest them most. Those curious about Javanese poetic language and textual practices can turn first to the articles by Van der Molen, Florida, Ricci, Bogaerts, Arps, Muslifah, and Day. Linguistic aspects of Javanese poetry from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries receive detailed discussions in the articles by Florida, Arps, and Van der Molen, while for Islamic theological debates, beliefs, and practices, the articles by Florida, Ricci, Bogaerts, Meyer, Arps, Day, and Quinn offer an array of perspectives from several different cultural milieu and time periods. Gender roles and relations are prominently on display in the texts examined by Van der Molen, Bogaerts, Arps, Muslifah, and Quinn.

Yet we also encourage everyone to read the collection in its entirety in order to appreciate the variety of both methodology and theme that are represented here as well as the commonalities that connect the articles to one another. Notwithstanding the “literariness” of *macapat* poetry and

¹² See Gallop (2015) for an excellent example of how a future book on Javanese *aksara Jawa* and *pegon* scripts might look.

the differences between writing in nineteenth-century poetic Javanese and contemporary Javanese prose, representations of Javanese “everyday life” – its practices, sights and sounds, gender relations, and religious and cultural preoccupations – are found expressed, in different ways, in all the articles. The articles by Florida, Ricci, Arps, Meyer, Day, and Quinn in particular demonstrate the powerful extent to which Middle Eastern Islam has shaped everyday practices and informed thinking and writing in Java, in the royal courts as well as the countryside, since at least the beginning of the sixteenth century. Nonetheless, Van der Molen, Florida, Bogaerts, Muslifah, Day, and Quinn also show the many, often playful ways, that older Javanese ideas – about mystical knowledge; the equality and unity of gendered opposites; royal authority; and the musical/aural nature of Javanese culture – have maintained a constructive, creative dialog with Islamic ideas and practices over many centuries. Read all together, the articles provide a rich variety of insights into the nature of literary representations of Javanese religious, social, and political life, predominantly from the nineteenth century, but with comparative glimpses at examples from the sixteenth and twenty-first centuries.

The Javanese literary heritage, consisting of thousands of poems, plays, short stories, and novels written over many centuries, offers a largely untapped resource for investigating Javanese cultural debates and the mysteries of literary production. We hope that the few examples of Javanese literary art examined in this issue of *Wacana*, written by a small, international group of people who have a passion for reading Javanese literature, make this assertion believable, so that many others will explore new ways of reading, studying, translating and enjoying more of the many thousands of literary works in Javanese awaiting our interest and intellectual engagement. The two Indonesian scholars of Old Javanese literature as well as the participants in the “New directions” project have each made new discoveries, taken roads “less travelled by” (to quote the American poet Robert Frost), in reading their texts. Thanks to the Internet, the possibilities for creating new groups that span the globe who will read, discuss, interpret, and enjoy Javanese literature are almost limitless.

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