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## Stuart Robson (editor and translator), "Kidung Pañji Margasmara; A Middle Javanese Romance (by Kēmuling Rat Dyah Atapêng Raje)"

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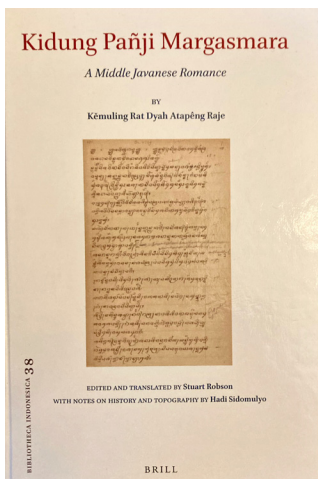
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## Book reviews

Stuart Robson (editor and translator), with Notes on History and Topography by Hadi Sidomulyo, *Kidung Pañji Margasmara; A Middle Javanese Romance* (by Kēmuling Rat Dyah Atapêng Raje). Leiden / Boston: Brill, [Bibliotheca Indonesica Volume 41.], 2023, 439 pp. ISBN 978 90 04 52369 2. Price: EUR 140.00 (hardback).



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Stuart Robson and Hadi Sidomulyo in this volume offer readers two quite different but important contributions to our understanding of east Javanese history in late Majapahit times. Robson's contribution adds to an already impressive record of editions, translations, and commentaries of *kakawin* and *kidung* he has published. He has been motivated, as

he says, by the real need to rescue these works from obscurity, even loss, and the importance of bringing them to the attention and appreciation of a wider audience in Indonesia and overseas. Sidomulyo adds yet another impressively detailed exploration of the topography of the landscape of ancient eastern Java to those he has published in *Napak tilas perjalanan Mpu Prapañca* (2007), "Notes on the topography of ancient Java" (2008), and *Threads of the unfolding web; The Old Javanese Tantu Panggĕlaran* (2021).

In 1979 Robson wrote an important article, "Notes on the early kidung literature" (*Bijdrage tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 135: 300-322). In it he provided readers with detailed summaries of three *kidungs*: the *Kidungs Pañji Margasmara*, *Wargasari*, and *Witaraga*. The stories recounted in all three he pointed out were authored in the middle of the fifteenth century and set in eastern Java. Interestingly, each of these *kidungs* is focussed not on the lives of royal households but on those of senior bureaucrats of Majapahit – the *Kidung Wargasari* on the kin group of the Buddhist *dharmādhyakṣa* of Majapahit, the *Witaraga* on the household of a senior bureaucrat who at the end of his career

retires to a life of meditation in the forested mountains of eastern Java and the present *kidung* on the households of the Adipati of Singhasari, the Atunggu Darma of Kagēnēngan, and of the *patih* of Majapahit.

Robson provides readers with a welcome edition, English translation and commentary on the *Kidung Pañji Margasmara*. In the lunar month of Śrawana of the Śaka year 1350 (July-August 1458 CE), the poem's author, Kēmuling Rat Dyah Atapēng Raje, composed his *kidung* in *tēngahan* metres. Robson had five manuscripts available for his edition. He selected as his most reliable witness Cod. Or. 4329, a manuscript dating from the late nineteenth century and part of the Van der Tuuk's collection, now housed in the Leiden University Library. He also had available a transliteration of this manuscript by Mr J. Soegiarto for Professor C.C. Berg. A colophon attached to this version of the *kidung* indicates that it was copied from a manuscript from Karangasem in 1811 CE. Robson supplemented the readings of this version of the text where necessary with readings from another transliteration of a lontar manuscript of the work from Bungkul(an), Buleleng dated 1930 CE. This was transliterated by Gusti Made Maker for the collection of the Kirtya Liefrink-Van der Tuuk in Buleleng, Bali (Cod. Or. 13.303). On occasions, however, he found that he had to rely on what he describes as "good suggestions" in a largely "unreliable" witness copied for the Proyek Tik from a manuscript in the collection of the Griya Pidada in Sidemen, Karangasem. Cod. Or. 3600, he says was too dirty to read and Cod. Or. 4330 also from the Van der Tuuk Collection was incomplete.

Robson's long experience and skills as a translator of Old Javanese poetic works has given us an excellent translation of the *Kidung Pañji Margasmara*. Supported by extensive textual notes the translation navigates with considerable dexterity the hazards of translating early works of *kidung* in *tēngahan* metres. Robson discusses these difficulties in his introductory commentary. *Kidung* in *tēngahan* metres, like *kakawin* and works in *macapat* metres, were intended to be sung. In the case of works in *tēngahan* metres, however, the manuscripts, while they mark cantos and stanzas clearly, within the stanza there is no punctuation indicating either the musical or syntactic phrasing. This together with a variable syntactic ordering of grammatical subject and predicate, the often absence of the grammatical subject, and the sometimes-idiosyncratic choice of words and words not always identified in Zoetmulder's *Old Javanese-English Dictionary*, presents a translator with difficulties of translation, which, as Robson himself points out, hamper interpretation of the text and the accuracy of the translations.

In precolonial Bali and Java *kakawin* and *kidung* were important forms in which inhabitants of Java's aristocratic courts gave expression to their sense of community. In these works, poets gave meaning to, and their audiences found confirmation of the traditions and values which informed their social existence. Robson categorizes Kēmuling Rat Dyah Atapēng Raje's *kidung* as a "romance". He has assigned the *kidung* to this literary genre because the *kidung* shares a number of characteristics commonly considered as markers of western courtly romances: its narrativity, its fictionality, its focus on aristocratic

characters and their tales of love and adventure, and finally its didactic purpose. Hadi Sidomulyo lays emphasis on the *kidung*'s didactic purpose. It was intended, he says, "to preserve for posterity the time-honoured traditions and institutions of ancient Java". The *kidung*'s primary thematic interest is an exploration in some detail of the nature of a successful marriage by kidnap, an interest the *kidung* shares with the *Kidung Wargasari* another of the mid-fifteenth century *kidung* in *tengahan* metres which Robson had discussed in his 1979 article. The *Kidung Margasmara* is the tale of the beautiful daughter of the Adipati of Singhasari, Ken Candrasari, and Pañji Margasmara, the son of a wetnurse in the court of Majapahit and favourite of its king. The Adipati of Singhasari and his wife had decided that their daughter was to marry her first cousin, Ki Jaran Warida, the son of the Atunggu Darma of Kagēnengan – a marriage which not only bore the authority of the girl's parents, but which was a form of marriage favoured in the royal and aristocratic courts of ancient Java. Ken Candrasari, however, was set against this union. Indeed, she was prepared to suicide (*prayane angur atēmahan antakāngadēmana tiksananing astra*) rather than be forced to marry (*kudwakēnāpanggiha*) the husband her parents had chosen for her. In the meantime, in Majapahit, the handsome Pañji Margasmara, described at this point in the poem as a talented gambler (*bobotoh*) and philanderer (*kewan rarasing sily-asih*), had married the beautiful daughter of the Patih of Majapahit. However, two months into their marriage she had died leaving him to grieve and determined to turn his back on social life and to withdraw to the forested mountains to live a life of meditation. The two lovers quite by chance meet in the garden Taman Warapsari and fall in love. Their union is consummated and Pañji Margasmara is forced to flee the wrath of Ken Candrasari's father. After a period of separation, the two lovers meet again on the southern coast of Java and elope. Following the intervention of the young king of Majapahit who gives his approval to the marriage, Ken Candrasari's parents also approve of her marriage to Pañji Margasmara who is appointed to the high office as *patih* of Majapahit.

The *Kidung Margasmara* is also a tale of journeying, of journeys between Majapahit and Singhasari; of the flight of Pañji Margasmara to *pangabētan* of Gandamayū where he receives the blessing of the goddess there, Ra Nini (Durga), for his future marriage to Ken Candrasari and then his onward flight south to the *maṇḍala* of Kayu Puring on Java's southern coast; of his flight with Ken Candrasari from Kayu Puring to the temple at Rabut Palah where he meets with the young king of Majapahit, who welcomes the couple and approves their marriage; and then their journey north to Majapahit and Singhasari where they marry. The *kidung* also describes journeys to ancestral temples where rites are conducted – the young king of Majapahit's journey to his ancestral temple at Rabut Palah (Candi Panataran) where he undergoes a consecration prior to his marriage at Bubāt; and the pilgrimage of the Adipati of Singhasari in the company of Ken Candrasari, her cousin Jaran Warida to whom she is betrothed, and their families, to the *maṇḍala* of Kukub where they participate in a three-day funerary rite at the time of the full-moon of Kartika

before their leisure trip on to the southern coast of Java at Palandungan nearby the *maṇḍala* of Kayu Puring where Pañji Margasmara waited the arrival of his bride-to be.

Hadi Sidomulyo, in Part 2 of the book, “Notes on the History and Topography”, traces each of these journeys. He also provides readers with a discussion of the location of the royal palace of Singhasari with its gateways, garden and palace square, ancestral temple, and the Taman Warapsari, where Pañji Margasmara and Ken Candrasari meet for the first time. His meticulously fine-grained analysis of each journey draws upon ground surveys which has familiarized him with topographical features of the landscape described in the *kidung*, archaeological sites and the names of villages, and, combined with careful scrutiny of a number of contemporary literary works and inscriptions, yields a convincing impression of the topography, distribution of villages and routes travelled in fifteenth century eastern Java. He concludes that Kĕmuling Rat Dyah Atapêng Raje must have been a native of Singhasari and thoroughly familiar with the eastern Javanese landscape he describes in his poem.

We have noted that Robson has categorized the *kidung* as a “romance”, and Sidomulyo has emphasized the work’s didactic purpose. Sidomulyo’s establishment of the historical veracity of the place names and features of the landscape of eastern Java in the fifteenth century gives him cause to question the generic classification of the *kidung Pañji Margasamara*. He asks whether the references to the “historical” landscape of eastern Java and placenames simply provide a socially realist setting for the romantic events and didactic purpose of this fifteenth century *kidung* or whether they perhaps give us reason to ascribe a historical veracity to both setting and events and so provide grounds to categorize the poem as a “history”? In the end he dismisses this possibility because he is unable to identify the “young ruler” of Majapahit and his *patih*, Pañji Margasmara, of the poem among the rulers and *patih*s recorded in the *Pararaton* and contemporary inscriptions.

The present publication is a valuable addition to the literature on fifteenth century Java. The authors have given us another important literary work from the pen of a Javanese author, one which provides us with an insight into Java’s literary history in the fifteenth century. They have also given us a publication which tells much about the mores of fifteenth century Javanese courtiers and their households together with a valuable topographical description of significant areas of eastern Java in the fifteenth century.