

## TRACES OF AN OLD SUNDANESE RAMAYANA TRADITION\*

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The remarkable diversity among the several Ramayana versions which are to be found in Malay and Javanese literature has been one of the main problems in the field of Indonesian Ramayana studies. About forty-five years ago W. F. Stutterheim established that several different Ramayana traditions existed side by side in these literatures. His comparative study of these various Malay and Javanese Ramayana texts was a major contribution to the understanding of their relation to each other and to their Indian sources.<sup>1</sup> Another major step toward relating the various Ramayana versions was the discovery twenty years ago that two-thirds of the Old Javanese Ramayana is a free translation of the Sanskrit *Bhatti-kāvya*, which meant that the major origin of one of the Javanese traditions was found.<sup>2</sup> Now it appears from an Old Sundanese manuscript recently found in Djakarta<sup>3</sup> that there is a third Indonesian region, the Sundanese one of West Java, which once had its own Ramayana tradition. Here again one is faced with similar problems of divergency.

Before entering upon the possible significance of this manuscript it seems worthwhile to make a few remarks on its language and on the literature to which it belongs. The Central Museum in Djakarta possesses a small collection of some forty Sundanese palm-leaf manuscripts which are written in a now obsolete syllabary. Most of them deal with religious and literary themes from pre-Islamic times. In the course of the last century these manuscripts were discovered in mountain villages in West Java where they were kept as sacred heirlooms from the past. At that time they were no longer part of a living tradition as no one could read them, let alone understand their contents.<sup>4</sup>

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\* An earlier version of this article was read at the XXVII International Congress of Orientalists in Ann Arbor, August 17, 1967. Research into the subject of this article was made possible by a grant from the Netherlands Organization for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.).

1. W. F. Stutterheim, Rāma-legenden und Rāma-reliefs in Indonesien. (Munich: G. Müller, 1925).
2. See e.g. C. Hooykaas, The Old Javanese Rāmāyana Kakawin (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1955), p. 16.
3. Kropak No. 1102 of the manuscript collection of the Central Museum in Djakarta.
4. E. Netscher, "Iets over eenige in de Preanger-regentschappen gevonden Kawi-handschriften," Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap, I (1853), pp. 469-479; Cf. the chapter entitled "Het verboden Tji-boeroej," in C. M. Pleyte, Soendasche Schetsen (Bandung: C. Kolff, 1905), pp. 163-173.

In these manuscripts two types of script are used, both of them members of the family of India-derived scripts which have been in use in several parts of Indonesia. One is written exclusively with ink on nipa palm leaves and is closely related to an Old Javanese type of script which is also written with ink and on the same material.<sup>5</sup> The other type is incised on *lontar* palm leaves and shows many peculiarities of its own which testify to an independent Sundanese development. Earlier stages of this second type of script are known from a few inscriptions on stone and on copper plates.<sup>6</sup>

It is fair to assume that this latter type of Old Sundanese script took several centuries to develop, but it is not possible to mention exact dates since hardly any of the manuscripts concerned is sufficiently dated. The only known exception is a manuscript of the didactic prose text entitled *Siksa Kandang Karesyan*, which is dated Saka 1440 (1518 A.D.).<sup>7</sup> There is, however, some evidence to show that the texts, in the form in which we have them, probably do not date from earlier than the sixteenth century. In one of the texts containing some historical information, the *Carita Parahyangan*, there are allusions to the wars which accompanied the introduction of Islam into West Java,<sup>8</sup> which took place in the years between 1520 and 1527, while the capital of the pre-Islamic state of Pajajaran was probably taken by Javanese Muslims in 1580.<sup>9</sup> Other texts mention the use of firearms, which probably were not introduced in Java much earlier than the sixteenth century.

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5. Examples of this script are reproduced in H. Kern, "De Legende van Kunjarakarna," Verspreide Geschriften, X (1922) after p. 76, and in Th. G. Th. Pigeaud, Literature of Java: Catalogue Raisonné of Javanese Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and other Public Collections in the Netherlands (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967-1970), III, p. 21, plate 22.
  6. The Batu Tulis and the Kawali inscriptions on stone and the Kebantenan copper plates, cf. Poerbatjaraka, "De Batoe Toelis bij Buitenzorg," Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap, LIX (1919-1921), pp. 380-417, and references mentioned therein; examples of this script are also to be found in the illustrations in my "Over het eerste gedeelte van de Carita Parahyangan," Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, CXVIII (1962), pp. 374-383; K. F. Holle's Tabel van Oud- en Nieuw-Indische Alfabetten (Batavia and The Hague: W. Bruining & Co., 1882).
  7. K. F. Holle, "Vluchtig bericht omtrent eenige lontar-handschriften," Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap, XVI (1867), pp. 450-470, especially pp. 453-460. L. C. Damais mentions the date of this manuscript under F. 7 in his "Etudes d'épigraphie indonésienne V," Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d' Extrême Orient, XLIX (1958), p. 58, though he erroneously calls this text Kawih Panyaraman instead of Siksa Kandang Karesyan.
  8. Poerbatjaraka, "De Batoe Toelis," pp. 402-415, especially pp. 414-415.
  9. H. Djajadiningrat, Critische beschouwing van de Sadjarah Banten (Haarlem: J. Enschedé en zonen, 1913), pp. 74 ff., 138.

On the other hand, these palm-leaf manuscripts are remarkably free of Muslim influence. Although one or two of them do contain some Arabic formulas, showing that they were written well after Islam had become dominant, in the great majority of these texts Islam is totally unknown, and none of the many Arabic loan words which form part of the present-day language occur in these texts. Consequently, it seems improbable that they were written much later than the sixteenth century, although they may have been copied afterwards by people who lived in small communities in the interior of the country, where the old culture may have been preserved for some time within a Muslim environment. In the eighteenth century, at any rate, Muslim influence was already strong in this literature, as is evidenced by the *Waruga Guru* text, which is not written on palm leaf but on paper, though in the peculiar Old Sundanese script. This text may be dated roughly to the first part of the eighteenth century because some Javanese kings of that time are mentioned in it.<sup>10</sup> The language of this text is also slightly more modern than that of the palm-leaf manuscripts.

The language used in the palm-leaf texts is another indication that they are at least some centuries old. It is clearly an older stage of the present-day Sundanese language of West Java. The differences are partly grammatical and phonological: some affixes are used differently; there are some syntactic differences; and some sound changes had apparently not yet taken place, e.g. words such as the modern *tilu* (three) are still written *telu* (or *tēlu*) and some words show a final palatal which have final *t* at present such as *imuc* now written as *imut* (smile). In a few cases the older form of a given word contains the etymological explanation of its modern form; the modern word *ngan* (only) appears to be an arbitrary abbreviation of the older form *hēngan*, which occurs in the Old Sundanese texts and which consists of a root *hēng* (known from Old Javanese in the meaning of "outside") and a suffix *-an*. The greater part of the linguistic differences between Old Sundanese and the modern language are of a lexical nature, so that an extensive lexicographical and comparative study of all of the texts available must be made to reach an understanding of their contents and of the many now obsolete words and expressions to be found in them.

For all of these reasons, the language of these manuscripts is usually and conveniently called Old Sundanese, although it must be borne in mind that this term in fact refers to a period of time which is several centuries later than that of the earliest Old Malay and Old Javanese documents.

Apart from the linguistic importance of these Old Sundanese texts for the study of the history of this particular Indonesian language, their main interest lies in their being our only sources for gaining some insight into the culture of what may be called the Hindu-Sundanese past of the now predominantly Muslim people of West Java. In the field of religion, for example, they give evidence of Hinduistic influence: such well-known Hindu gods as Visnu, Brahma, Śiva, and Mahadeva are mentioned in didactic texts; the punishment of sinners in the hell of Yama are described in the *Carita Purnawijaya*;<sup>11</sup> and ascetic practices are taught as a means of release from earthly bonds.

10. C. M. Pleyte, "De Patapaän Adjar Soeka Resi," Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap, LV (1913), pp. 362-404.

11. C. M. Pleyte, "Poernawidjaja's Hellevaart," Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap, LVI (1914), pp. 365-437.

On the other hand, there appear to be distinctly indigenous or at least less clearly Hindu elements in the pantheon, such as the inclusion of the lord of the nether world called Si Awak Larang and *batara* Darmajati who in one text is represented as the highest god.<sup>12</sup> With respect to social organization, one gets some idea of the classes and groups of officials which existed. Two examples are the descriptions of the state of peaceful prosperity prevailing among some special groups of subjects of a certain king in the *Carita Parahyangan*<sup>13</sup> and the instructions concerning their behavior towards each other in the *Siksa Kandang Karesyan*.<sup>14</sup>

In this latter text some titles of literary works (*carita*) are listed, such as *Adiparwa*, *Ramayana*, *Kunjayakarna* and *Ranggalawé*, which are known to us from Old Javanese literature. Thus, it seems to follow that there once existed a great deal more literary activity in West Java--perhaps consisting partly of translations from Javanese--than the relatively few and mainly religious texts which have been preserved would indicate.

One of the very few tangible pieces of evidence of such literary activity, and at the same time one of the most interesting of the texts preserved, is an epic poem which is introduced as "the great story of the children of Rawana, of the offspring of Manondari." The poem may be characterized as a sequel to the Ramayana tale, because it starts at a time when the war between Rama and Rawana has already been concluded. It is partly an *Uttarakānda* (final chapter of the Ramayana) story as it tells how Rama has Sita, his wife, put in a coffin and thrown in the river because of her alleged unfaithfulness. She is saved and given shelter by a hermit in whose house she then gives birth to Rama's son, Bujanggalawa, while the latter's twin brother Puspawala comes into being through the magic power of the hermit. The brothers are the Kuśa and Lava of the Sanskrit epic.

The main points of the story as summarized so far are well in accordance with the usual *Uttarakānda* tales, however much they may differ in details. But then the story develops along lines which are unknown elsewhere. Manondari (Mandodari, in Sanskrit), the wife of Rawana, just before following her husband in death, gives birth to his posthumous son, Manabaya, who, when grown up, brings to life again his brother Megananda (Meghanāda) and all his father's warriors, who had been slain by Rama and his army. Manabaya is acknowledged by Bibisana (Vibhīšana) as the rightful successor of Rawana in Lengkapura (Lankā). He then marches against the sons of Rama to take revenge for the defeat and death of Rawana. They besiege Pañcawati, the city of Rama, where Bujanggalawa has succeeded his father. At first it seems that the attacking party will win, especially because of the absence of the heroic Bujanggalawa who has gone to heaven to

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12. *Kropak* No. 620 in Central Museum, Djakarta.

13. Poerbatjaraka, "De Batoe Toelis," p. 413, Fol. 22 verso.

14. K. F. Holle, "Vluchtig bericht," p. 454; C. M. Pleyte, "Poernawidjaja," p. 438.

meet his deceased father. As soon as Bujanggalawa returns from his visit to heaven, however, the counterattack is launched. Unfortunately, since the remainder of the only manuscript of this text has not been preserved, the outcome of the battle has to remain a matter of conjecture.

It is clear, that this story--the part preserved consists of nearly 1,650 mainly octosyllabic lines--is built up as a counterpart of the Ramayana. The war of Rama and Rawana is repeated in a second generation, when the sons of Rawana try to take revenge on the sons of Rama. The Ramayana story itself is not told, but there are allusions to several details of it and a general knowledge of it is clearly presupposed. For instance, when it is told that Rama wanted to put his wife to death because of her intercourse with Rawana, the story of her abduction by Rawana and her involuntary stay with him is supposed to be known. Similarly, Rawana's death is alluded to when Manabaya is about to attack the sons of Rama, and they warn him that he will be killed like his father. And even the deer, Marica, which was chased by Rama is mentioned in a simile. These examples show that the text under discussion was a part of an Old Sundanese Ramayana tradition and that the Ramayana story was well known. There are other details which testify to its popularity and which seem to indicate that the heroes from the Ramayana had a special place in Hindu-Sundanese religion. In a poem which describes the journey through heaven made by one Sri Ajñana, it is told that among the abodes of the gods there was a place where Manondari (the wife of Rawana) and Puah Nilasita (the wife of Surugiwa [Sugrīva]) lived, having followed their husbands in death.<sup>15</sup> In another text *batara Bibisana* is mentioned as being present at a meeting of the gods, together with Darmajati, Wisnu, Siwa, Mahadewa, and Isora. These references and allusions to the Ramayana, however insignificant in themselves, together testify to the prominence and popularity of this story and make it highly probable that there once existed an Old Sundanese text of the Ramayana proper.

Although this Old Sundanese Ramayana text has not been preserved, it can nevertheless be inferred from some details of the sequel text that the Sundanese Ramayana tradition differed in more than one respect from the classical Sanskrit one. In the first place, the story appears to have been situated in a completely indigenous environment. Several of the secondary characters and places, such as the parts of the battlefield where the armies of Rama and Rawana fought, have Sundanese or at least Indonesian names, such as Haur Dēngdék and *tegal* si Awat-awat. In an interesting passage of our text, this former battlefield is described when Rawana's son, Manabaya, visits it and sees on it the fallen heroes of his father. Here he learns about the fate of his brother Megananda who met his death when he and Wiladikarma killed each other with their arrows. This incident again may be considered as a reference to the Sundanese Ramayana tradition.

One of the most interesting differences from the classical tradition is the fact that in our story Sita is represented as being the daughter of Rawana. She is accused by Rama of having had intercourse with her father; her sons refer to Rawana's sons as their uncles and to Rawana's wife as their grandmother. Consequently, in this tradition the war between Rama and Rawana as well as that between

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15. Kropak No. 625 in Central Museum, Djakarta.

their sons was a war of relatives, just as much as the war between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas in the Mahābhārata epic.

This fact makes it understandable why the story is announced in its introduction as "the tale of the children of Rawana, of the offspring of Manondari." Although this designation seems like a rather one-sided account of the story, it is clear now that this is not the case, for the expression quoted above in fact does also include the sons of Rama, who were the grandchildren of Rawana and Manondari. Therefore, it even seems acceptable to take this designation "the story of the descendants of Rawana and Manondari" as the title of our text, although it should be noted that this title stresses the underlying unity of the opposing parties rather than their deadly conflict. Their common descent seems to have had a special importance.

This nonclassical descent of Sita is a rather widespread belief. As Stutterheim pointed out in his Ramayana studies of 1925, it is clearly present in the Malay and part of the Javanese traditions, as well as in the Siamese *Ramakien* version, and is even not unknown in India.<sup>16</sup> Camille Bulcke, in his closely argued article of 1952 on the subject,<sup>17</sup> has amplified the material (the Cambodian, Tibetan, Khotan, and several Indian versions are included) and has pointed to the Vedavati story of the classical *Uttarakāṇḍa* of Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* as the original source of the idea that Sita was Rawana's daughter. This finding does not imply, of course, that the versions mentioned above have borrowed from this source directly and independently from each other. It must be left to future research to see if there was an intermediate source from which all or some of the divergent versions derive.

Stutterheim has argued that in some of the Malay and Javanese versions the incest motif has been mitigated by the suggestion that it was Dasaratha and not Rawana who was Sita's father.<sup>18</sup> Stutterheim here overlooked the fact that in this way one incest motif would have merely replaced another, since Rama and Sita would then be brother and sister. Be this as it may, it appears that the Sundanese tradition is not only in concert with other Southeast Asian traditions as regards the descent of Sita, but more specifically belongs with those in which there is no question of mitigation of the implied incest motif.

It is to these neighboring Indonesian regions, too, that we shall have to look first for the origin of possible influences upon the Sundanese tradition. The text under discussion clearly shows evidence of Javanese influence. The story itself has not to my knowledge been found in Javanese literature, but the names of several characters figuring in it are either Javanese, e.g. Sekar Awelang, or are explicable only from Javanese, e.g. Sombali (in Javanese, Subali), and Megananda. This Javanese element is certainly older

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16. W. F. Stutterheim, *Rāma-legenden*, pp. 92-93.

17. C. Bulcke, "La Naissance de Sītā," *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d' Extrême Orient*, XLVI (1952), pp. 107-117, especially pp. 110-112: "Sītā, fille de Ravana."

18. W. F. Stutterheim, *Rāma-legenden*, pp. 106-107.

than the texts of the Javanese wayang plays as we know them, in which the deviations from the classical names are much greater. There is more affinity with other Javanese Rama texts, such as the *Rama Kling* where Bujanggalawa occurs as the name of one of the sons of Rama.<sup>19</sup> But in other names occurring in the Sundanese text, Javanese influence is conspicuously absent (e.g., Sita, not Sinta). Therefore, if the Sundanese tradition goes back to a Javanese one, it may well represent a stage in Javanese Rama literature which is older than the Javanese texts just mentioned.<sup>20</sup>

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19. H. H. Juynboll, Supplement op den Catalogus van de Javaansche en Madoereesche Handschriften der Leidsche Universiteitsbibliotheek (Leiden, 1911), II, p. 60.
20. This is corroborated by Th. Pigeaud's statement in his Literature of Java, I, p. 243, that Javanese "Rama tales not in accordance with the kakawin tradition do not appear in written literature of the pre-Islamic period."

