PART I

OLD JAVANESE KAKAWIN
AND THE
KAKAWIN RĀMĀYAṆA

Hymns of Praise in Kakawins

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and Other Examples

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It is now common knowledge that there is a particular link, or there are links, between Kakawin and religion. We owe this insight to P.J. Zoetmulder, who as early as 1954 wrote a paper on ‘The Old Javanese Poet as Yogi’ for the 23rd International Congress of Orientalists held in Cambridge in that year. In 1955 he published an Indonesian article under the title ‘Kawi dan Kekawin’ in Yogyakarta, and this was duly followed by an English translation, ‘Kawi and Kekawin’, which appeared in the *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (BKI)* in 1957. However, now we always refer to the relevant section in Zoetmulder’s *Kalangwan; A Survey of Old Javanese Literature*, which was published in 1974. Of course, I mean the paragraph ‘Religio Poetae’ (Zoetmulder 1974:173–86).

Hence there is no need to reiterate what has been said there. We accept the idea that in the opening passages of many Kakawins the poet gives a clear statement of his aims and methods in terms of yoga. But the subject of the connection between Old Javanese poetry and religion has moved on since then, with some writings by S. Supomo that deserve to be better known, namely the articles ‘Kāma di dalam kekawin’ (1985) and ‘Kāma in Old Javanese Kakawin’ (2000), which consider the aesthetic theory underlying this art form in religious terms.

At a certain time in the early 1970s, Romo Zoetmulder once said, while sipping his tea and crunching a *pèyèk kacang* in the Pasturan refectory, that if he had time after the dictionary he would write what might be called a ‘theology of the Kakawins’. He would have been the ideal person to undertake that project, but as far as we know he did not get the time. It would have been interesting to see what he wanted to say on the subject.

In recent years I have had occasion to look again at a special passage in the Kakawin *Arjunawiwāha*, namely Cantos 10 and 11, which are actually quite difficult to interpret. This passage has been dubbed the ‘Hymn to Śiwa’, and

again the study of it has a respectable ancestry, as it was discussed at great length by C.C. Berg in 1933 in his article in the *Bijdragen*, 'De Ćiwa-hymne van de *Arjunawiwāha*'. He included Balinese paraphrases, a Kidung version and Modern Javanese texts as well. I may perhaps be permitted to remind you of the setting within the story: Arjuna has been grappling with the hunter, in a dispute over the boar that they have both shot, when suddenly the hunter reveals himself as the highest form of Śiwa. At this point Arjuna utters these two short cantos in praise of the god. But before he can continue (*stuti nira tan tulus*), Śiwa interrupts him and replies, granting the boon that Arjuna had been focusing his yoga on: Śiwa gives him the powerful arrow Paśupati.

The significance of this passage, at least in the mind of later generations, seems to be underlined by the use made of it in Bali, as I observed during a modest spot of fieldwork there in the second half of 1971. It was precisely these words that were chanted in the context of a *dewayadnya*, ceremony for the gods, held in a temple there. This Kakawin is of course very well known in Bali, and the sentiments expressed in Cantos 10 and 11 were felt to be appropriate when greeting the gods descending from Heaven to attend the ceremony being held for their benefit in the temple.

We have just seen the Old Javanese term for the passage that Mpu Kaṇwa, the author of the *Arjunawiwāha*, used for it, namely *stuti*, 'song of praise, praise'. For *stuti* OJED (1825) provides: 'In the context of ritual a distinction is made from *pūjā*, the acts of worship'. Arjuna was well aware of the ritual needed for confronting a god, and offered an abbreviated form, *sangsiptapūjā*, before uttering his praises (see *Arjunawiwāha* 9.5).

Given the close relationship between the *Arjunawiwāha* and the Sanskrit Mahākāvya *Kirātārjunīya*, one suspects that a comparable passage might also be found there, and this does indeed turn out to be the case: at exactly the same point in the story, the *Kirātārjunīya* (xviii.21–43) also has a 'grand hymn of praise', in which Arjuna 'glorifies Śiwa as the supreme Deity' (Peterson 2003:175). It has not been possible (yet) to make a close comparison, but the *Kirātārjunīya* passage is obviously much longer. The term used there is *stotra*, a synonym of *stuti* (indeed derived from the same root *stu* that also lies at the basis of *stawa*, which we will encounter below).

So at least one thing is clear—with the *stuti* we are looking at a phenomenon separate and distinct from the yogic opening passage of Kakawin. And we can already say, on the basis of the *stuti* in the *Arjunawiwāha*, firstly that it is embedded somewhere in the midst of the story, and secondly that it is uttered by a main character. The questions which now present themselves are: 1. Why at

this particular point? and 2. What is its function?

A search for answers takes us to other readily available Kakawin texts. Do they also contain a hymn to a god?

Naturally, I looked first at the *Bhomāntaka*. The passage there that immediately springs to mind is in Canto 108, which reads as follows (Teeuw and Robson 2005):

7. The god Brahmā quickly came to pay respectful homage to Lord Keśawa,

And with devotion praised (*angastuti*) him, saying: ‘You are the highest ruler, the supreme king;

You are the arising, abiding and passing away of the world, and this is why you are the first of the gods;

The enjoyer of what is to be enjoyed, you are pure of soul, the superior man, nothing but the highest reality.

8. Regarding the deepest essence of the syllable Om, you are the embodiment of the letter,

In the well-wrought, subtle Sutras you are bound as the highest truth, far to seek.

In the science of astronomy, you and none other are the direction for finding what is sought,

In short, supreme among the three lords, the highest Śiwa, and thus the favoured divinity.

9. See how the world of men longs for the truth about the gods—but how could they understand the ways of the Lord in his all-pervading power?

They show wisdom if they apply mental concentration, but even so its domain does not extend as far as you.

Even the prince of yogis is not capable of forming an idea about you—he keeps silent, and his thinking falls short—

Praise, meditation, concentration, the moral law and teaching are a distraction for him in his pursuit of spiritual learning’.

10. When Prajāpati had spoken such words of praise (*mangastuti*), all of the gods appeared ...

It is not necessary to get involved in a debate over the details of the translation. An important point is that the general style is similar to the hymn of *Arjuna-wiwāha*. Apart from that, we need to note the setting of this praise. It comes

immediately after the death of Bhoma in Canto 107 at the hands of Lord Wiṣṇu. So this is the climax of the poem. The demons have fled. But there is still a problem: Lord Keśawa has made himself so huge that he threatens to block the world (*māhêng göng kadi wuntwa tang bhuwana de nira; Bhomāntaka* 108.6d). This is where the god Brahmā, the creator, enters with his praises, and all the gods appear, wishing to show respect to Lord Wiṣṇu, including Lord Parameśwara. As a result Lord Wiṣṇu is pleased with the host of gods (*samangkana bhaṭāra Wiṣṇu sukha de watĕk dewata; Bhomāntaka* 110.2c), and addresses them all, reminding them of their duties. Having done this, he is free to resume a human form in the world as its protector (*nghulun muwah ajanma mānuṣa rikang jagat rakṣakā; Bhomāntaka* 110.7d).

My second example is taken from the *Hariwangśa*. Here the story tells of a conflict that comes to a head in a great battle, where we find (oddly enough) Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa in combat. To quote from the summary in *Kalangwan*,

The two antagonists suddenly assume divine forms. Both are partial incarnations of Nārāyaṇa (Wiṣṇu) and as such one in being, so that now the fight has lost its meaning. Wiṣṇu (Hari) descends, enthroned on his lotus-seat and surrounded by gods and ṛṣis (38.5–40.11). Yudhiṣṭhira (whose magic sleep has apparently been broken) worships him with a hymn in which he praises him as the god of gods, the essence of the unknowable. Brahma, Wiṣṇu and Mahādewa are one with him. He is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. The various sects of the Śiwaites, Ṛṣis and Buddhists, in spite of their differences, know that he is the beginning and the end, and implore him to grant them final release. To this praise Wiṣṇu listens with evident pleasure and allows Yudhiṣṭhira to ask a favour, whatever it may be. The latter begs him to restore the world and bring to life all those who have died, without exception. Wiṣṇu hesitates, but the other gods put forward an urgent plea for him to grant the request, reminding him that the time of the end for the world has not yet come... They pray that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna may resume their human form. Wiṣṇu agrees, a shower of *amṛta* descends and all come to life (41.1–45.5). (Zoetmulder 1974:254)

The Kakawin *Smaradahana* (ed. Poerbatjaraka 1931) is a remarkable piece of literature, deserving much more study than it has received hitherto. In this story Kāma's arrow has struck Śiwa and as a result he has been burnt by Śiwa's fire. Indra and Wṛhaspati had promised to help him, and now have the duty of asking Śiwa to restore Kāma to life. Quoting again from *Kalangwan*,

Together they return to the place where they had fled in panic. The ṛṣis approach the god reverently. With the aid of mantras they cause him to be present in their hearts in visible form, seated on the eight-petalled lotus, whereupon they worship him with a hymn praising him as the deity manifesting itself in all the beings, as the

aim of those striving after final release, and as the lord of creation (8.1–11.3). This induces Śiwa to relinquish his terrifying aspect [...]. (Zoetmulder 1974:292–3)

The hymn itself is found in Cantos 10 and 11, a total of only five stanzas, and is termed a *stuti* (in 9.17d and 12.1a). Another example is to be found in the Kakawin *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* (my personal favourite). Abhimanyu's affair with Kṣiti Sundarī has been discovered, and so Baladewa is furious and determined to marry her off to Duryodhana's son before Kṛṣṇa can get back. Abhimanyu is forced to flee, and while he is asleep the demon Karālawaktra finds him. Quoting from the summary in *Kalangwan*,

On hearing that he is a servant of the goddess Durga, who has sent him to look for prey, either animal or human, which is to be brought for her to devour, Abhimanyu persuades him to accept him as a prospective victim. Together they go to the abode of the goddess. She appears, frightening to behold, her hands outstretched to seize him, but halts when she hears his mantras. She listens to him worshipping her and praising her as the goddess who is one with the Supreme Being, and is merciful and generous to her devotees, but terrifying to her enemies, and so she becomes kindly disposed towards him and favours him with her advice. He is to seek help from Ghaṭotkaca [...]. (Zoetmulder 1974:266)

The canto containing Abhimanyu's words is Canto 31, and this consists of five stanzas. I did not find the word *stuti* here. The passage begins with the words *Om sēmbah ning anāśrayāmēkul i jōng paramasakala rena ning jagat* (31.1a), which gives a feeling for the style.

Moving ahead to the fifteenth century for another example, in the *Śiwarā-trikalpa* we find that the followers of Yama have captured the soul of the sinful Lubdhaka, only to have it taken from them by the followers of Śiwa. Yama and his troops proceed to the dwelling of Śiwa. Quoting from the existing translation (Teeuw et al. 1969:135–7):

32.7b. Meanwhile king Yama had arrived with his troops and had entered the audience court.

He then hurried in, bowing respectfully, and devotedly wiped the feet of Īśwara.

And his praises (*stuti*) were very brilliant and most distinct for Jagatpati to hear.

33.1. Hail! Behold the homage of him who has no refuge (*om sēmbah ning anāśraya...*), here at the lotus-feet of the Lord of the World.

Outwardly and inwardly I pay homage to you, who are the constant object of my devotion.

Visible and invisible are you in the whole world, you are the life of the living, and bring about both good and evil;
You are the permanent object of desire of those who purify the spirit by abandoning the ten senses.

33.2. In consecration and other rites you are present in the state of complete abstraction, you are the consummation of what has gone before—you par excellence and none other.

In the sacred books you are the embodiment of the holy syllable, and nothing else will ever exceed you;

You are corporeal and incorporeal, subtler than the slenderest body, and coarser than the greatest;

You are present in the stationary and the moving; you alone are the goal of him who takes refuge in the Void.

This praise (now termed *stawa*, another Sanskrit synonym) is then answered by lord Śaṅkara, who gives an explanation of the celebration of the Night of Śiwa (Canto 34).

In the Kakawin *Kuñjarakarṇadharmakathana* (Teeuw and Robson 1981), the king of the Gandharwas with Kuñjarakarṇa, having been warned of the dangers of hell, come before the Buddha and worship him (*amūjā*) with three stanzas of praise (Canto 17.1–3), again beginning with *om sēmbah ning anāśraya...*; in 17.4a this passage is termed *stuti*. Having uttered it, they state their request, namely to be instructed in the supreme essence of the Law. The Buddha then gives teaching on the road to release, at considerable length, and including an explanation of the equivalence of the religious systems of the Śaiwas and Buddhists, saying:

23.4. Such is the specification of the world—you should know it truly.
I am Wairocana, the manifestation of both the Buddha and Śiwa, taken as teacher by the whole world;
That is why I am called Lord Teacher, renowned throughout the world.
But it is I who pervade the whole world, the most superior of gods.

However, despite the similarity and frequent occurrence of this type of ‘hymn of praise,’ we might not be justified in assuming that it is a requirement of all Kakawins. This would call for a collection and comparison of all extant examples of the genre, and such has not been possible, as not all have yet been published, let alone translated. But to show that caution is needed, one can men-

tion that well known specimens such as the *Bhāratayuddha* (Supomo 1993),¹ *Sumanasāntaka* (Supomo and Worsley, forthcoming), *Arjunawijaya* (Supomo 1977) and *Sutasoma* (English translation, O'Brien 2008) do not seem to contain a *stuti*.

It is now time, at last, to turn to the *Rāmāyana* Kakawin, more specifically *sarga* 17. Here we read that Rāwaṇa has ordered fake heads of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to be made, in the hope that Sītā will accept him after all. Sītā is deceived by this ruse and is inconsolable.

In her lament she addresses the husband she believes to be dead. Were all the prophecies about his future only lies? What sense is there in cultivating the *dharma* if this is the sole reward? Is it thus that the gods dispose the fate of man? She decides to follow Rāma in death, and asks Rāwaṇa to kill her. Full of shame and rage he retires. Sītā and Trijaṭā prepare themselves for death by fire, but the latter, warned by a vibration of her left eyebrow, an auspicious omen, decides to see her father Wibhīṣaṇa first. She finds him on Mount Suwela in the company of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, both alive and well. With these happy tidings and a report on the preparations for battle she returns to console Sītā. The latter brings offerings to Agni, the fire-god, the patron of purity and faithfulness. Trijaṭā does her best to divert her mistress' mind and cheer her up. Description of the amusements of the *rākṣasī*-maidens in the *aśoka* grove. (Zoetmulder 1974:223–4).

The mere mention of 'offerings to Agni' does scant justice to this passage. I therefore propose to give an English translation of it in full.

Sarga 17

(Trijaṭā is speaking to Sītā)

89. 'My lady, you should therefore wash your face and rinse your hair with tamarind water;

Here is the *gurun* grass that will help you let go of your pain.

It will be an offering to relieve the pain in your heart—

Happiness has almost arrived, and is coming to you!

90. Here is the substitute for yourself—come, look, arise!

Come, cast it into the holy Fire, make haste,

So that the impurities will be gone and burnt up,

And in this way you can focus your mind on the prince.'

1. Dr. Supomo (email of 18-4-2009) has kindly pointed out that we find in *Bhāratayuddha* 23.10–11 a passage addressed to the dead body of Droṇa (who is likened to Paśupati), that is termed a *stawa* (*Bhāratayuddha* 23.9d) and *pangastuti* (*Bhāratayuddha* 23.12a).

91. The princess was elated and immediately did her worship:
Flowers, incense and lamps were arranged,
The offerings for the sacred diagrams were complete,
And the prayers of offering were carried out perfectly.
92. The wick of the Deity blazed up very quickly,
And while she did homage she approached the 'golden jewel';
Jānakī was indeed deeply devoted,
And her petition (*prārthana*) was that the prince should be victorious:
93. 'Oh Lord Hutipati, consumer of oblations,
You are the 'Mouth of the Gods', supreme ruler of the gods,
Kind to worshippers, the Lord Guṇawidhi,
The bearer of mountains, earth and sea.
94. You are the highest god, the supreme fire of Śiwa,
You are the eight manifestations, the gods revealed;
The divine eight qualities are always with you,
And likewise the three qualities you control.
95. You are valiant and mighty, a powerful ruler—
Gods and Dānawas praise you,
Siddhas and celestial singers worship you,
And your light can be compared to a hundred thousand suns.
96. And you, Bhārata (= Agni), are the welfare of the world, compassionate,
You grant great happiness to your devotees;
None other than you are the goal of those who perform austerities,
And those who are endowed with right judgment, forever happy.
97. You are always compassionate and full of goodness,
You are the source of happiness and virtue,
And it is you who endow a knowledge of the holy texts—
You are the reason we reach the realm of release.
98. You, Lord, are soul alone, and happiness is your purpose,
The reason that stains and impurities will be removed,
And that existence will be freed from afflictions and calamities,
Because of your love for all men.
99. Oh God of Fire, Lord of the Three Worlds,
Look upon me, Lord, with favour:

Let Rāmabhadra be victorious,
May he love me and may we be happy when we meet’.

100. This was the princess’s intention (*prayojana*), indeed most wonderful.

She ceased insisting on dying, now that she had heard that the prince was alive.

But the pain of separation had not yet completely disappeared,
And lying on her couch she amused herself with reading.

So Sītā’s address to the god Agni is quite long (and perhaps a little confused, in keeping with her state of mind). We need not dwell on the philological details, but note a few important points. Firstly, Sītā begins with making offerings, before embarking on her petition. Secondly, the Fire is seen as having the function of burning up and removing impurities (17.90c and 17.98b), and is therefore appropriate in this context. And thirdly, Sītā hopes that the god will be kindly disposed by her offerings and praise, and will grant her petition, which is spelt out in full clarity (17.99cd).

But this is not the first time that Agni has been invoked. If we turn back to an earlier passage in the same *sarga*, we find Sītā contemplating killing herself by descending into the fire (17.61d).

64. It was the middle of the night, when people were sleeping,
No one uttered a sound, all fast asleep;
Then she built a fire, that blazed up amazingly—
She was praying, of course, that they should die together.

65. Jānakī was of goodly appearance and goodly birth,
Her heart was pure and her spirit spotless;
Her clothing was pure, well perfumed and lovely—
Sad at heart, she was striving to reach the noble prince.

66. ‘Hail, oh king!’ she invoked the deity,
Her thoughts unwavering, directed to the Lord;
With intention she ardently desired it,
Her petition (*prārthana*) was for Prince Rāma:

67. ‘Come, Lord, you who are called Bahni,
See, I am going to die, as you have no regard for me.
You do not give me any kind of happiness—
See, I would prefer death, Lord.

68. However, let the fruits of my death be
 That my body is consumed while worshipping the deity.
 Let me meet Rāmabhadra,
 Providing that for my whole marriage I have been pure’
69. These were her words, paying homage to the Deity ...

We have now reviewed a number of examples of passages of *stuti* in Kakawins, and are in a position to compare them and draw some conclusions. Several interesting points stand out.

These ‘hymns of praise’ are found embedded in the narrative—they are not at the beginning or at the end of the text—and can therefore be expected to play a part within the narrative. When we take the overall plot into account, it becomes apparent that the *stuti* occurs at a crucial juncture or turning-point in the story. At this point, the main character (or characters) confronts a problem—he is unable to go on. Then the deity appears or intervenes, and this introduces the possibility of solving the problem. But for this to happen, the deity has to be worshipped and addressed with appropriate words, using language that underlines both the deity’s supreme power and the worshipper’s humility and helplessness (*anāśraya*). All this has the effect of making the deity well disposed, willing to assist the supplicant with his power in order to find a way forward, by granting a weapon, special knowledge, or whatever is needed. The result may be immediate, as in the case of Arjuna and his weapon Paśupati (granted now but used later), or it may be delayed, as in the case of Sitā and her prayer for Rāma, where the victory and reunion will only be achieved later, after much struggle.

On a literary level, the *stuti* is a means of moving forward in the story, and on a ‘theological’ level it is a means of harnessing divine power for the purpose of fulfilling the desires of the humble worshipper and the needs of the world.

We note that the identity of the deity is not always the same—it can be Parmaśiwa, Viṣṇu, the Buddha Wairocana or Agni—but each time this figure is depicted as the highest in the pantheon. What governs the choice is the requirements of the story; it is not a matter of private devotion on the part of the author.

Finally, it may be possible to speculate on a further level of significance, beyond that of the particular story being told: the depiction of the mobilization of divine power for the benefit of the world in itself imbues the literary work with a particular significance, so that when recited it goes beyond being a mere exciting story, in order to fulfill a function of wider application, as part of a ‘theology of the Kakawin’.