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G. J. RESINK

FROM THE OLD MAHABHARATA- TO THE NEW RAMAYANA-ORDER*

I

"... the *Bharata Yudha* can be performed again — when
Java will again be free ..."

Pronouncement of a nineteenth century *dalang*.

Some people not only live, but also die and kill by myths. So the well-known Darul Islam leader S. M. Kartosoewirjo wrote in a secret note to President Soekarno in 1951, prophesying entirely from the myth of a Javanese version of the *Mahabharata* epic, that a "Perang Brata Juda Djaja Binangun" was imminent. This conflict would lead to a confrontation with Communism — to which the expression "Lautan Merah" alluded — and world revolution.¹ The Javanese *santri* who was to advocate and lead the *jihād* or holy war in defence of an Islamic Indonesian state was writing to the Javanese *abangan* here in terms which both understood perfectly well.

For it was precisely this wayang story that was usually staged as a *bersih desa* rite or a *ngruwat* ceremony for purposes of "purification" or the exorcism of all evil and misfortune that had ever struck or threatened still to befall the community. As a student I once witnessed such a performance together with my mother in the village of Karang Asem, to the north of Yogya. She wrote about it in the journal *Djāwā*, referring in particular to how the women fled the scene towards mid-

* I feel most indebted to Dr. D. Emmerson, Prof. Dr. C. Hooykaas, Mr. A. van Marle and the editors of *Bijdragen* for their suggestions for corrections and other improvements of the text of the present essay, which I have gratefully incorporated. I am equally grateful to those editors for their permission to present this essay as a paper to the VIth International Conference on Asian History, held in Yogyakarta on August 26-30, 1974. My thanks and appreciation are likewise due to Miss M. J. L. van Yperen, who kindly undertook the translation of my article from the original Dutch.

¹ B. J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (1971), 251.

night, with the men working themselves up to such a savage frenzy later on in the night as to actually frighten her.²

The memory of that ritual has rendered me particularly susceptible by its apocalyptical atmosphere to *bersih masyarakat* scenes enacted on a larger scale in the darkest nights of Indonesia's most recent history.

In 1957 and 1958 the *Bharata Yuddha* was performed before tens of thousands of spectators, who had travelled from all over Java especially to see it staged in the *Sasana Inggil* — on the north side of the southern *alun-alun* of the Kraton of Yogyakarta —, hence with the Sultan's permission. Whereas the audience attending the actual *wayang kulit* production probably amounted to no more than several hundred people, a loud-speaker system turned the performance into a grand radio play followed by tightly packed multitudes. Mantle Hood, who has given a detailed description of this, has the following to say about it:

"This great tragic drama is considered such a powerful and sacred text according to informants, that a public wayang performance of the complete story was considered dangerous to the very survival of man. Grave economic and political conditions in 1957, however, were cited as justification for risking the complete presentation in the belief that 'things could not get much worse and they might get better'."

A serious earthquake in the course of the performance, at the very point of the death of Abimanyu, Arjuna's son, probably shocked the audience's faith in the possibility of things changing for the better even more deeply.³ They did not so change, in fact, and if I am correctly informed, Soekarno prohibited all further presentations. This was perfectly understandable, as the performances betrayed not only a growing unrest, but, moreover, served to strengthen the expectations of an approaching decisive battle taking place on many fronts all over Java.

The political parties, after all, had been known to use the wayang theatre for propaganda purposes, especially among the illiterate rural population. It stands to reason that each party in turn should have tried to put itself across as the righteous, victorious one and hence used the Pandawas as its mouthpiece and identified itself with them. This

² A. J. Resink-Wilkens, "Eenige opmerkingen over de wajang-koelit-voorstellingen", in *Djawa* XIX (1939), 39.

For more details on these *bersih desa* and *ngruwat* ceremonies see J. Kats, *Het Javaansche Toneel*, I, *Wajang Poerwa* (1923), 109-110; for "Bratajoeda" in particular, and for "meruwat" in general see L. Serrurier, *De wajang poerwa* (1896), 49, 56, 98-102, 122, 131, 200.

³ Mantle Hood, "The Enduring Tradition: Music and Theatre in Java and Bali", in Ruth T. McVey (Ed.), *Indonesia* (1963), 444-445.

was presumably easier for the nationalistic and religious political organizations than for the P.K.I., even though Sudisman, one of the five members of the P.K.I. central committee, consciously identified these latter leaders with the Pandawas in his speech in his own defence before the Special Military Tribunal as late as July, 1967.⁴

The nationalists, in point of fact, were able to represent their struggle as a continuation of that against the *raja seberang* — the strange rulers from overseas in league with the Korawas — as of old. The Dutch, English, Americans and Malaysians were all apt to be identified with the latter, just the same as it was possible for the Javanese collaborators or sympathisers of these intruders to be equated with the Korawas, thus opposing *sini* to *sana*. It is this interpretation of the *Mahabharata* which intrigued and obsessed Soekarno all his life.⁵ He overlooked or pretended to be ignorant of the fact, however, that the Japanese, Chinese, "Nefos" and even non-Javanese Indonesians might also be identified with the rulers from overseas by the Javanese, who found cause to fear these strangers.

For the religious parties the crucial point was naturally the struggle between the godly — the Pandawas were the sons of gods begotten with the mortal wives of King Pandu — and their demonic opponents, the latter of whom were supported by the allegedly atheistic Communists or other foreign *kafir*.

The political parties belonging to the said two blocs had adopted positions ranging from a moderate to an extreme "rightist" orientation, and were by virtue of that fact also associated with the Pandawas, the puppets representing the latter always being arranged to the *dalang's* right. Although the modern political "right" and ancient mythological "right" did not exactly coincide, they were even so vaguely associated with one another by many people to whom so much is *sami mawon* —

⁴ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Mythology and the Tolerance of the Javanese* (1965), 27. For those who read English only, this is to date the most informative and, besides, the best sociologically and psychologically oriented book on the wayang and the two great epics and their main characters, for whose roles and psychology I therefore refer the reader to this work. See also the stimulating, brilliant essay "The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture" by the same author in Claire Holt (Ed.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (1972); with reference to Sudisman see 24, note 49.

⁵ Bernhard Dahm, *Sukarno and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence* (1969), 25-28, 41, 63, 101, 104, 303. The motto at the head of the first section of the present essay is a quotation from this book, being a translation of C. Poensen's words, cited by L. Serrurier, *op. cit.*, 5. See note 25 and note 7, p. 7, of Dahm's work.

roughly translatable with "all the same anyway". The P.K.I., on the other hand, had to contend with four major psychological difficulties, which in the end probably helped bring about its downfall.

Firstly, despite its endorsement of the *Pancasila*, it was held by its religious political opponents to be atheistic. Its godlessness relegated it more or less automatically to the ranks of the demonic Korawas and the Chinese from overseas, who were also looked upon as atheists. These suspicions concerning Chinese aid and sympathies most probably also rendered it suspect with at least some of the nationalistic political organizations. It was furthermore ranging itself on the side of the Korawas — who, as is well-known, are arranged on the *dalang's* left, just like Karna — by consciously styling itself "leftist". Moreover, most of the Javanese mass following of the P.K.I. were undeniably *abangan*, or "red", in the old socio-religious sense of that word, which may have made it easier for their adversaries, the "kaum putihan", or *santri*, to identify the former with "reds" in the sense of the modern political meaning given to that colour in all its shades. Finally, Aidit, like Natsir and Sjahrir, was a leader from "abroad". This made the disappearance of these P.K.I., Masjumi and P.S.I. leaders from the Javanese scene easier than if they had been Javanese proper — in which case they would probably have pursued a different political strategy anyway.

All parties alike most probably played off the element of the struggle for land which is so characteristic of the *Bharata Yuddha*, in which the Pandawas and Korawas are continually fighting for the acquisition or retention of the realm of Ngastino. It is interesting to note in passing, however, that hardly any massacres took place in Sundanese Java, where the ownership of large estates is nonetheless most prevalent — to mention only the private estates and the village of Cibodas in this connection.⁶ Possibly the influence of the *Mahabharata* is slighter here, in proportion as that of Islam is greater. It was the B.T.I.'s *aksi sepihak* which, anticipating the land reforms that were coming forward either too slowly or not at all, caused the struggle for land to intensify all of a sudden. This probably served to increase the preparedness of numerous *tanis* for an approaching *Perang Bharata Yuddha*, entirely in accordance with the ideas to which they had been brought up. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, epidemics and other *garagara* which invariably pre-

⁶ H. ten Dam, "Cooperation and social structure in the village of Chibodas", in *Indonesian Economics, Selected Studies on Indonesia*, Vol. VI (1961), 362.

cede the major battle scenes in wayang performances were some of the phenomena foreshadowing the decisive fraternal war.

When after the confrontations with foreign powers the "unilateral action" was followed by "the ideological confrontation at home", which was the psychological corollary of the — again typically Javanese — "idea of a combat between two opposed camps",⁷ the stage seemed even more clearly set for a re-enactment of the Old Javanese *Bharata Yuddha*. The more so as this epic was interpreted by Berg as an apology of the fraternal war between Prince Jayabaya of Kediri and the King of Panjalu,⁸ and Soekarno and other intellectuals may possibly have been familiar with this interpretation.

President Soekarno — who had claimed before this to have descended from the royal family of Kediri!⁹ — was alluding to the fraternal war of the *Mahabharata* myth on that ominous night of 30th September, 1965, when himself talking to his audience in Senayan about this epic. He even predicted his own downfall by asking how Suryoputro — another name for Karna in the *Mahabharata*, meaning Son of the Sun(-God) — could have been killed by his brother Arjuna.¹⁰

How much not only the President but also the other protagonist of the drama staged that night, lieutenant colonel Untung, was thinking and, moreover, acting in terms of the *Mahabharata* is testified by the names given by him to the military units he dispatched at the time, viz.: *Bimasekti*, *Pasopati* and *Pringgodani*.¹¹

So he caused *Bimasekti*, still visible as a wayang shadow on the heavenly screen of the Milky Way in September,¹² finally to appear on

⁷ On the notions of "unilateral action" and "combat between two opposed camps" see Basuki Gunawan, *Kudéta, staatsgreep in Djakarta* (1968), 71-110 and 111-121 respectively.

⁸ C. C. Berg, "Javaansche geschiedschrijving" in F. W. Stapel, *Geschiedenis van Nederlandsch Indië*, Vol. II (1938), 63.

⁹ Sukarno, *An Autobiography, As told to Cindy Adams* (1965), 19. This unprovable and hence unproved genealogical pretension represents a typical attempt at the legitimization of personal authority, reinforced by the idea that he embodied the realization of his royal ancestor's prophecies for this reason as well. The claim that his mother was a descendant of the royal house of Singaraja in North Bali, which allegedly took part in a *puputan*, is so wide of the historical truth as to make the entire notion nothing short of pathetic by the unmistakable signs of senility to which these fictitious genealogies testify.

¹⁰ Arnold C. Brackman, *The Communist Collapse in Indonesia* (1969), 71.

¹¹ Nugroho Notokusanto and Ismail Saleh, *The Coup Attempt of the "September 30 Movement" in Indonesia* (1967), 17-18.

¹² See Mangkoenegoro, "Over de wajang-koelit (poerwa) in het algemeen en over de daarin voorkomende symbolische en mystieke elementen" in *Djâwâ, XIII* (1933), 79-95, as well as the photograph of the "lintang Bima sekti"

earth. The unit by that name was ordered to take up its position in the vicinity of the Merdeka palace and seize the buildings of Radio Republik Indonesia and the telegraph office — both of them centres whence issued the (magic) power of the spoken word. The *Mahabharata* motivation with which the soldiers were provided through this name was all the more meaningful not only since Bima was one of the models after which the chief occupant of the palace tried to pattern his life, but also because this second of the Pandawa brothers, who is heavily built, speaks low Javanese and always travels on foot, is both the hero of the little man, or *wong cilik*, and the ideal, charged with magical power and in search of the elixir of life, for the mystical religious life of the *priyayi*.

The name *Pasopati*, Arjuna's magic, invincible arrow, which did in fact hit its mark in the assassination of the generals, was no less meaningful.

Pringgodani, in conclusion, was the name of the realm of Bima's winged son Gatotkoco. Hence according to Javanese thought associations this third military unit was in fact appropriately stationed at Lubang Buaya basis, near Halim Perdana Kusuma airfield.

Finally, a third principal figure — though an antagonistic one — in the drama, General Soeharto, was associated with the *Mahabharata* in spite of himself. For the headquarters of the *Kostrad* which he headed had for many years borne the name of Darma-Putra,¹³ or Son (of the God) of the (religious) Law. Now, this happens to be another name for the eldest of the Pandawa brothers, Yudistira. He was the man who was prepared to the very last to leave the realm of Ngastina in the hands of his opponents so as at all costs to avoid the fraternal war. This may perhaps serve partly to explain why Soeharto showed himself so hesitant on that first day of October, and strove to avoid all bloodshed in the capital once he had finally decided to act. Anyone who is unable to repress a smile at Indonesian military officers thinking up in connection with particular tasks names derived from the *Mahabharata* and which are to some extent ethically inspiring for their subordinates, cannot logically avoid smiling also at Dutch military commanders doing precisely the same thing earlier on when launching a 7th of December division and a Princess Irene Regiment — how ironical, when one comes

between pages 86 and 87. A translation of this essay by Claire Holt, entitled "On the Wayang Kulit (Purwa) and Its Symbolic and Mystical Elements", appeared as Data Paper no. 27, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Southeast Asia Program (1957).

¹³ Nugroho Notosusanto, *op. cit.*, 228.

to think of it — in the struggle against Indonesian republican troops to whom the messages conveyed by these names meant absolutely nothing.

Once one realizes how much the principal actors in the tragedy staged in the capital in 1965 were consciously thinking in terms of the *Mahabharata* myth, one will be able to imagine how minor characters even in the remotest corners of the side-screens in the villages of Java proper and in Bali — brought up on the same myth and also consciously or unconsciously living and acting by it — may similarly have been led to enact a *Perang Bharata Yuddha*. After all, in the wayang the army commanders lead their troops into battle. So, continuing in the same vein of thought, the assassination of the generals may easily have helped to spark off the larger-scale battle between the two opposing camps. It claimed the lives of Moslems and Communists, *santris* and *abangans*, *priyayis* and *wong cilik* alike. Thus, regrettably, it became a “re-enactment” of a historical, ancient Javanese *Perang Bharata Yuddha*. And just as in the *Mahabharata*, people were probably seeking each other's lives and driving each other to their deaths for the sake of old feuds or young women, for the possession of land or on account of religious convictions, for justice or injustice, or for simply any motive derived from any myth, whether the *Perang Sabil* or holy war, or the *Perang Bharata Yuddha*, or both — as in the case of Kartosoewirjo. This also explains, finally, why so many calmly submitted to being killed as soon as the battle was lost for the Communists, or whoever were regarded as such. For after all, they had aligned themselves with the “left”, and taken the side of Karno, and, by inference, that of the Korawas and hence the *raja seberang* — that is, the inevitably losing side. It was no use fighting against the tragedy of fate.

Every murder is one murder too many. If one is inclined to this view, it makes no actual difference whether “only” thousands or, let us say, a little under a million, or even more met their death at the end of 1965 and beginning of 1966. It should always be borne in mind with reference to these estimates, however, that the authors quoting them — most of them non-Indonesians — knew of the assassinations only by hearsay and not through personal experience. And the Javanese and Balinese actors in and spectators of the drama, which in some villages was probably enacted without a single military man or policeman becoming involved, most likely talked about the horrifying events witnessed by them in the only language normally used for describing such calamities, that is, the language of the *dalang* and the wayang stories. This is a language abounding in hyperboles about torrents of blood and mountains

of corpses, of which images, the only ones with which they were familiar, the ear- and eye-witnesses to this real-life *Perang Bharata Yuddha* are certain to have availed themselves in their accounts to third persons. Most lawyers know only too well how unreliable witnesses' statements may be, and it is easy to see how apt exaggerated eye-witness accounts of the fraternal war of 1965 were to have been taken at face value by those whose own nations played a not insignificant part in other wars in the most recent past. Anyone who is prepared to take the patricidal urge of the Oedipus complex or the genocidal mania to which "Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts" has contributed for granted is hardly justified in taking greater offence at the *perang saudara* or fratricidal frenzy of the *Mahabharata*.

This partial explanation of the massacres from the Javanese educational system with special reference to stories of the wayang is of course incompatible with the notion put forward at times that there was question here of collective amuck. But then, a person running amuck usually stabs at random at anyone crossing his path, without the slightest discrimination. In the villages and wards of small country towns, where everyone knows everyone, people knew exactly who were their friends and who their foes, however. Here people definitely made discrimination, from whatever motives they were acting. This does not mean to contradict that there were probably also people who were goaded on by the numerous impulses provided by others to join in the shooting and stabbing, though always with a certain distinction between *kawan* and *lawan*, or friend and foe.

This theory — which I should be only too pleased to give up for a better one — is not incompatible, however, with any of the views put forward concerning the part played in the unsuccessful coup and its aftermath by the P.K.I. and/or particular military personages, or anyone else, for the specific reason that the vast majority of those involved in it were Javanese proper and Balinese. I shall never, therefore, forget a remark in this connection by an Eastern European diplomat, who said that the only interesting question was how Javanese and not how communist the P.K.I. was.

Moreover, this hypothesis — and a hypothesis it will remain, since any likely witnesses for or against are bound to remain as silent as the proverbial grave from sheer shame or fear — is in no way at variance with the view that the Javanese and Balinese are on the whole exceedingly tolerant, as they have no choice but to be in over-populated Central and East Java and Central Bali, for that matter. So Anderson's

Mythology and the tolerance of the Javanese, published in the same year 1965, though before the terrible coup and its frightful consequences, is not to be dismissed out of hand with a sneer and a gibe and the question of what happened to the much-vaunted Javanese and Balinese tolerance at that particular time. It is my personal belief that the bounds of Javanese and Balinese tolerance are (must be) generally speaking unusually far-extending. Once these bounds are reached and crossed, however, even the "gentlest nation on earth", when driven to despair, is capable — as we know at least since *De Vloekzang van Sentot* (Sentot's Maledictory Song) — of all the hatred and fanaticism which S. E. W. Roorda van Eysinga, who undoubtedly knew his Javanese well, attributed to that nation in the said poem.¹⁴

The remaining part of the night following the midnight on which this *Perang Bharata Yuddha* commenced in turn witnessed the real-life enactment of Mahabharata scenes. Minister Subandrio was subsequently denounced as Durno — the shrewd guru of both the Pandawas and Korawas — in the noisy street scenes in Djakarta of 1966, and he eventually fell. President (Bung) (Soe)Karno was forced into gradual withdrawal from political activities and eventually complete retirement in exactly the same way as his example (namesake) Karna abdicated as king of Awangga in the great epic.¹⁵ He went to live a life of quiet retirement in silvan surroundings on the mountain slopes as the *ratu* or ruler turned *resi* (hermit); and although he did so under duress, he nevertheless accepted this fate gracefully, completely in the Javanese style. He withdrew first to the palace in Bogor, where he was accustomed to discuss the wayang as a *guru* by way of introduction to *wayang kulit* performances, eventually to move to his villa in Batutulis, in turn called *Hing Puri Bima Sahkti*, entirely in keeping with the style of the wayang.¹⁶

Even Semar, the famous clown of the wayang stories — who is much more than a mere buffoon, however, and is even held by some to be a pre-Hinduistic fertility god and also representative of the low-Javanese speaking agrarian masses — was put on the political stage in the form of "Supersemar". The latter is an acronym of "Su(rat) per(intah) se(belas) mar(et)", the "written order" of 11th March, 1966, in consequence of which the P.K.I. was outlawed, as it were, by an even more

¹⁴ The "*Vloekzang*" is included in its entirety in Rob Nieuwenhuys' *Oost-Indische Spiegel* (1972), pp. 155-157. For Roorda's experiences in Java see pp. 158-159 and the relevant literature listed on pp. 579-580.

¹⁵ Cf. J. Ensink, *On the Old-Javanese Cantakaparwa and its Tale of Sutasoma* (1967), 9.

¹⁶ M. P. M. Muskens, *Indonesië. Een strijd om nationale identiteit* (1969), 279.

powerful figure than Semar himself, though a more up-to-date one, as the "Super" testifies!

For Suryoputro or Soekarno as the son of the Sun(-God) to pass away on 21st June, 1970, the day of the solstice, in itself seemed cosmically "fitting". But a further touch of *grand théâtre* was added by the fact that this day was also the anniversary (though this was disputed by the brothers-in-law Professors Hoesein Djajadiningrat and Soekanto) of the founding of Jakarta. So all the flags flying full mast at the beginning of the day were lowered to half-mast after the news of the ex-president's death in the afternoon. It was too late, however, to prevent the young people's "carnival", which it was impossible to cancel, from going on until deep into the night, well beyond the time limit imposed by the authorities that day as a sign of mourning. This again was understandable in a country where approximately 60 % of the population is under the age of 25 and whose young people, singing and dancing all through that night, cannot have consciously experienced the days of Soekarno's greatest glory from 1945 to 1955. Bung Karno's last journey across Java took place for the greater part through the air, which for Gatutkoco's father — with whom Soekarno had identified himself even to the extent of bestowing Bima's name on his villa in Batutulis — seemed entirely in keeping with the style of the *Mahabharata*, though executed in a modern fashion.

As though to underscore the definitive end of the *Perang Bharata Yuddha* a Javanese magazine *Pariksit* — the name of Arjuna's grandson, the last descendant of the Bharatas and at the same time the mythical ancestor of the Javanese kings — came out for the first time in post-war Jakarta in 1967, ushering in a new order in Indonesia. Soon thereafter another Javanese-language periodical was launched in the capital under the patronage of the wife of the President. Its title was *Kunthi*, which happens to be the name of Pariksit's great-grandmother and the mother of the three eldest Pandawas — and of Karna! It looked like a gesture of conciliatory tolerance with respect to a recent past considered as part of an older order that had vanished for good.

II

"Interest in the Rama cycle seems to have increased in Java."

James R. Brandon, *On Thrones of Gold* (1970), 11, note.

Going by the representations of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* scenes

in temple reliefs alone one would imagine the latter epic to have been infinitely more popular than the former in old Java.

In the wayang, however, the *Bharata Yuddha* has evidently come out the winner of the contest, as is plainly apparent from the multitude of *lakon carangan* which more or less sprouted from the former of these myths, the latter remaining immune from such overgrowths.

The villagers of Clifford Geertz's Pare, alias Modjokuto in East Java, evinced a decided dislike for these "monkey stories".¹⁷ One of the first leaders of the nationalist movement in that same East Java, the renowned Doctor Soetomo, however, seems to have shown a marked preference for the *Ramayana* even in his time.¹⁸ This latter is definitely true of R. M. Noto Soeroto, who gave unmistakable evidence of such preference in both his "Wayang Songs" and his animal fable "Reflections of Hanoman" — inspired by an old albino monkey, as the story itself relates, in the zoo of Prince Mangkunegoro VII. He moreover derived "the superficial theme" of his "The Fraternal War, Bratajoeda" ... "from the heroic and tragic struggle between the brothers Koembakarna and Wibisana" — in the *Ramayana*!¹⁹

In 1945 the *pemudas* set up Kumbokarno as an example also for such elderly leaders as Soekarno — the consonance of the final two syllables of the names and their meaning ("ear") must have been one of the decisive factors in this — in order to try and persuade them not to make common cause with the Japanese in their fight for independence and to be prepared to die for this goal if necessary.²⁰ But Soekarno, in spite of his name, refused to lend them an ear, and lived and thought — as his name required and predestined him to think and fight — in terms of the *Mahabharata* and Karna's example as a *ksatriya*, held up to the Javanese in the *Tripomo* text of the fourth prince Mangkunegoro.²¹ Even so, the victory of this great myth seems to have begun with the first production of the *Ramayana* ballet at Prambanan in 1961. This

¹⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (1960), 263.

¹⁸ I am indebted for this information to Doctor Soetomo's niece Mrs. O. Hardjolutito-Mangunkusumo. A friend of Doctor Soetomo's, the well-known secretary and treasurer of the Java Instituut, S. Koperberg, also on occasion published under the pseudonym Wibisono, so he once informed me.

¹⁹ Noto Soeroto, *Goden, Mensen en Dieren* (1952), pp. 28-29 (De Apenkoning, Hanoeman), 135-139 (De overpeinzingen van Hanoeman, and notes by Ben van Eysselstein, p. 13), and 64-67 (De Broederstrijd, Bratajoeda, and author's note, p. 195) respectively.

²⁰ Bernhard Dahm, *op. cit.*, 303-305.

²¹ See Boedihardjo, "Kritische beschouwing van de Tri Pama", in *Djâwa* XV (1935), 65-82; on Surjaputra (Karna), "the king of Ngawangga", in particular see 66, 67, 70-73.

dance "festival" presented annually at full moon in the dry season, has blown new, modern life into the old legend depicted in the reliefs of the main temple of the *Loro Jonggrang* complex, which is floodlit especially for this occasion. The restoration of the sanctuary according to plans drawn up many years back, in the 1920's, in my parent's home by the famous restorer of the Borobudur, Th. van Erp, was completed in the 1950's, a fact which no doubt inspired the originators of this festival.

In 1962 a "*Ramayana* room" and a bar by the same name were opened in the new Hotel Indonesia. An *Arjunawiwaha* relief installed there at the same time later had to give place to a partition wall for the office of a foreign airline company. The latter sent its planes aloft in the spirit of the myth of "The Flying Dutchman", later on even in company of those of a sister organization deriving its name from the mythical sun-bird Garuda.

Where in the above cases these myths seem to be still hovering in ethereal spheres, there are numerous instances of transport companies naming their trucks "*Rama*" and "*Laksmana*" which bring us much closer to earth. While such names as "*Ramayana* Optical" shop, "Golden *Rama* Express", "*Rama Shinta*" tourist offices, a "*Rama Sita*" Artshop, and "*Rama Sinta* Corporation" for a batik manufacturing company are altogether down to earth. Business seems swinging for the "*Rama* Orchestra" and "*Ramayana* Theatre", while the "*P.T. Rama Damayanti*" firm and even a "*Rama*" Insurance Company also appear to be flourishing. A "*Ramayana* barbershop" (instead of "*tukang rambut*"!) is evidently dependent for its trade on a white-skinned, long-haired foreign clientele, as is perhaps the clothes store "*Sri Rama* Tailors". Hanoman is extraordinarily popular as a mascot for motorists, as a name for race horses, or even for an "*operasi*" conducted by military engineers with the aim of bringing relief to victims of the great flood in Surakarta, and as an example for pilots making reconnaissance flights for the air force — another one of those newfangled technical arms! And who has not heard at least the name of the *lakon* "Hanoman Duta" (Hanoman as Messenger or Envoy) in a country where everyone seems to aspire to an ambassadorial post?

The upper middle classes, which were formerly in the habit of holding their receptions in the famous "Hotel des Indes" pavillion — the latter name having been conveniently converted into "Hotel Duta Indonesia", so that the table-ware with the H.D.I. monogram could be retained — had pictures depicting scenes derived from the *Ramayana* and the novel *Pronocitro* hung here. And the Puncak Pass Restaurant, where people

come for weekend parties, had its walls decorated with murals representing *Ramayana* episodes, just as Hotel Braga in Bandung has *Ramayana* reliefs in its reception hall.

A "*Ramayana* Bank" and a "*Ramayana* City Hotel" have also been opened — both of them in Jakarta — as well as a "*Ramayana* Beach Hotel" in Merak. Even the ultramodern "Intensive Care Unit" of the general and university hospital *Cipto Mangunkusumo* has a representation of a *Ramayana* episode as its only mural decoration.

The turbulent events preceding the great day of "Supersemar" were not lacking in allusions to the *Ramayana* either. For colonel Sarwo Edhie to introduce a major Wibisono as a member of his staff at a meeting with students of the Universitas Indonesia was a mere coincidence.²² But for the demonstrating *Kappi* students, who were quick as monkeys, to be compared to the *kapi* (monkeys) of the *Ramayana* certainly was not. The said paratroop commander was associated with Hanoman because he, too, was able to make flying-jumps through the air. It was possible by means of similar jumps of the imagination for the hundred-member cabinet of the period to be compared in caricaturistic exaggeration to Rama's powerful opponent, the ten-headed Rawana.

Admittedly there were, and still are, some lingering memories of the *Bharata Yuddha* in the *Srikandi* schools and *Bima* and *Arjuna* art shops. While a daily newspaper "*Berita Yudha*" and a band by the same name similarly contained allusions to the *Bharata Yuddha*. I can also recall seeing an enormous crane named *Bima* once; the *Bima* night train, on the other hand, seems to owe its name to a contraction of *Biru Malam* ("blue" and "night"), with reference to its colour, rather than being inspired by the second of the Pandawa brothers. And now that we are speaking of *Bima* again, I remember a bank called *Dewa Ruci*, as well as a truck by that same name, even though particularly these phenomena seemed a far cry from the mysticism and mystery of the *Dewa Ruci* story. The dissertation entitled *Kedaulatan Negara di ruang udara* (State Sovereignty in Air-space) submitted by Prijatna Abdur-rasjid to the University of Pajajaran in Bandung in 1972, in which *Bima-sekti* and his winged son *Gatotkaca* also appear, seems a more appropriate setting for *Bima*, even though I personally feel that Hano-

²² Yozar Anwar, *Dagboek van een Kamistudent* (1967), 22. A Major Santoso who had been previously introduced was greeted by the students with shouts of "Napoleon"! Wibisono spoke for itself.

man would have been even more in place here.²³ In any case, in certain traditions Bima is regarded as Hanoman's half-brother, because they supposedly both have Bayu, the Wind-god, as father, just as according to one well-known *lakon* Krishna is a reincarnation of Rama. This way a link is established between the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* via some of their most famous characters,²⁴ a link which makes mutual comparison, perhaps almost interchange, possible.

The *lakon* in question, *Rama nitis*, incidentally, was performed once on the occasion of the celebration of the 19th anniversary of the Universitas Indonesia. An English translation of one version of the story has been included in James R. Brandon's fine book *On Thrones of Gold*.

The Universitas Gajah Mada of Yogya, what is more, ventured on a 4½ hours' trilingual (Javanese, Bahasa Indonesia and English) production of the *lakon* *Rama Sita* once in 1972. Long before this attempts had been made to "present" the *Ramayana* in the form of *sandiwaras* (a kind of musical) and television plays, in which the story was therefore necessarily reduced to the barest of outlines. So a "Langèn Mandrawanaran" *Ramayana* performance presented in the *Taman Ismail Marzuki* in 1972 scored an enormous success. All this goes to show clearly how much the *Ramayana* has come to be associated with activities in the fields of modern banking, communications, commerce, the hotel business, art, fashions, tourism, transport, armaments and insurance, sometimes with further qualifications added to the name in English. Even Soemarsaid Moertono's important study on *State and Statecraft in Old Java* (1968) contains more references to the *Ramayana* than to the *Mahabharata*, and includes as Appendix III an English translation of the *Asta Brata* (The Eight Statesman's Virtues) from Kyai Jasadipoera's *Serat Rama*.

As though to sanction, or at any rate confirm the victory of the *Ramayana* on the highest level, President Soeharto posed for his portrait in Roeder's biography sitting behind his desk in front of a painting depicting Rama, Laksmana, Hanoman and Rawana.²⁵ Some time following this he officially opened the "Ramayana City Hotel", and in 1971 attended the opening of the international *Ramayana* "festival" in Pandakan in his official capacity. The government has now also made funds available for the Indonesian translation of the Old Javanese

²³ *Op. cit.*, 7 (Gatotkatja), and 22 (Bhima Sakti).

²⁴ See J. Kats, *op. cit.*, 85, and especially the note on that page.

²⁵ O. G. Roeder, *The smiling general. President Soeharto of Indonesia* (1969), frontispiece photograph.

Ramayana, for which the initiative was taken by the energetic Dr. Haryati Soebadio. This seems to be the proper time and place to remind the reader in deep gratitude how the way to this rehabilitation was paved by H. Kern, Juynboll, Kats, Stutterheim, Poerbatjaraka and Hooykaas.²⁶

Where I was a participant observer of the switch-over by the language-making and name-giving Jakarta intelligentsia from one old myth to the other, still older myth — according to the Indian *Mahabharata* Hanoman is depicted on Arjuna's flag — I shall be so immodest as to admit my own part in this change-over after giving my observations thereon. In contrast to so many Eurasian or Indo-European "fellows" such as Eddy Du Perron, Rob Nieuwenhuys and Jan Boon, for example, who because of their ethnic origin or skin colour were never able to become true-blood Dutchmen who could feel, to quote the words of one popular Dutch patriotic song, "Dutch blood undefiled by foreign taints" flowing through their veins, and who therefore set up as their particular hero or ideal d'Artagnan or one of the Three Musketeers, and accordingly chose Ducroo, Breton de Nijs and Vincent Mahieu respectively as wholly or partially French pseudonyms, I, who am of partly Javanese origin, took Yudistiro as my example of the human ideal. This was to some extent after discovering at school that the Dutch humanist scholar Erasmus, whom I had chosen as hero before, wasn't a real "man" at all and was even considered to be some kind of "sissy" when judged according to the "he-man" conceptions of the hard-working and hard-ruling "heirs of Coen". The peace-loving, "Erasmian" eldest Pandawa, however, appeared to be a socially highly esteemed figure in the Javanese educational system whom one could take as an example worth following without exposing oneself to ridicule. When as the only Dutch student member of the "*Stuw*" group I showed myself fully in favour of granting my Indonesian cousins the sovereignty of the realm of Indonesia, since I was definitely opposed to fighting for its continued reposal in Dutch hands, Yudistiro seemed to me the appropriate exponent of both magnanimity and faintheartedness, while his alternative name Darmoputro seemed doubly apt to me as a student of law.

After the war the more down-to-earth and "beastly" example of Hanoman from the *Ramayana* replaced that of Pandu's eldest son

²⁶ See C. Hooykaas, *The Old-Javanese Rāmāyana Kakawin* (1955), 4, including notes 3 and 5; 8, including notes 26-30, and 9, including notes 42 and 44, with reference to Stutterheim, Kats, Kern, Juynboll and Poerbatjaraka respectively.

from the *Mahabharata*, which proved too exalted a human ideal after all. My poetry came to be invaded by a great many more animals, and when in 1958 my Dutch colleagues left the Universitas Indonesia and I became the albino among the Indonesian academics, the politicologist Mirjam Budiardjo thought up the name Hanoman for me, which resembled my existing nickname and fitted in with my passion for travel, especially air travel. When her brother Soedjatmoko asked me as another Rama how the Sita of Indonesian historiography might be delivered from foreign hands and brought back into the arms of the Republic, we undertook the work leading up to the publication of *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography* (1965) jointly. One might imagine the other co-editors, namely Moh. Ali and George McT. Kahin, as a modest Laksmana and as Wibisana respectively in this connection. Nevertheless, the change-over from Yudistiro to Hanoman as "culture hero" was only properly effected after the other half of the only married couple of whom both husband and wife were correspondents of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, Coosje Hooykaas, pointed out to me once that in some Indian versions Hanoman is, besides a messenger and a querulous fellow, also a beast of science and a poet, and is immoderately inquisitive to boot. The creature also loves music, sporting the tinkling bells of exhibitionism around the ankles of Narcissus — to remain in the mythical sphere.

III

"Der Mythos ist die Legitimation des Lebens."

Thomas Mann, *Freud und die Zukunft*.

A dozen differences between the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, or at any rate in popular representations thereof, may help to explain why the intelligentsia of Jakarta has begun, if not to give a certain preference to the former over the latter, then at least to give it a prominent place beside its fellow epic.

In the first place the *Ramayana* enjoys a much wider international popularity in Southeast Asia than the *Mahabharata*, as the international *Ramayana* Festivals held in Kuala Lumpur and Pandakan have testified.²⁷ This is especially important now that Southeast Asian states are

²⁷ See James R. Brandon, *Theatre in Southeast Asia* (1967), 90: "On the mainland, the *Ramayana* is held in great esteem, but the *Mahabharata* is scarcely known. In Indonesia, both epics are known and performed but the *Mahabharata* is more commonly staged (I would estimate at a ratio around ten to one)."

seeking to achieve mutual cooperation in all kinds of fields, including the cultural one. So the availability of a single great myth as a source of inspiration for literature, ballet and drama is a uniting force of the first order.

In Indonesia itself, moreover, the *Ramayana* is better known and of more widespread occurrence than the *Mahabharata*, which is popular principally in Java and Bali. Stutterheim's excellent dissertation of 1925, entitled *Rāma-Legenden und Rāma-Reliefs in Indonesien*, applied justifiably to Indonesia in general, as the legends were also well-known in Sumatra.²⁸ Ras's interesting doctoral thesis on the *Hikajat Bandjar*, furthermore, indicates how *Ramayana* influences must have penetrated to Banjarmasin centuries ago,²⁹ while traces of an Old Sundanese *Ramayana*, as Noorduyt has recently revealed, find no parallel in a Sundanese *Bharata Yuddha*.³⁰ At all events, monkey stories such as that of *Lutung Kasarung* are on the whole more prevalent in West Java. In brief, the *Ramayana* epic has not only a wider international but also national spread than the *Mahabharata*.

A third difference, which probably has a special appeal for the contemporary youth of Indonesia, is manifest in the "happy ending" to which the *Ramayana* can make claim,³¹ and the "*Halbgötter- und Menschen-Dämmerung*" which characterizes the *Perang Bharata Yuddha*. In other words, the mood of the one epic is optimistic, and the other pessimistic.

Moreover, the *Ramayana* is idealistic in purport because the point at issue in it is the love and loyalty between husband and wife. The *Mahabharata*, on the other hand, is essentially realistic because it is about the acquisition or possession of land (of the realm of Ngastino).

A fifth contrast between the two epics is directly connected with the above difference. For the *Mahabharata* is above all else an agrarian drama in which sea and sky hardly play a role, except as media for Bima Suci and Gatotkaca to move through. In the *Ramayana*, however, these two primeval elements are indispensable. And this again is im-

²⁸ Willem Stutterheim, *Rāma-Legenden und Rāma-Reliefs in Indonesien* (1925), 211.

²⁹ J. Ras, *Hikajat Bandjar* (1968), 90, where the *Hikajat Atjeh* is also mentioned in this connection.

³⁰ J. Noorduyt, "Traces of an Old-Sundanese Ramayana Tradition", in *Indonesia* No. 12 (October 1971), 151-159.

³¹ I wish to express my gratitude to the well-known ethnomusicologist S. Brata (B. IJzerdraat) for explicitly drawing my attention to this fact.

portant for a nation which has to be made more "sea- and air-minded" if the archipelago is to become a modern *état nation*.

The *Ramayana* is further more contemporary than the *Mahabharata* in the sense that here there is no opposition such as that between the two warring factions in the latter epic, a kind of polarity that is no longer psychologically feasible at present. For the black-and-white contrast between the Korawas and Pandawas is great enough to prevent Javanese parents from giving their children names derived from those of the Korawa brothers. Soekarno's father made an exception to this rule when burdening his child, named Kusno at first, with the fateful name of Kunti's illegitimately begotten son. This in turn aroused speculation as to how this name may have explained Soekarno's origins as well as foretold his future. The name Suyudono forms an exception, however, as after all this eldest of the Korawas was a king, and evidently the adage "The king can do no wrong" here also applies to a certain extent. In contrast to this, personal names derived from either of the two opposing parties of the *Ramayana* definitely do occur. The name Rama is not often bestowed on sons, however, as the word *rama* in Javanese means "father". Similarly the names of Yudistira and Arjuna are not often bestowed because they are too "onerous" or because the example of these great heroes is too difficult to follow. The name of Bima — though not his alternative name Werkudara — and such of Arjuna's childhood names as Margono or Dananjoyo are sometimes bestowed, on the other hand, because they do not weigh too heavily on those who bear them. In some mixed marriages between Javanese and non-Javanese the partners have even ventured to name three sons outright after the three eldest Pandawas,³² though this may be regarded with mixed feelings by those from purely Javanese circles. One of Bali's best-known scribes, I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa, and a former secretary to the president of the Universitas Indonesia in the fifties, R. M. Subali, were given the names of figures who had ranged themselves on Rama's side, just as in daily life the Sukehis, Wibisonos and Indrajits from the family of Rawana on the opposing side abound. Hence the *Ramayana* is psychologically more subtle in the contrast it brings out between the two factions.

³² The historian A. Lopian was able to quote two instances of this, of which information I have gratefully made use here.

See further E. M. Uhlenbeck's interesting study entitled "Systematic Features of Javanese Personal Names" in *Word*, Vol. 25, nos. 1-2-3 (April-August-December 1969), 321 ff., especially 330.

The *Ramayana* is furthermore a more secular legend, as it lacks the religious and mystical stories included in the *Mahabharata*, such as the *Bhagavad Gita* — elevated in Hindu Dharma circles to a sacred law — and the *Bima Suci* legend. This seventh difference makes it possible for the core of the *Ramayana* story to be presented in reduced form to the public at large in television and radio plays and in comic strips, which it is practically impossible to do with respect to the *Mahabharata* without distracting from the majesty of its mysticism and tragedy. I for one at any rate have never seen the *Bharata Yuddha* staged in any half-hour's performance as part of some musical incorporating regional dances, in the finale of which Rama and Rawana heartily joined in in the chorus after contributing to the show with a *Ramayana* "act".

In the eighth place, whereas the *Bharata Yuddha* is famous for its battle arrays, the *Ramayana* is celebrated especially for its considerably less well-organized bands of monkeys and schools of fish who help win the war. The sticks or cudgels with which the monkeys are depicted in the reliefs of the principal temple at Prambanan are even evocative of the *bambu runcing* from the first years of the revolution. Militarily speaking, therefore, the one calls up memories of well-disciplined armies, and the other of irregular guerilla bands existing alongside these, which in Indonesia won or helped win the war of liberation.

The *Mahabharata* has further been politically compromised as a result of the abuse of the names of its principal heroes in connection with the abortive coup by Untung and his followers. The other epic has managed to stay clear of this, little popular as it was at the time.

The word "popular" prompts the word "population", and in connection with it the problem of overpopulation. Where President Soeharto has asked dalangs to incorporate in their wayang performances propaganda for the five-years reconstruction plan, of which the *keluarga berencana* (family planning) idea forms part, the *Ramayana* seems to set a more convincing example than the *Mahabharata* on this point, too. For Rama and Laksmana, bachelors by force or by choice,³³ are

³³ Their sexual abstinence and asceticism in this respect possesses a certain appeal — in contrast to that of Arjuna in the *Arjuna-wiwaha* for the purpose of acquiring magic (superior) power — for *tanis* who are not subject to the seductive wiles of heavenly nymphs. On this see Anke Borkent's thesis on her research in the villages of Tunjung Tirta and Langlang, in the *kecamatan* of Singosari, the region of Malang, (1972) p. 26, which makes interesting reading in other respects as well. The idea of such an ascetic ideal existing in *tani* circles was first put forward by Dr. Masri Singarimbun, according to the author.

victorious over the prolific Rawana family. And although the five Pandawas are similarly victorious over the hundred Korawas, the entire clan dies fighting after all.

Additionally the *Ramayana*, in contrast to the *Mahabharata*, possesses in Hanoman an enterprising spirit that is comparable to Hermes, considered by McClelland in his well-known work *The Achieving Society* as the archetype of the Western entrepreneur rather than Spengler's (spirit of) Faust. Apart from their somewhat obscure, though even so divine origins, they further have in common the circumstance that they are both only sons; that they are brought up by their mothers; are acquisitive from an early age — Hermes steals cattle, and Hanoman tries to swallow the sun; and, moreover, that both, as solidly built though mercurial messengers, came a long way in the world, both "horizontally" or geographically and "vertically" or socially as ingenious "tricksters". And Hanoman even fits into McClelland's typology of the entrepreneur, who never catches the eye by colourful clothing,³⁴ but, like his halfbrother Bima and like Semar, always wears the checked "off-the-peg" loin cloth or *kain polèng*. The Western-educated technocrats who studied under the supervision of Dutch and American economists may have noticed in this connection how the only monument from the colonial era to survive the national iconoclasm in Jakarta is the statue of Hermes on the parapet of the bridge near the building which formerly housed the "Harmonie" club.

The transport company "Mercurius" — the name of Hermes' Roman successor — and the sports clubs "Sparta" and "Hercules" also managed to keep their heads above water through the years of war, occupation and revolution, while the name Hermes has for years graced a business college in Jalan Haji Agus Salim. Hence the modern Indonesian entrepreneur has two archetypes from two different mythologies from which to derive his ethos.

The above contrasts may be considered to a large degree inherent in a twelfth difference, in conclusion, namely that between the outward-looking and inward-looking tendencies of the two epics. For the *Ramayana* is clearly extroverted on the points of international and national diffusion, optimism, orientation via the sea and air towards the worlds of overseas countries and foreign peoples, its contemporariness

³⁴ David C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (1961), Chapter 8, "The Spirit of Hermes", 301-335, especially the sections on: "Restless expressive Movements", "Preference for Sombre Colors", "Travel", and "Social Mobility", 302-322, and "Attitude toward Time" and "Trickery and Dishonesty", 324-331.

in a psychological and its guerilla warfare elements in a military sense, its secular character and its extremely outward-directed entrepreneurial figure of Hanoman. The *Mahabharata* with its Javanese and Balinese patriotism, if not parochialism or regionalism, its pessimism, its inward-directed interest, its traditional black-and-white psychology, and its less secular and sometimes even mystical character creates an introverted impression, on the other hand, especially also as regards its self-destructive urges, with which we are familiar in Bali from the *puputan*, creese dances and cockfights aside from the epic itself.³⁵ Lewis Feuer once wrote in an essay on "Karl Marx and the Promethean Complex": "Each modern generation seems to long to give itself self-destructively to its myth".³⁶ If another eruption of this urge among a younger generation of Indonesians should recur on a massive scale in a renewed attempt at revolution in Java and Bali, then perhaps a shift from the *Mahabharata* to the *Ramayana* myth among a broader section of the population may help at least to restrict the compass of such an explosion. The *Ramayana* furthermore provides a stronger motivation than the *Bharata Yuddha* for the modernization of these circles, even though dalangs will probably go on preferring the latter epic, because of the greater scope afforded them by the many *lakon carangan* than by the *Ramayana* for giving expression to their artistic talents. But the puppeteers with their syncretistic genius could at least be urged to create new *lakons*, blending *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* heroes and themes, as happened in the case of *Rama nitis*.

Now that the *Pelita* — an acronym for *Pembangunan Lima Taun*, but also a word for the lamp in whose light the shadow-play is performed — has been lit as though for a new *lakon*, it is to be hoped that the legend of Rama may be chosen as inspirational model.³⁷ The more so as there are the temple reliefs of Prambanan and Panataran to look to for visual support.

And even those to whom a shift of preference from the one to the other of the two myths by which to live and die seems too difficult, if not impossible, a task for the majority of the dalangs and their

³⁵ On this (self-)destructive urge becoming manifest during and after the cockfight see Clifford Geertz's fascinating essay "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" in *Daedalus* (Winter 1972), 7.

³⁶ In *Encounter* (December 1968), Vol. XXXI, No. 6, 32.

³⁷ The *Wayang Suluh* and the *Wayang Pantja Sila* of the 1950's have demonstrated the pitfalls of carrying subordination of the wayang to (pro-government political) propaganda too far — they were a failure. For a more detailed discussion of this see Brandon's work quoted in note 27, 286, 289, photograph 72, 318-323.

assistants and audiences, should nonetheless go on optimistically advocating such a shift. For the necessary strength for this they may appeal to the words which Albert Camus, thinking in terms of another myth, once wrote and which Rosihan Anwar passed on to a wider Indonesian public, namely: "Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux"! ³⁸

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³⁸ Albert Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942), 168.