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Kamandaka

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SOME CRITICAL REMARKS ON A RECENT INTERPRETATION OF A SENTENCE FROM THE OLD JAVANESE TANTRI KAMANDAKA

1. As I had occasion to point out in 1981, linguistics as a science differs from the natural sciences by the fact that it is concerned with data which become accessible to scientific observation only after having been understood first on another, subjective level of cognition: the level of language use. Instances of language use which are not understood on this level cannot form a sound basis for linguistic, scientific study (Uhlenbeck 1981:9).

Only one year later an article appeared which forms – as I will show in the following pages – a perfect illustration of this elementary but often forgotten truth. I am referring to an article by Becker of 1982 (henceforth to be referred to as B), which came to my notice quite recently when I found it reprinted unchanged but under joint authorship (with Thomas Hunter) in a collection of studies on Austronesian linguistics (McGinn 1988).

The contents of B's article on 'Binding Wild Words: Cohesion in Old Javanese Prose' are not easy to summarize. One finds in it reflections on Old Javanese in general, on its supposed relation to Sanskrit, on the morphological differences between the two languages, and further remarks about a general concept of 'binding'. It is not my intention to discuss all this here. My comments will be limited to the empirical basis of B's views, which consists of a single Old Javanese sentence, a paraphrase of the first Sanskrit *çloka* of the Tantri Kamandaka (henceforth TK) as edited by Hooykaas (1931). In order to make things easier for the reader, I reproduce here (1) the Skt. *çloka* as edited by Böhtlingk (1870, 1873²), (2) his translation, (3) the Skt. *çloka* as found in the TK, (4) the Old Javanese paraphrase, and (5) the Dutch translation of (4), the last three taken from Hooykaas' edition.

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- (1) *ṣabdaṣāstram anādhītya yaḥ pumān*
vaktum icchati vacaḥ sabhāntare
bandhum icchati vane madotkṣam
kuñjaram kamalatantunā hi saḥ
- (2) Wer ohne die Grammatik studiert zu haben in einer Gesellschaft zu reden gedenkt, der hat ja im Sinn einen brünstigen Elephanten im Walde mit einem Lotusstengel zu fesseln.
- (3) *asabdaṣāstram ahāwidhiwya ya promaṇa*
wastum angcan giwa sanantare
wandum iccat batang
hastinang kamaladantanī
- (4) *kalinganya: Ikang wwang tan wruh ring warga nikang ṣāstra mwan*
ṣabda-ṣaṣabda, umara madhya ning sabhā, mahyun mangucap-ucapa
kalawan sang mahāpuruṣa, ikang wwang mangkana niyatanya n paḍa
lawan ikang wwang mareng alas, mahyun sumikēpeng gajah alas ri
sēḍengnya matta mamawa bēsan ing tuñjung saḥēle, kangkēna
pangikatanya.
- (5) D.w.z. Een persoon die geen kennis bezit van de hoofdstukken der grammatica, van woord-en-stem, en dan in een gezelschap zich begeeft, met het voornemen om gesprekken te houden met geleerden, die is als een man die zich in een bosch begeeft met het voornemen om een wilden olifant te vangen als deze juist bronstig is, met één lotusstengel als middel om hem te binden.

In his own article B reproduces Hooykaas' text and translation, but does not provide a new translation. However, he gives glosses in English of nearly all the words, following Hooykaas' system of transliteration. B also presents a syntactic analysis of the Old Javanese sentence in what he calls dependent and independent clauses. In this way B furnishes sufficient lexical and grammatic information enabling the reader to find out how B has interpreted the sentence.

I reproduce B's analysis here (without changing his spelling or word division of the Old Javanese):

1. *Ikang wwang tan wruh ring warga nikang ṣāstra mwan*
that person not know about form of sastra-s and
ṣabda-ṣaṣabda
words (?)
2. *umara madhya ning sabhā*
go center of hall
3. *mahyun mangucap-ucapa kalawan sang mahapurusa*
want to speak with great man

4. (Ikang wwang mangkana niyatanya n pada lawan ikang wwang)
that person do clearly-it that same with that person
5. mareng alas
go forest
6. mahyun sumikēpeng gajah alas ri sēdēngnya matta
want to bind elephant forest while in rut
7. mamawa bēsan ing tunjung sahēle
carry stamen(?) of lotus one blade
8. kangkena pangikatannya
which hit binding-place-it

B's additional interpretive remarks elsewhere in his article will come up for discussion later.

2. As the glosses show, the following six Old Javanese words posed insurmountable difficulties for B:

(1) *warga*, not 'form', but 'class, category'. Apparently *warga* has been confused with *warṇa*, 'form'. In his thesis of 1929 Hooykaas translated *warga nikang cāstra* as 'the categories of the sciences' ('*de categorieën der wetenschappen*').

(2) *ṣabda-paṣabda*. As Zoetmulder-Robson 1982 (henceforth ZR) have correctly understood (ZR:1583), this has to be read as *ṣabdāpaṣabda*, 'right and wrong words', a compound consisting of *ṣabda* and the compound *apaṣabda* (cf. *sawyāpasawya*, 'left and not left (right)', and other borrowings like *apawada*, *apakarma*, *apadharmā*). B here followed Hooykaas, accepting his translation 'word and voice' ('woord-en-stem').

(3) *mangkana*, glossed by B as 'do' (?). Actually it is a frequently used deictic word, meaning 'such, like that', as is known in Old Javanese studies for at least a century. All dictionaries and grammars of course include it.

(4) *sumikēpa*, irrealis of *sumikēp* (*sikēp* with the infix/prefix *-um-*), 'to catch, to seize', not: 'to bind'.

(5) *kangkēna*, glossed as 'which hit'. B apparently assumed that *kangkēna* consists of a sequence of two different words: *kang* and *kēna*, although their meanings do not fit into the text. Actually *kangkēna* is one word, the irrealis of *kangkēn*, a passive verb based on *angkēn*, 'like, to be considered as', with prefix *k-* (*ka-* before consonants). *Kangkēna* may be translated here by 'to serve as' (cf. ZR 104).

(6) *pangikatanya*, glossed by B as: 'binding-place-it'. Apparently B assumed that he had to do with a word *pangikatan* followed by the suffix *-nya*. Therefore he changed Hooykaas' text by adding a second *n*: *pangikatannya*. Actually the morphological structure of *pangikatanya* is: *pangikat*, 'means, instrument for tying', followed by the irrealis suffix *-a* and the suffix *-nya*. It is hard to understand why B assumed the presence of a *pa-an* form, and why he did not notice that Hooykaas' translation was correct and that his interpretation as 'binding-place' does not make sense.

To this list may be added a remark about *bəsan*^c or *bəsa* in the noun phrase *bəsaning tuñjung*. With ZR:237 I consider it very likely that we should read *bəsaring tuñjung* (*bəsar*, 'fibre, thread'). The Nītiçāstra strophe 13.1, which is a more recent version of the Old Javanese TK paraphrase of the Skt. *çloka*, also has *bəsar* (see Poerbatjaraka 1933:68).

3. It is not surprising that these six lexical and grammatical problems which B experienced, had serious consequences for his syntactic analysis. It is hard to determine the syntactic status of *kangkana pangikatanya* if meaning and structure of both words are unclear. But especially the fact that B did not know what to do with the anaphorically used pronoun *mangkana* made it difficult for him to understand the over-all structure of the sentence. Its underlying scheme is quite simple: what A does is as impossible as what B tries to do. There are other *subhasita* which use a similar scheme, such as no. 2920 in Böhtlingk's *Indische Sprüche*¹, and no. 1100 in Sternbach's collection.² *Ikanḡ wwang mangkana*, 'such a man' or 'such people', refers back to everything that precedes, that is to *ikanḡ wwang* followed and syntactically connected by three verb phrases which take up a parallel position in the syntactic structure: (1) *tan wruh ring warganikanḡ çāstra mwang çabdāpaçabda*, (2) *umara madhyaning sabhā*, and (3) *mahyun mangucapa-ucapa kalawan sang mahāpuruṣa*.

There is here an important interpretive principle involved, which one may call the principle of agens-retention. *Ikanḡ wwang*, the agens of *tan wruh* etc., must also be assumed to function as the agens of the two following verb phrases: *umara madhya ning sabhā* and of *mahyun mangucap-ucapa kalawan sang mahāpuruṣa*.

The summarizing *ikanḡ wwang mangkana* is no doubt put in to facilitate the interpretation, which otherwise, because of the three fairly long preceding verb phrases, would become somewhat cumbersome. *Ikanḡ wwang mangkana niyatanyan* (the final *n* is a frequently used clitic, see Zoetmulder 1950:173 ff., Uhlenbeck 1986) *paḍa lawan ikanḡ wwang* etc. occupies a central place in the over-all structure of the sentence: 'such a man is in truth equal to a man who etc.'. Everything that follows *paḍa lawan* has basically the same structure as all that precedes *ikanḡ wwang mangkana*. Here again the principle of agens-retention is functioning and again *ikanḡ*

¹ Translation by O. Böhtlingk:

'Wer Böse durch Nektar träuſelnde Reden auf den Pfad der Guten zu führen im Sinne hat, der ſchickt ſich an, einen ſtörrigen Elephanten mit Bindfäden von jungen Lotusfaſern zurückzuhalten, der rüſtet ſich einen Demant mit dem Rande einer Çiriſcha-Blüthe zu durchſchneiden, der gedenkt mit einem Tropfen Honig dem ſalzigen Meere Süſſe zu verleihen.'

² Translation by P.G. Nath:

'You ſhould not ſhow the leaſt diſhonour to thoſe learned men who have obtained true ſpiritual knowledge; for, your worthless wealth is quite helpſſe to make them ſurrender to your power: the furious elephants whoſe temples have newly been marked with black lines of rut can never be bound by the delicate tendrils of a lotus ſtem.'

wwang is followed by three (not four) parallel verb phrases. The last two words *kangkëna pangikatanya* do not form a separate clause, but belong to the verb phrase *mamawa bësarîng tuñjung sahële*. They are directly connected with *bësarîng tuñjung sahële*.

The sentence as a whole may be translated as:

‘A man without knowledge of the learned books and of the right and the wrong words, who goes to the middle of the public meeting place wanting to start a discussion with eminent men, such a man is no doubt equal to a man who goes to the forest wanting to catch a forest-elephant just at the time he is in rut, carrying one single lotus stalk to serve as a means for binding him.’

What the sentence expresses is clear: people who are intellectually insufficiently equipped for a discussion with learned scholars are like men who with totally inadequate means try to catch wild elephants at the time they are most dangerous.

B, however, reads much more into the sentence. On p. 22 he writes: ‘Trying to speak well without grammar, was like trying to bind an elephant in rut with a single stalk of lotus. Besides the outrageous impossibility of the task, the elaborate simile says more.’ In order to explain this, B has to accomplish some breakneck feats of interpretation. He assumes the existence of an ‘elaborate paradigm’ which ‘may be broken down like this’:

	A	B
instrument	grammar	stalk of lotus
location	hall	forest
agent	a man	a man
patients	words	a wild elephant
intent	to speak	to bind

This table is thought to confirm the idea that both grammar and the lotus stalk are ‘modes of binding something powerful’ (B *ibidem*). B then states that ‘the metaphor of grammar as binding’ is a familiar one to many modern linguists. In other words, according to B ‘a grammar is an instrument for binding wild words’ (see the title of B’s article).

However, as we have seen in 2, the verb phrase *tan wruh ring warga nikang çâstra mwang çabda-paçabda* has not been understood by B, who could not identify *warga*, and followed Hooykaas’ interpretation of *çabda-paçabda* as ‘word and voice’. Therefore it is surprising that B equates the content of this verb phrase with *çabdaçâstram* of the original strophe as found in Böhlingk. What the Javanese text says is no more than: ‘not knowing the various categories of learned works and the right and wrong words’. There is in this no mention of a grammar used as an instrument for speaking. Moreover the lotus stalk is not an instrument for binding, but

rather one which is useless. As to the specific concept of binding, this is neither present in the Skt. nor in the Javanese text. *Sumikēp* means 'to catch' or 'to seize', not 'to bind'. And what about the notion 'binding something powerful'? Surely an elephant may be viewed as 'something powerful', but can words? The text has only *tan wruh . . . çabḍāpaçabda*, 'not knowing the right and wrong words', that is: 'to say the right things in a discussion with learned men'. Finally, the 'intent' is not simply 'to speak', but to have a discussion with.

4. In his article B makes a comparison between Old Javanese and Sanskrit on the basis of the *çloka* and the Old Javanese paraphrase, without paying attention to the Sanskrit version as found in TK, which is far removed from the Skt. original. B's comparison may be said to be a kind of typological one. In the pages devoted to this comparison (pp. 26-30) B makes several grammatical statements about Old Javanese which again betray his neglect of existing grammatical and lexical sources of information. I will mention only a few.

(1) B's verdict of the conciseness of the Skt. *çloka* and the elaboration of the Javanese paraphrase in the first place rests on his observation that the Old Javanese text contains 44 words, but the Skt. *çloka* only 16. It is not difficult to ascertain that he arrives at this number for the Old Javanese text by counting as a word everything that in Hooykaas' transliteration is printed between spaces. This is an unsatisfactory method, because of the presence in Old Javanese of clitics and of so-called external sandhi. *N* after *niyatanya* is a clitic and should not be counted as a word, while *mareng* is not one word but a sequence of two (*mara* + *ing*), just like *sumikēpeng* (*sumikēpa* + *ing*). Quite apart from the question of the exact number of words, it does not seem permissible to draw any conclusion about conciseness and elaboration by comparing a metric text of four lines with what is clearly a paraphrase in prose. That it is a paraphrase is indicated by the presence in the text of the word *kalinganya* directly after the Skt. *çloka*. This *kalinganya*, 'the meaning of it', omitted by B, is present in Hooykaas' edition and (correctly) translated by him as '*dat wil zeggen*' (= 'this means'). By its very nature a paraphrase tends to be longer than what is being paraphrased and explained.

(2) On page 26 B states that compounding in Old Javanese 'is awkward' and that in the Old Javanese paraphrase there is no compound 'except perhaps *mahapurusa*', but *gajah alas*, 'jungle elephant', may be one³, while *mahapurusa* is not a compound. This loan from Skt. contains the prefix *maha-*. Moreover, Old Javanese has borrowed many compounds from Skt., but it is true that in Old Javanese morphology compounding as a morphological device is much less important than in Sanskrit.

³ In Old Javanese it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a word group and a compound, this in contrast with Modern Javanese, where the positional possibilities of the suffix *-el-ne* may provide a criterion. See also Gonda 1973²:456.

(3) B's remarks about repetition and reduplication are not tenable. As an example of reduplication B mentions *çabda-paçabda*, which as we have seen, must be read as *çabdâpaçabda*, which is a Skt. compound. Moreover, and more importantly, what B calls repetition (the occurrence of *ikang wwang* three times in the Old Javanese sentence) is at best a syntactic-stylistic phenomenon which has nothing to do with reduplication (as in *mangucap-ucapa*), which is a morphological process and which occurs in many Austronesian languages in great variety, with high frequency and with different semantic values. There is a systematic semantic difference between the reduplicated form and the non-reduplicated form: *mangucap-ucapa* means in contrast to *mangucapa* 'to speak repeatedly, to converse, to talk with each other'.

(4) B's 'neat paradigm' of what he calls the deictic prepositions in Old Javanese (p. 26) is not descriptively adequate, because it contains heterogeneous material. *Ikang*, for instance, as in *ikang wwang*, is not a preposition but a sequence of the demonstrative pronoun *ika* followed by the clitic article *-ng*, just like the pronouns *iki* and *iking*, not admitted to B's paradigm. *-Ni-* is a clitic and not a word, and certainly not a preposition, while *ning* is a combination of two clitics (see Uhlenbeck 1986).

(5) On page 31, B states that the infix/prefix *-um-* 'marks clausal prominence' and that 'the clause in which it appears will always be a background for another almost always following clause'. He believes that *umara* is marked as background to the following *mahyun* (incidentally: not an auxiliary but a verb formed on the basis of the noun *hyun*, 'desire'). Likewise he believes that *sumikêpa* 'is background to' *mamawa*. I am afraid that there is no evidence in favour of such a viewpoint, either in the sentence under discussion or in Old Javanese texts in general. The verb phrase *umara madhyaning sabhā* is parallel to *mahyun* etc., and there is nothing that suggests that *umara* etc. is 'background' for *mahyun* etc. The same is true for *sumikêpa*: there is no interpretive indication of any background/foreground relation with *mamawa*. For a discussion of *-um-* verbs see Zoetmulder 1950:37ff.

5. The preceding paragraphs show what the consequences are if insufficiently understood texts are used to set up far-reaching generalizations and bold hypotheses. The only way to obtain access to Old Javanese is to acquire first a certain experience and facility in reading texts by making use of the existing instruments: grammars, dictionaries, and last but not least text editions and translations, of which there are several excellent ones. Native speakers of present-day Javanese are of little use, just as present-day speakers of English are unable to help us in the interpretation of Old English. To acquire a reading ability is certainly not everything. It is only a first step, but an essential one.

Quite recently the observation has been made that in the products of Dutch scholarship on Indonesia the names of authors such as Derrida and

Ricoeur are rarely mentioned (Vickers 1990). This is on the whole certainly true. Apart from the question of the value to be attached to the work of these authors (for critical remarks on Derrida see Uhlenbeck 1991), the explanation of their absence may very well be related to the Dutch tradition of giving a high priority to the acquisition of a solid reading competence. I hope that this short article has proven how important it is that this tradition be kept alive.

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