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The Figure of the *Tanḍa* in Old Javanese Literary and Epigraphical Records

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Abstract

This article offers a detailed analysis of the category of men known as *tanḍa*. Widely attested in literary records and known from Old Javanese inscriptions, the function and social status of *tanḍa* has been a controversial issue. Two views pertaining to the identity of these men have been advanced so far. According to most scholars, *tanḍa* were high-status officials, often interpreted as military ‘officers’. According to an alternative view, they were low-status military figures and their function was to oversee markets, or they were low-status figures associated with music and performances. This article argues that until at least 1200 CE *tanḍa* were court-based, active combatants, who had troops of their own followers at their disposal and were responsible for the military expansion of Javanese states. By the Majapahit period they were integrated as regular troops into the progressively more hierarchical system of the professional standing army, which resulted in their reduced social status.

Keywords

Java – ancient warfare – Old Javanese literature – *tanḍa*

1 Introduction: The Myth of Low-Ranking *Tanḍa*

The category of men called *tanḍa* is widely attested in *kakawin*, epic poems written in the literary register of Old Javanese, composed in Java between the ninth and fifteenth centuries CE, and later also in Bali. *Tanḍa* are associated with the court milieu and typically figure in a military context.¹ They are also mentioned in Old and Middle Javanese prose texts and have been documented in Old Javanese epigraphical records, too. The category is obviously ancient, as it is attested in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, a poem composed between the second half of the ninth and the first quarter of the tenth century CE in Central Java. Most interestingly, the word *tanḍa* only rarely designates a single person: in the corpus of Javanese literature, as well as in Old Javanese inscriptional records, it is used almost invariably in the plural meaning, denoting a category of *tanḍa*. This pattern is often emphasized by the use of the particle *para*, which marks the plural in Old Javanese.² I know of only two passages in which *tanḍa* is mentioned in its singular meaning; one of them, an important passage in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, is analysed in the third part of this article.

The status and actual function of *tanḍa* has invited substantial scholarly attention, yet their role in Javanese, pre-Islamic society is not entirely clear. A number of scholars have suggested that *tanḍa* designates a category of court officials and/or military commanders, often interpreted, in my view rather anachronistically, as ‘officers’. To give several examples, Soewito Santoso (1980, 111:640) renders *tanḍa* in his edition of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* as ‘official’. In the same text, Robson (2015:581) interprets *tanḍa* as ‘officers’, but at another place in the text he leaves the word untranslated (2015:757).³ In the *Deśawarṇana*, a court poem composed by Mpu Prapañca in 1365 CE, Stutterheim (1948: 35, 67) renders *tanḍa* as ‘reserve officer’ (original Dutch: *vaandrig*). Pigeaud (1960, 111:9) interprets *tanḍa* in the same text as ‘common *tanḍas* (headmen)’, and elsewhere renders it consistently as ‘*tanḍas* (headmen)’ (1960, 111:11, 23, 101). In the same text, Robson (1995:29, 30, 37, 87) translates *tanḍa* as ‘offi-

- 1 Originally, Old Javanese *tanḍa* seems to have denoted emblems or devices placed on war banners, seals, and other objects, identifying their bearers/users as acting in the authority of the owner of the emblem. It will become clear in the second part of this article that this original meaning of *tanḍa* motivated the use of the word as a designation of the category of military figures discussed in this study.
- 2 For the use of the particle *para* marking *tanḍa* as plural, see, for example, *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* 5.5, 48.7, and *Sumanasāntaka* 15.10, 19.4.
- 3 For the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 24.112, where Robson (2015:662) reads *tanḍaṇ* instead of *tanḍa*, see a discussion in the third part of this article.

cers'. In the *Ghaṭotkacāśraya*, a *kakawin* composed by Mpu Panuluh at the end of the twelfth century CE, Robson (2016:51, 95) renders *taṇḍa* in two places as 'guardsmen' and in one place as 'officers' (Robson 2016:279). Teeuw and Robson (2005:271, 399, 457) interpret *taṇḍa* in the *Bhomāntaka*, an anonymous *kakawin* composed in the second half of the twelfth century CE, as 'officers'; elsewhere in the same text, however, they leave the word untranslated.⁴ In the *Arjunawijaya*, a *kakawin* composed by Mpu Tantular in the late fourteenth century CE, Supomo (1977, 11:187), too, leaves *taṇḍa* untranslated. In the *Sutasoma*, another *kakawin* by Mpu Tantular, O'Brian (2008) leaves the term untranslated as well, and in her comments to the text she interprets *taṇḍa* tentatively as 'officer' (2008:263). Worsley et al. (2013:111, 115, 179) translate *taṇḍa* at three places in the *Sumanasāntaka*, a *kakawin* composed around 1200 CE by Mpu Monaguna, as 'court officials'; at one place in their translation we encounter '*taṇḍa* officials' (Worsley et al. 2013:297). The uncertainty of the status and actual function of the men denoted as *taṇḍa* in Old and Middle Javanese texts is discernible in the gloss provided by Piet Zoetmulder (1982:1928) in his authoritative *Old Javanese-English dictionary*:

a category of dignitaries or officials. Is it (originally): 'in charge of a "banner" or company'? It seems, however, that it does not always point to a military rank. Pigeaud renders it with 'headman'. Is it distinguished from *mantri*? But *taṇḍa-mantri*, certainly in *catus-taṇḍa-mantri*, denotes the rank of dignity (chief officer?).

Even though Zoetmulder rightly notes that the term 'does not always point to a military rank', in most instances *taṇḍa* is found in a military context and denotes persons of status. Furthermore, it is clear that the identification of *taṇḍa* as members of a class of professional, salaried officers would represent an anachronism in the cultural and political context of Java before 1500 CE, though I acknowledge that the rendering of *taṇḍa* as 'officer' in the narrative context of Old Javanese literary fiction can be appropriate and fitting. Recently, based on his reading of selected passages of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* and *Sumanasāntaka*, Aciri (2011) has argued that the Old Javanese *taṇḍa* was a figure of low status, which had a role in ceremonial performances. In his detailed analysis of *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 24.111–114, Aciri has made a number of interesting associations, finding similarities between several avian characters (the allegorical *kuwoṇ* bird, the *manuk widwan*, and *manuk uyakan* birds),

4 In stanza 55.8.

the figure of the *taṇḍa*, and the *widu mawayan*, the figure of the ambulatory performer, whom Acri identified with a Śaiva Atimārga ascetic. Literary associations between a *taṇḍa* and an enigmatic *kuwoṇ* bird in *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 24.112, along with the participation of *taṇḍa* in court performances in *Sumanasāntaka* 113.3, have led Acri (2011:71) to pose the interesting question of why we find *taṇḍa* associated with *widu* both in texts and in music and performances. Acri has concluded that ‘besides their official and military activities, this category of functionaries also had the prerogative to take an active role in ceremonial performances’. To further support his claim, Acri (2011:71, n. 51) points out that the Sanskrit word *taṇḍaka* denotes—apart from its other meanings—‘juggler’, tracing this word, which is unattested as a loanword in Old Javanese, to the Sanskrit verb root *taṇḍ* (to beat).⁵ In another publication, Acri (2014:29) has reiterated his claim that the *taṇḍa* of pre-Islamic Java were low-status figures, bringing into his discussion one passage in the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, an Old Javanese version of a well-known Sanskrit *purāṇic* text that can be traced to the tenth century CE. The opening part of the Old Javanese text details an account of a feast or ritual (*kārya*) held by the king, in which a number of *taṇḍa* (*para taṇḍa*) actively participate. The staged performance described in the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* is taken as another proof that *taṇḍa* were in a particular way associated with music and performances:

Those mask performances, buffooneries, dances, and *vidu* competitions, were intended to accompany a ritual or religious performance (*kārya*) that was attended by the king himself and *taṇḍa* functionaries. The *taṇḍas* we find throughout premodern Javanese history, e.g. in RK *sarga* 24 and 25, where they are mocked and connected to the performing practices of a *vidu* (alias *kuwoṇ*-bird), in *Sumanasāntaka* 113.3, again dancing besides *vidus*, and in the 14th-century *Deśavarṇana*, which describes them as low-ranking court functionaries involved in mock war-dances.

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In total, Acri (2011, 2014) selects four passages in support of his hypothesis that a *taṇḍa* was essentially a low-class functionary and performer. But even a cursory look at Zoetmulder’s *Old Javanese-English dictionary* (1982) shows that the figure of *taṇḍa* is very well represented in the corpus of Old and Middle Javanese literature, and a more detailed search reveals that the category of the *taṇḍa* is

5 In his monumental *Sanskrit in Indonesia*, Gonda (1973:46) does not suggest tracing the Old Javanese *taṇḍa* back to Sanskrit, but rather offers ‘sign, mark’ as the only meaning of the Old Javanese *taṇḍa*.

attested in no less than 29 Old Javanese passages, found in (at least) 12 texts.⁶ Apart from the fact that Acri's claim is based on a rather selective piece of evidence, two of the passages included in support of his thesis have been misread or distorted. First, nowhere in the *Deśawarṇana* do we find *taṇḍa* involved in 'mock war dances', as claimed by Acri. In a footnote, Acri (2014:29, n. 65) specifies that the passage that depicts *taṇḍa* 'as low-ranking court functionaries involved in mock war-dances' is to be found in *Deśawarṇana* 66.5, but the characters mentioned in this stanza are actually denoted as *bhaṭa*, a term that in Old Javanese (as well as in Sanskrit) refers to mercenaries, a category that is not identical with the *taṇḍa*.⁷ No doubt, *taṇḍa*—like many other military figures—would engage in simulated combats, if for no other reason than as part of their military training. This is, however, no justification for conflating two otherwise different categories of military persons.⁸

The second passage invoked by Acri in support of his thesis that Old Javanese *taṇḍa* are figures of low status is found in stanzas 113.3 and 113.4 in the *Suman-asāntaka*. Acri (2011:70) has associated the figure of *taṇḍa*—whose low status is taken for granted rather than questioned—with the enigmatic character of a wandering *widu* performer who is mentioned among participants at the wedding feast of Princess Indumatī and Prince Aja. In what follows, I quote the translation of this passage by Worsley et al. (2013:297), because it is this translation on which Acri has based his arguments about the status and function of *taṇḍa*:

6 Apart from discussing a rather narrow selection of literary texts, Acri (2011, 2014) completely disregards a substantial Old Javanese epigraphical record pertaining to *taṇḍa*. As we will see below, the inscriptional record gives us a valuable insight into the status and actual function of *taṇḍa* in pre-Islamic Java.

7 In the text, Acri (2011:71) actually justifies his conflation of *taṇḍa* and *bhaṭa*, explaining that '[i]t is not unlikely that the *taṇḍas* were involved in mock "war dances" [...]. This possibility is not as remote as it may seem prima facie, for a description of "warriors" performing together with *vidus* and enacting a mocked war-dance aiming at causing the laughter of the public is found in the first three lines of stanza 66.5 of the *Deśawarṇana*.' Now, the line in question (66.5c) reads: *ānyāt/ (121b) bhāṭa mapatra yudda sahaṇ maglapglapan aṅghyat aṇḍani pacāh* (Pigeaud 1960, 1:51). Robson (1995:73) interprets this line more carefully: 'Not to mention the warriors shouting challenges—naturally the ones as loud as thunderclaps gave people a fright and made them laugh'. Old Javanese *bhaṭa*, a loanword from Sanskrit, is glossed by Zoetmulder (1982:224): '(Skt *bhaṭa*, from *bhṛta*, mercenary, hired soldier, warrior, combatant) soldier, warrior (prob. of higher rank than the ordinary *bala*)'. For an alternative view of *bhaṭa* as originally denoting a low-class soldier, compare Gonda (1973:142), who interprets Sanskrit *bhaṭa* as 'soldier, servant, slave'.

8 Compare, for example, Old Javanese *Wirāṭaparwa* 16.11, where *bhaṭa*(*mantri*) and *taṇḍa rakryan* (lord's *taṇḍa*) figure as two distinct categories of personnel.

*rasa bubula tənəh nīn rājyāpan paḍa gumərəh
para ratu saha gəṇḍīn goṇ rojeh tabə-tabəhan
apituwi para taṇḍasraṇsānan midər aritan
saha paḍahi guməntər lagy atry āsurak aṇawat
para widu səḍəṇ aywan saṇ taṅkil hyaṇ acarita⁹*

(It seemed that the centre of the kingdom might split asunder because
of the thundering noise
Of the kings with their gongs, cymbals and idiophones.
The more so because *taṇḍa* officials in particular vied with one another,
milling about in a great crowd,
With conical drums thundering as they continued to sound loudly the
introductory themes for the music.
The *widu* performers were just then competing with one another and
the *tangkil hyang* were telling a story.)

According to Acri (2011:70–1), '[t]he *vidus* here enact their comic performance together with dignitaries such as the *taṇḍas*, whom OJED [1928] describes as low-ranking dignitaries with military functions'. Zoetmulder (1982:1928), however, nowhere describes *taṇḍa* as 'low-ranking' dignitaries, as can be seen in his gloss of the word quoted above.¹⁰ Furthermore, Acri links the performance of *taṇḍa* to that of *widu*, claiming that '[t]he *taṇḍas* accompany the performance of the *vidus* with a "thunderous noise" (*gumərəh*) made with their drums'. But the text nowhere says that they do so; rather, the *taṇḍa* are depicted here in a simulated combat, in close proximity to the 'kings' (*ratu*), obviously persons of high social and political standing. In his translation of this passage, Acri (2011:70) interprets the word *ratu* as 'vassals'. Without giving any explanation as to why he chooses to render *ratu* specifically as 'vassals', Acri goes against a common—and widespread—interpretation of *ratu* in Old Javanese as meaning either 'king' or 'queen' (Zoetmulder 1982:1522). A close reading of the text reveals the actual identity of the *ratu* depicted in stanza 113.3b: they are the kings invited by King Bhoja to the wedding of his sister Indumatī. We gather this from stanza 19.3, where Mpu Monaguna offers us an account of Bhoja's decision to invite other kings (*ratu*) to attend the wedding:

9 *Sumanasāntaka* 113.3–4a. Old Javanese text taken from Worsley et al. 2013:296.

10 In the footnote, Acri (2011:71, n. 48) actually quotes Zoetmulder's entry on *taṇḍa*, in which nothing is said about the low status he presumes for them.

Now there was a royal ritual to be performed under the direction of the king.

Śrī Indumatī was to be married by *swayambara* so that she might choose a suitable king. The king dispatched messengers to invite all those kings who were worthy of invitation.¹¹

Clearly, Indumatī is supposed to choose ‘a suitable king’ (*ratu sasambhave sira*) from among the ‘kings who were worthy of invitation’ (*para ratu samayogya hundañan*). We know from a detailed list in the text that the *ratu* invited to the *swayambara* of Indumatī included the kings Hemāṅgada, Susenā, and Pāṇḍya, among other well-known, mighty epic figures. I find it difficult to call these powerful men, actual or potential political allies of King Bhoja, his ‘vassals’, and it is clearly not the meaning intended by Mpu Monaguṇa in his text. Interestingly, we find the *ratu* performing alongside the *taṇḍa* also in the *Bhomāntaka*, a text which is nearly contemporaneous with the *Sumanasāntaka*. In *Bhomāntaka* 81.26, the phrase *watak ratu* denotes the lords allied with King Kṛṣṇa; in my view, the *ratu* depicted in the *Sumanasāntaka* should also be interpreted as allied kings rather than subordinated ‘vassals’. Importantly, the *widu* are only introduced at the beginning of stanza 113.4a, only after the performance of the *ratu* and *taṇḍa*, who seem to interact with one another, has been discussed in stanza 113.3. It is thus improbable that the *taṇḍa* would ‘accompany’ the *widu* on drums, as Aciri has it. The translation by Worsley et al. (2013:297) quoted above, which has the *widu* coupled with the *taṅkil hyaṅ* rather than with the *taṇḍa*, seems to me to do more justice to the narrative logic of the account offered in stanzas 113.3–4.

In his review of the translation of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* published recently by Robson (2015), Aciri (2016) again discussed the enigmatic stanza 22.112, criticizing, in my view rightly, Robson’s interpretation of the term *taṇḍa*. In contrast to all previous readings, which read *taṇḍa ṅkoṅ*, Robson (2015:662) prefers to read *taṇḍaṅ koṅ*. Finding no explanation for the meaning of this phrase, however, Robson leaves it untranslated. In his commentary to the text, Robson (2015:705) suggests that *taṇḍaṅ* is a ‘word of abuse, in view of *kong*’, adding further that *taṇḍaṅ* is ‘definitely not the same as *taṇḍa*’, the word for which he gives the meaning ‘sign; category of dignitaries’. Aciri (2016:459) expressed disagreement with Robson’s word division, reiterating his previously expressed claim that we should read *taṇḍa ṅkoṅ*, where Old Javanese *ṅkoṅ* has a semantic parallel in Malay *engkau/kau*. This time, Aciri (2016:460) offers three possible mean-

11 *Sumanasāntaka* 19.3abc. Translation taken from Worsley et al. 2013:115.

ings for *taṇḍa*. First, the function of *taṇḍa* is linked to the institution of the *kuwu* (initially meaning: ‘makeshift fortress’),¹² strongholds that Javanese rulers built on the frontiers of their *maṇḍala* domains.¹³ The second possible interpretation, according to Acri, would be to identify *taṇḍa* with *tāṇḍa*, a character he discussed in some detail in one of his articles (2014:42, n. 90), but without having made any previous suggestion of synonymizing the two words. For this interpretation of Old Javanese *taṇḍa*, let me quote Acri (2016:460) in full:

As an alternative—or simultaneously valid—possibility, I have interpreted *tāṇḍa* (= *tāṇḍaka*) as meaning ‘an old sage’ (Monier-Williams 1899: 441), which fits in the context as I connected the *vidu* to a *ṛṣi*-type performer-cum-ascetic character appearing on reliefs of Borobudur and Prambanan.

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This is, of course, a very attractive hypothesis, and the *widu*’s performer and ascetic character might account for the demonstrable aspect of ritualized show or performance associated with the *taṇḍa* in several passages in the Old Javanese textual corpus. But this hypothesis might also run ahead of some of the evidence, and assume things that still need to be demonstrated. The third possibility Acri considers in his interpretation of the figure of the *taṇḍa* is to amend the reading of *taṇḍaṇ ṇkoṇ*:

As a third option, I venture to speculate that *taṇḍaṇ ṇkoṇ* is a corruption of *taṇḍak koṇ*, where *taṇḍak*, ‘dance (with songs)’ (Zoetmulder 1982:1929; from Sanskrit *taṇḍaka*, ‘juggler’? [Monier-Williams 1899:432]), could be connected to the modern Javanese *tandhak*, a category of singers and dancers.

It seems to me that in his interpretation of the Old Javanese *taṇḍa* as a figure of low status, Acri has been influenced by Pigeaud, whom he quotes several times. Pigeaud (1960–1962) seems to be the first scholar who advanced the hypothesis that *taṇḍa* were low-class, military figures. He based his arguments on a single passage in the *Deśawarnana*, a court poem composed in 1365 CE by Mpu Prapañca as a eulogy of Hayam Wuruk, the king of Majapahit (r. 1350–1389 CE). In stanza 8.1, Mpu Prapañca depicts *taṇḍa*, who are assigned

12 Compare the meaning of *kubu* in classical Malay.

13 In a footnote, Acri (2016:460, n. 18) gives ‘personal communication’ with Jiří Jákł as his source for this claim.

to guard (*kuməmit*) the main gate of the inner quarters of the royal palace, denoted *purawaktra* ('palace-mouth') in the text.¹⁴ In his influential edition of the *Deśawarṇana*, Pigeaud (1962, 111:9) translates *taṇḍa* in stanza 8.1 as 'headmen', and suggests in his commentary to this passage that Old Javanese *taṇḍa* denotes a 'petty officer' (1962, IV:13). Further, Pigeaud draws a correspondence between the *taṇḍa* depicted in the *Deśawarṇana* and the office of the 'superintendent of markets' as documented as existing in several cities of Central Java in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries CE.¹⁵ Rather forcefully, Pigeaud (1962, IV:13) traces the arguably economic function of the modern *tandha* market supervisor to the *taṇḍa* 'headmen' described in the *Deśawarṇana*:

The fact that in Majapahit the taṇḍas mounted guard near the marketplace leads to the supposition that their function already in the 14th century was related to the market and maintaining order.

A supposed market-related function of pre-Islamic *taṇḍa*, however, is not supported by any other evidence, nor is it attested in Old Javanese epigraphical records. In my view, by denoting *taṇḍa* as 'petty officer', and ascribing him a low status, Pigeaud had projected the social standing of the largely ceremonial guardsmen of the modern Yogyakarta and Surakarta courts onto pre-Islamic *taṇḍa* military personnel, who were active combatants, as we will see in the second part of this article. In fact, Mpu Prapañca says nothing in his text about a presumed commercially administrative aspect of the duty of the *taṇḍa*. On the other hand, by depicting the *taṇḍa* as standing guard over the royal palace—the sacral centre of the populous and powerful Majapahit Empire—Mpu Prapañca implies that *taṇḍa* were part of the permanent royal military establishment.¹⁶ Contrary to the views proposed by Pigeaud, and more recently also by Aciri, there is very substantial evidence that persons denoted as *taṇḍa* cannot be identified as low-status soldiers, nor as men whose function was purely in the field of performance or ritual. On the contrary, Old Javanese literary and epigraphical records suggest that *taṇḍa* were persons of high standing: professional military figures, in most, if not all, cases active combatants,

14 On the structure of *purawaktra* and its function, and the cultural meanings attached to this gate, see especially Stutterheim 1948:14.

15 Compare Robson and Wibisono (2002:719), who interpret *tandha* 11 as '1 official in charge of the market; 2 a military rank'.

16 Robson (1995:29) offers a more balanced interpretation of stanza 8.1, translating the pertinent textual sequence *rikā toṛiwan para taṇḍa tan paḡat aḡanti kuməmit i karaḡṣaniṇ purasabhā* as: 'Those are the places where the officers constantly take turns at watching over the safety of the court.'

and important and powerful men, who were either based directly at the royal court, staying in their own quarters and residences, or who protected and represented their lord's interests outside the (royal) court, and were based in king's fortresses (*kuwu*) from which the royal power extended directly to rural settlements. Now let me turn to the evidence supporting this claim.

2 *Taṇḍa* as Military Figures and Their Function in Pre-Islamic Java

One of the earliest representations of *taṇḍa* in Old Javanese literature, apart from the passages in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* that will be analysed in detail below, are to be found in the *Ādiparwa*, an Old Javanese version of the first book of the *Mahābhārata*, written in the late tenth century CE (Zoetmulder 1974). Janamejaya, a grandson of Abhimanyu and great-grandson of Arjuna, has organized a 'serpent sacrifice', a magic ritual to slay Takṣaka, the King of Nāga and his race of serpents. As is well known, the *Mahābhārata* story is recited during the occasion of this immolation. The Javanese author informs us that just before the onset of the ritual, King Janamejaya and his troops returned from a war campaign (*paṇḍonan*), during which 'they had plundered the country of Takṣila' (*huvus mañalahakən ikañ deśa takṣila*), because Takṣila refused to obey the rule of the king [Janamejaya] (*tan bhaktinya ri haji*).¹⁷ While giving us an account of a famous epic story, the anonymous author offers an interesting insight into the Javanese royal protocol:

*maluṅguh ta sireṇ watañan pinarək de niñ taṇḍa mantrinira*¹⁸

(Seated in the *watañan* pavilion, [the king] was approached there by his *taṇḍa* and *mantri* dignitaries.)

A number of scholars have argued that the epic Pāṇḍawa brothers were believed to be the mythical ancestors of the Javanese kings, and the author of the Old Javanese *Ādiparwa* clearly represents Janamejaya as a Javanese king, who holds audiences in the *watañan* pavilion. *Taṇḍa* and *mantri*, who had apparently accompanied the king on his military campaign (*paṇḍonan*), are summoned to attend the audience. The term *paṇḍonan* indicates that plunder, war booty, and captives were the main goal of this military opera-

¹⁷ *Ādiparwa* 17.4–10.

¹⁸ *Ādiparwa* 17.6. Old Javanese text taken from Juynboll 1906:6.

tion. Elsewhere in the same text we learn that the king (*sañ prabhu*) is 'protected by his *taṇḍa* and *mantri*, all of them carrying weapons' (*rinakṣa de niñ taṇḍa mantri nira makabehan paḍāmawa sarwasañjata*). Both *taṇḍa* and *mantri* feature in the two passages as military figures who accompany the king during his war campaign; once back in Hastinā, they are assigned to protect and attend to the king.¹⁹ Interestingly, this passage also makes a distinction between the elite *taṇḍa* and *mantri*, and rank-and-file soldiers, denoted as *bala* in the text.²⁰ The same status is attached to the royal *taṇḍa* in the *Wirāṭaparwa*, an Old Javanese version of the fourth book of the *Mahābhārata*.²¹ Denoted 'the lord's *taṇḍa*' (*taṇḍa rakryan*), they appear before the king in the audience hall (Juynboll 1912:16). In the *Bhāratayuddha*, a *kakawin* composed in 1157 CE by Mpu Səḍah and Mpu Panuluh,²² we find in stanza 36.8 a description of *taṇḍa* 'drawn up' (*arəpat*) in expectation of battle: the men assemble in Śalya's residence (*wirāyatana*) found inside a fortified encampment of the Korawa warriors at Kurukṣetra, alongside the 'people of the court' (*wwaṇ i daləm*) (Supomo 1993:201). Again, the Javanese author represents *taṇḍa* as Śalya's elite combatants rather than common soldiers or low-class performers.

When we turn our attention to the texts used by Pigeaud and Aciri to support their arguments discussed above, we will see that in these texts, too, *taṇḍa* figure as professional, high-status military figures. In the *Sumanasāntaka*, apart from the passage in stanza 113.3 analysed by Aciri, *taṇḍa* are mentioned at several other places. In stanza 15.10, 'the *taṇḍa* and *mantri*' (*para taṇḍa mantri*) are summoned to the royal council (*hōman inarahakən*) by King Bhoja at the moment he announces his decision to organize a *swayambara* (marriage by choice) for his sister, Princess Indumatī. In stanza 39.7, Mpu Monaguna represents the residence of *taṇḍa* dignitaries inside the royal court of Bhoja to be comfortable enough to accommodate Prince Aja, one of the suitors of Princess Indumatī. Meeting Aja at the major road (*mārga*) just in front of the city, King Bhoja personally accompanies his noble guest through the gate of the city, and leads him to the place assigned for his accommodation: *umah niñ taṇḍāgōṇ pinakapasənāhe nṛpasuta*²³ (the residence of the *taṇḍa* was spacious and had been prepared for the prince).²⁴

19 *Ādiparwa* 52. 28–34.

20 *Ādiparwa* 52.34.

21 *Wirāṭaparwa* 16.11.

22 The text is unique in the corpus of Old Javanese *kakawin* due to its dual authorship (Zoetmulder 1974).

23 *Sumanasāntaka* 39.7a. Old Javanese text taken from Worsley et al. 2013:178.

24 Worsley et al. (2013:179) translate the line *umah niñ taṇḍāgōṇ pinakapasənāhe nṛpasuta* as follows: 'The quarters of the court officials were spacious and had been prepared for

It is difficult to envisage that Prince Aja, personally accompanied to the palace complex by the king, would be housed in a low-class establishment, if *taṇḍa* would represent low-status soldiers or men making their living by some type of performance. In the *Bhomāntaka*, in stanza 82.17, the *taṇḍa* fighting for Kṛṣṇa are depicted riding into battle in chariots, certainly a mark of honour in the world of *kakawin* court poetry. *Taṇḍa* are subsumed in this text under the category of ‘the king’s troops’ (*wadwā sañ naranātha*); moreover, the anonymous author informs us that all of the *taṇḍa* ‘were experienced at fighting from chariots, and they all moved in formation’ (*tahwāprañ mahawan rathāratha-rathan gatinya ya kabeh*), martial skills one would not ascribe to rank-and-file soldiers, performers, or religious figures.²⁵ In my view, one should not underestimate the power and status of elite warriors in ancient Java: with its long-standing tradition of internecine warfare, elite combatants were of crucial importance in deciding military conflicts waged by their lords. Elsewhere in the same text, in stanza 55.8, when the court ladies discuss the possibility that they would be given in marriage to a *taṇḍa*, the ladies call him *rahadyan* (gentleman, lord), once again a mark pointing to the high social status of *taṇḍa* in ancient Java.²⁶ In the *Ghaṭotkacāśraya*, the *taṇḍa* are rewarded by being given new courtly attire (*dadar*) for their military services, which included guarding the royal train during a ‘pleasure trip’ organized by Kṛṣṇa.²⁷ Again, the text represents *taṇḍa* as part of the *watak wwan i dalām* (court folk); most of them are given either new attire or money to purchase new clothes, as we gather from stanzas 5.2–5. At another place in the *Ghaṭotkacāśraya*, the most trusted of the *taṇḍa*, military figures Robson (2016:95) interprets as ‘guardsmen’, are assigned to protect a fortified encampment (*kuwu*) in which Kṛṣṇa—represented in the

the prince’. The Old Javanese term *umah* means either ‘house’ or ‘home’ (Zoetmulder 1982:2116), and the translation advanced by Worsley and his colleagues seems to emphasize the ‘communal’ aspect of the *taṇḍa* dwelling. There also exists, however, the term *kataṇḍan*, which is glossed by Zoetmulder (1982:1928) as ‘the group of *taṇḍas*’. It is attested in *Tantri Kāmandaka* 2.24b.

- 25 Elsewhere I have argued (Jákl 2015) that battle chariots may well have been used in pre-Islamic Java, if only as vehicles to convey elite warriors—and especially their commanders—to the battlefield, rather than in their capacity of ‘shooting platforms’, a function which is commonly ascribed to battle chariots in Sanskrit and Old Javanese literature.
- 26 This passage in *Bhomāntaka* 55.8 is one of only two passages known to me in which the use of the word *taṇḍa* implies a singular (the second case is the metaphorical passage in *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 24.111 discussed below). It is worth noting that both passages have in common the fact that they are presented as direct speech.
- 27 *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* 5.5. Robson (2016:51) renders *dadar* in this passage as ‘presents’. For an interpretation of *dadar* as ‘courtly attire’ and for a detailed discussion of this term, see Worsley et al. 2013:197; compare also Jákl 2016:182.

text as a king—stays with his retinue during the ‘pleasure trip’: *sakweh sarī yaduwaniśa taṇḍa sakaparcaya pinakapikandāl akrama* (all the Yadu tribe, and the most trusted of the *taṇḍa*, formed the defensive wall in proper order).²⁸

Hardly identifiable as low-status soldiers or humble performers, the *taṇḍa* depicted in this passage are represented as seasoned combatants who are trusted to stay in close proximity to the king, in their capacity of his bodyguards, alongside Kṛṣṇa’s elite Yadu warriors. In my view, by associating the *taṇḍa* guards with the epic Yadu warriors, Mpu Panuluh has provided an ‘epic pedigree’ for the Javanese *taṇḍa*, a category of military figures familiar to pre-Islamic Javanese. Still, in the *Ghaṭotkacāśraya*, in stanza 48.7, *taṇḍa* are present at a high-profile meeting between Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍawa brothers and king Matsyapati at the city of King Wirāṭa. Mpu Panuluh informs us that when the major protagonists agree on attacking (*dumona*) the army of Duryodhana, all the *taṇḍa* eagerly abide by this decision and prepare themselves for military action (*para taṇḍa saṅgraha*).

Turning now to the Old Javanese epigraphical record, we encounter *taṇḍa* in a number of inscriptions listed among the high-ranking figures. In the inscription Tulang Air 11 (also called Caṇḍi Perot 11), issued in 850 CE, a *taṇḍa* called Maṇḍi is listed second only to Lord (*rakryān*) Patapān. In the Kañcana inscription, issued in 860 CE, the *taṇḍa* is named third in a hierarchy headed by the king (*śrī mahārāja*), and his three highest ministers (*mahāmantri*). In the Taji inscription, issued in 901 CE, the lord’s *taṇḍa* (*taṇḍa rakryan*) are among the participants and witnesses at the *sīma* ceremony that marks the transfer of tax rights from the ruler to the newly established temple. The *taṇḍa* are involved in festive activities, eating and drinking palm wine, covering themselves with flowers, dancing, joking, and holding boar-fights and cock-fights (Matsuyama 2009). From the twelfth century CE onward—but apparently not before this period—we encounter a category of royal notables denoted as *taṇḍa rakryān riṇ pakira-kiran*. The term can probably best be rendered as ‘lord’s men of [military] strategy’. According to Boechari (2012:11), these men formed the second-highest echelon of state officials, preceded in rank only by the three highest dignitaries of the state. The designation *taṇḍa rakryān riṇ pakira-kiran* is attested in Old Javanese inscriptional record from the Kaḍiri until the late Majapahit period. In the fourteenth century CE, the category is also attested in Old Javanese inscriptions issued in Bali.²⁹ In almost all instances known to me,

28 *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* 12.6c. Old Javanese text taken from Robson 2016:95.

29 See, for example, Selumbung inscription Ib.2, which informs us that the ‘lord’s men of [military] strategy [based] at the court’ (*taṇḍa rakryan i pakirā-kiran i jro*) receive, through

the social status of *taṇḍa* is (relatively) high, and I believe the literary and epigraphic references discussed so far prove that it is not feasible to interpret Old Javanese *taṇḍa* as low-class soldiers, ritual specialists, or performers, but that we must look for another interpretation that would do justice to our evidence.

3 *Taṇḍa*: The King's Men

Who, then, were the men known in Old Javanese texts as *taṇḍa*? To answer this question, we must start by finally letting go of one well-entrenched view. Historians and scholars of Javanese literature have been too eager to accept the idea that Javanese pre-Islamic armies were centrally organized structures, with a chain of hierarchical military command and a class of professional, salaried officers, often identified with the Old Javanese term *taṇḍa*. The matter is more complex and complicated, for Javanese armies and their structures evolved over time: armies were not the same in the ninth century as they were in, say, the twelfth or fifteenth centuries CE. To obtain a better insight into the social standing and function of *taṇḍa*, I start with the hypothesis advanced by Zoetmulder (1982:1928) that *taṇḍa* may have originally indicated the men who were 'in charge of a "banner" or company'. There are indeed several references in Old Javanese literature to a unit called *sataṇḍa* (literally: 'one *taṇḍa*') that seems to have referred to a military unit headed by a *taṇḍa*. For example, in the *Kṛṣṇāyana*, a *kakawin* composed in the thirteenth century CE by Mpu Triḡuṇa, the author describes diverse types of war banners and flags seen at the onset of the battle, saying in stanza 48.7 that the battlefield was 'completely filled with armed men, clustered around their banners' (*sār sōk pānuh sañjata nīn sataṇḍa*).³⁰ In pre-modern warfare, flags and banners were symbols of the military units that they represented. *Taṇḍa* would thus belong to the category of words that derive in one way or another from the terms for banners and flags, so that it would be similar to the well-known term *pañji* (De Casparis 1975:56).

Another meaning of *taṇḍa* is '[royal] seal', with the word mostly used in the Old Javanese form *tinaṇḍa* (with the seal attached).³¹ Another form, *manṭaṇḍa*,

the agency of the military commanders (*para senāpati*), the king's instructions to oversee an establishment of a freehold at Salumbuṇ (Van Stein Callenfels 1926:68).

³⁰ *Kṛṣṇāyana* 48.7a. The term *sañjata* in this line refers to warriors, hence my translation 'armed men', rather than to 'weapons', the most common meaning of this word in Old Javanese.

³¹ The passive form *tinaṇḍa* seems to be known exclusively from the chancery lan-

has been analysed by De Casparis (1956:239), who read *maṇṭaṇḍa si maṇḍi* in the inscription Tulang Air II discussed above. De Casparis translates the phrase as ‘the secretary: Si Maṇḍi’.³² Elsewhere, De Casparis (1956:239, n. 166) has noted that ‘[t]he *mataṇḍa* probably denotes the man who seals the letters, orders, etc., and probably writes them, too’. I would interpret *taṇḍa* not specifically as a ‘seal’, but rather as an ‘emblem’; its meaning would thus be similar to Sanskrit *lañcana*. Chhabra (1961–1962:41, n. 13), for one, observes that ‘such *lāñchhanas* or heraldic devices are sometimes common to seals, banners, shields-of-arms, crests, etc. of royal houses in India from remote antiquity’. In my view, the war banners under which the *tanda* served in ancient Java displayed the royal emblem and thus marked, at least originally, the warriors who directly served the king. The source of utmost importance to appreciating the role and status of *taṇḍa* in pre-Islamic Java is the Padlāgan inscription, issued in 1116 CE by King Bhameśwara for the benefit of the hamlets (*para duwān*) in Padlāgan, represented by their heads (*rāma*). The inscription informs us that benefits and concessions were given to villagers for their military assistance, if they: *makatohāṅgajīwitanya mamrih riñ samarakārya mrasiddha pinakabala rakṣa i śrī maharāja* (put their lives at stake in the war campaign, serving as soldiers who protected His Majesty the King).³³

Most importantly, we gather from the inscription that one of the major benefits the inhabitants of Padlāgan were to enjoy was being freed from the forced conscription of their young men to serve in royal armies: *tan katakana rājawa deniñ taṇḍa* (let no *taṇḍa* have the right to invade [the hamlets] to carry out a forced conscription) (Brandes 1913:152).

The passage makes it clear that *taṇḍa*, as active combatants, were in charge of the conscription of peasants, and to no longer be the object of their attentions is represented in this document as a definite privilege. The inscription also suggests that *taṇḍa* had the right to enter villages as they wished, and it serves as a testimony that in the twelfth century CE peasant levies represented an important part of Javanese armies. Apart from the epigraphical evidence, the *Bhomāntaka* and *Sumanasāntaka* indicate that as late as ca. 1200 CE, the term *taṇḍa* designated active combatants and warriors who distinguished themselves in battles. The *Bhomāntaka*, in particular, clearly represents the category of *taṇḍa* as consisting of elite, well-trained warriors: in stanza 73.26, *taṇḍa* are engaged in fights at the border of the lands controlled by the Yādawa

guage. For a number of instances of *tinaṇḍa* found in Old Javanese inscriptions, see Zoetmulder 1982:1929.

32 Tulang Air II B.15. See also a discussion of this attribution in Gallop 2016:136.

33 OJO 67, A.8. Brandes 1913:152.

warriors. Elsewhere in the same text, the *taṇḍa* fighting for Kṣitisuta are represented as seasoned warriors, who can be relied upon for their battle experience: *pinakādhikāra para taṇḍa saṇ kṣitisutātīśakti suyaśa*³⁴ (Kṣitisuta's *taṇḍa*, strong and famous, were his elite troupes).³⁵

The term *suyaśa* (famous) in this passage suggests that *taṇḍa* personnel had already demonstrated their martial skills and military excellence in previous battles. The passage does not represent *taṇḍa* as members of a class of 'officers', simply because the category of salaried military commanders was not known in twelfth-century Java.³⁶ Most other passages pertaining to *taṇḍa* in Old Javanese texts support the view that rather than representing 'officers' or 'military functionaries', by the Kaḍiri period *taṇḍa* were (still) seen as active combatants. In the *Bhomāntaka*, allied kings (*watək ratu*) meet with Kṛṣṇa and his Yadu warriors and pass the orders they have received from Kṛṣṇa to their *taṇḍa* (*taṇḍa nira ya winarah*).³⁷ Importantly, allied kings (*ratu*) rather than Kṛṣṇa himself muster and give orders to the *taṇḍa*, for in ancient Java each king or queen (*ratu*) would have had his or her own following of *taṇḍa*, who would be in command of their own small groups of troops. This seems to have been the main way that large Javanese armies were raised prior to war campaigns: regional lords relied on their personal entourage of *taṇḍa*, who, for their own purposes, brought to the field their followers, often bondsmen or slaves. In another passage in the *Bhomāntaka*, the *taṇḍa* assembled at the court of Kṛṣṇa are evaluated according to their martial performance, demonstrated in view of other men in simulated combats. Two passages in stanzas 81.26 and 81.28 suggest that superior skills could have secured monetary gifts or a share of war captives in the war campaign for a *taṇḍa*; alternatively, they would be entrusted with the supervision of a fortress (*kuwu*):

*taṇḍa niraṇ watək ratu paḍātihan asira-siran
gḥūrṇita tan pasaṇkya karəñö tabə-tabəhan ikā
len ta saṇ asrameṇ ləbuh aḍeṇ hulun ika sabatək
ri hyun ikā n katiṇhalana kapwa mawuwuh adəmak*³⁸

34 *Bhomāntaka* 85.8d. Old Javanese text taken from Teeuw and Robson 2005:466.

35 I am grateful to my anonymous reviewers for their suggestion of how to interpret this passage.

36 It is, nevertheless, entirely possible that by the twelfth century CE, if not earlier, the highest level of military commanders of Javanese armies, the men we would probably call 'generals', were salaried noblemen. Such financial arrangement was fully in place by the fourteenth century CE, as we gather from the *Nawaratya* (Pigeaud 1960–1962).

37 *Bhomāntaka* 81.25d.

38 *Bhomāntaka* 81.26. Old Javanese text taken from Teeuw and Robson 2005:440.

(The *taṇḍa* of the kings were all well-prepared, vying with each other, [while] boisterous din of countless percussion instruments could be heard;
Others performed simulated attacks on the square, while the whole group of their followers stayed quiet.
[They did it] in expectation that they would be seen, so that the monetary gifts might be increased.)

*mvañ hana taṇḍa mākrəp irikāñulah aṇiñət-inət
ndā krəpanā kəkəh ta n aharəp mahuluna makuvu*³⁹

(And there was a multitude of *taṇḍa* there, engaged in combat, highly attentive;
Though assailed by many, they held on bravely, in the hope of securing slaves or a fortress.)

The context of this passage suggests that *taṇḍa* were reviewed during the occasion of a pre-battle spectacle, which included a ritual of oath-taking, as well as a drill of armed forces in simulated fights (*śrama*). These activities culminated in festive communal eating and drinking.⁴⁰ Such spectacles had a very practical purpose for the *taṇḍa*: it is clear that they strove to demonstrate their martial skills in order to increase their military value, making an impression upon the king, who was supervising the event.⁴¹ The passage depicts *taṇḍa* in a competitive display of martial prowess, vying with one another. Contextualizing the available evidence, I offer the hypothesis that the term *taṇḍa* originally designated a warrior who had proven himself in battle and received a ‘mark of honour’ (*taṇḍa*) in the form of an ensign that marked him as a military professional serving his lord, usually a king (*ratu*). Restricted use of the term *taṇḍa*, invariably associated in *kakawin* with the military establishment of the royal court, would suggest that in Old Javanese literature the *taṇḍa* were conceptualized specifically as the ‘king’s men’, though local lords (*rakryan*), too, probably had their own professional *taṇḍa* to serve in their armies; the designation *taṇḍa rakryan* used in the Taji inscription discussed above may refer to *taṇḍa* serving local lords. It seems to me that *taṇḍa rakryān i pakira-kiran* originally repres-

39 *Bhomāntaka* 81.28ab. Old Javanese text taken from Teeuw and Robson 2005:440.

40 For oath-taking rituals, and festive drinking in the context of warfare, see Charney 2004.

41 The motif of pre-battle spectacle undoubtedly represents one of the most interesting examples of the localization and contextualization of originally Indic literary themes in *kakawin* poetry (Jákl 2015).

ented an institution of ‘warlords’ in service to the king, who were in charge of military expansion and territorial consolidation. In the Kaḍiri period, *taṇḍa* established themselves as a powerful category at Javanese royal and princely courts, and alongside their military careers they assumed important administrative functions in the government.

Though in most passages analysed so far the *taṇḍa* do not engage in any kind of theatrical or musical performance, it cannot be denied that military signalling and martial/festive music were important tasks ascribed to *taṇḍa* in Old Javanese literature, as suggested by Acri in several of his contributions. Already in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, *taṇḍa* are associated with the *paḍahi* drums. In stanza 26.7, the anonymous author describes a festive welcome given in Ayodhyā to Rāma and Sitā, who approach the city in the airborne Puṣpaka vehicle. Numerous drums are sounded, ‘like the *paḍahi* used to mark time for the *taṇḍa rakryān* to celebrate the month of Māgha’ (*kadi paḍahi paḍeṇḍeṇ taṇḍa rakryan mamāgha*).⁴² In his work on the music of pre-Islamic Java, Kunst (1968:40) has suggested that Old Javanese *paḍahi* were most probably kettledrums, demonstrating persuasively that drums were dominant in the Central Javanese period, and remained important until the twelfth or thirteenth century CE. Thereafter, metal gongs became increasingly common, finally dominating drums in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries CE.⁴³ Kettledrums have a very long tradition in Southeast Asia, going back to the ceremonial use of bronze kettledrums by the Dongson notables (Bernet Kempers 1988). The ceremonial use of drums by *taṇḍa* seems to be implied in *Sumanasāntaka* 19.4: upon receiving the orders issued by King Bhoja that his sister, Princess Indumatī, would be married by *swayambara*, the *taṇḍa* ‘make a noise like the thunder day and night, rumbling all together, answering each other in turn from all sides of the compass’ (*soresuk gumərəh makakrətug abaṇḍuṇ asahuran aganti lor kidul*). ‘Drumming up’ the people for Indumatī’s wedding, the *taṇḍa* clearly participate in the ‘spectacle of state’, which in ancient Java also included military reviews, parades, and royal audiences.

42 Old Javanese text taken from Van der Molen 2015:601.

43 See also Kunst 1973 for the decreased popularity of drums and the increased popularity of gongs in modern Java. In the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Arjunawiwāha*, two of the earliest *kakawin* known to us, various types of drums are the foremost musical instruments used in military signalling. The Old Javanese term *gon* only seems to be documented for the first time around 1200 CE, when it is attested in *Sumanasāntaka* 146.14. The sounding summons the peasant levy and drives them to join the army in the field. Flat gongs, however, figure among trade items shipped from China to Sumatra much earlier, namely from the tenth century CE onwards (Nicolas 2011:360).

In sum, for the period between the ninth and thirteenth centuries CE, *taṇḍa* are best interpreted as active warriors in the service of the king or other lords, who stayed either permanently at the court or were stationed in fortresses in different parts of the realm, where they served as a tool of military expansion. Rather than representing ‘officers’, *taṇḍa* were elite combatants who were in charge of their own followers, the men denoted as *hulun sabatək* (pack of followers) in *Bhomāntaka* 81.26.⁴⁴ The power and status of the *taṇḍa* may have decreased after 1222 CE, when the Kaḍiri kingdom became integrated into the Singhasari state; their diminished status and power is clearly reflected in sources from the fourteenth century CE, which we shall discuss in some detail. For the study of the function and status of *taṇḍa* in the fourteenth century CE we have the immensely valuable testimony of Mpu Prapañca, in the *Deśawarṇana*. The men denoted as *taṇḍa*, mentioned in several places in the text, figure among the military troops of Majapahit, where they represented an important part of the royal establishment of a standing, professional army. Some of these men, as we have seen above, were assigned to guard the major gate leading to the inner quarters of the royal palace. In stanza 9.2, Mpu Prapañca depicts the *taṇḍa* and indicates their status relative to other military figures assigned to guard the royal palace:

*nāhan tāḍinya muṅgw in watañan alun-alun tan/ pgat lot maganti
taṇḍa mwañ gusti wadwā haji muwah ikañ amwañ tuhan/ riñ yawābāp
mukyañ muṅgwiñ wijil/ pi kalih aḍika bhayañkāryapintāpupul/ sōk*⁴⁵

(These are the main [troops] posted in the *watañan* pavilion in the square, constantly taking turns:

Taṇḍa and *gusti*, the king’s troops, as well as bonded troops, who are posted outside in great numbers.

The elite [troops] are stationed at the Second Gate: the eminent Bhayañkāri, who guard the gate with an iron fist.)

In the first line of this stanza, the *taṇḍa* are closely associated with the protection of the *watañan* pavilion. Interestingly, the same function is assigned to them in the passage in the *Ādiparwa* discussed in some detail above. In the Old Javanese version of the first book of the *Mahābhārata*, *taṇḍa* are also posted at

44 Teeuw and Robson (2005:441) translate *hulun* in this passage as ‘slaves’. For the discussion of slavery/bondage and their various forms in pre-Islamic Java, see Jákl 2017.

45 *Deśawarṇana* 9.2abc. Old Javanese text taken from Pigeaud 1960, 1:8.

the *watañan* pavilion, protecting the epic king Janamejaya. The Old Javanese *Ādiparwa* was written in the late tenth century CE, while the *Deśawarnana* was composed or finalized in 1365 CE, so that there is a gap of almost four hundred years between the two texts: the function of the Javanese *tanḍa* to protect the king—being stationed at the *watañan* pavilion, which seems to have served as an audience hall and a place for state officials to meet—was clearly a long-standing duty of this category of military persons. Zoetmulder (1982:2222) has conveniently summarized what we know about the *watañan* pavilion from its numerous descriptions in Old and Middle Javanese literature:

it appears that watañan is the place where the king gives audience. Emerging from the pura (jro, kaḍatwan) he takes his place there. From AgP it seems that it is a building of wood. But the courtyard is certainly also meant; it has sand, gates; a wrestling match is held there; in the centre is a maṇḍapa. It is possible that sthāna watañan (Udy; BY; AbhW) and bwat watañan (KY) indicate the building in the middle (cf AWj 3.3: bwat mantĕn [...] muṅgw i tĕṅah iñ watañan), which has given its name to the whole area.

It seems, then, that the major function of the Old Javanese *watañan* complex was to serve as a place to hold audiences. I can add one interesting detail. The earliest description of the *watañan* complex is found in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*. In stanza 12.51 we learn that

watañan atiśayeñ lwā yeka kāñkən samudra
sahana nirañ anañkil ñkā ri heñ yan parāryan
*kadi ta ya kalib in lwah yan pañāmbəg katambak*⁴⁶

(The *watañan* complex was very broad indeed, like an ocean;
 All those attending the audience and who were waiting outside
 Were like flooding rivers that had stopped flowing and been dammed.)⁴⁷

46 *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 12.57acd. Old Javanese text taken from Van der Molen 2015:267.

47 The phrase ‘rivers [...] dammed’ (*lwah* [...] *katambak*) represents, in my view, an allusion to the physical layout, or architectural structure, of the (walled?) *watañan* complex; in stanza 18.37 we learn that Aṅgada, the son of Bāli, who comes to discuss with Rāwāṇa the conditions of surrender and peace, enters the *watañan* ‘by way of the *tambak*’ (*mahawan ta tambak masuk*). Robson (2015:441), for one, translates this passage as: ‘[Aṅgada] arrived by the way of the causeway’, which is certainly a possible interpretation of *tambak* in this context.

From stanzas 12.58–64 we learn that the men who pour into the *watañan* complex are Rāwaṇa's warriors, who bring the booty they plundered in Indra's heaven. The *watañan* is thus represented as a 'collection point' where tribute, plunder, and gifts flow in like rivers flow into the ocean. In stanza 12.64, Rāwaṇa enters the *watañan* and sits on the bejewelled throne, from where he inspects his warriors and the men who bring in the booty. We will come back to this scene in the next section. In the *Deśawarṇana*, the *taṇḍa* are classed, along with the *gusti*, as 'the king's troops' (*wadwā haji*), military personnel who, posted at the *watañan* pavilion, rotate in guarding the outer gate leading to the inner quarters of the royal palace. However, the most prestigious place to stand guard, the inner gate of the palace complex (the 'Second Gate'), is protected by the Bhayaṅkāri, the elite troops who act as the personal bodyguards of Hayam Wuruk and his family, and whose function and social status is well-documented. It seems that by the Majapahit period the elite Bhayaṅkāri had resumed the most honoured duty to guard the inner apartments of the king and the main gate leading to them, while the military status of the *taṇḍa*, though still relatively high, had been lowered. The Bhayaṅkāri seem to have been the most loyal troops associated with the rise of the Siṅhasari-Majapahit dynasty to power. Yet, elsewhere in the *Deśawarṇana*, the *taṇḍa* are listed among the categories of court people who accompany Hayam Wuruk in 1359 CE on his royal tour to Lumajaṅ: '*mantrī* and *taṇḍa* from the whole of Majapahit' (*mantrī taṇḍa sa-wilwatikta*).⁴⁸ Significantly, they take second place, their importance only one step below that of the king and princes of Java and their wives, who are mentioned in the same stanza.⁴⁹ Another interesting passage in the *Deśawarṇana*, stanza 85.1, gives us further information about the status and function of *taṇḍa* in the fourteenth century CE:

*taṅgal niñ cetra tekañ balagaṇa mapuluñ rahyā (130a) hām apupul
mantrī mwañ taṇḍa len/ gusti sahana nuniweh wadwā haji tumūt
milwañ mantryākuwu mwañ juru buyut athawā wwañ riñ parapurī*⁵⁰

(In the first half of the [month of] Cetra the troops gather to consult
and take counsel together:

All of the *mantrī*, *taṇḍa* and *gusti*, as well as the king's personal troops
join in,

48 *Deśawarṇana* 17.7d.

49 *Deśawarṇana* 17.7c.

50 *Deśawarṇana* 85.1abc. Old Javanese text taken from Pigeaud 1960, 1:66.

Followed by the *mantrī* in charge of [royal] fortresses, *juru* and *buyut*, as well as the people of other cities.)

In this passage, the royal troops posted in the provinces are introduced, coming to the Majapahit capital on the occasion of the Cetra festival. Mpu Prapañca gives us a fascinating and very rare insight into the structure of the Majapahit army: high-ranking *mantrī*, who are in charge of provinces, come along with their military leaders (*taṇḍa* and *gusti*). At the field of Bubad, where the Majapahit festivities traditionally took place, they are joined by the royal troops (*wadwā haji*), such as the Bhayaṅkāri. Next, the *mantrī* in charge of royal fortresses (*mantryākuwu*) arrive, followed by local representatives of the Majapahit government (*juru* and *buyut*). Apart from in the *Deśawarnana*, in other texts from the fourteenth century CE *taṇḍa* are represented as military figures. In the *Arjunawijaya*, a *kakawin* composed by Mpu Tantular in the last quarter of the fourteenth century CE, *taṇḍa* are still praised for their military skills. In stanza 3.4, they figure prominently in the army of Rāwaṇa assembled in Laṅkā. The *taṇḍa* occupy the *wañuntur* yard, which is described as ‘crowded with demon soldiers [and] elite warriors’ (*sök de niñ asurabala wīrayoddha*), ‘with brave *taṇḍa*, front-line combatants’ (*hana taṇḍa subala pamukha*).⁵¹

4 Kumbhakarṇa’s Speech: Predatory Warfare in Ancient Mataram

One of the most intriguing passages in which we encounter *taṇḍa*, and which has led several scholars to interpret this category as low-class figures, is found in *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 24.112. The stanza is part of a long and beautiful description of revitalized Laṅkā and its animal inhabitants, who experience a life in renewed harmony after the defeat of Rāwaṇa and his *rākṣasa* soldiers. In 1931, Walter Aichele published his study on the meaning of selected names of Javanese occupations, arguing that parts of book chapters 24 and 25 can be read as allegorical descriptions of historical events that marked Javanese politics in the period of ancient Javanese Mataram (Aichele 1931).⁵² Since then, a number of scholars have followed this fruitful approach. In stanza 24.112, the anonymous author of the text associates the figure of an enigmatic *kuwoṇ* bird with the character called *taṇḍa* and at the same time with the figure of the *widu mawayan*. This identification is presented by the literary character of a *jalak* bird (starling), in its critique of the *kuwoṇ* bird:

⁵¹ *Arjunawijaya* 3.4b.

⁵² See also Damais 1970.

*sambegā niñ kuwoñ tekana hinaiñ-an-ñ donyān pamajahi
koñ taṇḍaṇ koñ kaniṣṭākuṭa makuwu kuwuñ koñ kaśmala kuwoñ
tan pomah tā kaṭṛṣṇān laku widu mawayañ ko m guṇya saguṇa*⁵³

(The disposition of the *kuwoñ* over there is to concentrate his thoughts,
for his aim is to kill!
You, the *taṇḍa*! You have a miserable stronghold, a fortress in a hole! You
are a wretch, *kuwoñ*!
Homeless, unloved, acting like a *wayañ*-performing *widu*, endowed with
magical powers!)

In the second line, the *kuwoñ* bird is thus allegorically identified as a *taṇḍa*, who is depicted in a derogatory way as a person who lives in a 'hole' (*kuwuñ*) instead of being in charge of a fortress (*akuṭa*). The third line informs us that the *kuwoñ* leads a life of an unsettled, perambulatory storyteller (*widu mawayañ*),⁵⁴ who is said to be endowed with magical powers. Though scholars have rendered this line in different ways, the intended association of the character in question with low status, and with the miserable place in which he has to live, is very clear. Aciri (2011:62), for one, translates the second line of stanza 24.112 as follows: 'You are a *taṇḍa*! You have a very mean "palace", living in holes in the ground! You are stained, *kuwoñ*!' Robson (2015:662) translates the same line as: 'You *taṇḍang*! You low creature! With a fort and with a hollow as lodging, you vile *kuwong*!'⁵⁵

It is this satirical passage that has led several scholars to claim that the status of *taṇḍa*—whoever is denoted by this term—must be low. Aichele (1969:133) has rendered the *taṇḍa* in this passage as a 'Landstreicher' (vagabond), which is indeed an apt designation for a figure—allegorically represented as a perambulatory *kuwoñ* bird—wandering without a permanent place to stay. How, then, does the image of the humble, wretched *taṇḍa* (depicted in stanza 24.112) fit with our finding that the *taṇḍa* were high-status warriors, military chiefs, and figures of the royal administrative hierarchy? As I see it, the literary image in stanza 24.112 is consciously distorted through a parody: the author of the

53 *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 24.112bcd. Old Javanese text taken from Van der Molen 2015:542.

54 The figure of the *widu mawayañ* has been interpreted by several scholars as a *dalang*, a performer of shadow theatre (Santoso 1980; Robson 2015). However, I would be very cautious about specifically identifying it as such. Aciri (2014:62) translates *widu mawayañ* more carefully as 'vagabond performer, a *wayang*-player'.

55 Robson 2015:662. For Aciri's critique of Robson's translation of this line, see Aciri 2016:459–60.

Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa meant to criticize the high-ranking *taṇḍa* military chiefs of Rāwaṇa, the same men who figure prominently in stanza 22.35. Aichele (1969), Acri (2011), and Robson (2015) disregard the passage in stanza 22.35 in their discussion of the figure of the *taṇḍa*. Yet, stanza 22.35 helps us to identify this figure and its role in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*. As we will see below, the correspondences are actually complex and go beyond the figure of the *taṇḍa*. In stanza 22.35, never analysed in detail, we encounter the men called *taṇḍa* in a speech delivered by Kumbhakarna, a younger brother of Rāwaṇa.⁵⁶ Awakened from his sleep, the giant *rākṣasa* first finishes his gargantuan breakfast and then proceeds to meet Rāwaṇa. Though not stated explicitly, their meeting occurs at the *wataṇan* complex, as all other important audiences and meetings at Laṅkā depicted in the text.⁵⁷ Rather than taking his brother's side, Kumbhakarna lectures him sternly on the *śāstric* norms for the righteous exercise of royal power, criticizing Rāwaṇa for being unwise and blinded by his lust for power in opposing Rāma. In a bold speech, a sharp critique is launched against the *taṇḍa* personnel serving to Rāwaṇa:

taṇḍanta ya hārohara rāt
utpāta pati praṇ-praṇi ya
*aglah miduṣeṇ tan paduṣa*⁵⁸

(Your *taṇḍa* are a menace to the world!
 They are always keen on waging wars,
 Finding delight in punishing sinless people.)

56 Zoetmulder (1982) does not list this particular reference to *taṇḍa*.

57 In stanza 13.15, Wibhīṣaṇa meets Rāwaṇa, who is seated on his bejewelled throne, at the *wataṇan*. In stanza 18.12, Rāwaṇa's spies meet their lord at the *wataṇan* to report on the battle preparations of Rāma and his simian soldiers. In stanza 18.38, Aṅgada, the son of Bālī, enters the *wataṇan* to discuss the possible conditions of peace between Rāwaṇa and Rāma. In stanza 19.35, Rāwaṇa's general Wirūpakṣa orders his elite troops to protect the *wataṇan* at all costs, bringing all the weapons inside the *wataṇan* and attack all Rāma's soldiers who would possibly come there. It is in this passage that the *wataṇan* is represented as the most sacred and important place in the whole palace complex. Was the treasury possibly part of the *wataṇan* complex? We have seen above that the plunder was carried there, and the metaphorical reference in stanza 12.57 (where the *wataṇan* is compared to an ocean) to 'its towers, perfectly built and extraordinary' (*gupura ya paripūrṇāpūrwa*), which are represented as 'being its cliffs' (*yekā karaṇnya*), certainly suggests that the *wataṇan* complex included high-rising, solidly built masonry structures.

58 *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 22.35bcd. Old Javanese text taken from Van der Molen 2015:482.

sañ śreṣṭi linuṇṭanya hala
mās donya dadī don rasikā
melik mulati n̄ wañ rahayu
*mahyun ikanañ śīla salah*⁵⁹

(Badly they extort the honourable merchants,
 Only gold is what they are seeking;
 Abhorring seeing good people,
 [But] taking delight in misconduct.)

The *taṇḍa* of Rāwaṇa are depicted in Kumbhakarna's speech as immoral, unscrupulous, and conspicuously powerful men, who misuse the support of their lord for their own material gains. It is difficult to consider these greedy *taṇḍa* as low-status dignitaries invested with only limited power, that is, as the humble 'doorkeepers' or market attendants envisaged by Pigeaud (1962, IV:13) in his reading of the *Deśawarṇana*. Quite the contrary, Kumbhakarna depicts the *taṇḍa* of Rāwaṇa's court as powerful military figures who busy themselves with raids and wars (*pati prañ-praṇi*), pillaging the country, and extorting money from merchants (*sañ śreṣṭi*). In his fiery and conspicuously open speech—badly received by his older brother—the giant Kumbhakarna identifies the *taṇḍa* as the source of Rāwaṇa's problems, and their misconduct as the reason of his ultimate defeat in the war against Rāma. Representing high-status court figures, the men with whom Rāwaṇa spends his days drinking and carousing—the *taṇḍa*—are subjected to a harsh moral and social critique. In my view, the institution of the *taṇḍa* can be criticized in the text because Rāma, an arch enemy of Rāwaṇa, does not have any corresponding *taṇḍa* in his army, which is composed mostly of Sugrīwa's simian soldiery. Only in stanza 26.22a, the *taṇḍa* serving to Bharata, Rāma's brother, are introduced for the first time, when they welcome Rāma back in Ayodhyā. These men, however, took no part in the war against Rāwaṇa, for they are serving to Bharata, whose troops were not engaged in this war. Importantly, they seem to ride on elephants and horses, certainly a sign of their high status, and Robson (2015:760), for one, has translated the phrase *taṇḍa rakryan* as 'officers and nobles', as we have seen above.

Viewed from this perspective, it is now easier to understand the links drawn between the *taṇḍa* and the figure of the *kuwoṇ* bird in stanza 24.112 of the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*. The famous Aśoka grove suffered serious damage at the

59 *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 22.36. Old Javanese text taken from Van der Molen 2015:482.

four limbs of Hanumān, as we gather from stanzas 8.214–215, and it was completely devastated in the final stage of the attack on Lañkā, as we learn in stanzas 23.34–35. In stanza 24.112, however, the author represents a magically revitalized Aśoka grove, which represents, at least symbolically, the centre of a revitalized kingdom, where law and order prevail. A number of scholars have argued that the birds and animals introduced in this passage are depicted as living in renewed harmony in the nearly paradisiacal conditions of a revitalized Lañkā, where the former *rākṣasa* demons seem to thrive. The poet describes Rāwaṇa's previously terrible *rākṣasa* warriors, who have now been miraculously transformed into virtuous characters, as already noted by Hooykaas (1958:265):

After the restoration of Dharma, however, our *rākṣasas* become saints by putting an end to their vexations and preferring the company of virtuous men [...]. Animals which normally prey upon each other now live peacefully side by side, thoroughly enjoying the fortunate opportunities bestowed upon them; they only tease one another.

However, the teasing detected by Hooykaas has a deadly point, as we have seen above: the figure of the *kuwoñ* bird is revealed to be a warrior, a *taṇḍa* who is 'willing to kill', and a faithful servant of the now-dead Rāwaṇa, one of the men whom Kumbhakarṇa censured in his speech as a 'menace to the world'.⁶⁰ The allegorical associations between the *taṇḍa* military personnel and the *kuwoñ* bird are complex, as recognized by Acri, and some of them are probably lost on us. There is not only the shared participation in music and acting performances, as observed by Acri (2011:71), but also, and most importantly, a predatory character that is shared by the two figures: while the *kuwoñ* bird is characterized in a number of Old Javanese texts by its carnivorous diet (see above: 'his task is to kill!'), the *taṇḍa*, a warrior by profession, is clearly a human 'killer', who is cruel and unforgiving, as we learn in stanza 22.35, quoted above. It seems to me that after the loss of Lañkā, a daring *taṇḍa* seems to plan to establish a new stronghold (*kuwu*) as a base from which to wage war against the newly appointed ruler of Lañkā.

To summarize this exploration of the character of the *taṇḍa* in the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, we can conclude that the *taṇḍa* is not a man of low status, as Pigeaud and Acri have surmised. He nevertheless makes two contrasting appearances in this *kakawin*, calculated to achieve both mockery and a social

⁶⁰ *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 22.35.

critique. As military personnel serving to Rāwaṇa, *taṇḍa* are depicted in stanzas 22.35–36 as *rākṣasa* warlords, lusting for gold and booty, still in full power, well-nested in the stronghold of Laṅkā. On the contrary, in stanza 24.112, the figure of the *taṇḍa* (allegorically associated with the *kuwoṇ* bird) is represented as a wandering, lord-less warrior, a former warlord, who is cherishing the hope of establishing a new stronghold from which to launch predatory raids. The social, and presumably political situation of Rāwaṇa's former *taṇḍa* military personnel has changed: now they are doomed to live as scared individuals in hiding, wandering in the paradise of Laṅkā.

5 Conclusion

This article has discussed in detail the category of men denoted as *taṇḍa*, which is widely attested in Old Javanese literature, especially in *kakawin*. Invariably, *taṇḍa* are associated with the court milieu and typically figure in a military context. They are also mentioned in Old and Middle Javanese prose texts and have been documented in Old Javanese epigraphical records, too. The function and social status of the Old Javanese *taṇḍa* have been the subject of substantial scholarly attention, and most scholars have suggested that the term *taṇḍa* indicates court officials and/or military commanders, and is often interpreted as 'officers'. Even though Zoetmulder (1982:1928) has rightly noted that the term does not always point to a military rank, in most instances *taṇḍa* are found in a military context where they enjoy high status. Yet, several scholars have argued that *taṇḍa* were low-status figures and represented either rank-and-file soldiers, or functionaries and performers.

In this article, 24 Old Javanese passages in which *taṇḍa* feature have been analysed, apart from epigraphical evidence. In sixteen passages, *taṇḍa* are represented as military figures of high status;⁶¹ in four passages, they are depicted as figures of high status, but their military function cannot be ascertained from the text.⁶² In three other passages, *taṇḍa* are represented as military figures, while their social status is not entirely clear.⁶³ Only in two passages are their military function and social status not clear enough to allow for any con-

61 These passages include *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 22.35, 26.22a; *Ādiparwa* 17.6, 52.34; *Wirāṭaparwa* 16.11; *Bhāratayuddha* 36.8; *Ghaṭotkacāśraya* 5.5, 12.6, 48.7; *Bhomāntaka* 81.25–26, 81.28, 82.17; *Sumanasāntaka* 113.3; *Deśawarṇana* 17.7, 85.1; and *Arjunawijaya* 3.4.

62 These passages include *Bhomāntaka* 55.8, 82.36 and *Sumanasāntaka* 15.10, 39.7.

63 These passages include *Bhomāntaka* 73.26 and *Deśawarṇana* 8.1, 9.2.

clusions to be drawn.⁶⁴ All in all, in 20 out of 24 passages analysed in this study, *taṇḍa* are represented as figures of high social status, and in 19 out of 24 passages they are depicted as military figures. A hypothesis has been offered that between the ninth and thirteenth centuries CE, *taṇḍa* were not ‘officers’, but rather active warriors in the service of the king or another lord, who stayed either at the court or were stationed in fortresses owned by the king or lesser lords in different parts of the realm. *Taṇḍa* seem to have been in charge of their own followers, the men denoted as *hulun sabatak* in *Bhōmāntaka* 81.26. Old Javanese epigraphical evidence, too, suggests that the *taṇḍa* were figures of relatively high status, though their military function is only rarely apparent in epigraphical records. An important document is the inscription issued in 1116 CE by King Bhameśwara for the benefit of the hamlets in Padlāgan; from this inscription we gather that the *taṇḍa* were in charge of forced conscription and that to be freed from their attention seems to have been a privilege in ancient Java. From the twelfth century CE onward—but apparently not before this period—we encounter a category of royal notables denoted as *taṇḍa rakryān riṇ pakira-kiran*. This phrase can probably best be rendered as ‘lord’s men of [military] strategy’. These men formed the second-highest echelon of state officials, preceded in rank only by the three highest dignitaries of the state. It is unclear if these men were active combatants or, rather, salaried officers. The designation *taṇḍa rakryān riṇ pakira-kiran* is attested in Old Javanese inscriptional record until the late Majapahit period. It seems that in the fourteenth century CE the importance of the category of *taṇḍa* diminished, though at least some of the men were still active combatants.

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64 *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 26.7; *Sumanasāntaka* 19.4. The very specific and allegorical passage in *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 24.112 has not been counted in this list, while I believe that the reference is to the court *taṇḍa* already mentioned in stanza 22.35.

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