The *Kalaṅkyaṅ* in Old Javanese Literature
*From Bird of Prey to Mirror Image of the Poet*

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**Abstract**

The article discusses an enigmatic Old Javanese bird named *kalaṅkyaṅ*. The avian species known by this name is identified as the white-bellied sea eagle, a bird common in the past in the coastal parts of Java. In the second section it is argued that the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird is represented in Old Javanese poetry as the mirror image of the Javanese *kawi* (poet).

**Keywords**

Old Javanese – *kalaṅkyaṅ* – ethno-species – poetry

1 **Introduction**

The identity of the bird denoted in Old Javanese *kalaṅkyaṅ/kālaṅkyaṅ* is not entirely clear, beyond the consensus that it represents a bird of prey. The uncertainty about the identity of the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird is caused mainly by the fact that it lacks its reflex in modern Javanese, and reflexes of this word seem to be unattested in other Indonesian languages, too.¹ Yet, literary references to this bird are common, though not abundant, in Old and Middle Javanese lit-

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¹ The word may have, however, reflexes in the Mon-Khmer languages of mainland Southeast Asia, as has been kindly pointed out by one of the anonymous reviewers of this article. The comparative Mon-Khmer dictionary by Shorto et al. (2006:221) gives several lookalike forms (*kalaṅ*) in the languages of mainland Southeast Asia.
erature. Based mostly on the context in which this ethno-species\textsuperscript{2} occurs in Old Javanese court poetry (\textit{kakawin}), several identifications have been offered so far.\textsuperscript{3} Most commonly, \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} is considered to be a kind of hawk. Juynboll (1923:119) interprets \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} in the Old Javanese \textit{Ādiparwa} (late tenth century CE) as ‘a kind of harrier’ (in original Dutch: soort van kiekendief). Santoso (1986:170) renders \textit{kālaṅkyaṅ} in the \textit{Krśnāyana} (thirteenth century CE) as ‘\textit{kālangkyang} bird’ but elsewhere interprets it as ‘eagle’ (Santoso 1986:92). Hunter (2007:292, 295) translates \textit{kālaṅkyaṅ} in the same text as ‘\textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} hawk’. Robson (2008:147) renders \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} in the \textit{Arjunawiwāha} (eleventh century CE) as ‘\textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} bird’, and notes in his commentary to the text that ‘\textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} is a kind of hawk’ (Robson 2008:191). Dwi Woro Mastuti and Has-tho Bramantyo (2009:275) interpret \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} in the \textit{Sutasoma} (second half of the fourteenth century CE) as ‘hawk’ (in original Indonesian: \textit{elang}). Worsley and colleagues (2013:147, 303) translate \textit{kālaṅkyaṅ} in the \textit{Sumanasāntaka} (ca. 1200 CE) as ‘\textit{kālangkyang} hawk’, and elsewhere in the same text as ‘hawk’ (Worsley et al. 2013:167, 175). At yet another place we encounter ‘\textit{kālangkyang} bird’ (Worsley et al. 2013:433). Robson (2015:664) leaves the word untranslated in the \textit{Kakawin Rāmāyana} (ca. 900 CE), probably the earliest Old Javanese text in which the bird-name \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} is attested.

The most complex discussion of the \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ}/\textit{kālaṅkyaṅ} has been offered by Zoetmulder (1974, 1982), who has refrained from translating its Old Javanese name into English and emphasized in his analyses the poetic aspects of the bird. Zoetmulder (1974:199) has drawn numerous parallels between literary representations of Old Javanese \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} and \textit{cātaka}, a bird well-known from Sanskrit as well as Old Javanese literary discourse. Probably most importantly, the Old Javanese \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} and \textit{cātaka} share their affinity for rain, drops of water, and mist, which they actively search out. Zoetmulder (1974:199) has also noted that both birds represent ‘the image of the lovesick person, pining away in his desire to meet the beloved’\textsuperscript{4}. This shared metaphorical power has meant

\textsuperscript{2} I understand 'ethno-species' to be a bird species of the Javanese folk taxonomy. In this system, several bird species can often be known under one name. On the other hand, several forms (adult, young et cetera) of one particular bird species can be recognized and known under distinct names.

\textsuperscript{3} It is certainly important to note that the identifications of Old Javanese \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ} offered so far were advanced by philologists rather by ornithologist.

\textsuperscript{4} Unlike Austronesian \textit{kalaṅkyaṅ}, Old Javanese \textit{cātaka} is a loanword from Sanskrit, where it is identified with the Banded Bay Cuckoo (\textit{Cuculus melanoleucus}), rather than with a kind of raptor (Dave 2005:495). Zoetmulder (1982:31) glosses Old Javanese \textit{cātaka} as ‘a part. kind of bird, Cuculus Melanoleucus’. From his gloss it is clear that he considered the Sanskrit and Old Javanese terms to refer to the same bird species. This conflation is, however, open to question, for the actual identity of the \textit{cātaka} in Old Javanese literary discourse is unknown.
that in Old Javanese poetological texts, the terms *kalaṅkyaṅ* and *cātaka* are often used synonymously. Yet, Zoetmulder was aware that the *kalaṅkyaṅ* and the *cātaka* are not identical birds, as is clear from his gloss quoted below. Furthermore, Zoetmulder (1974) has in his discussion—in a rather infelicitous way—conflated, and confused, the images pertaining to the *kalaṅkyaṅ* and the *hǝlaṅ* (a kind of hawk). Let me quote Zoetmulder (1974:199) in full:

> Both *kalangkyang* and *hělang* are birds of prey, a kind of hawk or buzzard, and apparently different from the *cātaka* (*cucculus melanoleucus*). (In the Ādiparwa *hělang* is used to render the Sanskrit *śyena*, hawk). It seems that the *cātaka* living on raindrops has been copied from Indian literature. The *hělang*’s and *kalangkyang*’s longing for rain, on the other hand, is apparently based on the indigenous observation that when they come down to the river to drink they are attacked and chased away by smaller birds, so that they remain circling in the sky, their piercing shrieks crying for rain, which is the only drink left to them.

From one of Zoetmulder’s notes (1974:538, n. 47) it is clear that he used a single passage to support his claim that the *kalaṅkyaṅ* (like the *hǝlaṅ*) would be attacked and chased by smaller birds upon landing on the shore of the river. This passage is found in the *Khāṇḍawawanadahana* (41.5), a *kakawin* written in 1854 in Lombok (Creese 1999:80). This late text may reflect a (Balinese?) birdlore that is different from that of pre-Islamic Java. Zoetmulder (1982:773) has revisited the status of the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird in a short lexicographical entry in his *Old Javanese-English dictionary*:

> a part. kind of bird of prey (hawk or buzzard). Its circling in the sky crying for rain is frequently used to depict the longing of a lover for his beloved.

Nowhere do the Old Javanese texts describe the physical features of the kalaṅkyaṅ bird in detail, and we must tap several literary vignettes to discover various aspects pertaining to the description of this bird. Yet, *kakawin* court poetry,

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5 I am grateful to one of my reviewers for drawing my attention to the synonymization of the *kalaṅkyaṅ* and *cātaka* in Old Javanese lexical and poetological texts.

6 Zoetmulder (1982:1851) also noted that in Balinese interlinear commentaries on Old Javanese texts, *kalaṅkyaṅ* is often glossed by the word *sundari*. Usually interpreted as a kind of bird or possibly insect, the actual identity of *sundari/sundari* is even less clear than that of the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird, and literary references to *sundari* are of little use in this study.

7 Though *kakawin* rarely offer sound ornithological descriptions, Javanese and Balinese poets...
a major source on Old Javanese bird lore, gives us several important clues as to the habitat and behaviour of the *kalaṅkyaṅ*. Looking at literary representations of motion and cries of the bird helps us to offer a new identification of this enigmatic raptor. Like all pre-modern societies, the ancient Javanese had a more inclusive concept of the species: habitat and behaviour, in particular, are often more relevant in ethno-ornithology than in modern bird taxonomy. In his meticulous study of bird symbolism among the Nage people in Flores, Gregory Forth (2004:66) uses the term ‘empirical species’ to accommodate criteria and categories that are culturally particular, and this study adopts this approach as a useful tool for discussing birds represented in Old and Middle Javanese literature. One of the consequences of this approach is that many ‘empirical’ bird species (or ethno-species) of Javanese folk taxonomy cannot be easily linked to biological species of modern taxonomy. Yet, this does not seem to be the case for the *kalaṅkyaṅ*, which, as I will try to demonstrate below, can be identified with a specific raptor species that still breeds in Java. In the second part of this article I will argue that the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird of Old Javanese literary discourse can be viewed as an alter ego of the *kawi*, a religious figure commonly interpreted as ‘poet’.

2 The *Kalaṅkyaṅ* Bird and Its Ethno-ornithological Identity

To start with, the Old Javanese *Agastya*parwa, a prose text of unknown date, but possibly composed already in the late tenth century CE (like the Old Javanese *Ādiparwa*), shows how the categories of Javanese ‘pre-Islamic’ ornithology depend on spiritual and mythological paradigms. In an interesting vignette, the origin of Javanese birds of prey is traced to Sampāti, a mythological giant raptor-beast well-known from the *Rāmāyaṇa*:

saṅ sampāti sira ta makānak ikaṅ həlaṅ kalaṅkyaṅ bintit

Distinguished Sampāti had as his children the hawk, the *kalaṅkyaṅ*, and the *bintit* bird.

were good observers of nature and some of them demonstrated a keen interest in birds. Strikingly, some texts, such as the *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* and Sumanasāntaka, pay substantial attention to the avian world, while others, for example the *Arjunawiwāha* and *Ghaṭotkacāśraya*, are much less informative. Old Javanese poetry has been little tapped for its richness on Javanese avifauna, but several birds have received attention. See especially Zoetmulder (1974:199–201), Nihom (1995), and Acri (2010, 2011).

The kalaṅkyaṅ bird figures already in the Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa. The poem is unique for being the only kakawin composed in the Central Javanese period (ca. 750–928 CE) that has survived. In stanza 24.118, which is part of a famous discourse on birds and animals inhabiting the revitalized Laṅkā, we encounter the kalaṅkyaṅ bird in the company of the hawk (holaiñ), and crow (gāgak). All the three birds—standing in this vignette for human actors—are subject to critique and mockery. The anonymous author criticizes the həlaṅ hawk for its cunning habits, and for having no permanent abode, while the crow is mocked for its dark black feathers, ‘grilled and burned black’ (n pinaṅgaṅ kagasañan ahiroñ). As for the kalaṅkyaṅ bird, the critique is rather mild, for the author only marvels about its habit ‘to be pining’ (akūñ) when roaming about (mabayañan), an obvious reference to the strong call of the bird and its gliding flight:

kālaṅkyaṅ ko lanākūṅ sabhaya mabayañan ko tah mapavuñ

You, kalaṅkyaṅ, you are always lovesick, you fearfully roam about: what’s wrong with you?

It is clear that even in our earliest literary testimony, the gliding flight and distinct call were recognized as typical of the kalaṅkyaṅ. The term akūñ, rendered here ‘lovesick’, can also mean ‘infatuated, full of amorous desire’. Zoetmulder (1982:925) notes that the form ŋ akūñ (lovesick person) ‘may refer to a man or woman, but usually the former’. It is plausible, then, that in the passage quoted above a male bird is implied. We should also note that in all kakawin composed in the East Javanese period (928–ca. 1520s CE), the kalaṅkyaṅ’s flight is closely associated with the Old Javanese concept of laṅö, an aesthetic and religious rapture, which was an innovation of the East Javanese period (Zoetmulder 1974). This association is lacking in the Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa, a text in which Indian aesthetics and poetical values are prominent. We have already seen above that another literary image associated with the kalaṅkyaṅ bird in the kakawin is its ‘calling for rain’, an Indian poetic trope associated with a number of birds, most famously with the cātaka. It is attested, for example, in the

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10 The Old Javanese concept of laṅö refers to a religious and aesthetic experience of deep enchantment or enrapture, in which the kawi poet-priest (or any other practitioner) achieves a state of spiritual dissolution and unification with divinized elements of nature, such as plants, rocks, or clouds. The concept is discussed in detail in Zoetmulder 1974. For its rich representation and importance in Old Javanese court poetry, see also Zoetmulder (1982:976–9).
11 On the identity of Sanskrit and Old Javanese cātaka, see note 5.
Sumanasāntaka, a kakawin composed by Mpu Monaguña around 1200 CE. The complementarity of the kalaṅkyaṅ bird and drizzling rain is expressed in a passage where a sexual union of Prince Aja and Princess Indumati is depicted:

\[
kālaṅkyaṅ mwaṅ rorəb warna nira kadi liraṅ kāmukan saṅhub awrā\]

They were like the kālaṅkyaṅ-bird and the thin rain-cloud enveloping it, like a sugar-palm tree veiled in the spreading mist.

The male kālaṅkyaṅ couples here with the rain cloud (perceived as a female element) in the same eroticized, complementary way as the sugar palm (liraṅ) couples in Old Javanese literature with the mist (Jākl 2015). We will see below that this image is not trivial; it reflects more than the simple fact that diurnal birds of prey, such as hawks and eagles, would glide high in the (cloudy) sky in search of prey. Moreover, the image may be based on Austronesian lore rather than Indian literary trope. Gregory Forth (2016:253, 2019:194) has demonstrated that the Nage people of Flores, and the people in Sumba, too, acknowledge a strong association between the sea-eagle and the coconut or lontar palm, mountains, and the sea. One particularly striking metaphor, documented from the Nage, conjoins two raptors, the ‘eagle’ (kua) and ‘goshawk’ (sizo), who call seaward from the top of the lontar palm at drizzling rain. A similar coupling of the kalaṅkyaṅ bird and drizzling rain is attested in the Arjunawiwāha, a kakawin composed by Mpu Kaṇwa in the first half of the eleventh century CE. A beautiful literary vignette reproduces the words of one of the divine nymphs, who writes them on a panel placed below the roof of the ‘pavilion of poetry’, which is found in Indra’s heaven. Her laments are targeted to be read by Arjuna, the eponymous Pāṇḍava hero of the text. Having fully used his days as the king of Indra’s heaven, Arjuna leaves the divine court and wishes to go back to the world of men. Divine ladies lament his decision, and one of them—possibly Tillotamā, who in stanza 35.3 expertly caps and finishes an incomplete verse composed by Arjuna—writes down her lament on one of the roof panels of the ‘pavilion of poetry’. In her short poem the lady hopes Arjuna is to be reborn in his next life as a kalaṅkyaṅ bird, as we learn in stanza 35.14. Let me quote a poetic translation of this passage by Stuart Robson (2008:147):

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12 Sumanasāntaka 15.1b. Old Javanese text taken from Worsley et al. (2013:302).

13 In Jākl (2015), I demonstrated the cultural and religious importance of the sugar palm in Javanese pre-Islamic lore. The sugar palm was associated with the divine nymphs, and its crowns are conceptualized in Old Javanese literature as the earthly ‘terminals’ of the flyways used by the heavenly denizens.
In another birth, if you are the kalāṅkyaṅ bird, I shall be the rain clouds that trail over the hills:
Let me examine your weeping when you seek refuge in my mists—look for me from a bare branch!
When you are about to swoop down on me, I shall conceal myself behind the waterfall,
And while you enjoy my droplets at the setting of the sun, let me in turn taste bitterness.

The passage reveals that the kalāṅkyaṅ bird could be spotted gliding high in the sky over the mist-enveloped mountains (wukir). The term wukir is often complimentary to sāgara (ocean) or pasir (sea, seashore) in Old Javanese poetry (Jākl 2020). At the same time, the mountains and the ocean (or, rather, the coast) are the two ‘obligatory’ types of natural environment where Javanese poets and other visitors would come to muse and compose poetry: the mountains represent an element of fire (volcanoes), while the ocean or coast stands for the water (Worsley 2012).

Another passage that informs us about the habitat of the kalāṅkyaṅ is found in the Sumanasāntaka. In the charming ‘Account of the seasons’, a long textual sequence giving in thirteen stanzas (28.14–26) fascinating details of the Javanese pre-Islamic calendar, a ‘royal ascetic’, who lives in a remote but large religious settlement in a mountainous district, describes for Prince Aja twelve months of the Javanese lunar year, each one marked by the characteristic changes of weather and environment, observed here obviously in a drier, southern part of Java. The fourth month (Kapat) is associated with the onset of rains in Java, and roughly coincides with the month of Kārttika in the Sanskrit cultural sphere, and with October to November in the modern calendar (Zoetmulder 1982:810). As is well-known, the Kapat/Kārttika of Javanese discourse is depicted as one of the most beautiful months of the year (Zoetmulder

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15 See, for example, Bhāratayuddha 10.10; Sumanasāntaka 50.12.
16 It comes as no surprise that in different parts of the Indic world people used different concepts of ‘season’ and divided the times of the year differently. Recently, Dominik Goodall (2014) has demonstrated how the concept of ‘seasons’ differs in Sanskrit literature comp-
1974:193). For Javanese poets, there is no month which can compare with Kārttika/Kapat, which is comparable to Indian spring: it is a season of beauty and sexual pleasures, and the thunder, the rain, and the flowers of Kārttika/Kapat are recurring themes in Old Javanese descriptions of nature. Furthermore, in ancient Java, the month of Kārttika was strongly associated with the cult of Kāma, the god of love and aesthetic pleasures, such as music and poetry. Mpu Monaguṇa employs the motif of kalaṅkyaṅ birds gliding high in the sky to characterize the month of Kapat:

jalada kadi pətəṅ yan tombe niṅ kapat alanö
jawuh aməkasakən rom riṅ kaywan hañar asəmi
wahu mari panañis niṅ kālaṅkyaṅ sukha sumayab
asiga kadi tinambaṅ wahw inantuken agiraṅ

Rain-bearing clouds, dark as night, are enchanting at the onset of the Kapat.
The fall of rain leaves veiling mist in freshly blossoming forests.
Kalaṅkyaṅ birds cease to cry, gliding delightedly in the sky.
In high spirits, lovers abandoned, but now expectant of a happily reunion.

Bird vocalizations, and less often movements, serve in Old Javanese literature as chronological signs, marking parts of the day and night and changes in the seasons (as is the case here) and it is certainly significant that Mpu Monaguṇa selects the kalaṅkyaṅ as the sign marking the month of Kapat. The locus preferred by kalaṅkyaṅ birds in this passage seems to be the mountainous environment, situated just a short distance from the coast. We gather this from stanza 29.6, where Prince Aja and his retinue leave the abode of the ‘royal ascetic’ and take a shortcut through the mountains to reach in short time the seashore. On their way they encounter salt-pans and fishponds in a river valley they pass, osed in India and in the epigraphical poetry written in Sanskrit but produced in ancient Cambodia.

17 From the Deśawarṇana, a kakawin composed by Mpu Prapañca in (or before) 1365 CE, and from a number of other kakawin composed in East Java, we learn that the so-called ‘pleasure trips’ were conducted by the Javanese royalty during the month of Kapat. There were certainly many reasons behind these royal outings, during which the king and his court visited different parts of Java. One of the reasons little discussed so far seems to be Tantric worship of Kāma at the seashore.

as we gather from stanzas 29.8–9, where noisy ‘large birds’ (pakṣinyaṅgaṅə) hunt for eels, reared there in the artificial ponds, robbing the people working there of their fish harvest. I will come back to this observation later. Two of the descriptions of the habitat of the kalaṅkyan bird that we have just discussed indicate that the bird would inhabit wooded mountains some distance from the coast, yet never too far away. In the passages discussed so far we have also noted that the literary motif of two lovers, happily united after some time alone, is mapped on the motif of the kalaṅkyan bird pining for its lover. Recently, Tom Hunter (2007:296) has associated this interplay with the search for the divine. Let me quote his view in full:

The sensitivity of the kakawin poet to the play of presence and absence is perfectly consonant with—or even prefigures—a figuring of the divine (or absent beloved) in semiotic terms, a constant shifting of the position of the elusive and subtle godhead within language to the play of the similar.

Now I would like to introduce a passage in the Sumanasāntaka that is key in my effort to identify the kalaṅkyan bird of Old Javanese literature. The passage also introduces a close association between the kalaṅkyan and the Javanese kawi (poet). The charming literary vignette is part of a description of the seashore, reached by Prince Aja and his retinue of cavalrymen. Standing at some distance from the shoreline, probably on a low cliff, the men observe three types of watercraft, which are compared by way of an extended metaphor to three kinds of animals. While two of them are local birds, the third animal is a non-native visitor:

mambö sāgara ramya niṅ laṅit awarña tali hurut-urutnya tan pəgat kālankyaninya baṅun jukun niṅ amayaṅ loyop i lari nikāmaḍom ḍarat kuntul mōr kadi tuṇḍan iṅ banawa kāri tan ilu kajahat lanālayar saṅ hyan candra baṅun bahitra ḍatəṅ iṅ kuləm amawa šaśā mare jawan

The beautiful sky gave the impression of the ocean: the unbroken threads of clouds were like fishing lines [of fishermen],

The kālankyan-bird was like a canoe of the fishermen who use the payaṅ-nets, disappearing from view when its course headed for the shore.

19 Sumanasāntaka 33.4. Old Javanese text taken from Worsley et al. (2013:166).
The heron in flight resembled the *tunda* of a *banawa* ship that—safe from shipwreck—continued to sail.

The holy moon was like the ocean-going *bahitra* ship, coming in the night, carrying the hare as its cargo to Java.

In a brilliant metaphor, Mpu Monaguṇa depicts the sky and the sea as if inverted and merged together: the sky above the coast, with its clouds, birds, and the moon, turns into the sea-space, where fishermen in small boats work their nets and larger ships ply their trade. The beautiful vignette is one of a number of passages found in the *kakawin* poetry, based on the figure of speech of an inverted, topsy-turvy world. Moreover, this image may be in one or other way related to the Balinese esoteric practices of visualizing and embodying the graphemes denoted Ongkâra Ngadeg and Ongkâra Sungsang. This is, however, not the place to go into detail about this topic, and the author’s expertise is in any case too limited to follow this line of argument in more detail.

Like the heron (*kuntul*), the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird must have been a familiar sight along the Javanese seashore. In the stanza quoted above, three types of vessels of apparently different sizes and functions are introduced: a simple canoe (*jukuṅ*) used by the fishermen; a larger *banawa* ship, which is characterized by the presence of *tunda*, an enigmatic term denoting possibly some superstructure (or outriggers?) and a large, ocean-going trading vessel, called *bahitra* in the text. Interestingly, the *jukuṅ* and *banawa* are associated with the native species of birds, while the *bahitra* is not. In my view, this narrative device can be read as a meta-poetical commentary on the three types of watercraft. Old Javanese term *jukuṅ* refers to the dugout canoe propelled by paddling.\(^\text{21}\)

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\(^{20}\) Old Javanese *tunda* is a difficult term. Zoetmulder (1982:2065), for one, glosses *tunda* as ‘storeyed construction (on chariot; decks or bridge of a ship); anything done in shifts (in succession); levy to be done in shifts?’ Other scholars have mostly accepted this view and interpret *tunda* as ‘deck’. This interpretation, however, seems to be rather anachronistic, for before 1500 CE most of the Southeast Asian ships were not yet provided with rigid decks. Though the antiquity of ships and boats with rigid decks in the Indo-Malay world is not known, there is linguistic evidence that this type of ship might have been introduced to the region by South Asian mariners. Recently, Claudine Salmon (2019:27) has suggested that such boats may have been denoted by the term *kapal*, a loanword from Tamil. There is also a possibility that Old Javanese *tunda* denoted the outriggers. This identification may be supported by the finding that in the colonial Malay world the term *perahu payang* (fishing boats using trawl-nets) typically denoted watercrafts provided with outriggers. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for this interesting suggestion.

\(^{21}\) We learn that the *jukuṅ* was propelled by paddling in Bhômântaka 3.42. Worsley and colleagues (2013:167) translate *jukuṅ niṅ amayaṅ* as ‘junk of fisher folk’. But there is no need to assume that any sort of larger vessel, such as a junk, is implied. First, in modern language...
The *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird in the *Sumanasāntaka* is thus metaphorically associated with the canoe used by fishermen. As fishermen catch fish with trawl-nets, the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird, too, seems to be hunting for fish at the seashore. The *banawa* ship, associated with the heron, must be a larger watercraft than a simple canoe, as the heron is a larger bird than the *kalaṅkyaṅ*. As for the *bahitra*, it is not associated with any native bird, but with the hare (*śaśa*), which it brings as its cargo to Java, as we learn in the last line of the stanza. This is, of course, a poetic trope well-known in Sanskrit literary discourse. The *bahitra*, a loanword from an Indian language (most probably Sanskrit), would also be a foreign species, so perhaps an ocean-going ship owned or operated by foreigners, possibly Indians.\(^\text{22}\)

The association between the *jukuṅ* (canoe) and the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird is interesting and seems to imply that the *kalaṅkyaṅ*, spotted here gliding over the coast, catches fish, like the fishermen. To decode this metaphor, a little bit should perhaps be said about the way that the fishermen in canoes capture the fish. The fishing method in question is indicated by the verb *amayaṅ* (to fish with [a] *payan* net[s]). Zoetmulder (1982:1330) gives no conclusive interpretation of the Old Javanese *payan*, glossing it as ‘a part. kind of tool to catch fish (at sea), prob. a net’. Robson (2016:71) offers an entirely persuasive interpretation of a *payan* as a ‘trawl-net’, hence a kind of seine.\(^\text{23}\) According to Butcher (2004:44), a historian of Indonesian fisheries, *payan* nets were widely used in the past off the Javanese coast to catch small and medium-sized pelagic fish, mainly scads and mackerel. Let me quote Butcher’s description of this type of fishing gear in full:

The *payang* was a large sack-like net with two long wings bearing some resemblance to a trawl net. The net was made from a fibre that came from the petioles of a particular kind of palm. The upper edge of the net was

\(^{22}\) The Old Javanese *bahitra* is most probably a loanword from the Sanskrit *vahitra* (Jones 2007:30). On the complexity of Indian loanwords pertaining to ships, see especially Hoo-gervorst 2013.

\(^{23}\) I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for the suggestion that the Old Javanese *payan* must have been a kind of seine.
As I see it, an interesting meta-poetical comment is hidden in the literary image of the payaṅ nets used by the coastal fishermen in the Sumanasāntaka: could it be that the ‘two long wings’ of the payaṅ net reminded Mpu Monaguṇa of the kalaṅkyaṅ bird in flight? Of course, this assumption is only relevant if we accept that the form of the payaṅ net changed little after the period around 1200 CE when the Sumanasāntaka was composed. Then the metaphor would imply that the wings of the bird must be prominent in one or other way, and thus possibly quite long. Now, let me summarize what we have learnt about the kalaṅkyaṅ bird so far: it is a bird of prey that feeds on fish and has prominent wings. This raptor can be observed on the seashore but it can also be spotted in the mountains located at some distance from the coast. The bird seems to form a lifelong monogamous bond with its mate.

Now, there is only one species of bird of prey native to Java that would fit the description that we have distilled from the Old Javanese discourse: this is the white-bellied sea eagle (Haliaeetus leucogaster). A distinctive bird of prey, this eagle in the family Accipitridae prefers rocky coasts, coastal islands, rivers, and lakes as its habitat (Tilford and Compost 2017). Though mostly pelagic, it can be commonly seen far inland, where it would follow rivers. The white-bellied sea eagle was first described as an ornithological species by the German naturalist Johann Friedrich Gmelin in 1788, but already in 1781 John Latham had made short notes on the species obtained in 1780 at Princes Island off the westernmost cape of Java during Captain Cook’s last voyage (Stresemann 1950:66). Today, this impressive bird is known as bahak in Java. It has a white head, rump, and underparts, and a dark or slate-grey back and wings. Males are 60 to 80 cm long; females, as with most raptors, are larger: they can be 80 to 90 cm long. The wingspan ranges from 1.70 to 2.20 metres, making the wings prominent parts of the body when the bird is seen in flight (Eaton et al. 2016). Adult white-bellied sea eagles are unmistakable and unlikely to be confused with any other bird, and the prominent white tail distinguishes it from other species of large eagles. In flight, the black flight-feathers on the wings are easily seen when the bird is viewed from below. The white-bellied sea eagle flies with slow, powerful wingbeats and occasional glides—not unlike the course of a paddled canoe, as depicted in the Bhomāntaka and Sumanasāntaka.24 When gliding, the wings

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24 Bhomāntaka 3.42; Sumanasāntaka 33.4.
are modified so that they rise from the body at an angle, but are closer to horizontal further along the wingspan. This would actually be reminiscent of the typical configuration of the outriggers of Javanese and Madurese canoes.

The white-bellied sea eagle feeds primarily on fish, including spiky and poisonous fish, but it also takes turtles, reptiles, sea snakes, waterfowl, and small mammals. Opportunistically, it would also rob other birds, and sometimes even sea mammals, of their prey. This feeding strategy may account for its modern name bahak: the verb mbahak means ‘to take others’ possessions arbitrarily’, and bahakan refers to ‘things acquired by looting’ (Robson and Wibisono 2002:65). I cannot help but recall a passage in Sumanasāntaka 29.9 mentioned above, where large birds (pakṣināgyaṇī) ‘steal’ eels from man-managed fishponds located in the river valleys, the corridors typically used by white-bellied sea eagles to fly inland. Interestingly, the reflex bahak is not attested in Old Javanese, but it is known from Middle Javanese texts. We have noted above some similarities in representations of the white-bellied sea eagle in Old Javanese literature and the lore associated with this bird in parts of eastern Indonesia. Based on his field research among the Rindi in Sumba, Gregory Forth (1981) reports that the white-bellied sea eagle, called mbaku (compare with Javanese bahak), features prominently in local cosmology. It appears in a myth about the origin of the world, where the bird, by flying over the waters of the sea formed by a primordial flood and flapping his great wings, causes the waters to subside and dry land (the island of Sumba) to emerge.25 Most interestingly, the name of the white-bellied sea eagle in ritual language (also representing an ancestor of one of the numerous eastern Sumbanese clans) is Mbongu I Mbaku. Now, Mbongu means ‘mist’ or ‘drizzle’, a meteorological phenomenon with which the bird is often associated in Old Javanese poetry.

Similar to the much more famous, emblematic Javan hawk-eagle, the white-bellied sea eagle forms permanent pairs. The bird breeds in lowlands but can be seen at mountainous regions up to 1700 m high, which is in perfect conformity with the descriptions of its habitat in Old Javanese literature. The environmental range of the bird that covers both the sea and the mountains, two distinct zones that form a complementary unity in Old Javanese cosmology, might have been, actually, the reason for the prominence of the kalaṅkyaṇ bird in the spiritual world of the Javanese kawi and Javanese pre-Islamic courts. We have also seen that poets were very interested in the call of the kalaṅkyaṇ bird. The loud, goose-like honking call is a familiar sound, particularly during the

25 In an email communication (6-3-2021), Gregory Forth has noted that the additional motif of the primordial flood seems to have been lifted from the Christian lore.
breeding season. At this time, birds often perform acrobatic aerial displays, which include somersaults, side-slipping, and stoops. Uniquely, both mates fly together and lock talons, tumbling together through the air while making their honking calls.

3 The Kalaṅkyaṅ Bird: A Mirror Image of the Javanese Kawi

The white-bellied sea eagle, the kalaṅkyaṅ bird of Old Javanese discourse, shares a number of features with the Javanese kawi (the author of kakawin poetry), a figure that has been interpreted variously as a ‘poet’, ‘priest of literary magic’, or ‘scholar’ (Zoetmulder 1974:173–85). I argue that the kalaṅkyaṅ bird actually represents a mirror image of the Old Javanese kawi. The kalaṅkyaṅ is equally at home on land and by the coast, as is the peripatetic kawi, who roams the mountains and the coastal districts (pasisir) in search of laṅö, a spiritual experience of ‘salvific beauty’ that combines trance-like rapture, aesthetic pleasure, and possibly shape-shifting. As has been suggested previously by Tom Hunter in a different context, the search of the lonely kawi for beauty, either the beauty of nature or female beauty (I would add: also the ‘beauty’ of the battle-ground) can be interpreted as the poet’s search for the divine and pleading for its assistance. The conflation of human and pelagic lone-dwellers articulates well the shared concept of creatures that shift between land and sea, who are equally at home on land and by the coast.26 At the same time, the kalaṅkyaṅ’s gliding flight, high in the sky, where the bird ‘disappears from view’ (ləyəp) at the horizon, is not unlike the quest of the Old Javanese kawi for spiritual release (kamokṣan). The liminal space that both the kalaṅkyaṅ and the kawi occupy establishes a kind of ‘interspecies kinship’: the kalaṅkyaṅ bird prepares us for the spiritual flight of the kawi, who is dependent upon the palpability of real avian encounters which inspire and are incorporated into the kawi’s quest to embody laṅö, a salvific beauty experienced in the state of spiritual rapture.27

This bird-human union is further developed in Sumanasāntaka 37.7. A bit of context is necessary here. Prince Aja and his retinue leave the coastline

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26 For an interesting parallel, a literary motif of ‘vanishing seabirds’ in the Old English poem Wanderer, see Osborn 1974.
27 Any effort to better understand what I call ‘salvific beauty’ can possibly be furthered by taking a fresh look at the little-studied corpus of Javanese temple reliefs showing the so-called ‘bird’s eye views’ of Javanese landscapes and seascapes. The concept of ‘interspecies kinship’ may be relevant for the parallels documented from eastern Indonesia. Gregory Forth (2004:140) observes that in East Flores, several clans in the village of Labao regard raptors, including the white-bellied sea-eagle, as totems.
and ascend the winding path to the top of the mountain ridge overseeing the coastline. There they encounter a charming hermitage (kadewagurwan), where a small group of hermits (tapa-tapa) are practising penance. The animal life depicted in stanzas 37.7–8 reminds Mpu Monaguṇa of the life of ascetics. Similar metaphorical allusions to diverse classes of ascetics and other religious figures are well-established in Old Javanese poetry. For example, in the Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa, the snakes living as ascetics (atapa-tapa), and quails (puyuh) scratching a hole in the earth to make a nest, have been explained as literary allusions and metaphors of the religious life of organized religious groups. In a stimulating article, Andrea Acri (2008:200) understands the activity of quails to be a satirical allusion to the practice of the Alepaka or Vaimala ascetics of the Atimārga tradition, who engage in observances of lying with ashes. In Sumanasāntaka 37.7, Mpu Monaguṇa gives us a charming description of a kalaṅkyaṅ bird soaring high in the sky:

\[kālaṅkyarinya layəp wiśāta baṅun ahyun atapa riṅ aṅin huwus ləpas^{30}\]

A kālaṅkyaṅ, completely unhindered, faded away in the distance and, as if practicing religious austerities in the wind, found release.

The animals depicted in Sumanasāntaka 37.7–8 are generally associated with religious groups who are mocked in the text. But in the figure of the kālaṅkyaṅ-bird, flying high above the world of ascetics, secluded in the restricted space of their hermitages, Mpu Monaguṇa seems to refer to himself and his ‘poetic flight’. In my view, our interpretation of the kālaṅkyaṅ-bird cannot be limited to its identification as the white-bellied sea eagle, but it is to be interpreted as a mysterious, bird-soul figure that takes to the heavenly skies as an enigmatic hybrid that is both material and metaphorical. This is the reason I refrain from translating Old Javanese kālaṅkyaṅ/kalaṅkyaṅ as ‘white-bellied sea eagle’, even though the physical features of this avian specimen are clearly based on this biological species. The actual ‘empirical species’ might well have been known already in ancient Java as bahak, but the term kalaṅkyaṅ might have been preferred by kawi poets to cover the spiritual aspects of the bird, which are dominant in Old Javanese court poetry. In fact, both the kawi and the kalaṅkyaṅ

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29 Acri (2008:203) has translated the phrase lanā analuṣa puyuh ikākipu-kipū in stanza 37.8c as ‘the quails were dirty (or: lead the life of hermits), continuously scratching away the earth to make a resting place’.
30 Sumanasāntaka 37.7c. Old Javanese taken from Worsley et al. (2013:174).
bird seem to undergo a spiritual transformation. The phrase kālaṅkyañnyā layop wiśāta in the stanza discussed above, rendered ‘a kālaṅkyañ, completely unhindered, faded away in the distance’, describes this process well. The close associations of the kālaṅkyañ bird with the figure of kawi are further developed in the Kṛṣṇāyana, a kakawin composed by Mpu Triguṇa in the thirteenth century CE. In stanza 7.1, Princess Rukmini, who is to undergo the ceremony of piḍuḍukan to be married to King Cedi, a man she does not love, pines for Kṛṣṇa and his loving embrace:

\[
\text{Ah! You who disappeared from my dreams at the moment the rumbling thunder woke me up:}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hāh-ah sa}ñ \text{ hi}lañ \text{ in pa}ñipayan \text{ i so}ñkwātañhi \text{ de ni}ñ \text{ gərəh} \\
\text{ndah sin}ñi kahanan \text{ ta de nya wulikən yan riñ sakar-pədapa} \\
\text{yapwan muk}sa \text{ kiten rəməñ potəñ adoh kālaṅkyañ asyañ-syana} \\
\text{yan muk}ñəsin ləpihan tañakna mituhwa ṃwang tuduh niñ tanah31
\end{align*}
\]

Ah! You who disappeared from my dreams at the moment the rumbling thunder woke me up:
Now will I search out the way to every place you may have gone whether in blossoms of young saplings,
Or vanishing into dark, distant rain-clouds where kalaṅkyañ-birds call one to the other.
But if you vanish inside the bark-paper book, I will look up you there, seek you following the directions of your pen.

Another interesting vignette, where the real and metaphorical birds become entangled and fused with the kawi, is found in Sumanasāntaka 177.5, where kālaṅkyañ serves as a heavenly messenger of Prince Aja and Princess Indumati. The context of this passage is important: Indumati, who has been dead for quite some time, recalls her sojourn in heaven where she was waiting for Aja to die:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kālaṅkyañ jarumankw riñ masa kapat datoñ ri kita kāla niñ rəməñ} \\
\text{her-herən ri təkanta kewala kitātiśaya kadi hinundañ in patər32}
\end{align*}
\]

In the month of Kapat the kālaṅkyañ-bird was my trusted messenger, ordered to come to you during the time of rain-clouds.
To inform you that I was waiting for you to come, as if invited by the rumbling of thunder.

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32 Sumanasāntaka 177.5cd. Old Javanese text taken from Worsley et al. (2013:432).
More prominently than in any other passage in Old Javanese literature, the *kālaṅkyaṅ* functions here as a divine messenger that can easily move between the firmament occupied by divine denizens and the material world of humans. I cannot help but draw a parallel with a similar lore documented from eastern Indonesia. Gregory Forth (2019:194) has recorded among the Nage of Flores that the white-bellied sea eagle, and a ‘goshawk’ called *sizo*, are believed to be mourners, who are weeping and keening over a dead person. The high-pitched mewing of the raptors must have been considered as a replication of human mourners in Java, too. A remarkable ‘ritualized vocalization’ makes the *kalaṅkyaṅ*, a hybrid species of the bird-human union, similar to other ‘divine birds’ of Old Javanese lore. These birds, difficult to identify to the level of (modern) bird species or even families, often include the avian fauna of the Sanskrit literary discourse, such as the *cucur* (a kind of cuckoo?), *cātaka* (a kind of cuckoo?), and *jīwa-jīwa* (a pheasant?). In Sanskrit as well as in Old Javanese poetry, they often provide a link between the worlds of human beings and the world of divinities, immortals, and deified ancestors. They are often associated with the atmospheric phenomena, but this interesting aspect would call for another, more informed study.

4 Conclusion

The article has discussed Old Javanese literary references to a bird denoted *kalaṅkyaṅ*. Though the ethno-ornithological identity of this enigmatic bird has been unclear, there is a consensus that the Old Javanese *kalaṅkyaṅ* is a bird of prey. The references to *kalaṅkyaṅ*, which are particularly common—though not abundant—in Old Javanese court poems (*kakawin*), demonstrate that the bird must have been symbolically important in pre-Islamic Java. From a number of vignettes discussed in this article a portrait of the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird has emerged: it is a bird of prey that feeds on fish and has prominent wings; it can be observed at the seashore but it can also be spotted in the mountains located at some distance from the coast; and the bird seems to form pairs for life. There is only one species of bird of prey native to Java that would fit all the features we have distilled from the Old Javanese discourse: the white-bellied sea eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*). Called *bahak* in modern Javanese, this distinctive eagle in the family Accipitridae prefers rocky coasts, coastal islands, rivers, and lakes as its habitat. Though mostly pelagic, it can be commonly seen far inland, where it would follow rivers. In the second part of this article, I have demonstrated that the *kalaṅkyaṅ* bird of Old Javanese literary discourse shares a number of features with the Javanese *kawi*, the author of
white-bellied sea eagle as a mirror image of Javanese poet. The kawi has often been interpreted as a religious figure, a ‘priest of literary magic’. I argue that the kalaṅkyaṅ bird actually represents a mirror image of the Old Javanese kawi: the kalaṅkyaṅ is equally at home on land and by the coast, as is the peripatetic kawi, who roams the mountains and the coastal districts (pasisir) in search of laṅö, a spiritual experience of ‘salvific beauty’.

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