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DRONA'S BETRAYAL AND BIMA'S BRUTALITY: Javanaiserie in Malay Culture

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The presence of elements explicitly identified as “Javanese” or “from Java” in traditional Malay literature and performance — settings, characters, objects, idioms, stories, texts, even entire genres like the renditions of Mahabharata story-matter — has mostly been ascribed to the putative prestige of the historical civilization of Java. Here I explore another point of view. Focusing on religiosity and ethics in a hikayat with Mahabharata stories, I propose the notion of javanaiserie, the creation of texts, performances, and other cultural artefacts designed to be considered Javanese. Javanaiserie has proven alluring in Malay contexts. Rather than as a matter of influence I suggest regarding javanaiserie as an active process of worldmaking, the creation of a reality that is culturally at once close to and distinct from an audience’s everyday lifeworld, a reality that can be both elegant and evil, appealing as well as appalling.

Keywords: Malay Mahabharata, *hikayat*, religiosity, javanaiserie, worldmaking.

The “Javanese” Presence in Malay Literature and Performance

It has long been noted by scholars that traditional literature and performance in Malay, as once practised throughout the archipelago, in an area ranging from the island of Java itself, particularly Batavia, up to Kedah and Kelantan in Malaysia, contains elements with explicit and strong Javanese associations. Settings, characters, objects, idioms, stories, texts, even entire genres are explicitly identified as “Javanese” or “from Java”. Certain Malay prose and verse narratives (*hikayat* and *syair*) are set at medieval Javanese courts, with Javanese protagonists. These works mostly tell stories about Prince Ino Kertapati (Panji) and his close relatives. Some are labelled as translations from the Javanese language or said to have been performed by narrators in or from Java. An often-discussed example is the *Hikayat Andaken Penurat*, but there are numerous others (Robson 1969, pp. 7–8; Koster 1997, pp. 55–56; Braginsky 2004, p. 159). There are also, of course, Malay texts with only a few episodes set in Java and with Javanese characters more as antagonists, including the celebrated *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. A genre of shadow-play named “Javanese” (*wayang Jawa*) used to be performed in a variety of Kelantan Malay with Panji and Pandawa narratives — stories about the heroes of the Mahabharata — for its repertoire (Sweeney 1972, pp. 3–25). Other texts may appear not to have a Javanese connection at first because they can be categorized, as Braginsky does, as “[t]ales about heroes of Sanskrit epics and *purana*” (Braginsky 2004, p. 143), yet Malay audiences identified some of them as Javanese (see for instance Hussain 1992, p. 280). As philological comparison has shown — and to be fair to Braginsky I should stress that he was perfectly aware of this and discusses it in his monumental study — among them are renditions of Old Javanese texts (Wieringa 2007, pp. 19–20; Brakel 1980).

In his discussion of the Javanese presence, Robson even refers to works like *Hikayat Pandawa Lima* and *Hikayat Galuh Digantung* collectively as “Malayo-Javanese literature” (1992, p. 27), as Winstedt had done earlier (1991, pp. 30, 35, 36). To explain this presence Robson notes that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Java had greater political

and economic power than the Malay-speaking lands. He argues that this caused a “spread” or “flow” of culture from the former to the latter, involving texts that pictured the superior literary and dramatic refinement of Java (Robson 1992).

Robson cites Overbeck as one of the first scholars to examine the Javanese presence in detail. Overbeck has a more specific theory, which, he stresses, is “for the time being totally unproven” (and which he never got to verify). He hypothesized that Panji and Pandawa narratives were written in Malay in Java as political propaganda and exported to regions over which Java claimed sovereignty or with which it maintained friendly ties (Overbeck 1938, pp. 305, 309; Robson 1992, p. 28). Robson considers it unlikely that these texts were, as Overbeck suggested, authored by Javanese, but he does support the possibility that “Malays came to Java, became familiar with its arts and culture (perhaps over a period of generations), and then propagated them in their home country” (Robson 1992, p. 37). Braginsky, in turn, finds Robson’s ideas convincing (2004, p. 199).

Overbeck made his hypothesis public in an extended review of a survey of Malay literature, Hooykaas’s *Over Maleise Literatuur*, first published in 1937, written for use in a colonial secondary school for Indonesians and students of Indology in the Netherlands. Far more accessible and influential in Malay studies at large has been Winstedt’s counterpart, *A History of Malay Literature*, which came out in 1939. Winstedt categorizes Malay literature according to major sources of influence in approximate chronological order and treats “the Javanese element” as part of this literary-historical periodization. In an incisive discussion, introducing a study intended to put Malay orality and “schematic composition” on the scholarly agenda, Sweeney points out with devastating dryness that “the model is particularly unsuited to what we know of Malay literature” (1987, p. 26) and makes short work of it with well-chosen examples. To mention one: a *wayang* performance today, “undeniably a product of the *present*”, would have to be assigned to Winstedt’s Hindu period (Sweeney 1987, p. 26).

With Overbeck and Sweeney as notable exceptions, the authors of these studies (and too many others to allow further discussion) tend to account for the Javanese presence in Malay texts as a matter of influence

received. To be sure, they did not think of it as passive adoption. The Javanese influence was selectively processed. Robson suggests that “in some cases relative fidelity may have been called for, while in others the ‘translation’ may have been a reshaping of material familiar in Javanese in accordance with the demands and tastes of a Malay audience, with plenty of room for adaptation” (1992, p. 36). But the process is seen as reception-led. Such a perspective asks to be complemented and enriched by observation from another vantage point, one that shows texts as components of literary *activity*.

These works are in varieties of the Malay language. Authors, performers and audiences mastered such varieties and some of them may at times have called themselves Malays. They may have been writing, performing, reading, and listening in environments regarded as Malay.¹ The questions arise what these Javanese-flavoured texts and performances were *designed to do* in their cultural contexts, and — not quite the same — what they actually *did* in those contexts once they had begun to circulate. It is obvious that “the Javanese element” played a role in this, but what role? In abstract terms one may say that in composing, hearing, and reading these texts and performances, their authors, performers, and audiences immersed themselves in diegeses (worlds, universes, realities) that had something decidedly Javanese about them.² Though fleetingly, these textual diegeses were part of a bigger diegesis, these people’s lifeworlds. The artefacts that were these texts and performances circulated in and across communities, as did the diegeses they helped call into being. From this perspective, as Overbeck and Sweeney sensed, “the Javanese element” is not about receiving influence but about having it, not about reflecting a Javanese past but about making a Malay present.

The Malay “Nawaruci” According to Scholarship

It is from this perspective that I want to consider these narratives here. My empirical focus is on one episode in one “Javanese” work in Malay, an episode that is particularly suitable for consideration under this aspect because it tells a story known in Java (and Bali) in a range of narrative inflections, but recounts it with a plot resolution and thematic emphases that differ substantially from all other known versions.

The narrative of Bima's arduous quest for the purifying water at the direction of his teacher Drona, Bima's meeting with a deity in the ocean, and the enlightenment he receives when he has entered the deity's body is one of the classics of Javanophone literature and drama. Many versions exist, under such titles as Nawaruci (after the deity's name in certain literary versions, known from Bali, in Old Javanese), Dewa Ruci (his name in another Old and most Modern Javanese literary and dramatic renditions), and Bima Suci ("Bima Purified", a long-standing alternative title in Modern Javanese). The story, not known from South Asia, has been attested in Java since the mid-fifteenth century. Renditions continue to be produced, in written, spoken and dramatic form, and statues and *wayang*-style paintings of key scenes are on display in public places and homes across Java and Bali.

One of the reasons for this story's longevity has been its multiple religious interpretability. Multiple, that is, in certain respects, because in an important way its interpretation is constant. The doctrinal backgrounds are variable. The story has been framed in Shivaite, Buddhist, Islamic, Javanist, Christian and New Age terms, and interpretations of it in a nationalistic vein also exist. The reinterpretation often entails changes to the narrative. But that it is somehow a religious and, more specifically, a mystical story is evident across all interpretive transformations. The story always recounts the protagonist Bima (who may bear other names), the second of the five Pandawa brothers, questing for an enigmatic kind of water and sometimes other matters, having to overcome hindrances that are easily taken as symbolic, encountering a mysterious and knowledgeable personage in the ocean, entering paradoxically that personage's body which turns out to contain boundless space, and attaining some kind of deep insight there. The very structure of the narrative, thematizing as it does enigma and a series of trials over the course of a quest that ends in understanding, suggests a mystico-religious *modus interpretandi*.

At least, this is so in the story's known Old and Modern Javanese, Balinese, Madurese, and Sundanese manifestations. It was reported almost a century and a half ago that versions in Malay exist as well (Van der Tuuk 1879, pp. 512–13; 1881, pp. 53–54). These have not exactly basked in the limelight of scholarship. Unlike several of their

Javanese counterparts, they have not entered the literary canon. They have an obscure position in an area of Malayophone literature, *wayang* mythology, that Malays have long regarded with suspicion for religious reasons. Still as it happens, questions about the cultural context of the Malay narrative have received attention from the few scholars who did mention it. They tended to examine it as part of the multilingual corpus of stories about Bima's enlightenment, however, more than as a specimen of Malay writing or storytelling. This helps to explain the pronounced emphasis they have put on what the text is not and does not do, rather than what it is and does.

Ever since Van der Tuuk made the suggestion (1881, pp. 53–54), the Malay rendition is assumed to be based on the version in Old Javanese known to scholarship as Nawaruci. This version, it was proposed fifty years later, was probably written in Bali in or before 1613 (Prijoetomo 1934, pp. 13, 21). The teachings of Nawaruci to Bima amount to an elaborate survey of Shivaite religious dogmatics (Prijoetomo 1934, pp. 1–2). But, as Poerbatjaraka put it when he published the only edition and translation of a Malay rendition so far, “of Nawaruci's teachings nothing remains in the Malay version, because the Malays were concerned to give the ‘story’, not the teachings” (Poerbatjaraka 1940, p. 38, my translation from the Dutch).

Poerbatjaraka called the text he published (incompletely, as we shall see) “the Malay version” while in fact there are several related ones. Van der Tuuk had implied as much (1879, pp. 491, 513 note 4), as had Juynboll in his catalogue of the Malay manuscripts in Leiden University Library (Juynboll 1899, pp. 56, 61). These Malay versions are striking exceptions to the tendency mentioned above as regards the play between interpretive constancy and changeability of the story. The main title under which the story was long known in Javanese, “Bima Purified” (Bima Suci), is grossly inapplicable to the Malay versions — in spite of the fact that in these versions, too, Bima's quest is motivated by the desire to have a body that is pure (*suci*). The only teaching remotely worthy of the name that he receives from the deity concerns a magical spell and the quest yields no purification or enlightenment whatsoever. This is all the more striking because the preceding narrative does build the expectation that something extraordinary is about to happen.³

Poerbatjaraka attributed this anticlimax to “the Malays” and their concerns. Gonda went a step further. He noted that “Buddhist” teachings were contained in the Old Javanese version which he regarded as the oldest (“dating back to the period between 1400 and 1600”), a versified telling that has only partly survived and that was the main object of Poerbatjaraka’s philological attention in his 1940 article. Gonda explained the lack of such teachings in the Malay text as a result of adaptation to changed cultural circumstances: “The originally Buddhist elements of the Javanese version were in the course of time eliminated, obviously to make the work [...] acceptable to the Moslems’, Javanese and Malay” (Gonda 1976, p. 216).

In Java this story is regarded as an account of profound religious mystery, as a source of “the knowledge of perfection”, i.e. as a guide to the ultimate union of the soul with God, in the Malay version it is almost devoid of that deeper sense: here Drona, the *guru* of the epic heroes, in sending Bhīma out for the water of life contrives the other’s destruction; Bhīma is, however, resuscitated by Navaruci, who incites him to take revenge on Drona and gives him a magical weapon (Gonda 1976, p. 216).

Clearly, then, the Malay versions are not about Bima’s purification, let alone his mystical enlightenment. Nor is Bima’s entering of the deity’s body recounted, while this is a crucial juncture in other tellings, including the prose Nawaruci (Prijoetomo 1934, pp. 58–59), the Old Javanese verse rendition (Poerbatjaraka 1940, pp. 22–23), the numerous Modern Javanese versions connected more or less closely with the narrative poem attributed to Yasadipura I, which was written in Surakarta around 1790, and the dozens of *wayang* and other dramatic renditions from the early nineteenth century onwards that I have studied.⁴

Leaving aside Gonda’s generalization about “the” Javanese version, sudden or gradual de-doctrinization in order to render the text more acceptable to Muslims is not the only process that has made the Malay versions what they are. Religious bowdlerization may have had a share, but if it did it was not, and could not be, successful. The outcome was hardly a story that agrees with Islamic sensibilities. The crucial personage of the deity was retained, and although he does not impart Buddhist or Shivaite doctrine, he does teach Bima a spell that allows him to walk

on water. Other elements like the destruction that Gonda mentions and the recurring fear of blemish and misfortune, sparked by malice, also disagreed with normative Islam. Moreover, although Poerbatjaraka creates the impression that his text is complete when at the end of his Dutch translation he states “Thus far runs the story of the Malay Dewa Ruci” (1940, p. 37), it simply is not.

From What the Story Is Not, to What It Is

If one is interested in the significance of the Malay renditions in their contexts of use it makes sense to examine not only what the story does not or no longer contain, but also what it does contain. Poerbatjaraka’s representation is inaccurate. When we go back to the manuscripts, it transpires that the episode is much longer than he states. Poerbatjaraka duly acknowledges that the text in the manuscript he used, Cod. Or. 3240 in Leiden University Library, begins *in medias res* whereas another manuscript also contains a preceding narrative (Poerbatjaraka 1940, p. 35). His source of information here is Van der Tuuk’s succinct synopsis of the entire episode (1879, pp. 512–14). Van der Tuuk had used manuscript ML 15, now in the National Library of Indonesia, which was written in Batavia in 1861 (Bijleveld [s.a.], p. 13). Upon scrutiny the episode itself turns out to be quite different in these two manuscripts, and overall they contain partly different episodes while corresponding episodes sometimes come in a different order. Poerbatjaraka remains silent about how the story continues in either version after Bima, incited by the deity, begins to beat Drona.

I will devote the remainder of this chapter to three matters that call for clarification. The Malay versions of the story of Bima’s quest for the purifying water do not constitute an independent work or even a discrete part of a longer work. They are one episode in a series. This is so in all four manuscripts that I know to contain the story. It is so in the 1861 Batavian manuscript ML 15 summarized by Van der Tuuk (1879).⁵ It is so in Cod. Or. 3240, from which Poerbatjaraka took his partial text. Date and provenance of this manuscript are unknown (Wieringa 2007, pp. 97–100), though it is clearly early nineteenth century or earlier. It is also the case in Cod. Or. 3377, written in 1875 and part of a lending

library by 1884 (Wieringa 2007, pp. 340–44). This contains a version resembling Jakarta ML 15 but partly far more elaborate.⁶ It is also in a fourth manuscript, Raffles Malay 21 in the Royal Asiatic Society, London. This manuscript will be my main source. Its text is very close to that of the incomplete manuscript Or. 3240. Like earlier commentators I focus on the story of Bima's quest, but in its entirety and not at the exclusion of its narrative context. In Raffles Malay 21 and Or. 3240 the protagonist of the episode is not Bima but rather the Pandawa brothers collectively in their interaction with their Korawa cousins, particularly their eldest cousin Duryodana and the chancellor (*patih*), Sangkuni. I will summarize the episode and discuss its intertextual relations in the next two sections.

The second issue to be examined is the role that religious notions evidently do play in this Malay version in spite of the lack of doctrinal instruction. I will survey the kinds of religiosity that are thematized verbally or narratively in Raffles Malay 21. In the concluding section I try to shed light on the third issue, the story's significance in its contexts of use (as I phrased it earlier), based on the text, other scholars' research into the social life of Malay-language texts, and ethnographic and historical studies of the image of Javanese culture in Malay communities.

Duryodana Employs Drona to Have Bima Killed

Raffles Malay 21 is a clean manuscript. It is undated and unlocalized, but the paper is dated 1812 (Ricklefs and Voorhoeve 1977, p. 135) and its former owner took sail from Java in 1816. Circumstantial evidence suggests that it was inscribed in Batavia, like a number of other manuscripts in the Raffles collection,⁷ between 1812 and 1816.

Errors of the scribal type show that Raffles Malay 21 is a copy. The exemplar is unknown. The fact that the manuscript was probably made in Batavia and that later versions of the text survive from the same city says little about the text's cultural provenance. Hooykaas's idea that this collection of stories was meant as "a guideline for the *dalang*" (1947, p. 129, my translation; a *dalang* is a *wayang* puppeteer) is too restricted, as later versions clearly belonged to lending libraries in Batavia, whose

manuscripts tended to serve as reading matter in private and group reading sessions. Nonetheless the cultural domain indexed by the text was indeed *wayang*. The dramatis personae include the clown-servant Semar typical for Javanese-style *wayang* and, as Semar's son, a certain Belado or Beladu. The latter personage is rare.⁸ I have encountered him only in *wayang* narratives from East Java and Madura. This suggests that the stories in Raffles Malay 21 were written with reference to an East Javanese *wayang* tradition.

Semar and Belado are said to be present at an audience (section 14 below⁹), but they play no active role in the episodes summarized here. They are there to evoke a certain image — that of a *wayang* scene in Javanese style. The text contains several other signs of Javaneseness as well. The story-world is labelled as socially Javanese through terms of address used in dialogues (such as *Man*, short for *Paman* “Uncle”, and *Kakik* “young man”) and the titles of protagonists (such as *Patih* “Chancellor”, which is Old and Modern Javanese, and *Dangiang*, the standard title for Drona, which parallels Old Javanese *Dang Hyang* and Modern Javanese *Dhangyang*). Bima introduces himself with an epithetic phrase that is clearly Javanese (see section 10) and at a certain point in the corresponding manuscript Or. 3240 (though not in Raffles Malay 21) Bima's distressed mother exclaims “Oh my son, my life” in Javanese (*Aduh anakku nyawa sun*; in section 18). A place name, too, contains Javanese, as does a list of divine weapons (both in 10). This text, then, has a Javanese flavour. Whether it was actually composed in or by people from Java, in what sort of milieu, when, and for whom, is quite another matter. The language is too translocal and transcultural for it to be used as a criterion and Raffles Malay 21 does not go back to a known Javanese text. I will return to this issue below.

Meanwhile it is evident that Raffles Malay 21, the manuscript, was inscribed in a cultural milieu unfamiliar with the finer details of the mythology it reproduces and its onomastics.¹⁰ This milieu cannot have been Javanese-speaking and was not in direct contact with a living *wayang* or textual tradition featuring the story of Bima's quest. It is reasonably certain that by the early nineteenth century the text was present in Batavia — where ethnic Javanese were not officially allowed to live until the 1810s (Abeyasekere 1989, pp. 13, 64)¹¹ — and it is indisputable

that texts closely akin to it remained in use there, in Malay-reading circles, until the 1880s. But, whether the text was composed to satisfy British demand for texts and manuscripts as Pijnappel suggested for several Malay literary works (1870, pp. 145–46), or was already present in Malay-reading (and probably Malay-speaking) communities in Batavia before it was copied for Raffles there, or was collected elsewhere in the Malay lands and brought to Batavia for copying we do not know.

Echoing Van der Tuuk (1866, p. 101), Winstedt called Raffles Malay 21 “a collection of narratives with no plot to link them” (1991, p. 34). Although it is true, as comparison between manuscripts shows, that they were partly reconfigurable, the episodes summarized here — Bima’s quest which leads into Drona’s thrashing (Raffles Malay 21, pp. 153–66) and the three much shorter episodes that precede (pp. 148–52) — are represented as a series of events narrated in order of occurrence. They do belong together, building a climax that ends in the Pandawas’ exodus from Astinapura and their founding a new settlement, Martawangsa. These episodes are neatly integrated into the overarching Mahabharata-derived mythology. In the long term they will find their resolution in the fratricidal war between Pandawas and Korawas (Malay *Perang Pandawa Jaya*).¹² Drona’s betrayal of Bima, instigated by Duryodana, leads the Pandawas’ advisers to conclude that the animosity between Pandawas and Korawas will not subside. In this text, then, the episode of Bima’s quest is constructed as a crucial moment in *wayang* mythology.

At the court of Astinapura where they all live, the five youthful Pandawas and their 108 cousins the Korawas are no longer getting along well together.

1. Their grandfather Biasa arrives from his hermitage to warn the Korawas and Pandawas and Chancellor Sangkuni that, as he has been told by the seven sages and the gods, the cousins will come to blows over Astinapura and the Korawas will lose. He wants to prove this with a pair of scales brought down from heaven by Betara Guru (God Guru, i.e. Shiva). The heavier party will win. Sangkuni agrees, saying “let us see the Godhead’s miraculous works” (*kita lihat kekayaan Dewata Mulia Raya*). The five

Pandawas indeed outweigh their 108 cousins. One by one the Pandawas descend but their side remains the heavier. Finally, when Bima places a hand on one scale with the Korawas on the other, the scales hang even. Biasa stresses that they must not fight.

2. Sangkuni reports in detail to King Destarata (the Korawas' father, who is blind). Destarata realizes that Bima will defeat his children and decides to kill him with his magical power (*kesaktian*) called "the oil of disintegration" (*minyak peleburan*). He summons Bima and tells him not to quarrel with the Korawas. If some of them do mischief (*berbuat jahat*), he should forgive their sins (*ampunilah dosanya olehmu*). He asks Bima to approach so that he can hug and kiss him. Bima finds this strange, as Destarata has never done this before. Bima stands near a statue. Thinking it is Bima, Destarata embraces it and it is shattered to pieces. Bima accuses Destarata of wanting to kill him. Were he not like a father to him (Bima's own father is deceased), Destarata would feel his fists. Bima returns to their uncle King Rama Widara (who supports the Pandawas). As the time for Bima to die has clearly not yet come, Destarata (like Biasa earlier) tells Chancellor Sangkuni to ensure that the Pandawas and Korawas do not fight. Sangkuni follows Bima to Rama Widara, who, again, says the same, with the Pandawas present. All return to Astinapura.
3. The Pandawas and Korawas make outings to seek amusement. One day, Sangkuni takes them to a grove with a tall jambu tree full of fruits. The Korawas climb it and shower the Pandawas with seeds. Bima shakes the tree and the Korawas fall to the ground. They run back to Astinapura shouting. Only now the Pandawas can eat the jambus. They return to Rama Widara, who says that they should not play with the Korawas anymore.

The years that follow are described in a few sentences. The Korawas and Pandawas become adults and the kingdom of Astinapura is divided in two, one half for each party. Duryodana is married. The next episode is again recounted in detail.

4. One day Duryodana asks Chancellor Sangkuni how they could kill Bima, the most evil one of them all. Sangkuni notes that because Bima is big now and endowed with sensibility and opinions (*tahukan budi bicara*), while even when he was still a child they were unable to deceive him (*tiada boleh kita perdayakan*), they should ask the Reverend Drona to kill him [by] deceiving him (*kita suruh membunuh pedayakan dia*).
5. They go to Drona's residence, Angsoka Panca, and tell him about the situation with the Pandawas. They should seek to be reconciled (*muafakat*), is Drona's advice. The Pandawas are like a fence and the Korawas like precious plants. If they are in harmony, all enemies will fear them. Duryodana counters that if the fence attacks the plants, they will be destroyed. Bima is that kind of person. But if he is killed, the other four will be subject to the Godhead's decree (*dalam hukum Dewatalah*).¹³ Drona claims he could easily kill Bima, but he fears the blemish and misfortune this entails (*takut akan mala petakanya*). Duryodana is prepared to bear the consequences. If Drona wants, Duryodana will give him half of the country.
6. Drona tells them to fetch Bima, and Sangkuni goes to Rama Widara's residence to call him. When Bima has arrived, Drona says that he has given all his knowledge to the Korawas, but he wants to teach Bima as well. He has not done this so far, because his body is polluted (*karena tubuhnya itu lagi cemar*). There is this thing called the *kawitra* water (*air kawitra*). If Bima bathes in it, he will obtain magical powers (*beroleh kesaktian*). It is to be found in the pond (*telaga*)¹⁴ Sagurangkah (later referred to as Sakurangga) at the foot of Mt. Mahameru. Bima should not tell his mother and brothers, lest they try to stop him. Drona does this out of love for Bima, in order that his body becomes pure (*suci*) like his brothers. Bima must quickly fetch the water so that Drona can bathe him in it. Bima leaves. Duryodana and his relatives rejoice when Drona predicts that Bima will die because there is a huge serpent (*naga*) in the pond.
7. Having travelled for some time, Bima arrives on a field where not even a single blade of grass grows. The serpent, angry whenever it

is unable to find food, has sprayed the forest that used to be there with its venom. Bima finds the pond, its water clear, and enters it. The serpent asks what he has come for; Bima wants water from the pond because Drona has said it will rid his body of pollution. According to the serpent, Drona intends to kill him (*sahaja engkau ini hendak dibunuhnya*). “You may be mighty, brave, and fierce, but you’re not very clever” (*Sungguhpun engkau gagah berani dan perkasa, tetapi akalmu itu kurang*). Bima insists on getting the water nonetheless. This angers the serpent, who coils around him. Then Bima remembers a spell taught to him by God Bayu, “the formula of fierceness” (*aji perkasa*). He pronounces it and kills the serpent. With some of the water in a golden bowl, he goes to Angsoka Panca.

8. As he arrives there carrying the bowl, Drona, Duryodana, and the other Korawas are amazed. He explains how he killed the serpent and got the water. Drona empties the bowl before Bima’s feet. Bima is furious: “No-one but me would have been able to get this water. Why did you spill all of it?” Drona says it was polluted by the serpent’s blood. There is another place where the water that will rid his body of pollution can be found, namely in the middle of the sea (*di pusat tasik*). Bima sets off. Drona predicts Bima’s imminent death.
9. Because he may disappear in that forbidding place (*tempat yang sukar*), Bima decides first to tell his relatives where he is going. He heads for King Rama Widara’s residence, finding Lady Gunti (Rama Widara’s sister, Bima’s mother) and his brothers Darmawangsa, Rajuna, Sakula and Sadewa there. Bima recounts how he searched for the *kawitra* water to remove the pollution of his body, as Drona told him. Startled, Gunti realizes that Drona means to kill her son. Now, Bima says, he must go to the middle of the sea. Rama Widara warns him not to, as Drona means to kill him. Bima’s heart is torn: he is at fault (*salah*) if he fails to do what his relatives say, he is also at fault if he does not follow Drona’s instructions. He decides to go, but after everyone has gone to sleep. He says that Rama Widara is correct and promises not to go. All return to their quarters.

10. When night has fallen, Bima leaves through the back door and enters the forest. The next day, he reaches a field called Ing Tegal Amlagung.¹⁵ It is inhabited by the ogre (*raksasa*) Inderabau who used to be a god (*dewa*) but was struck by a curse of blemish and misfortune (*kena sumpah mala petaka*) from Betara Guru. Betara Guru ordered him to go to earth, where he would be released from the curse. Inderabau has been eating all humans and animals passing by; the field is covered with bones and skulls. When he spots Bima, Inderabau roars and bares his fangs. Bima introduces himself as “Bimasena, the second of the Pandawas” (*sang Bimasena penggulu ing Pandawa*)¹⁶. When Bima mentions that his *guru* has told him to get the *kawitra* water in the middle of the sea, Inderabau notes that Drona clearly intends to kill him. Bima and Inderabau fight “like hills clashing” (*seperti bukit bersabung*). As they stand holding each other by the waist, Inderabau claims he cannot be killed even if Bima stabs him with a variety of divine weapons,¹⁷ but Bima says he will use his quintuple nails (*kuku pancanaka*). He does so and Inderabau dies. He changes back into God Indera, who is willing to serve Bima because he has annihilated his blemish and misfortune (*sudahlah ruat mala petakaku*). Bima tells him to return to his heaven; he will continue to search for the *kawitra* water. Indera warns him that the intention is not for him to get this water but to be killed. It is Duryodana who wants this. Bima does not care. Indera leaves.
11. Bima travels across forests, fields, and hills until he reaches the sea-shore. Wonderful corals are visible. He enters the sea and goes deeper and deeper until he has to swim. Battered by the waves, he continues towards the middle. He becomes exhausted, chokes, and dies. The current carries his body to the middle of the sea.

This is where Cod. Or. 3240 begins, and therefore a published Malay text and Dutch translation are available from this point onwards (Poerbatjaraka 1940, pp. 52–54, 36–37). The text is close to that in Raffles Malay 21, but a little more elaborate, especially as from time to time the descriptions that frame the dialogues are longer. I continue to follow Raffles Malay 21 and indicate significant differences in footnotes.

12. When Betara Guru sees that Bima has died,¹⁸ he descends, assuming the form of a pandit (*pendita*) named Begawan Tawaruij.¹⁹ He creates an island in the middle of the sea with on it a golden pavilion (*maligai*) studded with jewels. When Bima's corpse has washed ashore, he brings him back to life. Bima goes towards the pavilion, noticing the pandit seated in it. He walks round in circles, but cannot find his way there and rather ends up farther away from it. Then Narawuij²⁰ approaches him and asks, "Bima, where are you going?" Bima is surprised that he knows his name. He is Begawan Narawuij, the master of this golden island. He claims to know not only Bima but also his ancestors, and also what Bima has come for. Drona, he says, does not really want Bima to find the *kawitra* water. Rather, his intention is to kill him, which is why he has directed him to this forbidding place. Bima realizes that Narawuij must be right, as Betara Indera said the same. This pandit must be a god. No human beings would reside on this island.

This is the ensuing stretch of dialogue in full:

Bima said, "O Narawuij, where did you come from when you approached me?" His Holiness Narawuij said, "Dear Bima, I have lived here in the middle of the sea for all time." Bima said, "In that case, where is the *kawitra* water here in the middle of the sea?" His Holiness Tarawuij said, "O Bima, go home and take revenge for your death here in the centre of the sea. What would be the use of you taking the *kawitra* water here in the middle of the sea, as he did not order you to [really] take this water, but rather intended you to die.²¹ Now you must quickly go home and take revenge on the Reverend Drona for your death, because he has been insincere to you." Bima said, "I fear the blemish and misfortune that thrashing [him] would bring; my blemish and misfortune would become even greater." His Holiness Tarawuij said, "You shall not suffer blemish and misfortune for it, because it is other teachers who [if maltreated] cause one to suffer blemish and misfortune. As to this teacher of yours, he has been exceedingly wicked, he wanted to kill you. Everything he said to you was insincere. Therefore you shall not suffer blemish and misfortune for it. But you must not kill

him; do not go beyond a thrashing, so that he becomes aware of himself and does not want to do you harm again.”²²

Back to a summary.

To enable Bima to return home, Narawuji teaches Bima his magical power (*kesaktian*) named “the formula Water Destruction” (*aji Jala Sengara*), which will allow him to walk on water. Bima takes his leave, goes to the sea-shore, pronounces the formula, and walks away. When he looks back, the golden island and Begawan Narawuji have vanished. Bima thinks (again) that this person cannot have been human but must have been a god. Now, if he returns to his relatives they will prevent him from beating Drona, so he heads straight for Angsoka Panca.

13. Drona gives audience to the Korawas. He thinks that Bima must be dead, as he has been away for a full day and night. Duryodana agrees. Then Bima arrives, looking angry. Drona notices and asks him with sugary words whether he has found the *kawitra* water. If not, he should not exert himself any further as Drona will go and get it himself. Bima claims that Drona did not want him to get the water but wanted him to be killed. If pupils were allowed to kill their teachers, Bima would kill him right now, but [instead] he must feel his fists.²³ Duryodana and his brothers tremble with fear. Bima pulls Drona face-down to the ground and slaps and beats him.

This is where Poerbatjaraka’s text and translation end. The manuscript he used continues, however, as does Raffles Malay 21.

The Korawas run away and hide in the grove. Only Sangkuni stays and begs forgiveness [for Drona]. When Sangkuni grabs Bima’s hand, Bima pushes him aside and he rolls over the ground. Sangkuni warns him that he is committing a grave sin and incurring great blemish and misfortune (*besar dosanya dan mala petakanya*), as nothing causes more blemish and misfortune than a teacher thrashed; even saying bad things to a teacher is a grave sin (*berkata jahat lagi kepada guru itu besar dosanya*). Bima responds that that might be so if Bima had been at fault (*salah*), but if he has been upright (*benar*), this teacher deserves

to be thrashed. But, Sangkuni protests, Drona wanted Bima to get the *kawitra* water to rid his body of pollution. Bima tells Sangkuni to stop talking, or he will throw away both their heads. Sangkuni withdraws and quickly goes to Darmawangsa, for Bima will surely listen to him.

14. Darmawangsa and his brothers sit together with Semar and Belado in attendance. Sangkuni arrives in great haste and says that they should help Bima [*sic*], as he is thrashing Drona. They rush to Angsoka Panca.
15. As they arrive, Bima is holding Drona by the arm and beating him.²⁴ Darmawangsa clasps Bima's neck, the other brothers hold other parts of his body. Bima wants to throw them off but when he recognizes them, he stands motionless. Darmawangsa tells Bima to let the eminent teacher (*sang adiguru*) go, because he is their *guru*, but Bima will not do so before he has heard whether it was someone else who told Drona to kill Bima, or Drona himself. Drona says that he was ordered by Duryodana; he would have been crazy to send Bima away of his own accord. Bima asks why then did he not tell him. Drona was unaware that he was at fault (*salah*), as he did not intend to kill him.²⁵ Darmawangsa tells Bima (again) to let go because Drona was not at fault. Bima complies, Drona rises and sits down. Rajuna, Sakula, and Sadewa pay him obeisance but Bima, still angry, remains standing. He asks where that (*si*) Duryodana went, he wants to thrash him. Drona tells Sangkuni to go and find Duryodana.
16. Sangkuni looks for Duryodana and his brothers around the grove and eventually finds them crouching in the undergrowth, crying. Drona is calling for them. But Duryodana is afraid of Bima, who beats even his teacher. Sangkuni says there is no need to fear because Bima is not angry anymore, this having been forbidden by Darmawangsa. If Bima wants to kill him, Sangkuni will offer himself to him, rather than this ending in failure.²⁶ They come along with Sangkuni.
17. When they arrive there they feel fear. Drona accuses Duryodana of putting him up to it and Duryodana promises not to do such things again. Drona tells the Pandawas to listen to their relative

and forgive his sin.²⁷ Darmawangsa responds that he, too, wants to be reconciled (*muafakat*). Drona counsels Duryodana that whoever undertakes an action with evil ambitions will inevitably have to confront [the consequences of] his misdeeds.²⁸ Duryodana agrees. Drona says that they should (indeed) be reconciled and Darmawangsa, Rajuna, Sakula, and Sadewa agree. They go home, taking Bima along. Then Drona says emphatically (twice) to Duryodana that he will not take part in any further efforts to kill Bima and the Pandawas. Duryodana and his brothers return to Astinapura.

18. The Pandawas arrive at King Rama Widara's who is sitting with Lady Gunti, longing for Bima. Gunti asks Darmawangsa why Sangkuni called them away. He explains that Bima was thrashing Drona. Gunti wants to know why; Bima says that Drona committed a sin: he wants to kill him, at the orders of Duryodana. Bima recounts everything; Rama Widara and Gunti are distressed. Rama Widara realizes that the Pandawas and Korawas will be enemies. He suggests the Pandawas should distance themselves from the Korawas and build a new settlement, as inevitably they will be trying to deceive one of them (*niscaya mau juga anakku salah seorang diperdayakannya*). Darmawangsa agrees. With the five Pandawas and their followers, Rama Widara goes outside Astinapura. They arrive in a beautiful park called Martawangsa, where King Pandu (the Pandawas' late father) used to go to enjoy himself. Rama Widara suggests they settle here. They build a town complete with fortifications and a moat.

The text describes the beauty and prosperity of the new settlement, then moves to a new episode in the ongoing rivalry between the Pandawas and Korawas.

Two More Things that the Story Is Not

This is not the Old Javanese Nawaruci. That text is immensely more detailed. It is not a synopsis of it or of part of it either. There is a relationship, but it is not straightforward. Reduced to the barest essentials,

part of the plot of this Malay episode parallels the beginning of Nawaruci. There are also remarkable similarities in the identity and names of certain story-specific characters that tend to vary from version to version. For instance, the ogre Inderabau (section 10) corresponds to Indrabāhu in the Nawaruci, while later Javanese versions have two ogres with totally different names (though they are manifestations of Gods Indra and Bayu). The Malay name Tawaruji, Narawuji, or Tarawuji corresponds to Nawaruci, while other versions (including the Old Javanese verse rendition of Poerbatjaraka 1940) tend to call this personage Dewa Ruci. Conversely, there are numerous differences of detail and, most importantly, the two versions diverge radically after Bima and Narawuji part ways. Prijohoetomo divided the Nawaruci into eight chapters (1934, pp. 3–4). The first three or four have a counterpart in sections 6–12, but Bima does not take revenge on his *guru* here. Rather, Nawaruci continues with an intricate plot in which Bima goes on to find the purifying water and then to perform austerities, becoming more powerful than the gods.

The Malay episode, on the other hand, has elements that are different or lacking in Nawaruci, but does correspond to other Old and Modern Javanese renditions in literary and *wayang* form. An example is the contents of the pond where Bima goes first to search for the purifying water (section 7). It is inhabited by one serpent not two as in Nawaruci (Prijohoetomo 1934, pp. 28, 89). This corresponds to early nineteenth-century *wayang* scenarios (which are from Central Java). A second example is the passage in which Narawuji claims to know Bima's ancestors (section 12). This has no equivalent in Nawaruci, though such a claim occurs in the Old Javanese poem (Poerbatjaraka 1940, pp. 20–21) and is standard in *wayang* scenarios, including the early nineteenth-century ones. Also, shared elements do not necessarily indicate that one is the source of the other. For instance, Poerbatjaraka (1940, p. 37) derives the name of the pond, Sakurangga, via a hypothetical Si Kurangga from the well (*sumur*) Si Dorangga found in Nawaruci, but it might also come from Sigrangga, the well's name in nineteenth-century *wayang*.

As shown above and unlike the Nawaruci, the present episode is solidly embedded in the overall narrative of the run-up to the Pandawa-Korawa war. Such mythological integration of individual episodes is

a characteristic feature of the Modern Javanese *serat kandha* “books of stories” or *serat purwa* “books of antiquity”. As signalled by the extended name of this genre — “books of stories of the *wayang* of antiquity” or *serat kandhaning ringgit purwa* — they recount the repertoire of *wayang*. They do this in chronological order. Also in the brevity and matter-of-fact style of its episodes, Raffles Malay 21 resembles a *serat kandha*.²⁹

The episode of Bima’s quest in Raffles Malay 21, then, may contain reminiscences of the Old Javanese Nawaruci, but other kinds of intertextual relationship are also possible. If Raffles Malay 21 has a literary counterpart in Javanese, it is likely to be a *serat kandha*, but it may equally well be an original composition in Malay in the manner of a *serat kandha*. Currently there exists a vast and dynamic multilingual and partly non-lingual web of tellings of and references to the story of Bima’s quest in various media, some relatively durable and others ephemeral, including oral accounts and *wayang*. Although it was not as complex and involved fewer media, the story’s multiform mode of existence was not substantially different in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While literary renditions may on the whole have been endowed with greater authority than spoken narrations or dramatic performances — as tends to be the case today — the story was not exclusive to written texts. The Malay literary renditions were composed against the background of such a dynamic body of versions.

If the episode of Bima’s quest is not in any straightforward sense “based on” the Nawaruci, exactly the same goes for the so-called adaptations of the Old Javanese poems *Bhāratayuddha* and *Bhomāntaka*, which were likewise told in *wayang* fashion. Judging by Braginsky’s review, Parnickel has argued for the possibility that the Hikayat Sang Boma, based on the latter Old Javanese poem, was composed in the seventeenth century “in the bilingual milieu of one of the coastal towns of East Java”, the same environment as the *serat kandha* (Braginsky 1976, p. 473). Coupled with my own findings on the Malay story of Bima’s quest, including what can be concluded from its clown-servants, this points to the possibility that the Malay Hikayat Pandawa Jaya (Hussain 1992) came into being in similar circumstances. It has been thought to be based on a hypothetical Majapahit-era version of

the Bhāratayuddha, timed around 1400 CE (Brakel 1980, pp. 155–57). Brakel surmises that such a version indeed existed by referring to a title, Pandawa Jaya, that was used in Majapahit times. However, there is no ground for assuming that this title belonged to an unattested text. It may have been an alternative name of the well-known Old Javanese poem or it may have referred to the story rather than a particular text narrating it.³⁰ When Van der Tuuk identified the Old Javanese Bhāratayuddha as the source of the Hikayat Pandawa Jaya, it was thought that knowledge of Old Javanese literature had largely been banished from Java with the establishment of Islam, and what remained had become corrupted. It is now known that this idea was mistaken.³¹ Other Modern Javanese tellings of the Bhāratayuddha existed. In this case, too, the narrative was told in *wayang* style and some of the literary tellings were of the *serat kandha* variety.³²

Before turning to an examination of the Malay story of Bima's quest, I must pause on one more thing that it is not: a paragon of virtuousness. A major difference between the Malay version and other tellings lies in its thematic emphases. The Malay text foregrounds matters like Drona's betrayal of his pupil and Bima's brutality towards his *guru*. There is a consensus, a shared assumption, among scholars of traditional Malay literature that this literature taught virtue. Overall this may be a valid generalization and, not unimportantly, exemplariness was an ideal actively promoted in Malay poetics and other metatextual commentary. But, in at least one realm of Malayophone writing and performance it was not straightforwardly the case. This is the realm from which the present episode springs. It represents idolatry, malevolence, and sin, and not all of it in a negative light.

Religiosity in the Story-World

Whereas the mystical and doctrinal domains of religiosity are notably absent from the episode of Bima's quest, it contains elements — beings, objects, practices, conditions, concepts — that were at odds with Islamic doctrine or normative practice, or in accordance with it. A number of such elements are conspicuously thematized by means of repeated and in some cases truly iterative reference, often using the same words and

syntactic constructions, or by their place of occurrence in the structure of the narrative. This suggests that they were meant to be of interest to readers and listeners. These highlighted religious matters are deities (*dewa*, *betara*, *Dewata*), the possession and use of *aji* “magical formulas” and more generally *kesaktian* “magical powers”, the use of a particular kind of water for removing pollutions and rendering one’s body pure (*suci*), the moral concepts of *mempe(r)dayakan* “to deceive” and *salah* “to be at fault” versus *benar* “to be upright”, the notion of *dosa* “sin”, and, especially prominently, the fear of *mala petaka* “blemish and misfortune”.

Several deities appear as *dramatis personae* and in sections 1 and 7 reference is made to “the gods” (*dewa*²) generally. They have superhuman abilities, such as God Guru’s ability to bring down scales from heaven to weigh people’s relative power (section 1), his ability to create an island with a structure on it (section 12), and his ability to revive Bima after he has drowned (*ibid.*). This is unsurprising, as a pantheon with certain extraordinary capabilities is part and parcel of the mythology represented in these texts. More interesting are two phrases which refer to Allah, but by the non-Arabic word *dewata* “godhead”. In section 1 the idiom *kekayaan Allah* “God’s miraculous works” is rendered as *kekayaan Dewata Mulia Raya* — literally, “the riches of the Great Exalted Godhead” — and *hukum Dewata* in section 5 is synonymous with *hukum Allah* “God’s decree” (as to one’s life or death). This is how *Dewata Mulia Raya* was used in Malay in the well-known Terengganu inscription of the early fourteenth century. It parallels the common use of designations like *Hyang Manon* “The Seeing Godhead” and *Hyang Widi* “The Supreme Godhead” instead of *Allah* in pre-nineteenth century Islamic texts in Javanese. Most remarkable, finally, in the divine realm as represented in the text is the figure of Narawuji. Initially he is said to be a *pandit*. As he is unique to this episode this could have easily been carried through, but rather it is stressed that he is divine not human (section 12, twice). A manifestation of Betara Guru, he is definitely not to be identified with Allah.

Two named magical formulas (*aji*) and a magical oil with similar function feature in these episodes (sections 2, 7, 12). Two of them are explicitly identified as *kesaktian* “magical powers”. Bima is called

“mighty and magically powerful” (*gagah dan sakti*) after showing his ability to counterweigh all 108 Korawas with one hand (section 1). *Kesaktian* is referred to in one other place, namely as something that Bima will acquire by bathing in the *kawitra* water (6). The story could have done without these references; human strength and force, with God’s blessing, could have done the same narrative work. The fact that such magic is considered out of bounds for Muslims was insufficient reason to avoid them.

One thing that the *kawitra* water, the object of Bima’s quest, will do is endow Bima with *kesaktian*. This places it in the same religious domain as the formulas and oil, but there is obviously more to it than that. It is never made clear what the *kawitra* water is exactly, but its salutary effects are mentioned over and over, and it is to be found “in the middle of the sea” (*di pusat tasik*) (section 6). The effects and location of this mysterious substance will have rung familiar to those readers and listeners who knew the Hikayat Sri Rama, the classic Malay rendition of the Ramayana narrative — a Muslim rendition, as Sweeney has stressed (1987, p. 26). Here the little monkey Hanuman, who is polluted with excrement, is told by Sri Rama (who in fact has sired Hanuman, albeit indirectly): “You must go to the middle of the sea to bathe and purify your entire body” (*pergilah engkau kepada pusat tasik mandi bersuci segala tubuhmu*). Hanuman leaves and returns in an instant, dripping with water and carrying various jewels and perfumes. He offers them to Sri Rama. Sri Rama acknowledges him as his son and later dispatches him to the island of Langkapuri to find Sri Rama’s abducted wife Sita Dewi (Achadiati Ikram 1980, pp. 184–86). In the episode of Bima’s quest the *kawitra* water is clearly depicted in the same light.³³ Besides endowing Bima with magical powers it will also clean off the pollution (*cemar*, *cemar-cemar*) of his body (sections 6, 7, 8, 9, 13) and make him pure (*suci*) (6, 9), so that Drona can teach him. The water can itself be polluted with blood (8). This is in line with Islam. Polluted and forbidden (Arabic *ḥarām*) could be considered the same category.³⁴ Blood defiles (Arabic *najis*). Water, on the other hand, cleanses.

As noted, scholars have paid little attention to the Malay episode on its own account. Braginsky is an exception when he characterizes it: “Another Javanese poem, Dewa Ruci, telling about Bima’s mystical

self-cognition, became, in the Malay paraphrase, a tale of perfidy and vengeance for perfidy [...]” (2004, p. 147). In the text itself, what Braginsky calls perfidy is referred to as *-pe(r)dayakan* “to deceive, trick” (sections 4 and 18). A kind of “moral of the story” is formulated by Drona in the reconciliatory meeting afterwards (17), in which he refers to Duryodana’s scheme — disregarding, as the context shows, his own involvement — as “undertaking an action with evil ambitions”. Besides these cover terms for what Duryodana and Drona do to Bima, mentioned before and after, the phenomenon is thematized more concretely in the regular observation, made by nearly everyone whom Bima meets, that his teacher does not really want Bima to find the *kawitra* water but intends to kill him. Even after Bima has recognized this as true (12), it is repeated.

More clearly relative and contextual than these religious personages, objects, and functions and immoral intentions is the contrast between being “at fault” (*salah*) and “upright, right” (*benar*) that is thematized several times. At one point Bima even notes that he is caught in a dilemma: he can do what his relatives want or what his *guru* has ordered; he will be at fault either way (section 9). But across the episode in its entirety, Bima is right and Drona at fault (13). A kindred but absolute concept is “sin” (*dosa*). Doing mischief (2), beating one’s teacher³⁵ or even just saying bad things to them (13), putting someone up to mischief (17), and wanting to kill someone (18) are said to be sins. These types of sin are social; they can be grouped together as malice. Social pressure in general has an important moral function in this story. Even though Betara Guru in disguise has assured Bima that it is acceptable to beat Drona on account of his malicious intentions, and Bima is so infuriated that he actually follows this advice to commit malice to his teacher, Bima does still expect that his relatives will try to prevent him from going through with it.

A possible consequence of sinning is “blemish and misfortune” (*mala petaka*). The fear of bringing such calamity upon oneself is a motif that occurs throughout. Drona expresses this fear while Duryodana declares his willingness to bear it (5), Bima utters the same fear later (12), and Duryodana tries to get Bima to stop beating Drona with the warning that it will cause blemish and misfortune (13). In the story-world

created here, not only the misfortune but also the blemish are to be taken literally, as actual disfigurement. Indera had become the horrible ogre Inderabau because he was struck by Betara Guru's curse (10). Blemish and misfortune should be avoided but if one does incur them, a solution is to have them annihilated and be delivered from them (both referred to as *ruat*, a Javanese loanword). This happened to Inderabau when he was killed by Bima. More mundane ways would be not to want to murder one's pupils and thrash one's teachers, but as this story testifies, the world would be quite a bit more boring for it.

While such malice disagrees with Islam, the notion of blemish and misfortune that are incurred by transgressing moral codes but can be annihilated has Hindu-Buddhist antecedents and "Javanese" connotations.³⁶ At the same time it is a Malay concern. This is clear, for instance, from its thematic prominence in the narrative poem that has been styled "the jewel of Malay Muslim culture", the *Syair Bidasari* (Millie 2004). Also, among the countless versions of the narrative of Bima's quest, blemish and misfortune feature most prominently in this particular rendition, the one in Malay.

These are signals that the kinds of religiosity thematized in the episode of Bima's quest — mostly from the realms of magic and morality — were of interest in Malay environments. Ideally, in order to investigate the cultural resonances of this text and others like it, one should have access to the themes that coloured the discursive ambience of the people who read and heard them. We have only educated guesses as to the place and time of writing of the text in Raffles Malay 21. It circulated among Malays in nineteenth-century Batavia, but next to nothing cultural is known about them, apart from the fact that they tended to be fervent Muslims.³⁷ It may also have been available in Malay-speaking circles elsewhere. We must therefore turn to more recent times and other parts of the Malay world for information.

Ethnographic studies of traditional communities in the Malay peninsula suggest that wickedness was a concern and, at least in private, a theme of discourse. In his ethnography of rural Negeri Sembilan, researched between 1978 and 1988, Peletz refers to "villagers' suspicions that fellow Malays are frequently motivated by greed, envy, and malice" (1996, p. 193). Such motivations were deemed unethical and these

suspicions should not be aired in public (1996, p. 194). Under the heading of *ilmu*, the Arabic loanword which in the Malay context “is most commonly used to denote esoteric religious knowledge concerning the manipulation of spirits and the unseen forces of the natural world” (1996, p. 158), Peletz also noted that “[v]illagers assume — and fear — that many people in their social universe rely on *ilmu* to achieve what they are prevented by the formal rules of social interaction from accomplishing (or even setting out to accomplish)” (1996, p. 194). Owing in part to this assumption, practices involving *ilmu* persisted under the radar despite vehement orthodox Islamic opposition (1996, p. 194). According to this line of reasoning, *ilmu* is likely to be of long cultural standing, and indeed Peletz points out that this term approaches what in the past could also be called *sakti* and *kesaktian*, words still used by nineteenth-century observers (1996, pp. 57, 360 note 4). *Ilmu* today relates typically to magical formulas (Haron Daud 2001, p. 19), like *kesaktian* did in Raffles Malay 21. The Malay Concordance Project reveals that *ilmu* and *kesaktian* began to collocate in Malay texts around 1700.³⁸ Under flexible nomenclature, then, ill will and magic, taboo though they may be, are established cultural themes.

Malay Javanaiserie

They are thus among Malays, but Peletz notes that people of Javanese origin in particular are “believed to have dangerous forms of *ilmu*” (1996, p. 165). The prominence of this perception is confirmed by Miyazaki in his study of the image of Malays of Javanese ancestry in rural Johor, based on fieldwork in 1991. Although its variety and frequency have declined, “Malay magic is still very much a part of the daily life of the Malays” (2000, p. 90) and “many Malays [...] tend to believe that [Javanese-Malays] possess strong ‘magical’ powers and are skilled in sorcery” (2000, p. 83). This is a stereotype, of course, but it is influential: “The Javanese-Malays also often described themselves as magically powerful” (Miyazaki 2000, p. 84; see also p. 91). That this image extends to the language variety associated with the ethnic category follows from Sweeney’s reference to a “widespread belief in the efficacy of written charms (*azimat*, *tangkal*) which are found (among

Malays) in Arabic, Thai, Javanese, and Malay” (1987, p. 110).³⁹ Most of those who employ these producers and tools of magic, whose efficacy is credited, in part at least, to their Javaneseness, are Malays. The history of rivalry and animosity between Java-based kingdoms and Malay kingdoms in Sumatra and later the Malay Peninsula that goes back to the first millennium CE (Leonard Andaya 2008) continues to resound, but it does not preclude Malays from making use of occult practices held to belong to and belong with Javanese.

Threatening otherness is not the only image of Javanese culture that has been of consequence among Malays. The idea that Javanese civilization was considered prestigious and paradigmatic, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter in connection with Overbeck and Robson’s theories of cultural influence, finds support among most literary scholars and has been confirmed through historical research. Barbara Andaya, for instance, observes that the Malay sultanates of Palembang and Jambi in the seventeenth century engaged in “amusements such as Javanese wayang, dancing, and gamelan” and emulations of courtly “Javaneseness” in the form of tourneys, that the Javanese language was admired, and that at certain points Malays appearing at court were even required to don Javanese attire (1993, pp. 66–67). Vickers notes that, besides Panji narratives, “Javanese styles of shadow puppets, dance, and weaponry in the form of the *kris* with its various types of hilt [...] became firmly embedded in Malay culture” throughout insular and peninsular Southeast Asia (1987, p. 56).

These emblematically Javanese modes of discourse, genres of performance, and types of objects are public culture, civilized and positive. But, the Malay conception of Javaneseness was complex and knew darker shades as well. Its association with magic and sorcery is not recent. To mention a famous example, the iconic Hikayat Hang Tuah also connects Java with threatening magical objects and practices and individuals possessing them (Sulastin 1983, pp. 241–47).⁴⁰ What these two apparently conflicting images have in common is fascination. Rather than distinguishing objects of admiration and appropriation on the one hand and objects of discomfort and rejection on the other, it seems wise to recognize that a spectrum of select “Javanese” characteristics was part of the Malay cultural repertoire, while at the same time being alien,

and remaining so. In other words, what is relevant was Javaneseness's difference, an alterity that was also one's own. The idea of "Javanese" — *Jawa*, the Malay adjective that refers to geography, ethnicity, culture, and language — functioned as a zone, both other *and* the same, onto which certain aspects of *Malay* culture could be projected, and in which certain issues that were problematic to *Malays* could be thematized.⁴¹

In either case this is a matter of representation, and therefore a term like *javanaiserie* would seem to be apt as a cover term for these practices.⁴² In this connection the question of Javanese influence is beside the point. What counts is that these practices, public and concealed and in between, create a diegesis designed and felt to be "Javanese" and sometimes explicitly marked *Jawa*. Such a diegesis and style may be analyzed as *javanisque*. Alleged Javanese authorship of Malay texts, for instance, is an element of javanaiserie. Such a claim helps legitimize the work as extra-Malay at the same time that it *is* Malay. But javanaiserie could also involve actual translation or adaptation from Javanese, rather than first-hand Malay composition in javanesque style. Javanaiserie is a mode of diegesis, of worldmaking. Although the latter term may suggest artistic fantasy, these worlds can be narrative and indeed lived ones. Part of Malay magic, for instance, is javanesque and its practice is javanaiserie. As Bima's quest and revenge demonstrate, one thing that javanaiserie can do is to create a zone in Malay diegeses where, under javanesque cover, certain evils are justifiable and indeed alluring.

Javanaiserie has an artefactual component. This goes for texts and material culture, but the same applies to performances and magic. For this reason javanaiserie was not only able to circulate, but its cultural significance varied.⁴³ Javanesque narratives and performances, for instance, have been produced in Bali (Vickers 2005, pp. 266–67), in mainland Southeast Asia in Thai (Robson 1996)⁴⁴ and Khmer, in twentieth-century Europe and the United States of America (Cohen 2010; Spiller 2015) and in metropolitan Indonesia. Also for the self-conscious forms of Javaneseness promoted and practised in Java itself during high colonialism and the New Order period (Pemberton 1994) the label is not amiss. It should not come as a surprise that within the lingual tradition of Malay, heterogeneous and dynamic as it was, the

cultural meanings of javanaiserie varied geographically and historically. Over the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries it certainly flourished in different ways in Batavia (where it was taken to new heights in the second half of the nineteenth century), Palembang and Jambi, and Kedah and Kelantan, but javanese works and performance genres have been identified throughout the Malay World.

Over the centuries “Javanese stories” and “Javanese *hikayat*” have received a bad press in Malay cultural criticism. At least from Bukhari’s damning judgement of the readers of *hikayat*, particularly a “Javanese” one, as infidels, stupid and witless, in 1603, javanese narratives were typically branded “misguided” (*sesat*), “falsehood” (*dusta*), and “harmful” (*kecewa*) (as in Hussain 1992, p. 280; Hijjas 2010, p. 160; Gallop 2015; and other texts, discussed in Koster 1997, pp. 86–93; Braginsky 2002, pp. 46–48, and Chambert-Loir 2013, pp. 28–32). Nonetheless — only to mention major centres of Malay javanaiserie — up to the early twentieth century javanese texts were composed and copied in Batavia (Chambert-Loir and Dewaki 2013) and Palembang (Overbeck 1932, p. 209; 1934, p. 104; 1935, p. 150) and *wayang Jawa* was staged in Kedah and Kelantan (Sweeney 1972, p. 24). There were ways of neutralizing the sin of immersing oneself in these narratives, ways not automatically to disqualify oneself for heaven. These methods are premised on the fact that diegeses are *ensphered* into each other.⁴⁵ A common strategy was to advertise these narratives, often in versified epilogues, as allegory (*ibarat*). The sphere of the dramatis personae’s story-world could be interpreted as invoking a higher-order diegetic sphere that was more elementary (as not everything in the first-order narrative diegesis was represented here) and abstract. In the episode of Bima’s quest and its brutal aftermath, this is the function of the “moral of the story” that Drona delivers to Duryodana (section 17). In the story-world, Drona comments upon and closes the diegetic sphere that, with hindsight, was constituted by Bima’s dealings with Drona, Duryodana, and Sangkuni. At the same time Drona’s counsel signals to overhearing readers and listeners, who have just enjoyed a sizable dose of un-Islamic religiosity and violence, that it can also be taken metaphorically in a higher and essentially moral diegetic sphere.

The second method, too, was applied as the narrative diegesis was dissolved and readers returned to the everyday sphere, their lifeworld, the one that would lead on to the hereafter. It was a ritual moment in Malay reading practice. Epilogues to sinful narratives tell the reader to repent (*bertobat*) or ask to be forgiven, as in this example from a Batavia-Malay javanese *hikayat* finished in 1892: “And you are advised, after reading and hearing this, to ask much forgiveness and pray and beg for clemency from the Lord, the Honourable, the Forgiving, the Merciful.”⁴⁶

NOTES

I thank Adrian Vickers, Andrea Acri, Henri Chambert-Loir, Jan van der Putten, Leonard Andaya, Suryadi, Ulrich Kratz, and Willem van der Molen for their critical comments on earlier versions of this chapter and Suryadi, Henri, and Willem for their help in interpreting parts of the text in Raffles Malay 21. The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, both in London, have enabled me to study this manuscript.

1. It should be clear that I do not assume a stable and simple correlation between Malay language, ethnicity, culture, and territory. The same goes for Java(nese). I do examine some contexts where these categories are habitually superposed.
2. I use the term diegesis for a configuration of entities, processes, conditions, and moods constructed processually in the interplay between discourse, other symbolic productions, and situations (Arps 1996; 2006). A less pretentious synonym is worldmaking (Arps 2016), although this term is really too specific, suggesting that what is constructed is by default as comprehensive as a “world”. In fact, diegesis may be highly selective and strongly focused on a particular stretch or aspect of reality. That reality may, moreover, be fictional.
3. For instance, the person whom Bima meets on an island in the ocean is a manifestation of Betara Guru, the king of gods. Bima has mysterious difficulties in physically reaching this person, whom he sees seated in a wonderful golden pavilion adorned with jewels in the middle of the island.
4. See Tanaya (1979) for texts of several of the Modern Javanese literary versions including the canonical one, and Arps (2000) for a Dutch translation of the latter. On the dating of that version — which, incidentally, represents an Islamization of the Old Javanese poem, casting Bima as a Sufi — see Arps (2000), p. 85. The first known dramatic rendition is examined in my article “The Benefits of Purity in Amarta and Surakarta: The Shadowplay of

Bima Suci, 1817–1818” (To appear in a volume on reflections of religious change in Javanese texts, edited by Toru Aoyama et al. (Tokyo: Institute of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)). More recent *wayang* representations of Bima’s encounter with the deity are discussed in Arps (2016), pp. 559–72.

5. I have not had the opportunity to study this manuscript, only the other three.
6. This version is discussed in my monograph in progress on the ideology of the quest in modern Java and beyond.
7. The same paper dated 1812 as used for Raffles Malay 21 is found in other Malay manuscripts from the Raffles collection. One of them, Raffles Malay 15, “was written in Kampung Kěrukut in A.D. 1815 (in Western numerals) or A.H. 1219 (in Western numerals) [A.H. 1219 was, however, A.D. 1804]” (Ricklefs and Voorhoeve 1977, p. 134). (The dating peculiarity according to the Islamic calendar does not affect my argument.) Kerukut or Krokot was (and is) a downtown neighbourhood in Batavia, founded as a Balinese settlement in 1687 (Oud Batavia 1922, p. 478) and inhabited, among others, by “educated Chinese Moslems” in the late eighteenth century (Salmon 1981, p. 16). Another such manuscript, Raffles Malay 78, “has many Batavia Malay words” (Ricklefs and Voorhoeve 1977, p. 143). Moreover Bijleveld, probably referring to Raffles Malay 21, mentions that a character’s voice “is compared with that of a company lieutenant in Batavia” (Bijleveld [s.a.], p. 5). I have not been able to check this.
8. Or rather, this name is. The personage is commonly known as Bagong in Javanese *wayang* today.
9. I have divided Raffles Malay 21’s episode of Bima’s quest and the preceding episodes into numbered narrative sections for ease of reference. The criteria for division were heuristic and other segmentation is certainly possible. The numbering is ad hoc.
10. See the remark above about Bima’s self-description. The name of the deity Bima encounters in the ocean, an important figure in all other renditions, is also corrupt. See the footnote to “Tawaruji” in section 12.
11. Although there were *kampung Jawa* in Batavia and ethnic Javanese did live there (Raben 2000, p. 97 *et passim*).
12. This is explicit in Or. 3240, where Drona’s death is predicted. See the footnote to section 12.
13. I.e. as to whether they should live or die.
14. The lexical meaning of *telaga* in this text is “pond, lake” as in Javanese, not “well” as in Malay.
15. This reading of A NG-T-K-L A M-L-A K-W-NG is quite uncertain. It is a field (Javanese *tegal*, Malay *padang*). *Ing* is a Javanese locative particle. Van der Tuuk calls the place Melanggang (1879, p. 513), but the manuscript he used contains a rather different text. It is a forest there.

16. This is a version of a common epithet of Bima in Javanese.
17. The phrase in question reads *senjata dewa2 T-R cakra mungsala duduk angkusa*. The last four are weapons (*senjata*) and kindred metal instruments: *cakra* “discus”, *musala* “mace”, *du(k)duk* “thrusting spear”, and *angkusa* “elephant goad”. All are known in Old Javanese; most of the words derive from Sanskrit but *duduk* is Austronesian. What T-R stands for I do not know.
18. In Or. 3240, where it comes at the very beginning of the manuscript, this passage is more elaborate. Seeing that Bima has died, Betara Guru is angry with Drona who has listened to Duryodana. He ordains that Drona will die in the war with the five Pandawas (*perang Pandawa Lima*). Then he descends to earth.
19. Called Narawuji and Tarawuji later on in the text. These names go back to the Old Javanese name Nawaruci. See Van der Tuuk (1879), p. 21 on the names Tarujaya — no doubt born from a different reading of T-A R W J-Y — and Tawaruji, and (1881), p. 54 on Tawaruci. In his text and translation, Poerbatjaraka has silently emended the name that is actually used in Or. 3240, Tawaruji, to Nawaruci. The variation in names, exhibiting metathesis and variable readings of the Perso-Arabic script, suggest scriptural transmission of the text in an environment where the story was not familiar from other sources.
20. N-A R W J-Y, as his name usually is from here onwards, alongside a few cases of T-A R W J-Y.
21. It is implied that Drona is not going to teach Bima anything anyhow.
22. The manuscript reads as follows: Maka kata Bima, “Hai Narawuji, dari mana datangmu maka engkau mendapatkan aku ini?” Maka kata Begawan Narawuji, “Hai Kakik Bima, dari selamanya pun aku ada duduk pada pusat laut ini.” Maka kata sang Bima, “Jika demikian, di mana tempatnya air kawitra itu di pusat laut ini?” Maka kata Bakawan Tarawuji, “Hai Bima, pulanglah engkau, balaskan kematianmu di tengah laut ini. Yang air kawitra itu di pusat laut ini apatah gunanya engkau ambil, karena engkau ini tiada disuruhnya mengambil air ini, sebenar2nya sahaja hendak disuruhnya mati. Sekarang sigeralah engkau pulang, balaskanlah kematianmu kepada Dangieng Drona itu, kerana ia tiada benar hatinya kepadamu.” Maka kata sang Bima, “Aku takut akan mala petakanya memalu itu, bertambah2 mala petakaku.” Maka kata Begawan Tarawuji, “Tiada engkau kena mala petakanya, karena lain gurunya yang memberi kena mala petaka itu. Akan gurumu ini terlalu jahat, hendak membunuh engkau. Barang katanya kepadamu itu tiada sungguh. Sebab itulah maka tiada kena mala petakanya. Tetapi jangan ia kaubunuh, sehingga engkau palu juga, supaya tahu ia akan dirinya, tiadalah mau ia berbuat jahat kepadamu lagi” (Raffles Malay 21, pp. 160–61; cf. Poerbatjaraka 1940, pp. 52–53).

23. “Jikalau murid harus membunuh guru sekaranglah engkau kubunuh, tetapi engkau rasai juga bekas tanganku ini” (Raffles Malay 21, p. 162). Poerbatjaraka’s published text contains unnecessary emendations (1940, p. 54) and his translation errors (1940, p. 37).
24. In the version of Or. 3240 Bima’s rage receives greater emphasis: Drona begs forgiveness but Bima thrashes him still more forcefully.
25. I am not certain of the interpretation. Rendered without added punctuation, Drona’s response to Bima reads “Apatah lagi yang salah ayahanda itu mengapatah bicara anakku t iadalah ayahanda sadari lagi karena bukannya ayahanda hendak membunuh anakku.”
26. Unusually, Sangkuni’s offer to bear the brunt has no equivalent in Or. 3240.
27. The text is confused here. This is what it seems to come down to.
28. The text reads “barangsiapa memulai pekerjaan berjaga2 yang jahat itu niscaya menempuh juga kepada kejahatannya.” *Berjaga2* does not make sense here. Or. 3240 reads *bercita2*, which does. Instead of the last clause, Or. 3240 reads “niscaya menempuh juga kepadanya kejahatan”, i.e. “evil will inevitably confront him”, which makes sense as well.
29. The present episodes are not in the published text (*Serat Kandhaning Ringgit Purwa* 1985–88). There is a huge narrative gap between vols. 4 and 5; if it was once part of this version of the *serat kandha*, the story of Bima’s quest would have fallen here. Nor do these episodes have a counterpart in Leiden Cod. Or. 6381 and 6383 (the latter dated 1795 and from Gresik in East Java), although these *serat kandha* cover the same portion of the mythology as Raffles Malay 21 and likewise feature the clown-servants Semar and Bladho.
30. The reference to Pandawa Jaya from the Old Sundanese Bujangga Manik is probably about a particular text in Javanese that was studied by Bujangga Manik (late fifteenth to early sixteenth century) (Noorduyn 1982, p. 431), and that in the Sutasoma (late fourteenth century) to an episode in the narrative.
31. See Kuntara (1990) about manuscripts of Arjunawiwāha, another Old Javanese poem, provided with Modern Javanese glosses and paraphrases. See also Teeuw and Robson (2005), p. 64 about a Modern Javanese summary, from Madura, of Bhomāntaka.
32. See *Serat Gembring Baring* (1981), containing a *serat kandha*-type of work that incorporates fragments from the Old Javanese Bhāratayuddha (as well as, in fact, fragments of the Old Javanese poem of Bima’s quest for purity). The antecedents of this work are unknown but the contents and style suggest both East Javanese and Yogyakarta-court connections. This work, too, features Bladho.
33. Later in the Hikayat Sri Rama there is mention of an abyss in the sea that leads to the nether parts of the earth, where it meets the water of life (*air ma’ulhayat*, Arabic *mā’ al-hayāt*). Drinking and bathing in the water of life will render Sri Rama’s followers mighty, brave, invincible, and immortal

- (Achadiati Ikram 1980, pp. 210–11). In an Islamic context this water of life is known particularly from commentary on a passage in the Koran and from the narrative of Alexander the Great's quest for it (Drewes and Brakel 1986, pp. 156–57). Probably Hanuman in the earlier episode should be understood as having cleansed himself in the water of life and it is quite likely that those familiar with the notion also took *air kawitra* in the episode of Bima's quest as referring to it.
34. As suggested by a passage in the Laws of Malacca, a code in force in parts of the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, and Borneo up to the nineteenth century or even later. See Liaw (1976), p. 136.
 35. Slapping (let alone thrashing) someone was a grave offense in both customary and Islamic law according to the Laws of Malacca. For instance, a free person who slapped an innocent slave should be fined. If the latter killed the former in retaliation, he was deemed not to have committed a crime according to customary law — though according to Islamic law he was a murderer and should be put to death (Liaw 1976, pp. 74–77).
 36. In the Nawaruci, for example, Indrabāhu's disfigurement (Old Javanese and Sanskrit *mala* "impurity, defect") is caused by a sin (*doṣa*) that had to be annihilated (*lukat*, an Old Javanese synonym of *ruat*) (Prijoetomo 1934, p. 32). It is likely that in Malay the ancient lexical meaning of *mala* faded over time as *mala pe(s)taka* (Old Javanese and Sanskrit *pātaka* "misfortune, punishment for sins") became a fixed collocation meaning "misfortune", though it retained the sense that the misfortune was incurred by a transgression. Hence my choice of "blemish" to render Malay *mala*.
 37. As was noted, for instance, by the Central Javanese nobleman Sastradarma who, after visiting Batavia in 1865, wrote in his travelogue that he "used to believe that 'Javanese' and 'Muslim' were identical until he arrived in Batavia. There he learned that the Javanese, at least in the eyes of the original inhabitants of Batavia — themselves devout Muslims — are hardly more than heathens" (Van der Molen 2006, p. 113).
 38. See <<http://mcp.anu.edu.au/>> (accessed 28 March 2014).
 39. Magic is also associated with Thais and "forest-dwelling aborigines" (Peletz 1996, p. 162). This is relevant but I cannot go into it. The use of the Malay languages of Islam, Arabic and Malay itself, is self-explanatory.
 40. It has been suggested that in Southeast Asia Java had a "reputation for possessing esoteric knowledge" as early as the ninth century CE (Wolters 1999, p. 35), but Wolters's suggestion hinges on the very specific interpretation of the word *siddhayātrā* in a Sanskrit inscription from Champa as "pilgrimage to a particularly sacred territory charged with magical power" (Coedès 1968, p. 316). In spite of much debate, the correctness of this interpretation has not been established. For Old Javanese, Zoetmulder simply glosses *siddhayātra* as "having a successful (auspicious) journey" (Zoetmulder and Robson 1982).

41. See Vickers (2004) for a discussion of the historical dynamics of Malayness in relation to Javanese-ness.
42. This coinage is modelled after *chinoiserie* and *japonaiserie*, likewise historical styles of selective representation of other cultures that are also one's own. I use the term as a mass noun to denote the employment of "Javanese" characteristics. In French, of course, *chinoiseries* and *japonaiseries* are artefacts.
43. I can only identify the phenomenon and refer to a few individual studies. Comparative study is in order.
44. And in 1703 King Phetracha of Ayutthaya (r. 1688–1703) sought to buy female dancers and musical instruments from the ruler of Mataram in Central Java (Bhawan Ruangsilp 2007, pp. 171–72). He may not have succeeded in buying the dancers (2007, p. 251).
45. The notion of ensphering is inspired by Goffman's "frames" (1986), but conceived multi-dimensionally and allowing for fuzzy boundaries, so including "sphere" in the sense of "environment" or "ambience".
46. "Dan dipesankan habis membaca dan menengar harap biar banyak-banyak istifar dan salawat dan minta ampun pada Tuhan *Azizu l-Gafur l-Rahim*" (Nikmah Sunardjo 1989, p. 137).

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