

Prologue and acknowledgements

This is a study of texts of pre-colonial Bali. Or should I say this is a study of how we might think about a set of 'texts' as they circulated in pre-colonial Bali, in particular how they expressed an ideology of royal rule in a part of Southeast Asia where European control and modern nation states had not yet come to dominate the lives of the people of the island and its neighbour, Lombok. These texts looked back to Javanese culture as the foundation of the pre-modern cultures of Bali and Lombok, and in so doing romanticized that foundation. At the same time they presented engaging sets of stories, stories of love and death which still entrance me.

This book was based on my PhD dissertation completed over a decade ago. One of my aims in writing that thesis was to shake up the way we look at Indonesian texts, and I accordingly adopted a provocative approach to what I saw as the views which limited studies of texts as cultural utterances or performances. In particular I have reacted to aspects of the tradition of textual studies centred at Leiden University. Broadly speaking I have characterized this tradition as one which sees the literary practices of Bali as survivals of an ancient Javanese culture, and for that reason presents texts as objects.

Various aspects of the methodology of the study were accordingly geared to such a provocation, for example I have not followed the usual spelling system of the languages philologists know as Old Javanese and Middle Javanese, but which Balinese know as Kawi, the language of the poets. Instead my spellings of Kawi words follow the standard Balinese system (Panitia Penyusun Kamus Bali-Indonesia 1978), and reflect the way that Balinese pronounce these words, that is they are meant to give a sense of their living usage. I have made an exception for direct quotations from manuscripts, where I have used the spelling variants in those manuscripts.

Provoke some reaction I did. The most interesting and important of the Leiden scholars, A. Teeuw (1991:220-5), while making some complimentary comments about the dissertation, sees my adoption of various theoretical positions as relieving me of the task of editing a text. His view is partially based on the view that Post-Structuralist writers (namely Barthes, Foucault and Derrida) are providing an excuse for interpretation without limits, inter-

pretation based only on the imagination of the interpreter. This is something of an over-interpretation of that body of writing, although Teeuw is not alone in ascribing such views to them. What I have attempted to do instead is to demonstrate what a set of Balinese limits of interpretation may be, and how those limits include the way the text is rendered or performed. My contribution is intended as a very long introduction to the study of the Balinese text known as *Malat*, and should rightly serve as the basis for a later edition of key *Malat* manuscripts. I am trying to establish what you need to do and know before you edit, not replace the editing process.

Since that original thesis came out I have revised this book substantially. In particular I have taken account of recent developments in the study of Indonesian texts (for example Arps 1992), but I have retained some of my earlier comments about the Leiden tradition because there is still a corpus of work which I feel gives a substantially misleading view of how Balinese literature operated as a social phenomenon. Such a view continues to influence scholarship around the world – despite the fact that few if any of the scholars now active in Leiden itself would necessarily subscribe to that view. However in acknowledging the intellectual and personal debts accrued in putting this thesis together, it almost seems redundant to say that none of what I have done would have been possible without the Leiden tradition.

Besides the kindness and intellectual openness which Professor Teeuw himself showed me, many others who can be said to belong to that tradition have helped me in a variety of ways. My greatest debt is to Peter Worsley, my principal supervisor, who curbed my impatience and opened up a unique world of scholarship to me. Stuart Robson provided inspiration for this study in his editions and translations of Pañji poems, the *Hikayat Andaken Penurat* and the *Wangbang Widéya*. Stuart Robson and Hedi Hinzler provided me with advice and materials for this study, and I will ever be grateful for their interest, as well as the hospitality they and their Leiden colleagues showed me whilst I was in the Netherlands and in subsequent encounters.

This study began in the (then) Department of Indonesian and Malayan Studies at the University of Sydney, which many Australian scholars have regarded as a Leiden-offshoot, historically true, but a serious misreading in terms of the other intellectual influences which circulated at the University in my time there in the 1970s and 1980s. As well as my supervisor, Peter Worsley, Tony Day and Boy Joseph in particular were important teachers for me, although all the other members of that Department have left a lasting influence. Anthony Forge, with typical generosity, agreed to be a co-supervisor from Canberra, and his death in 1991 was profoundly saddening.

A number of others who influenced and helped this study have also since died: Dalem Pemayun, Ida Bagus Made Togog, Mangku Mura, Pan Seken, I Gusti Made Deblog, I Ketut Rinda, I Made Kanta and Cokorda Pamecutan. It

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