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S. Robson

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broertje deed de poorten van dat hartje weder openspringen voor Moeder. Klein broertje leerde haar: wàt een m o e d e r is, en wat haar kind haar is verschuldigd". En verder de hele pagina 58.

Zonder twijfel werd hier met "Moeder" bedoeld "Ibu Ngasirah", haar *eigen* moeder, want de Raden Ayu had geen enkele zoon!

Blijkbaar heeft Ibu Kardinah die passage over het hoofd gezien en Dr. Cora Vreede-de Stuers die het stuk eerder gelezen moet hebben voordat het ter perse ging, schijnt die fout ook niet opgemerkt te hebben.

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S. O. ROBSON

MORE ABOUT *TANAH* AND *KARAS*

In his work on Old Javanese literature,[1] without doubt the greatest contribution to this subject yet published, Professor Zoetmulder reviews the question of the writing materials used in early times in Java, in particular by poets (Chapter IV). Having described the method still used in Bali, namely the incising of letters with the point of a knife on palm-leaves, he points out that references to such leaves (*ron tal* or *lontar*) can be found in one work only, the prose text Korawāśrama, of which he says (p. 129): "Although nothing is known with certainty about its date and place of origin, it seems likely from both its content and language that it was written in Java in the Majapahit period, or even later, by an author (or authors) who were outside the sphere of influence of the courts and courtly literature." This then leads him to the conclusion that "palm-leaves were used as writing material in Java as well as in Bali and that the word *lontar* was not unknown in Java at a relatively early date. It is therefore all the more surprising that we do not find the word anywhere else in Old Javanese literature and that . . . there is not a single reference in *kakawin* literature to the use of *tal*-leaves for writing . . . This prompts us to ask whether we can in fact assume an unbroken tradition dating far back into Old Javanese times, and which is still reflected in Balinese practice, or whether perhaps the *lontar* was not the only, or perhaps not even the most usual, material for writing on — at least not in those circles where *kakawin* literature originated." Professor Zoetmulder's procedure, in the circumstances an impeccable one, is to seek an answer by comparing the many passages in *kakawin* literature where writing materials are mentioned.

His investigation shows that the regular equipment of the poet was *tanah* and *karas,* and it turns out that a *tanah* was a kind of pencil,

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[1] P. J. Zoetmulder: *Kalangwan, A Survey of Old Javanese Literature,* The Hague, 1974.

perhaps of soft stone (p. 133), while the *karas* may have been a board (p. 134). However, Zoetmulder says that "the exact character of the *karas* remains elusive" (p. 135). While it is very probably not *lontar* leaves, the possibility of its being a slate, as suggested by Balinese illustrations, is considered doubtful. The tentative suggestion is made that "it may have been a flat piece of split bamboo or a board of the same material" (p. 135). Unfortunately, split bamboo is generally neither flat nor wide enough to form a board for writing on.

A piece of information suggesting that the Balinese illustration showing something "square in shape and framed, with a hook at one end by which it can be carried or hung" should be taken more seriously is the fact that the normal term in Bali for a slate such as is used in primary school is *karas*. The object used by poets in early Java and called *karas* was probably comparable in form and function, although it is impossible to be certain whether it was composed of the stone called "slate" or was a hard piece of wood. That the *tanah* used by poets was a stick of soft stone does seem probable, as this would require sharpening and would be inclined to snap, as mentioned in poetry.

However, there is another piece of information, this time from an outside source, that throws doubt on the assumption that *tanah* and *karas* were in fact the most usual materials used "in those circles where *kakawin* literature originated" — clearly the direction in which Zoetmulder is hinting that we should move. This information comes from the remarkable account of Java found in Ma Huan's book "Ying-yai Sheng-lan Chiao-chu" dated 1416. The relevant paragraph reads in the excellent translation of J. V. G. Mills:

"For writing records they, too, have letters; [and these] are the same as the So-li (footnote: A form of 'Chola' . . .) letters. They have no paper or pen; [and] they use *chiao-chang* (footnote: Malay *kajang,* a general name for different palm-leaves; Ma Huan here means the leaves of the *Borassus flabbeliformis,* called *lontar* in Java . . .) leaves, on which they scratch the letters with a sharp knife. They also have rules of grammar. The speech of the country is very pretty and soft." [2]

This shows that the Balinese practice of today does in fact reflect an unbroken tradition reaching back at least to the first half of the 15th century. Of the antiquity of the use of palm-leaf, however, there is no doubt, as this method of writing was current in ancient India, including South India, one of the regions that exerted influence on Java. Basham tells us:

"The usual writing material was the leaf of the talipot palm *(tālapatra,* in *Tamil ōlai*), dried, smoothed, sized and cut into strips. To form a book a number of such strips was held loosely together by a cord passed through a hole in the centre of the leaf, or, in the case of large books,

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[2] Ma Huan: *Ying-yai Sheng-lan - The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores* [*1433*], transl. & ed. J. V. G. Mills, Cambridge, 1970, p. 96. Ma Huan visited Java in 1414 and the foreword to his account, dated 1416, tells how he saw the things described "with my own eyes" (p. 70).

by two cords at either end. The book was usually strengthened by wooden covers, which were often lacquered and painted... In the South... the letters were usually scratched on the palm-leaf with a stylus, and the leaf then rubbed over with finely powdered lampblack." [3]

So we are forced to ask how these pieces of information can be reconciled. It is perhaps an error to regard the two methods of writing mentioned above, viz. with a knife on palm-leaf and with a *tanah* on a *karas,* as being mutually exclusive. And we need not assume the existence of different "circles", one of which wrote *kakawin* literature (using *tanah* and *karas*), and another which wrote works such as the Korawāśrama (using *lontar*). Instead I would propose that the two methods were both used but at different stages in the process of literary creation. The nature of the materials themselves supports this.

The *karas* is likely to have been rather bulky and hence unsuitable for copying out and storing works of any length, but if it were possible to re-use it constantly — by erasing the letters when no longer needed — this would fit it as a tool for poets meditating in a beautiful place waiting for inspiration, which would then be jotted down, perhaps adjusted slightly to suit the requirements of the metre chosen, and then taken home to be incorporated into the work as a whole. The completed poem would then finally be copied out, perhaps by a specialist scribe, on prepared *lontar* leaves and stored away to be consulted and read on particular occasions as the need arose.

The fact that the *kakawin* literature says nothing about this last process actually tells us something about the literature itself and need not surprise us. In fact the range of activities depicted there is strictly limited and is far from being a full and accurate record of what was done in early Java. But why should it have been just this gap that was left? The *kakawin* literature is highly conventional and once the fashion of describing poets doing one thing (and not another) had been set then this custom was loyally adhered to. And as suggested above, it was possibly not the poets themselves at all who did the copying on *lontar* but another group — craftsmen rather than the scholarly or priestly class. But this is only a guess.

L. F. BRAKEL

CHAIRIL ANWAR AS TRANSLATOR

In his very useful documentary work "Chairil Anwar Pelopor Angkatan 1945" H. B. Jassin [1] has published a number of Chairil Anwar's translations, together with their originals. There were, however, a few poems whose originals could not be traced. One of these appears on p. 92 with the name of its author: R. M. Rilke, but with the notice "Tidak ketemu aslinja" (its original has not been found).

[3] A. L. Basham: *The Wonder that was India,* London, 1954, pp. 398-399.

[1] H. B. Jassin, *Chairil Anwar: Pelopor Angkatan 45,* Djakarta, 1956.