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The Astabrata, Saptadewawrtti, and Nagarakrtagama VII:1-2

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## BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

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### The Aṣṭabrata, Saptadewawṛtti, and Nāgarakṛtāgama VII:1-2

The attribution of a functional identity between the behaviour of rulers and the activities of the divinities grouped as the *aṣṭadikpālaka*, the 'Guardians of the Eight Quarters of the Sky', is one of the underpinnings of ancient Hindu political theory (Gonda 1959:172-6; Spellman 1964:30-3). The *Manusmṛti* (V:96; VII:1) states that the king is created from the eternal particles and is pervaded by the essence of the eight guardian deities: Moon (Candra, Śaśi), Fire (Agni, Bahni), Sun (Sūrya, Ravi), Wind (Vāyu), Indra, Kuvera, Varuṇa, and Yama. The king is enjoined to take these gods as exemplars for his conduct, so that the world will be protected. At a later point in the *Manusmṛti* (IX:303), Pṛthivī (Earth) is substituted for Kuvera (Wealth). Similar groupings of the *dikpālaka* as models for royal style can be found elsewhere in *purāṇic* literature. This concept of the functional divinity of the king was also known on Java in the formulation of the *aṣṭabrata*, the 'Eight Royal Virtues', the divine qualities that the king was to emulate.

The classical definition of the *aṣṭabrata* in Javanese literature is in the Old Javanese *Rāmāyaṇa* (XXIV:51-60), where Rāma lectures on statecraft to Vibhīṣaṇa, who had inherited the throne of Lēngkā after Rāvaṇa had been killed (Juynboll 1936:416-7; Hooykaas 1956). After reminding Vibhīṣaṇa that the Eight Gods are incorporated into the body of the king, Rāma admonishes him to follow the *aṣṭabrata*, pointing out the correspondences between the functions of the gods and the appropriate behaviour of the king. As Indra causes rain to fall, nourishing the earth, the king is generous, flooding the world with gifts (*Indrabrata*). Yama is the dispenser of justice; the king punishes the miscreants of the world (*Yamabrata*). Ravi, the Sun, evaporates water gradually; the king takes up his exactions without haste (*Sūryabrata*). The Moon delights the world; the king is gentle and agreeable to his subjects (*Śaśi [Candra]brata*). Vāyu, the wind, invisibly penetrates everywhere; the king spies without being seen (*Vāyubrata*). The king is like the god of wealth, taking pleasure in material satisfactions (*Dhanada [Kuvera]brata*). The weapons of Varuṇa are the weapons of the king (*Pāśabrata*), and in his fiery anger the king consumes his enemies like Bahni, the god of Fire (*Agnibrata*).

The *Rāmāyaṇa* is not the only Old Javanese source for this quintessentially Indian concept of the analogic functional identity between the king and the *lokapāla*. The *Tantri Kāmandaka*, a version of the well-

known Indian beast fables of the *Pañcatantra* cycle of tales, lists in a corrupt Sanskrit *śloka* the gods whose qualities the king must imitate. As reconstituted by the editor (Hooykaas 1931) with reference to *Manusmṛti* IX:303, it is an orthodox statement of the eight gods of the *aṣṭabrata*: Indra, Sūrya, Vāyu, Yama, Moon, Fire, Earth, and Varuṇa. The Old Javanese gloss to the *śloka*, however, presents an interesting variant reading (text, Hooykaas 1931:50):

‘Thus, the conduct of the Seven Gods [*saptadewawṛtti*] which is to be followed. Who are these gods whose qualities according to the texts must be taken as an example? Sang Hyang Indra, Sang Hyang Aditya [Sun], Sang Hyang Yama, Sang Hyang Baruṇa, Sang Hyang Bāyu, Sang Hyang Wulan [Moon], Bhaṭārī Pṛthivī [Goddess Earth]; that which is called the virtues of the seven gods, the divine qualities of which are proper to the king. The king practises them all. In this way the king will reach the goal of unbounded authority.’

Agni (Fire) is dropped from the enumeration of the gods of the *saptadewawṛtti*. That this is not simply an error or copyist’s lapse is proved by the use of the collective term *saptadewa*, the Seven Gods, to identify the group of divine role models.

The moral content of the concept of the *aṣṭabrata* had great impact on later, Islamicized Javanese courts. The modern Javanese adaptation of the Rāmāyaṇa attributed to Yasadipura, the didactic texts *Niti Sruti* and *Niti Praja*, and other works that exhorted the king to follow the *aṣṭabrata* provided a normative and prescriptive framework for authority that linked the courts of later Mataram to their Indianized predecessors (Moertono 1968:42-4) and is even cited as relevant to the moral basis of authority in the contemporary Indonesian state (Partokusumo 1992:86-7). Going beyond the hortatory, injunctive literary statements of the *aṣṭabrata* and its Javanese equivalent, the *saptadewawṛtti*, there has been no reference up to now to show that an historical Javanese Śrī Mahārāja was functionally identified with the divine qualities of the eight or seven gods. One does exist, however, but as such has not been noticed.

In the seventh canto of Prapañca’s *Nāgarakṛtāgama*, the poet concludes his opening panegyric to the Majapahit royal family by comparing Śrī Mahārāja Rājanagara (Hayam Wuruk), the reigning king, to seven gods (verses 1-2). His radiance is that of the Sun lighting the world. He is like god Śatamanyu (Indra) raining (good fortune) over the world. He is compared to Pitṛpati (Yama) in his punishing of evil-doers. He is like Varuṇa in the obtaining of wealth. With his agents throughout the realm, he is like Vayu, the Wind. He is compared to the Earth, Pṛthivī, in the protection of his *kraton*. Finally, his appearance is that of Candra, the Moon. Pigeaud, in his commentary on this extended simile, suggested that: ‘The most plausible inference is that the seven planets or (the same thing) the seven days of the week are referred to’ (Pigeaud 1960-63, IV:10). It

appears more plausible, and less obscure, that, given the identity of the seven gods invoked (Sun, Indra, Yama, Varuṇa, Vāyu, Earth, and Moon) and the functional comparison of their qualities with the king, Prapañca had in mind the *saptadewawṛtti* and that his praise of his patron Rājasaṅgara was an affirmation of the ruler's conformity to the classical Indian model of conduct of a perfect king.

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