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Encyclopedia-izing and the organization of knowledge; A cross-cultural perspective


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What's in a name? The name 'encyclopedia' does not seem to have been used in the title of works of reference before the 17th century, but the urge to compile encyclopedic works of reference is much older, and not a European invention, given the early appearance of Chinese examples. But the contents and organization of encyclopedias vary. In this paper, an explicit comparison (rather than the implicit ones we so often make) between two encyclopedic works on Java is carried out to show that the variation in content and organization is not trivial, but revealing of important features of the social milieu, time, and régime of knowledge from which the work springs.

The two works compared have quite a lot in common: for instance, they both contain a strong narrative element of a type which the archetypal 'classic' European encyclopedias like the Britannica do not. On the other hand, they differ markedly in the material they have assembled and in the way this is organized.

Valentijn's Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien

Valentijn's work is an example of an embryonic European 'quantifying template' type of encyclopedia, though his approach is not yet purged of the personal, the journalistic, and the traveller's tale. This use of systematic and quantifying templates is typical of the whole enterprise of Dutch commercial expansion and later colonialism, and probably is seen at its clearest in the format of VOC accounting, in which such standardized 'quantifying templates' provided powerful means of information control and retrieval.

François Valentijn was born in Dordrecht in 1666 and died in the Hague in 1727. He studied for the ministry and first went out to the Indies in 1685, spending the next nine years in Ambon and Banda, before returning to his native town for the following ten years. In 1705 he went out to the Indies again and was military chaplain on a campaign against Surapati's principality in East Java. During this second period of residence in the Indies he began to collect material for the great work he had already begun to plan on his first sojourn in the Indies, and in 1714, back in the Netherlands, he began to write...
it. In 1724 the first of five huge folio-format volumes (the third, fourth, and fifth so large that they are bound in two parts) appeared, and the publication of the entire work was completed by 1726. It ran to about five thousand pages, lavishly illustrated with plates and maps. This work, unlike the *Serat Centhini*, does not deal exclusively with Java or even with the Dutch East Indies. Its title reflects the extent of its geographical coverage: 1 *Oud en Nieuw Oost Indien, vervattende een nauwkeurige en uitvoerige verhandeling van Nederlands mogentheyd in die gewesten, benevens een wyd-lustige beschryving der Moluccos, Amboina, Banda, Timor, en Solor, Java, en alle de eylanden onder dezelve landbestieringen behoorende; het Nederlands Comptoir op Suratte, en de levens der Groote Mogols; als ook een keurlyke verhandeling van 't wezentylkste, dat men behoorde te weten van Choromandel, Pegu, Arracan, Bengal, Mocha, Persien, Malacca, Sumatra, Ceylon, Malabar, Celebes of Macasser, China, Japan, Tayouan of Formosa, Tonkin, Cambodia, Siam, Borneo, Bali, Kaap der Goede Hoop en Mauritius.* (Old and new East Indies, containing an accurate and comprehensive treatment of Dutch power in these regions, together with a comprehensive description of the Moluccas, Amboina, Banda, Timor, and Solor, Java, and all the islands belonging to the same countries; the Dutch factory at Surat, and the lives of the Great Moguls; as also an elegant treatment of the most essential that one should know about Coromandel, Pegu, Arakan, Bengal, Mocha, Persia, Malacca, Sumatra, Ceylon, Malabar, Celebes or Makassar, China, Japan, Taiwan or Formosa, Tonkin, Cambodia, Siam, Borneo, Bali, the Cape of Good Hope, and Mauritius). It is dedicated to Egidius van den Bempden, ex-burgermeester of Amsterdam, and the list of subscribers contains over 500 names. This is an unarguable indication of the commodification of saleable knowledge that Valentijn’s enterprise represents.

The first part of the volume on Java (Volume IV) contains the following named sections: 1. a description of the island (53 pages, discussed below);
2. animals and birds; the appearance, clothing, nature, women, weapons, and titles of the Javanese, the ranks of the nobility, government, tiger and other sorts of fights, usage of opium, language and letters (nota bene only 11 pages for all these subjects); 3. the history of Java (148 pages of which all but about seven are on the last three centuries); 4. a description of Banten (16 pages); 5. a description of Batavia (flora, fauna, inhabitants, government) (36 pages), representing a fuller coverage of these two coastal entrepots than of all the rest of Java; 6. biographies of the Dutch governors-general of the Indies (91 pages); 7. coinage in use in the Indies (5 pages); 8. weights and measures (2 pages); 9. further information on Batavian life (5 pages); 10. a list of the Dutch East India Company’s officials (39 pp); 11. a list of Batavian Chinese notables (2 pages); 12. more on 10 and 11 (10 pages); and 13. the foundation of Batavia (73 pages).

The second part of Volume IV begins with an account of religion on Java. A brief and highly prejudiced account of ‘Mohammedanism’ is followed by a detailed history of Christianity in the Indies, with lists of the pastors who served there. Edward Said sees the eighteenth century as a time when the treatment and discussion of Islam became to a large extent freed from Christian prejudice (Said 1978:117-20), but there is no sign of this yet in Valentijn’s account, which retains all the old prejudices. The material on Java ends on page 142, and the remainder of the volume contains extensive material on Surat and the Moguls, short accounts of China and Taiwan, and a description of the author’s journey out and back.

What immediately strikes one about Valentijn’s description of Java is its highly systematic, enumerative, and quantitative character. At the outset he divides Java into seven sections: the kingdom of Banten; the kingdom of Jakatra; the kingdom of Cirebon; the kingdom of Mataram and its dependencies; the governorship (landvoogdij) of Pranaraga, Kaduwang, et cetera; the governorship of Surabaya and Pasuruhan and the island of Madura; and the principality of Balambangan. These divisions are premised upon a concept of political rather than natural or geographic boundaries, reflecting a desire to establish ‘who’s in charge here’ and to determine the exact line at which one sovereignty passes over to another. After a short statement on the length, breadth, and situation of Java Valentijn takes us through the seven sections one by one. He gives the principal geographical features (mountainous terrain, swampy terrain, coastal cliffs, deserted areas, et cetera); notes also every (or so it seems) village and town and the number of its inhabitants, sometimes also recording a significant increase or decrease in population in recent times; states the distances between villages, cities, and other landmarks; and lists the chief items of produce and their means of distribution (for example, rice and teak, by river). At the end of each section he provides a numerical summary: Banten has (excluding Batavia, dealt with separately)
20 villages and a couple of cities which together contain 8,170 households of an average of 5 people each, thus 40,850 people altogether (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:5); Jakarta has 202 villages with 19,390 households totalling 96,950 people (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:11); Cirebon has 2 cities, 350 villages, and 63,120 households totalling 305,600 people (sic; should be 315,600) (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:24); Mataram has 3,616 known villages and an 'endless number of unknown' ones, 12 cities and a total of 343,020 households or 1,718,500 people (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:35); the fifth division has 14 cities and 226 villages containing 97,970 households totalling 489,850 people (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:43); the sixth has 5 or 6 cities and 60 villages, containing 41,900 households totalling 209,800 people, plus the 6 cities, 2,041 villages, 78,350 households equaling 391,750 people of the island of Madura, making a grand total of 12 cities, 2,101 villages, 120,250 households and 601,250 people (Valentijn 1724-IV-2:51); the seventh sector has one city, 12 known and many unknown villages, 50,000 households and 300,000 people (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:52).  

At the conclusion of this section Valentijn writes:

Thus we find, aggregating everything together, that in the whole of this island of Java there are 38 or 39 principal cities, 4,496 villages, and 31,161,250 souls, of which 31 cities, 3,902 villages and 2,417,850 souls are under the emperor (keizer) of Java [Mataram] from which one can easily measure the power of this prince, though there are numberless other villages and souls besides the above-mentioned in his lands. We also see from this description, that there are 5 separate powers on Java, which are not dependent upon one another and each of which is sovereign, of which the soesoehoenan or keizer of Java is the first, the king of Banten the second, the princes of Cirebon the third, the prince of Balambangan the fourth, and the Honorable Company the fifth in rank, though nevertheless the most considerable in weight. (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:53.)

Unfortunately for someone who has chosen such a conspicuously quantitative schema, Valentijn's total is wildly and inexplicably at odds with the actual sum of the seven parts: he claims that there were 31 million Javanese whereas when we add up the seven sub-totals as previously listed they come to only 2 million, less than a tenth of this figure. This is an indication (one among many examples) of how misleading an impression of accuracy the existence of a classificatory and quantifying template can provide in individual cases – a fact that European scholars have been very slow to recognize, too often mistaking the appearance of precision and accuracy for the reality. Despite this conspicuous emphasis on quantification, Valentijn's characteristic voice and style are intensely personal, his account 'author-saturated'. A large part of his account of the history of Java deals with Valentijn's own

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2 Valentijn does not explain why in this section the household is accounted as comprising six people as opposed to five elsewhere
experience, so vividly described as to convey a sense of place with much greater immediacy than his explicitly geographical description. The coastal cities of Banten and, especially, Batavia, receive a much more extensive coverage than the interior, the major part, of Java. For many Europeans of Valentijn's period and for centuries to come, the tight fort-city of Batavia was not only the centre but also the sum of their Java experience, so that ethnographic material on the Chinese, a small minority but one with a high urban concentration, is more extensive than for the Javanese majority. Valentijn however traveled, and met Javanese – something rather hard to do in Batavia.

Furthermore, both in the description of his voyage and in the 'historical' section he relates his own experience with an unself-consciousness that later scholars were to condemn as improper. This despite the fact that a thematic highlight of his travels is one aspect of his holy ministry, the baptism of children of Christian fathers hitherto deprived of the keys to heaven. Perhaps it is the unfortunate juxtaposition of this pious and proper work with a very extensive account of his gut problems, which provides so much of the dramatic tension in his account of the critical 1706 campaign. At one point he tells us he had had 17 meals without getting rid of anything he had eaten (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:172), and somewhat later he writes:

This was also the third meal, at which I had nothing in the world to eat, not daring (while I could not get any motion) to eat any dry meat [...] That afternoon I got a heavy fever and severe stabbing pains in the stomach, which lasted the whole night, and a little into the following day, that is to say, the fifth. This was certainly caused by the bad drinking-water. We had to stay here the whole day, in order to broaden the road along which we were to proceed. In the meantime I went out riding a little way, to amuse myself, happening upon the field, where our fallen still lay and were to be buried that day. I looked on them with much movement and emotion, more so in that there were a number of men there with whom I had lived in great fellowship and friendship. The prince of Surabaya having received a supply of fruits, this afternoon gave me a present of cucumbers, which were rather rare in the army. I greatly enjoyed them; but I was sick and remained sick, which would have been fixed, if only I could have achieved an open body; but all the medicines had no effect. (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:184-5.)

Later:

On my earnest prayer Mr. Knol also took care to arrange for four pancalang from the cruising fleet to take off the sick, and to transport me to Surabaya, seeing that I still had fever all day and now for many days had had no motion at all, whatever I might take (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:188).

In Surabaya the tension is resolved: he is purged and recovers.

Scholars of the high-colonial modern school found all this extremely reprehensible. Thus the author of the austerely impersonal definitive work on
Priangan, F. de Haan, launches into an extensive *ad hominem* attack on Valentijn, obviously provoked by the personal element in his account. De Haan covers everything from Valentijn's fear of sea voyages to the derelictions of duty that eventually led to his dismissal and repatriation; and concludes:

There we have what appears in the official sources concerning Valentijn. Now that he himself has had the floor on the subject of himself almost alone for two centuries, it is time to hear what others have to say for once. For me it remains a psychological riddle how Valentijn should not have preferred to have remained totally silent in his book about his personal circumstances. It is true, we should then be deprived of the best parts of his work. (De Haan 1910, I:280.)

To me, Valentijn's frank account of his personal involvement is not in itself more blameworthy than the complete silence of high-colonial scholars on their own relationships to the colonial establishment, and is also balanced by the fact that he admits Javanese to the picture as actors and as individuals, whereas later accounts generally virtually obliterate their active presence. Take for instance his description of the great gathering of 2,000 to 3,000 Madurese at the celebrations arranged by their prince before the start of the campaign. It is not just that Valentijn describes specific dances, martial displays, and other events in the most minute detail. He also treats the Javanese as individuals, greatly differing from one another in appearance and character, as in his descriptions of the cultivated prince of Madura and the prince's most favoured wife 'very fair, beautiful in form, with lovely eyes, tall of stature, very captivating, swift, and (so they would have it) at the time also pregnant by him at least if he believed it, for there were also others in the picture, so they said' (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:166); or of the scoundrelly Dipati of Surabaya (Valentijn 1724, IV-2:173), and many others whose interaction with the Dutch officers is described in unparalleled detail.

De Haan also accuses Valentijn of improper use of sources.

As far as his method of work is concerned, he sometimes names his sources, when they are well-known books [...] how he obtained the rest of his data he carefully conceals, except where he sees a chance of paying a compliment to one of his patrons (De Haan 1910, I:280).

It seems to me however that this criticism is somewhat anachronistic, as the full and careful citation of sources only became standard practice in European scholarship at a much later period.

Postmodernist scholars may look more kindly on Valentijn, regarding an

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3 An annotator of the library copy of De Haan – perhaps the famous G.P. Rouffaer himself, to whom it previously belonged – who has made a few small corrections to De Haan's own facts, picked up this piece of the characteristic de Haanian sarcasm in a marginal 'Hm!!'.

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admittedly personal narrative as preferable to synchronic essentialism, and considering citation of sources less as a guarantee of truth than as a sort of Orientalist conspiracy to support a particular prejudicial view of Eastern subjects.

To sum up: Valentijn has produced a collection of facts useful and/or to interesting his patrons, even if sometimes he had to invent them: *een keurlyke verhandeling van 't wezentlykste, dat men behoort te weten*. He has divided these facts into sections based on the subject treated, so that the information is retrievable. Some sections, such as the one on history, contain narrative material and much personal observation. The work is based on a quantifying template which counts space, time, and people, and shows the beginnings of the European scholarly habit of source citation.

The Centhini

Here I refer to the *Major Centhini*, which represents a rather late stage of the evolution of the *santri lalana* genre. Part of one manuscript of this text was edited by R. Ng. Soeradipoera, R. Wirawangsa and R.M.A. Soerjasoeparta and published by the Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen in four volumes between 1912-1915, and a summary of the same text was published by Pigeaud (1933). The date of composition is given in the opening lines as 1742 AJ (1814 AD), and the work was commissioned by the crown prince of Surakarta. Its actual authorship is extremely problematic, and it is clear that numerous pre-existing texts of various sorts – not only *santri lalana* but texts of different genres such as *babad*, *primbon*, and *suluk* – have been incorporated in one way or another.4

The *Centhini* does not provide its own division into subjects as Valentijn does, but some idea of the organization of the material may be obtained from the following summary of the first 87 cantos.

The narrative begins with an account of the political circumstances which led to Cabolang's journey. The story of the hero and his associates is entangled not only in Java's identifiable geography but also in Java's history, specifically the conquest of Giri by Mataram in the early seventeenth century. Searching for associates lost in the confusion of war, the eponymous hero (or depending on how one reads the text, anti-hero) Cabolang and his companions visit the following places: the remains of the Hindu-Javanese kingdom of Majapahit that flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in east Java; the Blitar region and the Hindu-Javanese temple Panataran; the

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4 On the *Centhini* texts, see Behrend 1986. The *Centhini* is aptly described by Behrend as voracious in its incorporation of other texts, attributed to the Surakarta court's aggressive taking hold of what had been created outside it in a process of literary and cultural hegemonizing.
Lodaja and Tuban regions, where they traverse wooded country; Mount Pandan and the village of Kedaton, where they find very large bones which the head-man explains are the bones of demons slain by Bima; Mount Gambiralaja, where they see a large phallic image; Bojanagara, where they see a smoking pond; Dander, a village of smiths; Dandangilo, site of a hot spring, Sela, Kasanga, and Grobogan; the remains of the (tenth century?) kingdom of Mendang Kamulan; Kradenan; Sela again; Gubug, where they see a fire in the middle of a sawah (wet-rice field); Undakan and Prawata; the remains of the Sultanate of Demak that flourished in the first half of the sixteenth century; the mosque of Demak; Mount Murya, where they visit the grave of Sunan Murya; Pekalongan and Mount Panegaran, where they are received by a hermit (resi); Mount Slamet, where they are received by a Sheikh; Mount Sawal and Mount Cerme, where they are once again received by hermits; Mount Tompomas in the Priangan region; the mountains Tunggul, Tangkuban Prahu, Burangrang, Wayang, and Sanggabuwana in the Krawang area; Mount Gede and the dwelling of a holy man (ajar); Bogor and the remains of the west Javanese Hinduized kingdom of Pajajaran, at the foot of Mount Salak; Karang; Wanakrama, where they are welcomed to the mosque-school of Sidacerma by the principal teacher (kyai); Pasuruhlan; the mountainous Malang area, where they visit some temples; the Tengger mountains, a Tengger (Hindu-Javanese) hermitage and holy man; Klakah, the foot of Mount Lamongan; Kandangan, at the foot of Mount Smeru in the Lumajang region; Mount Arga, where they are received by a seer (wiku); Mount Rawun in Banyuwangi; Pekalongan, Sokayasa; Mount Rawun again, where they are received by a female hermit; Banyuwangi and Mount Ijen; the remains of the old capital of the Hindu-Javanese kingdom of Blambangan and its temples; Ragajambi, Pekalongan, Sranggi and Sokayasa; the Hindu temples of the high Dieng plateau; Jalatunda, and Sokayasa again. The section that follows begins with a visit to the holy (Islamic) graves on Mount Lawet.

**Geography and history**

Unlike earlier santri lalana texts which exist in a kind of numinous and featureless Java, this one is geographically located in the 'real' Java. The sheer amount of precisely located geographical coverage provided by the Centhini is already very evident in the opening section.

Furthermore, the précis of the opening passage given above shows that although the Centhini does not count years or have a section labeled 'History...

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5 Seers, ascettes, and holy men and women appear frequently under a number of terms of Indian or Javanese origin: kyai, resi, ajar, yogi, wiku, and for women rara suci.
of Java', it is historicized in a way that earlier works of the genre are not. Look for instance both at the raison d'être for Cabolang's journey, a historical event, and at the antiquities he visits. It is striking that by the end of this first section he has visited the ruins of most of the important Hindu-Javanese kingdoms and of the first Islamic kingdom, the Sultanate of Demak, whose mosque has unique status in Javanese Islam, and also the grave of one of the apostles (wali) of Islam on Java, Sunan Murya. It is not only the presence of the Islamic past and the Hinduized past that makes itself felt, but also that of the legendary past: witness the bones of the giants. We can hardly doubt that Cabolang is traversing, not only Javanese geography, but Java's history, though he does not chronicle it and count its years in the way Valentijn and Raffles do.

This geographical and historical narrative has had inserted into it so much knowledge, in fact a whole curriculum. But here the subjects of the curriculum do not constitute the format of the text, which is controlled by the narrative, whereas the narrative is confined within particular subject divisions in Valentijn. Here, the divisions of the text are those of narrated time and literary form. The Centhini contains a curriculum which is delivered in a lecture format by the holy men, seers, and kyai noted in the above summary, and in which social and intellectual questions are canvassed as dialogues between characters in the plot. The lectures are not delivered in one place, but in many different places to which those who seek to acquire their collective wisdom must travel.

Those who are familiar with the Centhini know that it contains knowledge of many different subjects, but it became apparent to me when I was writing a paper on women and religion that it also contains many different types of knowledge of the same subject. In the following, I have tried to list these different types of knowledge and to link them to different sources cited by the text.

Moral and religious instruction

Much of this originates from Indic and Arabic material. The first seems to have been assimilated in an unproblematic way; or perhaps the problems of assimilation were resolved so long ago as to leave little trace in the Centhini.

In a passage where an ajar is instructing Mas Cabolang on how to choose a wife (canto 189), 6 he gives the following advice: choose a woman whose character can be described as sama beda, dana dhendha, and is able to know the proverb guna busana and also baksana and sasana. Sama means some-

6 All references in the text are to Amengkunagara (1985-91).
one who has the character of loving everything that grows (sakeh tumawuh; tumuwuh?). Beda means discriminating, aristocratic, and clever. Dana means generous, watek sukarena, gives to and likes her fellows. Dhendha means kukum, watek putus lan tatas, that is, of a sound understanding concerning good and evil. Guna means clever and able to understand all the duties and obligations of a woman. Busana means clothing, so she should know how to arrange everything she wears. Baksana means food, and refers to the food her husband eats every day. Sasana means place, and refers to the house. (This is followed by other Sanskrit terms referring to the unity of body and mind between husband and wife.)

Though I have said that Indic moralizing has been assimilated in an unproblematic way, that does not mean that it has not been considerably bent to local preferences. The Centhini is infinitely more thought-provoking on the interaction of indigenous and imported moral and cultural norms and on social dynamics generally than Valentijn is. For instance, it is rather remarkable that the first four qualities in this list (sama, beda, dana, and dhendha) are well-known in Old Javanese literature as qualities which a king should possess. Note also that dhendha is glossed with the word kukum which means judgment in the judicial sense - again shaking one's presuppositions concerning what would be regarded as desirable female qualities. The Centhini also applies the nistha madya utama (inferior, middling, excellent) classification, again one used to classify kings in Old and Modern Javanese literature, to women.

Interestingly, at the end of this passage it is said that this is without dilution the lore of the 'mountain people'. Does this mean that the preservation of the Indic heritage was confined to Java's mountainous regions, as the Merbabu collection perhaps suggests?

When we turn to Arabic moral and religious instruction we find evidence in the Centhini of a much more ambiguous attitude, in fact it could be said at a pinch that the Centhini shares with Valentijn quite marked anti-Islamic elements.

The main narrative of the Centhini, which revolves around the relationship of the hero and heroine Amongraga and Tambangras, provides extensive religious instruction. When Tambangras appears at the end of canto 352 she is described as beautiful and expensively dressed but indifferent to the men who court her, because she is in love with ngelmu (religious science). She has completely memorized the Koran and is superior to her younger brothers in mastering the great texts of Koranic exegesis, such as the Tepsir Bahwi-Baelawi and the Jalalen. She is also superior to the kaum pangulu in

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7 These are two very well known commentaries on the Koran, that is al-Baydawi's Anwar al-tanzil and the Tafsir al-Jalailayn. See further on their importance in the Malay world Johns (1988:257).
her understanding of the Hadith. Her younger brothers bow to her superior knowledge of subjects such as ijemak (agreement by those having authority) and kiyas (argument by analogy), but she has doubts and does not feel satisfied. She prays to God for a teacher, which she obtains in her husband. Immediately after their marriage he embarks upon an extensive program of religious instruction covering many areas of Islamic doctrine.

Taken as a whole, this program seems to represent a particular type of Javanese-Islamic mysticism,\(^8\) stressing the pursuit of unity with God (Javanese tokid, from Arabic tawhïd). The interpretation of the concept of unity is the locus of perhaps the biggest philosophical battlefield of current Muslim theology, which we shall not enter here. It is sufficient to note that Muslim mystics generally based their religious life on the combination of tawhïd (Unity) and the shar' (revealed Law). It is this pairing of tawhïd with the Islamic Law that is essential for the orthodox Muslim mystic, and the abandonment or perceived abandonment of adherence to the Law has led some Muslim mystics to be condemned as heretics, and even in some well-known examples put to death.\(^9\) Other passages deal with aids to the achievement of unity, for example, through meditation or the use of particular prayers or collects (wirid, from Arabic wird, plural awrād). The Centhini provides numerous Arabic texts as the source of legitimate religious belief, of which some examples are cited above.

\textit{Esoteric lore}

This is derived from both indigenous and endogenous traditions. Two examples are given below.

\textit{Imported esoteric lore}

Perhaps surprisingly to some, Islam seems to be the major external source of esoteric lore. One example is the practice of wirasat. This word is derived from Arabic firāsa, and since there is little physiognomy in Old Javanese texts, the practice probably became significant only under the influence of Islam. A certain Kyai Ajar responds to Cabolang's request and provides information on the distinguishing physical signs (canto 189). He says one has to look at the whole body, for instance if one wants to be able to tell if a woman is a virgin. Various physical indicators of character are enumerated, such as a bad-smelling breath and body, or a bluish sheen to the pupil, or a mascu-

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\(^8\) For those interested in learning more about this subject, see Zoetmulder (1935)

\(^9\) 'One whole session in which Among Raga instructs Tambang Raras on the pursuit of tawhïd has been translated by Zoetmulder (1935:151-3).
line voice (all bad signs). This *wirasat* learning is said to come from Imam Supingi. There is a didactic poem dealing with *wirasat* that bears the name Imam Sapingi (Pigeaud 1967:273) and Amad Dalem Supingi is the hereditary name of the chief grave-keeper at Kutha Gedhe.

*Indigenous esoteric lore*

Nurwitri asks guidance from Ki Wanakarta on the subject of finding a good woman, as he is not yet married. Ki Wanakarta says that this is a very proper request, and tells him that the *wirasat* of humans actually comes from their *weton* (birthday, as a combination of a day of the 5-day and a day of the 7-day week). He then goes through the whole 35 possibilities (cantos 246-8). Someone born on Jumungah Pon, for instance, is impatient and stiff-natured, an insubordinate (*wani*) child to their parents, and is not granted wealth, whereas a woman born on Sabtu Pon has a bent for trading. Someone born on Jumungah Kliwon is an appropriate choice for a wife, whereas a woman born on Saptu Paing is impatient, bad-tempered, disobedient to her husband. She does not accept one husband but has to have a second and even a third. This prediction of more than one husband occurs for other day combinations (Senen Pon and Salasa Kliwon). A woman born on Kemis Paing has a bad character, and is often naughty in speech or deeds (*padone akeh sing nakal*). By contrast, one born on Kemis Legi has a love of (esoteric) learning (*karem marang ngelmi*). And so on. There are numerous Javanese manuals on *pawukon*, but it does not seem that it was considered necessary to cite these in the text.\(^\text{10}\)

*Scientific/practical knowledge*

In the learned lectures of the *Centhini* some practicalities are beginning to be incorporated, for instance on sexual hygiene and venereal disease. There are also some primitive scientific theories, for instance concerning the causes of conception and the sex of the child (let us remember that in Europe the necessity of semen for fertilization and conception was not proved until Spallanzani did so in 1779). This means that the lectures on sexual congress between men and women constitute a sort of mixed discourse which includes practical advice and primitive science, as for instance in canto 190. In a passage which I found very difficult, advice is given concerning venereal disease and how this can spread to the womb if the penis is not washed, combined with advice not to have sex if the penis is affected by sickness, or

\(^{10}\) See also cantos 372-3, which contain instruction on *pawukon* given by Among Raga to his wife Tambang Raras.
at least to urinate beforehand. Theories concerning conception and the sex of the child are also put forward. However, this passage also retains the metaphorical style of Old Javanese, for instance, the metaphor of battle, in which the woman is described as the enemy to be conquered. Elsewhere, in the context of a wedding ceremony, there is a list of the circumstances (relating to day, time, and other particular circumstances) in which a couple should not have sex (canto 30).

There are also specific instructions as to how a woman should behave, as in canto 193 where Kyai Ajar replies that men and women are very different and actually the woman only has to follow the 'wave' of the man in lovemaking. But, he says, there are some women who are disappointing, as they are obstinate and refractory and weaken the man. When he wants to 'take their fortress', they act as if they do not want to be a partner. This will cause problems and their lovemaking will not be blessed and fulfilled. In verse 9, it is again said that the woman has only to follow the dominance (pangreh) of the man. No textual source seems to be cited for this type of knowledge, leading one to hypothesize that these are empirical observations, perhaps from specialist dukun.

Ruling myths

Unlike Valentijn's work, the Centhini portrays an enchanted Java rather heavily populated with supernatural figures, major and minor. Some of the major ones whose appearance, appurtenances and actions are described in considerable detail in the narrative are the following:

Nyai Rara Kidul (canto 21, verses 23-9). She is associated with a shrine (sanggar-pamujan) from olden times, in which there are two containers. In one there is a kain made of lurik (striped cloth) with a pattern of multi-colored stripes, and another kain of gold-leaf, as well as a headcloth edged with lace and gold leaf. In the other is a kampuli cloth of the gadhung malathi pattern with gold leaf. All these are said to belong to Nyai Rara Kidul. The caretaker Ki Carita recounts how he takes them home every year to check the number and to air them. He then brings them back to the shrine. When he takes them away and returns them he is followed by tigers, but at a distance. These are guardian tigers that take the form of men in the day. The durian trees to right and left of the shrine are said to have been planted by Panembahan Senapati.11

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11 This is obviously a reference to the union of Senapati, the 'father and mother of the rulers of Java', with Nyai Rara Kidul, which is recounted in the Babad Tanah jawi (Olthof 1941:77).
2. Jeng Ratu Mas Trangganawulan. The travellers Gathak and Gathuk meet another special virgin (rara/wanodya kinaot) who tells them that formerly she was the daughter of Brawijaya of Majapahit. At the time of the fall of the kingdom and the changeover to the religion of the Prophet, she went to the Bagor forest to follow the will of Hyang Widdhi, who ordered her to become the queen of all the spirits. She called the pond where she held audience Sugih Waras. Every Sukra Manis she comes there and grants the wishes of people who steadfastly desire to meet her (mantep ati yun katemu marang jeneng mami; note her use of the word jeneng, used of the royal presence). To do this they have to carry out asceticism for one day. The cannon the travellers had heard firing was the signal that this was the day for her to appear. She predicts the future for the travelers and imparts to them divinatory lore. Finally she remarks that it is already late and she must ask their leave to return to heaven (kahyangan; canto 22, verses 1-26).

The above passage has a marked similarity in structure and motifs to the babad stories of Nawang Wulan and of Ajar Cemara-Tunggal of Mount Kombang. The latter was not really an ajar, but a princess of Pajajaran who had refused to marry and fled to take up the life of a hermit. She too is described as ruling over the spirits (Olthof 1941:16-7).

These are the two major Javanese goddesses, the sea goddess and the moon goddess. Another female divinity who brings good fortune is represented in the story of a very poor man who goes to the Roban forest (famous for its special supernatural status) in search of a sarat sugih (a spell or special magic to become rich). Here he meets an old man who looks like a wiku. The ancient wiku says that he will introduce his daughters, and allow the poor man, Kyai Hardasangsara, to choose one to marry. But he should choose not the beautiful daughters but a hideously deformed, scarcely human one. He does so and this deformed woman proves she possesses supernatural qualities by turning into a beauty. However, unlike the frog-into-prince story and other similar stories this one does not end in the couple living happily ever after, together. This woman does not enter into domesticity. Instead, she promises to come to the house of Kyai Hardasangsara every Friday and every Anggarakasih. Before her visits he has to set up a rice cooker (bum-bung) made of blue-black (wulung) bamboo at each of the four corners of the house. She then fills these with gold and silver money so that he becomes very rich (canto 175).

Other female divinities who make cameo appearances are: Rara Blorong (with Jaka Linglung; canto 27, verse 27); Sri, with Sadana (canto 67, verses 2-13); and also Dewi Tiksnawati who is equated with Retna Dumilah. Here

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12 See Kumar (1997:Chapter 5).
again, there is no textual source given for these myths, nor would any have been needed given their wide currency at all levels of Javanese society.

By contrast, in European works of this period myths are not incorporated into 'real world' narratives, such as historical or travel narratives, though they were in the time of Bede's work on the history of Christianity in England.

The anti-curriculum: carnivalesque and worldly knowledge

Though the main narrative of the Centhini, and particularly the story of Tambang Raras and Among Raga, supports the didactic message of the lectures on moral and religious instruction, there is also a counter-narrative that subverts them. I have classified the type of knowledge presented in this counter-narrative as 'carnivalesque', following Bakhtin (1984) and referring to a sort of anarchic, free, and physical apprehension of the world that is subversive of social hierarchies, religious authority, and hegemonic discourses.

In this presence of a subversion of the dominant religious morality the Centhini is very unlike Valentijn, who, whatever his personal failings, never fails to produce the appropriate pious platitude.

A prime example of this type of knowledge is the story of Randha Sembada. She is a very rich divorcée who got her money from the pawn business and from ijo (the practice of buying the crop before it is harvested and thereby making a profit). Her wealth makes possible a life of pleasure of all types. Apart from music, dancing, and feasting, she has a lot of sex. All this is described in well over 100 pages of Javanese, in a passage that is very reminiscent of Rabelais.

Though Randha Sembada is frequently mocked, for instance for being dressed up like a young virgin despite her age and sexual experience with so many men (canto 490), many (if not most) of the men involved with her are equally or even more figures of fun. This is particularly true of figures of religious authority, who are humiliated in a way reminiscent of the treatment of the sacristan in Villon's passion play containing an extensive diablerie, described by Bakhtin (1984:263). The following are examples.

- The local pengulu says that he has fallen victim to the temptation of Randha Sembada. He happened to be short of money (blanja) and though he did not ask for any she gave him large amounts of money and other things. Then he found that these gifts were conditional on his catering to her considerable sexual demands (canto 501).
- A scene where *salat* is being performed at a prayer-house (*tajug*). Afterwards Kulawirya sees a *kaum* (Islamic official) called Duljaya and asks Jayengraga about his odd appearance. In conversation Duljaya admits that he is often forced to sleep with Randha Sembada, who is insatiable (*dremba*) about men, without pause day and night. Kulawirya laughs and says that it is fitting that you should be the food of Randha Sembada. Then they force the reluctant Duljaya to show them his penis and thereupon exclaim at its ugliness, saying it has a hairy back and is like an ancient field rat (canto 489, verse 13).

- An encounter between Randha Sembada and Nuripin. She asks him to try his *bandha* (his 'goods') on her. He demurs, saying that he is just a *santri* (pious Muslim). She forcibly undresses him (this is described in detail) to have a look at his genitals, which she graphically and derisively describes as deformed (canto 494).

The Randha Sembada episode ends with the *tayuban* (dance party with a professional dancer and male guests) to end all *tayuban* (cantos 504 and further). Many of the guests are naked, including the *umbul* (headman) and village officials. Apart from erotic dancing, arak, opium, nudity, and cross-dressing there is also firing of (even salvoes of) rifles.

After Randha Sembada had decided to hold this *tayuban*, she ordered the *kaum* Duljaya to organize the preparations for setting up the *tarub* (temporary pavilion) for the party, and also to tell the village officials to come. The obtaining of the required bamboo and dry coconut leaf and the construction of the *tarub* took place in short order, while the women began cooking. The author comments that Randha Sembada has the power of galvanizing many people, and that it is the blessing of the rich that everything they wish comes about, and they do not lack workers. So as much as she sometimes looks ridiculous, Randha Sembada is for all that undoubtedly a figure of power (canto 504, verses 17-21).

In contrast, we are once again treated to the spectacle of the *pengulu* Jabalodin looking ridiculous. When everyone else is royally drunk, he is forced by Randha Sembada into drinking a glass of arak, which he finds bitter and throat-catching. But this is only the beginning of his ordeal: he is then asked to join in dancing with the *taledhek* (professional dancer). Over his protests he is dressed up like a city *pengulu* and the *gamelan* is asked to play the *gendhing* (musical piece) Talabodin, which has been chosen by Randha Sembada presumably as a joke relating to the name Jabalodin. The sophisticated and good-looking travelers Kulawirya and Jayengrana sit on the sidelines making very risqué witticisms. Jabalodin is attacked and subject to sexual humiliation. Randha Sembada and the onlookers are in stitches, and
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Randha Sembada embraces Jabalodin and the dancer, Ni Madu, and makes Jabalodin kiss Madu. At this point another of the main characters, Duljaya, fires a rifle and Kulawirya and Jengraga laugh heartily. Madu pulls off the pengulu's bebed (batik sarong), leaving him dancing in his short pants, whose pull-cord she begins to attack (canto 516, verses 22-4, and canto 517). In contrast to this miserable performance, Randha Sembada dresses as a man, and dances the beksa (dance) in faultless masculine style, compelling admiration and astonishment from the onlookers (cantos 519-20).

Ethnographic knowledge.

The treatment of Randha Sembada is part of a much richer portrayal of social diversity than we find in Old Javanese texts or in Valentijn: she is a Kalang (canto 518, verse 4) and her source of wealth is a specific and somewhat morally dubious form of trade which has made her rich and powerful and able to indulge all her desires. Apart from this reference to the Kalang, the Centhini also deals at some length with the Tenggerese, who are described in a very 'ethnographic' style dealing with the offerings they throw into the crater of Mount Bromo, their clothing, priests, and marriage customs, their use of holy water for curing, and their way of disposing of corpses (see cantos 61-3). This is a new focus, which is also to be found in other early nineteenth century texts such as those found in the Leiden University manuscript NBS 89, which extend this approach to Chinese and Europeans.13

Conclusion

These two exemplars of the encyclopedia-izing impulse are sufficiently different to prompt one to seek an explanation of these differences in the social milieus from which they originate. Western scholars raised on classic theorists such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim and going on to revisionists like Gramsci as well as the structuralists and post-structuralists have little difficulty in categorizing and pigeonholing Valentijn. He clearly represents the alliance between capitalism and applied mathematics and the commodification of knowledge, or rather of useful and interesting facts, in the accessible format and plain language that the capitalist enterprise requires. He relies on the quantifying template that would become the hallmark of applied science in the high capitalist era, in his case very poorly used. (In a sense, he is the intellectual ancestor of the modern economic rationalist whose figures also

13 See Kumar (1997:Chapter 6).
He foreshadows the classical European encyclopedia in its tendency to privilege a single type of empirical knowledge: for instance, despite Valentijn's Christian vocation, he does not present the Christian myths as part of his 'real world' description. He retains, however, much of the personal, traveller's-tale, wonders-of-the-east style of earlier works.

In contrast, the Western classificatory systems simply do not seem adequate to categorize the Centhini. It seems clear that it contains a curriculum and aspires to impart wisdom rather than merely to sell facts, and that this is an elite curriculum: the difficulty of information retrieval and the extremely inaccessible and ambiguous language in which it is written presuppose that it is aimed at an elite group under the guidance of a teacher or teachers with advanced and specialized knowledge. But after that one seems to be faced with a kind of ungovernable and *sui generis* genius that resists classification. By comparison Old Javanese texts seem much tidier and classifiable into simpler genres such as didactic, epic or mythic works, belles-lettres, et cetera, as well as to reflect fairly consistently their courtly milieu. The Centhini seems to have absorbed all these genres into itself and to have added technical and empirical expertise and coverage of subjects such as economic realities and ethnography. And it seems to reflect conflicting hegemonic discourses reflecting the synchronic presence of what should be historically successive social formations: there are elements of medieval scholasticism in the Islamic religious instruction, Rabelaisian elements with a very Renaissance feel, and a 'modern scholarship' citation of sources (a practice probably introduced around this period) alongside something that resembles a contemporary 'infotainment' approach that mocks the old division between fact and fiction. As I have remarked elsewhere (Kumar 1997:90), this incorporation of scientific material into a biography-and-travel story reminds me very much of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.

Undeniably the Centhini reveals a more complex society – one apparently bursting out of the old social structures and hegemonic devices for social containment – and régime of knowledge than Old Javanese texts do. Perhaps it can best be described as a society that was in fact considerably transformed and diversified by the interaction of internal and external forces, and producing radically new types of knowledge, but where the old courtly society retained sufficient resources to produce an encyclopedia designed in its language and format to keep knowledge inaccessible, rather than to render it accessible.
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Valentijn, François 1724-26, Oud en Nieuw Oost Indien, vervattende een nauwkeurige en uitvoerige verhandeling van Nederlands mogentheyd in die gewesten, benevens een wydlustige beschryving der Moluccos, Amboina, Banda, Timor, en Solor, Java, en alle de eylanden onder dezelve landbestieringen behorende; het Nederlands Comptoir op Suratte, en de levens der Groote Mogols; als ook een keurlyke verhandeling van 't wezentylkste, dat men behoort te weten van Choromandel, Pegu, Arracan, Bengale, Mocha, Persien, Malacca, Sumatra, Ceylon, Malabar, Celebes of Macasser, China, Japan, Tayouan of Formosa, Tonkin, Cambodia, Siqm, Borneo, Bali, Kaap der Goede Hoop en Mauritus, Dordrecht: Joannes van Braam. 5 Vols.