

## A world of difference: the case of Java

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In one of his most famous passages, the revisionary historian JC van Leur wrote: 'there is an unbroken unity in the state of Asian civilization from the seventeenth century through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth ... Two equal civilizations were developing separately from each other, the Asian in every way superior quantitatively.'<sup>1</sup> Van Leur's revisionary, even revolutionary, point of view was intended, and accepted, as an overturning of a 'colonial' perspective on Asian history in favour of an 'Asia-centric' one.

And yet, Javanese texts from the early nineteenth century reveal that their authors felt neither separate from nor equal to European civilisation. A new view of the world explicitly based on the perception of defeat at the hands of the superior military, political and even moral strength of the West has emerged in Javanese texts by this period. Let us leave aside for the moment the question of how a civilisation can be quantitatively superior, and look at what Javanese writers have to say about qualitative superiority.

This viewpoint is most succinctly expressed in a short anonymous work, No. 89, Part Two, of the *Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap* collection.<sup>2</sup> References in the text to the 'French General', that is Daendels, and to the British suggest that it was written some time after 1811, when the British occupied Java. Though short, the text is very wide-ranging, covering five different subjects. The perspectives it puts forward are partly derived from a very old Javanese discourse, and partly new. The first subject is kingship, and clearly reflects old rather than new opinions. It deals in familiar terms with the qualities of the virtuous king, who is generous, forgiving, loves his subordinates, takes pity on the poor, forgives transgressions and avoids warfare as far as he can. Here, as in other texts, kings are conventionally

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classified as ‘outstanding’ through ‘average’ to ‘despicable’ (*utama*, *madya*, and *nista*, from the Sanskrit), the last being characterised by the negative qualities of an absence of commitment to justice and truth, tardiness, and an inability to look after the army. The text then goes on to deal with the king’s officials, again setting out the virtues they should have: good character, loyalty, ability to command, patience, care, understanding, forgiveness of mistakes, subtlety, and a sharp percipience that enables them to understand the subterfuges of their ruler’s enemies and defeat them.

The next two sections deal with Panji (sometimes described as the Javanese ‘culture hero’) and his wife Candrakirana, and with the protocol of war, and once again reflect old-established ideas. The final section, however, focusses on foreigners in a totally new way. In sharp contrast to older texts, they no longer fill marginal roles as subordinate, anonymous personages whose presence as traders or bearing tribute enhances the glory of Javanese rulers as lauded by their court poets. Now there is much more interest in their particular ethnic characteristics, and the implications to be drawn from these. All the races covered are described in an allegorical mode, likening them to particular birds. The author begins with the Chinese, whose baldness, pigtails, loose clothes, unmilitary appearance and diet of pork and frogs are criticised. They are said to have no more idea of polite manners (*tatakrami*) than an ape climbing a branch. When they lease the right to tax a village, they strip it of all its crops, even down to the coconut buds, even before the tax is due. They go to any length to claim their rights, and are equally insistent in demanding payment of tolls. The bird to which they are compared is the white heron, which though unprepossessing in appearance is nevertheless very quick and adroit in chasing any small sustenance.

The last canto, of 14 stanzas, deals with the Europeans who have, as the author specifically states, ‘ruled Java’ (no pretence of equality here). They are described as famous, outstanding warriors unrivalled on the battlefield who have roamed the world conquering other lands. What we are seeing here is nothing less than the emergence of a new, global perspective in the Javanese intellectual tradition.

The ‘white-skinned’ Dutch are the first to be described. After a description of their uniforms, it is said that once they are furious for battle, they are of high courage and none is afraid to die, their resolve is unshakeable. [But] their disposition is gentle and patient, their intention not immoral, they are clever, deliberate and cautious. They are skilled at polite conversation, and have no difficulty in pursuing their aim. They are like the goshawk that as it flies high in the firmament, looks attentively below at its future prey, patient and subtle. When it has taken careful aim it swoops swiftly on its prey and takes it into the sky to eat it where no-one can follow, leaving the chickens below looking around in perplexity, startled, envious and unable to do anything as they are inferior in respect of distance, speed, and ability.

Similar remarks are made about the English (whose jackets are ‘too short, straight, and tight’: they do not hamper them in action but are not roomy enough). When they go to war their enemies are annihilated. They are like the falcon (*pěksi alap-alap*), which flies high into the firmament; once it swoops down on its prey this rarely escapes, no matter how large it is. All the birds fly away into the air, much afraid of the falcon that can break through all obstacles and cut through all hindrances (*ingkang malang-malang putung*, *kang rawe-rawe rantas*, one of the best known Javanese proverbs). All evil-doers are swept away, those who persist in error are punished, the immoral are set upon. They are real men, their disposition is arrogant, they are not fickle or frivolous but careful in governing so that they bring about the prosperity of the state (*něgara*).

The author concludes by making an unfavourable comparison with the Javanese soldiers. These are always changing their clothes, at great expense, as they always like to imitate others, in the Dutch time adopting the Dutch style, in the French season the French style, and in the English season the English style. They are neither steadfast nor dashing. It is characteristic of the Javanese always to be changing; it seems as if they are heroes but when they are sent into battle they are swept away like a dam by water; they run away without resistance. They are only seasonally brave; if they have been stripped bare apart from their pants, then they will resolve not to fear death — that is, if they have a good leader, for the bravery of

the Javanese is in following a leader. The author compares the Javanese not to the birds of the air but to earth-bound buffaloes, which are, he says, excessively stupid. If they are not beaten and driven they won't do anything, and even if they are beaten they are still totally unconcerned, arrogantly blocking the road when you want to pass them. The author also remarks that at home the Javanese are sad because they are being dunned for their debts.

NBS 89 is in verse (*těmbang*), and its language is highly metaphorical. These literary qualities may distract us from realising the extent to which it is intellectually innovative. As stated above, ethnography had not been part of the Javanese literate tradition, although there was an implicit assumption that Java and the Javanese were the normative centre of the world.<sup>3</sup> This has now changed. Furthermore, the anonymous author goes on to explain the situation of the Javanese as being due to the military superiority of Europeans (and the hopelessness of Javanese soldiers on this front), their moral superiority, and the inability of Javanese to handle money. Despite its lack of a sophisticated vocabulary of socio-economic analysis and its metaphorical style, this explanation actually canvasses the major emphases of Western scholars seeking to explain Asia's domination by the West from the time this first became apparent down to Braudel. Van Leur seems not to have considered the obvious likelihood that for someone, in this case a Javanese, living in an occupied country and reviewing long decades of warfare, there would have been an overwhelming imperative to understand the military superiority of the 'other' civilisation, and to ask whether it was more powerful in other areas too. What is also striking is that there is a sort of internal rupture in the text, with the first part, on kings and ministers, preserving the Platonic, universalist tradition of earlier Javanese treatments of the subject, and the last part reflecting a Hegelian or even social-Darwinian world of plurality and struggle, in which a contemporary problem had to be addressed. In this focus on perceived contemporary problems and in its self-criticism of the writer's own people *vis-à-vis* other races, it is the earliest example, to my knowledge, of a refrain that was to be echoed in many later Southeast Asian texts.

**The Javanese states and the Dutch East India Company**

So, what was the political and economic context that led to this new view of the world? A comparative perspective may prove to be illuminating. Elvin writes of China that ‘the rich and multiplex Chinese world of human experience — perceptions, emotions, symbols and representations, and institutions — was subverted during the years between the 1840s and the end of the 1890s.’<sup>4</sup> This subversion was due to fact that China was humiliated militarily and diplomatically, though not conquered and occupied. It led, among other things, to a recasting of the Chinese past. The Javanese suffered far greater military humiliation, defeat, occupation and territorial loss at a considerably earlier period than the Chinese, as the following brief summary of events should make clear.

Java’s inland states were based on wet-rice cultivation, an ancient and productive system which allowed the production of surpluses that in turn permitted the development of technology, the arts, large-scale polities, and the rich and multiplex world of human experience described by Elvin. These interior states of Java were ruled by a military aristocracy and can be categorised as patrimonial states with a pronounced martial character — a character which though not introduced by Islam, since it is amply attested in earlier indigenous works such as the Panji epics, was confirmed and strengthened by a corresponding strand in the Muslim ethos. The agrarian state was not the only Javanese state; Banten, for instance was a mercantile, maritime, trade-oriented polity that might be said to have developed a more modern economic basis than that of the agrarian states. Ironically, it was this more modern state that was most completely devastated after losing out to the Dutch East India Company (VOC), becoming a particularly sullen and depressed backwater. The largest predominantly agrarian state, Mataram, did not suffer quite such a fate but from very early in its history was militarily engaged with the VOC. Its ruler Sultan Agung launched two massive attacks, in 1628–29, which did not succeed in their aim of expelling the VOC. After this first fateful encounter there was no further direct attack on the Company, which was, however, increasingly courted by candidates in a series of succession disputes for the throne of Mataram. These were the civil

war at the end of the reign of Mangkurat II (1675–81) and the First, Second, and Third Javanese Wars of Succession (1704–8, 1719–23, and 1746–57). The treaties that followed these wars imposed on the victorious prince a very heavy price for the VOC assistance that had ensured his victory: to begin with, cession of monopoly rights to the purchase of rice and sugar, the import of textiles and opium, and from tolls. These concessions were in lieu of repayment of the royal debt to the VOC for its military assistance.

When it came to turning these paper concessions into real economic gain, the VOC was poorly equipped for operating internal, especially small-scale, trade on its own. It could only overcome this problem by working with Chinese, large numbers of whom settled on the north coast at the end of the seventeenth century and gained an important position in trade, which is reflected in the description of them in NBS 89. The difficult three-way relationship between Dutch, Chinese, and Javanese, which involved not only economic but also religious conflicts, was to provide one of the major dynamic tensions of Javanese history from the late seventeenth century to the end of the colonial period. Increasing resentment at the role of the Chinese in rice purchasing led to raids on Chinese rice-purchasing agents as early as the 1730s. But in 1740, the relationship between Dutch, Chinese and Javanese took an unexpected turn as what eventually became 17 years of warfare broke out in a conflict between Dutch and Chinese in Batavia. After the Chinese had risen in revolt against the Dutch in the aftermath of the 1740 massacre, a court faction convinced the ruler of Mataram, Pakubuwana II, to ally with the former. Later, however, the vacillating Pakubuwana II changed his mind and was reconciled with the VOC. He paid dearly for his reconciliation with the Company and its support of him against the pro-Chinese party. By contracts of 1743 and, especially, 1746, put through by Governor-General van Imhoff with a view to a more thorough exploitation of Java, he was forced to accept the complete cession of firstly, all the coastal Regencies in return for 5,000 *real* per annum, secondly, the income from all harbour tolls in return for cancellation of his debts and other obligations to the Company, and thirdly, all interior toll-gates and markets, and import and export duties, including the taxes on birds' nests and tobacco, in

return for which he received the annual sum of 9,000 *real*.<sup>5</sup> The Sunan also lost the power to appoint and dismiss Bupatis (the top regional officials), leading to the disintegration of the realm.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the most powerful princes of his court remained in rebellion even after he had submitted to the Company's terms. Of these princes, the most important were Mangkubumi and Mas Said (Mangkunegara). They were not persuaded to surrender until 1755 and 1757, respectively, and at the cost of the partition of Mataram. Mangkubumi became the first Sultan of Yogyakarta, which was, with Surakarta, under Sunan Pakubuwana III, twin heir to the old kingdom; Mangkunegara received a much smaller settlement, 4,000 *cacab*, in lieu from the Sunan of Surakarta.

The state of Balambangan suffered most horrendously of all in this age of carnage and destruction, being completely wiped out in a welter of slaughter when the VOC moved to clear up the unruly 'Oostboek' (Eastern salient) of Java, where the feared and hated English traders were sponsoring 'smuggling' in breach of the VOC's monopolies. In the late 1760s the VOC inaugurated a draconian military regime in which all rice and provisions were commandeered or burnt, leading to widespread famine. A scorched-earth policy was also pursued, leading to the depopulation of the entire region — the only case, as an 1848 observer noted, where a once numerous population was entirely wiped out.<sup>7</sup> After forced settlement of offenders and prostitutes to try to repopulate the region, further devastation followed in 1817 in the form of a sulphur flood, reaching to the sea and wiping out all rice crops and plantations, from the temperamental Mount Ijen, whose sulphur had provided the VOC with almost the only profit to be drawn from the area. The region was eventually re-populated in the second half of the nineteenth century by a heavy immigration of Central Javanese and Madurese.

The ruins of Balambangan form an appropriate metaphor for the incorporation of Java into the modern, military and economic, world system. A temple of the old capital and some of the beautiful statues in a style unique to this region were still to be seen in 1821,<sup>8</sup> though an account from that time notes that around twenty years earlier the temple had been in better condition, and that the Dutch

Resident had sent some of the statues to Surabaya (one of many examples of the stripping of its enormous load of antiquities from the Javanese countryside). When in this year, after nearly 40 years of unsafe conditions, a Governor of the North-East Coast finally made a tour of the area allegedly under his authority, he visited a place which the oldest inhabitants of Banyuwangi told him was Macan Putih, the capital of the last ruler of Balambangan. His grave, much revered by the natives, was still within the walls, but it had been ‘managed’ for a number of years by the Scriba of Surabaya, Palm, who had dug it up in the misplaced hope of finding goods of value, ‘and thus ruined an antiquity for which every inquiring person has respect, and destroyed a tomb so very much respected by the Native’.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, then, it is hardly surprising that the author of NBS 89 should be impressed by European military prowess, but European moral superiority seems somehow less evident. Let us turn now to the question of whether this pain was a necessary one, leading to the development of more modern economic and political arrangements for Java.

### **The role of the Dutch in the world-system**

The Dutch specialised in the new skills required to establish and operate a major financial and commercial focus of what Wallerstein refers to as the world-economy,<sup>10</sup> and the Netherlands were one of the nodal points of European trade from the eleventh to the seventeenth century. It was in the Netherlands alone that a complex national-social revolution occurred in what Wallerstein terms the ‘second’ sixteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Following the liberation from Spain, the bourgeoisie of Holland carried through exactly the degree of reform it needed to promote economic expansion and yet feel free from over-centralisation. An important point made by Wallerstein, which is very evident to the historian of Java, is that the Dutch revolution — unlike the English, French and American ones — did not serve as a generator of ideological innovations; there were no Rousseaus, Voltaires, Burkes, Kants, Paines, Chateaubriands, Wilberforces or Jeffersons. Its importance lay in its economic impact on the European world-economy. The Netherlands Revolution liberated a force that could



sustain the world-system as a system over some difficult years of adjustment, until the English (and the French) were ready to take the steps necessary for its definitive consolidation.

In the Dutch economic system a key role was played by the VOC, for long the strongest of a small number of East India Companies that played a very special part in the development of European capitalism. The principal of joint-stock capital, the national monopoly, an integrated organisation and the powerful and revolutionary impact of the idea that corporate financial liabilities were someone else's assets gave these Companies such an advantage that the capital transactions of the VOC and the English East India Company at the height of their commercial activity in the first half of the eighteenth century were comparable to the role played by national institutions such as the Bank of Amsterdam or the Bank of England.<sup>12</sup>

The VOC also had a phenomenally well-developed and comprehensive accounting system and an extensive system of political reportage, part of what was probably one of the earliest examples of the modern bureaucratic form (often regarded as a post-Napoleonic phenomenon) considered by Weberians as the hallmark of modern rationality.

But by the second half of the eighteenth century, the VOC had already lost the comparative advantage it had once had over the English, and was slipping rapidly. This decline had begun earlier, with the Anglo-French invasion of 1672 that initiated the slow decline of the Netherlands as a global power. In answer to the question of whether the pain of protracted bloody warfare led to more modern economic and political arrangements in Java, it can be said that the reverse was true. From the mid-eighteenth century on, when the Dutch were unable to compete with the British and others in a free-trade environment, extremely conservative economic and therefore political and social policies were introduced. The impact of these on Javanese society may be summarised as follows.

Firstly, the VOC and the colonial government that succeeded it extracted huge amounts of labour from Javanese society; the retreat from rice cultivation that this caused would result in the famines of the 1840s. The enormous increase in labour demanded also had a great

impact, as Boomgaard has demonstrated,<sup>13</sup> on the disappearance of free wage labour, and on the elimination (by about the 1840s) of the peasantry's ability to maintain money-making occupations like textile production and independent production of cash crops in response to market opportunities. Nineteenth century colonial reports reveal a continuing emphasis on the question of how to extract more labour from the Javanese. In its drive to obtain unfree labour, the VOC relied on traditional economic arrangements — rule through the Bupati, tax-farming, and the extraction of goods and labour in place of money taxation, for example — that, far from being modern, went back far into the Old Javanese period.

Secondly, though it is depicted in colonial historiography as a centralising force in Javanese history, the VOC was in fact profoundly decentralising both politically, as noted above, and economically, by creating a number of competing élites (the VOC *qua* centralised company, VOC officials *qua* private entrepreneurs, the Bupati, and the Chinese) none of which was strong enough economically and politically to become an innovative capitalist class.

Thirdly, though the Company introduced Western ideas of the inalienability of private rights to land and other property and though its history and that of the colonial state that succeeded it was written in terms of a series of legal contracts concluded with native rulers, it never introduced the modern Western concept of one law for all. Under the VOC and the succeeding colonial government, the law was explicitly discriminatory on religious or racial grounds. Educational policies were also racially discriminatory, with the overwhelming majority of the population deprived of any modern Western learning until the rise of the Ethical reformers at the beginning of the twentieth century.

To sum up, the VOC and its successor state brought almost nothing of the *economic, social and intellectual* aspects that we associate with European modernity, or the legal guarantees of individual freedom. But as they shifted to supporting or creating reactionary social structures they retained the technical and technological aspects of modernity, in fields as diverse as accounting, engineering and military organisation, which were the foundations of colonial dominion.

### Javanese address their situation

In such a situation, it is clear that the intellectual aspects of modernity were not bestowed by Europeans. How then did they develop?

Java was heir to a long tradition of moral and socio-political discourse, reflecting a distinctively Javanese configuration of values. The highly king-centric perspective of works on government and history emphasised service of the king (*ngawula*) as the supreme moral end of human life. The superiority and efficacy of royal blood is remarked on again and again in Javanese texts, and so the ruler's close relatives, the *santana* (classified according to the closeness of the relationship with the ruler), ranked above even the highest officials (*priyayi*). The latter were sub-divided into precisely differentiated ranks clearly marked by such devices as sumptuary laws. Below them, the non-royal and non-official mass of the population formed an undifferentiated group referred to as *kawula*, 'servants' or as *bala tani*, 'peasant soldiers', terms which reflect the role that their superiors envisaged for them. In epic histories, usually referred to as *babad*,<sup>14</sup> the *bala tani* appear as an anonymous mass, while the spotlight remains fixed on the deeds of those of royal blood. These histories lacked the analytical character and the broader focus on society (for which there was as yet no word) that we associate with modern history.

The previous generation of European writers on Southeast Asia saw the development of analytical historiography as a gift from Europe. DGE Hall for instance believed that 'immense advances in both historical knowledge and interpretation ... are very largely the products of the West's contacts with South East Asia. ... The Western history teacher ... gave to his Asian pupils not so much a new notion of history as indeed their first real notions of history.'<sup>15</sup> But the Javanese have, for as long as writing existed, remembered and recorded their history — and in particular the history of their kings, and most of all those kings who were great founders and unifiers, reflecting a centuries-old anxiety about the desirability and difficulty of Javanese unity. Airlangga — who for a time managed to unite the whole Brantas valley region into a single realm, a feat that eluded his successors for centuries afterwards — and Agung, who in his unprecedented series of conquests of regional centres welded together the kingdom of

Mataram, are the two pre-eminent examples. Early in the nineteenth century, however, we find in the works of the Surakarta court writer Yasadipura II those ‘immense advances in ... interpretation’ that Hall refers to as the beginnings of analytical historiography. An examination of his works suggests that the major motivation was the need to explain a disaster, as indeed it had been for European historians from Thucydides to Macchiavelli and Clarendon. Yasadipura’s works introduce a pessimistic and critical historiography, developing the general theme that the present is a time of moral degeneracy. This concept of a degenerate present is something very familiar to students of Old Javanese literature; but we must pause to ask what was the Old Javanese concept of ‘the present’ and what is Yasadipura’s. The Old Javanese ‘present’ is the *Kaliyuga*,<sup>16</sup> the last and worst of four immensely long ages that go to make up the huge cycle of Indic cosmic time. By contrast, Yasadipura’s ‘present’ is just his own lifetime, and it is contrasted to a ‘past’ not counted in aeons but comprising the persons and events of the last generation or two. It is within this short time-span that he sees the phenomenon of degeneracy, which is clearly a peculiarly Javanese historical phenomenon and not a universal cosmic one. Unlike Old Javanese texts, he takes his good and bad examples — of which most of the work consists — from specific historical figures, members of the Javanese elite whom the author himself knew, had known, or had heard of. For this reason the *Wicara Kĕras* is not just of its time, but actually *addresses* its own time far more extensively and explicitly than other writings of the period.

Yasadipura criticises those he calls devils and traitors to their people (*sesetanan anjaili paĕa bangsa*). They are only brave with their own people (*mung wanine paĕa bangsa*); instead, they should be like Sultan Mangkubumi [the first ruler of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta, who reigned from 1755 until 1792], who performed *tapa* and was capable, who discussed things and did not maltreat people, and did not like to fight his fellow Javanese (*lamun aprang paĕa Jawa nora arsa*).<sup>17</sup> People of the degenerate present should follow an example from the glorious past. Here we find the emergence of *bangsa* — the people, the race — as an important concept, as something which demands loyalty, in the past the prerogative of the ruler.

Yasadipura draws lessons from the revolt of Trunajaya [from the mid 1670s] and the Chinese War [in 1740], saying:

my sons, be careful if there is a disturbance in another realm (*něgěri*)! As an example from the past, the beginning of the Chinese War was in Jakarta, whence it gradually spread eastwards, and then gave rise to an upheaval in the kingdom of Kartasura. Finally the whole kingdom was torn to pieces because we<sup>18</sup> were disunited. The leaders were at odds with one another, and so the common people were scattered. It has now become the custom of Javanese soldiers to be like a heap of rice straw, or a dyke of rice-straw, under attack by a large swift body of water. First it is carried away piece by piece and then [returning to the army] the whole of it is swept away without a backward glance at their Lord, like a broom that has lost its binding.

This echoes the theme of Javanese military incompetence that we have already seen in NBS 89. Note also the explicit recognition of a plural political order, complementing the growing recognition of an ethnically plural world. In the historical, rather than cosmic, contingency Yasadipura describes, there is great necessity for prayer, fasting, and sleepless vigilance, and for all the servants of the king to loyally carry out his orders and do their best to save the realm which has provided them shelter. They should not desert king and kingdom along with the evil opportunists who are finding opportunities for theft.

Yasadipura passes heavy judgment on the Javanese as a whole. He says they are insufficiently united, the texture of their minds is rough, they like silly tricks and if praised and made much of readily put on airs; they are confused by flattery so that they do not know north from south, and forget that they are an Islamic people brave in battle (*lali bangsa paḍa Islam wani jurit*);<sup>19</sup> and thus they are being reduced to the rank of beggars.<sup>20</sup> Here Yasadipura uses the word *bangsa* to denote the Javanese people or nation as a whole and to assess them critically.

This is a new use of the term *bangsa* which does not seem to have been used previously to denote a people or nation.<sup>21</sup> The word was previously used as a classifier to make distinctions between two or more groups of humans or human-like beings, for example *bangsa jin lan setan*, the race of jinns and devils, as opposed to humans. Indeed

even in another work by Yasadipura II, the *Sasana Sunu*, it is used not only for the ‘nation’, ‘race’, or ‘people’, but also to contrast two types of people, those who do physical work (*bangsa badan*) and those who do mental work (*bangsa ati*). Elsewhere it is used to rank different levels of Muslims along a scale of stages leading to spiritual enlightenment, with the ordinary people (*bangsa rija* or *riah*) at the bottom and those who have achieved union with Reality at the top.<sup>22</sup>

In the *Sasana Sunu*, there remain old ideas beside the new ones but the text’s overall form is quite different from any of its ancestors. It can be generally characterised as ‘didactic’, as it sets out to educate young *priyayi* who would go on to occupy positions of authority, but it is a many-faceted and extraordinarily difficult work of great complexity, of which only one or two aspects will be touched on here.

A central pillar of Yasadipura II’s program of instruction is his strong support for the established idea of a hierarchical, king-centric polity, where subjects seek salvation by serving (*ngawula*) their king, which is for them a religious observance. Yasadipura deals with the rank-order of those to whom one owes the deepest respect and obedience. First is the ruler; second one’s parents; third one’s parents-in-law; fourth one’s *guru*; and fifth one’s older brothers. In this all-pervasive hierarchy, the highest social rank is determined by blood descent, with the ruler at the very top, followed by those of royal blood, the *santana*. Below these are the four estates of society, of which that of *priyayi* is higher than those of *sudagar*, *santri*, and *tani*. These differences of rank, as well as the very important internal differentiation among different ranks of *priyayi*, are marked in every detail of speech, dress, and deportment.

The four estates are said to each have their own *budi*. *Budi* is an untranslatable, much-used word meaning, in this instance, the best normative conduct of the four groups named, who may perhaps be compared to the ‘estates’ of French society of the *ancien régime*. The *budi* of the *priyayi* is to maintain the proprieties and good forms of social intercourse, not to behave in a common way, to dress appropriately, to be rather frugal in respect to food, to be careful and precise, to treat other people’s opinions nicely, to be able to get people to work together, not to be afraid of suffering a personal loss, to be intelligent

and civilised in action and thought. The *budi* of the *santri* is to be pure and holy, to multiply the works of Allah and give thanks to Him. The *budi* of the farmer is to work long and hard at all sorts of work, heavy and light. He is never envious or given to talking about other people's affairs, never presumptuous or arrogant. He is steadfast (*mantěp*, another concept on which great value is placed) and in earnest and stout-hearted about his work, not given to time-wasting and shirking. Finally the farmer is *těměn*, which can be translated as 'sincere' or 'honest' but is only used of inferiors *vis-à-vis* their superiors.<sup>23</sup> Thus the young *priyayi* whom Yasadipura addresses are instructed to imitate the humble farmer in being *těměn* in their work for the ruler, though it is inconceivable that the ruler should be required to display the same quality towards them.<sup>24</sup> The *budi* of the merchant is to be calculating, economical and careful and treat his undertakings with respect. So the special task of the *priyayi* therefore is to combine the particular code of his own estate, the purity of the *santri*, the earnest application of the farmer, and the careful calculation of the merchant; surely a major burden, and not the only one that Yasadipura expects his young pupils to shoulder.

No earlier writer provides such a detailed analysis of the composition of Javanese society, in which the formerly undifferentiated *kawula* are broken up into different groups. It is hard to say to what extent this indicates a more differentiated society, and to what extent a more attentive analysis.

### **Mindful empiricism**

But Yasadipura goes beyond laying out the rules of the social hierarchy and the codes of the different estates to provide new insights on the pragmatics of society and the dynamics of interactions therein.

Canto X, which lays down the proper behaviour for young *priyayi* as they receive appointments, provides both an expanded spatial perspective, one which looks at society beyond the capital, and an expanded conceptual perspective. The latter involves substituting for the old tried and true moral maxims, presented as universally applicable, a new pragmatism and empiricism that addresses a particular set of circumstances. The canto begins by advising the young

men not to complain if they are appointed to a low post such as a village *běkěl* [tax-collector for an appanage holder]. If that is their lot, they must master the requirements of the job, set out under the headings *saguna*, *satata*, and *satau*. *Saguna* means knowing all about the farmer's equipment: harrow, plough, sickle, crowbar, different types of axes and hoes, adzes and choppers, as well as about livestock. This passage exemplifies what I see as a new trend to a more empirical and pragmatic attitude to management, though it is still less strong than that found in Vietnamese works of comparable period.<sup>25</sup>

While appointed in this position they must also work diligently in the fields, and not relax their efforts; when they have a good harvest they must surrender the correct amount to their superior as tax when it is due. If their land is taken away from them they must not resist and fight.<sup>26</sup> Yasadipura says that if the young men behave in this way they will be despised and cut off from the *priyayi* class. *Satata* means knowing the ways of the farmers, setting up a mosque close to water and providing the *santri* with rice-fields, and not taking any part of the *zakat* and *fitrah*.<sup>27</sup> [Participation by *priyayi* in the collection and particularly in determining the distribution of these religious contributions opened opportunities for misappropriation, and there were occasions when members of the *santri* community complained that officials had acted improperly in this way.<sup>28</sup>] They should also create a *kabayan* (a sort of village executive assistant or right-hand man) who is strong and of good character.<sup>29</sup> They should build a fence around the village and be hospitable to visitors. *Satau* means maintaining the *adat* of the villages of the area<sup>30</sup> — and not setting up your own *adat*. They should not allow bad people to gather in their area and should govern the common people (literally, little people, *wong ciliĕ*) in such a way that they know what they are doing. If there is a thief among them, he should be forgiven, but if he does not stop his evil-doing he should be driven away so that he does not contaminate others. They are also advised to set up a mosque and see that everyone goes there on Fridays — evidently, the rural areas to which the *priyayi* would be posted could be assumed not to have mosques. The reason given for this is a rather pragmatic piece of ‘social engineering’; if the population is strong in *ibadah* (observance of the rules of Islam) there will be few



who fall into evils such as gambling and opium-smoking. Unlike older Javanese texts written under Hindu influence, which attribute crime to an inherently evil character, Yasadipura states that it is poverty that is the root cause of crime — a notably modern social analysis.

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The text-book view of modernity in Europe presents it, if not as an indivisible whole, at least as a profoundly symbiotic relationship of progressive social and political ideas with great advances in science and technology. But the enlightened ideas which Indonesian intellectuals of the 1920s summed up and proclaimed as ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’ had not been introduced with other aspects of modernisation in the nineteenth century. In Java the technological, administrative and organisational advances of European modernity were used in support of profoundly reactionary socio-economic and political arrangements. When it came to the intellectual side of modernity, the Javanese had to invent their own, drawing both on their own intellectual tradition and on their experience of an expanded world full of differences (the discovery of which had been equally important in the transformation of the European world-view). Among the results of this transformation were a shift from what I have termed a Platonic to a Hegelian view of world, the latter involving a world of plural and competing peoples/nations (*bangsa*), a shift that had taken place by at least the early nineteenth century. A new attentiveness to the abilities and characters of foreigners, formerly relegated to a passing mention, began to emerge. These foreigners are also accorded a significant, indeed cataclysmic, role in the new, analytical historiography which sets out to explain the contemporary situation of the Javanese. In a new style of socio-political analysis, though the king was still the centre of political thought, other foci, including a developing concept of society and social engineering, had now emerged. An expanded view encompassed and discriminated between a number of non-royal classes with different functions and moral codes. We see here not just the subversion of tradition that took place in China, but also innovation and expansion, though as in China the viewpoint was less

optimistic than in the European case, and (again as in the Chinese case) no longer inclined to see Javanese as the normative centre of the world, a prerogative which Europeans were claiming with increasing confidence.

The 'world of difference' cited in the title refers both to the radically new and different perspectives represented in the texts discussed here, and to the role that the discovery of a world of different, plural and competing peoples played in the genesis of modernity, in Java as much as in Europe. In Java as in Europe, there was a shift away from the ideological and universal to the empirical and pragmatic, and from timeless norms of kingship to social engineering. These Javanese developments were local inventions, not gifts from benevolent European teachers. There is also a 'world of difference' in the psychological attitude of Europeans and Javanese to this discovery of a vast and varied world. The European mood is predominantly optimistic, though not without eloquent laments about the loss of what the lamenters regarded as a morally and aesthetically superior pastoral world. The Javanese mood is predominantly black and lacking in confidence. These differing moods were both appropriate responses to the reality of the situation. It would take over a century before a Javanese would dare proclaim that Indonesia had had a brilliant past and could move out of the dark present into a bright future. This voice spoke from outside the confines of the intellectual world of the courts. But the diagnosis made from within that world in the early nineteenth century was still quite remarkably insightful.

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## Notes

1. JC van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*, Selected Studies on Indonesia by Dutch Scholars, vol. 1, published for the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, W van Hoeve, The Hague and Bandung, 1955, pp. 284–5.
2. For a description of this manuscript see Theodore GTh Pigeaud, *Literature of Java*, vol. II, Nijhoff, The Hague, 1968, p. 736.
3. An assumption implicit in the very language, in which one says of a child who has not yet acquired manners and morals that he is *durung Java*, not yet Javanese.
4. Mark Elvin, 'How did the Cracks Open? The Origins of the Subversion of China's Late-Traditional Culture by the West', *Thesis Eleven*, 57, (May 1999), p. 1.
5. Willem Rummelink, *The Chinese War and the Collapse of the Javanese State, 1725–1743*, Verhandeling van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 162, KITLV Press, Leiden, 1994, p. 202. Some allowances were also paid to the queen, the *Patih*, and the royal princes.
6. Rummelink, p. 203. Rummelink sees some indications of innovation in response to new opportunities in the period he covers, for instance the change from manpower to cadastral computation because of the entrepreneurial activities of Javanese aristocrats.
7. Actually, the 1930 census reveals that some of this population had survived; called 'Usingers', there were about 180,000 of them. Further on this area see Ann Kumar, 'Javanese Historiography in and of the "Colonial Period": a case study', in Anthony Reid and David Marr eds, *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, Asian Studies Association of Australia, Heinemann Educational, Singapore, 1979, pp. 187–206.
8. See CGC Reinwardt, ed. WH de Vriese, *Reis naar het oostelijke gedeelte van den Indischen Archipel in het jaar 1821*, Frederik Muller, Amsterdam, 1858.
9. See ARA, van Alphen collection 2e afdeeling 1900, no. 196, p. 105.
10. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the World Economy in the 16th Century*, *Studies in Social Discontinuity*, Academic Press, New York/London, 1974, ch. 4, 'From Seville to Amsterdam: The Failure of Empire', and Terence K Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Processes of the World-System*, vol. 3, Political Economy of the World-System Annuals, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills/London, 1980, ch. 5.: Albert Bergesen, 'Cycles of Formal Colonial Rule'.
11. Bergesen, p. 202.

12. KN Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 95, 213, 228.
13. Peter Boomgaard, *Children of the Colonial State: Population Growth and Economic Development in Java, 1795–1880*, Free University Press, 1989, p. 124.
14. This term encompasses works of diverse types, not only epic histories but also histories which have been assimilated to pre-existing myths; see Ann Kumar, *Surapati, Man and Legend: A Study of Three Babad Traditions*, Brill, Leiden, 1976 and ‘On Variation in Babads’ *BKI* 140, 2/3 (1984), pp. 223–47.
15. DGE Hall, Introduction to *Historians of South East Asia*, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 2.
16. The *yugas* are the four ages within the *Mahāyuga*. They are the *Kṛta*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpara* and *Kali* ages of respectively 4,800, 3,600, 2,400 and 1,200 ‘years of the gods’, each of which is equivalent to 360 human years. The *Kaliyuga* is said to have begun in 3102 BC, believed to be the year of the Mahābhārata war.
17. A quick perusal of Mangkubumi’s career will reveal that he did in fact fight against his fellow Javanese, whether or not he liked it.
18. In the Javanese, the pronoun is implicit and could also be read as ‘they’ instead of ‘we’.
19. *Wicara Keras*, canto III, verse 22.
20. *Wicara Keras*, canto III verses 21–5.
21. For an interesting description of a parallel case in Vietnam after the French conquest, see Greg Lockhart, *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People’s Army of Vietnam*, Asian Studies Association of Australia Southeast Asia Publication Series no. 17, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1989. Lockhart points out the centrality of the monarch to the Vietnamese political collectivity and the way in which its destruction by the French necessitated the development of a ‘modern mutation’ (pp. 40–6).
22. See published edition of *Centini*, canto 215 stanza 10ff. the *bangsa riah* are synonymous with the *ngam* (Arabic *‘amm*, ordinary, commonplace, general) or great majority of unlearned Muslims, followed by eight levels of *mukmin* (believers) in ascending order.
23. Personal communication, Dr Supomo Suryohudoyo.
24. S.a. Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java: A Study of the Later Mataram Period, 16th to 19th Century*, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Monograph Series, Ithaca, N.Y., 1963, p. 97.
25. See Alexander Woodside, ‘The Relationship Between Political Theory and Economic Growth in Vietnam 1750-1900’, in AJS Reid, *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies: Responses to Modernity in the Diverse States of Southeast Asia*

- and Korea, 1750–1900, Studies in the Economies of East and South-East Asia, Macmillan, Houndmills and New York, 1997.
26. Carey notes that it was often the case that on the replacement of the appanage holder in the royal capital, an all too frequent occurrence, a new *běkěł* would be appointed and it often happened that the current *běkěł* would abscond with the cash advances from the cultivators or refuse point blank to make way for the new appointee. This was the most frequent cause of the numerous ‘village wars’ (*prang desa*) which plagued the countryside of south-central Java at this time and which one Dutch traveller referred to as being almost a daily occurrence in the years immediately preceding the Java war. Carey, Peter ‘Waiting for the Just King: the Agrarian World of South-Central Java from Giyanti (1755) to the Java War (1825–30)’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 20/1, (1986), p. 76.
  27. Paying *zakat* is one of the five pillars of the faith, and there are precise specifications about the types of property subject to *zakat* and the rate to be paid. The *zakat* money is used for the poor, slaves, debtors, travellers, and those in the service of God. *Fitrab* is a charitable contribution usually of about a *gantang* of rice made by every member of the mosque congregation at the end of the fasting month, for the purpose of allowing the poor to celebrate the great annual festival at the end of the fast. It is also known as *zakat badan* to distinguish it from the true *zakat* levied on property.
  28. See, for example, Ann Kumar, *The Diary of a Javanese Muslim: Religion, politics and the pesantren 1883–1886*, Faculty of Asian Studies Monographs: New Series no. 7, Canberra, 1985, p. 44.
  29. In some versions of the text, the required qualification is not smoking opium.
  30. Referred to as the *mancapat/mancalima*, four-sets and five-sets, since villages were traditionally conceptualised in groups of four, at the compass points, around a centre. This four-five compass classification is very old and is depicted in textile patterns, and correlated with colours and the five days of the market week.