

Chapter 8

Social Integration in Majapahit as Seen in an Old Javanese Court Narrative

AOYAMA Toru

In the history of Southeast Asia, among many Indianized states, Majapahit stands out in a sense as an anomaly because it remained an Indianized state well into the fourteenth century, when we witness the rapid expansion of Theravada Buddhist Ayutthaya at the expense of the Indianized Angkor in mainland Southeast Asia as well as the emergence of Islamic polities on the island of Sumatra. Also, evidence seems to indicate that Majapahit had a remarkably higher degree of social integration than we might have imagined.

This paper first re-examines Wolters' concept of *maṇḍala* in the context of Majapahit and attempts to demonstrate that Majapahit may not have fit squarely into the pattern of *maṇḍala*. Then the paper examines some of the factors that may have contributed to the social integration of Majapahit by analysing the Old Javanese narrative *Deśawarṇana*. In particular, close attention will be paid to how the Singhasāri–Majapahit dynastic genealogy and the Phalgunā–Caitra annual court festival are narrated in the text to point out their significance.

1. Background

Wolters introduced the concept of *maṇḍala* in his groundbreaking *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* [Wolters 1982, 1999]. As his argument is broad and extensive, I would like to focus on his definition of the term and application of the term to Majapahit. Needless to say, the aim of this paper is not so much refuting as complementing Wolters' arguments. He defined the term, a Sanskrit word meaning 'circle, zone, district' and used in Indian manuals of government, as follows [Wolters 1999: 27-29]:

In practice, the *maṇḍala* ... represented a particular and often unstable political situation in a vaguely definable geographical area without fixed boundaries

and where smaller centres tended to look in all directions for security. *Maṇḍala* would expand and contract in concertina-like fashion. Each one contained several tributary rulers, some of whom would repudiate their vassal status when the opportunity arose and try to build up their own networks of vassals. Only the *maṇḍala* overlord had the prerogative of receiving tribute-bearing envoys; he himself would dispatch officials who represented his superior status.

Thus a *maṇḍala* is characterized by an area of variable size and shape, a multi-centredness with vassal rulers in the centres, and a possible reconfiguration through the usurpation of overlordship by a vassal ruler. Wolters then selected four examples of *maṇḍala* and examined them [Wolters 1999: 31-35]: the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya, founded in the mid-fourteenth century; the Sriwijayan *maṇḍala*, existing from the seventh to the eleventh century; the history of the Philippines as recorded by Spanish explorers in the early seventeenth century; and the Javanese *maṇḍala* of fourteenth-century Majapahit. In the case of Majapahit, Wolters rightly pointed out that the ‘island of Java was Majapahit’s original *maṇḍala*’ [Wolters 1999: 34] but fell short of elucidating the characteristics of Majapahit as *maṇḍala*, as he seems to be more interested in ‘the charting and evaluation of the extension of Javanese cultural influence outside the island’ [Wolters 1999: 34]. He did refer to Noorduyt’s article [1975] by stating a ‘scholar has recently suggested that even in Majapahit’s heyday a potential rival existed’ [Wolters 1999: 34]. This reference apparently suggests that Wolters might have been influenced by the reputed division of Majapahit into Eastern and Western kingdoms in the late fourteenth century. The division of Majapahit had been propounded as early as in Krom’s magisterial history of Indianized Java [Wolters 1931: 424-425]. An armed conflict involving royal family members did take place in 1406. However, re-reading the Javanese and Chinese records has made it possible to establish that the conflict was not caused by the territorial division of Majapahit but by the increased tension between the two palaces, which existed in close proximity in the capital of Majapahit [Aoyama 2007]. This understanding enables us to look into the social integration of Majapahit in a more affirmative way without necessarily refuting other characteristics of Majapahit as *maṇḍala*.

This approach is also in accordance with Kulke’s theory on the formation and development of Indianized states in Southeast Asia [Kulke 2001]. The theory recognizes three phases in the process, that is, local phase, regional phase, and imperial phase. The local phase corresponds to chieftaincy, whereas the regional phase represents the time when a stronger chief came to subjugate other chiefs. The supreme chief was recognized as such by subordinate chiefs through the process of legitimation in which the prestige of Indian cultural factors played an important role. Thus, supreme chiefs or overlords assumed the title ‘rāja’. Majapahit is considered to be in the third imperial phase where the central power completely subsumed the

authority of regional leaders and established itself as a stable superregional polity [Kulke 2001: 275-281]. The advantage of the theory is that it enables us to recognize change in a society instead of a changeless principle.

Another field of research that also suggests the increased social integration in Majapahit is the one conducted from the economic and administrative points of view [Hall 1985: 232-260]. Hall analysed three charters or inscriptions of Majapahit origin dated mid-to late fourteenth century and demonstrated that the relationship between the royal authority and local communities became strengthened by bypassing landed elites in the fourteenth century [Hall 1985: 241-242]:

The three charters show the emergence of the state's revenue collection policy in the post-tenth-century era, wherein the state, with both an institutional inability to collect local cesses and a lack of sufficient physical prowess to impose direct authority over the subject population centres, depended on alliances with subordinate elites. The state thus had initially turned to landed elites in agricultural communities (Canggu and Karang Bogēm) and to chiefs of trade in a well-established commercial community (Biluluk). However, the Majapahit state's new *pamuja* and *pamihos* cesses were to be collected more directly than were the revenue collections of the pre-1300 era, seemingly to assure that the state would receive a larger share of such locally collected cesses. A new royal relationship with these three communities is most strikingly shown in the Canggu Ferry Charter's curtailment of the political rights of the landed elite.

If the reinforcement of social integration was observed in economic and administrative fields, it may also be found in a cultural aspect. We will now turn to the cultural aspect of social integration by analysing the contemporaneous literary work called *Deśawarṇana* (hence forth, DW).

2. Majapahit in the *Deśawarṇana*

Majapahit is regarded as one of the quintessential Indianized states in the history of Southeast Asia. The kingdom was founded in 1293 by Wijaya, the son-in-law of the last king of Singhasāri Kṛtanagara, after defeating a Kaḍiri rebel prince and driving out the Mongols. On his accession to the throne, Wijaya took the name Kṛtarājasa, which incorporated parts of his Singhasāri predecessors' names, thus establishing Majapahit as the rightful successor to Singhasāri. The kingdom reached its apogee in the mid-fourteenth century under the reign of King Rājanagara (1350-1389). Its sphere of influence extended to the coastal areas of Sumatra, Kalimantan, and eastern parts of Indonesia, even though its area of direct control was limited mostly to eastern Java, Madura, and Bali. In its court, the clergy practiced Śaivism,

Vaishnavism, and Buddhism, and literary works were produced by poets in Old Javanese based on literary traditions of Indian origin. The DW, formerly known as Nāgarakṛtāgama, is one of them [Pigeaud 1960-1963; Robson 1995].

The DW was a narrative work composed in 1365 by the court poet Mpu Prapañca, a contemporary of King Rājasanagara. The work is, in essence, the poet's eulogy to the king, also known under his infant name Hayam Wuruk. The text consists of 98 cantos or 384 stanzas and is classified under the genre called *kakawin*, as it is written in a metric format of Indian influence. The DW, which means 'description of the country', is aptly named, as the poet recorded the life of people in both the court and the country during his visits to parts of East Java and attendance to royal functions.

It has been argued that in representing the social and natural landscape the authors of *kakawin* works from at least the Kaḍiri period were not so much concerned with faithful reproduction of the Indian world as with the description of and commentary on Javanese life, even though their stories were taken from Indian sources [Worsley 2012]. This argument is more applicable to the DW, which purposely describes the contemporary Javanese society. It must also be noted that most of the historical descriptions found in the DW have been attested by evidence obtained from other sources [Pigeaud 1960-1963].

The depiction of life in the contemporary Javanese society instead of a world inhabited by heroes and gods in the past India truly makes the DW a unique work in the genre. As the term *kakawin*, derived from the Sanskrit word *kavi* meaning 'poet', suggests, *kakawin* works generally simulate the Sanskrit literary convention. Almost all the *kakawin* works except for the DW and a few others at least adopted the basic story line from Indian epics and recounted the deeds of Indian heroes and gods. The fact that the first major Old Javanese *kakawin* work was an adaptation of the quint essential Indian epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, clearly illustrates this point. Nevertheless, although the DW was the exception rather than the rule at the time when it was written, the emergence of the work does appear to indicate that there was a sense of growing confidence in the integrity of the society among Javanese people strong enough to produce a literary work that could break away from the convention.

With regard to cultural aspects of social consolidation, there are two points of interest that will be dealt with in this paper. The first concerns the consolidation of the king's power as the focal point of social consolidation (vertical consolidation), while the second concerns the king's interaction with the common people through a number of royal tours and the annual court festival (horizontal consolidation).

3. Vertical Consolidation

In the narrative of the DW, the consolidation of the king's power is represented in the form of a dynastic genealogy and the divinization of the king. During one of the

royal tours in which he participated, the poet Prapañca personally paid a visit to an aged Buddhist monk Ratnāngśa, who recounted the genealogy of the Singhasāri–Majapahit kings originating from Rajāsa, the first king of Singhasāri, and through Kṛtarājasa to the current king of Majapahit (see Appendix). In the following excerpts, the English translation is taken from Robson [1995] with the present author’s additional notes in brackets. The scene begins when the poet explains his intention of visiting the monk [DW 38.6-49.4]:

38.6 ‘My [Prapañca’s] aim in coming to you [Ratnāngśa] is a wish to ask you about the sequence of the ancestors / Of the King who have been enshrined and to whom he is constantly paying honour, / Especially the Lord of Kagēnēngan [Rajāsa]—speak of him first, / Relate the ancient tale of him, as Son of the Lord of the Mountain.

Having warmly approved the poet’s request [DW 39.1-39.3], the old monk starts recounting the story of the current king’s ancestors:

40.1 Formerly in the Śaka-year ‘oceans-directions-moon’ (1104, AD 1182) there was a great king, of unparalleled valour in battle, / Visibly a divine incarnation, known as a son not born from the womb to the illustrious Lord of the Mountain. / In fear and reverence all the people paid homage at his feet, respectful and submissive; / The illustrious Ranggah Rājasa was his name, victorious over his enemies and a very skilful warrior.

(40.2-40.5)

41.1 Lord Anūṣanātha, son to the Lord, succeeded him as a supreme ruler, / And while he held power the whole of Java continued to be devoted and attentive. / In the Śaka-year ‘sectmark-mountains-Śambhus’ (1170, AD 1248) he was laid to rest and returned to the abode of Girīndra; / He was depicted in a splendid image of Śiwa in the foundation at Kiḍal.

41.2 Lord (Hari) Wiṣṇuwardhana was his son, who succeeded him on the throne, / ...

41.3 In Śaka “flavors-mountains-moon-moon” (1176, AD 1254) Lord Wiṣṇu inaugurated his son to rule, / And all the sāmya of Kaḍiri and Janggala came forward to offer flower-worship at the court. King Kṛtanagara was his consecration-name, as is well known; / The district of Kuṭa Rāja became more and more splendid, and so became known as the city of Singhasāri.

After a detailed account of King Kṛtanagara's deeds and his death in AD 1292, an interregnum took place due to the usurpation by a local ruler named Jayakatwang, who in turn was to be defeated by King Kṛtanagara's son-in-law Wijaya, also named Narārya in this part of the text [DW 41.4-44.4]. The monk continues his account:

45.1 With the death of King Jayakatwang the world was clear and without disturbance, / And so in 'seasons-form-suns' Śāka (1216, AD 1294) the Narārya became king. / He ruled in the palace at Majapahit, kindly disposed and victorious over his enemies, / With the title of His Majesty King Kṛtarājasa Jayawardhana.

(45.2-47.2)

47.3 In Śāka "moon-three-suns" (1231, AD 1309) the King passed away. / Soon he was set up as Jina-image within the palace—/ Antahpura is the name of the sanctuary, / And as a Śiwa-image he is also at Simpang.

48.1 And the King Jayanagara was left behind as king of Majapahit, / ...

(48.2)

48.3 In Śāka "dot-arrows-suns" (1250, AD 1328) the King returned to Wisnu's abode; / Soon he was enshrined within the palace, his statue being the highest image of Wiṣṇu; / Also at Śilā Pētak and at Bubat he had the same image as an incarnation of Wiṣṇu, without compare, / And at Sukhalīla the splendid Buddhist image as a visible manifestation of Amoghasiddhi.

49.1 Verily in the Saka-year "moon-arrows-two-form" (1251, AD 1329) / The Princess of Jiwana [Tribhuwana Wijayottungadewī], known to us as the mother of the King, / Succeeded in Majapahit as Queen, / And the King's father in Singhasari.

During the reign of Tribhuwana as queen regent, two enemies were defeated under the command of the capable minister Gajah Mada and the king of Bali was also defeated. The monk's account of earlier kings ends at this point. Tribhuwana's son Hayam Wuruk was to succeed as King Rājasanagara in AD 1350, when his maternal grandmother Rājapatnī passed away.

The monk's account, which includes eight royal persons such as King Rājasanagara's mother as queen regent, is remarkable, because for the first time in the history of Indonesia, or even of Southeast Asia, a regular dynastic genealogy with this degree of depth and coherence was presented. The kingdom of Matram in Central

Java, for instance, in spite of its well-known designation of Sañjaya dynasty, in fact lacked a dynastic genealogy, whereas later kingdoms in East Java before Majapahit could not sufficiently develop one. In this sense, the DW may be considered to be a forerunner of full-fledged court chronicles that emerged in Southeast Asia in the following centuries, including Thai Phongsawadan, Burmese Yazawin, Malay Hikayat, and Javanese Babad.

Many of these early modern chronicles contain a genealogy of kings, which legitimated the kingship. The legitimation of the kingship, in turn, must have contributed to the vertical consolidation of the society; the king functioned as the centre of centripetal forces among the people who were in the formative stage of nationalistic sentiment in the pre-modern times in line with the notion of 'ethnie', as proposed in Smith's argument on the ethnic origins of nations [Smith 1986]. In this conjuncture, it is noteworthy that the Sanskrit word *vamśa*, meaning 'lineage, dynasty', is incorporated in some of indigenous terms for a chronicle as in Cambodian Rajabansavata and Thai Phongsawadan, and the modern Malay word for 'nation', *bangsa*, is its derivation. Although the account of the dynastic lineage constitutes only a part of the DW, the work must have contributed to the vertical consolidation of the society as its later counterparts did.

Another means to enhance the vertical consolidation of the society was the divinization of the king. In the DW, the poet Prapañca describes King Rājasanagara as a manifestation of several deities [DW 1.1-1.2]:

1.1 'Hail to the King! Homage be to thee!'—this is the praise of the humble man at the feet of the Lord [Rājasanagara] always / He is present in invisible form at the focus of meditation, he is Śiwa and Buddha, embodied in both the material and the immaterial; / As King of the Mountain, Protector of the Protectorless, he is lord of the lords of the world, / And as the deity of deities that one sets one's heart upon, the inconceivable of the inconceivable, being and non-being are his expression in the world.

1.2 All-pervading and immanent, representing all the basic principles, he is the epithetless to the Vaiṣṇavas; / To the yogis he is Īśwara, the universal soul to Kapila, and he is Jambhala manifest as the deity of wealth; / He is Wāgindra as the deity of all the sciences, Manasija in the treatises on love, / And in putting into practice the removal of obstacles he is Yamarāja, having as the fruit of his deeds the welfare of the world.

The divinization of King Rājasanagara is not an isolated case. In the genealogical account of the kings of Singhasāri and Majapahit, the kings were enshrined when they passed away, for they were regarded as a divine existence incarnated in a human form when they were alive after the fashion of God Viṣṇu's incarnation as Rāma. It was also

not uncommon for the kings to be regarded as the embodiment of more than one deity. This notion of multiple incarnations may have been endorsed by the notion of *advaya*, or the belief in the essential oneness of divergent existences based on the Tantric philosophy, which was prevalent at the time of Majapahit [Aoyama 1999]. This was also the case with King Rājasanagara, who was described as the supreme being in more than one denomination. Nevertheless, obviously God Śiva and the Buddha were considered the most important as it is clearly demonstrated in a scene of the annual court festival where two groups of Śaivite and Buddhist priests were actively engaged in the extolment of the king, as we shall see in the following section.

4. Horizontal Integration

Both the dynastic genealogy and the divinization of the king contributed to the strengthening of kingship, which in turn became the focal point of social integration. This is consistent with what we have learned from the studies on economic and administrative aspects of Majapahit, which have revealed the increasingly direct control of the king over tax revenue at the expense of local landed leaders. The strengthening of kingship, however, does not necessarily mean that the king's control of people was enforced through the increased use of coercion. On the contrary, the DW shows that there were occasions of amicable interaction between the king and common people, which are marked in the narrative by a number of royal tours and the annual court festival.

The DW narrates a number of royal tours that the king initiated. Undoubtedly these tours had administrative purposes, such as the 'stock-taking' of resources and 'weeding out' of the causes of potential unrest. However, it must also be noted that the DW indicates several moments where the king and his retinue interacted joyfully with common people [DW 27.2]:

27.2 Manifold were the kinds of sports that the King arranged as amusement, / And he set up anything that would make the village people happy. / Every time he was carried away by the martial exercises it made the onlookers speechless, / Indeed he was simply a divinity descended as he roamed the world.

In other words, if the strengthening of kingship consolidated the society in a vertical direction, royal tours worked horizontally.

Another instance of the horizontal consolidation of the society was the annual court festival. The festival began in Phalgunā, the last month of the traditional Javanese year (usually falls in the month of February or March), and it ended in Caitra, the first month of the next year (March or April). The festival not only celebrated

the beginning of a new year but also a good harvest, as the period coincides with the end of a productive rainy season. The narrative explains that the marketplace was inundated with harvested produce and other products, both domestic and imported. After the elaborate description of the religious rituals involving Śaiva and Buddhist priests, the festival ended with a communal feast [DW 89.4-91.9], in which both the leaders and the common people participated, and the king also played a role in the merrymaking.

90.1 The food intended for the common people arrived, / Complete and all of silver were their splendid dishes; / Countless meats, everything on land and in the water, / Quick-sticks! Soon they came down in succession, one by one.

In the feast, many different varieties of food and drink were served in abundance to satisfy the participants. Some became quite drunk and caused happy laughter. Singers were also present and enlivened the feast with their songs about the king's accomplishments. A female entertainer joined and pleased the audience [DW 90.2-90.6].

91.2 Finally she was ordered to go before the King and to join in serving drinks there, / And so she went with the officials and assessors as they served and sang. The singing of the Manghuri and Kandamohi was praised again and again, / And the King, himself an expert, would cap it, deeply touching and beautiful.

91.3 The King's songs put them under a spell, amazingly apt, / Comparable with the cries of a peacock on a branch in their poetic beauty. /...

From the DW's descriptions, it appears that while the festival functioned economically as an occasion for gathering and distributing resources across the kingdom, socially it helped integrate people as one community. It is also apparent in the DW that the king was the centre of both the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' consolidation. The king managed to achieve such consolidation, not so much by exerting power over people but by assuming religious and cultural prestige, and by interacting amicably with other fellow Javanese. As the objective of the poem was to eulogize the king, this observation may hardly be surprising. However, considering the candidness and intimacy with which the poet often described the king's life, we cannot totally dismiss what the poem described as spurious. At least, we may argue that this is the way the poet wanted to show the king to his contemporaries.

5. Significance of the Annual Court Festival

The DW clearly indicates that Majapahit had reached a higher level of social integration, to which the 'vertical' enforcement of kingship and 'horizontal' inter-

action between the king and common people contributed. It is possible to argue that Majapahit may not be a *maṇḍala* state, as defined by Wolters, where the leader's charisma is the primary source of social integration and his or her death leads to the rapid disintegration of the kingdom. Majapahit did experience rebellions and power division, yet these instances of turmoil should not prevent us from recognizing the degree of the development of social integration in Majapahit, which enabled the kingdom to survive the demise of a king.

With this regard, the section of the DW that immediately precedes the scene of the annual court festival may provide insight into its significance [DW 83.1-83.6]:

83.1 Such being the excellent qualities of the King, ruling as sovereign over Majapahit, / He is praised as being like the moon in autumn, making all the world content. / The evildoers are like day-lotuses and all the good people are like night-lotuses, sincerely loving, / And the servants, supplies and vehicles, elephants, horses and so on are as the ocean.

83.2 The land of Java [Yawadarani] has become more and more renowned for its purifying power in the world: / It is only India [Jambudwīpa] and Java [Yawa] that are noted for their excellence as fine places, / Because of the numbers of experts in sacred texts, principally the Superintendents and the Seven Assessors, / As well as the Panjang Jīwa, Lekan and Tangar, all who are experienced in affairs, each highly skilled.

83.3 Firstly the Brahmarāja, a worthy priest, a great poet and faultless in his knowledge of the scriptures— / Every kind of logic he knows, he is expert in the great *kāvya*, in *Nyāya* philosophy and so on; / And also Ḍang Hyang Bāmana, highly competent in observances, virtuous, a master in the sacred texts and the six pure duties, / Not to mention Śrī Wiṣṇu, who is immersed in hymns and prayers that have as aim the increase of the world's abundance.

83.4 And so constantly all kinds of people come from other countries in countless numbers— / See: India [Jambudwīpa], Cambodia [Khamboja], China [Cina], Annam [Yawana], Champa [Cempa], the Carnatic [Kharṇnataka] and so on, / Gaur [Goda] and Siam [Syangka] are their places of origin, sailing on ships with the merchants in numbers, / Monks and priests in particular, when they come they are given food and are happy to stay.

83.5 Now every Phalguṇa the King is honoured and treated with solicitude in his own palace: / There arrive the officials of all Java, the *juru* and *kuwu* as well as the Superintendents and all the Assessors, / Joined by the Balinese as first among the other islands [nusāntara], all with their gifts in uninterrupted

numbers; / Vendors and merchants fill the markets and all their various wares are piled up in abundance.

83.6 The procedure for the worship is that a procession of portable shrines with drums is escorted by the common people / Seven times, each day increasing with one, together with offerings heading for the Outer Courtyard. / The *homa* and *brahmayajñā* are performed by the Śaiva and Buddhist priests as their worship, / Commencing on the 8th of the 'dark' half of the month, and having as fruit the well-being of the King.

The festival was characterized by the abundance of goods available in Majapahit, either produced domestically or imported from outside Java. The importation of prestigious foreign goods was made possible, in part, by the existence of an international trade network, to which the DW refers by naming the involved countries. The text explains that Majapahit was a major hub of the network because Java was the only country that was equal to India (Jambudvīpa), and, consequently, it enjoyed the presence of religious experts of Indian origin. This is testified by the prominent role played by Śaiva and Buddhist priests in the festival. These priests, in turn, made it possible to conduct religious ceremonies in a proper manner, thus ensuring that their blessing of the king was efficacious and the legitimacy of the king established. In this way, the cultural prestige of India was inseparably connected to both the commercial prosperity of the country and to the legitimization of the kingship. They both undoubtedly resulted in the further consolidation of the society.

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The DW's narrative reveals that the legitimacy of Majapahit rested substantially on its Indic ideology and the perception of India as the centre of Indic, that is, Hindu and Buddhist civilization. Also important was the Javanese perception of Java as one of the major centres of the civilization, which was second to none except for India. The importance of the perceived religious orientation of India may explain why Majapahit could remain 'Indianized' well into the fourteenth century, as the Hindu Vijayanagar Empire came to flourish in South India in the same century. In any case, the reading of the DW suggests that cultural factors were deeply embedded in the process of the king's political legitimization in such a way that they contributed to the kingdom's social integration.

APPENDIX

Geneology of Singhasāri (1-4) –Majapahit (5-8) kings as described in the DW

1. Rājasa (Ken Angrok), AD 1222-1227
2. Anūṣanātha (step son of no. 1), AD 1227-1248
3. Wiṣṇuwardhana (son of no. 2), AD 1248-1268
4. Kṛtanagara (son of no. 3), AD 1268-1292
(Interregnum. Ruled by Jayakatwang (usurper), AD 1292-1294)
5. Kṛtarājasa Jayawardhana (Wijaya Narārya, son-in-law of no. 4), AD 1294-1309
6. Jayanāgara (son of no. 5), AD 1309-1328
7. Tribhuwana Wijayottungadewī (reigned as queen regent, daughter of no. 5, mother of no. 8), AD 1329-1350
8. Rājasanagara (Hayam Wuruk, son of no. 7), AD 1350-1389

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