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Bujangga Manik: or, Java in the fifteenth century: an edition and study of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Jav. b. 3 (R)

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Cover Page



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Summary

This thesis is an edition and study of *Bujangga Manik*, a narrative poem in Old Sundanese, a language of West Java (Sunda) in what is now Indonesia. The poem survives in a single manuscript, MS Jav. b.3. (R), which was deposited in the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford in 1627. The text dates to the late fifteenth century CE, perhaps to 1480 or so – before the Islamisation of Sunda in the sixteenth century, before the establishment of the first European colonies in Southeast Asia in 1511, and before the accompanying impact of the Columbian Exchange. It is one of only a few witnesses to this period in Sundanese and, indeed, Indonesian history. This dissertation uses the text as a starting-point for a study of fifteenth-century island Southeast Asia in the round, using archaeological evidence and contemporaneous texts in a range of other languages, particularly Portuguese, Classical Chinese, and Old Javanese, to provide further information about the people, places, and material culture evinced in the text.

Bujangga Manik relates the travels of a fictional nobleman from Pakuan, the capital of the kingdom of Sunda, through Java and Bali, as he leaves his life and family behind in order to improve himself spiritually and become an ascetic – and, upon his death, a god. ‘Bujangga Manik’ is one of the three names by which this ascetic is known over the course of the text. During his travels, which are narrated in the first person, he gains in insight and spiritual authority. This culminates in a vision of the world seen from the summit of Mount Papandayan in West Java, after which the ascetic retires from travelling and establishes a hermitage. Here he meditates, sweeps the ground with a broom, and dies without illness a decade later, whereupon he ascends to heaven. The surviving manuscript comprises 30 *lontar* leaves, and at least four others are missing, including one (or more) at the end; the poem finishes mid-sentence, with the ascetic’s soul riding a bejewelled yak while gongs and metallophones are beaten and lightning flashes in the sky. Many articles of material culture are described or referred to throughout the poem, including rosewater, cannons, and ocean-going junks, among many others, and the small cast of characters, most of them friendly and caring, provide a welcome counterpoint to the crude depictions of fifteenth-century Javan people found in accounts written by foreigners.

The centrepiece of the thesis is an extensively updated edition of the Old Sundanese text with an improved English translation (Part II), building on the work of Jacobus Noorduyn and Andries Teeuw, who first published a version of *Bujangga Manik* in 2006. An extensive study of the codicology, palaeography, and language of the manuscript and poem precedes the text (Part I), as does an Introduction intended to place *Bujangga Manik* in its proper historical context as part of a wider Afro-Eurasian hemisphere of interaction and exchange. The remainder of the thesis is an extended commentary on the poem’s contents. This includes a discussion of the important theme of place and of the many place names that occur in the text (Part III); an overview of the poem’s characters and their roles (Part IV); descriptions of the ships the ascetic travels on and their multi-ethnic crews (Part V); and

finally an analysis of the textiles, dyestuffs, perfumes, toiletries, narcotics, weapons, and other manufactured goods mentioned at various points in the text (Part VI). A brief epilogue summarises the conclusions of the thesis.