

Babad Sangkala and the Javanese sense of history

M.C. Ricklefs

Abstract

Merle C. Ricklefs

There is a tradition of scepticism about the historical value of Javanese chronicles (babad), which has led to a privileging of European sources in the study of Javanese history. This scepticism may rest upon doubt whether the Javanese even have a sense of history.

This paper argues that there is ample evidence in Javanese chronicles of a vibrant sense of the past. It analyses particularly Babad Sangkala. The original version of this work (Leiden cod. or. 4097) seems to have been completed c. 1750 and is shown here to be very accurate in its account of the reign of Pakubuwana II (1726-49). This babad demonstrates that in the mid-eighteenth century there was a Javanese chronicle tradition which assumed that events occurred in a sequence, that they had causes and consequences, that they could be judged and that the past was worth both knowing and recording accurately. This demonstration that Javanese chronicle writers could be concerned to record the past with precision is essential to showing that the Javanese were indubitably people with a sense of history and a capacity to record it. Clearly therefore historians of pre-colonial Java are as much obliged to take Javanese sources seriously as historians of France or Germany are obliged to use French or German sources. The author expresses regret that this seems not yet to be accepted by all scholars of Javanese history.

Citer ce document / Cite this document :

Ricklefs M.C. Babad Sangkala and the Javanese sense of history. In: Archipel, volume 55, 1998. pp. 125-140;

doi : <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.1998.3445>

https://www.persee.fr/doc/arch_0044-8613_1998_num_55_1_3445

Fichier pdf généré le 21/04/2018

Merle C. RICKLEFS

Babad Sangkala **and the Javanese sense of history**

It is a commonplace observation that a people's sense of themselves, of their identity, is rooted in and shapes their concept of the past. Their being and culture is embedded in their history – in the sense both of what happened in their past and of what they believe to have happened. Thus the idea legitimately arises that different societies have different views of what their history is or should be. Such differential views are encapsulated in the accounts which are locally regarded as historical. We may therefore examine a society's historical writings and deduce from them a view both of identity and of history

In the case of the Javanese, this examination of historical writings – above all of chronicles about past events (*babad*) – has at times led to the remarkable idea that the Javanese have no sense of history at all. If this were true, it would have the consequence that historians would have no need to consult Javanese sources, except insofar as one might wish to investigate the curiosities of Javanese ideas (or myths) about the past.

This scepticism has long precedents, going back to condemnations by John Crawfurd and other nineteenth-century Europeans, who regarded Javanese chronicles as essentially childish nonsense.⁽¹⁾ If scholarly history was to be written, they felt, it had to rest upon European sources. The distinguished modern scholar J.J. Ras, in a valuable essay about *babads*, address the

1. A review of some of these opinions is to be found in M.C. Ricklefs, "Javanese sources in the writing of Modern Javanese history", in C.D. Cowan & O.W. Wolters (eds), *Southeast Asian history and historiography : Essays presented to D.G.E. Hall* (Ithaca & London : Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 333-6.

question of “the reliability of the Babad” regarding which he rightly concludes, “no hard and fast rule can be given”. He writes that “It is obvious that a dynastic document such as the Babad can never be used in the same way as the VOC reports”. While this is certainly true, the observation may seem to ascribe a privileged – or at least a different – status to VOC documents with regard to reliability, perhaps underestimating the extent to which they, too, were shaped by literary and cultural conventions and marred by ignorance and errors. Ras insists, however, that Javanese records must be consulted : “The Babad is indispensable for every historian interested in the past of Indonesia”.⁽²⁾

Rommelink's doctoral thesis on the first seventeen years of Pakubuwana II's reign (1726-49) appears to adopt a less favourable position regarding *babad* records. The thesis makes useful observations about chronicles, but its structure merits comment. It has five chapters resting on VOC sources, suggesting that this is the real history, the facts. It then adds a chapter which summarises the Surakarta Major *Babad* for the first twelve years of the reign and compares it to the story of the Dutch records. Rommelink, it seems to me, gives the impression that VOC sources are the foundation for an accurate reconstruction of Javanese history (he calls them “a generally reliable report”) while *babads* are valuable for showing the weaknesses or peculiarities of Javanese historical thought. Rommelink condemns a “narrow documentary approach” to chronicles, implying that “facts” are things to be got from European records,⁽³⁾ thereby echoing a theme which goes back to John Crawfurd. He comments, “The *babad's* cavalier attitude to facts, which has often been noted, is less important than its general frame of reference. A purely documentary approach to the *babad* is therefore a wasted effort. It does not really add new facts, and those that it adds are of questionable reliability. And even if the facts given by the *babad* were for sixty, eighty, or even one hundred percent reliable, we still have to avoid the trap of “primitive positivism”, or the reading of any text, be it *babads* or VOC records, as a simple source of information on the level of content analysis”.⁽⁴⁾

More remarkably, in Nagtegaal's doctoral dissertation “the central issue is formed by the question of the extent and nature of the changes which occurred in society along Java's north coastThe society stands at the centre : the perspective is Java-centric as far as possible”.⁽⁵⁾ Yet the thesis uses no Javanese sources at all, except for some references to translations of such works. Another Dutch scholar, Ben Arps, refers in his distinguished doctoral

2. J.J. Ras, “The Babad Tanah Jawi and its reliability : Questions of content, structure and function”, in C.D. Grijns & S.O. Robson (eds), *Cultural contact and textual interpretation : Papers from the fourth European colloquium on Malay and Indonesian studies, held in Leiden in 1983* (VKI vol. 115 ; Dordrecht & Cinnaminson : Foris Publications, 1986), p. 271.

3. W. Rommelink, *The Chinese War and the collapse of the Javanese state, 1725-1743* (VKI vol. 162 ; Leiden : KITLV Press, 1994), pp. 4, 6, 241, 242, 243.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 243. It should be said that Rommelink does, it seems to me, read VOC sources as “a simple source of information”.

5. Lucas Wilhelmus Nagtegaal, *Ryden op een Hollandse tijger : De noordkust van Java en de V.O.C. 1680-1743* (Doctoral thesis, Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht, 1988), p. 2.

thesis to “the fictionality of traditional historical texts in Indonesian languages [which] has attracted considerable scholarly attention”.⁽⁶⁾ It may be that in some scholarly circles an emphasis on the literary features of chronicles – which it is important to recognise – has led to serious underestimation of their value as historical sources.

Doubts about the validity of Javanese chronicles as historical sources may not rest solely on the grounds of factual errors found in them. Scholars who take this view could hardly think European-language sources to be free of error, yet I am not aware of any doubts having been expressed about using European sources as historical records, even in a “narrow documentary” fashion. The suspicion or rejection of *babads* as historical records, however flawed, may therefore rest on something more profound than discomfort with the chronicle *genre*. Rather it may be, as it almost certainly was in the nineteenth century, a doubt that the Javanese have a sense of history which can make any significant contribution towards knowing their past. This view, if it is indeed held by some, is objectionable on two grounds. Firstly, it is erroneous. There is ample evidence in Javanese chronicles of a vibrant sense of the past.⁽⁷⁾ The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that with particular reference to one such source. Secondly, such a view is an atavism from an age when it was thought that the Javanese past can only be grasped by a modern scholar armed with European records. It threatens to return Javanese to membership of those “people without history”, the “victims and silent witnesses” of history.⁽⁸⁾

Peter Carey’s comments on Javanese *babads* concerning the early nineteenth century are notable for their sensible lucidity. He shows how a Surakarta *kraton* account of the outbreak of the Java War reflects the author’s critical attitudes towards the Dutch, Yogyakarta and Dipanagara. “This critical approach, combined with the highly contemporary nature and historical accuracy of the babad, makes it an invaluable source for students of this period”.⁽⁹⁾ That historical accuracy (in “narrow documentary” terms) is fully established by Carey in voluminous notes for his edition of the *babad*. In his edition and analysis of the *Babad Bědhah ing Ngayogyakarta* by prince Panular of Yogyakarta, Carey observes :

6. Bernard Arps, *Tembang in two traditions : Performance and interpretation of Javanese literature* (London : School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992), p. 352 n.1.

7. This view is supported by Ras in his “Babad Tanah Jawi and its reliability”, p. 254 : “From this brief survey of the contents of the Major Babad of Surakarta we see that 16 % of the text is taken up by stories about mythic origins and the purely legendary past, whereas no less than 84 % is filled with information containing direct, systematic and uninterrupted reference to verifiable historical developments. It would be difficult, indeed, to maintain that the Babad Tanah Jawi is a text in which the reference to reality is no more than a disturbing element, now and then interfering with the overall fictional character of the text”.

8. Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the people without history* (Berkeley, etc. : University of California Press, 1982) ; see esp. p. x.

9. P.B.R. Carey (ed. & transl.), *Babad Dipanagara : An account of the outbreak of the Java War (1825-30) : The Surakarta court version of the Babad Dipanagara with translations into English and Indonesian Malay* (MBRAS monograph n° 9 ; Kuala Lumpur : Art Printing Works Sdn. Bhd. for the Council of the MBRAS, 1981), p. xxiv.

The core of the babad's importance as a work of historical literature lies in the special insights it affords into the author's world, both private and public. If the chronicle is approached merely as a data source for the social history and fait divers of the period, much of its significance as a work of literature will be lost. Nevertheless, there are numerous passages in the babad which do amplify our knowledge of various aspects of the British period in Java and the way in which the Javanese reacted to the presence of the new foreigners on their shores.⁽¹⁰⁾

It is preferable not to become bogged down in general observations about Javanese chronicles, but rather to consider particular works, as does Carey, and to see what general conclusions subsequently arise. It is worth noting that in studying the Surakarta Major *Babad* for the early part of Pakubuwana II's reign, Rummelink picked a part of that work which suffers from considerable confusion and, in particular, from anachronisms. One should not seek to draw general conclusions about Javanese chronicles on this basis. In this article we will consider *Babad Sangkala*, one of a small, closely related family of eighteenth-century Javanese chronicle MSS. This source fully establishes that Javanese chronicle writers could be concerned to record the past with precision. Establishing that is essential to demonstrating that the Javanese were indubitably people with a sense of history and a capacity to record it.

It seems curious – and somewhat frustrating – that it is necessary to argue yet again that precolonial Javanese society had a sense of history and a capacity to record it accurately. De Graaf argued this in 1956, although without substantial analysis of Javanese sources to demonstrate the case.⁽¹¹⁾ Carey has demonstrated the point in the works referred to above. My *Modern Javanese historical tradition* (1978) published a chronogram chronicle written in AD 1738 and argued that :

The Kartasura *Babad ing Sangkala* text shows the existence of a tradition of quite accurate historical writing in the court at least until the late seventeenth century, and the accurate preservation of historical traditions into the 1730s ; chronicles from the later eighteenth, and especially the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, are significantly less accurate than this text.⁽¹²⁾

Further study of materials related to this source, which will be discussed below, now makes it possible to extend this analysis. Yet the historiographical implication of this – that historians of pre-colonial Java are as much obliged to take Javanese sources seriously as historians of France or Germany are obliged to use French or German sources – seems not yet to be accepted by all students of the subject. It makes one wonder whether Clio is chained to Sisyphus in Java.

10. *Idem* (ed.), *The British in Java, 1811-1816 : A Javanese account* (Oriental Documents X ; Oxford : Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1992), pp. 13-14.

11. H.J. de Graaf, "De historische betrouwbaarheid der Javaanse overlevering", *BKI* vol. 112, n° 1 (1956), pp. 55-73.

12. M.C. Ricklefs (ed. & transl.), *Modern Javanese historical tradition : A study of an original Kartasura chronicle and related materials* (London : School of Oriental and African Studies, 1978), p. 203.

The source of interest here, *Babad Sangkala*, is one of the most valuable Javanese records for the reign of Pakubuwana II and is cited frequently in my forthcoming study of that reign.⁽¹³⁾ A separate discussion of it here will demonstrate its importance as a source and shed light on Javanese historical thought more generally.

Babad Sangkala is represented in two MS versions, both held in Leiden University Library.⁽¹⁴⁾ One of these (NBS 87) was owned by J.F.C. Gericke (c. 1800-57); the other (LOR 4097) by H.N. van der Tuuk (1824-94). It seems that NBS 87 (xiii) is a copy of LOR 4097. In other words, van der Tuuk seems to have acquired an original MS of this text which at some point was copied for Gericke, perhaps through their mutual association with the Netherlands Bible Society. These two texts are the only evidence of the survival after the mid-eighteenth century of the verse Kartasura *babad sangkala* tradition represented by the India Office MS Jav. 36 (B), *Babad ing Sangkala*, which was written in 1738 and is studied in my *Modern Javanese historical tradition*. All other *babad sangkala* MSS known to me, while containing many of the same events, are sufficiently different to be regarded as different (and presumably new) textual traditions.

LOR 4097 is written upon poor-quality Javanese paper (*dluwang*) and in a rather crude hand. The binding uses paper from some official Dutch publication which appears to be from about the middle years of the eighteenth century; one of the pages of this book used in binding the back of the MS prints an act dated in 's-Gravenhage on 2 May 1760. On the title page of the MS itself is a pencilled note "A° 1760". The origin of this note is unknown, but it suggests that the MS was acquired by some European c. AD 1760. The physical condition of the MS leads one to suspect that it may have been written in the *kraton's* troubled years between 1743 and 1755, when circumstances were hardly conducive to relaxed literary activity and such luxuries as Dutch paper were no doubt in short supply. It will be argued below that the pattern of episodes in the text also leads to the suspicion that it represents a chronicle compiled c. 1739 to which further episodes were added at other times down to 1748. On these grounds, too, one may imagine the MS to have been compiled in its present form c. 1750. Evidently it was then acquired by a European c. 1760.

NBS 87 (xiii) is on Dutch paper of the kind used in Java in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is watermarked "B & C" with the fence of Holland and "pro patria". It has a substantially higher number of scribal errors when compared with LOR 4097. This MS was used extensively by de Graaf in his studies of the seventeenth century.

13. *The seen and unseen worlds in Java 1726-49 : History, literature and Islam in the court of Pakubuwana II* (Sydney : Allen & Unwin ; Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press).

14. See Th.G.Th. Pigeaud, *Literature of Java : Catalogue raisonné of Javanese manuscripts in the library of the University of Leiden and other public collections in the Netherlands* (4 vols. ; The Hague : Martinus Nyhoff ; Leiden : Bibliotheca Universitatis Lugduni Batavorum ; Leiden : Leiden University Press, 1967-80), vol. II, pp. 192, 735. The parts of the *Babad Sangkala* MSS which cover the period down to 1720 have already been discussed in Ricklefs, *Tradition*, pp. 245-7. The first part of the discussion of *Babad Sangkala* here largely reproduces what is said in that book.

Because LOr 4097 appears to be the original MS of which NBS 87 (xiii) is a copy, it is LOr 4097 which has been used in my *Seen and unseen worlds in Java*. All references here to *Babad Sangkala* are therefore also to LOr 4097.

The text represented in these two MSS is largely in prose rather than verse. It shows its close derivation from an antecedent verse version, however, in the preservation of word-forms used in verse to meet metrical requirements.⁽¹⁵⁾ Some sections are still, indeed, in a recognisable standard poetic metre (see the quotation below). Numerals are used in place of chronograms, excepting only where the author of this prose version apparently failed to recognise a chronogram in the text he was adapting and preserved it as part of the narrative (an example of this will be seen below). Javanese numerals are used for years but, rather curiously, both MSS use Western numerals for dates of months. LOr 4097 preserves the order in which dates are given by chronograms, so that for instance 1673 is given as 3761; the scribe of NBS 87 (xiii) reversed these numerals so that they appear in the conventional numerical order in that MS.

It is important that *Babad Sangkala* can be shown to be closely related to the chronogram-chronicle tradition known in the time of Pakubuwana II. Here will be presented just one pair of parallel passages, which will suffice to show the relationship between the Kartasura *Babad ing Sangkala* which is dated 1738 and the version represented by LOr 4097.

These passages describe the beginning of the reign of Amangkurat II. The 1738 version is given first.⁽¹⁶⁾

Text	Translation
<p>27. <i>Kala aneng [Tě]gal Wangi sedanipun Jěng Susunan kang putra sampun gumantos Kangjěng Susunan Mangkurat wadya suyud dadaya [sic; i.e. sadaya] bubar saking Těgil Arum anglangkungi Pakalongan</i></p>	<p>27. When he was at Těgal Wangi the Susunan passed away. His son then succeeded as Susuhunan Amangkurat [II]. All the troops paid submission and they departed from Těgal Wangi, passing by Pěkalongan.</p>
<p>28. <i>Jěpara sinědya galih sampun abala Walonda wong Koja lan tiyang Ambon wus bubar saking Japara Susunan Amangkurat Kadhiri ingkang jinujug ambědhahi Trunajaya</i></p>	<p>28. Jěpara was the goal in their hearts, already garrisoned by the Dutch, Muslim foreigners, and Ambonese. Then had departed from Jěpara Susunan Amangkurat, Kědiri his destination, to destroy Trunajaya.</p>

15. E.g. *pjah*, *pangran*, *kramangsal*, *Těgil*, *rajeng*, etc. More examples of this are found in the quotation below.

16. Ricklefs, *Tradition*, pp. 86-9, Canto II (Asmaradana). Words which are part of chronograms are enclosed in quotation marks, followed by the date conversion.

29. *Jalma sirna ngrasa wani*

*kala ing Kadhiri bĕdah
Pangeran ing Kajorane
giningsir marang ing Sonya
kalih sirna winayang
wong Kamangkuratan purun*

duk pjahe Trunajaya

29. “Men were destroyed, feeling courageous” [AJ 1601/23 Feb.1678-11 Feb.1679]

when Kĕdiri fell.

The Pangeran of Kajoran
fled to Sonya.

“Two disappeared, played upon the screen by the people” [AJ 1602/12 Feb.1679-1 Feb.1680] of Amangkurat, daring, when Trunajaya died.

30. *Ing Payak denya ngĕmasi
Sunan dhatĕng Surapringga
kala pa-Kĕprĕ pĕrange
bĕdhahe ing Giri Liman
sumĕdya Sabilolah
sikara widik karĕtu
wanine wong ing Mataram*

30. In Payak was he killed.

The Susunan went to Surabaya
when there was fighting in Kĕpĕr.

Giri Liman fell,

intending Holy War,

when “violence on high was destroyed by the courage of the people” [AJ 1602/12 Feb.1679-1 Feb.1680] of Mataram.

31. *Wus bubar Sri Narapati
lumampah dhatĕng ing Pajang
Kartasura kadhatone
Sang Nata anjabĕl pura
dhumatĕng ing Mataram
tan emut lamon sadulur
atĕmah(b)an papĕrangan*

31. Then the ruler departed

and went to Pajang ;

Kartasura was his court.

The ruler demanded back the [old] capital
from Mataram ;

thinking not that they were brothers,
in the end it came to war.

32. *Kang rayi maksih ngukuhi*

*Pangeran asor kang yuda
ya ta lalos mring Pagĕlen [sic]
ya ta Susunan Mangkurat
wangsul mring Kartasura
lir ngambara ngrasa purun*

32. His younger brother [prince Pugĕr]
still stood firm,

but the prince [Pugĕr] lost the battle
and fled to Bagĕlĕn.

Then Susunan Amangkurat
returned to Kartasura

“As if flying in the sky, feeling
courageous”

[AJ 1603/2 Feb.1680-20 Jan.1681],

Raja Namrud rose up as king.

Raja Namrud madĕg Nata.

The prose *Babad Sangkala* version (pp. 27-8) is given below. One should note the failure to recognise and convert the chronogram *janma lina angrasani bumi* (AJ 1601/AD 1678-9) at the start of the second paragraph. The text here is still so close to its verse original that it is in fact in the metre Dhandhanggula except where a date interrupts the verse. The first paragraph below is completely in verse ; the third is in verse except for the final four words, which contain two more syllables than the final line of Dhandhanggula. This evidence regarding the verse original is important also for showing that the version on which the prose *Babad Sangkala* was based was not identical to

the 1738 MS, for the parallel passage there is in Asmaradana metre. Yet clearly the contents were very close to each other. The *Babad Sangkala* version is as follows :

Text

Seda Jěng Sinuhun Těgil Wangi, ingkang putra anggantyani Nata, Prabu Měngkurat⁽¹⁷⁾ namane, sawadyarsa anglurug,⁽¹⁸⁾ duk angkate saking Tatěgil,⁽¹⁹⁾ grig⁽²⁰⁾ pasisir bang kilyan,⁽²¹⁾ Japara jinujug, sampun angait Walonda, mulya budhal⁽²²⁾ anglurug marang Kadhiri, arsa mrěp Trunajaya.

Janma lina angrasani bumi, duk bėdhahe Kadhiri sěmana, Pangeran Kajoran mangke, gingsir mring Sunya sampun 2061. Duk pjah Trunajaya ing Payak genipun, nulya dhatěng Surabaya, duk pa-Kěpěr bdhahe⁽²³⁾ nulya ing Giri, sědyane Sabilolah.

Wusnya bėdhah ing Giri lumaris, Jěng Susunan⁽²⁴⁾ kondur marang Pajang. Kartasura kadhatone, kraton jinabėl sampun, ingkang rayi maksih ngukuhi, mila atěmah yuda, tan emut sadulur, Pangeran aprang kasoran, ngungsi Raja Namrud ingkang raka⁽²⁵⁾ nuli Ruwah kondur mring⁽²⁶⁾ Kartasura.

Alip, 3061

Translation

The Susunan passed away at Těgal Wangi. His son succeeded him as king, King Amangkurat [II] his name. All his troops wished to march. When they set off from Těgal, called up were all those of the western *pasisir*. They headed for Jěpara, already allied with the Dutch. Then they departed to march for Kėdhiri, intending to target Trunajaya.

Men were destroyed, feeling the earth, when Kėdhiri fell. Pangeran Kajoran then fled to Sonya; it was then [AJ] 1602 [12 Feb.1679-1 Feb.1680]. When Trunajaya died, in Payak was it done. Then [the Susunan] went to Surabaya, when was the affair of Kěpěr. Then fell Giri, intending Holy War.

After the fall of Giri, His Highness the Susuhunan returned to Pajang; Kartasura was his court. The [old] capital he had demanded back. His younger brother [Pugěr] still stood firm, so in the end it came to war, thinking not that they were brothers. The prince [Pugěr] lost the battle and took refuge with Raja Namrud. His elder brother, then in the month Ruwah, returned to Kartasura.

It was the year Alip 1603 [2 Feb.1680-20 Jan.1681]....

17. NBS 87 (xiii), p. 267 : *Mangkurat*.

18. *Ibid.* : *nglurug*.

19. *Ibid.* : *Těgil*.

20. *Ibid.* : *krig*.

21. *Ibid.* : *kilen*.

22. *Ibid.* : *bidhal*.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 268 : *bėdhahe*.

24. *Ibid.* : *Susuhunan*.

25. *Ibid.* : *ra* (scribal error).

26. *Ibid.* : *mring* omitted.

This comparison of the 1738 *Babad ing Sangkala* MS with a parallel section in the later *Babad Sangkala* – a comparison which could be greatly extended – makes one important point clear beyond reasonable doubt. That is, *Babad Sangkala* of the mid-eighteenth century derived from a verse chronicle very like that found in the 1738 MS. The prototype of *Babad Sangkala* was not, however, precisely the same as the 1738 *Babad ing Sangkala*. The excerpt above shows its derivation from an original in Dhandhanggula metre, whereas the parallel section of *Babad ing Sangkala* is in Asmaradana metre. There are also a few short passages in *Babad Sangkala* where the text has details additional to those in the 1738 *Babad ing Sangkala*, thereby confirming its prototype to have been different. One can, however, reasonably conclude that the passages in *Babad Sangkala* concerning the period before 1720 – at which point the 1738 MS breaks off and comparison therefore becomes impossible – are a later (c. 1750) prose recension of a verse chronicle tradition which was known in the time of Pakubuwana II, as is shown by the survival of the 1738 *Babad ing Sangkala* MS.

A second point also requires emphasis. That is, the Kartasura verse chronogram chronicle tradition, witnessed in the 1738 MS and subsequently turned into the prose recension witnessed in *Babad Sangkala*, was a notably accurate (if regrettably succinct) account of events. Analysis of the 1738 MS by seeking corroboration in contemporary VOC records, which provide reasonably accurate dating (but not necessarily interpretation) of events, shows this to be so.⁽²⁷⁾ There are evidently errors in the text, but they are few. The MS is particularly inaccurate concerning the chaos of the 1670s. This leads to the suggestion that the 1738 MS preserves a very accurate text originally composed (presumably as events developed) before c. 1670, which was available for recopying after the establishment of Kartasura in 1680, but that the description of the chaotic 1670s was recorded *ex post facto* with many errors. To these sections were added new passages concerning post-1680 events. The *Babad ing Sangkala* MS of 1738 is thus a compilation of older and new sections.⁽²⁸⁾

For the purposes of the present discussion, two questions are central. Firstly, can the account of the reign of Pakubuwana II in the *Babad Sangkala* MS of c. 1750 be shown also to derive from a text known in that reign itself? Secondly, to what extent can that account be shown to be accurate? Unfortunately no older MS is known to exist of a chronogram chronicle from the time of Pakubuwana II which includes that reign. So there is no

27. Such a comparison is the heart of the commentary upon the 1738 MS in Ricklefs, *Tradition*; see esp. pp. 169-201. Note that the comparison of the MS with VOC evidence on the Kartasura period could now be redone more accurately on the basis of the evidence used in M.C. Ricklefs, *War, culture and economy in Java, 1677-1726 : Asian and European imperialism in the early Kartasura period* (Sydney : Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen and Unwin, 1993).

28. Ricklefs, *Tradition*, pp. 183-7.

codicological evidence to answer the first question. The second question is answerable by comparison with other records, and has implications for an answer to the first.

The accuracy of the *Babad Sangkala* depiction of Pakubuwana II's reign (MS pp. 57-97) can be established by comparison with other sources. There are multiple references to and verbatim quotations from this *Babad Sangkala* MS in my forthcoming *Seen and unseen worlds in Java*. Readers will see there that the text is sometimes quite succinct, describing events with only a few details, but is sometimes more extensive in its descriptions, although it never approaches the prolixity of texts like *Babad Kraton*, the Surakarta Major *Babad* or *Babad Giyanti*. *Babad Sangkala*'s dates for events are often given in detail. Both these depictions of events and their dates may be compared with VOC records. One must not, however, assume in such a comparison that wherever the two sources conflict it is the Dutch record which is correct. What one seeks, rather, is a reasonable degree of corroboration of episodes concerning which the VOC had means of knowing and reporting the information also given in LOr 4097. Sometimes contemporaneous Javanese letters preserved in the VOC archives offer corroboration. A few dates are given for eclipses, which can be compared with Oppolzer's *Canon of eclipses*.⁽²⁹⁾

While working through the evidence employed for my study of the reign of Pakubuwana II (1726-49), it was a simple matter to note where *Babad Sangkala*'s versions of episodes were corroborated by other evidence. One technicality concerning dates should be borne in mind. When one converts dates from the AJ to AD calendars using standard tables such as *Djidwal memindahkan tahoen Djawa dan 'Arab ketahoen Maséhi*,⁽³⁰⁾ one discovers that Javanese practice could differ by one or occasionally two days from what the tables predict, presumably because of variations in the observation of the new moon. So, in assessing the accuracy of *Babad Sangkala*, it seems appropriate to regard as correct any detailed date which, when converted according to the tables, is within two days of what is found in other records. Of course the chronicle frequently raises matters for which no other evidence is available, or concerning which VOC reports can only be conjectural. When Javanese and VOC sources conflict, there may in fact be strong arguments for favouring the former.⁽³¹⁾ Nevertheless, there were eighty-one episodes in *Babad Sangkala* concerning Pakubuwana II's time down to 1742 where other evidence seemed to offer a ready means of assessing the chronicle's accuracy. The results are persuasive, as the following table shows.

29. Theodor Ritter von Oppolzer, *Canon of eclipses (Canon der Finsternisse)* (transl. Owen Gingerich; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962).

30. Batavia-Centrum: Balai Poestaka, 1932.

31. E.g. concerning the return of the royal *pusakas* in 1737. See my *Seen and unseen worlds*, chapter 6.

The accuracy of Babad Sangkala (LOr 4097)
on the reign of Pakubuwana II to the fall of Kartasura, 1726-42

	Number of episodes	Proportion
Corroborated as correct	72	0.89
Probably correct	1	0.01
Suffering from minor errors	2	0.02
Almost certainly inaccurate	3	0.04
Calligraphic errors	2	0.02
Unclear	1	0.01
Total	81	0.99

Before accepting that about 90 per cent of the readily assessed episodes in the MS are accurate, readers will wish to know how rigorous was the requirement for corroboration. This is best illustrated by looking at the cases which did not make it into the first category. The single episode regarded as probably correct concerns the annual trip by the Patih (chief administrative officer of the court) to pay the court's cash and rice dues to the VOC in Sĕmarang. *Babad Sangkala* (p. 80) says that Natakusuma returned from Sĕmarang on Tuesday 16 Sapar AJ 1661; *Djidwal* leads one to expect 16 Sapar to have fallen on Wednesday, which would be equivalent to 27 June 1736. A VOC source says that he left from Sĕmarang on 23 June;⁽³²⁾ this does not give his arrival date in Kartasura but makes 26/7 June probably correct. The category of minor errors is exemplified by the report in *Babad Sangkala* (p. 62) of the Patih Danurĕja's arrival back in Kartasura from Batavia in September 1729. The MS dates this Thursday 27 Sapar, *wuku* Warigagung, *mongsa* Katĕlu, Je 1654. All of these elements are mutually consistent and are equivalent to 22 September 1729. But a VOC letter from Sĕmarang⁽³³⁾ reports that Danurĕja arrived in Kartasura on 27 September. So the episode may be regarded as suffering from a minor error, but one cannot rule out the possibility that it is the VOC report which has the mistake. The second episode in this category is that concerning the fall of Kartasura to the Chinese in 1742. Here LOr 4097 (p. 94) seems to be wrong by one day from the correct AJ (not converted AD) date; this complex business is discussed in my *Seen and unseen worlds*.⁽³⁴⁾

The episodes which are regarded as almost certainly inaccurate are exemplified by the *Babad Sangkala* account (pp. 76-7) concerning the killing

32. Sĕmarang to Batavia, 30 June 1736, in VOC 2391 (OB 1737) in Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague. (All archival references below to VOC ... (OB ...) records refer to sources in the Algemeen Rijksarchief.)

33. Ter Smitten, Sĕmarang, to Batavia, 5 Oct. 1729, in VOC 2139 (OB 1730).

34. Chapter 8, n° 103.

of one Onggakusuma in 1735. The whole matter is obscure, but the date given for the death certainly seems to be wrong by two weeks. Similarly, on p. 78 the text records the departure of Natakusuma to Sēmarang to pay the annual dues on Thursday, 3 Sura, *mongsa* Kasa, Ehe 1660 (= 26 May 1735), but a letter from the Susuhunan announces his departure two weeks later.⁽³⁵⁾ Finally, the departure of Pringgalaya with an army to Salatiga during the Chinese war is dated (p. 92) AJ 1665 (30 March 1740-18 March 1741) whereas in fact this took place in June 1741.⁽³⁶⁾

Two episodes fall into the category of calligraphic errors. As pointed out above, *Babad Sangkala* uses Javanese numerals for years but Western numerals for dates of months. The scribe was evidently not very familiar with these foreign numerals, which are written rather clumsily. In two cases, where the scribe has written what seems to be a 2 and produced a wrong date, had it been a 1 the date would be correct (within the two-day limits referred to above). On p. 66 the departure of royal ambassadors to Batavia is dated Monday 27 Rabingulakir, Dal 1655 (= 9 Nov. 1730, in fact a Thursday). The correct date, confirmed in a VOC letter,⁽³⁷⁾ is Monday 17 Rabingulakir (= 30 Oct. 1730). On p. 85 the MS refers to Nicolaas Crul, the VOC governor of Sēmarang with the date Tuesday, 23 Jumadilawal AJ 1662, evidently referring to his arrival in Kartasura. *Djidwal* leads one to expect 23 Jumadilawal to have been Thursday, equivalent to 19 September 1737. But Crul actually arrived in Kartasura on Tuesday, 10 September.⁽³⁸⁾ Had the scribe written Tuesday, 13 Jumadilawal, the text would have been correct, assuming that Kartasura practice differed from the *Djidwal* table by a day. Finally, one episode above is classified as unclear. This is found on p. 64 of *Babad Sangkala*. Here is described the visit by F.J. Coyett to Kartasura in September-October 1730, followed by the appointment of Condranagara to replace Urawan in a senior court post. VOC letters say that Condranagara was already designated as the successor by 5 Sept. 1730,⁽³⁹⁾ whereas Coyett only arrived in Kartasura on 21 September.⁽⁴⁰⁾ But it is quite possible that Condranagara's formal installation in his new post only took place at the great court celebration of Garēbeg Mulud Dal on 25 September, which Coyett observed in all its glory.⁽⁴¹⁾ Hence one cannot reasonably say that *Babad Sangkala*'s dating is either right or wrong.

The conclusion which arises from this analysis is obvious : *Babad Sangkala* is a very accurate account of the reign of Pakubuwana II. One does

35. PB II, Kartasura, to Duyvensz, Sēmarang, Thurs. 17 Sura, Ehe 1660 (= 9 June 1735), rec'd 13 June 1735, in VOC 2358 (OB 1736).

36. Van Velse, Kartasura, to Visscher, Sēmarang, 22 June 1741 (3rd letter of the day), in Surakarta 15, "Aparte brieven naar Samarang 1740-1741", in Arsip Nasional RI, Jakarta.

37. Coyett, Sēmarang, to Batavia, 31 Oct. 1730, in VOC 2169 (OB 1731).

38. Crul, Kartasura, to Sēmarang, 19 Sept. 1737, in VOC 2418 (OB 1738). The 10 Sept. date is confirmed in Rautenberg, dagregister 5 Sept.-14 Oct. 1737, in VOC 2418 (OB 1738).

39. Coster, Kartasura, to Coyett, Sēmarang, 22 Aug. & 6 Sept. 1730, in VOC 2169 (OB 1731).

40. Greven, dagregister 17 Sept.-19 Oct. 1730, in VOC 2169 (OB 1731).

41. *Ibid.*

not need to preface such an observation with convoluted qualifications about Javanese having different perceptions of time, or specific literary conventions, or conceptions of reality which were different from those of today, or social imperatives which influenced how they perceived and wrote history. All of these things are true, but of little relevance here. *Babad Sangkala's* account of Pakubuwana II's time is a straightforward chronicle. It describes events as they occurred – so far as this can be known on the basis of corroborating evidence – and provides generally accurate dating. It is, on the basis of the simple comparison above, at least as accurate an account of the reign as can be found in European sources.⁽⁴²⁾ Given Javanese writers' undoubtedly greater understanding of indigenous affairs, it is not surprising when *Babad Sangkala* seems to be more reliable. It is self-evident therefore that its account of those affairs for which there is no corroborating evidence should be considered very seriously. A historian's main regret must be that the text is so succinct, while a student of literature may regret that it is so dull.

The question was posed above as to whether *Babad Sangkala's* account of Pakubuwana II's reign might have derived from a MS known during that king's lifetime. Since no MS survives to demonstrate that this was so, there can be no confident answer to this question. But the accuracy of the prose version does indeed suggest that it derived from a text composed at the time of the events down to c. 1739. It is hard to imagine how otherwise such an accurate record could have been composed.

The pattern of the text also points to compilation during the reign of Pakubuwana II. Year after year, *Babad Sangkala* records events of significance in *kraton* life until it comes to AJ 1664, beginning in April 1739. Then, on p. 92, it records briefly Pakubuwana II's progress to Mataram in September-October 1739, then skips immediately to AJ 1665 (beginning in March 1740) to record and date inaccurately Pringgalaya's march to Salatiga. Thereafter, on pp. 92-4, it describes with more details and accurately dates the attack on the VOC garrison of July 1741, the bursting of the gun Gunturgēni and the surrender of the garrison in August 1741, the killing of Tēpasana in July 1741 (i.e., out of chronological order), the summoning of Mas Brahim to Kartasura in September 1741 (for which no corroborating evidence has come to light), and the arrest of Natakusuma and fall of Kartasura in June 1742. Thereafter, on pp. 94-6, events of 1742-8 are briefly described.

This pattern strongly suggests that *Babad Sangkala* represents a text to which events were added in a regular fashion until c. 1739. Then the recording of events appears to have been interrupted. The dramatic affairs of July-August 1741 were probably added at around the time of the events. But one has the impression that thereafter the court's record-keeping was haphazard, as one might well expect it to have been in that time of war and crisis. Thus, *Babad Sangkala* appears to represent a text compiled down to c. 1739, to

42. I have pointed out in *War, culture and economy*, p. 341 n.106, that Valentyn, *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën*, commits historical error comparable to the sort found in the 1738 *Babad ing Sangkala* MS. Other erroneous VOC reports are referred to in my *Seen and unseen worlds*.

which new episodes were subsequently added, some possibly in 1741 and others at a later time or times down to 1748. The codicological evidence described above suggests LOr 4097 was then acquired by a European c. 1760.

There can be no reasonable doubt that *Babad Sangkala*, like the antecedent verse *Babad ing Sangkala* MS of 1738, demonstrates the existence of a sense of unfolding historical events in Javanese court circles.⁽⁴³⁾ It is therefore a source not only for the reign of Pakubuwana II, but for the study of Javanese historical thought in general. It demonstrates that in the mid-eighteenth century there was a view of the past which saw it as sequential, within an evolving chronological framework. Events were not only recorded, but also judged and explained within the cultural frameworks of the time. According to this MS, the Patih Danurĕja survived a fatal bridge collapse of 1729 because he was still favoured by God,⁽⁴⁴⁾ the king became involved in homosexuality because he did not fear divine prohibitions,⁽⁴⁵⁾ the chief religious officer of the court encountered misfortune when his son was executed without proper investigation by the king,⁽⁴⁶⁾ and so on.

In other words, here is evidence of a chronicle tradition which believed that events occurred in a sequence, that they had causes and consequences, that they could be judged and, as is evidenced by the very existence of such works, that the past was worth knowing and worth recording accurately.

Whether other *babads* achieve the level of literal, factual accuracy which can be seen in *Babad Sangkala* or its 1738 predecessor is irrelevant to the central points here. For this chronogram chronicle tradition demonstrates that there was a sense of sequential, causal developments over time in Javanese historical thought. Since this is so, it may be of interest to ask why the Surakarta Major *Babad* should be confused concerning some aspects of Pakubuwana II's reign – just as one may ask why Dutch reports from the court sometimes profoundly misunderstand or misrepresent events there or why Valentyn's *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën* is sometimes so full of error.

Such questions do not detract from the points I have sought to make here. Javanese courtiers no doubt turned to works like *Babad Sangkala* as simple sources of factual information about the past. It was therefore worth their while to attempt to preserve such historical records accurately. Modern historians are obliged to take such works seriously, as well. Of course all sources – Javanese, European or whatever – must be subjected to rigorous historical criticism, including a consideration of the literary and other conventions which influenced them. No sources are, in some abstract sense, perfect. But to dismiss Javanese chronicles as sources of factual historical material, to pretend that one can write Javanese history without serious study of the sources – historical and otherwise – produced by that society, would be like refusing to light a torch in the dark on the grounds that some shadows would still remain.

43. See my comments in *Tradition*, pp. 198-9.

44. *B. Sang.*, pp. 62-3.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

ABBREVIATIONS

AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> , the Christian era
AJ	<i>Anno Javanico</i> , the Javanese era
BKI	<i>Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde</i>
LOr	Leiden University Library Oriental MS
MS, MSS	manuscript, manuscripts
NBS	Netherlands Bible Society MS, Leiden University Library
VKI	<i>Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde</i>
VOC	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, the Dutch East India Company

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arps, Bernard, *Tembang in two traditions : Performance and interpretation of Javanese literature*. London : School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1992.
- Carey, P.B.R. (ed. & transl.), *Babad Dipanagara : An account of the outbreak of the Java War (1825-30) : The Surakarta court version of the Babad Dipanagara with translations into English and Indonesian Malay*. MBRAS monograph n° 9. Kuala Lumpur : Art Printing Works Sdn. Bhd. for the Council of the MBRAS, 1981.
- Carey, P.B.R. (ed.), *The British in Java, 1811-1816 : A Javanese account*. Oriental Documents X. Oxford : Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1992.
- Djidwal memindahkan tahoen Djawa dan 'Arab ketahoen Maséhi*. Batavia-Centrum : Balai Poestaka, 1932.
- Graaf, H.J. de, "De historische betrouwbaarheid der Javaanse overlevering". *BKI* vol. 112, n° 1 (1956), pp. 55-73.
- Nagtegaal, Lucas Wilhelmus, *Ryden op een Hollandse tijger : De noordkust van Java en de V.O.C. 1680-1743*. Doctoral thesis, Rijksuniversiteit te Utrecht, 1988.
- Oppolzer, Theodor Ritter von, *Canon of eclipses (Canon der Finsternisse)*. Transl. Owen Gingerich. New York : Dover Publications, Inc., 1962.
- Pigeaud, Th.G.Th., *Literature of Java : Catalogue raisonné of Javanese manuscripts in the library of the University of Leiden and other public collections in the Netherlands*. 4 vols. The Hague : Martinus Nyhoff; Leiden : Bibliotheca Universitatis Lugduni Batavorum; Leiden : Leiden University Press, 1967-80.
- Ras, J.J., "The Babad Tanah Jawi and its reliability : Questions of content, structure and function", pp. 246-73 in C.D. Grijns & S.O. Robson (eds), *Cultural contact and textual interpretation : Papers from the fourth European colloquium on Malay and Indonesian studies, held in Leiden in 1983*. VKI vol. 115. Dordrecht & Cinnaminson : Foris Publications, 1986.
- Rommelink, Willem, *The Chinese War and the collapse of the Javanese state, 1725-1743*. VKI vol. 162. Leiden : KITLV Press, 1994.

- Ricklefs, M.C., "Javanese sources in the writing of Modern Javanese history", pp. 332-44 in C.D. Cowan & O.W. Wolters (eds), *Southeast Asian history and historiography : Essays presented to D.G.E. Hall*. Ithaca & London : Cornell University Press, 1976.
- (ed. & transl.), *Modern Javanese historical tradition : A study of an original Kartasura chronicle and related materials*. London : School of Oriental and African Studies, 1978.
- *The Seen and unseen worlds in Java 1726-49 : History, literature and Islam in the court of Pakubuwana II*. Sydney : Allen & Unwin ; Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, forthcoming.
- *War, culture and economy in Java, 1677-1726 : Asian and European imperialism in the early Kartasura period*. Sydney : Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen and Unwin, 1993.
- Valentyn, Fr., *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën : Vervattende een naaukeurige en uitvoerige verhandelinge van Nederlands mogentheyd in die gewesten...* 8 vols. Dordrecht & Amsterdam : J. Van Braam & G. Onder de Linden, 1724-6.
- Wolf, Eric R., *Europe and the people without history*. Berkeley, etc. : University of California Press, 1982.