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The Kakawin Sutasoma: A Look at 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' & Perceptions of the Text's Religious Implications

Hana Aghababian

SIT Graduate Institute - Study Abroad

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**THE *KAKAWIN SUTASOMA*:
A LOOK AT '*BHINNEKA TUNGGAL IKA*' &
PERCEPTIONS OF THE TEXT'S RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS**

**Hana Aghababian
Sugi Lanus, UNUD
SIT Study Abroad
Indonesia: Arts, Religion, and Social Change
Spring 2015**

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1: ABSTRACT

This study, to be concise, is an analysis of the religious aspects of the epic *Sutasoma*. Written in the 14th century CE during the height of the Majapahit Empire of East Java, this *kakawin* has raised several questions about its religious orientation, messages, and motives; questions, which, given the religious ambiguity of the time, are extremely difficult to answer. The *Sutasoma* also contains the famous line, “*bhinneka tunggal ika*,” which, often translated as “unity in diversity,” has since been adopted as the Indonesian national motto. The context and meaning of this passage has also been heavily contested. This study, therefore, is an attempt to contribute to these ongoing debates. By comparing the works of published scholars with the words of a diverse group of Indonesian individuals, this work explores the various interpretations of the story, its characters, and the “*bhinneka tunggal ika*” passage. Not only does this work examine the subtleties of the religious aspects of the famous story, it also serves to demonstrate that ancient literature, regardless of its distance from the present day, still remains relevant in modernity.

2: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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own and helped make this study abroad experience absolutely incredible. Thank you so much for your kindness and generosity, as well as your knowledge, assistance, and guidance.

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3: PREFACE

Ancient Studies is a field often overlooked and disregarded in the modern society. When I tell people that I am a Classical Studies major, I am often asked, “Why — who cares?” More often than not, however, my interrogator may simply be unaware of what a Classical Studies major entails. Some assume by ‘classics’ that I simply read the English ‘classics’: Shakespeare, Dickens, Chaucer, Austen, etc. Very few are familiar with the interdisciplinary nature of the study or its focus on the very foundation of western civilizations. The work of Classicists encompasses a wide range of studies including art and architecture, linguistics, history, sociology, philosophy, archaeology, anthropology, religion, politics, and literature of the ancient Mediterranean world.

Despite the myriad voices of doubt and skepticism that I have had to counter since declaring my major, I strongly believe that Classical Studies is a field still very much relevant to modern society. Without Greece, there may never have been democracy as we know it today; without Latin, more than half of the English vocabulary would be nonexistent; without Greek and Roman mythology, who knows what our planets and days of the week would have been named; without Homer, James Joyce would never have written *Ulysses*. As members of a society so heavily influenced by the ancients, I believe that it is crucial to have at least a basic understanding of the ancient world.

It is with this mindset that I have arrived at my ISP topic. Indonesian society and culture are so heavily infused with ancient knowledge and customs that it is difficult to find a topic *not* associated with antiquity. Pak Ketut Kejun (a sixty year old local of Bedulu who now works in the tourism industry)’s understanding of the history and significance of Pura Samuan Tiga, for example, speaks to the continuation of ancient Hindu practices and beliefs. In a short interview,

Pak Ketut expressed the significance of the temple, which was built in the 10th century to commemorate the merging of the Tri Murti. This idea now heavily influences Balinese Hindu practices and beliefs.¹ Therefore, going as far back in history as possible while still maintaining a tangible focus, I have decided to explore the national motto, “*bhinneka tunggal ika*,” often translated as “unity in diversity,” and its origins in the *kakawin Sutasoma*. As a story pertaining to the two oldest religions of Indonesia and as a motto chosen to represent the very essence of the country, this story and phrase hold great significance. This study, I hope, therefore is a worthy contribution to the scholarship of Indonesian Studies.

1. Pak Ketut Kejun, Personal Communication, February 4, 2015.

4: INTRODUCTION

FOCUS OF THIS STUDY

Focusing on the experiences of Sutasoma, several scholars have studied the *Sutasoma* story and its relevance to Hindu and Buddhist teachings in both Majapahit Java and modern Indonesia. Many questions have been raised concerning the character Sutasoma himself and the implications of the main conflict at the end of the story. While some consider Sutasoma to be an incarnation of Buddha, others simply regard Sutasoma as an admirable leader with noble qualities; Professor Angela Hobart, for example, writes that Balinese *dalangs* (traditional puppeteers of *wayang kulit* performances) see Sutasoma as the Buddha, whereas their Sudra audiences do not make the same connection to the deity.² Those who equate Sutasoma to Buddha further interpret the final conflict as a representation of Buddhist superiority over Siwaism or Hinduism. As Professor Zuriati writes, for example, “for Mpu Tantular [the author of the *Sutasoma*], Sutasoma and Buddhism are the winners.”³

These varying interpretations are further complicated by the famous “*bhinneka tunggal ika*” passage of the *Sutasoma*. Translated as “unity in diversity” and having since become the national motto of Indonesia, these words represent the “merging of Hinduism and Buddhism into one religious system [in which] ... Siwa and Buddha are described as different but essentially one.”⁴ How then, can scholars claim the superiority of one religion over the other while simultaneously preaching the importance of “*bhinneka tunggal ika*”?

2. Angela Hobart, “The Enlightened Prince Sutasoma: Transformations of a Buddhist Story,” *Indonesia*, no. 49 (1990): 88-89.

3. Z. Zuriati, “Kakawin Sutasoma and Sutasoma,” review of *Kakawin Sutasoma*, by Dwi Woro Retno Mastuti and Hastho Bramantyo and *Sutasoma*, by Cok Sawitri, *Wacana* 12, no. 2 (2010): 423.

4. Ann R. Kinney, *Worshipping Siva and Buddha: The Temple Art of East Java* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 24.

Given the obscurity of the realities of the religions of the time,⁵ it becomes extremely difficult to classify the *Sutasoma* as strictly Hindu or Buddhist, especially from a scholarly perspective. Add to this the contrasting interpretations of the characters and events of the story, and the picture becomes even more complicated. Depending on an individual's religious background, exposure to the story, and historical context, perceptions and interpretations of the text begin to vary greatly. Modern reception of the story, therefore, becomes an extremely intriguing study. Those familiar with Hans Robert Jauss' idea of 'horizons of expectations' or Stanley Fish's theories of 'interpretive communities'⁶ would immediately recognize that it is only natural that individuals of varying backgrounds and experiences would have different outlooks toward the text and consequently interpret it differently. The fact that the articles and books cited in this work all present myriad varieties of interpretations truly speaks to the relevance of these theories.

Taking this all into consideration, the present study is an attempt to contribute to the scholarship of modern reception of the *Sutasoma* story. Focusing on individuals' interpretations of the *Sutasoma* itself, its characters, and of the "*bhinneka tunggal ika*" motto, the study explores the manifestation of Jauss' and other scholars' theories in modern reception. Particular attention is paid to the interpretations of *dalangs*, other artists, and their audiences (who know the *Sutasoma* within the context of entertainment and story-telling), as well as academic scholars (who know the *Sutasoma* within the context of literary theory and history) from the Universities of Udayana and Gajah Mada. In short, this study is a comparative study of the responses of individuals with varying 'horizons of expectations' to the questions, "How do individuals of

5. This will be discussed in further detail below.

6. Details of these theories will also be further discussed below.

varying social and education backgrounds interpret both the character and story of *Sutasoma*? How are their interpretations affected by their ‘horizons of expectations,’” “does ‘*bhinneka tunggal ika*’ represent different ideas to different individuals? How do their interpretations differ,” and “what causes individuals to label the *Sutasoma* as exclusively Hindu or Buddhist.”

LITERARY RECEPTION & HORIZONS OF EXPECTATIONS

RECEPTION THEORIES & DEFINITIONS

As Hans Robert Jauss writes, “in the triangle of author, work and reading public the latter is no passive part, no chain of mere reactions, but even history-making energy. The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of its audience.”⁷ An analysis of an individual’s reaction to a work of literature therefore is equally important to a study of the text itself. This notion of shifting one’s focus to the audience is a relatively recent scholarly phenomenon. What is called ‘reader-response theory’ arose in the 1970s as a reaction to the formalist interpretations of literature, which strived to be “scientific, focusing on language, structure, diction, irony, paradox, metaphor, and other aspects of the text itself which should be defined objectively [...] labeling any attempts to interpret a literary work based on reader’s responses to it as a manifestation of the ‘affective fallacy.’”⁸

Two main schools of thought criticize this objective, formalist approach: the ‘constance school of reception aesthetics,’ which considers a literary work as an effect that must be explained, and the ‘individualist school,’ which focuses on the readers’ different responses and how these responses are affected by their personalities and backgrounds. Jauss, who belongs to

7. Hans Robert Jauss and Elizabeth Benzinger, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” *New Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1970): 8.

8. Astrid Martinez, “Reader-Response Criticism: The Revolt Against Formalist Interpretations of Literature” (presentation, n.d.).

this first school of thought, introduced the idea of ‘horizons of expectations,’ which are sets of “historical, cultural, and psychological assumptions collectively shared by texts and readers.”⁹ Wolfgang Iser similarly writes of ‘pre-intentions,’ “expectations that the text elicits from the reader, which were purposefully included by the author.” Stanley Fish, an American theorist belonging to the individualist school, writes that each individual’s interpretation is both subjective and objective; it is subjective because it represents a specific point of view, but it is also objective because the point of view is shared by an ‘interpretive community,’ a group of readers that share the same assumptions and will thus come to a similar consensus.¹⁰ The writings of these theorists make clear that the study of literature is not limited to an examination of the text itself; individuals’ reactions and interpretations are equally intriguing and require careful analysis. Jauss writes,

A literary work is not an object which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each reader in each period. It is not a monument which reveals its timeless essence in a monologue. It is much more like an orchestration which strikes ever new chords among its readers and which frees the text from the substance of the words and makes it meaningful for the time: ‘words which must, at the same time that they speak to him, create an interlocutor capable of listening.’¹¹

In the context of this work, therefore, it is crucial to consider not only the *Sutasoma* story and its implications, but the diverse interpretations that have developed as a response to the text, as well.

THE SUTASOMA AS A TEXT

By definition, it must be clarified, the *Sutasoma* is a literary text. A specific author who utilized specific language and meter physically wrote it, and it is categorized within a particular

9. Martinez, “Reader-Response Criticism.”

10. Ibid.

11. Jauss, “Literary Theory,” 10.

literary genre. If the literary tradition of reading and copying the textual manuscript had continued into modern Indonesian society, these aforementioned theories, which deal with physical works of literature that are read and interpreted – rather than performed and observed – by their audience, would neatly apply to modern reception. This, however, is not the case. As it is discussed in further detail below, the main context in which Indonesians are exposed to the *Sutasoma* is not through readings of a physical text, but through *wayang kulit* performances, and very few individuals, unless they are studying the story in an academic setting, have access to a copy of the original text. Thus, the relevance of the above theories to the present study becomes complicated. Using loose definitions of the words ‘text’ and ‘reader,’ however, can resolve this complication.

To be necessarily repetitive, the *Sutasoma* is a ‘text’; the context in which the story is known in present day, however, does little to warrant the use of the word ‘text.’ Nevertheless, because it was indeed a ‘text’ in its original form, in order for the theories to remain applicable, we shall continue to consider the *Sutasoma*, in both ancient and modern times, a ‘text.’ Similar liberties must be taken with the word ‘reader.’ Even if next to no one now ‘reads’ the text, someone at some point in time naturally must have read it. Individuals who were then introduced to the story via the recollections of these original readers subsequently ‘read,’ or interpreted, these accounts in order to produce their own. Thus we shall consider ‘readers’ to be ‘interpreters,’ whether of a physical text or of an artistic performance of the story. The English language, in fact, lends itself to this denotative license; an entry in the Oxford American Writer’s Thesaurus lists ‘interpret, take, take to mean, construe, see, and understand’ as synonyms for ‘read.’

Adrian Vickers faces similar complications in his work, *Journeys of Desire*, which explores the various artistic manifestations of the Balinese text *Malat*. As he writes in his introduction, the “text was more than the manuscripts”; “the *Malat* spills over from the written word into types of performance and visual representation, [...] and the written word makes little sense, or is at least ‘boring,’ unless you understand that it is part of a wider process of representation, linked to notions of genre and to cultural models.”¹² He further explains thus:

In explaining Balinese definitions of ‘*Malat*’ it became clear to me that the word was used without assuming that other forms of representation of performance were subordinate to the written word. In other words, there was no sense that dancers or painters should refer back to some original and definitive text that was superior to their own products [...] Balinese kept ‘varying,’ ‘fragmenting’ and ‘corrupting’ (to use the European terms) manuscripts because of this interaction, because only fragments filled the needs of providing specific episodes to describe performed stories, or to be sung during rituals. Or more broadly speaking, only fragments spoke to the specific times and places in which they were produced. This fragmentation was, then, a positive experience that kept the *Malat* alive and rendered it a broad cultural phenomenon, allowing it to serve as political mode, romantic entertainment, an element of ritual and a form of history, not tied to any single function.¹³

Professor Wallace Bacon has also written considerably on the relationship between literature and performance. In defining performance theory, he writes, “Our center is in the interaction between readers and texts which enriches, extends, clarifies, and (yes) alters the interior and even the exterior lives of students and performers and audiences through the power of texts.”¹⁴ This “power of texts” must not be overlooked or underestimated:

To say that both text and performer are of vital importance is not to deny that a study of the art may, at any given time, choose to spend time with one rather than the other. In my own case, I have, in what I have written, spent much time with

12. Adrian Vickers, *Journeys of Desire: A Study of the Balinese Text Malat* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2005), 9.

13. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

14. Wallace Bacon, *Literature in Performance* 5, no. 1 (1984): 84.

the text, partly because when I came to the field it seemed to me that the notion of “text” needed exploring *in relationship with performance* [his italics], and the idea of performance as a way of knowing was new and exciting to me.¹⁵

Bacon also writes of the “process of matching” between the performer and the text, which is not a question of “dominance and submission by either text or performer,” but an ever-changing process that results in a “gradual merging of the two bodies.”¹⁶ This matching process leaves the text “unchanged,” but the poem, or text, and the performer become one, “visible and audible,” and the “delicate back-and-forth play between poet, poet-in-the-poem, the language of the text, performer, and performer-in-the-poem combines to produce the unique interpretative event.” The final product is “neither poet nor performer but poem as *poem* [his italics].”¹⁷ This last statement by Bacon is especially striking and relevant to this study. The text and performance, or in our case, the *Sutasoma* and the *wayang kulit* performances, are closely linked in a mutual relationship in which both parts merge to create the final product.

MODERN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE *SUTASOMA*

The *Sutasoma*, despite being a story from nearly seven centuries ago, is still appreciated by modern Indonesians. Although it does not enjoy the same level of popularity as other great epics such as the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*, Indonesians are introduced to the story in a number of different ways. The *wayang kulit* is the “main vehicle” through which most individuals become acquainted with Sutasoma’s teachings.¹⁸ Others study the text in social groups called *sekaa bebasan*, which comprise about ten male members who meet regularly to

15. Wallace Bacon, “The Dangerous Shores – One Last Time,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1996): 356.

16. Ibid.

17. Wallace Bacon, “An Aesthetics of Performance,” *Literature in Performance* 1, no. 1 (1980): 1.

18. Hobart, “The Enlightened Prince,” 76.

chant, translate, and comment on the text. Members tend to be drawn from all castes but they are usually more scholarly inclined, including puppeteers, poets, priests, artists, and skilled craftsmen.¹⁹ According to Robson, the works most often selected to be read and discussed are the *Ramayana*, because of its “beauty of language,” and the *Sutasoma*, because it is the “most significant from a religious point of view.”²⁰ Zoetmulder similarly writes that the *Sutasoma* has remained popular because of its “partially didactic character”; “the combination of profound metaphysical speculation, found especially in the instruction given by Sutasoma to his disciples, and richly varied narrative [...] has never lost its attraction.”²¹ The story is also preserved on *lontar*, or palm-leaf, manuscripts, which are collected and copied by persons belonging to a variety of social groups.²² The fact that the *Cantakaparwa*, an encyclopedic collection of Old Javanese literature which contains an abridged version of the *kakawin Sutasoma*, was even written, as Aoyama also writes, is a reflection of the Indonesian interest in the culture and literature of the ‘classics.’²³

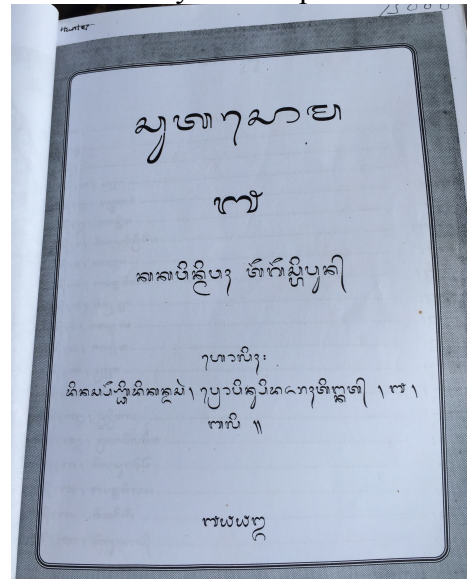


Figure 1: Pak Made Buana's copy of the Sutasoma text translated into Balinese

19. Hobart, “The Enlightened Prince,” 79-80.

20. S. O. Robson, “The Kawi Classics in Bali,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 128, no. 2/3 (1972): 316.

21. P. J. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan: A Survey of Old Javanese Literature* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 349.

22. Robson, “The Kawi Classics,” 309.

23. Toru Aoyama, “古ジャワ文学におけるスタソーマ物語の受容と変容.” *東南アジア研究* 24, no. 1 (1986): 6.

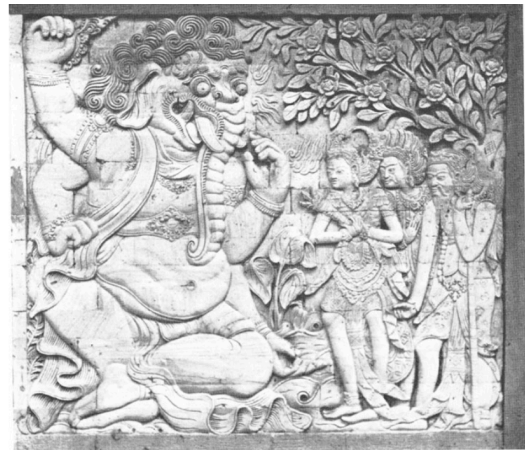
Thus the *Sutasoma* is still enjoyed by many in various formats and contexts. As stated by Hobart, and in accordance with the theories of literary reception discussed above, however, “the story takes on different colorings and nuances depending on the intention of its creators or performers, the media used, and the beholders and interpreters,”²⁴ the subtleties of which will be discussed in detail below.

SUMMARY OF THE *SUTASOMA*²⁵

The son of King Mahaketu and Queen Prajnadhari of Astina, Sutasoma is born after the prayers for a male heir of the royal couple were finally answered (1.5 - 3.8). The royal court and the citizens of Astina expect Sutasoma to inherit the throne and continue the great legacy of his father, but the prince prefers to meditate and search enlightenment. He thus steals away one night to begin his meditations on Mount Meru.

During his journeys, he encounters three creatures: a monster with the head of an elephant, a dragon, and a tigress. The elephant monster, named Gajahwakra, tries to eat Sutasoma, but Sutasoma convinces him of his wrong ways, and eventually Gajahwakra becomes Sutasoma’s follower (29.6 - 33.5). The two then encounter a dragon, who, like Gajahwakra, learns of his wrongs and follows Sutasoma (33.6 - 34.2). The group then encounters a tigress about to eat her own cubs (34.3 -

Figure 2: Relief by I Gusti Nyoman Lempad in Puri Lingsir, Bali depicting Gajahwakra



24. Hobart, “The Enlightened Prince,” 75.

25. General plot summaries were taken from Zuriati’s, Zoetmulder’s, and Aoyama’s accounts and translations.



Figure 3: Painting in Pak Nyoman Sambere's residence in the Tabanan District.

43.6). Sutasoma implores the tiger not to eat the cubs and instead offers his own body. The tigress bites Sutasoma, killing him, but his blood affects the tigress, and moved to great shame, the

tigress tries to kill herself. The god Indra then descends, stops the tigress, and brings Sutasoma back to life. The group continues on their journey.

While Sutasoma is meditating, Indra, transformed as a beautiful woman, tries to seduce the prince and convince him to return to Astina (51.1 - 54.6). In response, Sutasoma transforms into Wairocana (celestial Buddha) and declares his need to continue on his search for enlightenment. Sutasoma next meets the king Dasabahu, who offers his sister Candrawati to Sutasoma as his wife. Sutasoma complies, and a grand wedding takes place (57.1 - 85.2).

Meanwhile, Porusada, the king of the Ratnakanda Kingdom, had been kidnapping various kings around the land in order to fulfill his promise to feed Kala one hundred kings. Having gathered 99, Porusada turns to Sutasoma for his last victim. Sutasoma, however, defeats Porusada (138.1 - 140.11) and faces Kala, defeating him, as well (140.11 - 147.6). The poem concludes with Sutasoma's and his wife's apotheosis and ascent into the heavens (147.7 - 147.22).

5: LITERARY BACKGROUND: GENRE, LANGUAGE, STRUCTURE, AND ORIGIN OF THE *SUTASOMA*

The *Sutasoma* belongs to the literary genre of Old Javanese *kakawin*. *Kakawin* are poems in Indian or Indian-derived meters; each stanza consists of four lines, each line with a

fixed number of syllables and a fixed metrical pattern based on the quantity of the syllable.²⁶

They are modeled on Sanskrit *kavya*, metrical court poetry that developed in the era of the Gupta kings (236 - 600 CE).²⁷ The word *kakawin* consequently derives from Old Javanese *kawi* (poet) and the Sanskrit *kavya*. Besides the distinctive metrical patterns, *kakawin* are also uniquely distinguished by its use of Old Javanese language. The earliest use of Old Javanese is dated to March 25, 804 CE, when, according to the *Sukabumi* inscription, a Reverend Dhari officiated the boundaries of a piece of land which was to be exempted from duties and liabilities because of the construction of a dam in the Harinjing River.²⁸

Old Javanese vocabulary contains heavy borrowings from Sanskrit, but despite this influence from an entirely different linguistic family, Old Javanese has retained its distinctly Indonesian structure.²⁹ As Zoetmulder speculates, “Sanskrit was so much part of that new culture which [the Javanese] wanted to make their own and to which they wanted to adapt themselves, that the inclination to adopt its modes of expression must have come naturally to them, even where their own language was already adequate and there was no real need for change.”³⁰ Furthermore, poets may have utilized Sanskrit words in their works because of their

26. Kenneth R. Hall, “Traditions of Knowledge in Old Javanese Literature, c. 1000-1500,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2005): 2.

27. Ibid.

28. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 3.

29. Ibid., 7.

30. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 12; Zoetmulder also cites J. Gonda’s quantitative analysis of the influence of Sanskrit on Old Javanese: about 6790 Sanskrit words are entered in Junyboll’s *Woordenlijst* (Old Javanese dictionary), compared to the 1925 indigenous words, and in the *kakawin*, “about 25%-30% of the word-units are of Sanskrit origin” (Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 7-8).

need for a “wide range of synonyms or near synonyms, of unequal length and with syllables of varying quantity.”³¹

The Javanese languages have often become a point of confusion, an explanation for which a short digression becomes necessary. There are three main categories into which early philologists and scholars have divided the languages: Old Javanese, Middle Javanese, and Javanese-Balinese.³² Old Javanese refers to the oldest stage of the Javanese language for which there is extant evidence and is the language of the *kakawins*. Middle Javanese refers to the language of *kidung* (poems where meter is regulated by rhyme and number of syllables)³³ and some prose literature. Javanese-Balinese is a term utilized by Theodore Pigeaud for texts found on Bali that are neither purely Old Javanese nor Modern Balinese. The term Kawi is used to describe all three of these linguistic idioms. It must be understood that the division of these three linguistic groups, in addition to Modern Javanese, by no means indicates a chronological development. The terms Old and Middle are misleading, implying that Middle Javanese is an intermediary link between Old and Modern Javanese. In reality, however, they all coexisted and flourished since the sixteenth century, “each with its own spheres of historical, social, and cultural reference.”³⁴

To be succinct then, the *Sutasoma* is a *kakawin* written in Old Javanese, a Kawi language that has heavy borrowings from Sanskrit. The *Sutasoma* consists of 148 chapters and 1,210

31. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 13.

32. Raechelle Rubinstein, *Beyond the Realm of the Senses: The Balinese Ritual of Kakawin Composition* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 200), 9-10.

33. H. N. van der Tuuk, “Notes on the Kawi Language and Literature,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 13, no. 1 (1881): 322.

34. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 9.

verses.³⁵ It was written by Mpu Tantular at the end of the 14th century (between 1365 and 1389),³⁶ during the Majapahit Era of East Java.³⁷ Mpu Tantular, one of the court poets during King Rajasanagara (or Hayam Wuruk)'s reign,³⁸ is thought to have based his *Sutasoma* on the Pali *jataka* No. 537; the *jatakas* are folk tales ascribed to the Buddha, who is said to have told them as recollections of his previous births as *bodhisattwa*,³⁹ but as Aoyama writes, Mpu Tantular only used the skeleton of *jataka* No. 537 and inserted motifs from Buddhist texts and Hindu epics.⁴⁰ The *Sutasoma* story is preserved in two Old Javanese texts, Mpu Tantular's *kakawin*, and the *Cantakaparwa*.⁴¹ For the sake of consistency and given the fact that the *Cantakaparwa* has "major differences in general story-line and motif,"⁴² this study will focus exclusively on Mpu Tantular's original *kakawin*.

6: HISTORICAL CONTEXT: HISTORY & RELIGION OF MAJAPAHIT EAST JAVA

As Aoyama writes, the *Sutasoma* is a product of the "Hindu-Java culture which had received heavy influences from India with the Sanskrit language as a mediator."⁴³ This "Hindu-Java" culture of the Majapahit Era is extremely complex, instigating a variety of scholarly

35. Aoyama, "スタソーマ物語の受容と変容," 5.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 4.

38. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 342.

39. Hobart, "The Enlightened Prince," 77.

40. Aoyama, "スタソーマ物語の受容と変容," 4.

41. Hobart, "The Enlightened Prince," 76.

42. "具体的な筋やモチーフに関しては大きな相違"; all translations are my own unless otherwise noted; Aoyama, "スタソーマ物語の受容と変容," 4.

43. "サンスクリットを媒介としてインド文化の大きな影響を受けて成立したヒンドゥー・ジャワ文化"; Aoyama, "スタソーマ物語の受容と変容," 4.

debates, especially concerning its social and religious situations. Until the 9th century, the center of political and culture power was concentrated in Central Java. This center shifted to the east in 930 CE, however, where Sindok founded a new dynasty. King Erlangga (a descendant of the famous Dharmawangsa and Udayana marriage) took over after a period of conflict in 1016, and divided the kingdom into two for his sons Janggala and Kadiri. The Kadiri dynasty ended by 1222 and was taken over by Singhasari, but in 1292, Singhasari was also overthrown, marking the beginning of the Majapahit Era with the reign of King Krtanagara.⁴⁴

The religious climate of this time still remains highly ambiguous; there are two main schools of thought concerning the relationship of Siwaism (or Hinduism) and Buddhism. On the one hand, some scholars declare that Siwaism was the dominant religion.⁴⁵ According to the *Nagarakrtagama*, there were four sects of Hindu priests, each devoted to Siwa, Brahma, Wisnu, and Buddha; these represent the four religious currents in Hinduism during this time, but Siwaism was thought to have been maintained as the state religion.⁴⁶ Because of the dominance of Siwaism and “suppression in the realm,”⁴⁷ Buddhism was less popular and became a secondary religion in the Majapahit Era. Pigeaud also writes that remnants of pre-Muslim religious ideas surviving in modern Javanese culture point to Siwaism.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the “modern Javanese name for the pre-Muslim period, *jaman buda* (Buddha Era) seems to be a consequence of Buddhism [...] being felt as foreign [...] whereas Siwaism [...] was familiar and

44. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 19-22.

45. Theodore G. Th. Pigeaud, “Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Organization in 14th Century Majapahit,” *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 4 (1962): 480.

46. Zuriati, “Kakawin Sutasoma,” 424.

47. Ibid.

48. Pigeaud, “14th Century Majapahit,” 480.

always remained so.”⁴⁹ On the other hand, however, some scholars claim that Buddhism and Siwaism both enjoyed equal popularity and representation: “Since the time of the ancient kingdoms of Central Java (8th to 10th century CE), Siwa Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism already existed side by side.”⁵⁰ Zoetmulder similarly writes of the “special form of Mahayana Buddhism in vogue at the court of Majapahit” and the way in which Siwaism and Buddhism “existed side by side, influenced each other, and became identical in their basic ideas.”⁵¹ Without a clear consensus, therefore, it is extremely difficult to arrive at any definitive conclusions concerning the religions of the Majapahit Empire.

7: THE FINDINGS

This study is, first and foremost, a demonstration of the fact that a literary work, regardless of the format in which it is ‘read,’ inspires an incredible variety of interpretations and responses, which, to be blunt, no amount of scholarly scrutiny could fully anticipate or analyze. Although this study intended to explore the collective interpretations of two ‘interpretive communities’ based upon the way in which they were exposed to the story (artists and their audiences vs. scholars), the sheer variety of responses has rendered it impossible to categorize them in accordance with any sort of consensus. Of course, this is due largely to the fact that the study was conducted in less than a month with limited resources; the number of individuals questioned was not nearly sufficient. Nevertheless, it hardly makes sense to organize the succeeding paragraphs according to the two focus groups originally constructed. Instead, we

49. Pigeaud, “14th Century Majapahit,” 480.

50. “*Sejak masa kerajaan-kerajaan kuna di Jawa Tengah (abad ke-8 hingga ke-10 Masehi), agama Hindu Siwa dan Buddha Mahayana telah hidup berdampingan*”; Hastho Bramantyo and Dwi Woro Retno Mastuti, *Kakawin Sutasoma* (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2009), xxi.

51. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 347.

shall focus on the individuals' interpretations of the *Sutasoma* story, its characters, and “*bhinneka tunggal ika*” in turn, comparing them with the words of published scholarship and with, where applicable, to the original text.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE *SUTASOMA* STORY

Although a numerical chart seems out of place in a humanities-oriented work such as the present study, the following graphics serve to consolidate the information discussed in a neat format. As shown in Table 1, the distribution of individuals' religious interpretations of the story seems to be fairly random; the majority points to Buddhist, but a majority by a difference of two is hardly profound. What is more interesting, however, is the stark contrast between the interviewed individuals and the published scholarship. The secondary sources consulted almost exclusively claim that the *Sutasoma* is a Buddhist story, whereas most of the primary sources consider it to be a combination of Buddhist and Hindu. A number of factors could explain this discrepancy.

Table 1: “Is the *Sutasoma* a Buddhist or Hindu story?”

	Interviewed Informants	Published Scholarship	Total
Hindu	3	0	3
Buddhist	3	5	8
Both	5	1	6

First of all, those who answered that the *Sutasoma* is Hindu, or a mixture of Hindu and Buddhist, were all Balinese Hindus. A certain degree of ethnocentrism, therefore, could have contributed to these views. Pak Nyoman Sambere (73), a farmer from rural Tabanan, for example, said that the *Sutasoma* is Hindu because the story was passed down by each Hindu generation.⁵² Having only heard these stories in their Hindu communities, it naturally follows that individuals would consider the story to be Hindu. There are two outliers to this explanation:

52. Pak Nyoman Sambere, Personal Communication, March 26, 2015.

Pak Ida Bagus Anom and Pak I Gusti Made Sutjaja. Pak Anom (63), a *topeng* mask maker from Gianyar immediately began his summary of the story with, “this story follows a Buddhist concept,”⁵³ and a retired Udayana University professor and a renowned expert on *lontar* manuscripts, Pak Sutjaja (70) spoke of the Buddhist teachings within the story.⁵⁴ Both Pak Anom and Pak Sutjaja, however, are Hindu. To clarify his response, Pak Anom pointed to the Buddhist teachings of the story – such as that of universal love, concord, and nonviolence – and Pak Sutjaja explained that the *lontar* manuscripts of the story are written in the *aksara boda* script, which is “associated with Buddhist texts.”

Another explanation for the apparent disagreement between the primary and secondary sources is the fact that some informants were partially familiar with the historical context of the story. The *dalang* from Sukawati, Pak Wayan Nartha (74), for example, said that the story is Hindu because it was written on Java during the Hindu Majapahit kingdom.⁵⁵ Another farmer from Tabanan, Pak Inengah Purnah (70), explained that Siddharta Gautama (historical Buddha) wrote the original story, and that it was later translated into a Hindu version by Mpu Tantular.⁵⁶ This shows his familiarity with the original *jatakas*, Buddha’s folk tales discussed above.⁵⁷

53. Pak Ida Bagus Anom, Personal Communication, April 5, 2015.

54. Pak I Gusti Made Sutjaja, Personal Communication, April 23, 2015.

55. Pak Wayan Nartha, Personal Communication, April 2, 2015.

56. Pak Inengah Purnah, Personal Communication, March 26, 2015.

57. The variety of these responses begs the question, what does it mean to label the story as Buddhist or Hindu – what does a Buddhist (or Hindu) story really mean or entail? It was never strictly defined upon what basis the individuals should label the story; they were simply asked “*Bapak pikir cerita ini adalah cerita Hindu atau cerita Buddha* (Do you think this story is a Hindu story or a Buddhist story?)” and to explain. This was intentional. With such a vague question, responses ranged widely, influenced by the individuals’ religious views, historical knowledge, and understandings of the teachings of Sutasoma.

If these informants drew upon their historical knowledge and their religious beliefs to claim that the story is Hindu, what did the secondary sources consult? The confident declarations of the story's Buddhist orientations are numerous: "It is a Buddhist story, and as such is unique in the epic *kakawin* literature of the Javanese period";⁵⁸ "As a Buddhist *kakawin*, this *kakawin* also displays Buddhist characteristics";⁵⁹ "[it is] a Buddhist story about an incarnation of the Buddha";⁶⁰ "the *Sutasoma kakawin* is a Buddhist story."⁶¹ For Pak Hastho Bramantyo, who has published an Indonesian translation of the *Sutasoma*, and for many others, the answer lies in the text itself. On at least two occasions, Mpu Tantular explicitly states that his work is a "Buddhist story" and both are remarkably similar: "*Pertama perlu disebutkan bahwa cerita yang saya tulis ini berasal dari kisah kehidupan Sang Buddha (1.4)*"⁶² and "*Inilah akhir dari cerita mulia, disusun berdasarkan kisah hidup Sang Buddha...(148.1)*"⁶³ These Indonesian translations, when translated further into English, imply that the *Sutasoma* is simply "a story about the life of the Buddha." This is certainly evidence enough for scholars to claim that the *Sutasoma* is a Buddhist story, but a look at the original Old Javanese sheds even more light on the matter. At 1.4, Mpu Tantular uses the word 'bodhakawya' and at 148.1,

58. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 346.

59. "Sebagai sebuah *kakawin* Buddhis, *kakawin* ini juga menampilkan ciri Buddhisnya"; Bramantyo and Mastuti, *Kakawin Sutasoma*, xxi.

60. Aoyama, "スタソーマ物語の受容と変容," 3.

61. Hobart, "The Enlightened Prince," 77.

62. "First I must tell this story which I will write based on the story of Sang Buddha's life" (Appendix 2.1).

63. "This is the end of the noble story, organized based on the story of the life of Sang Buddha..." (Appendix 2.2).

‘*boddhacarita*.’ These, according to Aoyama and Pak Hastho Bramantyo (38),⁶⁴ are compound words for which the closest English translations would be ‘Buddhist poem’ and ‘Buddhist story’ (*kawya* is the noun form of *kawi*, or poetic; *carita* means tale [cf. Indonesian *cerita*]; the prefix *boddha-* incidentally refers to Buddha). Scholars who have access to this etymological information, therefore, naturally are able to conclude that the *Sutasoma* is Buddhist in nature.

Two questions arise from this discussion: (1) why is it that the *dalangs*, both of whom have stated that they have read the text, did not refer to the text, as the published scholars did, to label the *Sutasoma* as Buddhist, and (2) how have the scholars failed to make reference to the historical background of the time, as some of the informants did, to label the *Sutasoma* as Hindu?

Both *dalangs*, coincidentally, responded that the *Sutasoma* is both a Buddhist and a Hindu story. Pak Made Buana (55), an *ex-dalang* from a rural village in the Tabanan district, explained that the story must be both because Buddhism and Hinduism are in line and they compliment each other.⁶⁵ Pak Wayan Nartha wisely said that it depends on an individual’s religious tendencies; a Hindu would likely say that it is a Hindu story, whereas a Buddhist would likely say that it is a Buddhist story. Yet, it remains a mystery as to why neither *dalangs* referred to the text where it states that it is a Buddhist story.

With regards to the second question, a partial explanation can be attempted. The short answer is that the religious situation of the time does not necessarily imply the story’s religious orientation. But we must first refer back to the two contrasting schools of thought concerning the religion and history of the Majapahit era discussed above. While some claim Hindu

64. Aoyama, “スタソーマ物語の受容と変容,” 11; Pak Hastho Bramantyo, Personal Communication (email correspondence with author), April 16, 2015.

65. Pak Made Buana, Personal Communication, March 24, 2015.

dominance, others argue that the two coexisted and even began to merge into one. Aoyama, despite writing of the “Hindu-Java”⁶⁶ context in which the *Sutasoma* was composed, refers to the Old Javanese text and concludes that it is indeed a Buddhist story. Aoyama further expresses his surprise that such a Buddhist-oriented text could be composed in the Siwa-dominated East Java society.⁶⁷ Zoetmulder similarly writes that such a Buddhist text was an exceptional rarity at the time:

In the *kakawin* literature [...], the impact of Buddhism is practically non-existent, either on the choice of subject, the way of treating it, the descriptions, or the *manggalas*. Buddhists are mentioned among the clergy in descriptions of the trains of royal persons or of the ceremonial welcome, but as a rule, these contain no more than the usual stereotyped enumeration: *rsi saiwa sogata (boddha)*. Only the *Sumanasantaka* gives a somewhat more detailed description of the various groups. In the case of the work of Tantular, it is quite a different matter. The poet who wrote the Buddhist story of *Sutasoma* and its introductory *manggala* was unmistakably a Buddhist himself.⁶⁸

On the other hand, scholars such as Hobart write about the blending of the two religions: “The poem is clearly a distinct product of the East Javanese period which is marked by the growing syncretism of Buddhist and Siwaite cults.”⁶⁹ A recent graduate of Udayana University and an ancient scripts and texts enthusiast, Ida Bagus Komang Sudarma (24) looks to the archaeological evidence to answer the question. He explained that the Hindu and Buddhist temples built before the Majapahit era (e.g. Candi Borobudur and Prambanan, both built in the 9th century CE) were easily distinguishable, but by the 13th and 14th centuries, they had become similar in form and

66. Aoyama, “スタソーマ物語の受容と変容,” 4.

67. *Ibid.*, 16.

68. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 343.

69. Hobart, “The Enlightened Prince,” 77-78.

structure, signifying a “massive syncretic transformation of religion by that time.”⁷⁰ He further points to a statue of King Krtanagara from the Candi Jago, who is depicted as both Siwa and Buddha, as well as the fact that there were two head priests during the Majapahit era: the Dharmadhyaksa Kasaiwan and the Dharmadhyaksa Kasogatan, dedicated to Siwa and Buddha respectively. Thus, according to Darma, it hardly makes sense to label the *Sutasoma* as exclusively Hindu or Buddhist – the two religions were nearly the same.

In the end, there can be no clear-cut answer to the question, “Is the *Sutasoma* a Buddhist or Hindu story.” Of course, if we were focusing exclusively on the text itself, the immediate answer would be “Buddhist.” If someone were to only read the text, they would see the words ‘*bodhakawya*’ or ‘*boddhacarita*’ and naturally assume that the *Sutasoma* is a Buddhist text, but those who do not have access to the text have different means of understanding and answering the question. Thus, when considering the opinions of individuals and scholars who have contrasting ideas about the definition of a “Buddhist text,” it is evident that the matter is not so simple.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CHARACTERS

Regardless of their association of the story to Buddhism or Hinduism, all informants and nearly every secondary source declared that *Sutasoma* was either Buddha himself, or a reincarnation of the god (Table 2).

Table 2: “Is *Sutasoma* (a reincarnation of) Buddha?”

	Interviewed Informants	Published Scholarship	Total
Yes	6	4	10
No	0	1	1

70. Ida Bagus Komang Sudarma, Personal Communication, April 13, 2015.

Zuriati writes, “Sutasoma is the King of Hastina and the incarnation of the Buddha”;⁷¹ according to Hall, Sutasoma achieves potential of divinity as the “supreme Lord Buddha”;⁷² Bramantyo and Mastuti write that Sutasoma is referred to as Buddha, Jina or Jinapati (alternative names for



Figure 4: Sutasoma statue at Bajra Sandhi monument, Denpasar

Buddha), and Boddhisatwa (a being destined to become a Buddha) in the text.⁷³ Hobart, whose work compares the various art forms in which the *Sutasoma* is depicted, writes that to a *dalang*, Sutasoma is undeniably “an incarnation of Lord Buddha.”⁷⁴ She adds, however, to the “audience [of a *wayang* performance], who represent the ordinary populace [...], Sutasoma is primarily a wise, benevolent, and just prince and teacher. They rarely link him to the historical Buddha (who in any case many villagers, especially from isolated hamlets, have not heard of) or an incarnation of him.”⁷⁵ The findings of the

present study would beg to differ. Pak Inengah Purnah explicitly said that Sutasoma is Buddha,

Pak Anom said that Kala is unable to swallow Sutasoma because “he is Buddha,” and Pak

Sutjaja said that Sutasoma is a reincarnation of Buddha sent to save humanity. Pak Buana also

spoke about Sutasoma’s white blood, which signified his status as a reincarnation of Buddha.

Many spoke of Sutasoma’s characteristics and noble qualities, which, to them, are reminiscent of

71. Zuriati, “Kakawin Sutasoma,” 422.

72. Hall, “Traditions of Knowledge,” 23

73. Bramantyo and Mastuti, *Kakawin Sutasoma*, xix.

74. Hobart, “The Enlightened Prince,” 89.

75. *Ibid.*, 88-89.

those of Buddha: patient, peaceful, enemy-less, indifferent to temptations, compassionate, wise, and courageous.

The primary and secondary sources agree, for the most part, therefore, that Sutasoma can be associated with Buddha. However, the two differ dramatically with regards to the other characters of the story (Table 3).

Table 3: “Do any of Sutasoma’s opponents represent Siwa?”

	Interviewed Individuals	Published Scholarship	Total
Yes	2	2	4
No	4	0	4

Some published scholars claim that Kala, Porusada, and even Gajahwakra can all be associated with Siwa. Zoetmulder writes, for example, that when Porusada assumes Rudra’s form to fight Sutasoma, the text “no longer speaks of the King of Ranakanda or Porusada, but of *bhatara* Rudra or Siwa.”⁷⁶ Hall also refers to Gajahwakra as an incarnation of Rudra, who is equivalent to “Siwa, or in this instance Ganesha, Siwa’s elephant-headed son.”⁷⁷ Pak Nartha and Pak Anom share similar views: Pak Nartha stated twice that Porusada is Siwa, and Pak Anom said that Gajahwakra represents Ganesha and the tiger and dragon both represent Siwa.

The majority of the interviewed informants, however, did not associate any of the other characters to Siwa. Pak Inengah Purnah explains that when Siwa is angry, he transforms into Kala, but once in the Kala state,



Figure 5: Pak Nartha's wayang of Kala

76. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 340.

77. Hall, “Traditions of Knowledge,” 21.

he is no longer Siwa, and we may not equate the two. Similarly, Pak Sambere described Kala and Siwa as opposites – Kala is black and Siwa is white; they are not the same. Pak Sutjaja also said that Kala is not wholly Siwa. Pak Bramantyo wrote that Kala does not represent Siwa; he represents the “impurities and passion within us.”

Those who consider Sutasoma to have defeated and converted his Siwaite opponents further interpret the conflicts as representations of Buddhist superiority over Siwaism (Table 4).

Table 4: “Does any aspect of the story represent Buddhist superiority over Siwaism?”

	Interviewed Informants	Published Scholarship	Total
Yes	1	5	6
No	4	0	4

As Zuriati writes, “for Mpu Tantular, Sutasoma and Buddhism are the winners. He closes his *kakawin* by making Jayantaka (Porusada) repented his mistakes and asked for Sutasoma to instruct him about Buddhism. Afterwards, he and Batara Kala resolve to become Buddhist priests.”⁷⁸ Zoetmulder also writes that the “love for all creatures, and the compassion and non-violence of the Buddha in his incarnation as Sutasoma conquer the violence and destructive power of Siwa, manifesting himself in Kala, with the result that the latter devotes himself to asceticism according to the rules of Mahayana Buddhism,”⁷⁹ and Santoso writes about the “battle between a Siwaitic and a Buddhist Bhairawa resulting in the former’s submission and subsequent conversion to Buddhism.”⁸⁰ Furthermore, Aoyama describes the final conflict as Buddha’s victory (勝利) over Siwa.⁸¹ Pak Anom, however, was the only interviewed informant to

78. Zuriati, “Kakawin Sutasoma,” 423.

79. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 348-349.

80. Soewito Santoso, “The ‘Samaya’ of Bharadah and Kuturan,” *Indonesia*, no. 17 (1974): 53.

81. Aoyama, “スタソーマ物語の受容と変容,” 16.

similarly interpret the story as a representation of Buddhist superiority. He interpreted Kala's inability to defeat Sutasoma as an illustration of how Siwaism is "lower than Buddhism," and explained that the story is a manifestation of Buddhist popularity and superiority during the Majapahit Empire.

Most other informants would disagree. Pak Inengah Purnah, who said that Kala cannot be equated to Siwa, concluded that the conflicts cannot represent Buddhist superiority. Pak Bramantyo wrote that it depicts the "power of enlightened wisdom and compassion against our own passion and taint." Pak Buana said that instead of a conquering of Siwaism, the conflicts can be seen as a purification of Siwaism and of a union of the the two religions to balance the differences and to find peace.

This union and balance of the two religions that Pak Buana related is a concept touched upon by almost all other informants. Regardless of their religious orientations, interpretations of the story, or interpretations of the characters, each informant emphasized the importance of harmony and the relations of the two religions. These ideas emerged largely within the context of the discussion of the phrase, "*bhinneka tunggal ika.*"

UNDERSTANDING OF *BHINNEKA TUNGGAL IKA*

During the interviews, each informant was asked to read the following and describe what it meant to them:

Konon dikatakan bahwa Wujud Buddha dan Siwa itu berbeda. Mereka memang berbeda namun, bagaimana kita bisa mengenali perbedaanya dalam selintas pandang. Karena kebenaran yang diajarkan Buddha dan Siwa itu sesungguhnya satu Jua. Mereka memang berbeda-beda. Namun, pada hakikatnya sama. Karena tidak ada kebenaran yang mendua.⁸²

82. "It is said that the Buddha and Siwa are different. They are indeed different, yet how are we able to recognize the difference in a short glance, since the truths taught by Buddha and Siwa are in fact one. They are indeed different, but they are of the same nature, because there is no truth with any duality" (Appendix 2.3).

Most informants, as well as a few published scholars, expressed the idea that Siwaism and Buddhism, although different in name, are essentially the same religion, each striving for a common goal. According to Pak Buana, the differences of the two religions are not differences in opinions, but differences in the ways of teaching and their implementations; these different interpretations and practices, however, all lead to the common goal of worshipping a single god. Pak Inengah Purnah's response was nearly identical: Buddhism and Siwaism have one purpose – to make peace in the world – but it is achieved by means of different practices. Pak Sambere succinctly said that Siwaism and Buddhism are different but still one because they share the same purpose – they are only different in name. Pak Anom said that there is no reason to pit the two religions against each other because they are the same; these two (and other) gods have different names (Allah, Jesus, Buddha, etc.) but they are the same. Therefore, we must “care [for] other religions, we must [be like] brother[s].” Pak Sutjaja similarly stressed the importance of living in harmony and explained that although the two religions appear different, they are the same in reality. Pak Bramantyo wrote that “regardless of your approaching method, truth is truth, there is no second truth”; despite the various practices to gain truth, there is only one, single truth.

These views are reflected in the published scholarship, as well. As Zuriati writes, “one of the important messages of the text is that, in essence, Buddha and Siwa share the same doctrine of truth. They are not different but rather form a unity in diversity.”⁸³ Zoetmulder also writes that the god is the “highest *dharma* (doctrine and ultimate reality) and final goal for all, whatever sect or school [an individual] may belong to, in the same way as the top of a mountain can be

83. Zuriati, “Kakawin Sutasoma,” 423

reached by people ascending it from various directions.”⁸⁴ In the introduction to their *Sutasoma* translation, Bramantyo and Mastuti write, “The effort to achieve the goal is possible by different methods but the goal is one and the same: Buddha and Siwa are one and the same.”⁸⁵

Instead of the idea that the two religions are separate paths to a common goal, some describe a merging of the two into a single religion. Pak Nartha, for example, said that Siwa and Buddha (or Kala and Sutasoma) were united into one, becoming a single entity, so that Siwa and Buddha can be considered as one. Hobart introduces her work with the comment, “the Old Javanese *Sutasoma* reflects the process of Siwa-Buddhism being absorbed into ‘guruism,’ i.e., a more indigenous conception of Siwaism and Mahayana Buddhism merging into a two-in-one deity.”⁸⁶ Two scholars look to the archaeological evidence of temple architecture to explain the phrase. Rahadhian compares the dualities evident in the shape, ground plan, and layouts of temples erected in worship of Siwa-Buddha, concluding that there is a syncretic “dialogue between the elements within [...] [that] can become one in a single unit.”⁸⁷ Kinney similarly writes of the “merging of Hinduism and Buddhism into one religious system,” and describes how the five cosmic Buddhas (Wairocana, Akshobhya, Ranasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi) are equated to the five manifestations of Siwa (Sadasiwa, Rudra, Mahadewa, Brahma, and Wisnu) and can be worshipped simultaneously in one temple complex.⁸⁸

84. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 335.

85. “Upaya untuk mencapai tujuan itu dapat berbeda-beda, tetapi tujuannya satu dan sama: Buddha dan Siwa adalah satu dan sama”; Bramantyo and Mastuti, *Kakawin Sutasoma*, xx.

86. Hobart, “The Enlightened Prince,” 78.

87. Rahadhian P. H., “The The Persistence of ‘Candi’ Representation in Modern Architecture in Indonesia,” *International Journal of Engineering & Technology* 11, no. 4 (2011):135.

88. Kinney, *Worshipping Siva and Buddha*, 24-25.

The incongruity of the sources' claims of Buddhist superiority and their interpretations of "*bhinneka tunggal ika*," however, remains unaddressed. How is it that Zoetmulder, for instance, can declare that Kala's submission to Sutasoma represents Buddhist superiority while simultaneously explaining that "*bhinneka tunggal ika*" means Siwaism and Buddhism are merely two paths to the same goal?⁸⁹ Zuriati also makes seemingly contradictory remarks: Sutasoma and Buddhism are the "winners," and yet, "Buddha and Siwa share the same doctrine of truth."⁹⁰ It seems nearly impossible to explain this inconsistency. There is no doubt that the passage preaches the equality and sameness of the two religions, yet there seems to be no other way to interpret Kala's submission to Sutasoma at the end than as Siwaism's surrender to Buddhism.

One possible explanation is that, similar to what Pak Buana said,⁹¹ the final conflict can be seen, not as Kala (or Siwaism)'s defeat, but as his acceptance of Buddhist ways. By acknowledging Sutasoma as its equal, Kala accepts the prince's Buddhist teachings and is able to join Siwaism with Buddhism. This signifies the union which Pak Nartha had described: "Siwa and Buddha were united into one, to become a single entity." This unification is reflected in some modern practices of Balinese Hinduism: there is a Hindu sect called Siwa-Buddha, in which Buddhist customs are incorporated into those of Hinduism. Pak Inengah Purnah, for example, explained that the practice of praying with incense and flowers was adopted from the Buddhist practices. Pak Nartha also explained that in Balinese Hinduism, there are two priests: a Buddha priest and a Siwa priest, and Pak Anom even equated the two, saying that Balinese people consider Buddha and Siwa to be the same being.

89. Zoetmulder, *Kalangwan*, 335 and 347.

90. Zuriati, "Kakawin Sutasoma," 423.

91. See page 29.

In academia, one may say, we tend to over-analyze and make assumptions where there is no need for any. One may suppose that Mpu Tantular wrote this story without any intent to establish superiority of any religion over the other – it could merely be a simple story, or fairytale, as Pak Sambere said, with an



Figure 6: A Hindu shrine and Buddha statue found behind the stupa at the Banjar Buddhist Temple in Banjar Tegeha village, North Bali

archetypal hero facing various challenges. This seems not to have been the case, however. Mpu Tantular was a court poet who was commissioned to compose this story for Hayam Wuruk's royal family. It is hardly deniable, therefore, that the *Sutasoma* is the result of the Majapahit empirical court's specific political agenda. Whether that political agenda was Hindu-, Buddhist-, or otherwise oriented, however, is difficult to define, given the religious ambiguity of the time. Taking these complications into consideration, the best explanation that this study can attempt to provide is as follows. The *Sutasoma* was composed during a time when both Hinduism and Buddhism flourished, commissioned in order to advocate religious harmony and peace between the two religions. Thus, Sutasoma's encounters with the Siwaite characters should be seen as representing the merging of Buddhism and Siwaism, rather than the superiority of one over the other.

8: CONCLUSIONS

It is hardly deniable that this work is full of inconsistencies, contradictions, and ambiguities. To be crudely concise, this study fails to offer any groundbreaking discovery about

modern interpretations of the *Sutasoma* and their dependence on individuals' 'horizons of expectations.' There are no categorical ways, as far as this author is concerned, in which to organize the individuals' responses according to any sort of consensus; no two individuals belonging to the same 'interpretive community' – whether it be determined by religious background, profession, education, age, or context in which an individual may know the *Sutasoma* – produced identical, or even similar, responses. It has hopefully been made clear that, although responses in neat agreement would have been ideal, it is often difficult to apply theory to practice, and that the fact that this study produced such a variety of interpretations itself is a testament to the variability and flexibility of the story.

In exploring the modern reception of an ancient work of literature, obscurities resulting from individuals' religious views and opinions, not to mention time (if the *Sutasoma* were a contemporary work, our questions could have been answered instantaneously), can only be expected. That is not to say, however, that this study is not without merit. By comparing the published works of nearly two-dozen scholars with each other and with the words of nine valued informants, this work demonstrates that a single work of literature can produce myriad responses and interpretations. This only highlights the fact that everything in the world is relative, conditioned, and impermanent. Perhaps it is impossible to create a single explanation for a literary work; the beauty of studying ancient literature lies in the exploration of these various interpretations. With a work such as the *Sutasoma*, which has inspired the national motto of Indonesia, a study of its modern reception naturally remains relevant. Thus, to borrow the words of S. O. Robson, ancient literature, or the 'classics' are not "dead survivals from the past, but are a living part of the present, still playing an active role in society."⁹²

92. Robson, "The Kawi Classics," 309.

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PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Pak Ketut Kejun, February 4, 2015; Bedulu, Gianyar, Bali

Pak Made Buana, March 24, 2015; Tabanan, Bali

Pak Inengah Purnah, March 26, 2015; Tabanan, Bali

Pak Nyoman Sambere, March 26, 2015; Tabanan, Bali

Pak Wayan Nartha, April 2, 2015; Sukawati, Gianyar, Bali

Pak Ida Bagus Anom, April 5, 2015; Mas, Gianyar, Bali

Ida Bagus Komang Sudarma, April 13, 2015; Denpasar, Bali

Pak Hastho Bramantyo, April 16 and 19, 2015; email communication with author

Pak I Gusti Made Sutjaja, April 23, 2015; Denpasar, Bali

10: APPENDIX

1. SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Pak Wayan Nartha; April 2, 2015 (translated by SIT staff Riana Sari)

Tentang cerita Sutasoma, tolong ceritakan sedikit? Saya sudah sering melakonkan Sutasoma. Kalau di jalan cerita dia adalah negaranya Astina. Anak dari Mahaketu. *Anak dari siapa?* Mahaketu. Raja Astina... Ibunya Perahmudari ...tapi bilang cerita dia mau di kukuhkan menjadi raja. Dia tidak senang, dia lari ke hutan, menyamar tidak tahu dengan bapak masyarakat dia mencari waktu waktu tidur orang semua tidur dia pergi ke hutan, untuk bertapa, tidak senang sebagai raja, tapi ayahnya Mahketeu sedih, dia satu satu anaknya yang di andalkan untuk mengganti raja, di dalam hutan dia banyak pengalaman. Sebab dia seperti awatara dia sakti mantraguna dia dapat membunuh yang raksasa kepalanya gajah, Gajahwakta. Ada lagi ular...dia menularkan isi hatinya kepada semua orang. Dia ada orang yang tidak marah, tidak ego, maksudnya dia adalah orang yang bijaksana. Jadi di dalam hutan dia bertapa... Dan melihat harimau mau memakan anaknya dengan dia rela menyerahkan dirinya untuk dimakan, harimau itu tapi tidak bisa bunuh dia. Ada yang melindungi. Ketika itu, dalam pertapaan, dia banyak godaan, bidadari, sampai dia sudah selesai lalu mau pulang. Setelah perjalanan pulang itu, ada saudara yang mengasih adik, kawin dia. Kawin disana. Dan diceritakan ada raksasa Pursada, dia mempunyai janji, menghaturkan seratus raja kepada Kala. Banyak raja yang disekap dimasukan dalam penjara lalu hanya satu, Sutasoma belum. Dalam cerita bisa yang seratus itu ditukar dengan Sutasoma yang satu. Dari pihak kala tapi Basabau namanya. Keluarga tidak rela dia dimakan oleh kala. Sutasomanya membela diri tidak rela diserahkan kepada pursada. Untuk diserahkan kepada kala terjadi peperangan. Basabau itu perang dengan purusadha tapi kekalahan di pihak basabau. Ditolong oleh Sutasoma dia tidak melawan, semua senjata purusadha itu menjadi seperti taman-taman, jadi bunga dia bisa. Senjata gunung menjadi jalan, lalu terakhir dia menyerang untuk diserahkan kepada kala tetapi kala itu tidak mempan juga. Sutasoma sampai di kaki saja sudah kembali dia seperti sifatnya yang bagus menjalankan dharma dan ahimsa. Setelah itu dalam kemarahan Sutasoma, dengan purusadha terjadilah rwa bhineda atau bhinneka tunggal ika. Siwa sama Buddha jadi satu. Tidak ada mengerwa, tida ada duanya. Di dalam negara indonesia itu dikutip di dalam lontar Sutasoma itu "...bhinneka tunggal ika..." disana disebutkan dua tapi satu. *Ada dengan Garuda.* Garuda, Pancasila, itu kan dari Bung Karno...Disana kan ada Ketuhanan, Kemanusiaan, Kerakyatan. Mungkin dalam satu kembali kala itu tidak bisa membunuh Sutasoma sampai kala itu sadar dia...lewat tadi waktu diganti oleh Sutasoma raja raja yang seratus itu dilepaskan...ganti...dalam cinta mengisahkan uang Sutasoma itu yang adalah ajaran Buddha ... *Jadi Sutasoma adalah Buddha?* Buddha.

Tahu sejarah tentang cerita Sutasoma? Siapa menulis atau kapan menulis? Ya ada... saya lupa mpu kano, mpu kano... maaf saya jarang main sekarang waktu dulu tahun delapan puluhan ada terus nonstop main tenaga masih kuat ... bali baca buku jarang sudah lupa nama nama tahun, dan kapan itu.

Di cerita Sutasoma, siapa karakter kesukaan bapak? Itu Sutasoma... *Kenapa?* Yang meninggal kan dasa bau, dasa bau itu dasa sepuluh bau itu tangan itu bertangan sepuluh dia...itu dari ... dari Brahma ... Purusada itu Siwa dan Sutasoma itu menjadi satu, Siwa-Buddha.

Apa pesan moral paling penting di cerita ini? Itu mungkin jalan perbedaan membawa kebaikan jangan membuat perbedaan pendapat sebagai pertengkaran dan mari bersama menuju keharmonisan.

Bapak pikir cerita Sutasoma adalah cerita Hindu atau cerita Buddha? Hindu sebab pengarangnya berada di Jawa di kerajaan Majapahit... Hindu Majapahit.

Tolong baca ini [‘bhinneka tunggal ika passage’] dan apa artinya menurut bapak? “konon Buddha dan Siwa merupakan dua [yang berbeda itu] zat yang berbeda. Mereka memang berbeda, tetapi bagaimanakah bisa dikenali? Sebab kebenaran Jina (Budha) dan Siwa adalah tunggal satu, [kebenarnya satu. Tapi dia dua.] Terpecah belahlah itu, tetapi satu jugalah itu. Tidak ada kerancuan dalam kebenaran.” Intinya dia dua tidak bisa dipisahkan dua yang satu ... itu dalam Garuda Pancasila... di kekawin namanya [singing] kalau artinya di ceritakan dua di ceritakan Siwa dan Buddha ... [singing: bhinneka rakuo...] dia berbeda tetapi kebenarannya hanya satu tidak [singing:... tunggal]... itu Siwa dan Buddha disebut satu ... [singing: bhinneka tunggal ika tan hana dharma mangrwa] bhinneka tunggal ika lain itu tapi satu. Satu itu. *Jadi itu bilang, Buddha dan Siwa sama orang?* Sama orang... waktu di cerita Sutasoma, purusada, itu yang Siwa .Rudra juga Siwa kalau di Bali itu kepercayaan Siwa itu banyak... Mahadeva Siwa, Sankara juga Siwa, Wisnu juga Siwa... Iswara juga Siwa ... Brahma, Wisnu, Iswara, tiga itu, tri murti ... kalau ... Brahma Wisnu Siwa [reading and translating to BI] tidak ada kebenaran dan kerancuan dalam kebenaran itu. Ini ada yang di kutip di dalam Garuda Pancasila.

Kalau Buddha dan Siwa sama orang, bisa bilang cerita Sutasoma adalah cerita Buddha juga? Tidak Hindu saja? Tidak dia menceritakan tentang Buddha dia. Sebab di dalam lontar Bali itu ada istilah lontar Buddha, empat Buddha dalam lontar Buddha ada empat yaitu Lilacaya, Birawa, Datebanyu, Dewicadre itu bagian dari lontar Buddha, dan Sutasoma merupakan ajaran Buddha. Sebab di dalam Pancasila itu Siwa itu ada Brahma Wisnu Iswara dan Buddha ada Brahma Iswara Siwa sebagai perbandingannya. Yang lima itu Kalau didalam Siwa ada Brahma, Wisnu Iswara Mahadeva Siwa. Kalau di Buddha ada Wisnu Mahadeva Siwa mirip kelima dewata itu.

Pada akhir cerita, Sutasoma mengalahkan Kala, ya? Itu Beberapa skolar bilang mewakili Buddha mengalahkan Siwa jadi agama Buddha adalah lebih baik daripada Siwa. Itu benar atau tidak? Menurut kemampuan kalau orang yang pengertiannya mampu untuk percaya kepada Siwa dia Puji Siwa kalau Buddha itu mungkin lebih sulit dia tidak senang dengan Buddha terlalu sulit untuk mengejar Buddhanya, sebab peraturannya harus tinggi, dia harus tidak makan daging, tidak membunuh banyak larangan larangan. Tapi kalau di Bali ada yang sifatnya Siwa itu dianggap lebih tua dan Buddha ada Buddha dengan Siwa lebih tua Buddha ada. Sebab di Bali itu Siwa Buddha kalau pengertiannya Siwa itu ada yang makan bebas, hidup bebas tapi terbalik juga ada Siwa yang bebas Buddha nya yang terikat tidak makan daging, tidak membunuh, Untuk spritualitasnya ini lebih kuat Buddha tapi di Bali itu makhluk keagamaan ada Bakti, yaitu Karma Bhakti, Bakti. Menurut kemampuan. *Jadi menurut bapak, agama Hindu dan agama Buddha mirip? Mirip. Dan mungkin sama?* Sebab di Bali ini masih Siwa Buddha tapi satu Hindu itu Siwa Buddha. Makanya di dalam pendeta itu ada pendeta Buddhanya ada pendeta Siwanya.

Kenapa bapak memilih untuk mementaskan cerita ini? Ya, sebab kesempatannya Bagus untuk pengertian kepada masyarakat umum, karena kalau dulu 30 tahun dulu jarang masyarakat yang sekolah, dalang itu seperti Guru Loka, (guru masyarakat) dalang merupakan yang memainkan cerita di dalam masyarakat, karena terkandung nilai moral agama dan belajar cerita cerita tentang

agama ya seperti menerangkan lewat wayang sebab dalam pementasan wayang itu menggunakan bahasa bali dan ada yang menggunakan bahasa kawi kuno dan ada yang menjadi sebagai penerjemah karena orang Bali sedikit yang mengerti Bahasa Kawi.

Ini [‘bhinneka tunggal ika passage’] bahasa Kawi atau Bahasa Sansekerta? Bahasa Kawi karena sama dengan bahasa Kekawin dan bahasanya Kawi.

Waktu bapak bercerita sutasoma dengan wayang kulit, pakai Bahasa Kawi atau Bahasa Bali? Saya menggunakan Bahasa Kawi, tapi penerimaannya kepada masyarakat menggunakan bahasa Bali atau menjelaskannya ke masyarakat menggunakan Bahasa Bali agar mereka mengetahui seluk beluk perjalanan cerita itu sendiri singkat ceritanya Dia diperintahkan untuk menjadi Raja. Dia tidak mau menjadi raja karena dia berfikir tidak bisa hidup bebas, karena manusia hidup untuk kesenangan dan kemewahan. sulit untuk melepaskan kedua itu dari manusia.

Apakah cerita ini berhubungan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari? Bagaimana hubungannya? Ya Hubungannya sangat erat dengan kehidupan sebab kehidupan sehari hari, sebab sutasoma lebih memilih untuk menenangkan diri dan melepas keduniawian atau kemewahan dari dunia, itu sebagai perbandingan sebab manusia itu menginginkan hal hal yang bagus.

Bagaimana tentang semboyan “bhinneka tunggal ika”? Apakah berhubungan dengan kehidupan sehari hari ? Ya sebab Bhineka Tunggal ika itu berbeda beda tapi tetap satu jua, persatuan indonesia, kuat, dan teguh .

Beberapa orang bilang Gajahwatu mewakili Ganesha karena sama kepala gajah. Itu benar? Semua ada kepala gajah tapi hanya Gajah Watra itu berarti wajah tapi sifatnya tidak seperti gajah kalau Ganesha itu anak dari Dewa Siwa dalam cerita Bali, jadi Ganesha masih mewakili Siwa .

Suka mementaskan cerita ini? Senang, karena mencari dalang untuk sanggup mementaskan sutasoma ini susah karena banyak orang yang tidak sanggup mementaskannya.

Apa cerita kesukaan bapak? Cerita Mahabrata karena banyak mengandung cerita tentang kehidupan.

2. ORIGINAL OLD JAVANESE

1. Pūrrwa prastāwa ning parwwa racana ginēlar sangka ring boddhakawya (1.4)
2. Nāhan tāntyan ikang kathātīśaya boddhacaritang inikēt... (148.1)
3. Rwāneka dhātu winuwus wara Buddha Wiśwa, bhīneki rakwa ring apan kēna parwanosēn, mangkāng Jinatwa kalawan Śiwatatwa tunggal, bhīneka unggal ika tan hana dharmma mangrwa. (139.5)

11: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

- Focus on individuals of Buddhist and Hindu backgrounds, and examine if there are any consistencies in opinions among the two groups
- With a focus on politicians, explore the understanding of *bhinneka tunggal ika* in modern Indonesian politics and how it is manifested in their policies and everyday life
- Compare reception of the *Sutasoma* with that of other Old Javanese epics such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*; does the fact that the *Sutasoma* is less popular affect people's interpretations?
- A literary study of the translations from the original Old Javanese to Indonesian and English; what is lost in translation and why? How does this affect the story?

CONTACT

- Pak Sugi Lanus, Denpasar, Bali; sugilanus@gmail.com
- Pak Hastho Bramantyo, Yogyakarta, Java; brambram38@yahoo.com
- Pak I Gusti Made Sutjaja, Denpasar, Bali; sutjaja444@gmail.com