

Panel: *Panji and cultural patterns in Southeast Asia*

Convenor: Dr. Lydia Kieven

panel abstract:

While the Indic *Ramayana* has been well-known as a common cultural pattern in Southeast Asia, there is another rich tradition - the Panji theme – which has been much neglected and less-known, both in academic work as well as in popular culture. The Panji theme originates in Java, with evidence of an early popularity in art and literature during the pre-islamic Majapahit period. It has spread over large parts of Mainland Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar. Recent time has seen a process of revitalization and transformation of the Panji theme and tradition, in Java and other parts of Southeast Asia. The papers in this panel present and discuss two major aspects: Panji stories in literature, and the Panji tradition in modern transformation of performing arts. They demonstrate the richness and the values of the Panji theme in the past and its potential in the present and future. The question will be raised: In which way can and does the Panji heritage contribute to regional and transregional identities in „trans-Asian“ /ASEAN culture?

Double session

Discussant: t.b.a.

The Sweet-Talking Prince: Trust in Language in Java

Professor Bernard Arps

Leiden University

Against the background of the contextual history of Panji narrative across Southeast Asia, I examine ‘The Sweet-Talking Prince’ (*Panji Priyambada*), a story in a palm-leaf manuscript dated 1750 from the Javanese port town of Gresik, well known in the history of Muslim Java as the seat of a lineage of Islamic scholars and a centre from which Islamic literature spread throughout Java. This narrative, however, is set at a legendary court in the east Javanese interior and distinctly non-Islamic. It thematizes issues of trust and distrust in the interpersonal realm. Prince Panji has two main wives, one a woman of humble birth, the other a princess. Both are infatuated with him and he loves both, though not simultaneously. This precarious situation, sharpened by the status differences, leads to jealousy which is expressed in various ways including, in the case of the princess, bouts of blind rage in front of others and the secret use of love magic. It leads the princess to lie and deceive as well. Her behaviour causes embarrassment and shame in others at the court, including lowly and largely powerless co-wives and servants, and ultimately in herself. My discussion will focus on the representation, in this text, of the management of language and other means of communication. To bring this into relief I will consider an important ideological counterpart of the Panji stories in the literary life of 18th-century Java, the expressly Muslim stories about the exploits of Hamzah, an uncle and companion of the Prophet Muhammad.

Some war-episodes in Hikayat Kuda Semirang Sira Panji Pandai Rupa

Dr. Gijs Koster

Retired, formerly lecturing at University Sains Malaysia, Universitas Indonesia, Universidade do Porto and Universidade do Minho

This paper will be concerned with the war-episodes in *Hikayat Kuda Semirang Sira Panji Pandai Rupa* (Leiden MS Cod. Or. 3242, of which I am preparing an edition). On the basis of selected samples I will demonstrate the use by the *hikayat* of a formulaic pattern of type-scenes in order to build up the narrative in its many war-episodes. I will also draw attention to the overtones frequently audible in these episodes - and, in fact, throughout this *hikayat* - from *kakawin* and *kidung* literature as well as from the *wayang*. Subsequently I will touch on the question whether this formulaic pattern or one or more of its parts is also used in war-episodes in other Malay literary works. Finally, I will put forward some thoughts on why a Panji story may give such a strong emphasis to the epic element of war that its love-story almost disappears from sight.

The Flourishing and Significance of The Panji Story during the Reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910): A Golden Age of the Panji Theme in Thailand

Assistant Professor Dr. Thaneerat Jatuthasri

Chulalongkorn University

The Panji story was introduced to the Thai court around the 18th century and has provided an inspiration for creating Thai art ever since. The most complete and influential version of the Thai Panji story is Inao by King Rama II (1809-1824) and this reign is considered as a flourishing time of Inao. There was also another period of time that the story of Inao, or the Panji theme, was popular: the reign of King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) (1868-1910). During that time, not only was Inao of King Rama II preserved and promoted, but there was also a number of works of art related to Inao. Moreover, the King and some scholars at the time expressed their interest in the theme by surveying and analysing many versions of the Panji story; thus, it would seem that “the Panji studies” in Thailand began then. This paper aims to examine the popularity and the significance of the Panji theme during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. The paper proposes that during that period, the Panji theme had social and cultural significance to Thai society and some Panji works created at that time have also contributed to the Thai Panji tradition ever since.

Candrakirana as the ideal Woman in Malay Panji Stories

Dr. Mu’jizah Abdillah, Indonesian National for Development and Cultivation Language,
Ministry of Education and Culture

There are many versions of the Panji story in Malay with different representations of Candrakirana, the (future) consort of Panji. Interest in this tale and in the principal female character has continued into present times and in modern Indonesian literature, for example in the novel *Candrakirana* by Ajip Rosidi, Pustaka Jaya, 1938, and even in a number of comics. This paper analyses the depiction of Candrakirana in several Malay Panji stories from a gender studies approach. My focus will be on *Hikayat Panji Semirang*, *Syair Ken Tambuhan*, and *Panji Angraeni*. These texts will be analysed from structural and sociological

perspectives, with special attention paid to female characters and their characterizations. The conclusion is that Candrakirana is depicted as an ideal figure of Malay femininity. She is not only beautiful and faithful, but also plays a creative and steadfast role in protecting and expanding her husband's kingdom.

The prince and the press. Panji tales in Malay language newspapers in Colonial Indonesia

Joachim Nieß

Goethe University Frankfurt

Literary fiction, especially in serialized form, played an important role in early Malay language newspapers in Colonial Indonesia in the late 19th and early 20th century. Besides translations of modern works from Europe and other parts of the world and texts especially written for publication in newspapers, there were also many texts that were part of the local literary heritage. Among these traditional narratives were also texts that belong to the Panji genre. In my presentation, I will inquire into the attraction of these “old” texts for the concurrent readership and discuss whether such traditional tales also had a perceptible influence on other texts that were exclusively written for and published in the same medium.

Following the long walk of Panji and Sekartaji

Dr. Lydia Kieven,

independent scholar; University of Bonn, Germany

Since the millenium, the Panji tradition has undergone an increasing process of revitalization and transformation, having a broad spectrum of concepts: academic approach, popularization of “old authentic” traditions, innovation, manifestation of values and symbolism, and its use for strengthening cultural identity. The evaluation of interviews with 50 informants who are active in revitalization programs of the Panji tradition in Java gives insight into the major trajectories in the past and objectives for the future. The ways of dealing with this specific Javanese cultural heritage reflect the discourse on tradition and innovation of ‘living heritage’. The second part reflects my own role in this process during my 20 year-long “walk” as a foreigner, starting from archaeological research and leading to my involvement in revitalization activities in Java with my focus on the values of the Panji theme. I touch upon the role and the responsibilities of international/foreign researchers in processes of preservation and innovation of local heritage in a “foreign” country.

The overall question is: What is the potentiality of revitalization and transformation of the Panji tradition?

Journey of Panji into the 21st century

Dr. Marianna Lis
independent scholar

Among many subjects present in Panji stories and their contemporary interpretations and transformations, one seems especially interesting - it is a matter of searching for own identity through differently understood journey. Panji while wandering through various places and into himself learns about philosophical and moral principles which should guide his life.

The paper will be devoted to the works of two artists from Java. Wayang Beber Welingan is a contemporary reinterpretation of the history of Panji by Anthony Sastrowijoyo translated to the language of wayang and batik, in which the main character during his wandering finds not only the values originated from traditional Javanese philosophy, but also the symbolism of Javanese alphabet Hanacaraka. Linguistic perspective is also characteristic for the second artist Eddy Susanto, whose work entitled *The Journey of Panji*, shows not only the journey of Panji, but also the journey of the cycle of stories devoted to him, starting from Java across Southeast Asia. The artist asks questions if during this journey, during the process of "translation", moral and philosophical message of the story has not been lost in translation?

The Rise of Wayang Beber in the Spirit of Panji

Dinda Intan Pramesti Putri
Independent Scholar, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Wayang Beber is one of the performing arts that adapted the Panji tales as the main important part. It was popular during the Majapahit and Mataram empires in Java (c 1300-17th century), while afterwards it declined and almost died out to extinction. However in recent years, it rose with new ways of reinterpretation and adaptation of the Panji spirit in local and global context. This paper will address the rise of Wayang Beber in Indonesia with special attention to the development of alternative and contemporary ways of performing arts including its historical timeline. The paper draws back on my past bachelor research on the ethnography of Wayang Beber in performing arts (2011), and on an article of Marianna Lis about contemporary Wayang Beber (2014). These two studies demonstrate three kinds of contemporary forms of Wayang Beber with a new interpretation of the Panji spirit. In the meantime, the number of such forms raised significantly, leading to the creation of five more Wayang Beber contemporary performances (on an individual and community base) up to 2016. The development of Wayang Beber with the spirit of Panji might continue and increase in the future. The Panji heritage can be considered as a universal culture which may provide inspiration for further Asian and global collaborations in the art of Wayang Beber.