

Exploration of The Meaning of Animal Figures in The Illumination of The Jayalengkara Wulang Jav 24 Manuscript

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Received : 1 September - 2024

Accepted : 28 October - 2024

Published online : 29 October - 2024

Abstract

This research aims to investigate the significance of the interpretation of the animal element in the manuscript Jav 24, which contains the text Jayalengkara Wulang, and its relevance to the main doctrine of Javanese leadership, namely Asta Brata. This investigation involves qualitative research using the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of Paul Ricoeur. This study limits the interpretation to the illumination elements depicting three animals, namely elephants, lions and crocodiles. As an illuminating element in the text, the elephant represents strength, the lion represents protection from disturbances from the land, and the crocodile represents protection from disturbances from the water. In other words, the animal images as enlightenment elements in this text represent strength and protection. Strength and protection are two of the eight most important Javanese leadership teachings summarized in Asta Brata. Illumination is another manifestation of text so that there is a message contained in this illumination. In order for the message manifested in this illumination to reach the reader, it is necessary to present these illuminations in a more popular form.

Keywords: Animal, Asta Brata, Illumination, Jayalengkara Wulang

1. Introduction

The illumination is related to the content of the text it frames and also conveys symbols and messages about the ideas and cultural expressions of the community in each creative period (Bland, 1969; Damayanti & Suadi, 2007). In the Javanese, illumination is often referred to as *renggan wedana*, which means front decoration. This is consistent with the location of the illumination, which is usually at the front of the manuscript or at the beginning of a particular *pupuh*.

The data for this study are the illuminations contained in the manuscript with the codex number Jav 24. This manuscript is now in the collection of the British Library, London. This manuscript contains the text of Jayalengkara Wulang. Since 2018, the digital version of this manuscript was documented on <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/javanese.html>. However, since around October 2023, the online access to read this manuscript has been closed because the site was hit by a cyber attack. Fortunately, before that happened the research team had documented this manuscript.

Animal elements are one of the elements included in the illumination of this manuscript. The use of animals to symbolise certain meanings was found in Javanese culture. For example, birds were used as symbols of beauty and royalty in ancient Javanese times (Acridi, 1999). In addition, birds of certain species, namely the White Dada Sea Eagle, are used as symbols of



beauty and the author of the author himself (Jákl, 2022). The elements that make up illumination are animals, plants, buildings, and other inanimate objects. In this research, elements of illumination that come from animals, especially elephants, lions and crocodiles, are used as research data. This research examines the significance of the interpretation of the three animals in the text and looks for their relevance to the main doctrine of Javanese leadership, namely Asta Brata. The relevance of the animal representation in the illumination of this manuscript with the doctrine of Asta Brata needs to be examined considering that the manuscript is from the palace of Yogyakarta which is one of the scriptoriums with the background of the government center and copying this manuscript is the king's decree.

Asta Brata is the main leadership doctrine in Javanese culture. Current manuscripts are one of the objects of cultural advancement. Illumination, which is contained in the manuscript, is another manifestation of the text. Text and other elements, including illumination, in the manuscript are one of the entry points to understanding a culture. So, the context of the text and elements of illumination in the Javanese manuscript is Javanese culture itself. Therefore, it is important to place the illumination in this manuscript in the cultural discourse related to it, namely Asta Brata as the main doctrine of Javanese leadership. Contextualizing a research object into a broader cultural context is something that has rarely been done by previous cultural researchers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Illumination

Illumination was originally used as a term for the gilding of several pages of a manuscript in order to embellish it (Folsom in Zuriati, 2010). As a rule, the title page of the manuscript is decorated. In the course of development, however, illumination was used as a term for the decoration of manuscripts, which included various colors and metallic pigments. This decoration was intended to embellish a manuscript and increase its value. Illumination has been evolving for a long time and is often included in the letters of kings from different kingdoms of the archipelago. Correspondence between kingdoms using illustrated letters has been documented as a tradition since 1521 CE (Mu'jizah, 2009). From the way images are expressed in illumination, you get a concept of how to draw, how to express communication and implicit messages in the form of symbols that have meaning (Damayanti & Suadi, 2007).

2.2. The Use of Symbols in Illumination

Javanese manuscripts use symbols associated with the sources of power, such as kings, protectors, and the god. The Javanese manuscript below uses a symbol/symbol for the power of the then king of Yogyakarta (Hamengku Buwana) to symbolise the power of the king. This becomes clearer in the following illustration (Riyadi, 2002; Sedyawati, 2001).

2.3. Previous Research

Research on this manuscript has been conducted at least by Setiawan (2018) and Mayasari (2023). Setiawan (2018) states that the Wedana Renggan and the Wedana Gapura Renggan in the manuscript have codicologically similar patterns to the traditional architecture of Yogyakarta, while the Rerenggan has similarities to the warrior system of the Yogyakarta palace. Mayasari (2023), who examined an illumination on pages 2v and 3r of the manuscript, found that the elements of illumination in this manuscript have values that can be practically applied in life.

3. Methods

This research is qualitative research using the hermeneutic approach of Paul Ricouer's phenomenology. This approach is used to understand a phenomenon in a systematic, structured, and in-depth way. In this study, a holistic picture of the context must be examined in addition to the data. The main aim of this study is to describe the depiction of animal symbols, particularly elephants, lions, and a crocodile, in the illumination in Serat Jayalengkara Wulang Jav 24. This manuscript is currently in the collection of the British Library.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Representation of Elephants in the Illumination in Jayalengkara Wulang Jav 24

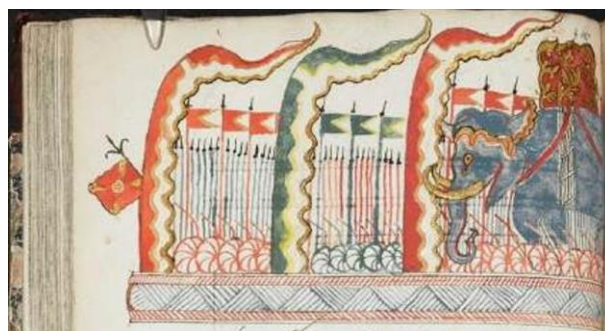


Figure 1. Illustration of Elephants in the Illumination on p. 57v

Above is an illustration from the manuscript of Jayalengkara Wulang Jav 24, which contains an image of an elephant. The image of the elephant in the above manuscript illustration is dark grey, with golden tusks, carrying a kind of chairs on its back along with war attributes such as artillery, banners, spears, and flags that can be seen around it. Based on the meaning of the above attributes, it can be explained that elephants are used in warfare in this text. As it is used in war, this elephant illustration is synonymous with strength.

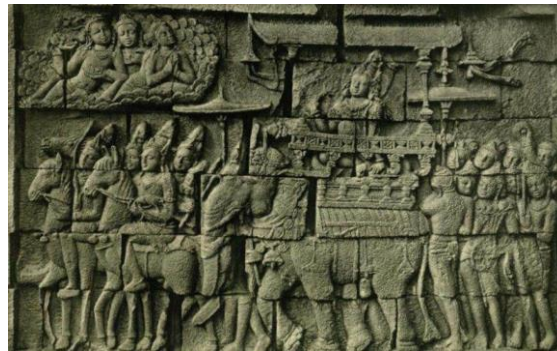
The text associated with this illustrative image is *macapat* in the form of the *Pangkur*. *Pangkur*, apart from meaning a type of song, also means sea fish Poerwadarminta (1939) while according to Padmasusastra (1903) and Winter (1928) this word also means 'tail'.

..., *ing asrama ing praja kang kaesthi wus pēpēk kadya lit agung/ ngumpul sēgalongannya/ kadi binusanan rēngganing arga gung/ dening gumēlaring bala/ kang samya saos lumiring// jalwestri rare mawēnyah, kang samya saos lumiring/ apa duk pakramanipun/ ramene ing aldaka/ anglangkungi pangkataning raja pupuh/ songsong tunggul warna warna/ wiradi prapta rumiyin// suta limiwah pragalba/ dyan prataliyu dadyan yuda pati/ tan pantara tētēg umyung/ rahaden ken tēngara/ ing grahita kang wadya horēg supēnuh/ liman satiga binēkta/ kuda kabeh tan akari//*

Above is a quotation under an illustration with an elephant. The text tells of troops going to war. In the case of troops going to war, there was information that elephants and horses are animals used in war. Therefore, based on the interpretation of the illustration and the reading of the text, the elephant in this text stands for strength.

The word elephant in Javanese is a loanword from the word *gaja* in Sanskrit. This word is found in several ancient Javanese literary works, for example, *Ādiparwa*, *Ślokāntara*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Hariwaṇśa*, *Bhāratayuddha*, *Sumanasāntaka*, *Sutasoma* and *Ariśraya*. In other variants, namely in the words *paṅgaja* and *paṅgajah*, these words mean something that can be relied upon as a source of strength. Poerwadarminta (1939) stated that elephant means: 1. The elephant, 2. The minister in the game of chess. Javanese culture knows the mythological animal Mina Elephant, namely an elephant with a fish body. Meanwhile, Bratakesawa (1928) observed that the word elephant, in addition to being the name of an elephant, may also refer to *usuk* (construction made of wood), a fish, a butterfly, and so on.

Elephants were often used in traditional Javanese culture as mounts for the nobility and as vehicles of war. In Marignolli's records during a trip to Majapahit, for example, it is said that women at a festival sat on seats attached to the backs of elephants. In the Shiva Buddhist religion, the elephant is the mount of the god Indra; in the statue, the goddess Laksmi, the goddess of fertility, is flanked by two elephants (Yustana, 2011). Elephants are seen as a sign of power, virility, wisdom, fertility, and devotion to the king (Yustana, 2011). The elephant as a symbol of strength in the text is consistent with the description of the importance of elephants in Javanese culture in general.



Source: <https://id.pinterest.com/>

Figure 2. An elephant as a Noble Ride on the Borobudur Relief Board

4.2. The Depiction of Lions in the Illumination in Jayalengkara Wulang Jav 24



Figure 3. The Illumination on page 89v

There are two images of lions as part of the illumination in this manuscript. The first image is on page 89v and the second image is on page 129v. The lion illustration on page 89v is depicted with two tails back to back. Its body is pink with short stripes of hair. Apart from that, the eyes, tongue and head hair are described as bright red. The fangs, nails, and curves of the body are depicted as colored gold. The position is slightly bent, head tilted forward, mouth open as if ready to pounce on prey. Text relating to this illustration image is at the top of the lion image in the illumination frame. The text sounds as below.

*//ĕnĕngĕna Nagari Sonyawibawa/ gĕntyā winarna nĕnggih Nagri Singapuspa/
julukira nalendra/ Prabu Sontabuwanaji/ dĕdĕg sang nata/ agĕng inggil rĕspati//
(Translated: Silence, you Sonyawobawa Kingdom, replace what is told, namely the
Kingdom of Singapuspa, name the king Prabu Sontabbuwana, the tall and appropriate
stature of the king)*



Figure 4. Illumination on Page 129

Apart from that, above is a manuscript illumination that contains an illustration of a lion. This image is found on page 129v. The lion as the illustration on page 129v is depicted on the left side of the illumination. Its body is pink with short stripes of hair. Apart from that, the eyes, the tongue, and the lips are bright red. The hair on the head is black. The fangs, nails, and curves of the body are colored in gold. Its body extends from the back towards the top, from the neck to the head towards the front, so that the whole body forms an L shape. The legs are bent, the position is slightly bent, and the mouth is open as if it is ready to pounce on prey. The text relating to this illustration is at the top of the lion in the illumination frame. The text sounds as below.

*//Lingĕn nateng Singasantun/ kaliyan Sri Pringgawĕsthi/ pan lagya
mbojandrawina/ pĕpĕk pra manca dipati/ busanane warna-warna/ tinon lir ujwana
sari// (Translated: That is King Singasari and Sri Pringgawesthi, eating food, full of
foreign dukes, their clothes are colorful, they look like a beautiful forest.)*

The image of a lion in the manuscript illumination on page 89v above is connected with the textual narrative that reports on the king of the kingdom of Singasantun. As the name of the king being narrated is inspired by the name of the animal lion, a lion was chosen as the image for the illumination of this text. The same applies to the manuscript illumination on page 129v. The text associated with the illumination and illustrations of lions is a description of the king in the kingdom of Singasantun. Based on the meaning of the image in the

illumination and the reading of the associated text, it can be explained that the lion image in this manuscript represents the king in the kingdom of Singasantun. Singasantun is a variation of the word Singasari. In order to comply with the rules for writing songs, the word Singasari was then changed to Singasantun. This is also found in other Javanese vocabulary, namely *wotsari*, which is linked to *wotsantun*, *wotsekar*, or *wotsinom* (Poerwadarminto, 1939).

Lions were foreign animals in ancient Java, but not in India. The lion as a symbol and as an ornamental image came to Indonesia with the arrival of the Indian culture (Th. Van der Hoop, 1949). So, searching for the meaning of the interpretation of lions in Java needs to refer to Indian sources. According to van Erp, placing lion statues on the right and left sides of the entrance to a sacred building is an Indian tradition because lions in India are considered sacred figures as guardians of stupas (Haryono, 1980). In this context, the illumination in the Jav 24 manuscript can be associated as a building and the text in the manuscript is a sacred text. The association of illumination images with buildings can be proven by the presence of images of buildings in several illuminations of this manuscript.

4.3. Representation of Crocodiles in Illumination of Jayalengkara Wulang Jav 24



Figure 5. Illumination on page 104v

The above image is an illumination illustration contained in the manuscript on page 104v. The crocodile as part of the illumination on page 104v is depicted at the bottom of the illumination. Its body is green with sharp teeth on the upper side. The eyes are also described as red with shaded eyelids. The teeth and fangs are described as sharp and pointed and golden in color. Its mouth is wide to pounce on its prey. The body is elongated and the tail sticks upwards. The crocodiles depicted in the illustration on this page are two back-to-back. The text referring to this illustration is above the lion in the lighting frame. The text sounds like below.

//Nêngna ing Sonyawibawa/ kawarnaa nagri ing Pringgawèsthi/ sang nata surèng pakewuh/ Maharaja Dursanta/ pan pëndhadha sang nata kuning umancur/ gègodhèg asimbar jaja/ tuhu yèn ratu sinèkti// (Translated: Stay in Sunyawibawa, this is the land of Pringgawesthi, the king of all sorrows, Maharaja Dursanta, the decoration on the king's chest is sparkling yellow, with hair on his chest, what a magical king)

The text also has a crocodile illustration on page 129v (see Figure 3). The crocodile in the illumination on page 129v is represented on the right side, with a lion on the left. Its body

is bright green with black markings and sharp fangs on top. Aside from that, the eyes are characterized as crimson, with darkened eyelids. The teeth and fangs are characterized as sharp, pointed, and gold in hue. Its mouth opens wide to pounce on prey. From bottom to top, the head below rotates to the left, forming an inverted L. The text relating to this illustration is at the top of the images of lions and crocodiles in the illumination frame. The excerpt is as below.

//Lingên nateng Singasantun/ kaliyan Sri Pringgawèsthi/ pan lagya mbojandrawina/ pêpêk pra manca dipati/ busanane warna-warna/ tinon lir ujwana sari// (Translated: This is King Singasari and Sri Pringgawesthi, having meals with foreign dukes, their clothes are colorful like a beautiful forest)

The image of the crocodile in the manuscript illumination on page 104v above is connected with the textual narrative that reports on the king of the kingdom of Pringgawesthi. The same applies to the manuscript illumination on page 129v. The text associated with these illuminated images and illustrations is a description of the king in the Pringgawesthi kingdom. Based on the meaning of the image in the illumination and the reading of the associated text, it can be explained that the image of the crocodile in this manuscript represents the king in the kingdom of Pringgawesthi.

Pringgawesthi is a variation of the word *Pringgabaya*. In order to comply with the rules for writing songs, the word *pringgabaya* was changed to *pringgawesthi*. This is also found in other Javanese vocabularies, *wotsari*, which is related to *wotsantun*, *wotsekar* or *wotsinom* (Poerwadarminto, 1939). The text in Jav 24 is one of the texts from the Panji story cycle. In another manuscript, which also narrates the flag of Jayalenggara Sanyawibawa, one of the kingdoms mentioned is *Pringgabaya* (Nggar, 2020).

In addition, the word *baya* in Javanese also means harm (Poerwadarminta, 1939). On page 129v, a crocodile and a lion are portrayed together. As mentioned in the preceding subchapter, the presence of lions as guards of sacred buildings (which are related with light in the text) implies that crocodiles can also serve as guardians. If lions are terrestrial animals, crocodiles may live both on land and in water. This might be taken that crocodiles are protectors against disruptions that come from land and water.



Source: <https://www.apsarahgallery.com/collection/javanese-figurines/>

Figure 6. Kala Kirtimukha in Candi Kidal

The concept of protecting against misfortunes by something that causes harms is often found in ancient Javanese cultural heritage. For example, in the niches and doors of ancient Javanese temples, the figure of Kala is always given, even though in the narrative in the text of Purwa Bumi Kamulan it is explained that Kala is the leader of the spirits who rule various places. By installing Kala as the guardian of the temple, it is hoped that the spirits will not dare to disturb the holy places because Kala is the leader of these creatures.

This concept is also found in the use of images of crocodiles as guards in this text. The crocodile (*baya*), which also means misery, is given the task to guard the illumination (building association) in the manuscript. This is felt to be more effective because crocodiles know more about the things that cause harm and protect them from harm themselves. Thus, the images of crocodiles and lions in this text represent protection.

4.4. The Relevance of the Values Contained in the Illumination of the Jav 24 Manuscript with the Leadership of Asta Brata

Asta Brata is the main doctrine and ideal Javanese leadership. This teaching came from Sri Rama's teachings to his younger brother, Bharata, when Rama was exiled to the forest to keep the promise of his father (Akbar, 2021). According to Sudharta (2009) Asta Brata comes from the Sanskrit language consisting of the word Asta which means eight and Brata means tasks of obligations, principle/primary behavior, and determination.

Asta Brata is the embodiment of eight natural elements, namely: earth, water, wind, moon, sun, ocean, mountains, and fire (Hidayat & Setiyowati, 2017). Yasadipura I (1729-1803 AD) outlines the eight principles of social leadership contained in Asta Brata, namely nurturing and protective attitudes, adaptability, measured speech, respect, providing solutions to problems, accommodating aspirations, being enthusiastic, having physical strength and mental resilience (Utama, 2023). In its development, leadership teachings of Asta Brata is spread into other works, for example Serat Parta Wigena (Budhisantoso et al., 1991).

The relevant values from the philosophy of animals as elements of illumination in the Jav 24 text are the values of strength and protection. The value of strength is represented by the symbol of an elephant getting ready for war, having physical strength and mental resilience. Elephants in Asta Brata are manifested as *saloka mahambeg mring wukir* 'imitating the nature of a mountain'. In his explanation, leaders must have high resilience to face many challenges, like a mountain that stands strong (Utama, 2023). In pre-Islamic theology, this attitude is personified by Dewa Agni or the God of Fire who has an unyielding attitude, a fiery spirit, and is not afraid to face enemies (Akbar, 2021).

The value of protection is represented by the animal symbols of lions and crocodiles which are depicted with open mouths and ready to pounce on prey. In the illumination, lions and crocodiles are depicted guarding the other elements that make up the illumination. The value of protection in Asta Brata is manifested as *saloka mahambeg mring kisma* i.e. imitating the nature of the earth. In his explanation, leaders must have the qualities of a caregiver, nurturer, and protector of all creatures (Utama, 2023). Concretely, the attitude of the earth element is to support and protect all groups without discrimination, including the weak. Furthermore, it also uses its power for the good of all people by freeing them from poverty and disability (Sudharta, 2009).

In modern times, the leadership concept of Asta Brata is consciously or unconsciously applied in various aspects of practical life. In industry, for example, Asta Brata is used to improve the performance, competence and work discipline of employees (Pratiwi, 2020). Asta Brata also plays a role in government at the village level to increase community participation

in the development of the village (Gede et al., 2024). Other aspects of leadership also adopt the leadership concept of Asta Brata. Asta Brata as the main leadership concept has been incorporated into various other cultural works. One of them is the illumination image in the ancient 19th-century Javanese manuscript, Jayalengkara Wulang Jav 24.

5. Conclusion

The element of elephants in the illumination of the Jayalengkara Wulang Jav 24 manuscript symbolizes strength. The lion element symbolizes protection from disturbances emanating from the land. The crocodile element symbolizes protection from disturbances emanating from water. Strength and protection are the meanings of the two elements of illumination in this text. Strength and protection are two of the eight Javanese leadership teachings contained in the Asta Brata.

There are two recommendations in this study. The first recommendation is to research illumination, illustration, or tributary in Javanese manuscripts to reveal other aspects of a manuscript. The second recommendation is to present the illuminations in the manuscript in other, more popular forms, for example in everyday objects, so that the message in the manuscript can reach a wider reading public.

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