

Curious Misinterpretations in the National History of Indonesia
The unpublished Sanskrit inscription of Śamkara
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It is a well-known fact that Sanskrit had a relatively shorter and less prolific life-span in Indonesian, particularly in Javanese, epigraphy than in that of other Southeast Asian regions. All the more precious, therefore, are the rare opportunities to add a Sanskrit inscription to the historical record of this region. This paper will present for the first time an edition of the inscription referred to in volume II of the *Sejarah Nasional Indonesia* (National History of Indonesia: first edition 1975; fourth edition 1984; updated edition 2008) as the *Inscription of Śamkara*. Without quoting more than one verse quarter of its still unpublished text, but relying on a transcription prepared by the Indonesian epigraphist Boechari, this standard work refers to data from the inscription to support rather far-reaching reconstructions of the national dynastic and religious history, on the basis of the presumed conversion of an 8th century (CE) ‘king’ Śamkara from Śaivism to Buddhism. The present whereabouts of the inscribed stone in question are unknown, but a photograph published in the fourth edition of the National History is sufficient where necessary to correct Boechari’s transcription (that circulates among his students, and to which I have been given access), and thus to arrive at a virtually certain reading of this undated inscription. My new reading and translation reveal that almost every aspect of its contents has been misinterpreted in the National History. The figure Śamkara in this inscription was not a king but a Śaiva poet, he never converted to Buddhism, and moreover his *floruit* cannot confidently be assigned to the 8th century on palaeographic grounds. Going beyond these negative results, this paper will point out some of the interesting positive conclusions that can be drawn from the proper interpretation of this interesting document of Sanskrit culture in ancient Indonesia.