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UPON A WHITE STONE UNDER A NAGASARI-TREE

Introduction.

There is a story in the official chronicle of Kutai¹ which relates how Maharaja Sultan, with his two elder brothers went to Majapait in order to study the Javanese *adat*.

The three princes travelled by swing, the customary magic means of conveyance (all over the archipelago) to reach heaven². From heaven they travelled to Java where Maharaja Bërma Wijaya, King of Majapait, was giving audience. His *Patih* (P. M.) Gajah Mada and all the ministers and generals were present. The King's eye was caught by a glow, which seemed divine rather than of human origin: it was the three Kutai princes who had alighted on the city wall.

The whole populace came out to look and a sudden rain gave the princely brothers an opportunity to show their magic powers. The eldest, Maharaja Sakti concentrated his thoughts on his God in such a way that a cloud came to stand over him and he did not become wet; the second, Maharaja Indra Mulia remained dry by swinging his kris over his head three times. But Maharaja Sultan, when he felt the rain upon him thought of Anantaboga (that mighty patron of legitimate kings, ever since he once protected with his hood God Vishnu in his sleep). The venerable serpent of the Underworld formed such a high arch that the place where Maharaja Sultan was sitting was elevated as high as the hall of audience of the King of Majapait himself.

¹ S. W. Tromp, *Uit de Salasila van Koetei*, BKI V 3=37, 1888. (Dr.) C. A. Mees, *De Kroniek van Koetei, textuitgave met toelichting* (text with commentary), uitg. C. A. Mees, Santpoort (N.H.), thesis Leiden, 1935. Dr. W. Kern, *Boekbespreking* (review) on this text-edition, TBG 77/2, 1937. Dr. W. Kern, *Commentaar op de Salasilah van Koetei*, VKI XIX, 1956; this commentary is mostly philological.

My translation from the Malay: ed. Mees p. 211 1.16—p. 212 1.9. The introduction to it is taken from Mees' summary (86—91).

² Dr. Alb. C. Kruyt, *Het Schommelen in de Indische Archipel*, BKI 97, 1938, p. 363—424.

The princely guests were well received at the Javanese court. After a magnificent meal the King of Majapait and Maharaja Sultan discussed several questions of adat over their coffee, tea and sweets.

When they had retired Maharaja Sultan, on his couch, was fanned by two Javanese noblemen, while two others sang for him with wonderful voices.

Translation from the Chronicle of Kutai.

'At about daybreak (here I translate from the Malay text), when the clouds had disappeared, the *kěntongan* sounded as loudly as the guns called The World's Brooms (*Sapu Jagat*), and the gong Grape-fruit-flower (*Sěkar Dalima*). The King and Maharaja Sultan got up and the King took his guest to a small tank with streaming water to bathe. Noblemen brought garments for them to wear in the water, other noblemen kept garments on their laps to change into. When they had bathed, their hair was cleaned and washed and then they went into the tank with streaming water called Sugáran. They bathed together for some time and when they came out of the water, the king and Maharaja Sultan changed their garments.

Then the king took Maharaja Sultan *to a Nagasari-tree and made him sit there, on a white stone.*

Only then the Permaisuri also bathed, with Her Highness the Mahadéwi and Her Highness the Matur and Her Highness the Léko³ and with the other wives and concubines of the King and of all the nobles. They splashed noisily in the tank of Banjaran Sari (the Flower-garden) giving joy to the Permaisuri. Having bathed for some time, the Permaisuri came out of the water with Her Highness the Mahadéwi and all the others and they walked about picking all sorts of flowers and fruits to their hearts' content.

Thereafter the King sat with Maharaja Sultan *on the white stone under a Nagasaritree*, all by themselves, the King and the Sultan; all the nobles had been told to go for a walk and they had gone to the garden (*taman*) to pick fruit. Then the King taught to Maharaja Sultan all the knowledge (*ilmu*) necessary for a man who is to become a king.'

Commentary.

At first sight this passage seems merely a pleasant, not particularly

³ Thoses are the names or titles of the four spouses of Panji. It has not yet been made clear whether *wayang*-influence or literary influence of the Panji-novels made the author choose those names. The fourth is as Liku still a figure in Balinese drama, acting as the wicked stepmother and witch.

interesting episode in the whole story. Yet I believe it to be the description of how the King of Majapait consecrated Maharaja Sultan of Kutai as a cosmic ruler.

To prove this point, let us first comment on this passage, considering what exactly happened. First of all the two princes took a bath, then they had their hair washed and cleaned, whereafter they bathed in another lake. This sounds very much like a *ritual cleaning*. It still happens on Java nowadays that people in Kota Gdé, near Jogja, cleanse themselves thoroughly in a small *kamar mandi* built for that purpose, before entering the tank with the holy white tortoises.

Fortunately we have another text about bathing in a holy tank with streaming water, at the foot of a Nagasari-tree, i.e. in the Sri Tanjung, a Javanese story possibly written in the sixteenth century A.D., although of older origin⁴. The heroine of the story, Sri Tanjung, innocently killed by her husband, is brought to life by Rara Nini, who is Durga, the demoniac form of Uma.

The goddess shows her the four heavens in the four cardinal points, following the well known Javanese system of classification: each direction has its tree, its bird, its colour, its flower, its metal, its virtue and its category of people who have the right to bathe in the lake at the foot of the tree.

Having shown and described the four directions, the goddess continues:

‘The Nagasari-tree, which is there in the Centre, the cockatoo belongs to it. The water underneath, called Talaga, is surrounded with flowers of every kind. Multicoloured is its border. The water is clear and streaming, immaculate and pure. My Divine Person is to bathe in it. There you must take a bath, darling girl.’ She took Sri Tanjung by the hand etc.

Here we see that the Nagasari-tree stands in the centre of the Universe. This ‘centre’ is known in Javano-Balinese religion to belong to Siwa, and to his spouse Uma, and ‘every kind of flowers’ and ‘all colours’ mean that they are the gods of totality, containing all other gods, colours etc. in themselves. ‘Bathing’ in this water imparts the highest form of purification.

Returning to our translation of the Malay text we notice that the

⁴ Prijono, *Sri Tanjung, een oud Javaansch Verhaal*, thesis Leiden 1938, p. 19 of the Introduction; the fragment quoted from p. 127.

king's spouses did not bathe in the same water, but in a tank in the *Banjaran Sari*, the Flower-Garden. This *Banjaran Sari* is a well known place in folk-romance as well as in reality. First of all there is a place in heaven with this name. It is reached before the crossroads, and Sri Tanjung picks a flower there ⁵. An unpurified soul however is not allowed to pick flowers there ⁶. I suggest that the princesses and noblemen, bathing there and picking flowers and fruits, might be acting as *Widadaris* and *Widadaras*, because the Javanese court was thought to be a replica of Heaven, its ruler an incarnation of Siwa and the beautiful young girls surrounding him are thought of as *widadaris*. In the conventional description in the wayang literature it is said of the ruler, entering his palace: "His human nature has gone, he is similar to a divinity, God Sambu, surrounded by *Widadaris*" ⁷.

Moreover, the way in which the king interrupts his ceremony — if it is a ceremony — gives the impression that the activities of the princesses and noblemen are of some significance. This would be the case if they did indeed have to act as inhabitants of heaven. Which are those activities? They are roaming about, picking flowers, making love and bathing — as we know from a charming Balinese poem ⁸.

A Javanese ruler, wishing to be left alone with his guest, could order his nobles to withdraw in a much simpler way than by telling them to go for a walk in the park, a rather unusual amusement anyway for a Javanese nobleman.

Finally we will discuss how the *taman* or *Banjar Sari* was a spot fit for ceremonial proceedings.

A *Taman* in Bali, as late as the 19th century, could only belong to a king ⁹. And, we may add, to the gods. In Indonesian languages it is as often explained by '(flower) garden' as by 'tank' or 'pool'. The Balinese *taman*, belonging to the gods, is described as: 'a rectangular tank in the midst of which a small shrine is installed like on a miniature

⁵ o.c. p. 117, stanza V. 128.

⁶ My Journey into the Realm of Death, BKI 111/3, 1955, p. 245.

⁷ Dr. Tjan Tjoe Siem, Hoe Koeroepati zich een Vrouw verwerft, Javaansche lakon in het Nederlandsch vertaald en van aantekeningen voorzien, thesis Leiden 1938, p. 5.

⁸ My De Goddelijke Gast op Bali, Balisch Gedicht en Volksverhaal, Bibl. Jav. 10, ed. KBG, thesis Batavia 1949, p. 66 & 74.

⁹ Dr. H. N. Van der Tuuk, Kawi-Balinesesch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek, Landsdrukkerij, Weltevreden, vol. II, 1899, s.v. *taman*, p. 752.

island' ¹⁰. The rectangular tank is always a regular part of the princely *taman* of Bali, and on the island a 'balé kambang' is frequently erected ¹¹.

Time and again one comes across a *taman* in old Indonesian literature, specially in Panji novels. Sometimes its entrance gate is described exactly as that of a palace. Nini Kēbayan, the mysterious old woman in the Panji novels, lives in such a *taman*, and one is not surprised that this *taman* is called *Banjaran Sari*. The famous Taman Sari ('Waterkasteel') of the Sultans of Jogja was built as late as the end of the 18th century, though earlier traditions may have influenced the outlay. A large, rectangular tank with streaming water and an island was one of its main features. It had a winged gate-building and a large monsterhead above the entrance. It had orchards where the Widadaris could be sent for a walk and to pick fruits, and a formal garden of flowering shrubs, where the ruler's female escort or widadaris could pick flowers ¹². Now it is a picturesque ruin.

The fact that a *taman* belongs either to the gods or to a prince — which makes no essential difference —, that a pond is an essential part of it, that it sometimes has a gate, resembling that leading into The Other World — from all these features we may conclude that it is thought to be a part of that Other World.

The Nagasari tree in old Javano-Balinese religion.

Having sketched the surroundings of the king sitting under the Nagasari tree, we will study the tree itself more closely.

Concerning the Nagasari tree we learned from the Sri Tanjung passage ⁴ that it stands in the holy centre of the universe (*ring Madya*), and that Uma and (we may safely add) Siwa were its lords. In this mediaeval milieu, which we may call Tantristic, there exists a *Unio Mystica* between Siwa and Uma.

We might say that the tree was a symbol of those gods of totality,

¹⁰ Claire Holt, *Bandit-Island, a Short Exploration Trip to Nusa Penida, Djawa 16, Juli 1936*, p. 130.

¹¹ Our impression is that this is not a specially Indonesian feature, but that it may be common to many Asian countries. A Japanese goaler on the Burma railway had made a miniature pond-with-island which reminded my husband wistfully of Bali.

¹² J. Groneman, *Het Waterkasteel te Jogjakarta (with a map)*, TBG 30, 1885, p. 412—34.

(Photo British Museum)

Fig. 2 Sēsako. Museum Djakarta.
Ethn. Coll. No. 610.

Fig. 3 Copy of a Sēsako. Museum Djakarta.
Ethn. Coll. No. 611.

Fig. 4 Pēpadon. Museum Djakarta.
Ethn. Coll. No. 19391.

where all colours, metals, flowers etc. were united. One only has to bear in mind that a symbol or token is too cold or abstract a way to imagine the relation between the divinity and its tree. It was thought more as a transfiguration of the god.

In the Tantu Panggëlaran ¹³, a Javanese pre-Muslim religious book, it is told that the goddess became a Kalpataru in order to get away from her baby son Kumara: *Tmahan Bhatāri Umā tikang kayu*, the tree was a transfiguration of the Goddess Uma. But God Kumara found her out and fed on the tree.

We find the Nagasari tree also in a Balinese folktale where a girl finds her dead mother: sitting under a Nagasari tree, i.e. in the Holy Centre of Heaven ¹⁴.

The main cultural medium, however, where the tree is found, is the *wayang*. It is the tree on the *gunungan*, the mysterious 'mountain' which is set up in the centre at the beginning and the end of a performance. It is as often called *kakayon* (from Javanese *kayu*, tree) as *gunungan*; and in some Malay writings it is even called *buhun Nagasari* ¹⁵.

Much has been written about this interesting wayang-property ¹⁶. It has been recognised as a symbol of totality. Rassers who gropes back to pre-Hindu times, declares that the tree 'represents the totality of the large community, divided in two phratries' ¹⁷. Bosch enlarges this view in one of his fine passages where he puts the question:

'Does not the way in which the Tree is put between the Agni- and the Soma-group of the wayang-puppets give expression to the idea that the adversary creative forces in nature, which are supposed to be incarnated in those groups, are fundamentally

¹³ Th. Pigeaud, *De Tantu Panggëlaran*, uitgegeven, vertaald en toegelicht, thesis Leiden 1924, 's-Gravenhage 1924, p. 72 l. 26.

¹⁴ I Jaum; Coll. Kirtya Lieftrinck-Van der Tuuk, Singaradja (Bali), No. 1700.

¹⁵ Dr. H. Bergema, *De Boom des Levens in Schrift en Historie*, thesis Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1938, Hilversum 1938, p. 43 note 134. The passage in Hikayat Galuh digantung had been given in Malay text and Dutch translation by H. Overbeck in his 'Java in de Maleische Literatuur' IV, Djawa 12/4—5, 1932, p. 218.

¹⁶ Dr. F. D. K. Bosch, *De Gouden Kiem*, Inleiding in de Indische Symboliek, Elsevier, Amsterdam-Brussel 1948, ill. p. 59—61 give six Javanese and two Balinese *gunungan*. For more references concerning the *gunungan* cp. Bosch o.c. p. 204, note 1.

¹⁷ Dr. W. H. Rassers, *Inleiding tot een Bestudeering van de Javaansche Kris*, Med. Kon. Ned. Ak. v. Wet., Afd. Lett, N.R. Deel 1, No. 8, 1938, Amsterdam; illustrations.

one? Because they arise from the one root of all life, from which sprouts the tree of life, which stands in the centre of the universe, procreating and feeding all creatures.' ¹⁸

Thus Dr Bosch, who in his own way reached a conclusion which is in harmony with the old Indonesian mentality.

In Toba-Batak myths we find beautiful illustrations of the conception of the tree of life representing the cosmic order: '*Life and death, age and youth, wealth and poverty, courage and cowardice are comprised in it*' ¹⁹.

This tree too must necessarily stand *in the centre* ²⁰. It would be interesting to compare the Toba-Batak tree of life with that of the Javanese, specially in the above mentioned Sri Tañjung passage, since many similarities occur. This however lies beyond the scope of my present subject.

I will only mention the conclusion which Tobing reaches in his fascinating book: '... that the Toba-Batak conceive upper-, middle- and underworld and the order of this totality as a tree which is the High God himself.' ²¹

This is very much the same conception as we find in the Balinese speculations about the *wayang*. We possess four small treatises about the *wayang kulit* ²², which deal with the macrocosm and microcosm (*bhuwana agung & bhuwana alit*) as nearly all Javano-Balinese mysticism does, following its Indian master.

The *kakayon* appears in one description of the microcosm (which is the perfect *dalang's* body) as *living or incarnating itself in the centre of the liver (kakayon mulih ring tēngah pupusuh)* ²³.

When the performance starts, the *kakayon* is the first property about which is told what happens 'in reality' for the mystic's mind:

'It should be recognised that Sambu enters Wisnu, Wisnu enters Sangkara, Sangkara enters Mahadéwa, Mahadéwa enters

¹⁸ Bosch, o.c. p. 262.

¹⁹ Ph. L. Tobing, *The Structure of the Toba-Batak Belief in the High God*, thesis Utrecht 1956, Amsterdam 1956, p. 65, cp. also p. 121.

²⁰ o.c. p. 57.

²¹ o.c. p. 60.

²² Collection Kirtya Liefrinck-Van der Tuuk (Singaradja, Bali), all of them entitled 'Dharma Pawayangan', Nos. 106, 369, 1151, 1610; in typewritten transcript available in the MS collection of the Leiden University and of the Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia "Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen", Djakarta.

²³ K 106, lempir 1. b; K 1151, lempir 1. b.

Ludra (Rudra), Ludra enters Brahma, Brahma enters Mahisora, Mahisora enters Iswara, Iswara enters the *kakayon*.' ²⁴

In order to understand the meaning of this statement one has to remember that the Balinese kosmos is represented as a lotus. Its Holy Centre (*Madhya*) is the abode of the divine couple Siwa-Uma, while on the leaves of the lotus eight gods are imagined, each of them with his own *sakti*. These gods are all different aspects of Siwa, and their saktis of Uma. This cosmic complex is called *nawa-sanga* (*nawa* is the Skr. word for nine, immediately followed by its translation *sanga*) ²⁵.

God Sambu, with whom the movement starts, is to be found in the N. E.; consequently one should imagine that at the beginning of the performance when the *dalang* takes the *kakayon* and shakes it, a cosmic movement causes all the gods of the Balinese nawa-sanga to enter their neighbour in a movement from right to left until all the gods have become one in Siwa, the Centre, the *kakayon*.

Here we are very near indeed to the Toba-Batak conception of the 'tree which is the High God himself'.

It now becomes a futile question whether the *kakayon* is solar or chthonic, as it is both, being the home or transfiguration of Siwa-Uma, the divine conception of totality.

Why did Siwa undergo incarnation in that special tree which is called Naga-sari? Nagasari undoubtedly is the Javanese translation of the Skr. name *nāga-puṣpa* ²⁶. The nagapuspa probably came to Java as the flower of Maitreya-Buddha, the future Buddha who was so important in Javanese Buddhism ²⁷.

'The Nagapuspa which grows in Java around ancient temples, cultivated there from old, is the *Mesua ferrea*. (Fig. 1) The flower

²⁴ K 106 1. 5. a. — We hope to find an early opportunity to deal with these interesting texts.

²⁵ Dr. P. H. Pott, *Yoga en Yantra in hunne beteekenis voor de Indische Archaeologie*, diss. Leiden, Brill, 1946, p. 148.

²⁶ MESUA FERREA L. An evergreen monopodial tree, up to 60 ft high, with dense conical crown (when in full vigour), shortly buttressed at the base; bark greyish-reddish brown, shallowly fissured and flaty; young leaves vivid-yellowish pink, hanging limply in tassels. Leaf-blade 2-6 x 7-1.5", narrow, oblong, lanceolate, pointed, dark green above, white with a waxy bloom beneath; stalk .2-.3", slender. Flowers 3-4" wide, white, very fragrant, sepals and petals 4, rather fleshy; stamens yellow with orange anthers; ovary pale cream. E. J. H. Corner, *Wayside Trees of Malaya*, 2 vols.; I, Singapore 1940, p. 320/1, Plate 67.

²⁷ T. van Erp, *Maitreya en het Voorkomen van Maitreya-Legenden op de Borobudur-Stupa*, TBG 54, 1912, p. 427.

is somewhat similar to the ones on Jav. sculptures, though the clusters of flowers is wholly phantasy or a combination with another kind. The flowers are large ($\frac{1}{2}$ d.M. = 2 inches) and fragrant and grow separately in the axilla of the leaf.

In the Nāgarakrētāgama of 1365 the author Prapañca mentions Nagapuspa, flowering around the derelict funeral-temple of Kajñengan.²⁸

The name *Naga-puspa* had necessarily a different meaning for Indians and Javanese. For an Indian it means *serpent-flower*. If a Javanese would translate this, the result would be *sari-naga*, or *puspa-naga*. This word *sari-naga* does indeed exist for the flower of this tree which are used for their fragrance²⁹.

To the Javanese the word *naga-sari* could only mean *flowering serpent*. The author of the Tantu Panggëlaran, (the Javanese pre-Muslim *tutur*) who gives many aetiological legends, also tells us about the origin of the Naga-sari-tree as the Flowering Serpent³⁰.

This passage deals with the foundation by Siwa of four *tyagas*, which are a kind of hermitage. Three of them are enumerated and I quote what is told about the fourth:

Kaping patnya ring Pacira (madya ngëmbung amrang gësing)³¹.

Ana ta Naga magalak arëp angalahakëna ri Bhatāra. Pinrang ring kudi. Pjah tang Naga, dadi tumuwuh marwan akëmbang. Nhër ingaranan Nagasari. Matangnyan ing Pacira tambëhan ing hana këmbang Nagasari.

The fourth is Pacira (the Centre sprouted fighting with a thorny bambu (?)). There was a fierce Serpent who wished to defeat the God. The God fought him with his hermit's knife. So the Serpent was killed and it happened that he sprouted with leaves and blossoms. Then the God called him Flowering Serpent. That is why in Pacira *the flower of the Flowering Serpent* existed for the first time.

With regard to this passage we notice:

²⁸ T. van Erp, o.c. p. 435/6.

²⁹ F. S. A. de Clercq en Dr. M. Greshoff, Nieuw Plantkundig Woordenboek voor Nederlandsch-Indië, Amsterdam 1909, s.v. *Mesua ferrea*.

³⁰ Pigeaud, Tantu p. 69, 70.

³¹ Those last four words, only testified by two MSS, Pigeaud omitted as obscure. I maintain them since Madya is the natural place for the Tree to sprout. Yet they may still hide a *wangsalam* as Pigeaud suggested. The punctuation & translation are mine. It differs only with Pigeaud's in being more accurate where the Tree is concerned.

1. that it was Siwa who killed the Serpent which became the Nagasari-tree 'with leaves and flowers';
2. that the author of the Tantu is apparently conscious that 'the flower of the Flowering Serpent' is the most important part, though his generation did not know enough Sanskrit to realise that 'the flower of the *Flowering Serpent*' in previous times had been expressed simply by Naga-kusuma, Naga-sari, Naga-santun, etc.
3. This legend could only have originated provided that in Javanese thought *the tree could be a serpent* ³².

The serpent and the tree of life have been conceived in some relation to each other in most cultures of Asia. The best known example to us is Genesis 3.

A student of ancient religion should try to solve the problem as to this relationship in the conception of the people he studies, without losing sight of the fact that a certain relationship between Tree and Serpent was widely recognised.

For early Indonesian religion this relation seems quite clear. The Ngaju-Dayak Tree of Life ³³ shows two horizontal branches of which the lower one is formed by the Serpent of the Underworld, the higher by the Hornbill, symbol of the Upperworld.

With the Toba Batak the Tree which was the High God himself ³⁴, was in its lower part imagined as the serpent of the Underworld, if Tobing's suggestion is right that the magic wand represents the Tree — a theory which seems possible.

On Sumba tissues one notices serpents in the Trees of Death ³⁵.

These are only examples to show that in pre-Hindu Indonesian thought the serpent was at least a part of the tree.

Then Hinduism came in its Tantristic form.

The Javanese king and his dynasty put themselves under the special protection of the lingga of Siwa in his demoniac appearance (In Champa and Cambodia a similar tradition existed ³⁶. An Old-Javanese inscription from 760 A.D. names a 'Wise and mighty prince under whose protection the fire of Putikeçwara radiates in all directions'.

³² Bosch, *De Gouden Kiem*, p. 222 sqq.

³³ Dr. H. Schärer, *Die Gottesidee der Ngadju Dajak in Süd-Borneo*, thesis Leiden, Brill, 1946, p. 28, Fig. 1.

³⁴ Tobing, o.c. p. 155.

³⁵ Bergema, o.c. fig. 110.

³⁶ Dr. F. D. K. Bosch, *Het Lingga-Heiligdom van Dinaja*, TBG 64, 1924, p. 227. I owe this part of my investigation to this article.

Putikeswara was Siwa in his most terrible form. The 'fire which radiates in all directions' is the god's lingga.

'The nagas, possessors of the deadly poisonous fire, inhabitants of the Patalas in the Underworld, specially are the fiery animals, related to the Lord of demons and his lingga. The serpentcord is Shiva-Rudra's attribute, countless times the god in his different murtis is represented with serpents in his hairdress; round his wrists, his ankles, his neck, as rings in his ears, etc. Also the lingga is often encoiled by a serpent and is then called *Nageçwara*. Shiwa as Nageçwara has a temple in Benares, and in numerous sanctuaries he is adored together with the nagas.' ³⁶

In the similar Cambodia inscription the lingga is called *pawana-sāra*, the essence of the fire. I suggest that the lingga could be represented as a naga, and the naga grew out to a tree, called Naga-sari ^{36a}. And could not the kala-head on the kakayon, which was the Naga-sari, be the god Kala himself, Siwa in his demoniac form?

One cannot discuss these questions without mentioning Rassers' illuminating brochure on the Javanese kris ³⁷. The author proves that kris and kakayon are essentially one because of their serpent, kala and vegetative elements. He concludes that both are Panji, referring to the material published in his thesis ³⁸. Here the author had come to the conclusion that 'Panji and his princess were the founders of the Javanese phratries'.

This may be true for the time when the Javanese had not yet undergone Hindu influence. But the people we meet in the Panji novels were hinduised, and to those people's minds the Nagasari tree as well as the kris were incarnations of Siwa Maha-kala. One specimen of a kris was even called Naga-sara ³⁹.

From stone to throne.

There is no doubt about the white stone being a megalithic royal

^{36a} Cp. A. Cabaton, *Nouvelles Recherches sur les Chams*, Publication E.F.E.O. 1901, p. 113, where *mesua ferrea* appears to be 'protecteur du royaume cam' (reference due to Eva M. Hooymaas, B.A.).

³⁷ Rassers, *De Javaansche Kris*, Med. K.N.A.v.W., Afd. Lett. Nr. I. 8. 1938.

³⁸ De Pandji-Roman, thesis Leiden 1922, Antwerpen, p. 363 & passim.

³⁹ L. Th. Mayer, *Een Blik in het Javaansche Volksleven*, Brill, Leiden, z.j. (II), p. 537.

seat ⁴⁰. We find it everywhere in Indonesia: in Sumatra, Java, Bali and Celebes ⁴¹.

The white colour may signify in Javanese classification that one is supposed to be in the heaven of Siwa. White and multicoloured as well as East and Holy Centre are interchangeable ⁴².

Those prehistoric seats often consist of two pieces (dissolith): a flat stone slab to sit upon and a menhir, a *stele* to lean against. They are supposed to be the seats of the forefathers, but, as the chiefs are their representatives or incarnations, they have the right to use them. Rings of seats are found apparently destined for an assembly.

In Nias these stone seats sometimes have the appearance of real chairs, with backs of one, single slab.

In the Lampong districts in S.E. Sumatra we find also a similar development from seats, made of two separate pieces, into one throne ⁴³. These are the *pěpadon* (seat) and *sěsako* (back) ⁴⁰. These are made of wood, but Heine-Geldern has shown that megalithic monuments may be changed for wooden ones when a megalithic people migrates into a region where stone is rare. The stone menhirs which e.g. serve as poles to which to tether the bulls to be sacrificed by the Torajas are replaced by wooden ones when there are not enough available, while the Dayak use exclusively wood for the same purpose. The megalithic stone ancestor statue is sometimes made of wood.

For that matter stone and wooden chief-seats alternate in Nias ⁴⁴. So we may consider the Lampong seat of honour and support of

⁴⁰ Dr. A. N. J. Th. à Th. van der Hoop, De Megalithische Hoofdenzetel Oorsprong van den Lampongschen Papadon? TBG 80. 1940, p. 60—77.

To this fine article I owe this part of my investigations, until I disagree about the explanation of the ornaments on the *sěsako* and the throne; also the suggestion that it means the Tree of Life is my own responsibility.

⁴¹ In India also a (white or yellow) stone under a holy tree was found in sacred groves since times immemorial, cp. Jeannine Auboyer, Le trône vide, Extrait des Cahiers Archéologiques, VI, Paris 1952, p. 1-9, reference for which I have to thank Prof. Bosch. The Indian stone also served for kings' consecrations, and also had a tendency to become a throne. In many texts it is conceived as situated in the centre of the Universe. I feel incompetent to deal with the problem of those similar conceptions, dating from long before the Hindu-influence in Indonesia.

⁴² Dr. J. L. Swellengrebel, Korawâçrama, een Oud-Javaansch Proza-Geschrift, uitgegeven, vertaald en toegelicht, thesis Leiden, 1936, Santpoort 1936, p. 31 Introduction.

⁴³ Edwin Loeb, Sumatra, its History and People; Robert Heine-Geldern, The Archaeology of Sumatra, Verlag des Instituts für Völkerkunde der Universität Wien, 1935, p. 271, 272.

⁴⁴ Sumatra o.c. n. 24 picture 61.

honour, though they are made of wood, as being in the same category as the above-mentioned megalithic seats. When a Lampong chief had acquired the honour of using the seat, his wife was allowed to drive to the assembly-hall, sitting in a cart which had the shape of a hornbill. The hornbill, now, is known as a religious symbol of high antiquity, connected with the megalithic culture which spread over Indonesia some three or four thousand years ago ⁴⁵.

A Lampong chief might nail his wooden seat to the support and a throne — though without legs — was the result. In the museum in Djakarta are two carefully carved backs (*sēsako*) and a throne with legs.

In the 16th century the Sultan of Bantam had great power in the Lampong districts, and this throne may have been made under Bantam-Javanese —, the legs even under western influence.

That the wooden seats of honour with their backs originated from stone seats is corroborated by a legend which tells that the Sultan of Bantam used to go for a walk every night, and rest *on a stone under a Waringin*. Therefore (sic!) the Lampong chiefs, having got their promotion from the Sultan, used the wooden seats and backs. The legend is mistaken about the late date of those signs of honour, as we have seen above. They dated from megalithic times, but the Sultan of Bantam gained the right of bestowing this honour.

So the carvings on the two supports as well as those on the back of the throne came to have Javanese features. I suggest that they represented the tree of life. If this suggestion is right, the honoured Lampong chief was not only sitting on a replica of the Sultan's throne, but also *leaning against the tree of life* (which in the whole of Indonesia usually is the *waringin*, but may also be another tree, as we saw e.g. the *Nagasari*).

Leaning against the tree of life in a Toba-Batak myth is the act by which the Uppergod creates this world: ⁴⁶

'In the very beginning there was a certain person, our Ompung Tuan Bubi na Bolon, the only God. He leant against the Singkamabarbar-tree, the beginning of the creaking (of the branches) caused by the wind. This tree was eaten by grubs and its decaying matter fell down into the sea. From this decaying matter there came into being . . . (in short all things whose habitat is in the water). Not long afterwards some more decaying matter fell down, but this time on dry land (so the insects came to life).

⁴⁵ E.g. Sumatra o.c. p. 310, picture 62; Schärer, o.c. Fig. 1 on p. 28, Abb. 6, 20, 22.

⁴⁶ Tobing, o.c. p. 91. I shortened the myth somewhat.

Again for the third time some decaying matter fell down and came down in the vast wood (the wild animals were born). The fourth time the domestic animals came into life. For the fifth time some decaying matter fell down and from this the birds in the air came into existence. And Tuan Bubi na Bolon . . . leaning against the *Singkam-mabarbar-tree* gave names to three of these birds.'

(the birds mated in the Tree and the gods were born).

The only god, sitting and leaning against the tree of life and so creating the world was the mythical prototype of all kings and chieftains who were sitting against their menhir or *sēsako*, ruling their little world.

Thanks to a recent article by Prof. Th. P. Galestin⁴⁷ we know that Balinese kings were also supposed to lean against a ceremonial back which again I suppose to be a conventionalised tree of life.

The author describes a Balinese painting which represents the Malat, a Panji story. He draws our attention to an ornament above the stern of the royal ship and observes that:

'It may be that this object was placed there as a back for the king to lean against and at the same time a symbol of his dignity (*exactly what the sēsako was*; J. H.). This supposition is based on the fact that a like ornamentation appears on a Balinese cloth known to us and belonging to a private collection; the picture on this cloth illustrates what is called the snake-sacrifice of king Janamejaya! Here we see the ornament in question standing straight up on the floor of a small, open building behind the seated king. It corresponds more or less with the backs of stone 'sun-seats'; with certain crowning pieces of pavilion roofs, and, again, with those of some 'closed gates' (*paduraksa*).'

Here the author detected the Balinese equivalent of the Lampong *sēsako*. As to the form it might be a conventionalised tree of life, which would also be a very suitable back for the seat of the sungod. It would besides fit in as an ornament on pavilions and temple gates, which are supposed to represent the world mountain.

After this excursion about the Toba god and the Balinese king, leaning against the tree of life, let us consider the ornaments on each of the Lampong objects.

⁴⁷ Th. P. Galestin, L. Langewis, Rita Bolland, Lamak and Malat in Bali and a Sumba loom. Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, No. CXIX, Department of Cultural and Physical Anthropology No. 53, 1956, p. 28.

The first one (Fig. 2) is a *sēsako*, stele, of which Van der Hoop, who calls it a beautiful and striking piece, gives the following description:

'It is shaped somewhat like a large and heavy screen; the height is 198 c.M., the width 191.5 c.M., while the thickness of the basis is not less than 31.5 c.M.

The motives are the following: Left and right a large naga; in the centre on the top a curious, somewhat primitive mask, of which the crescent-shaped headdress reminds of the *tēkēs*, the headdress of the Klana and Gunungsari, and also of the similar headdress of the famous *chili* figures of Bali, finally of the crescent-shaped hairdress of masks on different prehistoric Indonesian bronzes, as the famous axes of state from Roti in the Museum (in Djakarta).

Under the mask a rosette or sun. Besides, in the midst of volutes, some ten smaller nagas, some of which are changing into fishes.'

The second *sēsako* (Fig. 3) which is only 89.5 c.M. high, is, according to Van der Hoop: '*decorated exclusively with floralistic ornaments*'.

Finally there is the throne (Fig. 4) of which the description runs:

'Heavy wooden bench on four curved legs. In the triangular back a decoration of ornamented leaves and flowers is cut out in bas-relief, between which in the centre is a crescent, flanked by two bird-figures. The whole bench is varnished black. The edges of the seat and the leaves of the back are green, the flowers are painted red and yellow. The crescent and the bird-figures are gilded. Copy of an old original.'

As regards the back of the throne there is hardly any doubt that it represents the Tree of Life with its two birds (representing the phratries) facing each other. We find this motive in the Toba-Batak stories⁴⁸ as well as with the Dayaks⁴⁹, and also on the Balinese *gunungan*, as Dr F. D. K. Bosch kindly informs me. In the Dayak pictures we often find the crescent and sometimes the sun between the two birds.

Van der Hoop was so preoccupied with this interesting and well founded theory that the *sēsako* is of megalithic origin that he failed to realise fully how other cultural influences had worked on it, bringing with it their own symbols.

⁴⁸ Tobing o.c. p. 58.

⁴⁹ Dr. H. Schärer, p. 78, Fig. 4.

First of all, on closer inspection of the floralistic motives of the first sēsako, a beautiful large flower can be detected in the centre under the rosette or sun. Moreover, on the second sēsako an elegant flower occupies the whole centre of the decorated part of the stele. Those flowers forcibly remind us of the famous menhir in the Menangkabau called panchar matahari. This menhir is standing on a spot where in old times chiefs used to meet. So it is related to our sēsako. This menhir is roughly egg-shaped and shows on one side as ornaments three rosettes of which the middle one is the largest. On the top of this biggest rosette a large flower is standing. On the back of the stone, King Aditya-warman, the famous Buddhist king of Sumatra, had an inscription written, which contains a eulogy on his Buddhistic virtues. The inscription dates from the 14th century.

Van der Hoop draws our attention to the fact that this menhir as well as our first sēsako has the ancient sun or rosette ornament, though he does not remark that the resemblance goes further: Both monuments show a central *flower* as well, and so does our second sēsako too. So all the three ornamented sēsakos have a flower.

It is a proceeding as attractive as it is dangerous to try to explain those central flowers on the three steles. We know those steles to have all the same function: to be a support to a god or to a man acting in his name. Did not the flower also have a symbolic meaning? We only dare to put the question.

Upon a white stone under a nagasari tree.

Returning to the king of Majapait who was sitting upon a white stone under the Nagasari tree together with the Kutai Maharaja Sultan, I give a synopsis of my arguments, before coming to the definite conclusion.

I suggested that the *taman* was a replica of a spot in heaven, and that a scene in heaven was staged with widadaris, etc.

The Nagasari tree appeared to be not only the Tree in the Centre, but also the special Tree of Siwa and of his Sakti. It is the kakayon in the wayang in which Siwa, having absorbed all other gods, undergoes incarnation. The Tree is Siwa. This we found to be in accordance with the Toba-Batak Tree of Life, being the High God himself.

The white stone is a megalithic god's or king's seat which often got a separate back. I suggested that this honorary back represented the Tree of Life.

The serpent, which in pre-Hindu religion was already part of the tree, became still more prominent. Since the Javanese kings put their dynasty under the particular protection of the demoniac Siwa's lingga, and this lingga was closely connected with the serpent, I assumed that *Siwa's lingga became the Flowering Serpent*, the Naga-sari ⁵⁰.

So a king sitting on a white stone under the Nagasari tree was thought to sit under (or lean against) the Tree of Life, which was Siwa, incarnated in his lingga or serpent, the Naga-sari ⁵¹.

The sari of the Siwa tree gave the prince the initiation by which he became a Cosmic Ruler.

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⁵⁰ Bosch in his *Gouden Kiem*, p. 197 comes to the conclusion that the original Lingga is one with the Pillars of the World, and also that Lingga and trunc of Tree of Life are interchangeable entities.

⁵¹ Cp. Bosch o.c. p. 264, where he also considers the Tree (kakayon) as an *amërta*-pot.