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JAVANESE GOLD

In the 19th and the 20th centuries a considerable number of old-Javanese charters engraved on stone or copper-plates has been found in Java, and most of them have been the object of study of Dutch scholars at one time or another. As a rule the scholars' interest was concentrated on political history, and by means of the names and dates of Kings and officials that are mentioned in the charters, combined with data taken from literary texts, a history of the ancient Javanese kingdoms from the 9th till the 15th century has been constructed. Some charters have been translated completely because of their importance for the study of law and social organization. Nevertheless it is a fact that the old-Javanese charters contain many more interesting informations on life and customs in pre-Muslim Java than have appeared up to now in books or papers. No doubt this deficiency is to be explained by the difficulty of the interpretation of many words and the bad state of preservation of the texts. By careful study it would be possible, though, to make the old-Javanese charters yield interesting information in greater quantity than has been done till now. Dr Casparis's papers in *Prasasti Indonesia* are there to prove it.

It is beyond the scope of this paper, of course, to offer a translation with commentary of a complete old-Javanese charter. For the present it is sufficient to draw the attention of students of sociology to the fact that several charters contain circumstantial accounts of feasts and ceremonies. In a Dutch paper in this periodical (B.K.I. 95, 1937) Dr van Naerssen (now of the University of Sydney, Australia) has given a description of a ceremony based on a Central Javanese charter of about 900 A.D. The late Dr Stutterheim, Professor Bosch's successor as Head of the former Netherlands East Indies archeological service, discussed some details of the ceremonies connected with the consecration of a clerical domain, based on a charter of King Balitung (905 A.D., Randusari I, in *Inscripties van Nederlands Indië*, 1940). It does not seem superfluous, though, to call attention to a charter of 901 A.D. issued by the *rakryan* i Watu Tihang for the foundation of a clerical domain in Taji, a district in Central Java. The two concluding copper-plates of that charter (transcribed by Brandes and published by Krom

as no XXIII of the *Oud-Javaansche Oorkonden*, I, 1913) are occupied entirely by a description of the feasts and ceremonies that belonged to the occasion. A similar description is found in the charter of Panggumulan of 903 A.D. which has been published by Professor Bosch (*Oorkonde van Kembang Aroem, Oudheidkundig Verslag* 1925). Both texts contain the information that after the conclusion of the religious ceremony around the foundation stone all the men and women who attended returned to their plates (*kabaih umuwahi ronya*) to finish their free meals. The dishes and the drinks are enumerated too. Several names of dishes still are well known to-day with Javanese gastronomers.

In the charter of King Balitung of 905 A.D. (p. 7, plate 2b line 10) the shooting of monkeys and fruit-bats (so-called flying foxes) by blow-pipe is mentioned, to make special dishes for some dignitaries. Probably those men belonged to the commoners' clergy of the countryside. It would be interesting to know whether their eating game that lives in trees was related to their religious beliefs. Perhaps it was merely a consequence of a *tabu* concerning other meat.

The next passages of the same charter contain also interesting data with reference to the community festival. The cooks of the rice (*madang*) and of the vegetable dishes (*mangla*) are given the honorific predicate *sang*. Two of them come from clerical domains (*sima*). Probably the clergy's taste in eatables was more refined than the commoners', and therefore cooks from the *simas* were invited to have the supervision of the festival.

Another reference to the community meal is the mention of the *tuhan ning wadwa rarai*, the "master of the young servants". In his most interesting paper on the charters of Perot (*Prasasti Indonesia* II, b 16, p. 234) Dr Casparis discussed the probable function of that man. It is most plausible that the "young servants" were the boys and girls who served the meal, the *sinoman* of modern Java. The *tuhan ni wadwa rarai* and the *lurah kasinoman* belonged to the old classification of the people by age-groups. The working of the *sinoman* custom in modern Java has been described in the present author's *Javaanse Volksvertoningen*.

In previous copper-plates of the same charters the presents that were offered to the official persons who attended the ceremony are enumerated. Those presents consisted in the first place of *kains*, the well-known oblong pieces of cotton textile that formed the essential part of the clothing of both sexes. The men's *kains* and the women's *kains* are

distinguished in the charters by the words *wěḍihan* and *kèn*. The men received one *yu*. *Yu* appears to be an abbreviation of *gayu*, the word that is used in just the same relation in the charter of Wimalāçrama (published partly as no CXII in O.J.O. II, partly in O.V. 1924, p. 24, in van Stein Callenfels's paper on old-Javanese charters in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris). In modern Javanese *kayuh* still is in use as a measure for a piece of textile of eight *kacus*. One *kacu* is a square piece, as long as the width of the Javanese loom, i.e. about 50 cm, less than two feet. Eight *kacus*, i.e. one *kayuh*, can be made into one *kain* four times as long as its width by cutting the piece in two and joining the halves side by side. According to the charters the women and some men of lower rank had to be content with one *wělah* or one *hělai*, probably: one half (*sabělah*, *sahělai*) of a *kayuh*, i.e. four *kacus*. *Sahělai* is the modern Javanese *sělé*: one of a pair. There are some more instances in the charters of the women's part being fixed at one half of the men's. This interpretation of the abbreviation *yu* seems more satisfactory than the old one (Stutterheim, van Naerssen): a set of two, presumably: one *kain* and one shawl (*sléndang*), which leaves the *wělah* and *hělai* unexplained.

Some names of patterns of *kains* are mentioned in the charters of this period. More data are needed before it will be safe to come to a conclusion about 10th century Javanese textiles. The lady who was the highest in rank according to the charter of 901, the *rakryan* i Watu Tihang's daughter, received a *kain* of Eastern make (*buat wétan*). The highest functionaries received *kains* called *pātra sisi*, which probably means: foliage (*pattra*) from the Coast (*pasisi*, *pasisir*).

Besides the *kains* all official persons received presents of gold. Whereas in other charters of the same period the gold only is mentioned as such, with a notice on the weight of each portion, according to the Taji charter (and another charter of the same year, O.J.O. I, no XXII and also the Panggumulan charter of 903, Kěmbang Aroem, v. supra) the presents were gold rings decorated with a temple, having one jewel in its top (*simsim prasada woh.1*), all of fixed weight.

It is highly probable that during the last two or three centuries, and even before, innumerable gold rings have been found in the soil of Central Java. In former centuries most of them were melted down by Javanese village goldsmiths. Only in this century the artistic value of the rings began to be appreciated, and many of them were placed in museums. The number of Javanese gold rings in connoisseurs' collections must be considerable too.

One of Professor Bosch's numerous papers on old-Javanese art deals with the problem of gold rings (*Djawa* VII, 1927). Being interested in the first place in artistic symbolism Professor Bosch made a study of the rings that are decorated with engravings. He came to the conclusion that those engravings are stylized forms of the name *Çrī*, Fortune, which suggests that the rings were worn "for luck". This kind of luck-rings is different, of course, from the temple-rings that are mentioned in the charters of 901.

Very aptly Professor Bosch rounded off his paper on rings by a short discussion of gold. It appears that the rings that have been found in Eastern Java are far less in number than those of Central Javanese origin. According to Professor Bosch that fact should be seen in connection with the decline of the Central Javanese kingdom not long after the beginning of the 10th century. From that time till the end of the pre-Muslim period of Javanese history, about 1500, the Royal courts of Eastern Java held the hegemony.

The decline of Central Javanese power is of the utmost interest for historians. It must have been the cause of the rather abrupt ending of the magnificent building activities in the basins of the rivers Opak and Praga (Prambanan, Borobudur). A discussion of the explanations for the decline that have been offered in the course of time lies beyond the scope of this paper. Professor Bosch's observation of considerable quantities of gold ornaments found in the Central Javanese soil and a relative scarcity of the valuable metal in Eastern Java could have been extended, though, to the magnificence of Central Javanese building in stone as compared with the relative simple Eastern Javanese brick-layers' art. Those observations could lead further to the question whether the whole of the magnificent but not long-lived Central Javanese culture (about two centuries) perhaps has been founded on gold. Could it be that the rings were made of gold of Central Javanese origin? Has the finding of gold in Central Java been one of the motives for the 8th century colonization from India which presumably led to the founding of the Javanese kingdoms? Has the end of the Central Javanese hegemony been attended with or even caused by the decline of the gold-washing or gold-digging industry?

It is impossible, of course, to answer any of those questions without extensive studies of the geology of Central Java. The authors of the articles on Gold and Mining in the *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch Indië* are sceptical about the possibility of gold-mining in Java. In the meantime it should be remembered that the old-Javanese charters con-

tain ample informations on the importance of gold in Central Javanese culture as compared with the relative scarcity of places in later Eastern Javanese charters where gold is mentioned. Even the Nāgarakērtāgama, the "Book of Learning on the Order of the Realm" of Eastern Javanese Majapahit in the 14th century does not make mention of many gold ornaments. In the later Majapahit period the Javanese currency was the Chinese copper cash, value about 0,04 U.S. \$ cents. It is well known to visitors of Bali.

Brandes' admirable paper on the Jayapattra of Čāka 849 (published already in 1889 in the *Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap*, vol. 32) contains a discussion of the importance of gold in old-Javanese history. The author mentions a now almost forgotten booklet by F. Fokkens Jr (*Goud- en zilvermijnen op Java*, 1886).

The purpose of this paper is only to recall to mind one of Professor Bosch's most interesting papers on old-Javanese art, and incidentally to point out a direction for students of old-Javanese culture which might lead to unexpected results. The history of Javanese economics of the pre-Muslim period has been neglected, to the detriment of our insight in the development of the culture. Professor Bosch's paper on Javanese rings is a valuable contribution to the study of the interesting role of gold in Javanese history. It is to be wished that that study be continued.

TH. PIGEAUD.