G. Locher

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WILLEM HUIBERT RASSERS

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In 1973, at the age of 95, the orientalist and cultural anthropologist Dr. W. H. Raspers, former director of the National Museum of Ethnography, died in Leiden. His commemoration here is not only a duty to science considering the importance of his research and his special association with the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology), but at the same time also a privilege in view of his personality.

Willem Huibert Raspers was born in Roosendaal on 16th September, 1877. He always felt close to that part of the Netherlands south of the great rivers, although his family did not come from the predominantly Roman Catholic population of that area. His grandfather on his father's side had at the time moved from Groningen to the south of Roosendaal, and had settled in Nispen, a little place close to the Belgian border, where he worked for the customs. Nispen was also the birthplace of W. H. Raspers' father, who later went to live in Roosendaal, where he managed the consignment of sales catalogues, orders and goods for the Parisian department store Les Grands Magasins du Printemps. His position in society was considered higher than his father's in Nispen. Moreover, it brought with it a wider mental horizon through the regular to and fro contact with the firm concerned in Paris.

Pieter Lambertus Raspers, the father, was regarded in his days as a "liberal". For his position this meant belonging to the Protestant grouping in the most general sense of the word, which in him went together with a certain scepticism towards authority, on whatever matter. P. L. Raspers married Tanneke Segboer, the daughter of a road construction and hydraulic works contractor from Fijnaart in West Brabant, descended from Protestant family who for generations had lived in West Brabant. A large part of her nearest relatives joined the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) in the eighties of the last century. Hence one of W. H. Raspers' uncles by

Translated from the Dutch original by Miss M. C. A. van Doorn.

marriage was J. E. Vonkenberg, one of the well-known clergymen from the Abraham Kuyper movement, who in 1888 founded the *Nederlandse Bond van Jongelings-Vereenigingen op Gereformeerde Grondslag* (the Netherlands Federation of Young Men's Associations based on Reformed Protestant principles), and for decades fulfilled a leading function on the executive of this organisation.

W. H. Rassers thus knew from his own direct personal experience the Dutch plural society of denominationally segregated religious communities. As an individualistic liberal this collective segregation irritated him, and yet at the same time he was fascinated by it because of his interest in Durkheim's sociological vision of religion. With a mixture of gentle mockery and yet also appreciation, he would tell of Roman Catholic life in the South, such as he knew it from his own life in Roosendaal and from the rich experiences of his younger brother, Adriaan Rassers, who became a well-known lawyer in Breda. He spoke of the inflexible orthodox Protestants in the same sort of ambivalent manner. I still clearly remember the extent of his enjoyment when one of his brothers, a prominent physician in Leiden, with great vividness conjured up the image of the Calvinist farmer, psalm-singing behind his draught-horse while ploughing his land. Rassers' well-developed sense of style gave him an appreciation of the harmony of the closed community. However, the tradition of his milieu and the nature of his personality developed in him a keen aversion towards all strong pressure from outside and towards every hampering interference in his private life. He practised the principle of leaving the other person the freedom to hold his own convictions, and he expected this same freedom from others. In many aspects he showed himself a representative of the mildly critical liberalism and somewhat sceptical humanism of the previous century. Imagine that what is going to come couldn't be worse, then at times it even turns out to be a bit better, he said to me in the black thirties of this century.

One could easily forget that in his lifetime of almost a century, more than twenty-two years — and those indeed fundamental and formative ones in Rassers' life — were of the previous century. Those years however were not all spent in Roosendaal. At first he attended the public elementary school there, in those days under the direction of a generally respected and competent headmaster. Considering his achievements, W. H. Rassers must certainly have attracted the former's attention and it was probably also he who insisted on the "further education" of the talented boy. In any event, in 1890 Rassers went to The Hague, where

he attended the Hague grammar school, Laan van Meerdervoort, then directed by the famous rector Rutgers. At first he lived in with his mother's relatives; afterwards, together with an elder sister and younger brothers. Later on he spoke of the rector and teachers of the grammar school with great appreciation.

After grammar school, where he was always amongst the first in his class, he went to Leiden to study Dutch language and literature, enrolling as a student on 22nd September, 1896. Already financial circumstances alone prevented him from becoming a member of the Corps (an elite students' association). Where his study was concerned, there was a visible change in direction during these years. It was probably the famous Sanskritist H. Kern, who at the same time was also a student of Indonesian language and literature as well as teaching comparative linguistics, who played a decisive role herein. In any case, it is certain that he took for his Candidaats examination the study of the languages and literature of the East Indian Archipelago, which meant that up to this stage he concentrated primarily on Sanskrit and Arabic. His teachers in these subjects, Kern and De Goeje, both made a deep impression on him. Subsequently he followed lectures in "Mohammedan law", given at that time by the lecturer H. D. van Gelder. During these years he not only studied intensively, but also practised music. For a long time he played the viola in quartets. Later on he stopped actively playing music, but throughout his life he remained a music lover, until his increasing deafness made listening to music impossible towards the end of his life.

He sat for the above-mentioned Candidaats examination on 2nd November, 1899, and gained the highest distinction, cum laude. According to G. F. Pijper, van Ronkel — at a later stage — told his students that at the time Kern wrote to someone in the Dutch East Indies, "we now have a student, W. H. Raspers, whom I do not hesitate to call a genius." At Raspers' Ph.D. conferring ceremony, van Ronkel, as supervising professor, was once again to recall Kern's statement. This ceremony took place, cum laude, on 26th June, 1922, some four years after Raspers had successfully passed his Doctoraal examination in the languages and literature of the East Indian Archipelago on 31 May, 1918.

Thus there is a very noticeable hiatus between the examinations of 1899 and 1918. Raspers himself referred to this in the preface to his Doctor's dissertation, the extensive work *De Pandji-Roman*, when he speaks of "my long interrupted years of study". The reason was that after the Candidaats examination he suffered a depression, coupled with

neurasthenic symptoms. He was much troubled by headaches, could not concentrate on his study, and was over-sensitive to disturbing noises. The advice he most probably received was to spend some time in the open air and to take things a bit more quietly. In any case, he broke off his study and returned to Roosendaal. When there was no improvement in his condition, he went to work in a tree-nursery, at first as an apprentice, and later on in his own business, together with his younger brother Adriaan, who likewise had interrupted his studies.

Rassers was a lover of nature and must therefore have found a certain satisfaction in this type of work. In his spare time he undoubtedly also read a lot of "literature", as he did throughout his life until fairly shortly before his death. But dominant in him was a strong desire for scholarly work and research activity which was being frustrated. He could indulge in this anew when several years before his Doctoraal examination he resumed his studies in Leiden, after a successful treatment by E. J. Swaep, a physician in Breda. The two brothers knew him from the Hague grammar school days, and it was through Rassers the lawyer, who had returned to his studies much earlier, that W. H. Rassers was brought into contact with him. Swaep successfully treated Rassers with occupational therapy, prescribing progressively increased scholastic activity, and he also had him live for a time in Breda. There he took, among others, lessons in Malay from C. Spat, who was connected with the Royal Military Academy. Finally, after a break of sixteen to seventeen years, he was able to resume his studies at Leiden. Rassers expresses his extreme gratitude for this by dedicating his Doctor's thesis to his friend, E. J. Swaep, Physician.

In this second period of his student years Rassers' study was oriented towards the languages of the then Dutch East Indies. He attended Jonker's Javanese lectures as well as lectures on Malay given by Van Ophuysen, and also faithfully followed Nieuwenhuis' lectures in Ethnology. The last mentioned had little influence on Rassers as far as his methodological approach to ethnology was concerned. What he did do through his lectures was to bring him into contact with various objects from the Leiden ethnographical museum. Rassers also saw in Nieuwenhuis a man who had trodden unknown territories in Borneo and who had field-work experience in non-Western regions of the globe, something which he himself never got around to in his life. But it was Jonker who in 1918 brought to Rassers' attention a vacancy in the Malay-Polynesian section of the National Ethnographical Museum in Leiden. On 1st July of that same year, that is, shortly after sitting for his

Doctoraal exams, he was appointed to the staff of the museum. He continued to work there until 1st May 1943, from July 1, 1937 onwards as Director. This is a period of approximately twenty-five years, years which at the same time coincided with his productivity in scholarship and science. Measured against his long life this is but a short time. For science, however, it was a very fruitful phase, notable in terms of quality.

When Raspers took up his museum appointment he was in his early forties. Considering the museum's wretched condition, there would have been some justification for devoting himself whenever possible to pure research work and for taking as little interest as possible in work actually involving the museum. But this was not the case. With application he began to make descriptions of objects for inclusion in the catalogue which was to be published on the eastern Lesser Sunda Islands, which his predecessor H. W. Fischer had already partly completed. The Director, Dr. H. H. Juynboll, whose museum activities were directed almost solely to the publication of the museum catalogue, praised the diligence and knowledge of the new curator in his 1917-1918 yearly report. Before long Raspers also had to deal with the transference of collections from the section of which he was in charge, which were scattered over various buildings in Leiden, to a now vacant building in the Breestraat. There, in the twenties, a choice collection from amongst all of the museum's possessions was put on display for the public, with the exception of exhibits from the China and Japan sections, which remained housed in a building next to the university at the Rapenburg. Raspers eventually got his own room in the Breestraat building. His colleague J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong, his senior in service though of younger age, also had his spacious room here, where at the same time he gave his seminars. Raspers became one of his friends, and they also arrived at a very intensive mutual interaction in their scholarship. De Josselin de Jong's development where the first half of the twenties is concerned, cannot be imagined without Rasper's influence. I referred to this in my article on de Josselin de Jong, which appeared in *Mens en Maatschappij* (*Man and Society*) (volume 40, p. 41) in 1965. Rasper's later publications are inconceivable without the influence of de Josselin de Jong and his students. In the long run Raspers saw his friend as mentor in the school of scientific thought with which he felt himself most at home, and this he also openly stated. On the other hand, it was de Josselin de Jong who on several occasions emphasized the special significance of Raspers' work. He did so not only in his well-known inaugural address of 1935

on *De Maleische Archipel als Ethnologisch Studieveld* (*The Malay Archipelago as a field of ethnological study*), but also prior to this in an extensive survey of the literature on the "Religionen der Naturvölker Indonesiens" for the years 1925-1929, which appeared in the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* (XXX, 1933), wherein at the same time he made a correction to the preceding literature survey (XXV, 130ff.) by Rassers, who had left out a discussion of his own Doctor's thesis.

Rassers cannot be called a museum ethnologist, in the sense of being primarily interested in objects and being led by this to a study of the cultures to which they belong. Rather it was the other way round. The study of the culture taught him the function and significance of the objects which had a place there. This is also apparent from his publications. His first work is a book on the Pandji romance; he then writes articles on the meaning of Javanese drama and on the position of Çiwa and Buddha in the Malay Archipelago, understandable only from the society's ancient structure; subsequently there follow studies on the origin of the Javanese theatre and on the Javanese kris; and finally, a fairly comprehensive, unpublished study on the Batak magic wand. His introduction to the catalogue on the eastern Lesser Sunda Islands published in 1924 already indicates the value he attaches to a description, no matter how brief, of a number of the salient features of a culture by way of an introduction to the presentation of objects from that culture. When, in 1928, he published an article in *Ned. Indië, Oud en Nieuw* (*Netherlands Indies, Old and New*) (volume 13, p. 35ff.), with the title: 'With reference to some masks from Borneo', he demonstrates how the objects function in the context of the culture concerned. He subsequently elucidates the meaning of wayang, kris, and magic wand through an analysis of the culture, and this time he pays more attention to the concrete object than was the case in previous studies. With the understanding that object and culture, in the extended sense of the word, are considered as one whole, and must be understood as such.

Rassers' specific contribution to cultural anthropology consists above all in demonstrating the close connections between different parts of culture, notably those between myth, ritual, theatre, and social structure, in both small- and large-scale societies; in pointing out the great importance for the study of the contact between different cultures of what is called incorporation into one's own culture, the adaptation of foreign influences to one's own cultural system; and especially too in the way

in which he examined the form, meaning and content, and function of the objects in his analysis of the incorporation of foreign cultural influences. In several respects he was ahead of his time in this regard.

For many years he was occupied in particular with the study of Javanese theatre and the problem of the process of Javanisation which was involved, and which in this case also gave rise to a Hindu-Javanese cultural phenomenon with an own homogeneous character. On the question of how developments in general of this Javanisation process were to be explained, de Josselin de Jong, in his inaugural address of 1935 (p. 15-16), already mentioned above, stated: "In my opinion Raspers' investigations concerning drama and theatre in Java have given us the insight which was indispensable for answering this question. After Hazeu had shown, in his excellent Doctor's thesis, that an autochthonous ritual survives in the Javanese theatre, particularly in its shadow-play variant, and that the Indian material which forms the repertoire of wayang purwa has been partly substituted for, partly incorporated into, the indigenous myths, Raspers succeeded, by means of a thorough ethnological analysis of the wayang repertoire which was least Indian, in reconstructing the myth which dominates all the older Javanese theatrical literature and stage technique, irrespective of whether the material is Indian or Javanese. But the ancestors may appear as, or hide behind, all sorts of figures; the ordeals of ritual initiation which precede their marriage turn in the myth into endless wanderings with metamorphoses, afflictions and hardships of all kinds, a real nightmare of misunderstandings, disappointments and terrors, until finally, the ban broken, the sorrow borne, the two principal characters are allowed to find each other and the marriage for which they are predestined takes place. These two central characters are not merely the mythical forebears of the Javanese people; at the same time the dualistic basis of the Javanese cosmological classification system manifests itself in them. They simultaneously represent the left and right halves of the cosmos, and the two as male and female mutually supplementary exogamous moieties of primitive society. The myth of their life, in which the painful initiation test constitutes the central and eminently dramatic element, is related not only in dramatic literature, but ritually dramatised in the acting." De Josselin de Jong then further outlines how, according to Raspers, the mythical material which, together with the shadow-theatre, came to Java in the Hinduistic culture, was transformed according to the fixed schema of the Javanese Pandji romance; the heroes and heroines of the Mahabharata became actors too in the

Javanese drama, manifestations of the Javanese ancestral couple. Moreover he briefly sums up how, in his study on the origin of the Javanese theatre, Rassers argued that we have in this theatre a certain continuation of men's house rites, which occur among many peoples and in which the novices are initiated in clear sight of the men from the community who are involved, whereas the women are allowed to know of this only from at a distance and somewhat vaguely. In this connection, Rassers shows how in accordance with an old Javanese custom the male spectators at a shadow-play performance in fact sit behind the screen with the performer, while the women, who must stay in front of the screen, only get to see the shadows. Finally, Rassers also pointed out: "that not only the shadow-theatre, but also the men's house rites in question, as well as the dualistic-cosmological form of grouping, were undoubtedly known in both Aryan and pre-Aryan India."

De Josselin de Jong's recapitulation refers to Rassers' publications upto and including 1931. It corresponds with what Rassers himself published in the eighth volume of the *Encyclopaedie van Ned. Indië* (*Encyclopaedia of the Dutch East Indies*), (second edition, Supplement), which appeared in 1939, as a supplement on the subject 'Theatre'. Herein he also emphatically mentions the well-known study by G. J. Held, *The Mahabharata, an ethnological study*, which was published in 1935 as a Doctor's thesis, with de Josselin de Jong as supervising professor. I saw Rassers' enthusiasm for this work, from which according to him it was apparent to what extent the old cultural background of Indian ritual and drama and the pre-Hindu cultural background showed features of similarity, which was what he, in his analysis, had tried to prove for ancient Java.

In his studies on the kris Rassers once again illustrates the incorporative character of the influence of Hinduism on the Javanese cultural system. Herein it is noticeable how deeply impressed he was by the new insights offered by de Josselin de Jong and his students in that period concerning the double unilineal kinship system (matrilineal and patrilineal) as a normal structure type, unlike earlier conceptions, where matrilineage preceded patrilineage as a universal type, and the occurrence of matrilineal alongside of patrilineal features was explained as belonging to a transitional phase, or else this phenomenon was seen as a strong influencing of a matrilineal by a patrilineal culture (or vice-versa), or again as a blending of two separate cultures, one characterised by matrilineal, the other by patrilineal groupings.

In agreement with this new conception Raspers pays special attention to the total aspects of the all-embracing culture, which in one case may be elaborated and symbolised in their male dimension (weapon, etc.), in another in their female one (weaving, etc.), and while studying this within the Indonesian field of studies he became especially interested in Batak culture. For the latter had become well-known in cultural anthropology at that time because of the striking opposition as well as marked unity of weapon and weaving in the so-called *piso-oelos* relationship. In his essay on the kris Raspers already explicitly refers to this. He mentions in this connection the well-known book by J. C. Vergouwen, *Het rechtsleven der Toba-Bataks* (1933) (*The Social Organisation and Customary Law of the Toba-Batak of Northern Sumatra* [1964]), and the publication by F. D. E. van Ossenbruggen,¹ "Het oeconomisch-magisch element in Tobasche verwantschapsverhoudingen" ("The economical-magical element in Toba kinship relations") which appeared in 1935 in the *Mededeelingen van de Kon. Ned. Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde* (*Communications of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, Arts section*).

In the forties he went more deeply into the data on Batak culture and he wrote a study on the so-called Batak magic wand. But he did not have this published because he was somewhat critical in general of the quality of achievements attained at an older age, which in his idea began with the years above sixty. He did agree that this study, with the necessary reservation, might eventually be used by others. Hence I am able to make some general comments on it here. Raspers follows, in his study on the Batak magic wand, his usual method of argumentation. First of all he sums up what has been written on the subject; he then raises additional problems which have arisen in the description and interpretation of the relevant data; subsequently he sets out the results of his own research with regard to these problems, and finally raises and briefly discusses several questions following from his own interpretation.

In his study on the Batak magic wand, as with the kris, Raspers closely connects the object and the structure of the society in question, while at the same time borrowing information from relevant myths for his

¹ Van Ossenbruggen was an important figure amongst the Dutch forerunners of modern structuralism. Already in his doctoral dissertation Raspers gave a great deal of attention to his insights. See: Preface by G. W. Locher, in *Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia*, by F. A. E. van Wouden. Translation Series 11, KITLV, 1968.

interpretation. He uses the insights notably of van Wouden from the latter's Ph.D. thesis on *Sociale structuurtypen in de Groote Oost* (*Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia*) (1935) concerning circulatory systems and double unilineal descent. He analyses much of what directly or indirectly concerns the magic wand within the framework of the relation between "male" and "female" goods, which became especially well-known in this culture through the above-mentioned relation between weapon and weaving, the *piso-oelos* relation. It is a study which has both the great importance of Rassers' other work and against which the same objections (such as a postulated former social structure and totemic organisation) may be made. In any case therefore it would have been worth publishing at that time.

When we ask ourselves what was for Rassers the most important source of inspiration for his insights, then there is no possible doubt about the answer. It was the famous article by Durkheim and Mauss, "De quelques formes primitives de classification," published in *L'Année Sociologique* (VI, 1903). This was Rassers' own opinion also. "For this they should have received the very highest distinction in the field of science," he once said to me. In Durkheim he saw the grand master, although he held Mauss in high esteem too — partly because the latter had likewise occupied himself with the study of complex large-scale cultures outside Europe, and particularly as the author of the well-known *Essai sur le Don* (*The Gift*). Rassers followed Durkheim in assigning top priority to the influence of the social structure on the whole conceptual system of a culture. Consequently we do in fact encounter a very marked tendency in Rassers to suppose social structures in periods which belonged to the past, but whose matching conceptual system was in many aspects still to survive in later times.

In an article on "Ethnologie als cultuurwetenschap" ("Ethnology as the science of culture"), which appeared in 1938 in the journal *Menschen en Maatschappij* (*Man and Society*), I argued against Durkheim's sociological determinism. I added, however, that when we regard the social structure of communal life, that is in fact of cultural life, not as the final predominating causal factor in his interpretation but as the form in which cultural life has been socially integrated, then we must consider Durkheim's work of fundamental importance for a general science of culture (p. 350).

The same could be said of the scholarly and scientific work of Rassers, who incidentally by no means believed that with his interpretation of

the subjects he examined the last conclusive word had been spoken. He also felt somewhat ambivalent about the republication of his most important articles in the collection *Pañji, The Culture Hero, a structural study of religion in Java*, which appeared in 1959 in the Translation Series of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde. On this subject he wrote to his brother Adriaan in a letter dated 4th June, 1959 (of which I received a copy from the latter's son, P. L. J. Raspers of Breda), wherein he says he was naturally sensible of the honour of a republication — "who wouldn't like it?" — but that on the other hand, with the passing of years, he had changed his mind on all kinds of, sometimes important, details and he felt that this was a big objection: "It was not good (I thought) to give the appearance that I still accepted all that writing just exactly as it had been written." The editorial Board, he continues, had tried to meet his objections by suggesting that he himself write an introduction, in which he could then set out his later ideas. "Reluctantly I agreed, but when the moment came to formulate my ideas, nothing came of it; I did still manage to get something on paper at that, but it just didn't come off anymore; I'm too old for that now." He was very surprised when he saw that his friend de Josselin de Jong had thereupon written the introduction: "I knew nothing about that." It was undoubtedly much to his liking that the introduction dealt mainly with Radcliffe-Brown, Lévi-Strauss, and other representatives or forerunners of modern structuralism, and stressed at its end, in connection with Durkheim, the great importance of the study of religion in its close connection with social structure, as it is found in Raspers' work also. "For Raspers was one of the first, if not the first, to demonstrate the unbreakable unity of myth, ritual, and social structure in one particular cultural environment. He did so by means of a masterly analysis of the available facts; and even though the writer himself would undoubtedly formulate some of his conclusions in a different manner today, his work is essentially still up-to-date."

Precisely in those years Raspers had become convinced however that that which he considered to be the essential structure of the Pandji romance was not a local matter concerning the culture of Java, or of India, or of Hindu-Javanese culture, but that it had world-wide significance. This would become apparent from a comparative study of theatre and literature, in which notably Western culture must be included. From this period of his life dates also a preliminary study, which was found by his nephew P. L. J. Raspers amongst his papers, on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in which he discovers striking similarities

with what he came across in his study on the Pandji romance. He attempts to explain several seemingly strange passages from this Shakespearian drama on the basis of insights gained from his earlier studies. It is an attempt at a breakthrough towards a general approach to oral and written literature, in which he does break away from the regional-cultural point of view, though less so from the genetic-historical one. The outline for this study is in any case reminiscent of what Lévi-Strauss has observed on the continuation in later times of myth in the novel (see my contribution on "Het structuralisme van Lévi-Strauss" in *Invloeden op de Literatuur* ["Lévi-Strauss's Structuralism" in *Influences on Literature*], Servire, Wassenaar, 1973, page 46). It is a field as yet largely undeveloped, and which needs to be developed through the interaction of regional and general, and historical and ahistorical studies.

The postulation of the unbreakable unity of a myth and a particular social structure — which is not the same as the supposition of a certain connection between the two — has been criticised from various sides, both as regards the scientific work of Durkheim, Mauss, and others, as well as when publications by Rassers or de Josselin de Jong and his students were concerned. In my opinion this criticism has been very well met in the article on "Marcel Mauss et les origines de l'anthropologie structurale hollandaise" which was published by P. E. de Josselin de Jong in *L'Homme* (1972, XII, 4:62-84). Therein we also find some short but important passages on the work of Rassers.

As has already been said, the criticism of anthropologists was directed especially against the postulating of a social structure in the past in order to explain the origins of a symbolic classification system which was found in a later period. De Josselin de Jong Jr agrees with this criticism but at the same time he warns against throwing out the baby with the bathwater. According to him we must first of all clearly distinguish two matters:

1. The classification system in question is explained by referring to a postulated but not proven social organisation thought to have existed in an indeterminate past.
2. Even if such a social system existed, it would still be a mistake to consider it as the cause of the perceived classification system in a wider sense.

When we examine the first point, then we do not reach, on the basis of present material, any demonstrable insights with respect to the ancient Javanese society postulated by Rassers. But there are a number of facts

which suggest that ancient Javanese society approximates more closely to this postulate than was previously generally accepted. With regard to the second point we may say that the critics are right. On this de Josselin de Jong writes the following: "L'idée que tous les systèmes de classification ont leur *origine* dans un modèle d'organisation sociale, du type filiation et alliance, est à rejeter; il ne peut guère y avoir deux opinions à ce sujet." (page 79). Another thing is that we can deal with principles of social organisation in different spheres without one particular sphere necessarily being the cause or model of another. Instead of considering the different spheres or orders as sharply divided sectors, it is preferable, according to de Josselin de Jong, to see them as different aspects of one and the same culture. And with that we come to the complicated subject which Lévi-Strauss calls "Ordre des ordres" in his *Anthropologie Structurale* (page 347).

Rassers has exercised much influence through his publications and indirectly through the work of de Josselin de Jong Sr and his students. Through his personal contacts he exerted less influence. He cared nothing for speaking in public at large gatherings; what did appeal to him were discussions in private in a small group on serious and non-serious subjects (he enjoyed himself intensely when the three of us were together in his room and H. J. Friedericy in a masterly manner told his tales on and of Brabant). At one time he was second on the Faculty's list of nominations for the Professorship, which with the retirement of Nieuwenhuis had become vacant, and to which the University Board of Curators did not want to see J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong, who headed the list, appointed, *persona non grata* as he was with them on account of his actions in the controversy surrounding the removal and housing of the ethnographical museum in Leiden. Rassers was absolutely convinced that it should be de Josselin de Jong and at the time he even went to the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences to argue in his favour, which provoked Marchant, who was an acquaintance of Rassers the lawyer of Breda, to remark that for him it was really a unique experience to hear number one on a nominations-list recommended by number two on the very same list. Rassers had not the slightest ambition to become professor, just as he did not accept, let alone strive after, any function in which he had to take the lead or preside. He was, amongst others, a member of the Board of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde and also for some time a committee member of the Maatschappij voor Toonkunst (Musical Society) in

Leiden, but for an executive position in such a committee he was not the man. Because of this reserve and the reputation of having a "weak health" there was much hesitation in appointing him as Director of the National Museum of Ethnography. He did not choose to decline this directorship, were it only to ensure a good cooperation between the professor in Ethnology, de Josselin de Jong, and the direction of the museum. When the official reopening of the museum in the former Academic Hospital took place in 1937, Rassers, the new director, surprised the many who attended with his performance. He not only made a speech in the same excellent style as his writings, but he delivered it extremely well also, and as host his manner was friendly and easy, which to outward appearance seemed to come to him without much strain. This was certainly not the case, but neither was he the closet-scholar who felt himself at home only while at his study-lamp, as many a person thought. For many years he had lived outside of the museum room and the study, in the days when he had his tree-nursery. He could get on and talk with a variety of people and being a gentleman by nature he won the sympathy of all who came to know him better. In the relatively short number of years before his retirement he acquitted himself very well in his role as director, in so far as that was possible in a period which soon merged into World War II. As director he was an amiable and humane figure, completely in keeping with his character and his background, coming as he did from Brabant.

Already in the beginning I remarked that to commemorate Rassers was a privilege in view of his personality. He set himself very high standards where work and conduct were concerned, and for him this sometimes gave rise to no small tensions. But his manner induced in others precisely great relaxation. He held himself back and listened intently when someone came to him with problems, and he gave sound advice, frequently accompanied with his mild relativating humour. I was to experience that many a time, in particular during the period when, as young acting director of in fact two museums in Rotterdam, I came to Leiden on Mondays, when the establishment under my management was closed, and sought his advice.

Rassers was a very modest figure. "In addition I wanted to say only this," so he wrote in his letter to his brother Adriaan in 1959: "I think that above all the honour which lies in the publication in translation of one's work should not be exaggerated. I get the impression that this sort of thing happens more easily today than in the past." He set a high value on his nomination, in 1935, as a member of the Royal Netherlands

Academy of Sciences. But he found it absolutely great that in his immediate surroundings at home the only reaction when he announced this was to ask what the membership would cost him, and when he had answered this question with "Nothing", no more was said. He deeply appreciated the fact that once at home, he was completely removed from his circle at work and as it were in another sphere, in which he could quickly relax. Previously things had been different, when for many years he took lodgings in Leiden before moving in the early thirties into a house in Wassenaar together with his two, likewise unmarried, sisters. At a more advanced age, after the death of his eldest sister, he moved to Leiden together with his youngest sister, to the 'utility flat' Cronestein, where he stayed until very shortly before his death.

The Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, which named Rassers an honorary member in 1957, has played a special role in the diffusion of the scholarly and scientific work of this very gifted and sympathetic person. His articles he published above all in the Institute's *Bijdragen*, and practically all of them were included in the above-mentioned collection *Pañji, The Culture Hero*. By making these studies internationally accessible, Rassers emerged for a much wider circle as a pioneer of modern structuralism, in particular as a very outstanding figure within the group of Dutch forerunners of this structuralism.²

² For an account of Rassers within the context of the field of Oriental Studies, and which includes a bibliography of his works, see the forthcoming commemoration of Rassers by Prof. Dr. A. Teeuw in *Jaarboek der Kon. Ned. Akademie van Wetenschappen 1973* (*Year Book of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences 1973*).