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KORTE MEDEDELING

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PATOLA AND GRINGSING: AN ADDITIONAL NOTE

Cooperation between the (General) Ethnographical Museum and the Swiss Ethnographical Museum in Basle led, in 1975/76, to a display of ceremonial tissues from India and Indonesia. This display was accompanied and elucidated by a most attractive catalogue in which Prof. Alfred Bühler described and illustrated the patola (silk) tissues, which Indonesia imports from India, and Dr. Urs Ramseyer and Nicole Ramseyer-Gygi dealt with the Balinese gringsing (cotton) tissues, which until recently were only woven in one rather isolated village, called Tênganan Pagringsing-an. The male inhabitants of this village restrict their activities to the observance of rites and ceremonies while the tenants of its extended grounds pay land rent and do the necessary menial work. The women and girls, apart from their household duties, spend considerable time and energy on the weaving of the famous tissues. The village’s double name shows the importance attributed to the tissues woven there.

Dr. Ramseyer’s research on cotton tissues ends with an investigation of the myths, legends and historical speculations, an endeavour which certainly contributed to the understanding of the display and the value of the catalogue. As I have some additional and essential materials at my disposal, a short note would be useful.

Dr. Ramseyer pointed out, that according to the Nagarakertagama, the curtains of King Ayam Wuruk’s ox-cart were made of gringsing. He cited the Pararaton and the Rangga Lawe and told how Radèn Wijaya gave gringsing trousers to his warriors before battle. He concluded by asserting as a fact (‘Tatsache’) that gringsing protects one from becoming ill. While this statement is very likely true, Dr. Ramseyer did not explain it sufficiently. Hence I have a few additions to make.

H. N. van der Tuuk (Kawi-Balineesch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek, IV, 704a) mentions a yuyu gringsing, a type of lobster used in the preparation of poison. This lobster’s potency is such that grass, when walked upon by it, withers, and cattle which eat it die!

P. de Kat Angelino, in his article “De Lèak op Bali” (TBG 60, 1921, 1-44) mentions a lèak (a vampire or witch) clad in gringsing wayang who is probably an offensive rather than a defensive creature. He also cites nine relevant mantras. Nine is the correct number (nawa sanga) as it includes the eight directions of the compass plus the centre. There are nine gods residing in these places, and their natural successors are the wali sanga of Islam, whose names are not of primary importance but whose number must be nine. The eighth mantra is called Gringsing Wayang and those who recite this mantra must pick a potsherd from the cemetery (where all earthenware is used only once and then broken) and bury it at the cross-roads, the place where Bhatara Kala catches his victims (cf. my Kâma and Kâla, 1973) and where the sèngguhu or
rēsi bhujangga, when celebrating _Nyēpi_ (keeping silent), exorcises all evil spirits (cf. my _Religion in Bali_, 1973).

This eleven line mantra, (eleven = the number nine just mentioned + zenith + nadir = ḍhadaśa, meaning universality) is not always lucid as often happens with popular mantras which are subject to erosion. It begins with two lines of syllables (_mrēng, srēng, krur_, etc.) which only make sense to initiates. These are followed by: On-Kāra Paśupati! I Gringsing Wayang appears and makes ineffective (byu - sabda - idēp) the force, speech and thought of [the victim] X, who must accompany him to the graveyard for young children, a spot regarded as very eerie. I Gringsing Wayang concentrates and produces supernatural forces which will devour X. X's arms and legs will be twisted, his head will be cut off, his mouth will be opened and his tongue sucked in. His body will look like an _anggrēk_ (a spotted orchid) and his corpse will have its abdomen split open.

Although one or two words are not clear, being misspelt or wrongly transmitted, the overall purpose is readily apparent: the complete ruin of an enemy, rival lover, or nagging neighbour. There is no trace of self-protection; rather, a purely offensive attitude is taken.

Hitherto there has only been one other mention of this evil witch Gringsing Wayang. This was in the poem _Basur_, repeatedly published in mimeographed form by Balimas, Dènpasar, in the 1950's and 1960's. It owes its popularity to its subject, sorcery, and in it there are the characters Gringsing and Angrēk Kēbo (as in Patola and Gēringring) who are the helpers of an evil woman who invoked the aid of Durgā in order to take revenge on Basur and destroy him.

The poem _Basur_ gives the titles of more than a score of mantras, nearly all of which were meant to re-establish the good order by annihilating the forces of evil through serving as _panawar_ or _tawar_-maker and stripping evil forces of their power and influence. It appears that mention of such a title to the Balinese listener is as good as a recitation of the _Basur_, and has the same effect as the mention of the words "Ave Maria, Te Deum or Dies Irae" on a good Roman Catholic: they are infinitely familiar with the meaning. As I wanted to learn the exact contents I went through the Balinese manuscript collection of the Kirtya of Singaraja (cf. R. M. Ng. Poerbatjaraka, P. Voorhoeve and C. Hooykaas, _Indonesische handschriften_, 1950) as well as more recently collected manuscripts (cf. _Archipel_ 6, 1973, 33-41). I had to go through thousands of typewritten manuscripts and a few hundred of them were devoted to sorcery and witchcraft. There were prayers for clear skies as well as for rain, and for health and convalescence as well as for illness to be followed by death and disaster. Gringsing Wayang turned up nearly twenty times, which is fairly frequent. As is the case with so many of these mantras, their constant use and reasonably intelligible wording in Javanese-Balinese, resulted in a variety of readings — in contradistinction to the especially difficult and incomprehensible Sanskrit with its unusual metres — which time and time again has been handed down remarkably well. One version of the Gringsing Wayang
mantra is found twice, two other versions are found three times, and another version is found five times. Three of these are called Panawar Gringsing Wayang (= Antidote Gringsing Wayang) and the versions represented in two manuscripts have the following italicized words in common while at the same time the versions in three other manuscripts also have the italicized words in common.

I. Antidote Gringsing Wayang (K59, 2426). The necessary materials are either red onion and coarsely grained salt or a large 'spoon' consisting of half a young and fleshy coconut on a long wooden handle, fresh water and the top of a branch of the dapdap bush. The mantra reads: OM Antidote Antidote, I am the God Antidote (3X). AM UM MAM, there is a big tree, from the usual place, thou art called Ki Cëpuk Limar (silk textile) and Ki Gringsing Wayang. Thy origin is from afar, thy roots are from afar, thou wilt be thrown down, thy roots will be thrown down, thy branches will be broken, thy leaves will be ripped off, thy top will be cut off, for I know how to counteract Ki Cëpuk Limar and Ki Gringsing Wayang. At once thou wilt be powerless, forceless, impotent, effete; for I have supernatural power, I reside on the appropriate spot on earth, I make thee powerless.

Because of the discrepancies and large gaps in the two texts available, the translation of this mantra is not as complete as desirable. There is no doubt, however, that the “I” is the balian, the witchdoctor who conquers the obnoxious and evil Ki Cëpuk Limar and Ki Gringsing Wayang, and makes them powerless.

II. The same coupling of textile names and assurances of what will happen to foliage and branches are found in a second formula which is based on three complete traditions (K242 = Z446, Z194, Z540). Here white (E), red (S), yellow (W), black (N), and multi-coloured (C) poisons are listed in order to point out the universality of that which is annihilated by the balian, who destroys textiles 'by root and branch', using the same materials as in the first mantra.

III. The mantras Z170, Z194 (2X) Z446 and Z540 again use the same materials but only destroy Gringsing Wayang and only white and yellow (upas, cëtik and racun) poisons are used. Similarly, sëmpal carang kita, and logor godong kita (broken your branches, fallen your foliage) are here reduced to randu gëmpa logor (graveyard tree with broken and leafless branches). Nevertheless, these mantras have too much in common not to have a common origin. In this set we find: Gringsing Wayang amëtok (4X; 1X amëtokakëṅ = produces poison).

IV. K511 contains a Ka-sakti-an, Power(ed) Formula, which is rather long and in two places incomprehensible, but still revealing and even startling. It reads: I am God Gringsing Wayang; I come flying from the Northeast (residence of the upper God), acting on the rays of the Sun, for... God Gringsing Wayang enchants the hearts of all the people in the world on seeing Me. I am the Superior Power in the world of mortals. Everyone can see My supernatural power. I am the Supernatural Power, excitedly hunting bhutas, dëngëns, kalas, dëstis, and lëaks. God Gringsing Wayang hunts all kalas, lëaks, dëstis, tujus...
and evil persons. Go home to your houses, return! (3X).

We must draw two conclusions from the above. First, the frequent use and abuse of the Gringsing Wayang mantra have led to considerable corruption of its wording. Secondly, Gringsing Wayang has a split personality. He is supreme evil, to be reduced to impotence by the balian, and he is also supreme power working for the good of mankind, liberating us from all imaginable evil. In other words, Gringsing Wayang belongs to black magic as well as to white magic, and to the left as well as the right. In so being he shares the characteristics of an even more well known figure, that of Cambra Brag, the Lean Dog, who very frequently occurs in Balinese mantras.

V. The overabundant examples of Balinese sorcery contain still more concerning Gringsing Wayang, but since completeness is as lethal as ridicule, one mantra only will be offered as a final example. The materials necessary for this mantra are a brazier for frankincense and a clothes horse, adorned with a picture of a stalking tiger (presumably a representation of gringsing wayang tissues being penetrated by fumes). The mantra reads: My eyes are star A, my nostrils star B, my mouth star C, etc. The origin of my appearance is my body's flame. Whosoever sees me, loves me at once.

Such an unexpected formula reminds one of those dealt with in my Kāma and Kāla (1973). The tiger parades between UM (Visnu, North) and AM (Brahma, South), cudgel and wheel. A bull walks between OM and what is meant to be a lotus.

This example has been chosen for three reasons. First, because Prof. Egbert de Vries has given me a lontar, a Balinese "book" of long and rectangular engraved tree leaves, which appeared to contain it. It would be helpful if owners of Oriental manuscripts would follow his example and entrust these precious objects to experts and libraries. Secondly, I have chosen this example because the utterance of the mantra is preceded not only by the fetching of several requisites but also by the making of a drawing, an action very common in Balinese sorcery. Works concerning Balinese magic and sorcery necessarily involve the production of effective illustrations. And finally, I have chosen this mantra because its wording and choice of drawing is so baffling and incomprehensible to us Westerners. The corruptions and omissions of these popular writings make them so difficult for us to decipher that we will be extremely grateful when the Arts Faculty of the University in Bali, which has been teaching for many years, will begin publishing.

POSTSCRIPT

During the time that the above was awaiting publication, patola/patowala turned up to strengthen the case of gringsing wayang. The Fakultas Sastra Udayana Denpasar has a lontar no. 129, kropak no. 9, entitled Pangiwa, i.e. Black Magic. It tells the sorcerer how to make a terrifying drawing, pronounce a mantra over it, wrap it up with patowala silk and throw it in the kitchen of the person at whom the sorcery is aimed. Death will be the outcome for him (leaf 23a).