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The images from Candi Suko as described by Van der Vlis in 1841

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THE IMAGES FROM CAṆḌI SUKO AS DESCRIBED BY VAN DER VLIS IN 1841

In 1926 Krom published an article (Krom 1926) containing three recently discovered notes by Dr. C. J. van der Vlis¹, author of the first survey of the antiquities at Sukuh and Cĕto (Van der Vlis 1843). Van der Vlis lived and worked at Surakarta from 1837 till 1842, the year in which he died. The first of these three notes is dated 10 October 1841 and describes two sites in the village of Caṇḍi Krikil to the north-west of Boyolali. Van der Vlis called these remains Caṇḍi Krikil and Caṇḍi Bungalan or Caṇḍi Lor.

At the last-mentioned site three fine reliefs drew his particular attention: those of a female figure, a Mahākāla and a Nandiśvara. The first item was described by him as follows: "... a small female image with a nimbus behind the head, and a high crown ... The left hand holds a lotus flower on a long stem. The feet and legs of this small image are ... cut off at the knees. Perhaps it is a representation of Parvati. Its present height is about 60 Dutch inches"² (Krom 1926:176).

At the end of his article Krom added some comments of his own on the three notes by Van der Vlis. With regard to the mysterious site called Caṇḍi Bungalan or Caṇḍi Lor by Van der Vlis, he pointed out that this was none other than Caṇḍi Suko, surveyed later, between 1864 and 1867, by Hoepermans (Hoepermans 1914:270). Subsequently he identified the female figure described by Van der Vlis at this site as a relief which had recently been photographed by the Archaeological Service.³ No photograph of this sculpture has so far been published anywhere, and so it is illustrated here as Pl. 1. I may add that the picture was taken on 30 October 1923 on the plantation of Cepogo, not far from Boyolali, where

Editorial note

The article as published here represents a version which the author intended revising slightly in connection with her discovery in the course of a visit to the Radyapustaka Museum at Surakarta in June 1981 of yet another image which in her opinion hailed from Caṇḍi Suko. Difficulties in obtaining a suitable photograph of this image unfortunately prevented her from doing the intended revision before her untimely death. The photograph in any case is reproduced here as Pl. 3, and is commented on by Prof. J. G. de Casparis in a Postscript.

the photographer of the Archaeological Service was informed that the provenance of the image was unknown (Anonymous 1925:20). As we saw above, Krom identified its place of origin a few years later with the help of Van der Vlis's notes as Caṇḍi Suko, which is located quite near Cepogo. Krom concluded his remarks about Suko with the following words: "... we have not been able to trace the Mahākāla and the Nandiśvara, but perhaps this will be possible at the site itself, or at Bojolali or Soerakarta, on the basis of the description and the measurements [given by Van der Vlis]" (Krom 1926:183).

The Nandiśvara which Van der Vlis saw at Suko was described by him as follows: "... another stone, on which an image of Siwa in standing attitude has been carved, holding what seems to be a rosary in the right hand, with the left hand hanging down along the left thigh. Behind the head is a nimbus, and behind the right arm a trisoela or trident has been carved in the stone. The feet and legs are broken off at the knees. The present height of the small image is 61 Dutch inches" (Krom 1926:176).

I believe I am now able to supply some information with regard to this Nandiśvara from Suko of which Krom hoped that it might one day be traced, for a fine relief in the Gemeentelijk Museum Het Prinsessehof, Leeuwarden (see Pl. 2), shares a large number of stylistic features with the female figure identified by Krom as hailing from Suko (see Pl. 1). This Nandiśvara at Leeuwarden⁴ has the same excessively slim and elongated body and somewhat protruding belly. Both figures stand in a strikingly languid attitude. Their left hands almost touch the border which once surrounded the two panels. Their heads are slightly inclined and the faces are shown in three-quarter profile against an oblong aureole. The garments are arranged in exactly the same manner, dipping down in a curve under the belly with a point coming up on either side. Two girdles and two flat sashes knotted at the hips are added. The various pieces of jewellery, including in both cases a channavīra, are very similar in shape and arrangement. In short, there is a remarkable stylistic resemblance between the two sculptures, which are obviously closely related. Consequently it seems justified to suggest that the image at Leeuwarden also came from Suko.⁵ Comparing the above-quoted description by Van der Vlis of the Nandiśvara at that place with the Nandiśvara at Leeuwarden, it appears to fit the latter in every respect, down to the height, which was estimated by him at 61 Dutch inches, that of the relief at Leeuwarden being 61 cm.

The panel, which, judging by its style, dates from the 9th century, entered the Museum when the collections of the "Indische Verzameling te Bergum" were incorporated into its own. This local museum at Bergum was founded by Anne Tjibbes van der Meulen, who went to Indonesia in 1895, where he taught for many years, among others at a school at Salatiga, not far from Suko and Cepogo. It was undoubtedly during the period he spent at Salatiga that Van der Meulen acquired the

Pl. 1. Female figure holding a lotus flower; provenance Caṇḍi Suko (copyright Archaeological Service of Indonesia).

Pl. 2. Nandiśvara (copyright Gemeentelijk Museum Het Prinsesshof, Leeuwarden).

Nandiśvara originally from Suko. Correspondence in the archives of the Museum at Leeuwarden shows that Krom, who was Director of the Archaeological Service at that time, issued an export licence for a few items in Van der Meulen's possession. However, some other sculptures, which he considered to be of importance, were not allowed to leave the country. Van der Meulen thereupon donated these to the Museum Pusat at Jakarta.

There remain a few puzzling questions with regard to one of the interesting reliefs from Suko, which I should like to discuss in these final paragraphs. From the description by Van der Vlis it would appear that there were three buildings at the site, two lying in alignment with a third further to the west (Krom 1926:175-176). The three images which drew his special attention were located on or near the remains of this last monument. Van der Vlis rightly believed that this temple must have been a Śaiva shrine, in view of the Nandiśvara (Krom 1926:177) – a conclusion which is supported by the former presence here of an image which obviously represented Mahākāla. In accordance with the normal iconographical arrangement of Central Javanese temples these two figures must have stood to the left and right respectively of the entrance, while images of Śiva Guru-Agastya, Gaṇeśa and Durgā would have been placed in niches in the three remaining walls of the building. The problems which now arise are: where was the panel showing the goddess holding a lotus flower (see Pl. 1) incorporated in the monument, and how should this deity be identified?

In this connection I should like to draw attention to an unusual Durgā now in the Sriwedari Museum at Surakarta (Bosch 1924:150, 154, fig. 12). This figure brandishes no weapons, as is normally the case. On the contrary, all its attributes are "peaceful", and in two of her hands the goddess holds lotus flowers. The image was originally believed to hail from Karang-gěněng, but the description of a sculpture at Tampir by Van der Vlis in the notes published by Krom fits the Sriwedari figure down to the smallest details, so that Krom concluded that the actual provenance of this strange Durgā was, in fact, Tampir (Krom 1926:183).

In an attempt to identify the goddess holding a lotus flower at Caṇḍi Suko, Van der Vlis wrote: "Perhaps it is a representation of Parwati". In view of the "peaceful" Durgā from Tampir – a site quite close to Suko – it is conceivable that this area followed an iconographical tradition in which Durgā was represented in a "śānti" form. If so, then Van der Vlis's guess was correct. However, there is another solution to the problem as well, for in view of the attitude of the female figure, turning as it does to the right, the relief could also have been incorporated in the building as a side panel to the left of one of the three niches sheltering Śiva Guru-Agastya, Gaṇeśa or Durgā. This suggestion could be borne out by the fact that the width of the Nandiśvara sculpture originally flanking the entrance is almost 27 cm., which is roughly the same as that of the relief

showing the female figure, viz. about 30 cm.⁶ If the latter was merely a side panel, then its subject is almost certainly not a representation of Durgā but probably of some sort of semi-divine being such as an apsaras. As it seems impossible – at least for the time being – to establish the exact original position of the relief with the female figure, the matter of her identification will have to be left undecided.

In the last but one sentence of his article Krom expressed the hope that the publication of Van der Vlis's notes might one day lead to the rediscovery of the images from Caṇḍi Suko described in them. This expectation has now been partly fulfilled. Let us hope that it will not take another half a century or more before the Mahākāla which Van der Vlis noticed at that site is also traced.

NOTES

- 1 Now deposited with the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Leiden, Ms. H. 389k.
- 2 A Dutch "thumb" or inch is an old measurement equalling roughly 1 cm.
- 3 No. 7066.
- 4 Museum No. G.A.M. 1011.
- 5 In a letter dated Cambridge, Sept. 29th, 1957, I informed Dr. H. Miedema, at that time Curator of the Gemeentelijk Museum Het Prinsessehof, Leeuwarden, that in my opinion the provenance of the relief was Suko. He subsequently mentioned this on p. 15. of a pamphlet entitled *Beknopte Toelichting* published by the museum a few years later.
- 6 These measurements refer to the width of the panels inside the surrounding border.

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Pl. 3. Figure of a goddess kept at the Radyapustaka Museum, Surakarta (copyright Yayasan Paheman Radyapustaka, Surakarta).

POSTSCRIPT BY PROF. J. G. DE CASPARIS

The interesting image of a goddess illustrated in Pl. 3, though badly weathered and broken off just below the knees, shows a clear stylistic similarity with the two sculptures discussed by Professor Van Lohuizen in her above article and illustrated here in Pl. 1 and 2. It represents a four-armed goddess standing in a graceful *tribhaṅga* pose. The dress and ornaments are quite similar to those of the two-armed female figure described by Van der Vlis and illustrated in Pl. 1. In addition, the elongated shape of the face and, in particular, the complicated arrangement of the dress around the waist show a remarkable similarity to the two sculptures. Unfortunately, it is impossible to identify the attributes held by the two left hands of the image in the Radyapustaka Museum on the photograph. Each of its right hands holds a lotus flower: the upper hand a small, open four-petalled one, but the lower right hand a large half-open one. The stalk of the latter flower, which is turned towards the face of the goddess, runs down all the way along the edge of the stone, curving slightly towards the goddess at the spot where it passes through her closed fist, as though it were being pulled towards her body. This is precisely the same manner in which the lotus is held in the sculpture illustrated in Pl. 1, which probably hails from Caṇḍi Suko, as is argued by Professor Van Lohuizen.

The striking similarity of the two sculptures strongly suggests that both belong to the same area and period. There is therefore a distinct possibility that the sculpture of the four-armed goddess also hails from Caṇḍi Suko. However, one serious difficulty still prevents us from accepting this suggestion. If this sculpture was at the site of Caṇḍi Suko in or around 1841, how can one explain the fact that it escaped the attention of Van der Vlis? The latter, though an amateur, was a keen, accurate, and well-informed observer who could hardly have failed to notice the sculpture if it had been there. If it does indeed belong to Caṇḍi Suko, one has to conclude that it had been removed from the site before c. 1841. Although this would not be impossible, it is more likely that this sculpture hails from one of the other sites in the neighbourhood. Only further exploration of the ruins in the Boyolali area may establish a firmer basis for any conclusion concerning the provenance of the sculpture under discussion. As representations of this particular goddess in her benign form, *i.e.* as Umā or Pārvatī, are rare in Indonesia – in contrast to the Durgā Maḥiṣāsūramardīnī form, which is one of the most common representations of the goddess in early Indonesian art – the iconography of the Boyolali sites is of considerable interest for our knowledge of ancient Indonesian culture.