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SICKNESS AS A METAPHOR IN INDONESIAN POLITICAL MYTHS

Introduction

A few years ago one of the authors of the present article drew attention to a number of themes regarding the relation between the ruler and his realm which constantly recur in Indonesian political myths (De Josselin de Jong 1980). One of these themes strikes one as rather strange, namely the association between royalty and a certain type of illness: often the ruler himself was depicted as suffering from a (venereal) skin disease, or else persons with whom he had social or sexual intercourse were afflicted. This led to the question why a disgusting and humiliating disease should be attributed in particular to a ruler. The explanation offered in the 1980 article was that the illness should be seen as an aspect of the ruler's position as a mediator, i.e. as an individual who contains "the weird and the dangerous" in his person or has it around him in his immediate environment. Being ill and making others ill, in other words, are to be considered as aspects of the king's sacrality.

In a more recent essay (1983), the same author deals with the theme of the sick king in greater detail. Now the ruler's sickness is not discussed as an aspect of his sacrality (although the importance of this factor should not be overlooked) but is examined for its effect on the relationship between the ruler and his realm.

Using four western Indonesian political myths, the author argues that the sickness the king causes in others or suffers from himself disrupts the relations between the king and his subjects. This interpretation is supported by the fact that, in the societies concerned, such relations are often represented as those between husband and wife, and that (venereal) skin diseases are considered an impediment to a normal marriage.

In the present article we shall re-examine and then further develop this argument. We shall demonstrate that rulers, or members of the royal family, are associated with illness in other Indonesian myths besides the political myths of western Indonesia. Particularly striking are the cases of female members of the royal family suffering from skin diseases or other physical ailments, while the cause of their condition is not made entirely clear. This topic will require us to shift our attention from the king as the carrier or cause of a disease to sickness as a two-sided phenomenon: not only the ruler, but also the wife, i.e. the people, can be afflicted.

Such an investigation entails studying the effect sickness may have on the relationship between ruler and realm. Although sickness is a disturbing factor, it need not be disruptive: some texts suggest that a sexual relationship, provided it meets certain conditions, can have a curative effect. This could allow us to interpret the sickness as a metaphor for a state of imperfection, while the ruler and his subjects require one another in order to jointly overcome an undesirable condition.

It is noteworthy that one of the means, frequently occurring in the myths, by which the disturbed relationship can be restored is that both parties enter into a covenant or contract. This is of special interest as some Indonesianists have categorically denied that the notion of a "social contract" is a truly indigenous concept (Anderson 1972:47-52). In several dynastic myths the ruler sets himself up as the custodian of a new societal order in which the basic rights of the people will be restored and protected. Although it is left largely implicit, a study of this theme could also shed new light on the historical antecedents of the idea of an *Orde Baru*, which is propagated by present-day Indonesian authorities.

A first reconnaissance

We shall begin with the case of Sri Tribuana, king of Palembang, as described in the *Sejarah Melayu* or Malay Annals (Brown 1952). Although this myth is comparatively simple, it can be made the keystone of our article as it comprises almost all the themes which were mentioned in the foregoing introductory section, and which will presently re-appear in other myths, often in less clearly recognizable forms.

Three princes, descendants of Alexander the Great, had lived beneath the sea. They rise up and appear on land on the east coast of Sumatra. Two of them then depart, but the third is proclaimed king by a herald (who came forth out of the foam in the mouth of a supernatural cow) and is given the title of Sri Tribuana. He will become the ancestor of the future sultans of Malaka.

At the time, Palembang is already an established society under its own headman, Demang Lebar Daun, who now becomes chief minister of the new king. Sri Tribuana wishes to marry, and takes one of the local ladies as his consort; "but when she had slept with the king, she was found by him the following morning to be stricken with chloasma (*kedal*) as the result of being possessed by him, whereupon he abandoned her". This happens thirty-nine times, whereupon Tribuana asks Lebar Daun to give him his daughter in marriage. The chief minister agrees, on the condition that the king and he first enter into a solemn covenant with each other.

They do so, Lebar Daun promising that his descendants shall be subjects of Tribuana's throne, provided they are well treated: they

may be punished if they offend, but never be disgraced or reviled. On his part the king stipulates that the subjects should never be disloyal to their ruler.

"When the covenant had been made and strict promises mutually given", Lebar Daun gives his daughter in marriage to the king, and "when day dawned, he (the king) saw that she was not stricken by chloasma".

Shortly afterwards the ceremonial lustration of Sri Tribuana is performed (De Josselin de Jong 1980:7; Brown 1952:25-27).

The words "as the result of being possessed by him" make it clear that Sri Tribuana is held to be responsible for the sickness of his consorts. It is reasonable to attribute the sickness to the sacral power of the king, but sacrality is too imprecise a concept to have great explanatory value. For one thing, it is not an autonomous and permanent quality, but relational and variable. We therefore have to take the circumstances into account under which the power of the king to cause the disease could manifest itself. The myth is clear in this respect: during the earliest period of his reign, the relationship between the new king and his subjects was not yet satisfactorily established. The thirty-nine brides who contracted chloasma were persons with whom Tribuana only had sexual intercourse: he took and then abandoned them. His fortieth spouse, the daughter of Demang Lebar Daun, marks the transition from a transient to an ordered relationship. Her father only bestows her in marriage after the king has promised, on his own and his successors' behalf, never to humiliate his subjects. Only when this promise has been made can one feel immune to the dangerous aspects of kingship.

This approach entails a different interpretation of the meaning of the disease. It is not a sickness which disturbs the relation between king and people, but rather a disturbed (or imperfectly realized) relationship which becomes manifest in sickness. In other words, the sickness is an indicator (we might almost call it a symptom) of a flaw in the relationship. It is not only the solemn covenant, but also the king's marriage to Lebar Daun's daughter which allows us to interpret the sickness as a political metaphor.

In an earlier publication we demonstrated that in several Indonesian societies the relationship between ruler and realm is presented as one between husband and wife. This also applies to the case under consideration, when Sri Tribuana marries the daughter of Demang Lebar Daun, because Lebar Daun, the former *Demang* or local chieftain, who has now become the king's chief minister or *Bendahara*, may be considered as the foremost representative of the king's subjects. It is significant that the *Sejarah Melayu* repeatedly confirms the *Bendahara*'s role as bride-giver to the ruler: no less than six of the eight legitimate sultans of Malaka are stated to have married a daughter of their *Bendahara* (De

Josselin de Jong 1983).

We can now turn to two myths, or fragments of myths, which deal with a sick king. The first concerns Iskandar Muda, also known by his posthumous title Mökuta Alam, a famous sultan of Aceh in the early seventeenth century. A preliminary remark should be made here: we only know this myth in a fragmentary form and at second hand, namely as it is to be found in Snouck Hurgronje's late nineteenth-century account of Aceh (1893:139, 140), in the chapter on political organization in which the author deals particularly with the relations between the sultan and the territorial chieftains.¹

Sultan Mökuta Alam suffered from a venereal disease. To cure it he resorted to a practice which, Snouck Hurgronje comments, was still held to be efficacious in his days, the late 19th century.² The sultan had sexual intercourse with a woman, who not only contracted the disease, but thereby drew it away from and cured the sultan. For this purpose, Mökuta Alam slept with a black slave-girl. The sultan was cured; the woman not only contracted the disease but also became pregnant. The sultan ordered her to leave the palace and live in a country district. There she gave birth to a son, who became the ancestor of one of the great families of *panglima* or chiefs, namely the chiefs of the district where his son was born. He, and his descendants, bore the title of Panglima Polém: "Lord Elder Brother" – elder brother, that is, of the sultans.

The second example of a sick king is Brawijaya, represented as the last ruler of the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit in the *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Olthof 1941).

On his accession to the throne of Majapahit, Brawijaya asks his astrologers whether after his death there will be a successor to equal his power. The astrologers say that such will indeed be the case; the successor will even be one of Brawijaya's descendants. This coming ruler, however, will move the capital to Mataram and subjugate all the people of Java.

In those days, king Brawijaya was suffering from a venereal disease and could not leave his palace for a long time; no remedy could cure him. Then one night he hears a voice saying: "O Lord, if you want to be cured you must sleep with a Wandan woman whose countenance is yellow". The next day Brawijaya has intercourse with the Wandan woman and is cured. The woman, however, becomes pregnant and delivers a handsome boy. Because this boy, according to the astrologers, will bring an end to the king's reign, Brawijaya has the child handed over to a supervisor of the rice-

fields, to be killed when it is one month old. This plan fails. The supervisor reports that he has killed the child, while in fact he has saved the boy's life and adopted him into his own family. The boy is named Bondan Kajawan.

Subsequent events, as narrated in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, can be summarized as follows.

The astrologers, says the *Babad*, were not entirely right. Although the reign of Brawijaya was to come to an end, it was not because of Bondan Kajawan but by a Muslim insurrection. The kingdom of Majapahit collapses before the onslaught of troops from Muslim maritime states along the north coast of Java. King Brawijaya is not killed in battle but ascends to heaven, together with several court dignitaries. Power, "the light of royalty", is transferred to Demak and from there to Pajang.

Bondan Kajawan is connected with the House of Mataram, the central Javanese kingdom that in its turn was to succeed Pajang. Having grown up, the boy was sent to a man called Tarub for his education. Later, he marries his teacher's daughter, who was born from Tarub's union with a nymph, Dewi Nawang Wulan. A great-grandson of Bondan Kajawan, Pamanahan, who was a vassal of the sultan of Pajang, was to settle in the still uncultivated forested area of Mataram. His son, Senapati, was to become the founder of the new kingdom there.

We have now encountered two cases of rulers who were suffering from a venereal disease and who had sexual intercourse in order to be cured. In both cases a son is born who will become the ancestor of prominent descent lines. There are other similarities as well between the two stories, but these can only be discussed when we have answered the question why intercourse with a woman was held to be an effective remedy for venereal disease.

Only a tentative answer can be given. The one we propose is based on a passage in the *Babad Tanah Jawi* which states that a ruler also seeks union with a woman when the country is afflicted with a plague (Olthoff 1941:13). We are dealing with a symbolic correspondence, i.e. an association of two representations of the ruler as a mediator:

Regarding the first case, it is well known that indigenous historiographies, such as the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, usually attribute calamities, e.g. epidemics, crop failures and natural disasters, to a failure of the ruler as

mediator. These events are often portents of the downfall of the established dynasty – just as they indicate decay of the central authority to present-day Indonesians. The ruler mediates between the macrocosm and the microcosm, and is thereby responsible for maintaining the natural and the social order. In order to fulfil this role the ruler has to be endowed with exceptional qualities, both physical and mental. The required qualities are paranormal powers, intelligence, wisdom, but also physical perfection and beauty. One of the ways to distinguish the ruler who is unsatisfactory as a mediator from a good ruler is by attributing bodily defects or sickness to him. Many examples could be cited of such an association.

For Java, we need only compare the description of the personal qualities of Sultan Amangkurat of Mataram with those of his ancestor, Senapati, the founder of that state. It is no mere coincidence that Amangkurat, who is described as a Javanese Nero, is said to have been lame, while Senapati is perfection in all respects. A Burmese text which demonstrates the importance attached to sickness and health is the *Glass Palace Chronicle*: the good ruler is almost always said to be “of fair complexion”, “filled with (the bloom of) beauty”, while the bad ruler is “of ruddy complexion” or “of black complexion . . . his eyes and eyelashes were red”, or “suffering from itch” (Pe Maung Tin 1923).

If this can serve to elucidate the meaning of a ruler’s sickness, the question arises why the ruler should have sexual intercourse in order to cure his own or his country’s illness. In our opinion, this theme can best be understood by associating it with the idea that the ruler should be wedded to his realm. The myth of Sri Tribuana is a case in point. In the first place, because this myth speaks very specifically of sexual congress in marriage, and secondly because here, too, a direct connection is made between the ruler’s sexual behaviour and the appearance or disappearance of an illness. On this aspect, Berg has remarked that the societies concerned perceive a close connection between the ruler’s sexual powers and the prosperity and stability of the realm, while the dangerous forces of kingship become manifest when the ruler’s sexual act has a “wrong object” (Berg 1938:22). This appears to hold good for the Sri Tribuana myth as well:

Sri Tribuana: 1-39 =	“wrong object”	—————>	illness
40 =	daughter of Lebar Daun	—————>	no illness

Berg’s term “wrong object” is rather unfortunate, as the crucial factor is not an “object” but a relationship. Therefore it would be more appropriate to speak of a wrong relationship or *mésalliance*, i.e. a relationship which is not in accordance with the principle that the ruler should be wedded to his realm. Thus phrased, it makes us understand why Tribuana has repeated marital and sexual relationships with different women, and why the sickness no longer appears as soon as he has obtained his fitting consort.

In the cases of Mökuta Alam and Brawijaya we can also interpret their sexual intercourse as attempts to restore the relationship between the ruler and his people. In a sense their experiences are the reverse of Tribuana's, as it is not their mates, but the rulers themselves who are afflicted by a disease:

Sri Tribuana	:	sexual intercourse	→	sickness (wife/realm)
Brawijaya	:	sickness (ruler)	→	sexual intercourse
Mökuta Alam	:			

The sickness of Brawijaya and Mökuta Alam, like Tribuana's, could indicate a disrupted relation between the king and the people, while in their case the people are the principal cause of the estrangement. Unfortunately the texts are so imprecise and fragmentary on this matter, that we cannot test our hypothesis by internal evidence. We shall therefore have to turn to other sources, historical and ethnographic.

We know of Brawijaya that he is represented in the *Babad Tanah Jawi* as the last king of Majapahit, and know for a historical fact that this Hindu Javanese kingdom lost its hegemony to a coalition of Muslim coastal districts. It could well be that the king's illness refers to an ideological estrangement between the king and his subjects, due to the progressive Islamization of Javanese society.

We are less well informed about Mökuta Alam. Perhaps historical research will show whether in Aceh also religious or other developments had a harmful effect on the relationship between the sultan and the inhabitants.³ A remarkable fact, probably relevant for our subject, is that not long after the death of Iskandar Muda, alias Mökuta Alam, there were no males in the royal line, so that Aceh was ruled by four sultanas in succession. This turn of events was not only extraordinary in itself, but also, and in particular, because it is at variance with the idea of the ruler being the husband of his realm. That this conception existed in Aceh is proved by Snouck Hurgronje, who recorded the then current phrase that Aceh is the "perpetual bride" (*de eeuwige bruid*), who is bestowed in marriage to the successive sultans. We do not know precisely how the country was ruled by the four sultanas, but there are indications that, after Iskandar Muda's death, the sultan's office came increasingly under the influence of the territorial chiefs. While the Mökuta Alam myth still tells how the mother of the ancestor of the future Panglimas Polém was sent away from court, we read in Snouck Hurgronje (1893:93-94, 145) that, later, "each succession to the throne had to be in accordance with the decision of the representatives of the three districts (*sagi*)". In addition, "the installation of the ruler was and remained formally a contract with the three *panglima*". Once more we see an inversion of the Tribuana myth:

Tribuana	:	sick realm	→	contract/marriage	→	cure
Mökuta Alam	:	sick king	→	union/cure	→	contract

In the Tribuana story, the illness disappears once the king has made a contract with the people, which is sealed by his marriage to the former headman's daughter. Mökuta Alam is cured after sexual intercourse with a woman who will bear the ancestor of one of the prominent families of district chiefs, who arrange succession to the sultanate by a contract.

Judging by the historical outcome, we can say that neither Brawijaya nor Mökuta Alam succeeded in permanently restoring the relationship between the ruler and his subjects. Metaphorically speaking, their cure was apparently no more than temporary. We may wonder why the remedy, generally held to be efficacious, failed in their case. Can it be explained by the status of the women who were to effect the cure? In contrast to Demang Lebar Daun's daughter, neither of them could be considered to be a representative of the people of the realm: one was "black", the other "yellow", and they were either a slave or a servant. If we consider how precisely the texts specify the identity of the woman, we could say that both of them are, themselves, classified as irregular and therefore pathogenic people. By choosing them, the rulers missed the opportunity to restore their relations with the realm.

Just as Watu Gunung (i.e. the king whom Berg associates with a "wrong object"), who is disfigured by a scar, owes his downfall to his incestuous union with his mother, the *mésalliances* of Brawijaya and Mökuta Alam mean the fall of Majapahit and the anomaly of female rule in Aceh.

In search of an explanatory model

Our analysis started out from the supposition that illness was a disruptive element in the relationship between the king and his subjects. It soon became apparent that this supposition, though not incorrect, did not reach to the heart of the matter. It was not the illness which disturbed the relationship, but it was the disruption of the relationship which became apparent in the illness. Because the relationship was represented as a marital union, a disturbed relationship was interpreted as discord between husband and wife. This discord appeared as an estrangement between the spouses, and also as an unsuitable union or misalliance. The myths appear to suggest that recovery from the illness requires a restoration of the union or the establishment of a proper alliance, as the case may be.

The representation of the union between the king and his subjects as a marriage and the use of sickness as a metaphor can also be applied to other situations, in which it need not be the king who suffers from an illness. It can also be the wife, as representative of the people, and this means that, logically, four variations are possible, viz.:

		Wife / People				
		Healthy		Sick		
Husband/King	Healthy	+	+	A B	+	-
	Sick	-	+	C D	-	-

The cases of Brawijaya and Sri Tribuana suggest that we have to take the dynasty's position into consideration: in the first case the dynasty is in decline, in the second in the ascendant. Considering this factor, we can develop the following schema: A = established dynasty, D = decaying dynasty, B/C rising or declining dynasty. We cannot define the meaning of combinations B and C *a priori*: whether they refer to a rising or a declining dynasty must be made apparent by the mythical text itself. The double pointed arrows indicate that a dynasty's position at a given moment is not static; it can change in either direction.

The schema suggests that the meaning of the sickness is ambivalent: it can be a metaphor for either a declining or a rising dynasty. It is obvious that, in the case of a declining dynasty, there *is* already a relationship between the ruler and the people. The sickness then is a negative phenomenon, indicating that there is something amiss with the relationship. In the case of a rising dynasty, the position is different. One would expect that illness of either the ruler or his wife, i.e. the people, would prevent the relationship coming into being. Remarkably enough this is not the case: the illness appears, on the contrary, to function as an element which constitutes a predisposition for a relationship.

What is common to both meanings is that an illness indicates a crisis, which can only be overcome if the parties enter into a proper relationship. Overcoming the crisis means that an enduring relation, and an enduring dynasty, is either established or perpetuated.

Further enquiry on this point will have to show whether the schema can serve for the analysis of the ethnographic data. As we have already dealt at some length with sickness in the B/C category, referring to a dynasty in trouble, we must now examine several cases of sickness associated with the rise and establishment of a new dynasty.

Sickness connected with the rise of a dynasty

We shall begin with the myth of the sick princess of Luwu, who became the founder of the state of Wajo in southern Celebes. The myth is of special interest as both meanings of sickness which we have just been

discussing can be recognized in it. Our principal sources are the text and the commentary as given by Matthes (1869) and Brandstetter (1896).

According to the legend there once lived in Luwu (a region held to be the cradle of Bugis culture) a princess, whose name is not mentioned, suffering from an evil-smelling, incurable skin disease. She was the ruler's only child and heir presumptive.

The notables and the populace were unhappy, as they feared that the princess's disease might be infectious. They met to discuss the situation. They would have liked to eliminate the princess, but were withheld by the fact that she had white blood in her veins, i.e. was of royal descent. The dilemma was great, so a second meeting was held, where a decision was reached. The king was to be asked whether he preferred to have one egg or several. If he chose for one egg, all his subjects would leave the country and settle elsewhere; if he chose for several, the king should banish his daughter. The ruler's reply was that he preferred a multitude, and that the people's wish was also his own.

Thereupon a great raft was built, on which the princess and her retinue were to sail away into exile. After a voyage of forty days and nights men in her retinue went out to find a suitable location for a settlement. They found it near a big, tall tree, close by a little river. The new settlement was called Wajo, after the big tree.

One day, when her people had gone to the fields to bring in the harvest, the princess was suddenly attacked by a white buffalo. Trying to escape, she fell to the ground. The buffalo did not wound her, but began to lick her body, and then disappeared into the forest. The princess bathed, and found that her skin disease had partially disappeared. From that day onwards she let the buffalo lick her every day until she was entirely cured.

Some time after, the son of the king of Bone, who was out hunting, happened to lose his way near Wajo. Some of his followers, sent out to find food, discovered the new settlement, where they were hospitably received. As soon as the prince had heard their favourable reports, he set out for Wajo to meet the princess. Seeing her, he was so overwhelmed by her beauty that he fainted and had to be revived. Thereupon he returned to Bone.

In Bone, the prince languished because of his great love for the princess; he kept to his bed and refused all food and drink. When his parents finally discovered the cause, they sent an embassy to Wajo to propose a marriage between their son and the princess.

The people of Wajo were not given much choice: either they must consent to a marriage between the young male buffalo from Bone and the female buffalo of Luwu, or they must convert their dwelling-place into a fortress. After long deliberations the inhabi-

tants, both male and female, decided to agree to the match. The princess accepted the decision, but set a condition: the buffalo must always respect her dignity and give her his undivided love.

The marriage took place. In due time, children were born to the prince and the princess, and also to their subjects. The children of the subjects dispersed, to find their own habitation and means of livelihood. Each one of them took one child of the prince and the princess as ruler. This is the account of the origin of Wajo.

How must we interpret this myth? In our opinion it is important, when studying the meaning of the sickness, to take account of the context in which it occurs. In the opening scenes, the princess's skin disease symbolizes discontent among the people of Luwu, or at least of the great majority, in the face of her forthcoming succession to the throne. We can not ascertain why this was the case. The ruling king apparently lacks the power to ensure his daughter's accession. It was certainly in his own interest to bow to the will of the people.

Not much can be said about the journey into exile, except that several familiar motifs are used to symbolize Wajo's separation from Luwu and its independence: the period of forty days and nights, the stranding on an unknown shore, the choice of a tall tree as future centre of the new state. Against this background, the princess's disease acquires a different meaning: it now symbolizes a state of imperfection, one aspect of which is the absence of a prince with whom the princess, as representative of the people of Wajo, can be joined in matrimony. This becomes clear when we consider how she is cured of her disease.

Our first question might be why her cure is not effected in the same way as the sick king's, but in our opinion this is not a genuine problem, as the princess's situation is very different from his and it was much harder for her to find a suitable consort. As an unmarried woman, she could not initiate an irregular sexual relationship, and marrying a member of her retinue would not have been fitting, and would even have been incestuous. Her only option was to marry a stranger, but there was little likelihood of her doing so. Who would marry a woman suffering from an evil-smelling disease? This problem was solved by the appearance of the white buffalo.

From an outsider's viewpoint, the miraculous cure by the white buffalo may appear as an artificial device, but other Indonesian myths show that such an animal is far from rare in these tales, and often brings about a happy outcome. The white colour indicates that it is not an ordinary buffalo but a supernatural creature, which may be compared with the white blood of royalty and the nobility, held to be incarnations of gods. Mostly it is a white female buffalo who comes to the rescue by suckling a new-born child (often a prince or princess) which had been abandoned or exposed, or whose mother had died in childbirth (Werdisastro 1914;

Ras 1968). It is likely that the appearance of a male buffalo in the present myths is not fortuitous, as it suggests a connection with the prince of Bone, who will be the princess's suitor.⁴ A similar association is, in fact, to be found in other myths, as the following two specimens may show.

In the *Hikayat Banjar*, Prince Raden Putra is cured of his skin disease after meeting two white *naga*, who are the servants of his future bride, Putri Jungjung Buih (Ras 1968:31).

The *Tale of Sukadana* tells how Prince Brawijaya (not to be confused with the king of Majapahit of the same name) is cured of his skin disease after having been licked by little *belang uling* fishes. Like the fishes, his future wife is associated with water: she appears out of an aquatic flower (Veth 1854, quoted in Ras 1968:83).

It is significant that these two sick princes are also associated with the rise of a dynasty. We shall return to these examples presently, but shall first conclude our comments on the myth of the founding of Wajo.

The princess's marriage introduces a new phase in Wajo's affairs: the population increase leads to occupational specialization, which, according to the myth, in its turn leads to the formation of new groupings. Each social group was given one descendant of the princess and the prince as its ruler.

Although the myth deals with matters connected with the origin of Wajo as a society, it would not be right to call it an origin myth, as it is primarily concerned with what befell the princess, and the development of Wajo is described as a result of her marriage. In addition, the formation of separate groups is treated very briefly, and mainly in order to depict the organization of the local aristocracy.

This is not the place to investigate the functioning of the monarchy in Wajo – on this subject we may simply refer to Matthes's works. More relevant for our present study is what the myth tells us about the relationship between the ruler and his people. One cannot fail to be struck by the great, if not decisive, importance attached to decision-making by the people. The banishment of the princess from Luwu and her marriage to the prince from Bone are both decided on by the people, and subsequently confirmed by the ruler and the princess. We had already observed the importance of the princess and the local aristocracy, and we now see that an equipoise is introduced: ruler and people are interdependent and of equal significance. This conclusion is confirmed by data supplied by Matthes. To explain the relations between the ruler and the people, this author even uses the terms "contract" or "constitution" when referring to the agreement by which the two parties' mutual rights and duties are defined (Matthes 1869:6-18).

The myth about the founding of Wajo is not the only example of an association between sickness and the rise of a dynasty. We should also consider the *Hikayat Banjar*. This is a chronicle of the royal house of Banjar in southern Borneo (Ras 1968). The origin of the dynasty is traced back to the marriage of a local princess, Putri Jungjung Buih, to a Javanese prince, Raden Putra, also called Raden Suryacipta. We shall discuss this marriage, as described in the *Hikayat*, in some detail, because we are now dealing with a myth which places the sickness theme in an archaic Indonesian cosmological framework. This will facilitate its comparison with other Indonesian myths.

The land of Keling is ruled by King Saudagar Jantam. He has three sons, the youngest of whom is Ampu Jatmika, and two daughters; one is married to Sultan Iskander, the other to Nabi Khidir.

Sultan Iskander also has a wife in heaven, a daughter of Batara Bisnu. Nabi Khidir also contracts a second marriage. His wife is the daughter of Batara Gangga and Sang Hiang Antabuga, rulers of a country at the bottom of the sea. When the king, Saudagar Jantam, dies, his children disagree about the division of his estate. Because his brothers do not grant him his rightful share, Ampu Jatmika sails away, accompanied by his wife and children and his servants. After a long voyage they finally land in Candi Agung, a region in southern Borneo.

Having ruled over Candi Agung for a certain period, Ampu Jatmika dies. His two sons, Lambung Jaya Wanagiri and Lambung Mangkurat, temporarily assume power. They order two statues to be made, which are then venerated by the inhabitants as the true sovereign rulers. One day Lambung Jaya Wanagiri and Lambung Mangkurat hear a voice, commanding them to abjure idolatry and to seek a human king. In order to do so, they practise asceticism in remote spots. While doing so, Lambung Mangkurat sees a mass of foam floating on a river. A princess emerges out of the foam, and makes known that she is Putri Jungjung Buih, a reincarnation of Nabi Khidir's daughter by his second wife, the daughter of Batara Gangga, the ruler of the land under the sea. Lambung Mangkurat thereupon adopts Putri Jungjung Buih.

The beauty of the princess who appeared out of the foam becomes known far and wide. Thirty-nine princes become her suitors, but the princess refuses them all: she will only accept a prince who, like herself, was obtained by asceticism. Such a prince is Raden Suryacipta, a son of the ruler of Majapahit, but also a reincarnation of the grandson of Sultan Iskander and Batara Bisnu's daughter. Raden Suryacipta is described as physically imperfect: he has no arms or legs (in another version, he is suffering from a skin disease). To Putri Jungjung Buih, these physical

defects are no impediment to marriage, as the Javanese prince is the only suitor who was obtained by asceticism.

The ship which carries Raden Suryacipta to Borneo runs aground shortly before arriving at its destination, being held fast by the prince's twin brother (or, in the other version, by two white *naga*, servants of Putri Jungjung Buih). The prince then lowers himself into the water and descends to the land of Batara Gangga. After three days he re-appears, riding a white *naga*, handsome and free of all deformities. He is wearing a beautiful garment and a golden crown, and holds the *kris* Nagaselira and the spear Sesa given to him by Batara Gangga. The prince announces that henceforth he shall be known as Pangeran Suryanata. The voyage can now proceed.

Immediately after the prince's arrival, the wedding and the accompanying festivities are prepared. The royal wedding ceremony is performed by a pilgrim who happens to be passing by, and proves to be a manifestation of Nabi Khidir (in the other version, it is Lambung Mangkurat who performs the ceremony). Pangeran Suryanata and Putri Jungjung Buih become the ancestors of the royal dynasty of Banjar.

Although the above is a simplified and abridged rendering of the myth of the origin of Banjar's royal family, it is sufficient to demonstrate that the illness of Raden Suryacipta, also called Raden Putra, cannot be understood as an element in isolation, as it is contained within a consistent view of the world. The genesis of the dynasty is attributed to the union of two complementary partners, each representing a cosmic principle. In one of the versions of the *Hikayat Banjar* this is expressed by Suryanata – whose name means Sun King – himself in the following words: “None other than I could take Putri Jungjung Buih to wife, because no-one but Putri Jungjung Buih can have me for husband, for she is predestined as my match, as water and sun belong together as a pair” (Ras 1968:313). The illness symbolizes a state of imperfection, to be interpreted as the lack of a relationship with a fitting, i.e. complementary, mate. The logic of the situation does not require the Javanese prince to be ill: it could just as well have been Putri Jungjung Buih. We shall support this statement by referring to the *Sejarah Melayu* and the *Babad Tanah Jawi*.

As for the *Sejarah Melayu*, we have in mind the case of Sri Tribuana, which we have already discussed. It was not Tribuana who was ill, but the women with whom he had had intercourse. In our discussion of this passage we explained the illness as being due to the fact that Tribuana had not entered into a fitting relationship with his people. Such a relationship was established not only by the contractual agreement between the king and his subjects, but also by Tribuana's marriage to the daughter of Demang Lebar Daun. She was the only suitable partner for

him, because by marrying her he also married his realm. By its complementary character, this marriage is comparable with the marriage of Suryanata and Putri Jungjung Buih. Other resemblances confirm our comparison of the two marriages.

One of the most obvious resemblances is that both myths use the same numbers: in the *Sejarah* the disease appears after each of the 39 "unsuitable" unions of Sri Tribuana, and Putri Jungjung Buih rejects 39 healthy suitors, because none of them had been obtained by means of asceticism. In both cases, the fortieth partner is the suitable one. The fortieth partner is not "offered" or "accepted", like the others, but is requested. In both cases, the elimination of the disease proves that the partners in marriage were predestined for one another, and in both cases the marriage is connected with the establishment of a dynasty.

By comparing the *Sejarah* with the *Hikayat*, Ras demonstrates that there are seven other points of resemblance, which we need not repeat here. It is of greater interest to note that Ras comes to the conclusion that the resemblances in question do not mean that one of the texts had influenced the other, but rather that both are derived from a single proto-narrative (Ras 1968:128-129), which he calls "the (old) Malay myth of origin" (Ras 1968:93). We are not convinced that his conclusion, thus phrased, is acceptable.

On the one hand, while accepting the resemblances, we should not overlook the differences: for example, the cosmology is much less elaborate in the *Sejarah Melayu* than in the *Hikayat Banjar*.⁵ Nor is it certain whether such a proto-narrative should be called "Malay", rather than part of the Indonesian, or perhaps even Austronesian, cultural heritage. Many of the motifs, e.g. the princess born from foam; the prince or princess who appears out of a bamboo, and the ruler suffering from a skin disease, have also been recorded for other Indonesian regions, and even for continental South-East Asia (e.g. Porée-Maspéro 1964). For this reason, we would prefer to consider our texts as members of a coherent set of *transformations*.

In order to highlight the constitution of such a corpus of mythical transformations, we shall conclude our article by discussing two more myths which establish a connection between a disease and the rise or decline of a local dynasty.

The first example is a myth of the Cam, an Austronesian people who once formed an independent nation, Campa, but who were almost exterminated after the conquests of the Annamese. Their myth, as related by Aymonier (1891), describes the life of the deified ruler Po Klong Garai, whom the Cam hold to be the inventor of irrigated rice-fields. For comparative purposes we shall also give the data on Po Rome, the king during whose reign the Campa nation entered into its period of decline.

It is related that Po Klong Garai's mother, named Po Sah Inoeu, had been born out of sea-foam. She was found by an elderly, poor couple, who cared for her and brought her up. When she reached marriageable age she became pregnant after drinking some water miraculously appearing out of a rock. The virgin mother gives birth to a leprous son, the later Po Klong Garai, whose early years are spent in poverty, tending buffaloes.

The young buffalo-herd's life is totally changed when he sees a *naga* ("dragon") in a red tree, who announces his future greatness and cures his leprosy by licking him. From that moment onwards the young man's supernatural gifts become apparent. He marries the daughter of a famous astrologer and rides into the capital city on a white elephant. Having become king, he founds a new capital, Bal-Hangor. After a long and prosperous reign he ascends to heaven.

Po Rome is the son of a virgin princess who was chased from home because of her inexplicable pregnancy and gave birth to her son in a field. The boy later becomes herdsman of the king's buffaloes; one day he sees a *naga* in the trunk of a tree. A famous astrologer discerns his future greatness. The young man marries the king's daughter, and later succeeds his father-in-law to become ruler himself. Later, the king of the Annamese gives his daughter in marriage to Po Rome, and she brings about his downfall by trickery. Feigning illness, she induces Po Rome to cut down the *krek* tree, the tutelary symbol of the Cam. The kingdom of the Cam then succumbs to the invading Annamese.

In spite of their fragmentary form, the Cam myths show striking resemblances to the Malay dynastic myths we discussed above.⁶ The most important one in the present context is that, as in the *Hikayat Banjar*, Po Klong Garai's establishment of a new dynasty is the consequence of a marriage which symbolizes the union of two opposed principles, namely water (underworld) and stars (heaven). By contrast, the fall of Campa is the consequence of cutting down the tree of life, an act which breaks the connection between the upper and the lower worlds.

Our final case is taken from Mataram, the central Javanese realm which was founded in the late 16th century. The *Babad Tanah Jawi* ascribes the rise of Mataram to Senapati, who first was a vassal of the sultan of Pajang, but achieved an increasingly independent status, and finally ousted Pajang as the paramount ruler of Java. The description of Senapati's life contains several facts and incidents which foreshadow his future supremacy:

Senapati's distant ancestor is Bondan Kajawan, the son of Bra-wijaya, the king of Majapahit who suffered from a skin disease,

and a "yellow Wandan (i.e. Papuan)" woman. Astrologers in Majapahit prophesy that a future king in Mataram will reign supreme over all Java.

It is related of Senapati that he incessantly prayed to Allah that he should come to rule over Java. One night, during his vigil near the stone of Lipura, a star descends from heaven and tells Senapati that Allah has heard his prayers. On the advice of his uncle, Kyai Juru Martani, Senapati goes to the south coast to ponder this revelation. For the same purpose his uncle will withdraw to Mount Merapi.

Near the southern shore, by the mouth of the Opak river, Senapati first meets a fish-like creature which the text calls an *olor*. The *olor* is glad to meet Senapati, who had once saved its life, and asks him to mount on its back. Senapati refuses, and standing erect on dry land, he prays to Allah. His prayer is so fervent that it causes a great commotion in nature: a gale arises and the sea begins to boil. Lara Kidul, the goddess of the South Sea, is afrighted. She leaves her palace under the sea to discover the cause of the commotion. She sees Senapati standing by the sea shore, totally immersed in his prayer to Allah, and asks him to desist. She confirms that Allah has granted his prayer: Senapati and his descendants shall rule all Java. Even Lara Kidul herself and the spirits over whom she rules shall be subject to his authority.

Senapati follows Lara Kidul to her subaquatic palace, and is greatly impressed by its splendour. He says he would be prepared to stay there, as she lacks only one thing: a husband. Lara Kidul replies that she prefers to remain unmarried and wishes to remain the queen of the sea. All she lacks is someone who can issue commands to her. These words urge Senapati to have an amorous relationship with her, which lasts for three days and nights. During this period Lara Kidul also instructs him in statecraft.

Lara Kidul's support proves to be invaluable for the rise of Mataram. During the war with Pajang, Senapati repeatedly calls on her for assistance, while Kyai Juru Martani invokes the aid of the god of Mount Merapi.

After Senapati's death, the relationship between Lara Kidul and the rulers of Mataram is maintained. According to the *Babad Tanah Jawi* a descendant of Senapati, Sultan Agung, actually married her and regularly dwelt in her palace under the sea. His reign was the period of Mataram's greatest might.

At first sight, the myth of Mataram's rise to power may appear to have little in common with the other dynastic myths. This applies particularly to the sickness motif: it is only explicitly introduced with reference to Senapati's descent from Brawijaya. However, when we also consult

other sources, several closer resemblances appear.

The additional data concern the figure of Nyai Lara Kidul, whom the Javanese venerate, to the present day, as the Goddess of the South Sea. According to some tales, in her previous life Lara Kidul was a beautiful princess of Pajajaran, who contracted a frightful skin disease and therefore committed suicide by throwing herself from the rocks into the sea. The sea restored her beauty and made her its queen (*Encyclopaedia* 1918; Moertono 1968). The connection with a skin disease also appears in the popular belief that she captures all who suffer from smallpox and makes them her palace servants (Van Ossenbruggen 1916).

It is difficult to interpret Lara Kidul's own skin disease. The outlines of the theme only become apparent once we have penetrated the Islamic overlay. In an earlier study one of the present authors, following Schrieke and Pigeaud, suggested that Lara Kidul was originally an archaic Austronesian goddess of fertility, who was later partly supplanted as such by Dewi Sri, due to Hindu influences (Jordaan 1984). One reason for this supposition was the fact that Indonesian myths repeatedly attribute skin diseases to female ancestral figures who are somehow connected with fertility, procreation, wellbeing or prosperity. All these figures, like Lara Kidul, appeared to be closely associated with the underworld, while skin disease was interpreted as an attribute of chthonic deities. Such a disease symbolizes a relationship with the serpent of the underworld, who is often presented in the myths as the origin of rice and other nutritional plants.

Although we have reached a different conclusion in the present essay, we see no reason to reject the former one. What appears from both studies combined is that the mythical theme of skin disease has several aspects – provided, of course, that the interpretations do not conflict with one another. In conclusion we shall try to demonstrate that Lara Kidul's skin disease, besides being an attribute of a fertility goddess, is in concordance with the sea goddess's role as "kingmaker". To do so, we shall compare her with Putri Jungjung Buih, the princess in the Bornean dynastic myth.⁷

Like Lara Kidul, Putri Jungjung Buih is associated with the sea and the underworld. Not only is she the daughter of Nabi Khidir, the Muslim saint who is regarded by the inhabitants of the Indonesian islands as a kind of tutelary genius of the sea, but she is also the grand-daughter of Batara Gangga (i.e. "Lord Ganges"), ruler of the land under the sea. Again like Lara Kidul, Putri Jungjung Buih has a close relationship with that chthonic creature, the serpent. Batara Gangga sends two white *naga* to transport Putri Jungjung Buih to the place where Lambung Mangkurat is practising asceticism, and where she appears out of a mass of foam. Later, the ship carrying her future husband, Raden Putra, is brought to a halt by two white *naga*. In the other version of the *Hikayat Banjar* her future husband returns to the ship riding on a white *naga*,

while he also proves to possess the *kris* Nagasalira and the spear Sesa which he had received from Batara Gangga.

Earlier in this essay we called it logically irrelevant that in the *Hikayat Banjar* it is not Putri Jungjung Buih but her future husband who is afflicted by a disease. We now mention this theme once more, because the meeting of Senapati and Lara Kidul is an almost perfect inversion of Raden Putra's encounter with Putri Jungjung Buih:

A diseased prince, Raden Putra, is cured of his skin disease after meeting two white *naga*, who are the servants of Putri Jungjung Buih.

Senapati saves an *olor* and afterwards meets Lara Kidul, a re-incarnation of a princess suffering from a skin disease. (*Olor* = serpent or *naga*: see Jordaen 1984.)

← = inversion.

Another point of importance for our comparison of the two myths is the fact that the union of Senapati and Lara Kidul is to be interpreted in

terms of a dualistic cosmology such as we encountered in the *Hikayat Banjar*. The diagram above summarizes the principal resemblances and differences between the rise of Mataram and Banjar.⁸

In our opinion, the following equations can be derived from the diagram:

Senapati : Lara Kidul :: Raden Putra : Putri Jungjung Buih

heaven : underworld :: heaven/fire : underworld/water.

In a more general sense, a conclusion to be drawn from our investigation of Indonesian myths which associate a ruler with a venereal and/or skin disease can be phrased as follows. In these myths it is neither the ruler as such, nor the representation of his realm which is represented as being afflicted or at fault: it is the *relationship* between them which is disturbed during a transitional period in which authority is suspended, due either to the rise or to the decline of the dynasty. This is in accordance with the notion of the ruler being wedded to his realm, and of the sickness being an impediment to a normal marital relationship.

NOTES

- * The authors thank Ms Anke Niehof for her critical comments on an earlier version.
- 1 Some time after this article had been completed, Dr. P. Voorhoeve kindly pointed out in a personal communication that the Mökuta Alam tale is to be found in MS Or. 8091 in the Leiden University Library. We have not yet had the opportunity to consult this MS.
- 2 In some societies it is still held to be effective. While in Madura, Jordaan was informed that a man who had contracted a venereal disease should contact the woman who probably infected him, in order that she cure him by practising *fellatio*.
- 3 Lombard (1967) describes changes in the perception of royal power: besides being the mediator and preserver of the natural order, the king also came to be seen as preserver of the moral order of his society. Possibly this is to be explained as a consequence of traditional ideas, partly influenced by Hinduism, coming into contact with later ones, due to Islam. Cp. Brakel 1975.
- 4 For the connection between buffaloes and royalty we note the following item in Zoetmulder (1982:1090): "*mahiṣī* (Skt female buffalo; any woman of high rank, esp. the first wife of a king) queen". The Sa'dan Toraja have a tale of a princess who was cured of her skin disease by a white buffalo; since then, buffalo meat may not be eaten (Van Veen, quoted in Noorduyn 1955).
- 5 Demang Lebar Daun's daughter is not clearly associated with any cosmic principle, and it remains obscure whether Tribuana is – and, if so, with which. We cannot agree with Ras that Tribuana can be equated with Suryanata (and hence with heaven and sun). There are, in fact, several arguments for associating him with water and the underworld. At this stage it is perhaps wise to provisionally keep to the literal meaning of the ruler's title Tribuana, "(Lord of) the Three Worlds" (heaven, earth, and underworld).
- 6 Po Sah Inoeu's adoption by an old, poor couple has its parallel in the *Salasilah Kutai*, a work which Ras considers to be very close to his "proto-narrative". As regards the meaning of the *kek* tree for the Cam, we refer to Hooykaas' article 'Upon a White Stone under a Nagasari Tree' (1957), which deals with the tree of life as a religious theme.
- 7 Dr. Ras kindly drew our attention to possible resemblances between Lara Kidul and Putri Jungjung Buih.

We should also note that not only did a sick princess act as “kingmaker” for the House of Mataram, but also that this dynasty’s fall is attributed to a sick princess. Some tales about Java’s past explain the downfall of Mataram by referring to a sick princess who fell into the hands of the Dutch, and thereby initiated the rise of the VOC “dynasty” (Schrieke 1957:12; Berg 1961:20). Several *Serat Kanda* stories, which are related to the *Babad Tanah Jawi*, speak of two princesses of Pajajaran. The first, who suffered from leprosy, married the king of Holland who became ruler of west Java during the reign of Sultan Agung. The second, who had lived as a hermit, married the Javanese rulers of central and east Java (Dr. J. Ras, personal communication).

- 8 Several other similarities should also be noted. The asceticism practised by Senapati and Kyai Juru Martani resembles the hardships to be overcome by Lambung Mangkurat and Lambung Jaya Wanagiri during their search for a human king, although in the *Babad Tanah Jawi* it is Senapati who becomes the predicted ruler; in a certain sense he is in the position of Sultan Agung.

In this context the discussion around certain Javanese court dances, e.g. the Bedaya Ketawang and the Bedaya Semang, is also relevant. According to some traditions, these dances owe their origin to the meeting between Sultan Agung and Lara Kidul, while according to others Sultan Agung was inspired by Senapati’s encounter with Lara Kidul (see Hostetler 1982). The *Hikayat Banjar* mentions music and musical instruments in connexion with Raden Putra’s sojourn in the land under the sea. In one of the *Sejarah Melayu* versions, Raja Suran was inspired to compose pieces of music by living in such a land. In the *Hikayat Banjar* a certain gong is named Paradah, which very closely resembles Barada(h), a figure well known in Javanese legend and historiography, e.g. in *Calon Arang*; many elements in this narrative, according to Pigeaud (1938), were incorporated into the Lara Kidul stories. Finally, we should note the resemblances between Nabi Khidir in the *Hikayat Banjar* and Sunan Kalijaga in the *Babad Tanah Jawi*. These remarks suggest that a study which started out from sickness as a theme in political myths could be profitably pursued, so that it could further investigate the association between skin disease, serpent-like figures, the sea and the underworld on the one hand, and music and dancing on the other. In a quite different field, it could also provide data on the relations between Java and Borneo as far as a certain type of narratives is concerned.

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Abbreviation:

BKI *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*.