

## A HOLY-WATER SANCTUARY AT PRAMBANAN

The Hindu temple is the sum total of architectural rites performed on the basis of its myth. The myth covers the ground and is the plan on which the structure is raised.

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### The Javanese temple: a problem of meanings

Not only in India, but in all the Indianized states throughout Southeast Asia, the temple is often compared with Mount Meru, the *axis mundi* in Hindu as well as in Buddhist cosmology. The significance of Meru as a world mountain symbol in the religious life of the peoples of Southeast Asia was so enormous that one scholar of repute even ventured to speak of "a true Meru religion" (Heine Geldern 1930:73). His opinion was greatly influenced by the findings of Dutch archaeologists in Java and Bali (e.g. Stutterheim 1926 & 1928). According to Stutterheim, the Meru idea was the very basis of the temple architecture in Java: "the systematic treatment and elaboration of this phenomenon would certainly and all of a sudden eliminate hundreds of small as yet unsolvable difficulties [...], and not only for Java (1926:342, my translation).

In spite of this scholarly agreement, however, the Javanese temple was soon to become known for its singular function of royal mausoleum. Ironically, this was largely due to the efforts of the same Stutterheim. He picked up an idea apparently current in archeological circles in the Indies during the time of Raffles, the British interregnum (see Soekmono 1974). Though Hindu and Buddhist temples in Java were still generally recognized as replicas of Mount Meru, the non-Indian function of royal funeral shrine was attributed to them. The idea of their funerary purpose was based on finding deposits of ashes and/or charred skeletal remains in Hindu temple-pits, as well as on the comparison with current Balinese cremation practices. Support was also found in the fact that the common Javanese designation for a temple is *candi* a word, as was first pointed out by Krom, probably derived from Candi-

ka, another name for Durga acting as the Goddess of Death (1). Stutterheim developed the idea of the funerary meaning of the Javanese temple into a full-fledged theory (Stutterheim 1931), which he perfected in his 1939 article entitled "Some remarks on pre-Hinduistic burial customs on Java" [1965, English reprint].

In broad outline, Stutterheim's argument runs as follows (2): Unlike the situation once found in India, in ancient Java and in Bali the funeral ceremony for the deliverance of a King's soul (*craddha*) was quite spectacular. It also was more monumental, because the remains of the deceased were collected and stored in a nine-chambered stone coffin. Semi-precious stones were added, and figures cut from gold leaf, plain or inscribed with mystic syllables. The stone box was then buried in a temple pit filled and topped with a statue of the deceased in the shape of a deity having the features of the former King. The custom to worship rulers in the shape of gods, which was unknown in India, must be attributed to the persistence of ancient Indonesian practices of ancestor worship using images and bone-relics. Maintaining regular contact with the lofty ancestor, now in Hinduistic and Tantric-Buddhist ritual attire, was a traditional means of securing the well-being of the descendants. Hence the need for making objects connected with royal burials as durable as possible. This need may also explain why so many royal funerary temples have survived, in contrast to the numerous wooden temples erected for the daily worship of the gods. A Javanese *candi* therefore was not a temple in the proper sense of the word, but a monument: "the pit, the statue and the *prasada* were Hinduistic

in form, but they served ancestral traditions in spirit" (3).

Only after the Second World War was serious criticism levelled against Stutterheim's funerary thesis. Bosch (1952:197) was the first to admit frankly that archaeologists actually "knew next to nothing, if not nothing" about the ancient Javanese ancestor worship. In a subsequent article, specifically devoted to the topic of Indian influence and ancient Javanese beliefs, Bosch (1954) was able to demonstrate that the Javanese cult of royalty originated in India. Furthermore, he noted that perhaps over 88% of the religious foundations mentioned in the *Negarakretagama* as being responsible for the maintenance of temples, had no funerary purpose at all. These facts, he said, clearly indicated that the extreme views of Stutterheim were not tenable.

His objections were substantiated by other studies, such as that of O'Connor on ritual deposit boxes in Southeast Asian sanctuaries. O'Connor's conclusion was that "the existence of ritual deposit boxes in the foundations of the ancient sanctuaries of Southeast Asia can be easily integrated in the religious traditions of India. It is also evident that the mere existence of such boxes in a sanctuary does not in itself indicate the practice of enshrinining the ashes of dead Kings as in Java, nor is the existence of stone nine-chambered boxes of itself any evidence of Javanese cultural influence" (O'Connor 1966:60). But it was Soekmono (1974) who dealt the final blow to the funerary theory, in his unpublished Indonesian doctoral thesis, *Candi, Fungsi dan Pengertian-nya*, which focussed on the function

and meaning of the Javanese *candi*. His findings merit closer attention.

Basing himself on a thorough analysis of a wide range of archeological inscriptions and Old-Javanese literary documents, supplemented by field observations from Bali, Soekmono is able to show that there is no real textual evidence that the funeral remains of Kings and/or other high dignitaries were ever collected for safekeeping in a temple. Rather, it seems to have been the custom to throw the ashes and other remains into the sea or rivers leading there. Indeed, to the people in present-day Bali the idea of funeral enshrinement seems hardly conceivable because this would amount to an infringement of the ritual purity of their temples.

Turning his attention to the archaeological excavations, Soekmono remarks that the presence of a temple-pit is not sufficient as a criterion for establishing the funerary function of a Javanese *candi*. The fact that Buddhist temples generally lack a pit justifies his decision to exclude these monuments from further consideration (4). With respect to Hinduistic monuments, the situation is more ambiguous. Soekmono points out that in one case, viz. Candi Songgoriti, the temple-pit actually was a hot water well, that was drained into a nearby bathing pool. More importantly, ritual deposits were not only found in temple-pits, but have also been discovered in other parts of the monument and/or temple compound. Soekmono rightly questions whether all these deposits, customarily designated as "urns", really had to be associated with the burial of human ashes.

Taking O'Connor's hint, he suggested that some ritual deposits might

be related to particular cosmological classifications, such as those of the *astadikpalaka*, laid down in Hindu building manuals on religious architecture. For illustrative purposes, Soekmono also briefly refers to the classic study of Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* (1946). In this way the Javanese *candi* were restored to their proper perspective and "released from their isolated position among the contemporaneous architecture in South and Southeast Asia" (Soekmono 1974: 352).

Unfortunately and quite amazingly, in the final pages of his dissertation Soekmono himself partly undermines this correct conclusion by suddenly advancing the supposition that "whilst the *candi* developed into a *pura* [Balinese temple complex], it is in its turn a hinduized prehistoric conception of ancestor worship. The establishment of linggas is basically similar to the consecration of menhirs in the megalithic cultures" (Soekmono 1974:352). No one who remembers Bosch's remarks on the shallowness of our knowledge of ancestor worship, would abandon the established results for the darkness of the megalithic past. Rather than embracing menhirs, I propose to hold fast to the idea of a Hindu temple as a replica of Mount Meru, and to see whether Stutterheim was right in promising that it would help us to solve hundreds of riddles.

#### The case of Candi Lara Jonggrang

In the debate about the funerary meaning of the Javanese *candi*, a decisive part was played by the Hindu temple complex near the village of Prambanan in Central Java, popularly known as Candi Lara Jonggrang (i.e. the temple of the "Slender Maiden", so

named after the statue of Durga in one of the cellas of the main temple-building). For instance, Yzerman's (1891) excavations at this complex, particularly his find of bones and ashes in the ritual deposits, led Van Eerde to forsake his own conclusion that "there was no connection between funeral practices and temple services" (1911:32). It was also at this temple-site, so to speak, that Stutterheim expanded his funerary theory (Stutterheim 1939, 1940). As for Krom, though he never spoke against the funerary function, he considered Candi Lara Jonggrang primarily a state temple rather than a royal mausoleum (Krom 1923:452; 1931:172).

It would have been pointless to make a case out of Candi Lara Jonggrang, were it not for a number of fortunate circumstances. To begin with, the temple complex was less damaged than the ruins, partly hidden by an overgrowth of trees and bushes, initially suggested. Though many stones and statues had been stolen or simply used as material in the construction of public roads and bridges, it is possible to get a fair idea of the lay-out of the complex (see appendix A) (5). Unlike many other temples, here several ritual deposits were found, apparently undisturbed by thieves. The analysis of their contents has yielded and still yields important information on the ideas and practices of the original builders. As for the buildings, their reconstruction proved far more difficult. Yet, contrary to gloomy expectations, they even survived what came to be known as the "archaeological murder" by Groneman and the decades of neglect by the local authorities. It was mainly due to archaeological perseverance and several penetrating studies on the

excavated material that one became aware of the temple's splendour and cultural significance (e.g. Tonnet 1908, Vogel 1921, Krom 1923, Stutterheim 1928). Finally, a few years before the outbreak of the Second World War, a large-scale restoration programme was started. Interrupted by the war, it has continued to this day - now under Indonesian supervision (Bernet Kempers 1955, Soediman 1969).

In the meantime, De Casparis (1956) made some very important progress in the field of epigraphy. He analysed an Old-Javanese inscription now generally assumed to pertain to the Lara Jonggrang temple complex. In my opinion, however, the information contained in this inscription has not been sufficiently tapped. Although the translation and our understanding of the inscription are still incomplete, by combining the fragments of the text with the results of other research, I think it is possible to shed more light on the meaning of this Central-Javanese Hindu Monument.

#### From ashes to amrta

Let us first turn our attention to the ritual deposits. Reviewing the information from several excavation reports (e.g. Yzerman 1891:60-70; Soekmono 1974:9-13, 78-96), it appears that ritual deposits were found at various sites within the complex: not only in temple-pits beneath the three main temples dedicated to Siva, Vishnu, and Brahma, but also near the other buildings, viz. the minor temples formerly known as "candi wahana", as well as the *candi apit*, and *candi perwara*. The contents of the deposits were heterogenous. For instance, those of the Siva and Vishnu temples consisted of a stone box filled with soil mixed with charcoal and ashes, and

with a number of semi-precious stones, coins and shreds of gold leaf and silver-foil. In the minor temples, however, instead of ashes or valuables one either found nothing but soil stirred up, or skeletons. Remarkably, the skeletons found near the southern and middle "candi wahana" were those of animals (two dogs and an ant-eater), while the skeleton of the northern one was human. And significantly, none of the skeletons showed any traces of burning.

It is instructive to see how Stutterheim (1940) fitted this information into his theoretical framework. His rendering, which I shall summarize here as concisely as possible, runs as follows:

In the pit beneath the temple of Siva, the heart of the complex, a stone box was found covered with a lid, placed on soil mixed with charcoal and burnt animal bones, of a goat and a hen. In-between a small gold plate was found, bearing the names of Waruna, the god of the sea, and Parvata, the god of the mountain. In the box itself were the remains of copper plates, as well as soil mixed with charcoal and ashes. The ashes originated from incompletely burnt animal remains. Next, one found some 20 coins, several small gems (garnets, crystals, diorite), corals of glass, small cuttings of gold leaf and silver, a sea shell, and twelve small gold plates, five in the shape of a tortoise, a naga, a lotusflower, an altar and an egg. The other plates were square, and had been inscribed with syllables apparently of a mystical nature connected with a tantric magical system.

The unburnt animal remains justify the assumption that the Prambanan complex was a funeral shrine and as such was connected with ancestor worship. The small animal figures and syllabes were "the symbols of those divine principles, which correspond

with the different elements of the human body; by these it would be possible at all times to give the deified ruler a temporary body, in case his descendants wanted to honour or consult him" (ibid.:226-7, my translation).

The temporary spiritual return of the deified ruler was no trivial affair. To accomodate the ruler and his large retinue of fellow gods and servants, it was necessary to build them a fitting complex of dwellings, which could only be a replica of Mount Meru and its promontory. But there was more. To make the most of cherishing the memory of the ruler, the statues of gods in the complex were probably stylized portraits of the former King and his court dignitaries. In this way the statue of Siva as Mahadewa probably represented King Balitung, Durga his consort, Batara Guru his chief priest, Ganesha his army commander, and so on.

These practices indicate that the ancient Javanese had their own form of Hinduism. To understand this syncretist whole, we had better put aside the classic textbooks on Hinduism, and see what we can learn from the native Javanese.

The first critical comment to make is that Stutterheim confined his discussion to the ritual deposits of one temple-building only, which he justified with the argument that it represented the 'heart' of the complex. Apart from this point, I find his explanation unconvincing. As it is, the reference to tantric doctrines in connection with the spiritual resurrection of the King seems no more than a convenient stopgap, blurring our vision with a mystifying veil. To support his interpretation, Stutterheim should at least have mentioned the literature specifically dealing with this topic (6).

This objection may also be levelled against Soekmono, who suggests

a possible connection between the layout of the ritual deposits and the *vastupurusamandala*-system recorded in Hindu building manuals. This is no more than an educated guess, as Soekmono only relies on secondary sources instead of giving direct references to any particular building manual (7). Furthermore, of some deposits, notably those of the minor temples, consisting of the unburnt skeletal remains, it is not at all clear whether these originate from Hindu sacrificial practices or native Indonesian ones. Soekmono himself rightly noticed the similarity to the present-day Javanese ritual of *pendeman*, the sacrificial burial of a buffalo head at a building site (8). Regrettably, the inscription which commemorates the inauguration of the temple complex does not give any decisive answer. It only states that "there was no danger from the wicked ones (i.e. *bhutas* and other low spirits), for they all received their due". According to De Casparis (1956:328), these gifts may have included meat. This is not the same, of course, as the sacrifice of an animal or of a human being.

Pending further research on this matter, with respect to the ritual deposits from the main temple-buildings, I would like to replace Stutterheim's explanation by a less esoteric one (9). In my interpretation the contents of the ritual deposits have nothing to do with occult symbols of divine principles, but may be understood as a collective symbolic reference to the well-known Hindu myth of the Churning of the Milky Ocean. To render this connection plausible, it is necessary to take a closer look at some Old-Javanese versions of the myth.

From Juynboll's (1895) early discussion of the mythical theme, it appears that to the Javanese scribes of that period the *Mahabarata* was a major, though probably not an absolute source of inspiration. The Old-Javanese *Adiparwa*, for instance, faithfully recounts how at Narayana's suggestion the gods and demons decide to work together in churning the Milky sea to obtain *amrta*, the Elixir of Immortality. After all the necessary preparations, including the apocryphal transport of Mount Mahameru to Java, they start churning the sea by rotating Mount Mandara in it with the help of the snake Vasuki, used as a churning-rope. Skipping some well-known episodes, I want to resume the story at the passage which, I think, is most relevant to the present discussion. It concerns the fire resulting from the pervasive friction caused by churning.

...because Mount Mandara was rotated for such a long time, stones were torn loose and cast away, uprooting trees the woods and all the animals in it, such as gazelles, lions, boars and rhinoceroses... Then Indra realized that the gods and demons might be destroyed by the fire (and) summoned the clouds. These arrived from the ten points of the compass; the mountain and the sea were covered by the clouds and by their lightning and thunder. The latter were sent down by him as rains extinguishing the fire. But the fat of all the animals consumed by the fire and the juices of the trees dripped and streamed into the sea, making it thick and greasy. The gods and demons let it run, allowing its compression in the churning; they were given strength by god Vishnu. Finally, oil rose from the milk, just like Ardhacandra earlier, then the goddess Sri, the jewel Kaustuba, *dewa yatas tato jaqmuh* (= Sura?) who was taken by the gods, not the demons, Dhanwantari *tato dewah* (?) and finally Dhanwantari

(?) bearing the white Kamandalu containing the nectar..." (Juynboll 1895:82-83, my translation).

However distorted and incomplete this passage looks, it contains several elements that may serve as clues for further research. It may, for instance, be tentatively remarked that this Old-Javanese version of the myth was not only based on the account in the *Mahabarata* epic, but also on Puranic sources. Relying on Bedekar's (1967) comparative study of the narrative in the Indian *Mahabarata* and *Ramayana* and the *Puranas*, it would not seem unlikely that the *Matsya-Purana* was one of its Puranic prototypes. For the moment, I shall defer the arguments in favour of this supposition. First, I want to mention two elements which, I believe, link the Lara Jonggrang temple to the myth of the churning of the ocean.

The first concerns the burning of the animals. Would it not be possible that, instead of representing the mortal remains of a King - a problematic idea - the ashes in the ritual deposits are of animals and as such were meant to symbolize the fire during the churning? This alternative certainly makes sense, especially because, as may be recalled, the ritual deposits in the main temple actually contained the burnt bones of a goat and hen. The supposition is further supported by the fact that several other objects in the ritual deposits can be linked to the churning as well, viz. the animal figures of the naga and the tortoise, the sea shell, the gems and other "treasures" (10).

Next, there is still another, perhaps more solid piece of information to indicate that the Javanese really had the myth in mind when

building the temple. It is the portrayal in stone of a god, so far unidentified, surrounded by bulging forms that can only be understood as representing rain-clouds. This scene is not depicted in some minor or obscure place. On the contrary, it is found on the eastern side of the Siva temple: right on top of the magnificent Kala-ornamentation crowning the entrance of the main cella (11). Considering his position as the guardian (*lakapala*) of the East, and his connection with lightning and water, it seems plausible that the statue was meant to represent the god Indra of the myth - sitting high on the mountain, summoning the clouds from all ten points of the compass to be sent down by him as rains.

#### Temple and myth

As a matter of fact, there are still other sculptures at the temples that can, and previously have been, linked to the myth of the churning. For instance, the Kinnaras, heavenly beings with bodies half-human and half-bird, sitting on either side of the wishing-trees in the so-called "Prambanan motif". Yet, such observations were rather isolated and casual, and unsupported by contemporary Old-Javanese textual evidence. The first scholar to posit a connection between the myth of churning the ocean, and the Lara Jonggrang temple complex as a whole, was Poerbatjaraka (1932), in his discussion of a passage in the Old-Javanese *Ramayana*. Because of its relevance, I shall translate the passage involved, and reproduce some of Poerbatjaraka's comments.

"There was a temple, tall and large which looked as if it was made of crystal and precious stones. Animals were depicted in it carvings:

gold hares, elephants, lions, tigers, gazelles, wild boars and rhinoceroses. The likeness of a forest was carved out in it as well. The temple resembled a mountain.

The temple square was made of jewels and *candrakanta*-stones. The sand consisted of splendid fine pearls. At the rising of the moon they turned liquid and cold. They melted in the square and shone brightly.

The crystal temple was comparable to Mount Mandara, the square to the Milky Sea. Jewels and pearls were the foam, so to speak, the clear, cold water was like the nectar rising (from the Churned Sea).

There were radiant decorated *tambak*, ten in a row, comparable to the surf, the great waves. The kettle-drums beaten in the temple were comparable to the loud noise of the (Churned Milky) Sea.

Outside, there were *awarana*, small immaculately fine temples all carved from black precious stones. They could be compared with the reefs enclosing the Milky Sea. Now these outer temples all contained gold statues comparable to the gods and demons attacking each other to obtain the *amreta*, which was their goal. The statues were all armed: clubs, javelins, bows, spears, swords, discs, and *wajra* too. It looked as if they were fighting for the *amreta*.

There were also *suwuk* over the doors of the temple containing the statues. These *suwuk*s were beautifully carved from jewels and *candrakanta*. The eyes were round, staring and protruding. He (the *suwuk*) was like Rahu as it were, who also tried to steal the *amreta*.

But the *Wisa-kalakuta* (Siva's poison) made the door *suwuk* flee. For he was afraid of the god Cangkara, the Remover of Sin, who was always present in the temple.

A pleasant sight were the wishing-trees next to the *awarana*, standing close together and causing happiness, providing everything one wanted, just like the Pariyata-tree, obtained in

the churning of the Milky Sea.

Near these gold wishing-trees was a splendid *pandapa* made of pearls. Its floor consisted of sparkling and shining jewels. This *pandapa* contained various instruments for the worship of God, such as pearl coronas, sunshades; there were *wahana* as well: miniature elephants and models of carriages, and instruments encrusted with jewel and pearls, the finest produce of the Sea that had been churned, and had brought forth those splendid things.

There was a temple made of jewels. All its elements were perfectly ordered, they shone and sparked. These were the vehicles of those who did the churning. Now these vehicles, with which they flew through the air, were left outside the inner walls.

(Entirely) outside there, was a high wall of white silver surrounding the whole complex. It was comparable to the snake *Vasuki*, restoring from the fatigue of churning the sea.

The gate of sparkling jewels and red shining gravel was comparable to the gleaming head jewel (of the snake), while (both) *raksasa* acting as door guards were comparable to its sharp, pointed poison-fangs.

This was what the temple at Langka looked like."

According to Poerbatjaraka, the words not translated are the ones that matter most. *Awarana*, for instance, refers to the small temples standing in rows at the Lara Jonggrang temple-complex. Hence the comparison to the reefs surrounding the Milky Sea is quite apt. Similarly, the word *suwuk* means something carried on the head. *Suwuk lanang*, therefore, is the decoration over the doors of the temple, which in Central Java nearly always is a *Kala* head. Again, in Poerbatjaraka's opinion, the text is apt in comparing it with Rahu, the trunkless demon (or, properly speaking, the demon beheaded by Vishnu's discus).

Remarkably, Poerbatjaraka deemed its superfluous to add other explanations, particularly because of Van Eerde's earlier article, allegedly entitled *Tjandi en Meru*. An article, he said, already elucidating the subject. He only wanted to remind the reader of the fact that "Balinese temples almost without exception were representations of the Churning of the Milky Sea" (1932:165). Unfortunately, Poerbatjaraka was mistaken, or at least careless. Van Eerde's article lacked the elucidation expected, and neither did the other reference to a publication by Krom yield the information needed for checking the Balinese facts (12).

But it is doubtful whether this really would have mattered much to Poerbatjaraka. From his own remarks, it is clear that he thought of the Lara Jonggrang complex primarily in terms of a funerary monument. Indeed he was so much convinced of this, that he even suggested quite unwarranted changes in the translation. Instead of keeping to the text, where it mentions "the vehicles of those who did the churning, used by them to fly through the air, were left outside (the compound of the temple)", Poerbatjaraka proposes "the carriage of the Cakrawartin, used to ascend to Heaven, was left outside". Unfortunately, this seemingly minor change had its far-reaching consequences. It both helped to maintain a dubious interpretation of the temple, and robbed Poerbatjaraka himself of an argument to illustrate the authentic Central-Javanese character of this Old-Javanese text. For is it not correctly stated in the original text that the flying vehicles (= the *vahanas* of Vishnu and Brahma, the gods involved in the churning), viz. the Garuda and Hamsa,

were not to be found in the temple compound? The Garuda that once occupied the minor temple facing the Vishnu temple was actually brought in from outside (Van Erp 1911). The Hamsa was never found. Apparently, Poerbatjaraka did not know that a few years earlier, archaeologists had decided to stop calling these buildings the Garuda and Hamsa temples. A correction partly inspired by the idea that each of these minor temples might have contained attributes or representations of Siva; probably a lingga, and a statue of Siva as Mahayogi, next to the bull Nandi already present (13).

Poerbatjaraka's views were not left undisputed. The objections raised did not so much concern the passage connected with the Lara Jonggrang complex as the exact dating and authenticity of the text as a whole, which gave rise to a specialist debate concerning questions such as metrics, prosodic features, and intercalations (14). Hooykaas, among others, urged caution. As long as the greater part of Old-Javanese religious tracts was still only available in manuscripts, he said, Poerbatjaraka's remarks for instance on the description of the temple, could only be called enlightening, not decisive (Hooykaas 1958).

Just two years earlier, however, De Casparis (1956) had published his *Prasasti Indonesia* (1) including the very important Old-Javanese metrical inscription dated A.D. 856, of unknown origin. This inscription is now generally accepted as referring to the Lara Jonggrang complex. According to De Casparis, a comparison between the Old-Javanese Ramayana and the stanzas of the inscription provided new argu-

ments in favour of Poerbatjaraka's early dating of the *Ramayana* - an opinion reiterated by Bosch (1958:315). The points of agreement with the inscription were thus primarily related to the dating of the *Ramayana* and not to the textual allusions linking the temple with the churning myth. Hence my contention that De Casparis' study had not sufficiently been used to arrive at a proper understanding of this Central-Javanese temple complex. The present discussion is an attempt to remedy this situation.

Let us start with the designation of the temple complex as a *Sivagreha*, a sanctuary expressly dedicated to Siva. Though simple, this observation is not an obvious one. It tallies with the dominant position accorded to the Siva temple, and with the supposition of archaeologists concerning the Siva-related statues in former "*wihana*"-temples. It may also help us to understand the remarkable emphasis on Siva in the Old-Javanese *Ramayana*. This text states that Siva is ever-present in the temple, and mentions the role of his poison (*wisa-kalakuta*) in driving off the *suwuk*- demon, alias Rahu, depicted over the chapel doors. The latter addition is noteworthy because usually it is the god Vishnu who is mentioned in connection with Rahu (15). This fact led me to remark tentatively that the Old-Javanese version of the churning myth was not only based on the account in the epics, but on the *Matsya-Purana* as well (16). This Purana, according to Bedekar (1967:36), is the one that mentions the Pariyata-tree, the Kalakuta poison and the praise of Siva, as sequential, interpolated elements to the story found in the *Mahabarata*. To these elements I may add that of the fat of

animals consumed by the fire; as far as could be ascertained, this element, though found in the *Matsya-Purana*, is not explicitly mentioned in the epics. The *Mahabarata* only speaks of gums exuded by trees, and juices of herbs and flowers; nor is the animal fat found in the other Puranas discussed by Bedekar. What matters in this context, is that in mentioning the poison and the praise, the Old-Javanese *Ramayana* follows this Purana's predilection for Siva, quite similar to the one expressed in stone at the Lara Jonggrang temple-group.

The comparison of the Old-Javanese *Ramayana* with the inscription in stone and their mutual interpretability do not stop here. Yet rather than diverting the attention to minor correspondences (17), in the following section I want to concentrate the discussion on just one point of agreement. A point, I think, that will enable us to make the transition from the myth to the rites.

#### Tirtha and holy water

In my view, one of the most salient points of agreement between the inscription and the Old-Javanese *Ramayana*, concerns the use of water. Both texts use the word *tamwak*, usually translated by "dam". Although De Casparis himself notes that the translation might be defended by reference to two passages - one mentioning ritual bathing (*siddhayatra*) and another, the change of a river course and the rippling of water over the temple grounds - he thinks it more likely that *tamwak* in the inscription refers to the brick wall separating the different parts of the complex from each other. His main objection against the usual translation was that the stanza in which the word first occurs, deals with temple

buildings, or with constructions immediately connected with the latter (1956:322). Yet to De Casparis, the presence of *tirtha* (bathing-pool) in the immediate vicinity of the temples is hardly imaginable. Rather than accepting the textual information, he contends that it was "obvious that it [the *tirtha*] could not have been inside the two complexes already known, viz. the 'heart' of the foundation surrounded by its own wall, and the *anumoda* buildings supposed to have been built in rows around the central part. The presence of a *tirtha* within either of these complexes would be astonishing, if not impossible" (De Casparis 1956:306).

But then, where should the *tirtha* in question be located instead? Conjecturing, De Casparis points out a piece of land on the bank of the nearby river Opak, in-between the second and third wall of the temple-complex. His argument calls for a discussion of the mysterious location of the third wall.

As can be seen from the ground-plan (appendix A), the first (inner) and the second wall of the temple-complex form two concentric squares with sides exactly oriented to the points of the compass. The square enclosed by the third wall, however, does not harmonize with this pattern because it lies at an angle to the other squares. How to account for this peculiar lay-out? In the ingenious explanation proposed by De Casparis, the remaining parts of the south and west walls of the third enclosure indicate that they met near the bank of the river Opak. Possibly, De Casparis argued, the main reason for the construction of the outer wall in this way, was the need to include a small

part of the river's course in the foundation. The advantage was an easy access to clean water for ablutions of priests, objects of cult, etc. The second advantage he perceived concerns the use of the temporary dwellings and hermitages for priests, ascetics, and visitors from abroad. A plausible reason for the peculiar lay-out is the distinction it implies between the space reserved for the 'dwellings for the gods' (within the walls oriented to the four main points of the compass) and the space left for the dwellings of human beings, where no exact orientation was considered necessary (De Casparis 1956:308-309).

In my view, the latter point constitutes the main objection to the solution proposed by De Casparis. While it may be true that the piece of land in question was once occupied by dwellings and perhaps even offered a bathing-pool (17), it seems improbable that this was the *tirtha* mentioned in the inscription. For is it not stated that the *tirtha* is visited by various (migratory) birds, as well as by merchants and other travellers seeking *siddhayatra*? In order to yield this extraordinary effect - the text itself also speaks of *mahatisa*, i.e. "coolness" or blessing - the water must first be sanctified, a condition that cannot possibly have been met at the profane plot of land indicated by De Casparis.

This fact led me to reconsider the reading dismissed by De Casparis, the one that suggested a *tirtha* in the immediate vicinity of the temples. A fact, moreover, confirmed by the Old-Javanese *Ramayana*, which reads "the crystal palace was comparable to Mount Mandara, the court-yard to the Milky Sea". It goes without saying that the

water from this spot would have been regarded as thoroughly sanctified, possessing all the supernatural qualities attributed to it.

Though appealing, the solution I propose leaves several problems unsolved. The first question concerns the supply of water. Two alternatives might be considered here: conduits to divert the water from the river, or the collection of rain-water. Although it is as yet impossible to demonstrate, one cannot exclude the possibility that in the first alternative the third wall served as a support for conduits (19). Whatever might have been the case, the next and more serious question to face is that of the feasibility of water collection in the central courtyard. With respect to this question, which can only be answered satisfactorily by water-engineering research, I would like to draw attention to some possible evidence.

The first piece of evidence was found in Krom's detailed description of the temple complex, and has a direct bearing on the technical aspects of water storage and drainage. Whereas Krom (1923:451), considering the size of the central compound, seems amazed at finding so few (*viz.* eight) gutter-spouts, I see it as part of a design. A design to create a *tirtha* in the form of a tank. Moreover, there is the fact, not reported by Krom, that the holes of the gutter-spouts are so small that perhaps they were never intended to serve the normal drainage of the compound. If I am correct about the compound's design as a reservoir for holy water, it seems more likely that the gutter-spouts really functioned as outlets that could be closed off with stoppers. Contrary to

Krom, I think it improbable that the drainage would have taken place through the sandy soil. Indeed, in view of the technical problems involved, e.g. the control of the drainage processes with all the attendant risks of subsiding, Krom's opinion amazes me. Apart from this, the permeability is less than he claims as the soil consists both of ordinary sand and of clay (20).

The possible location of the *tirtha* in the central court-yard is also indicated by the width of its surrounding wall. Krom has rightly remarked that the width of about 2 meters leaves enough room for a surrounding platform (*ommegang*) and parapet. Add to this the raised stair-entrances at the gates, as well as the height of the basements of all the inner temple-buildings, and the *tirtha* at this spot - with all the *hamsa* and other migratory birds mentioned in the inscription - becomes imaginable.

#### Candi Lara Jonggrang as a holy-water sanctuary

Hence it is plausible to conclude that the central compound of Candi Lara Jonggrang was used as a *tirtha* or holy-water reservoir. It may be assumed that this water with its magical powers was obtained by inundation of the courtyard at religious holidays or other momentous occasions. Probably, the sanctification of the water was attended by priestly rites, after which it was stored in the compound and sparingly distributed.

But how was the water sanctified, apart from its diversion to, and storage at, the grounds reserved for the 'dwellings of the gods'? Again, it was Stutterheim who discerned that our understanding of Javanese temples would remain incomplete if we confined

ourselves to a study of their symbolism. Javanese temples, he argued, even if used to house the ashes and statue of a dead King, are "not 'Denkmäler' [monuments], but practical magical power-stations" (1933:237). The best way to illustrate this, I think, is on the basis of Stutterheim's earlier analysis of the stone of Sirah Kentjong (Stutterheim 1926).

Much more clearly than in the case of *candi* Candi Lara Jonggrang, this stone depicts the myth of the churning of the Milky Sea (see drawing, appendix B). By comparing the motifs on the stone with the relevant passages in the *Mahabarata* and the Old-Javanese *Tantu Panggelaran* (a 14th-century text of East-Javanese origin), Stutterheim argues that the stone adheres much closer to the story as told in the *Tantu* than to the epic. Because of this, he identifies the mountain depicted on the stone as a miniature of Mount Meru. An identification confirmed by the fact that the mountain was depicted as pierced through at the same spot where, according to the *Tantu*, the Kalkuta poison flowed out of Mount Meru. The poison Siva subsequently transmuted into *amrita*. Stutterheim is quite right in assuming the stone of Sirah Kentjong to be a ritual object. An object used by a priest, acting on Siva's behalf, to change ordinary water into holy water. It was, as Stutterheim himself succinctly stated, "a holy-water machine" (1926:314) (21).

A similar reasoning applies to Candi Lara Jonggrang, if not to several other temples as well (22). In very much the same way, only on a larger scale and several centuries earlier, the water from the slopes of Mount Merapi - the Central-Javanese

equivalent of Mount Meru (perhaps derived from *Meru-api*, Meru afire) - was diverted to its replica in the Prambanan Plains. The sanctification, it appears, was not left to the priests, but involved all sections of society. The inscription on the stone mentions "worshippers coming in rows and in groups, by hundreds", and further informs us that "on the day fixed for compulsory work on behalf of the Gods, the people in command performed the ceremonies; crowds of people came in [...] monks, young men and women of rank ..." (De Casparis 1965:325-327).

The only way to account for this mass participation is to relate it to the information that the construction of the huge temple complex was not just undertaken for the King's benefit (23) but concerned the whole nation: "... he, with his servants, all simple people, low-born men, (but also) friends, servants, and those placed in the foremost position [...]: who would have been unwilling to consent in bringing their gifts; (everybody) worked cheerfully" (De Casparis 1965:321). This brings us back to Krom's suggestion that the Lara Jonggrang complex was a state temple. It is possible to elaborate this idea in two directions. The first line of inquiry pursues its socio-political aspects, to demonstrate that the temple is a replica of the whole state, the central sanctuary representing the royal court, and the various temple buildings around the sanctuary representing the parts of the Kingdom (Krom 1923:453; 1931:172, De Casparis 1958, Kulke 1986:14-15). The second approach focusses on the religious-ideological aspects, relating the structure of the temple complex to the division of labour among the various gods and

demons mentioned in the myth of the churning of the ocean. Ideally, both lines of inquiry converge. Thus, by delegating to his subjects the building and the maintenace of the minor temples dedicated to the lower gods, the King recognized this his subjects were indispensable for a successful re-enactment of the myth.

Notes:

\*) The research on which this study is based was conducted during my stay in Jakarta, in relative isolation, far removed from most of the best libraries. More than once it turned out that even the Puslit Arkenas library lacked the archaeological literature I was looking for. In these circumstances I was forced to appeal to several friends and relatives abroad. For their readiness to help I owe them *utang budi*, a lasting debt of gratitude. Hans Borkent, Madelon Djajadiningrat, Bert van den Hoek and, last but not least, Han Vermeulen, are among those whom I would like to mention. In Jakarta, Jaap Erkelens, Prof. Resink and F.X. Supandi were important informants and resource persons. Finally, I am obliged to Prof. De Casparis for stimulating me to put my ideas on paper. His role reminded me of the god Indra watching over the labours of a very minor god (or demon, for that matter), in churning an article out of the sea of miscellaneous ancient Javanese cultural facts. As usual, Jeff van Exel took care of the English correction.

1. This is not to say that Krom himself unreservedly defended the funerary interpretation of the *candi* (see text, page 20).
2. Stutterheim's arguments are found in several of his numerous publications. The most relevant I have listed in the references. In Dutch, 'Bosch (1954) offers a good summary and criticism of Stutterheim's funerary theory.
3. An early indication of Stutterheim's ideas was found in his review of a book by Heine-Geldern, where he thinks it necessary to correct "a minor error" of the author: "tjandi does not mean 'Tempel überhaupt', but monument" (Stutterheim 1925:57). It is noteworthy that in his translation of another important term, Stutterheim shows a similar bias in favour of his own interpretations, viz. stone coffin instead of ritual deposit box.
4. Ritual deposits in a stupa may be explained from Buddhist traditions. Originally, these deposits allegedly consisted of parts of the mortal remains of the Buddha, but later this could only be interpreted in a more spiritual sense. Buddha's presence or his memory is then evoked by mean of certain relics or holy texts, written on precious metals.
5. It should be remarked that according to some archaeologists the temple complex was not completely finished (Lulius van Goor 1924; Van Romondt 1940:239).
6. If tantric Hinduistic examples cannot be found, it might still be possible to look for a way out in native practices of ancestor worship. In that case, however, it is necessary to solve a number of problems and incongruities in Stutterheim's descriptions of Indonesian ancestral cults. Questions, for instance, about the need to keep the ashes of a deceased, when either his bones, or his statue or other so-called reconstitutive objects would have sufficed for cult purposes. These observations I owe to Dr. J. Platenkamp.
7. Even if a particular building-manual were mentioned, Soekmono is still obliged to demonstrate its actual application.

Apparently this is not at all easy. Bernet Kempers, for instance, frankly admitted that for the material at his disposal, his calculations yielded

different results every time, even with respect to the proportions inside the Siva-building (1955:8).

8. Stutterheim made the same observation in his review of Blom's book on Tjandi Sadjiwan. Stutterheim suggests a possible relationship with the Javanese *culik* belief, which calls for human sacrifices for large building-projects (1935:84, note 1).

9. Various explanations have been proposed by others, such as Blom who sees the contents of the ritual deposits as "seven valuables (for travelling)" and Van Eerde who thinks they may be food for the gods (see Blom 1935:110). It is very hard for me to appreciate the explanatory value of their suggestions. My own interpretation finds support in Voorhoeve's observations on Batak divinatory texts (1958:247).

10. See Voorhoeve, cited above. I also want to point out a possible connection with the "models" and other small objects in the description of *pandapa*, in Poerbatjaraka's version of the Old-Javanese Ramayana.

11. See also Bennet Kempers 1955:30, who confirms the presence of the statue but does not identify the god depicted against the background of clouds, on the eastern side of the Siva-temple. To my knowledge, neither have identifications been put forward for the gods depicted in the reliefs over the entrances of the four cellas of the Siva-temple (Jordaan & Edi Sedyawati, in preparation).

12. Poerbatjaraka is inaccurate both in the title and in dating Van Eerde's article. The reference to Krom did not yield the expected Balinese information. Curiously enough, Poerbatjaraka fails to mention Stutterheim's highly relevant article, *Oost-Java en de Hemelberg* (1926).

13. See O.V. 1927, and Soekmono (1969) for a similar lay-out of Candi Gurah. Considering the fact that the positions of Durga and Ganesha in the Siva-temple of Candi Lara Jonggrang are a reversal of the common pattern, it is not unlikely that the same happened with the statues in the minor temples. The northern *candi* "wahana" containing a statue of Siva (as Mahayogi? See Yzerman 1891:57), the southern one containing a lingga (the *halu*, "pestle", mentioned in the stone inscription? See De Casparis 1956:321 note 43). See also, Van Lohuizen de Leeuw 1955.

14. See De Casparis (1956:287) for further details and references.

15. In the *Mahabarata* the demon is decapitated by Vishnu's discus to prevent his swallowing the *amrta*, the Elixir of Life. Rahu's head lives on, and periodically devours the moon and the sun. Siva's poison, on the other hand, originates from the churning preceding the production of *amrta*. As the presence of the poison threatens the work of the gods and demons, god Vishnu approaches Siva for help. Siva then drinks the poison, scorching his throat. See O'Flaherty 1975:273-280.

16. Further research is needed to verify my hypothesis. Hooykaas (1955:34), on the other hand, does no more than resort to the once fashionable-expression that the Javanese author "borrowed from the flotsam and jetsam of general knowledge concerning the Ramayana that was current in those days in

Southeast Asia". Such a view obviously underestimates the selective character of acculturation processes.

17. These minor correspondences, for instance, include that between the tree *Ki Muhur* and the *Pariyata* tree (cf Bosch 1958), and the one between the *raksasa* of the Old-Javanese *Ramayana* and the *dvarapala*, "fierce doorkeepers", of the stone inscription.
18. Although, to my knowledge, no remains of buildings, pools or stairs have ever been found at the nearby banks of the river Opak.
19. This may be inferred from the passage in the stone inscription, reading: "After the Siva-sanctuary had been completed in its divine splendour, the (course of the) river was changed so that it rippled along the grounds" (De Casparis 1956:328). On linguistic grounds however, Boechari (1978:14, 20) has questioned this interpretation. He translates the Old-Javanese word *apan* as 'because' instead of as 'so that'. This question needs further research. The implications of Boechari's translation seem hard to reconcile with the great care taken to determine the (magical) centre of the temple complex, prior to the actual building. Moreover, the new translation would amount to an acknowledgement of a construction defect, one that is in odd contrast to the preceding statement about the temple's "divine splendour".
20. To my knowledge, no exact information is available on the composition of the soil at the temple site. Soekmono (1985:688), who has demonstrated the use of clay to fill holes in the inner walls of the Vishnu and Brahma temples, cryptically remarks that the fine sand in the soil really is dried clay ("pasir halus adalah lumpur yang sudah kering, sesuai dengan keadaan tanah daerah Prambanan yang amat berpasir halus"). Another fact of possible influence on the permeability of the soil is the report that excavations at the temple-site have "...revealed that the whole raised site (of the central compound) containing the larger temples was fortified by walls built of stones from the river. Though this is not certain, it is assumed that all this was meant to prevent the soil's erosion by heavy rainfall" (O.V. 1938:15, my translation).
21. Prof. Resink kindly drew my attention to the so-called holy-water vessel of Pedjeng, representing the Balinese equivalent of the stone of Sirah Kentjong (see Stutterheim 1929:170).
22. For instance, Candi Songgoriti (see text page 4). Stutterheim's interpretation may shed new light on the function of the bronze conduits and other remains of waterworks found in Javanese temples, e.g. Candi Merak, Candi Muncul, Candi Arjuna (Dieng), and Ratu Baka. For further details, see Soekmono 1969, and 1974:28-29; Bosch 1961:47-109, 151-170. An interesting parallel from mainland Southeast Asia is the complex of Angkor Thom in Cambodia (see Heine Geldern 1930). The so-called Tank of the Golden Lilies in Madura in southern India is another non-Indonesian example. The research on this question goes far beyond the scope of the present article, as it would involve a reconsideration of the relationship between *tirtha* and water both in its Indian and Indonesian settings (see Vogel 1941:446, Kramrisch

1946:3ff, De Casparis 1958, Van Liere 1980).

23. Not King Balitung, as was assumed by Stutterheim and others but Rakai PiKatan alias Jatiningrat (see De Casparis 1958).

## ABBREVIATIONS:

BKI = Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde  
Djawa = Tijdschrift van het Java-Institut  
JAOS = Journal of the American Oriental Society  
OV = Oudheidkundig Verslag  
ROC = Rapporten van de Oudheidkundige Commissie  
TBG = Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde

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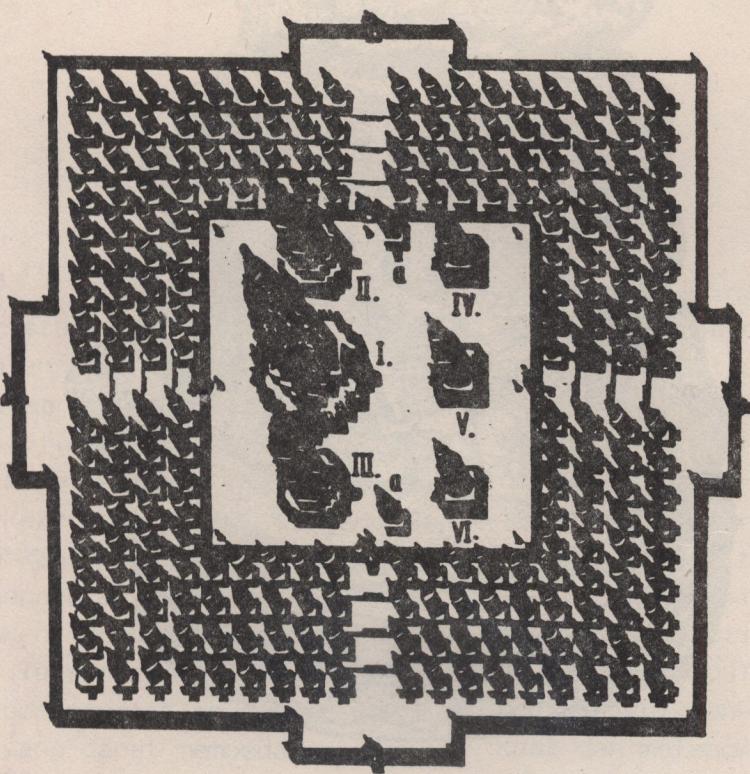
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RECONSTRUCTED GROUND-PLAN OF THE LARA JONGGRANG  
TEMPLE COMPLEX



Opak river



LEGEND

- I. Candi Siva
- II. Candi Vishnu
- III. Candi Brahma
- IV. Candi A
- V. Candi Nandi
- VI. Candi B

- = Candi Apit
- = Candi Kelir
- = Candi Perwara

Perio. P.

Appendix A

The Stone of Sirah Kentjong



Museum Nasional (Jakarta)  
Cat. no. 383a/4335.

PRYO. P.

Appendix B