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## MOUNTAINS IN JAVANESE SACRAL TOPOGRAPHY

The island of Java is undoubtedly can be called a mountain island from the geographical point of view. It is horizontally crossed by a mountain ridge consisting of eleven peaks with the altitude of more than 3000 m. The highest peak is volcano Semeru — 3676 m. Thirty four volcanoes are situated on Java, sixteen of them are active. During its history Java was the place of development and flourishing of many world famous religious systems like Hinduism, Buddhism and its syncretistic forms of Tantric Shivaism and Islam in its mystical form of Sufism as well as indigenous beliefs venerating the Gods of Mountains (Bhatara Guru, or Shiva) and the Goddess of Southern Sea (Loro Kidul). While the religious situation has being changed the national Javanese cult of mountains remained to play the key role in Javanese outlooks on the structure of cosmos. The main geographical mountains and groups of mountains which are the sanctified places, the places of asceticism and meditation or Hindu-Buddhists ritual complexes on Java are mainly situated on Eastern Java and date back to the IX–XV centuries' history of the ancient states of Kediri, Mataram, Singosari and Majapahit. The mountain-mass on eastern Java Penanggunang, consisting of one central peak and four smaller ones surrounding it, was considered to play the role of Hindu mountain Meru on Java. Hindu-Buddhist complex Penaggunang became the true model of Javanese two-fold cosmological order (mountain — sea). The typical architecture of such medieval mountain complexes comprises cave-shrines, sacred peaks, chandi situated on sacred roads, and ritual pools like Belahan and Jalatunda. Besides, the veneration of mountains is closely associated with the syncretistic cult of Shiva-Buddha in the XIII century. Later many Javanese mountain peaks and caves are connected with legendary names of Javanese Sufi saints *wali* and took significant place in the Islamic history of Java. The famous. Javanese literary treatises like *Arjunawiwaha* and *Nagarakertagama* narrate about the Mountain Gods and ascetics. Moreover, the cult of mountain's veneration can be found nowadays in the Islamic ceremonies held in Javanese palaces (*keratons*).

*Keywords:* Tantric-Shivaism, ritual complex of Penanggunang, Bhatara Guru, numerical magic, Sufi saints, Shattariyah brotherhood, Shaykh Abdul Muhyi

Beginning the discussion about Javanese sacral topography it is important to notice that the island of Java is evidently can be called a mountain island from the geographical point of view. It is horizontally crossed by a mountain ridge consisting of eleven peaks with the altitude of more than 3000 m. The highest peak is volcano Semeru — 3676 m. Thirty four volcanoes are situated on Java, sixteen of them are active.

During its history Java was the place of development and flourishing of many world famous religious systems like Hinduism, Buddhism in its syncretistic forms of Tantric Shivaism and Islam in its mystical form of Sufism as well as indigenous beliefs venerating the Gods of Mountains, Shiva (jav. Bhatara Guru), and Loro Kidul, the Goddess of Southern Sea. While the religious situation has being changed the national Javanese cult of mountains still remained to play the key role in Javanese traditional structure of cosmos with its symbolical unity of mountain and sea. The main geographical mountains and groups of mountains are considered to be the sanctified places for concentration power or asceticism and meditation, precisely Hindu-Buddhists ritual complexes which are mainly situated on Eastern Java and date back to the XI–XV centuries' history of the ancient Javanese states of Kediri, Mataram, Singgosari and Majapahit.

However, before touching on the description of Hindu-Buddhists mountain complexes on Java it is reasonable to focus the attention on some important points of mythological space which associate the history of Central Asia and Indonesia, namely the Buddhist teaching of Kalachakra Tantra and the eschatological myth about Shambala according to its place in Buddhist picture of the world. The legendary mystical country of Shambala is considered to be the place where teaching of Kalachakra originated and then disseminated in India, Tibet and on Indonesian islands with their ancient title *Jambudvīpa* (Golden islands). It is famous that the earliest center of Buddhist learning was situated in Indonesia already in the IX century. The outstanding Buddhist propagator Atisha learned tantric texts on Sumatra and Java in the XI century and then moved to India and further to Tibet where he died in Tyangboche monastery. According to the Tibetan sources Atisa achieved the Malay state of Srividjaya in 1013 where the famous Sumatran authority of Buddhists learning and prince of Srividjaya court Dharmakirti became his guru [Shorterman 1986: 23–30]. It is known that the cult of Goddess Tara (later Her image was venerated as the national Goddess of Tibet), has been already practiced on Sumatra and

Java during that period of time. It is considered in the Buddhist tradition that only Atisa and his master Dharmakirti had a chance to catch a glimpse of Her face. The earliest in the world epigraphic and statue of Tara was found in *Candi* (temple) Kalasan which was constructed in 778 by the so-called “mountain” dynasty Shailendra on Central Java. The Goddess Tara on Java was venerated in the role of “savior” (Vasya-Tara) with much similarity to the cult of Tara practiced in the Pala dynasty of Bengal. Atisa left Sumatra in 1025 and settled in Tibet where he renovated Buddhism by the fresh cult of Tara.

Moreover, there are many traces of Kalachakra in Javanese stone inscriptions and in poems, so in the XIII cent it became the official doctrine of Singosari state (1222–1293). We will not touch on the controversial problem of Shambala’s geographical position. However, in this context it is interesting to mention Tibetan description of Shambala, according to which this continent is situated more south than Mt. Semeru and is named *Jambudvipa*. The space of *Jambudvipa* is organised like mandala consisting of central peak and four mountains surrounding it.

The most significant mountain-mass on Eastern Java, south of Surabaya, is called Penanggungang consists of one central peak and four smaller ones surrounding it: Mt. Bekel, Mt. Gajah Mungkur, Mt. Keluncup and Mt. Sarakelapa. It was known to play the role of legendary Hindu mountain Meru on Java [Бандиленко 1984]. Hindu-Buddhist complex Penanggungang became the true picture of Javanese outlooks on the structure of the Universe. At the foothills of Penanggungang in the X century two large ritual complexes with water pools were constructed for harmonizing the structure of the Universe by the natural element of water. These pools were also used as shrines of kings and places for holding Hindu-Buddhists rituals. The typical architecture of such medieval mountain complexes comprises cave-shrines, sacred peaks, *chandi* (temples), situated on sacred roads, and ritual pools. There are two ritual pools on eastern and western slopes: Belahan constructed in the XI century and dedicated to Airlangga and Jalatunda constructed earlier, in 977 as ritual complex, dedicated to father of Airlangga, king Udayana. Thus, the complex of Penanggungang was devoted to the legendary figure of Javanese history, king Airlangga (1019–1042) whose royal power was symbolically represented as a mountain. The heroic deeds of Airlangga as an ascetic and a warrior were sung in the poem *Arjunawiwaha* by the court poet Mpu Kanwa

in 1035. Besides, it is represented also by his spiritual magical portret as image of God Vishnu. It is interesting to notice that in this complex one can find many chronograms, or metrical inscriptions (jav. *candra-sengkala*) arranged according to Javanese Saka calendar. Saka era originated in India and was widely used in Southeast Asia. Javanese calendar had very complicated system of reconciling the lunar (synodic) month with the solar year using three different kinds of weeks *wuku* (5, 6 and 7 days). Javanese art of metrical inscription gradually increased the elaboration of dates; the lengthiest date is the date of Penanggungan (fifteen elements) in copper inscription of Krtarajasa (1296). Many inscriptions mention the place of the planet, presumably, Jupiter at the sunrise (*grahacara*). Evidently, that the art of Javanese chronograms was closely connected with the art of magical memory influenced much by astronomical and astrological knowledge. Besides, in astronomical and poetic treatises images were used instead of numbers. For example, the number corresponding to the meaning of mountain (jav *wualung*) in this ancient mnemotechnical system was “8”. The earliest example is in Belahan, precisely Airlanga’s grave depicting the date of his death (1049): the head of Rahu wearing the headdress of an ascetic biting in the Sun [Casparis 1978]. It is important to note that since the XVIII century when the process of Islamisation was mainly completed, Javanese calendar was divided in 8-year cycle. So the abovementioned number “8” meaning “*gunung*” (mountain) still plays a key role in Javanese cultural space. It is possible to make a conclusion that the cult of mountains and its symbols played an outstanding role in Javanese sacral topography as well as in the knowledge of ancient numerical magic, astrology and astronomy. It is reflected also in the famous Javanese literary treatises like poems *Arjunawiwaha* and *Nagarakertagama*, dedicated to legendary Javanese kings, Mountain Gods and ascetics who practiced meditation *semadi* in the holy caves and on tops of mountains.

Besides, the veneration of mountains is closely associated with the syncretistic cult of Shiva-Buddha in the XIII century. The national cult of Mountain God, Bhatara Guru played an important unifying role in the process of syncretization of these two religious forms on Java — Shivaism and Buddhism. Till nowadays his cult is practiced in Tenggerese highlands, the district of Eastern Java which is considered to be the land of Gods and holy people. Its inhabitants venerate Mt. Bromo (Brahma). It is known about tradition of making *samkrantis*

(marks of the time on which the Sun enters each of the twelve signs of zodiac) on the slopes of Mt. Bromo.

The ancient bronze goblets (“zodiac beakers”) *prasen* which are still used in Tenggerese ritual practice were painted with mysterious images of Bhatara Guru surrounded by zodiac signs. These images depicted on vessels “Bhatara Guru and Crow” remain a mystery till nowadays and are ignored to some extent by contemporary scholars. It is enough to say that the last article dealing with their description and attempt to study was published in 1897 by Dutch scholar J.H.F. Kohlbrugge [Kohlbrugge 1897: 120–141]. But supposedly further and close studying of Tenggerese art and beliefs could elucidate more on the religious outlooks and sacred knowledge of ancient Javanese. The astrological knowledge and rituals dealing with chronological tradition in the state of Majapahit in the XIV–XV centuries still remain a mystery.

Later many Javanese mountain peaks and caves were associated with well-known names of Javanese Sufi saints *wali* and took significant place in the Islamic history of Java. In the XVII–XVIII centuries during the epoch of late Mataram and Islamization of Java the indigenous mythological outlooks concerning the Universal Mount and the Mountain God were preserved in the new forms in search for the syncretism and under the influence of the demands of monotheistic Islam. Mountain Gods were transformed to the spirits of mountains. Sunan Lawu, spirit of Mt. Lawu and spirit of Mt. Merapi in central Java were the most venerated among them. They were considered to be protectors of spiritual and royal power of Sultan in Yogyakarta palace and Susuhunan in Surakarta palace. The ceremonies and rituals illustrating the Javanese cosmological scheme are still being held in both keratons, they are devoted to the sacred marriage of the spirit of mountain and the Goddess of Southern Sea Loro Kidul. These royal ceremonies play an important role in harmonizing the cosmic order, reflecting ancient beliefs in the unity of the Universe. It is remarkable that Sultans of Yogyakarta and Surakarta are in official marriage with Loro Kidul and sometimes they play the role of mountain spirit themselves. In both keratons one can find special places for Sultan’s meditation for unifying with Loro Kidul: in Surakarta it is a five-storied tower *Sangga Buana* (Base of the Universe) and in Yogyakarta keraton it is an arm-chair for meditation [Beek 1999].

One more conspicuous courteous act, held in Javanese palaces, also deals with symbolical meaning of mountains in Javanese cosmological

order. It is Muslim ceremony celebrating Maulud, birthday of the Prophet and ending of Muslim fast, called in Javanese *garebeg* (“the sound of wind”) [Soelarto 1993]. Richly decorated food sacrifices in the form of mountains’ cones take magical part in the ceremony as sacrifices for state flourishing (*sajen walujengan nagari*). It is interesting to note that all these mountains of rice and fruits have the names of really existing mountains where Mt. Bromo plays the most important role. Its rice image is traditionally made only once in 8 years.

Undoubtedly, Javanese Sufism (*Ilmu Kejawen*) is syncretistic form of mystical Islam and the autochthonous cult of mountains. According to Javanese historical literary source (*Babad Tanah Jawi*) the ruler of Mataram and the first Javanese Islamic ruler, Sultan Agung (1613–1645) was bestowed by Islamic inspiration (*wahyu*) as a result of his *semadi* meditation (concentration of magical power *sekti*) on Mt. Girilaja, having got a mystical science of Allah. Moreover, the mountain mass between Yogyakarta and southern shore of sea is famous for its numerous caves as places for seclusion of Javanese Sufi saints (*wali*).

There is one more mountain mass, Priangan in Western Java, or Sunda region, where the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism much more limited and one can find the autochthonous beliefs venerating the God of Mountain, Batara Karang (*karang* — sundanese “limestone”). People in the regency of Tasikmalaya know that the Karang area is a place of old teaching recognized as a center of spiritual power such as black magic (*teluh*) as well as white magic which is believed to be a supernatural power exercised by Sufi saints (*wali*). They also possess *ilmu karang* or knowledge of vulnerability. The caves of Western Java in the village of Pamijahan became spaces of mystical path (*tariqah*) and pilgrimage (*berziarah*) toward Sufi sacred places [Christomy 2008: 57–68].

Pamijahan is famous as a center of Shattariyah mystical brotherhood in Western Java along with Cirebon; precisely it is closely connected with the name of Shattariyah Shaykh of the XVII century Abdul Muhyi. Moreover, it is one of the pilgrimage destination to his grave place venerated as tomb of *wali*. He is considered to be descendant of Cirebon *wali* Sunan Gunung Jati, the founder of Cirebon Sultans’ dynasty. There are two kinds of historical sources — written like *Babad Pamijahan* and oral tradition of retelling. The *Babad* does not recite clearly how Shaykh Abdul Muhyi found a cave and converted Batara Karang, while

oral narratives retell the *wali's* itinerary in this area in a very lively way. But one of the main functions of *babads* is to freeze the genealogy of the ancestors, the *karuhun*.

So *Babad Pamijahan* focuses more on the ancestors of Abdul Muhyi. But the oral stories are used by the custodians as pivotal sources of their history about Shaykh Abdul Muhyi and his contemporaries, for example, the story of his journey to Aceh and Mecca, his mystical journey to the southern part of Priangan in search of a cave for meditation, or his conversion of the villagers to Islam. The custodians classify such narratives as the speech of ancestors, *kasauran karuhun*, or *pitutur karuhun*. *Karuhun* is a central concept in the village culture, referring to the founder Shaykh Abdul Muhyi, his companions and ancestors. The line of *karuhun* connects the villagers directly to the network of the Nine Saints of Java *wali songo* as well as to the King of Sunda. In Sunda these lines seem compulsory since they help Sundanese to 'domesticate' their conversion to Islam [Djajadiningrat 1965].

In the *Babad* the genealogy of Shaykh Abdul Muhyi starts with one of Nine Saints *wali songo*, Sunan Giri and continues through his descendants from his four wives. The Shaykh is the founding ancestor of Pamijahan and in rituals they call him *Eyang*. The term is used for apical ancestors who set up a new village. The line of succession of names is called *kokocoran*, or the 'source of the river'.

*Karuhun* are the places of pilgrimage and represent the village's sacred space. The custodian of Pamijahan has a symbolical map of sacred places. It reflects a landscape of human rather than physical geography. The landscape includes five sacred tombs which are genealogically linked with Shaykh Abdul Muhyi, and the other artifacts that are historically associated with his journey. These spatial signs connect genealogy with the conception of space in the village. According to this conception the 'source of river' *kokocoran* constitutes an imagined place and ritual space. Besides, genealogies are found in the abstraction of space, or *pongpok* which literally means 'a side'. The imagination of villagers concerning their social relations is based on a system of inherited relationships. This pattern of relations has been concretized to the form of the four sides, *pongpok* of rectangular tomb. *Pongpok* not only refers to the walls or sides of shrines and tombs of rectangular form but also is a metaphor for social structure and cultural space where various rituals can be conducted. What is unique to Pamijahan that the lines of descent, or *pongpok*, as a sub group are metaphorically

associated with the rectangular shape of the tomb. Such symbolical spatial organization also created a 'guild' of custodians (*pakuncenan*) which consists of four Muhyi's descendants. The custodian is in charge of day-to-day pilgrimages. According to the custodians' view *kepamijahan* is a cultural concept referring to a rectangular framed space. Thus, custodianship, *pakuncenan*, is a real translation of genealogy into the ritual space of the village since the custodians of the shrine comes from the *pongpok* system. Texts of Shattariyah manuscripts written by Sufi Shaykhs of Pamijahan narrate about these rituals and cultural space.

Finally, touching on the role of mountains in Javanese culture one cannot help mentioning the existing of the so-called "mountain scriptoria" (*kabuyutan*) in the caves of mountain mass Merapi-Merbabu in Central Java which dated back to the XVI–XVIII centuries. Many manuscripts were written there in Old Javanese. From the colophons of these manuscripts we can identify nine of such scriptoria situated on different slopes of Mt. Merbabu and Mt. Merapi. It is remarkable that Merapi-Merbabu manuscripts have their own style of writing and their own unique script which is called *aksara Buda*, or *aksara gunung* — "mountain script" [Wiryamartana 1992].

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