

Spirits of the Earth and Spirits of the Water: Chthonic Forces in the Mountains of West Java¹

ROBERT WESSING

Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois

INTRODUCTION: HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

In the past two decades there has been a growing awareness among anthropologists that there often is a close correlation between a people's cosmology and the way in which they perceive their environment (Sperber 1974). Natural or social relations and situations are explained or accounted for in myths and legends and lore about a geographic area. For instance, in a recent study on the rich folk-lore about the tiger in Southeast Asia (Wessing 1986) I showed that the system of beliefs about the tiger is predicated at least in part on the overlap between the ecological niches occupied by the tiger and man.

In this paper I will relate stories and lore about some hills near a Sundanese village and show how the purported locale of these stories as being up-hill or down-hill varies with the mythological and symbolic elements with which these stories may be associated. The movement up or down a hill is also correlated with a greater (up) or lesser (down) distance from a source of water and thus also with wet and dry cultivation and the stories and lore interdigitate the mundane labor of food production with the larger cosmic processes.

The general symbolic significance of mountains in Southeast Asia is well known. Most commonly discussed is Mount Meru, or one of its local replicas, the center of the universe or *axis mundi*. This mountain is the cosmic center in which all aspects of the universe are both subsumed and generated. Local hills may serve as immediate instances of the cosmic center (Westenank 1923) or, where such hills are lacking, artificial ones may be constructed (cf. Heine-Geldern 1942). Such Meru replicas may be seen as the place where the sky and the under-

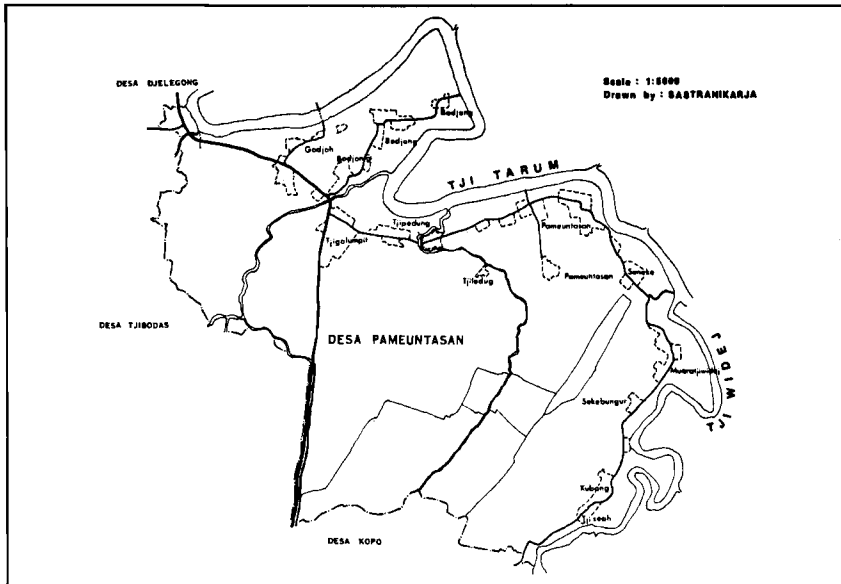
world, fire and water, male and female or Śiva/Viṣṇu and Śrī intersect and, through their intersection, create the universe, the world or, on the local level, the state.

Hidding (1933, 470–471) has observed that mountains are natural boundaries between the settled area and the wild. This also makes them a boundary between the civilized and predictable realm of the human and the unpredictable, and thus dangerous, realm of the non-human. This view of mountains as boundaries may include both the hills around a settled area, often forested and full of danger (Lombard 1974), and the central, cosmic mountain which may be seen as the boundary between the natural sphere of humans and the supernatural regions of the sky and the underworld.

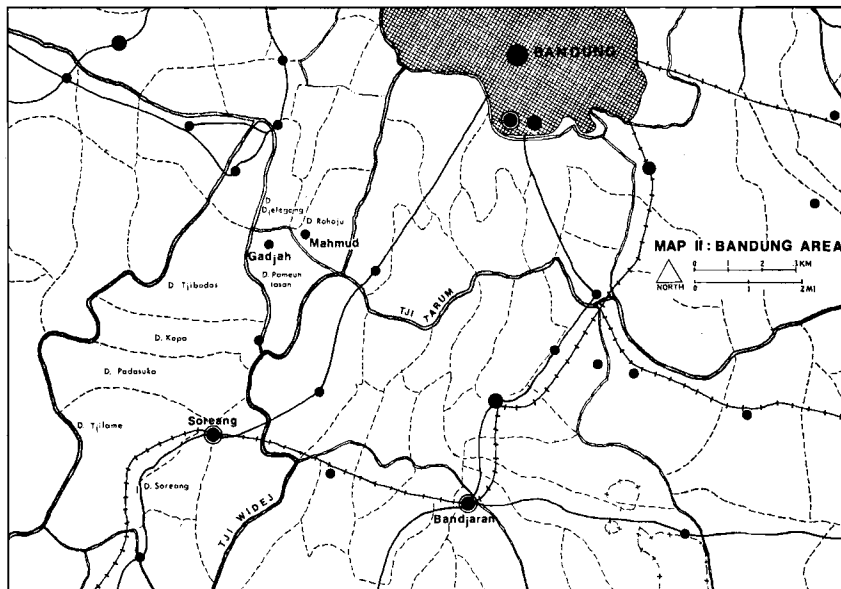
In fact, this latter function may well be shared by both kinds of mountains. While the cosmic, central mountain is associated with kingship and the channelling of cosmic power into the realm (cf. Anderson 1972; Stutterheim 1926), other mountains are often the place where important persons are buried (Hidding 1933, 470–471; 1935, 34–35). Such deceased focal figures often take on the role of generalized ancestors to the people living in the area (cf. Raksakusumah 1966; Wessing 1986, 27–47). These focal figures possess all the functions of ancestors, including protection against evil and the punishment of transgressors. In a sense they stand, like the king at the cosmic mountain, between the people (their ‘descendants’) and the supernatural (Wessing 1978, 90–99). For this reason pilgrimages are often made to such graves, today especially during the celebration of the Prophet’s birth (*ngabungbang*; Wessing 1978, 97–98). Other rituals may be performed as well. Thus, Becker (1979, 234, n. 25) informs us that “On Mount Kawi, near Malang, a wayang performance goes on every day and every night, nonstop year round, performing for the essential audience [i.e. the ancestral spirits] and preserving the spiritual texture, the *ruatan*.”

THE VILLAGE

The village of Pameuntasan, where these stories were collected, is located at the confluence of the Citarum and Ciwidey rivers, southwest of the city of Bandung in the Priangan highlands of West Java. One of the settlements (*kampung*) making up the village is Gajah which once formed the court center of the regency of Batulayang. Batulayang, which was founded in 1763 merged with the regency of Bandung in 1802 (De Haan 1910, I, Pt. 2: 136–137). The settlement of Pameuntasan, which has the same name as the village, existed as a river crossing at the time of the regency. About 1870 Gajah and Pameuntasan were combined with the settlement Ciseah to form the present village.



Map 1. Desa Pameuntasan.



Map 2. Bandung Area.

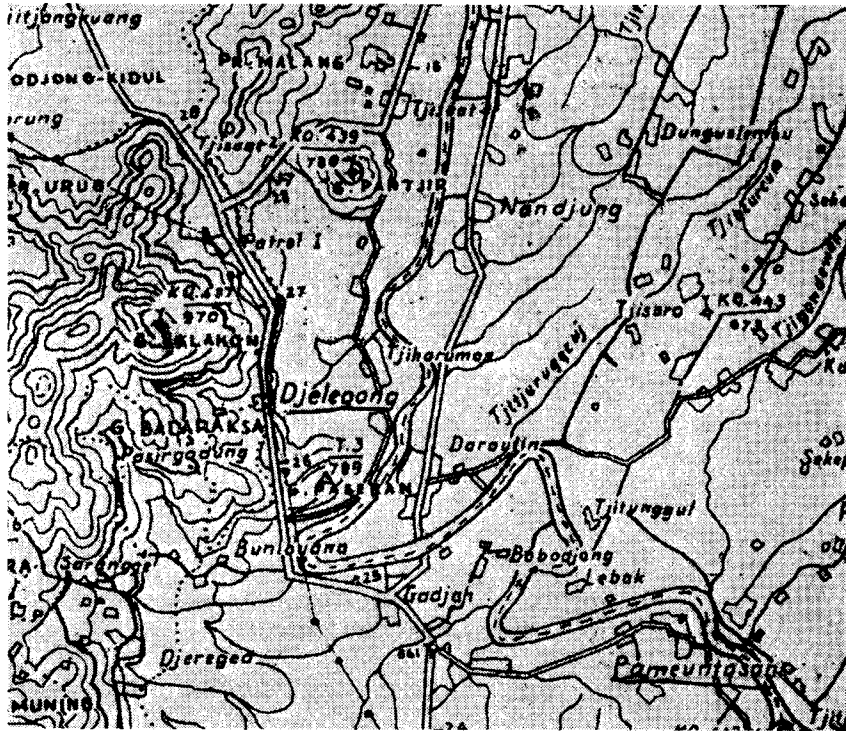
The people of Pameuntasan speak of themselves as primarily rice farmers although, like many other farmers in Indonesia, they often have to supplement their farming with other, secondary occupations (Wessing 1984). As a rice-growing village Pameuntasan is ideally located on the flat plain south of Bandung. Indeed, the village head man (*lurah*) during my first stay there (1970–1971) proudly pointed out to me that Pameuntasan proper did not encompass a single hill. There were hills, however, almost immediately outside the village on the way to Jelegong. The road to the district (*kecamatan*) town of Soreang, via Kopo, also leads through a hilly area (see Maps 1 and 2).

As one stands in the village and looks at these hills and mountains, a feature that immediately becomes obvious is the water-line. Beneath this line irrigated rice agriculture is possible while above it dry fields are planted, mostly with cassava.

Male-female distinctions are common in agricultural labor as well as a basis for the conceptual organization of village space. Very briefly these entail the planting, weeding and harvesting of the rice by women and the ploughing and regulation of water by men. This is seen as appropriate because rice, the embodiment of Dewi Sri or Nyi Pohaci, is female and therefore the proper concern of women, while land and water involve dealing with male spirits and thus are the appropriate domain of men. The organization of space follows similar lines. The innermost area of the house, the *goah* (rice storage room) is devoted to Dewi Sri and is to be entered only by women. Going outward from the *goah* through the house and the yard, space becomes progressively more 'male' until one reaches the area beyond the village where dangerous forces lurk, which are to be dealt with by men. The actual details of all this are of course more complex and are dealt with elsewhere (Wessing 1978).

THE MYTHS, LEGENDS AND LORE

The stories can be divided into two general categories. The first category deals with rulers and protectors and is set on the top of Gunung Lalakon. The second category deals with caves, spirits, and snakes, and involves the intermediate and lower slopes of both Gunung Lalakon and Gunung Paseban (see Map 3). Beside these stories I was told that on Gunung Gedugan or Gedogan there is the grave of Prabu Siliwangi, the legendary ruler of the kingdom of Pajajaran, who is said to have become a weretiger. It is a pity that I did not get the exact spelling of the mountain's name as both are names of mountains in this area. *Gedog*, however, means to shake or move something back and forth as well as to change appearance, which makes the idea of Gunung Gedogan



Map 3. Topographical map showing Pameuntasan, Jelegong, Mt. Lalakon and M. Paseban.

interesting (cf. Wessing 1986).

Rulers and Protectors. Along the path leading up to the various entities said to reside on Mount Lalakon there are two large stones like a gate. These stones are called Batu Lawang (gate stone, or boundary marker; see Fig. 1). These stones then form a gateway to things that lie on the mountain and, as such, imply a boundary. The idea of boundaries and the associated ideas of containment and exclusion are very important in West Java. Boundaries are continually emphasized, and it is on boundaries that dangerous cosmic forces come into play and that offerings are often made (cf. Wessing 1978; Turner 1967). The Sundanese, like the Javanese, believe that all things are imbued with a cosmic power (Anderson 1972). The amount of this power in persons and things varies with several factors, but it is recognized that sacred things and ancestral and royal graves contain a great deal of it and that, through these, the power may be utilized for the concerns of those living in its sphere of influence.

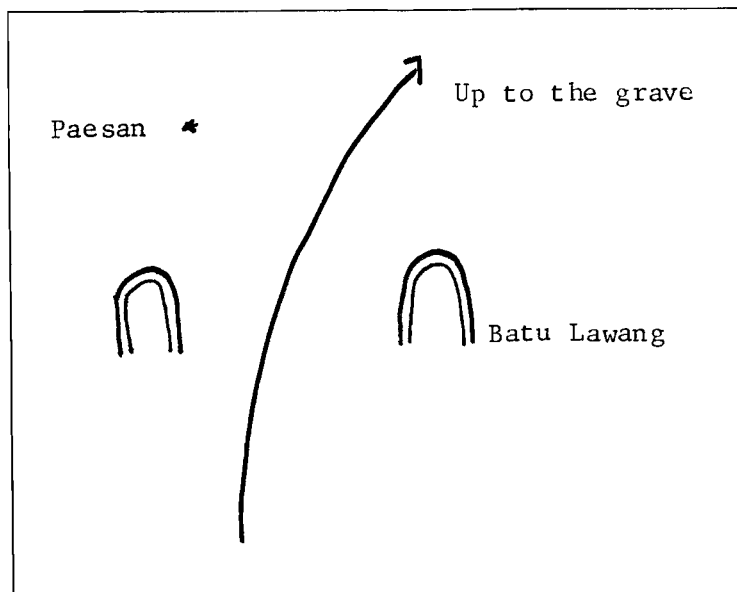


Fig. 1. Sketch of the Batu Lawang.

The Batu Lawang, then, may be seen as indicative of a boundary around the mountain, containing the cosmic power inherent in the sacred things that lie there. This boundary can be perceived in three ways. First, the power, and by extension the graves and other entities, on Gunung Lalakon, may not be approached directly by just anyone. These forces can be dangerous and should be dealt with only through a *kuncen* (lit. keeper of keys, thus gate keeper). This is a liminal person who himself has control over enough cosmic power to be able to be an intermediary between the people and the cosmic forces. Thus, the boundary contains or sequesters the cosmic power and stops it from diffusing, thereby maintaining the power for the use of those who have the greatest need of it, the protectors of the area.

Secondly, the boundary may also be seen as a symbolic border around the area that falls under the influence of these forces. The top-most grave on Gunung Lalakon is said to belong to either Adipati Ukur or to Sembah Prabu Surialagakusumah, both of whom had possible connections with the ruling house of Batulayang (see below). The boundary around the place from which one of them now oversees the welfare of the area under his protection, a common function of deceased rulers and ancestors, may be seen as similar to the boundary a ruler traditionally ploughed around his capital (Paranavitana 1970, 31-33) or created through circumambulation (Heine-Geldern 1942, 17).

Thirdly, in Southeast Asian cosmologies the center can stand for the whole. From Javanese classification systems (cf. Duyvendak 1935, 114), it is clear that the center is associated with the king, with well spokenness, and that it encompasses all forms and colors, including formlessness and colorlessness. The king or center encompasses the various aspects of the realm and from this center radiates the cosmic power drawn into the center by the king or other appropriate entities such as the ones mentioned above (cf. Anderson 1972, 22–25). A boundary around the center is equivalent to a boundary around the whole area, thereby ensuring that the power of the center benefits all those within the area.

The space enclosed by the Batu Lawang is called *Buni Buana* (hidden world or universe; world set apart) which fits with our discussion of bounded areas. That this is indeed a sacred, powerful area is illustrated by a story I was told about a Muslim man who professed not to believe any of the tales. He took one of the Batu Lawang and threw it down the mountain-side where it came to rest against a large bamboo. He said that if the stone was really *gaib* (supernatural) it would return to its old place by itself. The next day the stone was back, reenforcing the people's belief in the magical powers of the area.

As I indicated, on top of Gunung Lalakon lies a grave. Informants differ about who is buried there. Some say it is Sembah Prabu Surialagakusumah while others maintain that it is part of Adipati Ukur's body. De Haan (1910–1914) does not mention Sembah Prabu Surialagakusumah, while some informants were unclear if he was a person or a spirit. Most informants, however, do mention that Sembah Prabu Surialagakusumah is related to the people of Gajah and Pameuntasan through Adipati Galunggung. This Adipati Galunggung, they say, had four sons: 1) Sembah Prabu Karir, who lies buried in the *kampung* Pameuntasan where his grave functions as a focal grave (Wessing 1979), 2) Sembah Dalem Sumili, who is buried near Singaparna, 3) Eyang Santoan Kobul, who will be discussed later, and 4) Eyang Agung, who was buried in Mahmud, across the river from Pameuntasan (cf. Wessing 1978, 13).

From De Haan (1910, I, pt. 2: 144) we learn that in February 1813 Adipati Surialaga, of the Sumedang Surialaga line, became regent of Sukapura. (About the Sumedang Surialagas see Drewes 1985.) At this time the district of Galunggung was joined with Sukapura. Thus we have at least three of Adipati Galunggung's sons, Prabu Karir, Eyang Santoan Kobul and Eyang Agung, present in the area and we have an Adipati Surialaga (no *kusumah*) who rules over Galunggung. Furthermore, De Haan (1910, I, pt. 2: 136–137) mentions several per-

sons with the title *Kusumah* belonging to the Batulayang regency with its court at Gajah. More than likely these names and titles have become merged over time into the semi-mythical Sembah Prabu Sirialagakusumah.

The other possible occupant of the grave is Adipati Ukur, or at least, say my informants, the lower part of his body. The upper part, they say, is buried on Gunung Kidang Penanjung near Cililin. Others, however, maintain that Adipati Ukur might be buried on Gunung Walahu, which I have not been able to pinpoint, and Sumantri *et al.* (n.d.) mention the likelihood that he is buried behind the district office of Ganjaran; all but his head, that is, which was shipped to Mataram.

Adipati Ukur was involved in the war between Mataram and the V.O.C.² In 1628–1629 Mataram twice sent an army to conquer Batavia, but was defeated. After the second defeat the Sundanese troops, made up of people from Ukur and Sumedang, departed and stopped acknowledging Mataram's, and thus Sultan Agung's, suzerainty (De Graaf 1949: 108). Mataram made several attempts to re-subject them. In 1632–1633 Adipati Ukur and his followers ensconced themselves on Gunung Lumbung (Bandung) where they were eventually defeated and where Adipati Ukur was beheaded (Veth 1896, 384; see also Wahlbeem 1857; De Graaf 1958, 193–197).

The reason for the claim to Adipati Ukur's body on Gunung Lalakon probably lies in one of the lists of regents of Batulayang (there are two). According to this list (De Haan 1910, I, pt. 2: 136) Tumenggung (regent) Batulayang was the first regent who submitted to the Company. This regent is supposed to have been Adipati Ukur, though De Haan says he was buried in Banten. His son was Ngabehi Wangsaniti, who lies buried in Kopo, quite near Pameuntasan. Ngabehi Wangsaniti was succeeded by his son, Rangga Gajahpalembang, buried at Cimanik, who was in turn succeeded by his son Ngabehi Anggayuda, who rests in Cicapar. This regent was succeeded by his son Rangga Batulayang who founded the *dalem* (court) of Gajah Palembang, the Gajah of today.

De Haan (1912, III: 92) also mentions the possibility that Batulayang was ruled by Adipati Ukur prior to Company rule. After Adipati Ukur's defeat the regency of Ukur was divided up (1912, III: 92) and it is possible that Batulayang was part of Ukur (1912, III: 93). The map facing the title page of De Haan (1910, I) shows Batulayang and Ukur right next to each other.

Whether it is Surialagakusumah or Adipati Ukur who lies buried on top of Gunung Lalakon, it is clear that in popular belief a powerful spirit or soul resides there. In Adipati Ukur's case he is a *pahlawan*

(warrior) as well, who defended the Sundanese lands against subjugation by the Javanese, a contest that went back as far as the 14th century and the conflict between Pajajaran and Majapahit.

It might be asked at this point how important a grave can be if there is no unanimity about who is buried there and if some people are not even sure whether one of the supposed entities is human or a spirit. First of all, the phenomenon is not at all unusual. As an anonymous reader of this paper pointed out in his comments, the same thing was found in Central Java where pilgrims at such sites also had little or no idea about who was buried at the place and, while ready to listen to tales about the site remained on the whole uninformed and basically uninterested. What then is the attraction of the place?

First of all, it must not be thought that this is a place that draws large numbers of pilgrims. The only time I saw a significant number of people gather there was during the *ngabungbang* ceremonies that are part of *Muhudan*, the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth. During *ngabungbang* large groups of people visit sacred graves and chant Quranic verses over them. On that night people go to Buni Buana to chant and, as I discussed elsewhere (Wessing 1978), infuse the place with cosmic power, rather than, like the usual pilgrim, going there to draw on the power of the place with requests. The fact that people *ngabungbang* there, however, does indicate that they believe that a person is buried there.

Who it is does not really matter. It is even possible that no one is buried there (cf. Wibowo 1971), and that the grave is a marker for what is believed to be a point of access to cosmic power. It may also be an attempt to symbolically associate the named person with the place. The point is that the place is believed to have power and that this power emanates from the soul of a royal person believed to be buried there or from a spirit believed to reside there who was significantly connected to the court. This power may be approached for protection and the like. As long as such an approach is seen as efficacious, the reputation of the place will be maintained and may even grow.

Further down the mountainside, it is said, lies the grave of Eyang Santoan Kobul. While he is related, as was seen, to Sembah Prabu Surialagakusumah and thus of noble descent, the title *eyang* puts him in the category of ancestors as well. Functionally these two categories are very similar and they often tend to merge. Both nobles and ancestors are protectors, respectively of the people residing in the area and of their descendants. Both furthermore are greatly concerned with the maintenance of the *adat* (custom) (cf. Wessing 1986, 27-47).

Eyang Santoan Kobul was one of the sons of Adipati Galunggung

and is said to share descent with the court at Gajah, although the details were not clear to my informants. He is reputed to have come from Cirebon where he had many children, several of whom became sultans and *walis* (Muslim saints). He then came to Buni Buana, which at that time was wild forest where few people lived. There he spent decades in meditation (*tapa*) after which he died and was buried at Buni Buana. This, according to my informants, happened ca. A.D. 1660–1670, which nearly correlates with the dates given earlier. They said further that Eyang Santoan Kobul was *bao tigigir*, a collateral great-great-grand relative, to Dalem Gajah and that this whole descent line is *keramat* and *sakti* (sacred and filled with cosmic power).

Spirits and Snakes. Another entity on Gunung Lalakon is Embah Batu Gajah, who resides in a cave. During my 1970–1971 research (Wessing 1978) I was told that this Embah was a *siluman* (water or swamp spirit; Moestapa 1946, 87, n. 5; the spirit of a person who dies a violent death, Wessing 1978). In 1980, however, informants maintained that he might not be one, but rather that he might be the spirit of a deceased person (*hiang*), i.e., an ancestor. Typically one goes to the graves of ancestors for advice and protection (Wessing 1978, 93–94) and to a place haunted by a *siluman* for wealth (1978, 99–102). Embah Batu Gajah seems to be approached for both. I was told that he will aid people in trouble, and I was also told that a person involved in a land deal once went to him for advice.

At the same time people say that Embah Batu Gajah may be asked for aid in seducing women, for lottery numbers and for power. Once, when I had been on a visit in Jelegong, people asked me where I had been. When I told them, they asked if I had been given a 'code,' the winning numbers in the national lottery. To get these, they said, you have to bring an offering, such as the head of a black goat slaughtered for the occasion. The head is buried at Embah Batu Gajah's cave. Interestingly Embah Batu Gajah is said to appear as a magical snake, something we will see again in the story about Gunung Paseban.

Through his name it is tempting to connect Embah Batu Gajah (Grandparent Elephant Stone) with the court of Batulayang. In the graveyard belonging to the old court stands a weathered carved stone elephant (*gajah*; compare De Haan, III, 1912: 96). It may well be that there is a connection between this symbol of the *dalem* (court) and Embah Batu Gajah, the spirit of the cave, especially considering the other connections between Gunung Lalakon and the court of Batulayang. As Mus (1975) has pointed out, there often is a close relationship between earth or place spirits, which Embah Batu Gajah could be seen

as being, ancestors, rulers and the shaman-spirit embodied in ancestors and rulers through which the social system is maintained (compare Wessing 1986). Thus, the elephant in the *dalem* may have been the stone in which the spirit, Embah Batu Gajah, took up temporary residence when summoned to be involved in human affairs. This would be similar to the relation between gods and temples as discussed by Stutterheim (1926, 344). In any case, the stone elephant was still considered sufficiently sacred ca. 1969 to be stolen by a man who considered it an affront to Islam. It has since been recovered and returned to its place.

Finally there is Emban Sanusi, a true *siluman*. In my 1978 study I classified a *siluman* as a spirit of a person who died a violent death. While not wrong, this definition is incomplete. Moestapa (1946, 87, n. 5) classifies *siluman* with water and swamp spirits and informants said that Embah Sanusi appears as a snake. It is likely that *siluman* are at base earth or locale spirits who, because of their uncontrolled nature are very dangerous. The association of violent death with them may well be due to the restless nature of the spirits of such persons, akin to the hungry ghosts of China (Weller 1985; cf. Lehman 1987 for a discussion of such spirits in Burma).

People go to *siluman* for wealth and power, although this is frowned upon by the more pious Muslims in Pameuntasan. Their connection with wealth as well as their manifestation as a snake connects them, like Embah Batu Gajah, with chthonic, underworld forces. These we will meet again shortly. Several people in Pameuntasan were alleged to have had dealings with *siluman* in order to gain wealth (Wessing 1978, 100). On Gunung Lalakon there are wild chickens, said to belong to Embah Sanusi. These are presumably the surviving live offerings to this spirit. To get wealth and power you have to promise to make sacrifices to the spirit. The magnitude of these depends on the bargain made with the spirit and may include a yearly human sacrifice (Wessing 1978, 100).

A *siluman* may also be rather sensitive about an invasion of its privacy. One informant related how he went to cut down a tree in Embah Sanusi's area without asking the *siluman's* permission. Embah Sanusi warned him by making a plate disappear and reappear and later, when the warning went unheeded, possessed the culprit, giving everyone a scare (Wessing 1978, 103–104).

At this point our stories shift to Gunung Paseban. On Gunung Paseban there are a *batu tapak* (stone footprint) and a *gerendung* (hollow sound as coming from a well or cave, Eringa 1984, 248). The *batu tapak* today is unattributed but such phenomena are often said to be a

place where the Buddha walked. The *gerendung* may be understood as a cave, as the following story from my field notes illustrates.

Ustad A. tells that he has a dry garden (*kebun*) on Gunung Paseban. He wanted to build a house so he cut trees in his *kebun* and sawed them into planks. He did this for a week. One night he dreamt of a woman, a very beautiful one. The woman came close to him and asked him to marry her. She said that her girlfriend was already married to a person from the east (*urang wetan*). She said, "even if it is polygamous, that is no problem. I have money put away." She opened a curtain and showed him seven *buyung* (water vessels) full of money. When A. awoke he remembered the dream and went to an old man in *kampung Asem* in Jelegong who told him there are *ipri* (snake spirits) on Gunung Paseban. One is married and one is not. A. was afraid and has not returned to his *kebun* since.

Informants added that if one marries an *ipri*, a specific time is arranged for sexual relations, usually Thursday night (*malam Juma'at*). You have to prepare an offering (*sesajen*) at a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. She will come about midnight in the form of a beautiful girl. After intercourse the girl departs, leaving money or gold. She looks for husbands who were born on Wednesday and does not like men born on a Friday. Some say one can divorce the *ipri* and that there is no *korban* (sacrifice) involved. Others, however, maintain that after a certain length of time one is summoned to serve at her home.

A story very similar to this is related by Rosidi (1977, 95-105). In this story two men who have fallen on hard times decided to *ngipri*, to enter into marriage with a magical snake. They traveled to the place where this was supposed to be possible and met with the *kuncen* (gate keeper) who prepared them to meet the spirit forces. After the appropriate offerings were made, they went to a quiet place in the forest where they came upon a stone called Sanghiang Lawang, a spirit gatepost. There the *kuncen* burned incense, telling them to close their eyes. One of the men, Atung, did so but his friend, Wangsa, kept his wide open. When the *kuncen* said it was time to go on, Atung opened his eyes and found everything changed. The Sanghiang Lawang stone had turned into a gate, the path had become a major road and ahead there stood a large palace. They entered the palace where they were received and Atung was eventually told to pick a wife from among the available princesses. He did so and was married to her, agreeing to meet every Monday and Thursday night. She would then sleep with him and give him wealth—until her money ran out, at which time he would become a palace slave. They then left the palace without Wangsa having been called to marry. Because he did not close his eyes at the

Sanghiang Lawang he saw none of the wonderous transformations. Instead of a palace with beautiful maidens, all he had seen was a cave with some very large snakes. He did not have the heart to tell his friend this.

CONCLUSION

All these stories deal, in one way or another, with earth and underworld powers and their relation to the human inhabitants of the area of their influence. Thus we find an ecological gradient from the forested mountain top via the dry gardens to the irrigated lowlands running parallel to a symbolic/mythological gradient connecting the sky, earth, and the underworld via the ruler, the earth spirits, and the serpent goddess:

Forested Top	— Sky	— Ruler
Dry Gardens	— Earth	— Earth Spirits
Wet Fields	— Under World	— Serpent Goddess

On Gunung Lalakon we first of all found the grave of someone connected in some way to the House of Batulayang. One informant even said that Surialagakusumah rules Gunung Lalakon and that all the other entities there are subservient to him. Placed on top of the mountain, like the 'kings of the mountain' (cf. Quaritch Wales 1953), he forms a link between the domain of Batulayang and the chthonic forces of fertility and prosperity (Mus 1975). In Embah Batu Gajah this theme is repeated with the addition of a materialization as a snake. Furthermore, we also saw a *siluman* appearing as a snake.

This is not to say that the villagers of Pameuntasan make the connection with the 'kings of the mountain,' but rather that there is an interesting parallel, both here and elsewhere in Indonesia (cf. Hatta 1982), between the 'kings of the mountain' and local rulers and heroes. Most villagers in fact, as I pointed out earlier, do not visit these places much and, when they are good Muslims, frown on those who go there to seek their fortune. They are, however, aware that these places are there and that one must be circumspect in approaching them, usually enlisting the aid of a *kuncen* (intermediary) to do so.

While even minor nobility is now far removed from Pameuntasan, the awe of the mountain, that may well have served as a Meru for Batulayang, persists. It is for this reason that the local stories can be fit into a larger complex of tales relating to rulers who, in order to maintain the welfare of the realm, have to be able to make contact with the chthonic sources of wealth and fertility.

The ancient kings of Funan and Cambodia were reputed to be

descended from an Indian Brahman and the daughter of the serpent king. A 13th century report relates how the Cambodian ruler cohabited nightly with the serpent goddess who came to him in human form (Heine-Geldern 1942, 26). Heine-Geldern concludes that the king thereby was thought to renew the connection between himself, the sky and the soil, and through both descent and cohabitation linked his kingdom to the forces of the earth (see also Jordaan 1984, 113, n. 8).

Similarly, on Java, Lara Kidul "is especially known for her alliance with Central Javanese royal courts, with the House of Mataram and with superseding Sultanates of Surakarta and Yogyakarta." Sultan Agung, who defeated Adipati Ukur, married her and is said to have stayed in her underwater palace. There are furthermore reports of Javanese rulers visiting her in a cave near the south coast (Jordaan 1984, 100). In West Java the connection between Lara Kidul and the court also exists. Here she is sometimes said to be the daughter of Prabu Munding Wangi, a ruler of Pajajaran. She became terribly ill and drowned herself in the southern ocean where she now rules over the evil spirits (Anonymous 1918, 535).

All this is very similar to the beliefs about Nyai Blorong reported on by Drewes (1929: 23–24). Nyai Blorong is said to be an evil spirit on the south coast, the domain of Nyai Lara Kidul with whom, as will be seen, she may well be identical. Nyai Blorong is portrayed as a mermaid (=fish-woman) with golden scales. She grants wealth to those who marry her, appearing to her husband, who has to prepare a special room for her, as a beautiful woman with a long snaketail. In the end he pays for the wealth and pleasure by literally becoming a part of her house.

This brings us to Nyai Lara Kidul who is probably the original serpent goddess and the focus of the snake-cult hypothesized by Hidding (1929, 28, compare MacCulloch 1955, 406 and Heine-Geldern 1942, 26). Jordaan (1984, 109) refers to a depiction of Nyai Blorong "as a snake-like creature [who] . . . is the daughter of Lara Kidul." Nyai Lara Kidul, the queen of the southern ocean is herself a chthonic deity, at least partially identifiable with the rice goddess, Dewi Sri or Nyi Pohaci. As I discussed elsewhere (Wessing 1978, 41–52) Dewi Sri is identical to Nyi Pohaci (see also Jordaan 1984: 107). Furthermore, Nyai Lara Kidul who, as Jordaan (1984: 107–112) shows, is a serpent deity, "lives in a palace of gold and silver, the courtyard is full of pebbles of rubies . . ." which associates her with wealth and thus with the rice goddess.

Dewi Sri, also the goddess of fortune (Dowson 1972, 176), born (as Lakṣmī) at the churning of the ocean where the serpent Vāsuki was

used as a rope, in the Sundanese rice myth is cursed by her father to become a snake in the rice fields (Hidding 1929, 47). Jordaan (1984, 107) mentions that Nyi Pohaci/Dewi Sri can incarnate as a snake, while he cites Cock Wheatley for the fact that Tisnawati, yet another name for the rice goddess, is the sister of Lara Kidul (1984, 112). On the other hand, *nagas*, the guardians and controllers of water (Crooke 1955, 415), may at night become women (MacCulloch 1955, 410). They live under the earth (=underworld) in great splendor (Dowson 1972, 213). Finally, Nyai Lara Kidul is associated with caves and at least some of those who want her wealth must marry her (Anonymous 1982).

In brief, we have a relationship between Nyai Lara Kidul, Dewi Sri/Nyi Pohaci on the one hand and Nyai Lara Kidul, Nyai Blorong and our caves and snakes on the other. All are chthonic and as such, as Hidding (1929, 32–33) points out, are always ambiguous in that they may bring blessings and injury, life and death, health and sickness, wealth and ruin. It is possible to see in the rice goddess the positive aspects of Nyai Lara Kidul, and Nyai Blorong as depicting the negative ones, while Nyai Lara Kidul combines the good and bad aspects of these two in her person.

Lara Kidul then is precisely the ambiguous serpent queen mentioned by Hidding (1929, 32–33). In the form of an *ipri* or Nyai Blorong she lures the unwary into ruin with promises of easy money, while as the consort of rulers and perhaps as the rice goddess she brings prosperity. The difference between the two ways of dealing with her is a matter of controlled vs. uncontrolled use of cosmic powers. As I pointed out in the study on the tiger (Wessing 1986, 113–114), proper dealings with the spirit world take place under conditions of symbolic control, in bounded areas by properly qualified people with enough 'power' to keep the invoked cosmic forces in hand. When one deals with magic, no such controls are present. Magic is done in the forest, away from people and civilization and dangerous forces are brought to bear directly on the person. The result is almost always disastrous. The danger is added to by the fact that entities such as the snakes are displaced. The *ipri* and the snakes on Gunung Lalakon are located on the mountain side in the dry gardens, away from civilization and the wet underworld. In other words, they are removed from the bounds and controls of their usual domain and as such they are dangerous. On the other hand, when the Javanese ruler visits Nyai Lara Kidul in her palace or in a cave, they are within the boundaries of her domain and thus she may provide the power, mediated through the ruler, necessary for the welfare of the realm.

Finally, everything related here takes place on the mountain, above

the village and the wet rice fields. A shortage of land has forced the farmers to clear dry fields higher and higher up the mountain. Yet, the tops are still wooded, forming what may be seen as a *hutan larangan* (forbidden woods) around the *angker* (forboding) graves and caves (compare Wessing 1977). While the wet fields, rice and Dewi Sri are the domain of women and belong inside the village (Wessing 1978), the dry area above the water line is the domain of men. It is always men who seem to *ngipri* and it is men who deal with the forces on the mountain.

Yet, the separation is not total. Just as women may occasionally, under defined conditions, become involved in male affairs (Wessing 1978, 61), Tisnawati, the sister of Nyai Lara Kidul, is the goddess of dry rice, forming a link between the dry and the wet and, since this cultivation involves both sexes, between men and women as well.

NOTE

1. The basic data for this article was collected during field research in 1970–1971, supported by the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities (MUCIA) through their grant #E-I-126. I would like to thank Kris Lehman and Susan Montague for some helpful comments on a previous draft of this paper.

2. V.O.C. stands for Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or the Dutch East Indies Company.

REFERENCES CITED

ANDERSON, Benedict R. O'G.

1972 The idea of power in Javanese culture. In *Culture and politics in Indonesia*, ed. Claire Holt. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

ANONYMOUS

1918 Lara Kidoel (Ratoe-) [Queen of the southern ocean]. In *Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, v. 2, ed. S. de Graaf and D. G. Stibbe, 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.

1982 Air liur di sebuah gua [The mouth waters in a cave]. *Tempo*, 12, 16, 19 June: 75–76.

BECKER, A. L.

1979 Text-building, epistemology and aesthetics in Javanese shadow theatre. In *The imagination of reality. Essays in Southeast Asian coherence systems*, ed. A. L. Becker and Aram A. Yengoyan. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Co.

CROOKE, W.

1955 Serpent-worship (Indian). In *Encyclopaedia of religion and ethics*, v. 11, ed. J. Hastings. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

DOWSON, John

1972 *A classical dictionary of Hindu mythology and religion, geography, history, and literature*. 12th edition. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd.

- DREWES, G.W.J.
 1929 Verboden rijkdom [Forbidden wealth]. *Djawa*, 9: 22-33.
 1985 The life-story of an old-time Priangan Regent as told by himself. *Bijdragen tot de taal, land- en volkenkunde*, 141, 4: 399-422.
- DUYVENDAK, J. Ph.
 1935 *Inleiding tot de ethnologie van de Indische archipel* [Introduction to the ethnography of the Indies archipelago]. Indische cultuur-historische bibliotheek, deel 1. Groningen Batavia: J. B. Wolters Uitgeversmaatschappij, N.V.
- ERINGA, F. S.
 1984 *Soendaas-Nederlands woordenboek* [Sundanese-Dutch dictionary]. Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.
- GRAAF, H. J. de
 1949 *Geschiedenis van Indonesië* [History of Indonesia]. 's-Gravenhage: W. van Hoeve.
 1958 *De regering van Sultan Agung, Vorst van Mataram 1613-1645 en die van zijn voorganger Panembahan seda-Ing-Krapjak 1601-1613* [The government of Sultan Agung, ruler of Mataram 1613-1645 and that of his predecessor Panembahan seda-Ing-Krapjak 1601-1613]. Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, 23. 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.
- HAAN, F. de
 1910-1913 *Priangan. De Preanger-regentschappen onder het Nederlandsch bestuur tot 1811* [Priangan. The Priangan regencies under Dutch rule until 1811]. Four volumes. Batavia: G. Kolff and Co.
- HATTA, Mohd.
 1982 *Masyarakat dan kuburan keramat* [Society and sacred graves]. Laporan hasil penelitian. Darussalam-Banda Aceh: Pusat Latihan Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Social.
- HEINE-GELDERN, Robert
 1942 Conceptions of state and kingship in Southeast Asia. *Far Eastern quarterly*, 2: 15-30.
- HIDDING, K.A.H.
 1929 *Nji Pohatji Sangiang Sri*. Proefschrift, Leiden. Leiden: M. Dubbelman.
 1933 Het bergmotief in eenige godsdienstige verschijnselen op Java [The mountain motif in some religious phenomena on Java]. *Tijdschrift voor Indische taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, 73: 469-475.
 1935 *Gebruiken en godsdienst der Soendanezen* [Usages and religion of the Sundanese]. Batavia: G. Kolff and Co.
- JORDAAN, Roy E.
 1984 The mystery of Nyai Lara Kidul, goddess of the southern ocean. *Archipel*, 28: 99-116.
- LEHMAN, F. K.
 1987 Burmese religion. In *Encyclopaedia of religion*, vol. 2, ed. M. Eliade, 574-580. New York: Macmillan.
- LOMBARD, Denys
 1974 La vision de la forêt à Java (Indonésie) [The vision of the forest in Java (Indonesia)]. *Études rurales*, 6, 53, 54, 55, 56 (January-December): 473-485.
- MACCULLOCH, J. A.
 1955 Serpent-worship: Introductory and primitive. In *Encyclopaedia of religion and ethics*, v. 11, ed. J. Hastings. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

MOESTAPA, Hadji Hasan

- 1946 *Over de gewoonten en gebruiken der Soendanezen* [About the customs and usages of the Sundanese]. *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 5. 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.

MUS, Paul

- 1975 *India seen from the East: Indian and indigenous cults in Champa*. I. W. Mabbett, tr. Monash Papers on Southeast Asia No. 3. Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University.

PARANAVITANA, C.B.E.

- 1970 Ploughing as a ritual of royal consecration in ancient Ceylon. In *R.C. Majumdar Felicitation Volume*, ed. Himansu Bhusan Sarkar. Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay.

QUARITCH WALES, H. G.

- 1953 *The mountain of god. A study in early religion and kingship*. London: Bernard Quaritch, Ltd.

RAKSAKUSUMAH, Said

- 1966 Kuburan lama dari masa Tjiung Wanara di Bandung utara [An old grave from the Ciung Wanara in north Bandung]. *Sastra dan Budaya*, 1: 11-24.

ROSIDI, Ajip

- 1977 *Si Kabayan dan beberapa dongeng Sunda lainnya* [Si Kabayan and some other Sundanese stories]. Jakarta: Gunung Agung.

SPERBER, Dan

- 1974 *Rethinking symbolism*. London: Cambridge University Press.

STUTTERHEIM, W. F.

- 1926 Oost-Java en de hemelberg [East Java and the heavenly mountain]. *Djawa*, 6: 333-349.

SUMANTRI, R. H., H. Sulaeman ANGGAPRAJA and H. Achmad SYAFE'I

- n.d. *Perkembangan pemerintahan kabupaten daerah tingkat II: Bandung dari masa ke masa* [The development of level II regency government: Bandung from era to era]. Bandung: n.p.

TURNER, Victor

- 1967 *The forest of symbols*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

VETH, P. J.

- 1896 *Java, geographisch, ethnologisch, historisch* [Java geographically, ethnologically, historically], v. 1. Haarlem: Erven F. Bohn.

WAHLBEEM, C. W.

- 1857 Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis der Soendalanden [Contributions to the history of the Sunda lands]. *Tijdschrift voor Indische taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, 6: 247-257.

WELLER, Robert P.

- 1985 Bandits, beggars, and ghosts: The failure of state control over religious interpretation in Taiwan. *American ethnologist*, 12: 46-61.

WESSING, Robert

- 1977 The position of the Baduj in the larger West Javanese society. *Man*, 12: 293-303.

- 1978 *Cosmology and social behavior in a West Javanese settlement*. Ohio University Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia series No. 47. Athens, OH: Center for International Studies.

- 1979 Life in the cosmic village: Cognitive models in Sundanese life. In *Art*,

- ritual and society in Indonesia*, ed. E. M. Bruner and J. O. Becker. Ohio University Papers in International Studies, Southeast Asia series No. 53. Athens, OH: Center for International Studies.
- 1984 Parameters of economic behavior in West Java, Indonesia. *Journal of anthropology*, 3, 3: 28-49.
- 1986 *The soul of ambiguity; The tiger in Southeast Asia*. Monograph series on Southeast Asia, Special report No. 24 DeKalb, IL: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University.
- WESTENENK, L. C.
- 1923 Boekit Segoentang en Goenoeng Mahameroe uit de sedjarah Melajoe [Mt. Seguntang and Mt. Mahameru from the Malay annals]. *Tijdschrift voor Indische taal-, land- en volkenkunde*, 63: 212-226.
- WIBOWO, A. S.
- 1971 Makam keramat banjak jang kosong? [Are many sacred graves empty?] *In-tisari*, 8, 91: 4-8.