BEATRIZ VAN DER GOES
Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, The Netherlands

Beru Dayang

The Concept of Female Spirits and the Movement of Fertility in Karo Batak Culture

Abstract

The Karo Batak inhabit the northern regions of the Bukit Barisan (a mountain range running from north to south on the island of Sumatra) and the coastal lowlands of Sumatra's east coast. The Karo of the highland plateau, nowadays called *kabupaten* Karo (Karo regency), combine agriculture with pastoralism and the collection of forest products. They live in villages, which in the hilly landscape look like small islands surrounded by wide expanses of agricultural land, savannah, and forest. Dry rice cultivation was traditionally the main agricultural activity.

The cycle of dry rice cultivation is relevant to Karo Batak village life and rituals. To the Karo, Beru Dayang, the spirit of rice, is female. In the process of growing dry rice various stages are distinguished, all bearing the ritual name of *beru dayang*. However, in certain rituals the term is applied to other visible matter, such as parts of the house, ritual equipment, and features of the surrounding landscape. This paper examines appearances of the *beru dayang* in a Karo Batak ritual chant, in dry rice cultivation, in the order of seasons, in the mythical affinity with the spirits of the *arenga* palm and rainbow, in the female body, and in the bodily elements of amniotic fluid and placenta. This leads to the question of how Beru Dayang is related to the fertility of both rice and people.

Keywords: Karo Batak—Sumatra—female spirits—embodiment—affinity

Asian Folklore Studies, Volume 56, 1997: 379–405

THIS PAPER DESCRIBES and analyzes the concept of a female spirit, called Beru Dayang, among the Karo, one of the six Batak peoples of North Sumatra, Indonesia. The term *beru dayang*[1] appears in ritual chants, in the process and rituals of growing dry rice, in the composition of equipment, and in elements that contribute to the constitution of human life.

In Karo ritual chants the *beru dayang* are addressed as grandparents (*nini*).[2] They inhabit various parts of specific domains that belong to deities called *beraspati*.[3] In this paper I will present appearances of the *beru dayang* in the domains belonging to the deity of the land(scape), Beraspati Taneh, and the deity of the house, Beraspati Rumah.

The concept of *beru dayang* or *si dayang* becomes eminently clear in the process and rituals of dry rice cultivation. A variety of plants are planted at the rice field's center, its "navel": these are thought to shelter and protect the rice spirit, Beru Dayang (or Si Dayang), during the time the rice is growing. In this context the Karo Batak conceive of Si Dayang as female and as the spiritual element of the rice (*tendi page*).[4] Her character changes in accordance with the different stages of the growing of rice, which are reflected in the names given to her between sowing and the harvest.

Beru Dayang, as rice, is part of the rainy and dry seasons and has a mythical affinity with the *arenga* palm (*pola*) and the rainbow. The spirit of the *arenga* palm, Beru Sibo, and the spirit of the rainbow, Beru Tole, accompany Beru Dayang into the field as elder (*kaka*) and younger (*agi*) cousins. A similar affinity is conceived to exist in the female body in the form of a specific interaction between the breasts (*pola*), the uterus (*mbuyak*), and the vagina (*tele memek*). At birth *si dayang* reappears in the constitution of the relationship between the child and his/her spiritual siblings: the elder (*kaka*) amniotic fluid (*gala-gala*) and the younger (*agi*) placenta.

Beru Dayang, or Si Dayang, appears as the essence of the existence of many things. In Karo Batak creation myths she lives in the moon (*Beru Dayang sinu bulan*) and produces sunshine (*Beru Dayang sindar mata ni ari*).

She appears by various names in the tools of the forge, in the components of the gun, and in the equipment for chewing betel (NEUMANN 1922, 2–3).

This paper will trace appearances of Beru Dayang in a Karo Batak ritual chant, in dry rice cultivation, in the order of seasons, in mythical affinities with the spirits of the *arenga* palm and the rainbow, in the female body, and in the birth elements of amniotic fluid and placenta. This leads to the question of how Beru Dayang is related to the fertility of both rice and people. The Karo Batak perception that birth and the rice harvest are both processes of delivery means that use of the term *fertility* is not overly abstract. In this sense fertility is connected to processes of embodiment and the correct order of relations that stimulate growth and the development of a particular body, processes in which female persons and spirits take a specific position.

BERU DAYANG IN A RITUAL CHANT

In Karo Batak society certain people, called *guru*, are said to possess two layers of eyes (*dua lapis pernin matana*), meaning that they can see two worlds, the human one and that of the spirits. The skills of these *guru* are quite diverse, and include the art of fortune-telling, performing rituals, contacting the supernatural world, and treating diseases (GINTING 1991, 85). A *guru permangmang* is a person, either male or female, who understands the messages of the spirits and represents their voices in the *mangmang*, a kind of dialogue expressed in the form of a ritual chant.[5] *Guru* compare these chants to an offering. For, as they say, in a *mangmang* words are offered and spirits are invited to the ritual. The special activity of *guru permangmang* is the recitation of personal histories, including the origin of clan membership and of the village, "kingdom," or house, and the connection of these to a mythical past, the knowledge of which has been handed down by spirit guides.[6] A *mangmang persentabin* is a ritual chant in which spirits are addressed in a singsong manner to ask for protection and success in the ritual. The text of a chant is in general composed of several other *mangmang*, like a *mangmang jabu* (addressing the living place), a *mangmang rumah* (addressing the structure of the house), or a *mangmang kuta* (addressing the village), in which each chant addresses a different level of space and of ritual organization. As each ritual has its own context and specific offering, a *guru* through a *mangmang persentabin* reorganizes various rituals into a total context.

The Part as a Whole

Below I present some fragments of a *mangmang persentabin* that used to be sung at the inauguration of a house.[7] Like all *mangmang persentabin*, it consists of two main parts. The first part addresses the deity of the earth, Beraspati Taneh, and the beings called *beru dayang*. The second part is devoted to

Beraspati Rumah (the deity of the house) and the entities called either *beru dayang* or *sibayak* (rich person) that together constitute a house. As such the relationship between the *beraspati* and the *beru dayang* is conceptualized as one between a whole and its parts. The *beraspati* embody whole spaces, like landscapes, villages, or houses, while the *beru dayang* occupy a place, like a significant feature in the landscape[8] or an important element of the house. However, sometimes the part a *beru dayang* occupies stands for the whole, in which case there is no clear distinction between the *beraspati* and *beru dayang*. The following fragment is a case in point.

I maka kam dage nini beraspati taneh enda arih
i japa nari nge ndia ku mulai
adi das nari ngenda ndi dalen ku teruh
entah teruh nari kari erdalen ku datas arih
entah si lebe gia kari ku tengah ku pudi nini
ula karo sangkut-sangkut ukurndu
entah si pudi gia kari ku lebe ku tengah ku pudi
ula kari sangkut-sangkut ukurndu
aku nini kuturiken nge gia kari kerina
kugelari me kari gelarndu
si arah lebe ngenda man ikutenku nini
ula kari tama ngindet-ngindet

—

I maka kam nge lebe ku gelari gelarndu nini
kam si ngian-ngian datas deleng si meganjang ena nini
gelarndu kepe nini beru dayang si menatap-natap arih

So you, the grandparent *beraspati* of this land(scape)
from where shall I start
if I start from the top I must continue to the bottom
if I start from the bottom I must continue to the top
maybe I shall place the first one at the center, or at the back
please do not feel offended
maybe I shall place the last one at the front, at the
center, or at the back
please, do not feel offended
I shall uncover everything, grandparent
I shall mention your name
I just follow what has been done before, grandparent
please, let no one fall ill

—

I shall mention your name first, grandparent
you who lives on that high forested mountain, grandparent

your name is lady [*beru dayang*] with a panoramic view, isn't it?

In this text the deity of the earth, grandparent Beraspati Taneh, may be addressed from different perspectives: from top to bottom, from bottom to top, from the front to the center on to the back, from the back to the center on to the front. When the *guru* decides to follow what has been done by others before, he first addresses the one who lives on the high forested mountain, whose name is *beru dayang si manatap-natap*, "the lady with a panoramic view." In this way he follows the line from top to bottom, by which the top, the first to be mentioned, represents the whole body. In this case *beru dayang si manatap-natap* is the part that represents the *beraspati*.

The total body of Beraspati Taneh is further made visible by addressing significant parts of the land(scape), moving from the top part, the high forested mountain, to the lower lying parts:

> You, who lives on these high hills, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang penungkir-nungkir; you, who lives in the extended savannah flatlands, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang tikar markimbang kahe-kahe kolu-kolu; you, who lives in the basin land, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang si manjilam dang-dang so bias; you, who lives in the ravines (and) the long, deep and narrow river banks, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang si mangaloken; you, who lives in the middle of the wide ocean, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang saniang naga bagas sampuren; you, who lives in the fast current river, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang si bagas sampuren.[9]

In the second part of the chant, the invocation addresses the deity of the house, Beraspati Rumah, and mentions significant parts of this total body. Moving again from high to low it starts with:

> You, who lives at the ridge of the house, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang si manatap-natap; you, who lives in the center of this living place, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang pepulungken; you, who lives in this central hearthstone, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang perunggu-rungguken; you, who lives at the navel of the hearth, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang si manjilam dangdang so bias; you, who lives in the ashes of the fireplace, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang penggeser-geser; you, who lives at the gully/walkway, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang pagodang-godangken; you, who lives at the doors, your name is grandparent Beru Dayang penung-gu-nunggu; you, who lives in the surroundings of this house, your

name is grandparent Beru Dayang perjaga-jaga perbelat perbalengen.[10]

Each part addressed reveals its function to the total body; the specific name of the *beru dayang* is generally connected to the protective role as ascribed to them, and reflects the specific character of the place they occupy. An example is the following fragment of the navel of the hearth, which is used for burning ensorceled objects.

I maka kam pe nini
singian-ngian ibas pusung dapur ena arih
kam pe kugelari ka nge gelarndu nini
gelarndu kepe beru dayang simanjilam dangdang so bias
aku ngelaga aku nina buluh laga
silamndu labo erbias-bias nini
enda pe bage me nini
adi lit kin gia nipi jahat nipi gulut
entem-entemen nu begu
adi lit kin gia ulah-ulah kalak si la mehuli rukur
adi lit kin gia singabat ngali aku nina
silamndu nini
maka sikap kari runggunta enda nini

Also you, grandparent
who lives at the navel of this hearth
I shall also address your name, grandparent
your name is lady whose flames lick everything
I wish to excel myself, said the bamboo
your fire tongues are sufficient, grandparent
to threat with, grandparent
whether someone has a bad dream (or) a nightmare
is menaced by a ghost
or whether there is sorcery from persons with bad thoughts
whether something is obstructed or thwarted, I said
please let your fire lick it, grandparent
so that this meeting can be arranged, grandparent

The *beru dayang* of the hearth is thought to be like fire—her flames protect the "owners" of the hearth from sorcery and nightmares. Nevertheless, the whole body of a *mangmang persentabin* text disentangles a *beraspati* into several *beru dayang* by which a place is conceived to be the location of a specific *beru dayang*.

Parallel Movements

Although the land(scape) and the house are conceived of as distinct bodies, they are addressed in parallel order by the *beru dayang* in *mangmang persentabin* chants. Starting at the highest part of both domains, like the high forested mountain and the ridge of the house, it continues downward to the lower-lying parts, like the wide ocean and the foundation of the house. At the end all the disengaged parts of the land(scape) and the house are reconnected by one of its parts, such as the river or the surroundings.

In a sense some *beru dayang* are also seen as coordinate, as can be noted in the identity of the names given to some of them. Thus, in the above chant the spirits of the high forested mountain and the roof-ridge are both *beru dayang si menatap-natap*, "the lady with a panoramic view," revealing a parallelism between the domains of forested mountain land and the house's roof. Another point of coordination is Beru Dayang si manjimlam dangdang so bias, who is part both of the land(scape) and of the house.

Such a parallelism becomes significant for locations related to ritual. In the ritual that destroys sorcery, for instance, the sorcery is thrown away into a basin area (*taneh mate*) or burnt at the navel of the hearth (*pusung dapur*). Many chants conceive of both these places as the location of the same Beru Dayang manjilam dangdang so bias, whose character is like a flame that licks everything.[11] In the practice of dry rice agriculture this basin land becomes the field's navel, and forms the ritual center of Si Dayang.

Beru Dayang and Dry Rice Cultivation

The Body of the Rice Field

A Karo Batak dry rice field is usually a square bordered by a fence or various types of shrubs. The fields should be placed at right angles to any nearby river, which is said to prevent the river from washing away the rice. In the center of the field a small garden of about a *depa* (fathom; six feet)[12] square may be found. The plants that grow here are, generally, *besi-besi* (turmeric; *Curcuma longa*), *sangke sempilet* (*Justica gendarusa*), *kalinjuhang* (*Cordyline fructicosa*), *nderasi* (*Villebrunea rubesceus*, a native forest tree), *sere-sere* (lemon grass; *Andropogon nardus*), *kapal-kapal* (*Kalanchoe pinnata*), and *galuh si tabar* (banana; *Musa brachycarpa Backer*) (Ginting 1994, 26; Heyne 1927). The small garden is called *pemenan* (starting point), *perbenihen* (seedling place), *pusung juma* (field's navel), *piseren* (crown), and also *ingan tendi page* (the place of the rice-spirit). As a group all of the plants grown are called *bulung si malem-malem* (leaves that bring coolness).

The garden comprises the above-mentioned "navel," which, ideally, is made in a small basin area (*taneh mate*; lit., "dead land"), that is, a poorly drained low-lying area. Crops planted in this place would be parched. If the

field lacks such a location, the center of the field will serve. According to informants, the garden offers Beru Dayang shelter in the field, making the field a location of Beru Dayang. The time that Beru Dayang is expected to enter a rice field and the manner in which she grows into a particular body are evident in the cycle of Karo Batak dry rice cultivation.

Creating a Dry Rice Field

Prospective locations for dry rice fields are usually discovered in the forest by men while hunting or collecting forest products (GINTING 1994, 26). When a good site is found an area of about a *depa* square is cleared in its center, into which a betel leaf jammed in a stick is placed.[13] A handful of fragrant soil is then taken home and put beneath the pillow.[14] A good dream that night is taken as an omen that the field is ready to be cultivated (TAMPENAWAS 1894, 240; NEUMANN 1902b, 374–75; JOUSTRA 1902c, 424; SLAATS AND PORTIER 1994, 188–89). The borders of the field are indicated by planting shrubs at regular intervals; in eastern Karoland one often sees borders of *ḳalinjuhang* (*Cordyline fructicosa*). In the past one saw borders, not only of *ḳalinjuhang* and *arimas* (crotons; *Codiaeum variegatum*), but also of *jaba* (*Eleusina coracana*), a kind of millet (JOUSTRA 1899, 128; 1907, 45; 1910, 287; INLICHTINGEN 1912, 176). After a field has been marked off a working group (*aron*) prepares it for sowing. In the past working groups that cleared the land and harvested the crop were made up of young, unmarried people. Nowadays this is done by married couples, as young people are absent, continuing their education in the city.

After the fields had been cleared the young men and girls of the working groups celebrated the end of their work with a feast that lasted for two days (JOUSTRA 1898, 298). DE HAAN mentions that during these days the young people bathed together,[15] and at night danced in the village square and flirted, while married couples remained awake to tend the fires in the hearths, which were not allowed to go out (1875, 40–41). This feast, called *guro guro aron*, is still celebrated, although in different areas it is held at different stages of the growth of the rice. In Liang Melas, in the northwestern part of Karoland, it is connected with sowing (*merdang-merdem*), while in the Gunung-gunung area near Mt Sinabung it is held when the fruit sets in the panicles (*mbeltek pagé*, *erbunga benih*), when the rice is about three months old (GINTING 1986, 80). Other areas hold it at harvest time (*rani*).

Sowing

When the time for sowing approaches, the owners of the field first create the field's navel in, as mentioned earlier, a basin or the center of the field. Some of the plants planted in the garden there, *bulung si malem-malem* ("leaves

that bring coolness"), serve mainly ritual purposes.[16] Others are used as cooking spices or as medicines (GINTING 1994, 45–47). When a field has never been cultivated before, food and a live white rooster are offered on an altar at the navel. The rooster is then released as a gift to the spirit of the forest (GINTING 1994, 27).[17]

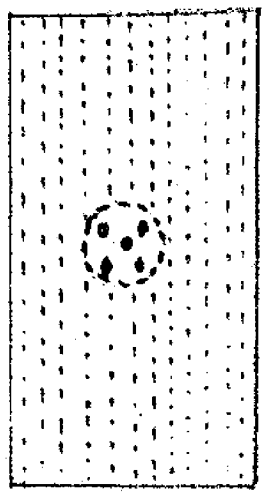

FIGURE 1a. Rice field and its navel

After the field's navel has been made, the name of the original basin area changes from *taneh mate* to *pemenan* (starting point) or *perbenihen* (from *benih*, "seed"), and becomes the locus of Si Dayang, the rice spirit (NEUMANN 1904a, 130) (see figure 1a). The field's navel is thus the location where death and life connect or where death reproduces life. This life—the rice seeds to be sown at the navel—is thought to be protected by the navel's plants. As at the first claiming of the field, a betel leaf, the stalk of which is oriented towards Mt Sibuaten, is jammed in a stick and placed in the center;[18] this ritual act is thought to invite Si Dayang to come to the navel, the center of the field.

Eleven holes are then dibbled in the garden, into each of which rice seeds are placed. These rice seeds are "descended" from the previous harvest, and are thought to be direct descendants of the first rice. Ideally, the grains of these rice plants are never eaten, but are planted, time and again, at the field's navel. A newlywed couple is given its starting seeds by the bride's mother, a few weeks after the wedding (GINTING 1994, 31). This rice will ripen earlier than the other rice in the field. A few days before the harvest the villagers choose eleven of the best stalks, bind them together, and place them within the roof-covering of the field hut (JOUSTRA 1897, 155; 1902c, 425). They may also bring them home (NEUMANN 1902b, 379; GINTING 1994, 31). When sowing the rest of the field, the navel is the point from which the workers must always start (NEUMANN 1902b, 376; KIPP 1987, 261). A few days later the entire field is sown to rice, which at this stage is called *beru dayang manercer*, "the scattered lady."

In former times, the time for sowing (*merdang*) was indicated by the appearance of the *bintang periama* (Pleiades) early in the morning in the eastern part of the sky (NEUMANN 1902b, 377; 1905, 54). Planting was supposed to start at the field belonging to the village's founder. This was an

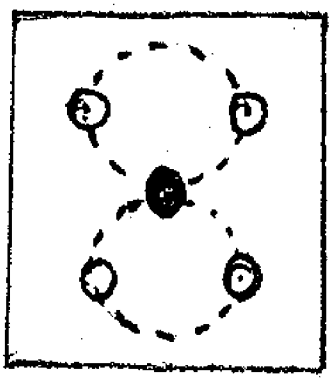

FIGURE 1b. The five hearthstones

important ritual event in which dreams and the sounds of birds were heeded as omens indicative of the abundance of the coming harvest. For four days the village was closed off from the outside world, as all had to remain silent and undisturbed. Sowing one's field is today still a ritual occasion to which relatives are invited to participate (*serayan*). Men rake the rows and dibble the holes, while women follow behind sowing the seeds. These activities are seen as analogous to sexual intercourse, and the dibble stick is usually carved to resemble a penis. The family that owns the field provides a lunch of rice, vegetables, and the meat of a speckled rooster (*manuk cabur bintang*, sprinkled with stars).

The rooster's head, feathers, tail, stomach, and nails are buried at the field's navel (GINTING 1994, 45), following a myth about the origin of the plants there. These plants are said to have come from the body parts of a male mythical bird (*manuk danggur dawa-dawa daluna*) that had been violently struck down by a god (DE HAAN 1875, 15–16; WESTENBERG 1892, 218; NEUMANN 1902b, 376; JOUSTRA 1907, 121).[19] According to this myth, rice originated from one of the mythical bird's eggs (*manuk danggur dawa-dawa beruna*) (JOUSTRA 1907, 122). The myth further relates that the male mythical bird is a transformation of a *manuk cabur bintang*, a speckled rooster that had been created by the god of the middle world from four different kinds of rice (JOUSTRA 1907, 109–11).[20]

According to the Karo Batak, the transformation of a bird into the plants at the field's navel should be seen in the context of the exchange of gifts at marriage, of which the presentation and consumption of a *manuk cabur bintang* is an important part. Early in the morning the boiled rooster, an egg, and some cooked rice are brought to the bride's house. This food is a gift from a group of women from the groom's side headed by his father's sister and also including his mother, mother's sister, mother's mother, and mother's brother's wife. These five women represent the body of the groom and the hearth of his house (see figure 1b).

To understand this, we must keep in mind that marriage among the Karo Batak comprises several phases in which various forms of exchange

take place between the groom's side (*si empo*, the wife taker) and the bride's side (*si nereh*, the wife giver). These exchanges always occur at the bride's place, and are between the various categories of persons constituting the male and female relatives of both sides. The gift of the speckled rooster represents the complementary exchange between the bodies of groom and bride, by which they become united into a complete body with the numerical value of eleven, which stands for the male and female elements plus one, totality itself. The Karo express this as *ersada tendi ke rumah*: "the spirit is one with the house." Marriage and the complementarity of male and female are connected to the mother's brother's house. The mother's brother is the visible god, *dibata ni idah*. The food is in turn received by five women, headed by the bride's mother's brother's wife, who is accompanied by the bride's mother, her father's sister, her mother's sister, and her mother's mother. These recipients, who are "the trunk of the bride's body," eat the proffered food. The five women represent the bride's reproductive life force: the *ingan mola jadi*, the five places in the human body from where life emerges (see figure 1c), the re-creation of which belongs to the responsibilities of the mother's brother's house. The rooster represents the male element, the egg the female element, and the rice the children (GINTING 1994, 56–58; GINTING and VAN DER GOES 1994, 57).

FIGURE 1c. The *ingan mola jadi*, the places from which life sprouts

The bird, transformed into plants, is also thought to create a cool place where the rice spirit, Si Dayang, can prosper (GINTING 1994, 30). Ritual specialists often advise prospective marriage partners to lay out such a place on their field, as it is said that their *tendi* (spiritual element) secretly desires it (WESTENBERG 1892, 230). Such a place is called an *upah tendi*, "a gift to one's spirit" that gives it satisfaction and makes it unlikely to leave.[21]

The rice is thought to take root directly after the seeds have been sown into the earth. This stage is known as *beru dayang marsuli*, "the lady that takes root."

Growth

Two rituals are performed in the field while the rice is growing (GINTING 1994, 47–49). The first, called *ngambur-ngamburi* (to pour upon), takes

place a month after planting. Here rice plants are sprinkled with a medicine made from a mixture of water, river sand, and the leaves of the plants growing at the field's center. A yellow rooster is killed and its outer body parts are, once again, planted at the navel. At this stage the rice is known as *beru dayang maranaḳ*, "the lady multiplies," referring to the "pregnancy" of the rice plants and the multiplication of the number of sown seeds.

The second ritual, *mere page*, is to feed the rice offerings. It comes three months after sowing when the rice has reached the stage where the fruit sets in the panicles and is called *beltek laḳi pagé* (JOUSTRA 1910, 175; GINTING 1994, 48) or *si dayang tertuwang* (GUILLAUME 1903, 9).[22] In this ritual, eleven small cooked river fish wrapped in a palm leaf are offered at the field's navel, together with glutinous rice cooked in bamboo. The food is placed at the *perbenihen*, where the rice is courteously addressed: "May all be well with you, *si naiḳ* (the growing one), *si buah* (the fruit-bearing one), *si nangḳih* (the rising one) (NEUMANN 1902b, 379–380; JOUSTRA 1910, 175; KIPP 1987, 263).

Harvest

The ritual picking of the rice stalks at the field's navel, called *mutiḳ beru dayang*, announces the coming of the harvest (JOUSTRA 1902c, 425; NEUMANN 1902b, 378–379; GINTING 1994, 49–50). This ritual portrays the birth of the not yet fully ripened rice, which at this stage is called *si dayang marayo*, "the lady with a face" (GUILLAUME 1903, 9). The woman who owns the field first removes five fistfuls of the rice planted at the center, cutting it with a knife called a *pengetam* rather than a sickle. She next embraces their

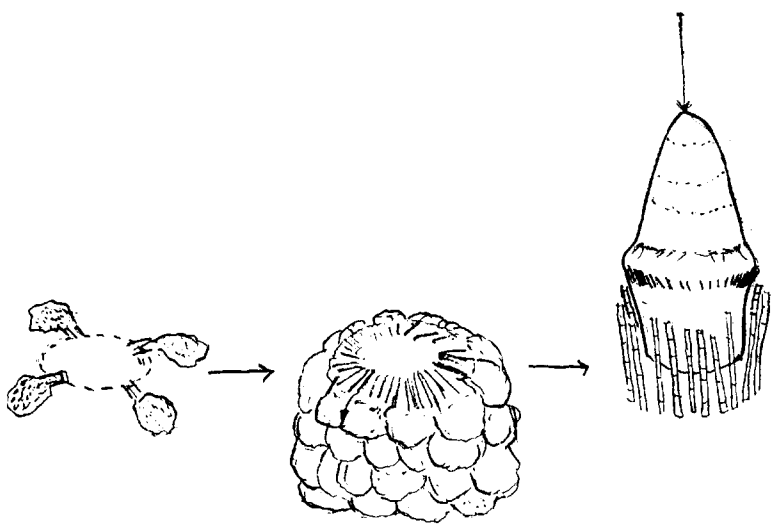

FIGURE 2. The component parts of the rice sheaf

stalks as if they were a newborn baby, then ties them with grass and cuts them with the *pengetam*. The stalks are bound together with some of the "cooling leaves" from the field's navel and with several other plants bearing auspicious names (GINTING 1994, 49–50). This bunch is then tied to the roof beam of the field hut or brought home and placed on the rack (*para-para*) above the hearth (JOUSTRA 1902c, 425; NEUMANN 1902b, 378; GINTING 1994, 50). Next, eleven sheaves of rice are harvested from the field's edges and offered at the village's most important sacred place, the *sembahen kuta* at the women's bathing place.[23] They are then taken home, pounded, roasted, and made into *pahpah* (a kind of cracker) and served with palm sugar and scraped coconut (GINTING 1994, 50).

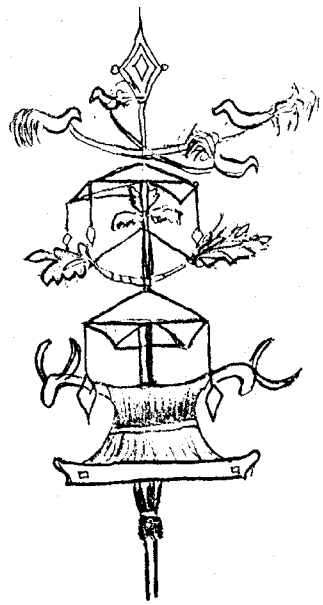

FIGURE 3. The *anggir-anggir*, the decoration on top of the highest rice sheaf

After the rice has matured, the actual harvest (*rani*) takes place. At this stage the rice is addressed as *si dayang perpulungen*, "the lady that brings us together" (GUILLAUME 1903, 9). The ears are cut one by one, bunched, and placed on the ground to dry.[24] When the rice is dry, the bunches are stacked into several different kinds of piles, each with its own name (see figure 2). The rice is now called *beru dayang margungun*, "the lady that is piled up."

In the past, the largest of these piles was called the *pinuh* (JOUSTRA 1902c, 425; NEUMANN 1902b, 380; KIPP 1987, 266), which is the word for the first fistfuls of rice cut without stalks using the *pengetam* knife. This pile was decorated, the most elaborate form of decoration being a bamboo called *anggir-anggir* (swing). This bamboo, which was adorned with wooden birds, white chicken feathers, and a diamond twined from black, white, and red thread, was placed on top of a miniature house roof and shaded by square awnings (see figure 3).[25] The decorations were intended specifically for the topmost bundle of rice, the *takal pinuh* (head of the *pinuh*); this is the seat of the rice spirit, which is now thought of as a full person.

Where the preharvest activities are seen as the birth of the rice, the later treatment of it is thought of as analogous to the growth of a female child into

a young woman. The decorated and shade-giving miniature house roof is made in order to invite the rice spirit, Beru Dayang, to move away from the field's navel into this new house, that is, to accompany the harvested rice.

Some days later the rice grains are threshed, which was formerly the work of adolescent boys and girls and for which clear moonlit nights were preferred (JOUSTRA 1902c, 425). At this time the *takal pinuh* is treated with special care. According to NEUMANN (1902b, 381), a girl with an auspicious name, such as Si Ngikut (the obedient one) or Si Ras (the one who accompanies), and both of whose parents were still alive, was chosen to handle this bunch of rice. The *takal pinuh* is not threshed, but spewed with betel juice and placed in a winnowing tray (*ndiru*), where it was used for prognostic purposes (NEUMANN 1906, 510). After threshing it was placed in the middle of the threshed rice, which is now called *anak beru* (literally "female child," a term used for daughters, their husbands, and children) (NEUMANN 1902b, 380–381; KIPP 1987, 267).

The next morning the threshed rice, now called *beru dayang mardolan*, "the ladies that are walking home in turns," was brought to the village by adolescent boys and girls in large plaited storage bags and stored in the rice barn.[26] At this moment its name changed into *beru dayang marpulung*, "the gathered ladies" (GUILLAUME 1903, 10). When all the grain had been stored, an egg or stone was placed on top to guard it.[27] The *takal pinuh* was then placed on top of the egg or stone and offered betel and food. It was left there for as long as there was rice in the bin (NEUMANN 1902b, 381–382; JOUSTRA 1902c, 425–426; KIPP 1987, 267–268).

THE AFFINITY OF BERU DAYANG WITH THE SEASONS

The cycle of sowing and harvesting of dry rice is connected to the *arenga* palm and the rainbow and linked with the alternating periods of the wet and dry monsoons, which are determined by Sumatra's equatorial climate. The best time to sow is at the start of the heavy rains, between September and the end of December, or at the start of the lighter wet season, between January and June. Just as rain is needed for growth, so wind is necessary for drying the harvest and, especially, winnowing the grain.[28] The dry season is dominated by a dry western wind that generally blows between June and July. Both the wet and dry monsoon, then, contribute to the rice-growing process.

In discussing the seasons, the Karo Batak mention that Beru Dayang does not enter the field alone, but is accompanied by Beru Sibo and Beru Tole, who are respectively Beru Dayang's elder (*kaka*) and younger (*agi*) cousins. There is no special tradition or myth explaining why they are her elder and younger cousins. In fact both have their own myths of origin, which do not refer to the other.

Beru Sibo, the Elder

The *arenga* palm (*pola*) is one indicator of seasonal change among the Karo. The *arenga*, which is grown in a small grove near the village, produces a juice (also called *pola*) that is tapped early in the morning and in the afternoon to be used as a drink or cooked into sugar. In former times, if the rice harvest had been inadequate the sago from this palm was used as a substitute food (DE HAAN 1875, 36; JOUSTRA 1903, 229). A decline in sap production indicates the approach of the rainy season, while an increase signals the start of the dry season.

This sap, which Karo Batak associate with water, is the spiritual element of the *arenga* palm; dreams about quagmires or an abundance of water were interpreted to mean the collection of much sap (NEUMANN 1904b, 368–69). This palm tree is said to be the incarnation of Beru Sibo, an adolescent girl younger than her six brothers. Her brothers left the village and travelled to all directions of the compass, where they involved themselves in gambling. Unable to repay their gambling debts, they were incarcerated by a village headman who promised to free them if the girl would become his wife. In despair Beru Sibo went to the forest and cried, then stamped the ground seven times and transformed into a palm tree. By producing palm water she could repay her brothers' gambling debts, as the sap or sugar could be sold (KAROSEKALI 1987). In another version of the myth, her brothers' quarrel about her bride price caused her to sink into the earth while dancing and singing. While singing she told her brothers, "Don't fight each other about the price of my body. Some days later you will find an *arenga* palm growing here. That is my body. You can tap its water (*pola*), make palm sugar (*gula*), and sell this on the market. That is the price of my body."

Both versions of the myth describe the origin of the *arenga* palm as the result of Beru Sibo's sacrifice for her brothers. Even today collectors of palm water, which are only men, treat the *arenga* palm as a sister (*turang*). *Pola* is also the word for a woman's breasts, the milk of which is like the sap of the palm. To Karo women, however, Beru Sibo is not just the spirit of the palm tree, which humidifies the land and refreshes people with its sap, but is regarded as Beru Dayang's elder, who accompanies her after the seeds have been planted in the rice field.

Beru Tole, the Younger

As was mentioned above, a dry wind is needed at harvest time. When the wind does not blow, the women complain that this is because Beru Tole has preceded Beru Dayang rather than followed her, as she properly should. Beru Tole (also known as Tole Mamana) is the spirit of the rainbow, which the Karo Batak associate with a long dry season. They say that one end of the rainbow is looking for water, especially that of the women's bathing

place, which, as we have seen, has ritual significance. Long periods of dry weather, which can lead to crop failure, cholera, and skin disease, were thought to be caused by incestuous relationships (*sumbang*), as in the myth of Beru Tole (KIPP 1979, 1; NEUMANN 1927, 525; SLAATS AND PORTIER 1994, 239).

The myth concerns the relationship between a sister's daughter named Beru Tole and her mother's brother, called a *mama*. One day the mother's brother was on a bamboo watchtower (*pantar*) in the field, guarding the rice crops from birds. Beru Tole's mother asked her to bring him some food. Beru Tole was reluctant to do so, but her mother insisted. When she arrived at the foot of the watchtower Beru Tole said, "I am bringing your lunch, *mama*." "Bring it up to me," he answered. The most important part of the myth, which I collected from a storyteller,[29] is a long dialogue between Beru Tole and her mother's brother, who persuades her to climb the watchtower ladder step by step. When she finally reached the top he makes incestuous love with her. Immediately afterwards she gives birth, and she and her lover do not dare come down from the tower. When her mother comes to the field she hears the crying of the baby. Ashamed of the child, Beru Tole tells her mother that the sound was made by the mother's brother's cat.[30] When the villagers hear what had happened they try to tear the structure down. Beru Tole, her lover, and their offspring escape by fleeing to the sky, where they are transformed into the rainbow.

The Affinity of Beru Dayang, Beru Sibo, and Beru Tole

As mentioned above, the relationship between Beru Sibo, Beru Dayang, and Beru Tole is based not on their appearance in the same myth (their myths being different), but on an affinity arising from the fact that all of their myths concern specific kinds of love relations that constitute incest. Beru Sibo represents the cool refreshing affectionate love between brothers and sisters, which functions as the spirit of male love, as a young man calls his lover "sister" (*turang*). Beru Tole represents the love relation with the mother's brother, which functions as the spirit of female love, as an adolescent girl calls her lover "mother's brother" (*mama*). In other words, within the permitted relationship expressed by a marriage, the couple address each other with terms that reflect prohibited relations. On the other hand, Beru Dayang, as the spirit of love between mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's son, combines both these prohibited relations into a permissible sexual and affectionate love. Beru Dayang then, as the rice, unites the wet and dry seasons by means of the preferred form of marriage relation, and turns the *arenga* palm and rainbow into her elder and younger cousins. These two spirits in turn accompany Beru Dayang to the rice field. In the correct order, Beru Sibo precedes Beru Dayang and Beru Tole follows her.

The Embodiment of Affinity

Reproduction

Beru Dayang and her cousins each occupy a part of the female body: Beru Sibo centers at the woman's breast (which, as we have seen, is called *pola*, along with the *arenga* palm), Beru Dayang at the uterus (*mbuyak*),[31] and Beru Tole at the vagina (*tele memek*). This elder-younger relationship also represents the correct order for movements during sexual intercourse and is thought to aid conception. In the ideal Beru Sibo, Beru Dayang, and Beru Tole order of lovemaking, first the breasts are fondled and then the belly, and this is followed by intercourse.

Barrenness and miscarriage are symptoms that may be caused by reversing the three-cousin order of entering a woman's body.[32] To correct these conditions the Karo Batak practice a shock ritual, called *nengget*. For instance, during the couple's dinner a gong may be beaten or water may be poured over the woman. Another shock is to confront her with a man who stands in a prohibited relation (*rebu*) to her, such as her husband's sister's husband (*turangku*) (Ginting 1989).

The same concept of disorder is applied when the dry season lasts too long—a woman who has married a categorial mother's brother (*mama*) is thought to be the cause. In the ritual of calling the rainy season (*ndilo wari udan*), she will have water poured over her and be mockingly called Tole Mamana.[33] In order to reinstate the correct order of dry and rainy seasons, the villagers divided themselves into two opposing parties who seek out and pour water upon each other's prohibited relations (Kipp 1979, 6–7). In this way Beru Tole, as well as the dry season, will turn over to stand in line behind her elder cousins. By pressuring the earth, the villagers invite Beru Sibo and the rainy season to enter the village.[34]

Birth

At birth humans are said to have guardian siblings, spiritual beings born at the same time as the person and who act as the person's guardian throughout life. The amniotic fluid and the placenta, which respectively precede and follow the birth, and which the Karo Batak call either *saudara daging* (sibling of the body) or *saudara tendi* (sibling of the soul), act as elder and younger sibling to the child (Westenberg 1892, 229; Joustra 1902c, 407). The amniotic fluid is called *si dayang mengencak*," the lady that seeped away," and the placenta is referred to as *si dayang menimpus*, "the lady that covers something" (Neumann 1904a, 133). It is said of the elder sibling that she lives at the threshold (*danggulen*) to the door, while the younger sibling is said to live below the house, where the placenta is buried (Westenberg 1892, 229; Joustra 1902c, 407). Si Dayang (i.e., the person) herself lives

inside the house, or inside the moon, as the house is ritually known, together with a cat and a dog and spends her time weaving (NEUMANN 1904a, 141).[35] In the end she escapes as a white bird (NEUMANN 1905, 55).

The Interrelationship between Rice and the Human Body

A white bird, *manuk-manuk si mbulan*, is an image used for the soul (*tendi*) in the ritual of calling a lost soul (*raleng tendi*). In order that it be caught, it has to be enticed by chants and by leaves, which represent the total natural landscape. It is placed into a basket and enclosed in a protected space, like a body, a house, or a rice field.[36]

During pregnancy the spirit of both the rice and the human fetus are nourished at specific points of their development; the rice one month after being sown, and the fetus on the hundredth night of its existence. By being fed they are, in a sense, made identical with the species of animal or fish that they are fed with. The consumption of a yellow chicken, cooked into a curry (*manuk sangkepi* or *manuk ratur*)[37] starts this phase, in which the protection of the spirit is taken over by the woman's brother or parents (GINTING 1995, 9).[38] At the second nourishment ritual for the spirits of both the rice and the fetus, fish is added. In the seventh month of pregnancy the woman is visited by her brother or her parents, who bring a yellow chicken, crickets, and a *cibakut* fish;[39] this ritual celebrates the two-hundredth night, in which the fetus is thought to change into an animal that builds its home in the mud, with both crickets and mudfish representing this embryonic phase (GINTING 1995, 9). Similarly, eleven small cooked river fish are offered to the spirit of the rice on the hundredth night of its growth. According to informants, this fish, called *nurung kaperas*, should be caught in a large river by women using a scoop-net. The informants explicitly stressed the importance of the fish's nondomesticated nature.

The ritual phases of rice growth and the human prenatal life, then, mark transformations of a spirit from the sky, which is enticed and trapped by women using the natural vegetation. However, the human spirit is fed with the inner parts of domesticated fowl and animals belonging to the wet soil, while the rice, although it grows on the land, is fed with the outer parts of the fowl and with fish belonging to the river rather than to the land. By referring to rice as their daughters (*anak beru*), Karo Batak women mean to say that they are like both the rice seeds and the fish. Although born from the inside, they may not continue their inside relationship with the land by means of extending territory and replanting it—such a thing would be thought incestuous. Therefore, they have to move outside by marrying out, as symbolized by the river and the borders of house and field.[40] Nevertheless, as ones on the "outside," the *anak beru* (the daughters, their husbands, and

their children) become an indispensable part of the society as a whole. Like the boundaries, they protect the land, the house, or the field, and contribute in this way to the prosperity of its owners. The same can be said of the rice. Cooked, she becomes *si dayang merkata kata*, "the lady that gives speech," and served, she is, most importantly, *si dayang menjadikan jelma*, "the lady that makes humans" (GUILLAUME 1903, 9–10).[41]

CONCLUSION

In their ritual chants of *mangmang persentabin* the Karo Batak address the *beru dayang* as grandparents who are a part of the domains of a *beraspati*. These *beru dayang* inhabit places located in the land(scape) and the house, which each have their own ritual significance. In the chant these spirits are united into a total body, the space of which stands in relation to the context of the specific ritual. *Guru* therefore compare these invocations to offerings.

In the dry rice cultivation Beru Dayang is the ritual center of the rice field. The various stages in the process of growing dry rice, which are all ritually addressed as *si dayang*, contribute to the birth of the rice as a particular body. However, the growth of Beru Dayang as rice does not stand on its own, but is connected to the *arenga* palm and the rainbow and linked with the alternating periods of the wet and dry monsoons. Beru Dayang then, as rice, unites the wet and dry seasons by means of the prescriptive form of marriage relations, and turns the *arenga* palm and rainbow into her elder and younger cousins. In this prescriptive form of marriage between mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's son, Beru Dayang encompasses the love relations of both *mama* and *turang*. These love relations are constituted on a prohibition of incest between brother and sister, as told in the myth of origin of the *arenga* palm, and between mother's brother and sister's daughter as told in the myth of origin of the rainbow. In permitted love relations, the terms *mama* and *turang* become expressions of endearment used by females and males.

Together Beru Dayang and her cousins constitute certain embodiments of seasons, sexual intercourse, reproduction, and birth, related to the female body and created on the basis of exchange. Exchange relations as constituted by marriage serve the reproduction of the human life force and the rice. The consumption of a rooster at marriage and the burial of a rooster at the field's navel should be understood in this context. Similarly, the ritual of calling back a lost soul is a repetition of the marriage of the person's parents. At the end the buried, eaten, or caught bird or rooster will transform into a complete new body, Si Dayang, whose form will be that of a human or of rice.

NOTES

* The author is indebted to Jarich Oosten and Robert Wessing for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

1. The word *beru* means "women," "girl," "beauty," and "new shoot" (NEUMANN 1951, 48); *dayang* is a lady-in-waiting (NEUMANN 1951, 64). As such a *beru dayang* is connected to palaces and kingdoms.

2. *Nini* is also a polite term of address for spirits.

3. The Karo Batak distinguish five *beraspati*. These are Beraspati Taneh (deity of the earth), Beraspati Lau (deity of the water), Beraspati Kerangan (deity of the forest), Beraspati Kabang (deity of those that fly), and Beraspati Rumah (deity of the house). Although there is a similarity between this term *beraspati* and the *banaspati* of Java and Bali, the latter refers to a forest spirit that later gained an evil reputation (VAN HIEN 1912, 143–44). In India, Vanaspati is the "Lord of the Forest," referring to a large tree (STUTLEY and STUTLEY 1984, 322). This same idea is found in Bali, where a shrine to him is located underneath a very large banyan tree (*Ficus benjamina*) located on the outer square of a temple (BELO 1966, 43–44).

4. Si Dayang, as rice, is thought of as a person and is addressed as such (NEUMANN 1904a, 10). JOUSTRA points out a more than coincidental similarity with the Javanese rice spirit Dewi Sri, but adds that Si Dayang also represents medical and ritual knowledge (1907, 59).

5. Like that of all ritual specialists, the specialization of a *guru permangmang* is thought to derive from spirit guides (*jinujung*) that he or she has married, and that enable the *guru* to communicate with other spirits. Each person is thought to have a *jinujung* (from the word *jujung*, to carry on the head) that guides him from the moment he is considered old enough to wander alone in the immediate surroundings of the village. These spirits belong to the opposite sex, with a male carrying a female spirit and vice versa (JOUSTRA 1897, 146–48; NEUMANN 1902a, 36). However, some *jinujung* also have another role, that of deciding whether a person becomes a *guru* (NEUMANN 1904b, 364). These *jinujung* are the spirits of persons who died a sudden death, and act as mediums (*perkentas*) between the *guru* and other spirits (JOUSTRA 1897, 146; 1907, 77). As HUMPHREY (1995, 153) pointed out for Mongolian shamanism, the souls of the remarkable dead, or people who died in a strange way, become the spirit-rulers of the land.

6. Among the various kinds of spirit guides, the spirit of a baby that died before its teeth erupted is thought to be the best messenger to a *guru permangmang*. The Karo Batak call this kind of spirit a *bicara guru*, "the *guru*'s voice or way." The spirit announces itself with a whistling sound, produced within the throat, which the Karo say is the twittering, bird-like speech (*déwal*) of the *jinujung* (JOUSTRA 1902a, 9; 1907, 77; 1910, 168; STEEDLY 1993, 178). It is said that these spirits always address a basic principle rather than a specific case. In the past *guru* used parts of the bodies (preferably the liver) of such deceased babies to make *pupuk* (magical pulp). Placed into objects like magic wands, this substance was thought to give the *guru* preternatural powers (WESTENBERG 1892, 236–44; NEUMANN 1939, 536).

7. This specific text was sung by *guru* Pa Surdam (Sir Bamboo Flute), a nickname for the ritual specialist whose life history has been described by GINTING (1991). In STEEDLY (1993, 203–24) he is called Pak Tua. I recorded the Karo text (three cassette tapes) in July 1990. These were transcribed by Juara GINTING and translated into English by me. All the words were checked in JOUSTRA 1912 and NEUMANN 1951. A prior draft of the text was presented at the seminar Perceptions of Space in Southeast Asia, held at the Rijksuniversiteit Leiden in 1994.

8. In this sense there is a similarity with the Javanese *dhanyang* (cf. WESSING 1995, 197).

9. In English, these names mean, respectively, "the high hills as the lady who watches,"

"the savannah as the lady of the mat that is spread out on the lower and upperstream land," "the low-lying basin lands as the lady whose flames lick everything," "the gorges as the lady who receives," "the ocean as the lady grandmother dragon who lives in the waterfall," and "the river as the lady of the waterfall."

10. In English, these names mean, respectively, "the ridge as the lady with a panoramic view," "the center of the living place as the lady of the gatherings," "the central hearthstone as the lady of the meetings," "the navel of the hearth as the lady whose flames lick everything," "the ashes of the hearth as lady relocating," "the walkway inside the house as the lady who makes things longer," "the doors as the lady who is waiting," "the surroundings of the house as the lady who guards over borderlines."

11. The *beru dayang si manjilam dangdang so bias*, "the lady whose flames lick everything," is the spirit of a *mate sada wari* (someone who died a sudden, accidental death, a type of death seen as due to sorcery). Such spirits reside at offering places and protect the lives of those who live on its domain, animals as well as humans (NEUMANN 1927, 529, 532–33).

12. A *depa* is about 1.83 meters. In practice it is the distance between the fingertips of a person standing with his arms fully stretched out to the sides, and is roughly equivalent to the height of a person's body.

13. This betel leaf offering is analogous to the first stage of a marriage ritual, in which a betel leaf is offered by the groom's side to the bride's side (*ngembah belo selambar*, to offer a betel leaf; GINTING 1994, 55).

14. This handful of earth symbolizes the beginning of human creation. In the first stage of pregnancy, the Karo Batak conceive of the fetus as being the size of a handful of earth. According to my fieldnotes, the same actions are performed in choosing a house site. SLAATS AND PORTIER describe similar customs for the opening of a new compound (1994, 122). A dream is a good one if one sees many cucumbers (*cimen*) or catches numerous small fish, which NEUMANN's informants called the "soul," or spiritual element, of the rice (*tendi pagé*) (1902b, 375). Neumann adds that the term was only used in the interpretation of dreams, and that the cucumbers and fish do not really have to be the rice's soul. Apparently Neumann was not aware of the significance of cucumber and fish in the pregnancy of both humans and rice.

15. Bathing places for men and women are normally separated. JOUSTRA mentions a similar case of bathing together after the fields were ready for sowing (1897, 158–59). In this case it was part of the rain-calling ritual, *ndilo wari udan*.

16. NEUMANN thought that these plants, with their thick leaves that remain fresh for a long time, symbolize long life (1902b, 383). GINTING, however, points out that these plants represent specific colors, the combination of which refers to the affinity between mother's brother (yellow), represented by three stalks of the *nderasi* tree; mother (red), represented by the *kalinjuhang*; father's sister (black), represented by the *besi-besi*; and father (white), represented by the *sangke sempilet*. The unity of these is considered to be the starting point of life (1994, 28–30). "The Karo Batak also call the plants in the center of a rice field *ingan tendi page* (the place of the rice-soul). It refers to the idea that the 'center' is like the womb of the land, by which the colour combination of the plants is seen to be analogous to the elements of the womb" (GINTING 1994, 30). ADIMIHARDJA mentions a similar concept for the Kasepuhan of West Java (1992, 38).

17. When climbing a mountain, the same offering should be made to the king of the forested mountain top, the *raja umang* (WESTENBERG 1892, 231). *Umang* are spirits that resemble humans, except for their short stature and backward-turned feet (STEEDLY 1993, 121). While *umang* may occasionally share their supernatural knowledge with favored humans, they are more often mischievous or aggressive. They are said to pelt intruders with rocks or even throw them down the mountainside. *Umang* are also reputed to have a pen-

chant for human mates and are said to abduct "nice girls" and "comely youths," whom they might hold captive for years (WESTENBERG 1892, 232; STEEDLY 1993, 122). In spite of this view, the Karo Batak consider the *raja umang* of Mt Sibuaten and his human wife, the human daughter of the raja of Ajinembah, whom he took (*buat*) to his mountain, to be the spirits of the fertility of rice (GINTING 1994, 27). As a bride-price the *raja umang* built a multifamily house for the raja of Ajinembah during the night (SLAATS AND PORTIER 1994, 100). This house is considered to be the first Karo Batak multifamily house (*rumah adat*).

18. *Buat* means "to take" as well "to marry." *Buaten* means "cultivated land" (NEUMANN 1951, 55), but to the Karo Batak the word means "rice field." GINTING notes that *sibuaten* stands for "to take each other," "to marry each other" or "to strike each other," and points out the symmetry between the prefix *si* and the suffix *en* (1994, 27). "The term *buaten* in this context is connected with the idea that the opening of a rice field is the same as 'to take (*buat*) a field' from the forest (spirit)."

19. There are various different versions of this myth. In some, like that in DE HAAN 1875 (15) it is a woman who strikes the rooster that was sitting on a house's buffalo horns. WESTENBERG mentions that the mythical bird was killed because he had dirtied the pool of the god of the middle world (1892, 218). JOUSTRA says that the bird was struck with seven palm-leaf veins by the god that lives across the sea, in order to give medicinal leaves preventing death to the mythical person that accompanied the god of the middle world to earth (1907, 120). In healing, seven palm-leaf veins are used to strike out illness from the body.

20. The Karo use the word *manuk* for both chicken and rooster. Chickens used in divination, birds in general, and the penises of little boys are called *manuk-manuk* (NEUMANN 1951, 188). It is not clear whether the star-speckled rooster (*manuk cabur bintang*) is a reference to the Pleiades, which signal the start of the planting season, though the combination of the appearance of the stars, the inception of the new season, and the role of speckled rooster as the origin of rice suggests a connection.

21. It is the custom that when marriage preparations have reached the final stage the bride may ask for something, like a piece of land, a water buffalo, or a particular piece of clothing or jewelry. In this way there is something that keeps her spirit in her changed situation. As elsewhere in Indonesia, the Karo believe that a person's spirit may leave the body if it feels disturbed, in which case it has to be coaxed back as this condition is dangerous to the person's health.

22. Earlier publications like JOUSTRA 1902c (425) and NEUMANN 1902b (379) mention that in the Karo lowlands the *mere page* ritual was held at the start of the harvest season.

23. This sacred place is inhabited by the spirit of the land. The "grave," which is located upstream from the women's bathing area, is seen as a dead person's rice field in the afterlife and is planted with plants similar to the ones at the field's navel. The spirit represents the village social bond, the category of autochthonous people that is subdivided into the four classes of patrilineal descendants of the four village founders: the male children of the land (white), represented by *sangke sempilet*; the matrilateral parallel cousins of the land (red), represented by *kalinjuhang*; the female children of the land (black), represented by *besi-besi*; the wife-givers of the land (yellow), represented by *arimas* (croton; *Codiaeum variegatum*) (GINTING 1994, 91–93). A baby's first trip outdoors is to the female bathing place, as an introduction to the spirit that guards the community.

24. JOUSTRA noticed an important difference in the way rice is cut in the Karo highlands and lowlands: in the lowlands the ears were cut one by one using the *pengetam* knife and tied up into bundles (*pungo*), while in the highlands the stalks were cut near the ground using a sickle (*sabi-sabi*), after which they were bundled and sheaved (*raden*) (1907, 71).

25. The same decoration, to which small fish traps (*tuar*) edged with white hen's feath-

ers were added, was placed on top of the spirit boats used in the second mortuary ritual of Karo Batak who belonged to the kin group (*merga*) *Sembiring si ngombaḳ* (those who drift down the ashes of their death). The drifting down was related to an abundant harvest (JOUSTRA 1902d, 543–44). The feast—ideally held annually in September on the day after the full moon—was only celebrated in the Sukapiring area of the eastern Karo higlands. This area falls within the agricultural zone of "upstream land" (*julu*), where sowing takes place in November/December and the harvest falls in June/July.

26. As a result of individual ownership, the rice barns have now completely disappeared. Rice barns were placed at right angles to the houses. This was explained to me as a way to prevent the river from washing away the rice, as the houses were aligned with the flow of a river. As was mentioned, rice fields should also be placed at right angles to the river.

27. This stone, called the tooth of the lightning, can be found in a banana plant (*galuh si tabar*) that has been struck by lightning (NEUMANN 1905, 56). This banana plant is a transformation of the head of the male mythical bird. It is regarded as the king of the people, and is used in life-cycle rituals as a replacement for the male human body (JOUSTRA 1907, 120–21; GINTING 1994, 70–80).

28. According to GUILLAUME (1903, 9), rice being winnowed in the wind is called *si dayang topeliasken*, "the lady who gives clarity."

29. A short version can be found in KIPP 1979 (5–6).

30. According to KIPP, the child was a tomcat (1979, 9).

31. *Sembuyaḳ* (from one belly) is the term of reference for a patrilineal descent group.

32. The reversal of the order, in which Beru Tole precedes the other two, is also a sexual joke among Karo women and often elicits chuckles from them, as it refers to a lack of sensitivity to female arousal by some men.

33. SLAATS AND PORTIER give a description of such a ritual (1994, 243).

34. KIPP gives a description of this ritual, which takes place in the village center (1979, 7–10). Four long pandanus leaf spines are secured by one end in a hole made in the earth. Four older women each take one of the leaves at its loose end and, moistening their hands with water from nearby buckets, pull on the leaves with long upward strokes, hand over hand. This produces an odd sound, a loud groan like the sound made by rubbing a balloon, which is the sound of the bellowing of thirsty cattle.

35. The cat, we have seen in the myth of Beru Tole, represents the relation with the mother's brother. SLAATS AND PORTIER cite a myth that mentions a ritual in which a mother's brother's daughter adorned a cat with jewelry used in rituals by females. The cat was adorned with earrings, a necklace, a headcover, and covered by a dyed woven cloth, after which the woman called upon the deities to destroy the village. Thunder, rain, and wind arrived, destroying all the houses and killing the inhabitants (1994, 87–88).

36. GINTING gives the text of a chant sung by a female *guru* to call this white bird—also named *dayang*—and entice it into a basket (*baḳa*) (1994, 124–39). The four corners of the basket are each adorned with twelve wild and medicinal plants, together representing the natural vegetation of the landscape. In the past these baskets were used for storing valuables that had been received in ritual exchanges. These valuables were meant to be worn on such ritual occasions, and consisted of, for instance, woven cloth, jewelry, and money, and also the exhumed bones of the founder of the house. The basket was stored in the house roof (GINTING 1994, 121–24).

37. The main ingredient is a yellow chicken (or a combination of a white, a black, and a red chicken), its blood, coconut, and rice. The yellow (gold) color of the chicken represents the woman's parents or her brother. A pregnant woman should eat this chicken's gizzard, breast, and neckbone, as these are thought to influence the fetus's inner skin and cartilage.

38. From this moment on the woman's mother will stay with her, while the husband has to sleep in the *jambur* (men's house) at night (GINTING 1995, 2).

39. The *cibaḳut* is a fish with poisonous spines at its mouth. It lives in the mud of riverbanks and rice paddies (NEUMANN 1951, 280). Collecting crickets and mudfish is done mainly by women at times when they gather at ritual occasions. The *cibaḳut* are conceived to be the reincarnated skin dirt of men, and the crickets to be the corpses of reincarnated ancestors.

40. In the past, on ritual occasions, unmarried adolescent girls wore an indigo-dyed headcover, called *batu jala* (stones tied to the edge of a fishing net) or *batu peranggu*.

41. TERWIEL relates a myth of the Lokapaññatti of mainland Southeast Asia in which it is told how, after consuming rice without husk or chaff, spirits became visible and sexual differences became apparent (1994, 18).

REFERENCES CITED

ADIMIHARDJA, Kusnaka
1992 The traditional agricultural rituals and practices of the Kasepuhan community of West Java. In *The heritage of traditional agriculture among the western Austronesians*, ed. James J. Fox, 33–47. Occasional Paper of the Department of Anthropology, and the Comparative Austronesian Project, Research School of Pacific Studies. Canberra: The Australian National University.

BELO, Jane
1966 *Bali: Rangda and Barong*. Monographs of the American Ethnological Society 16. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

DE HAAN, C.
1875 Verslag van eene reis in de Battaklanden [Report on a trip to the Batak territories]. *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volḳenḳunde* 38: 1–57.

GINTING, Juara R.
1986 Pandangan tentang gangguan jiwa dan penanggulangannya secara tradisional pada masyarakat Karo [Traditional perceptions of mental illness and therapy in Karo society]. B.A. thesis. Medan: Universitas Sumatera Utara.
1989 Nengget: Upacara tradisional Karo di kota Medan [Nengget: A traditional Karo ritual in the city of Medan]. *Majalah Budaya Batak dan Parawisata* 23: 10–12.
1991 Pa Surdam, a Karo Batak Guru. In *The Batak: Peoples of the Island of Sumatra*, ed. A. Sibeth, 85–98. New York: Thames and Hudson.
1994 Plants that cool and clear the mind: The symbolism of rice cultivation, holy places, and rituals among the Karo Batak of North Sumatra. M.A. thesis. Leiden: Rijksuniversiteit Leiden.
1995 Karo Batak rites of passage. Working Paper presented at the Institut für Ethnologie, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster.

GINTING, J. R. and B. VAN DER GOES
1994 Between myth and ritual among the Karo Batak. In *Text and tales: Studies in oral tradition*, ed. Jarich Oosten, 52–66. CNWS Publications 22. Leiden: Research School CNWS, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden.

GUILLAUME, H.
1903 Beschrijving van het tandenveilen (erkiker) bij de Karo-Bataks (Description of toothfiling (*erḳiḳer*) among the Karo Batak). *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 47: 1–14.

HEYNE, K.
1927 *De nuttige planten van Nederlandsch Indië* [Useful plants of the Dutch Indies]. 3

vols. Buitenzorg: Departement van Landbouw, Nijverheid en Handel.

HUMPHREY, C.

1995 Chiefly and shamanist landscapes in Mongolia. In *The anthropology of landscape: Perspectives on place and space*, ed. E. Hirsch and M. O'Hanlo, 135–62. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

INLICHTINGEN (Verslag 1911)

1912 *Bulletin, koloniaal museum te Haarlem* [Bulletin of the colonial museum of Haarlem] 50: 175–77.

JOUSTRA, M.

1897 De zending onder de Karo-Batak's; jaarverslag over 1896 [Mission activity among the Karo Batak: Annual report 1896]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 41: 141–62.

1898 Verslag van de Karo-missie in 1897 [Report on the mission to the Karo in 1897]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 42: 292–306.

1899 Verslag van een bezoek aan het onafhankelijk Karo-Batak-gebied [Report on a visit to the independent Karo Batak territory]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 43: 123–51.

1902a Het persihili mbelin [The great substitute ritual]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 46: 1–22.

1902b Het jaar 1901 onder de Karo-Bataks [The year 1901 among the Karo Batak]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 46: 50–62.

1902c Het leven, de zeden en gewoonten der Bataks [Life, morals and customs of the Karo Batak]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 46: 385–426.

1902d Mededeelingen omtrent, en opmerkingen naar aanleiding van het Pek oewaloeh of het doodenfeest der merga Simbiring [Reports about and remarks concerning the Pek uwaluh or the feast of the death of the Simbiring kingroup]. *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 45: 541–56.

1903 Verslag over 't jaar 1902 [Report for the year 1902]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 47: 224–29.

1907 Karo-Bataksche vertellingen [Karo Batak tales]. *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 56: 1–123.

1910 *Batakspiegel* [Reflections on the Batak]. Uitgaven van het Bataksch Instituut 3. Leiden: S. C. van Doesburgh.

1912 *Nederlandsch-Karosche woordenlijst* [Dutch-Karo wordlist]. Uitgaven van het Bataksch Instituut 6. Leiden: S. C. van Doesburgh.

KAROSEKALI, Ramland R.

1987 Kisah Si Beru Ginting yang malang [The tale of the unlucky Si Beru Ginting]. *Majalah Budaya Batak dan Parawisata* 17: 43–45.

KIPP, Rita S.

1979 Calling a rainy day: A rain ritual and incest myth of the Karo Batak. Working Paper for the Central States Anthropological Society. Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

1987 Karo Batak rice rituals then and now. In *Cultures and societies of North Sumatra*, ed. Rainer Carle, 253–76. Veröffentlichungen des Seminars für Indonesische und Südseesprachen der Universität Hamburg 19. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

NEUMANN, J. E.

1906 Kemali, pantang en reboe bij de Karo-Bataks [Various kinds of prohibitions among the Karo Batak]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 50: 505–13.

NEUMANN, J. H.
1902a De Begoe in de godsdienstige begrippen der Karo-Bataks in de Doesoen [The spirit in the religious concepts among the lowland Karo Batak]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 46: 23–39.
1902b Iets over den landbouw bij de Karo-Bataks [Something about agriculture among the Karo Batak]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 46: 373–84.
1904a De tendi in verband met Si Dajang [The spiritual element in relation to Si Dayang]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 48: 101–45.
1904b Een en ander aangaande de Karo-Bataks [This and that about the Karo Batak]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 48: 361–77.
1905 Een en ander aangaande de Karo-Bataks (vervolg) [This and that about the Karo Batak (continued)]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 49: 54–67.
1922 Schets der Karo-Bataksche Spraakkunst [Outline of the Karo Batak grammar]. *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 63: 1–138.
1927 Karo-Bataksche offerplaatsen [Karo Batak offering places]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 83: 514–51.
1939 Aantekeningen over de Karo-Bataks [Notes on the Karo Batak]. *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 79: 529–71.
1951 *Karo-Bataksch-Nederlandsch woordenboek* [Karo Batak-Dutch dictionary]. Lembaga Kebudayaan Indonesia. Medan: Varekamp & Co.

OCHSE, J. J.
1931 *Indische groenten* [Indies vegetables]. Batavia: Volkslectuur.

SLAATS, Herman and Karin PORTIER, eds.
1994 *Wilhelm Middendorp over de Karo Batak, 1914–1919, Deel I* [Wilhelm Middendorp on the Karo Batak, 1914–1919, Part I]. Series Recht & Samenleving 11. Nijmegen: Katholieke Universiteit, Faculty of Law.

STEEDLY, Mary M.
1993 *Hanging without a rope. Narrative experience in colonial and postcolonial Karoland.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

STUTLEY, Margaret and James STUTLEY
1977 *Harper's dictionary of Hinduism: Its mythology, folklore, philosophy, literature, and history*. New York: Harper and Row.

TAMPENAWAS, R.
1894 Een en ander uit de aantekeningen van R. Tampenawas, te Pernangenen [This and that from R. Tampenawas's Pernangenen notes]. *Mededeelingen vanwege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 38: 227–46.

TERWIEL, B. J.
1994 The tale of the giant rice-kernel and the cursing widow. In *Text and tales: Studies in oral tradition*, ed. Jarich Oosten, 10–24. CNWS Publications 22. Leiden: Research School CNWS, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden.

VAN HIEN, H. A.
1912 *De Javaansche geestenwereld en de betrekking, die er tusschen de geesten en de zinnelijke wereld bestaat, verduidelijkt door petangan's of tellingen, bij de Javanen en Soendanezen in gebruik. Deel I, De geschiedenis der godsdiensten en der tijdrekenkunde op Java* [The Javanese world of the spirits and the connection between the spirits

and the world of the senses, as clarified by divination or numerology used by the Javanese and Sundanese. Part I: The history of faiths and of time-reckoning on Java]. Bandoeng: Fortuna.

WESSING, Robert

1995 The last tiger in East Java: Symbolic continuity in ecological change. *Asian Folklore Studies* 54: 191–218.

WESTENBERG, C. J.

1892 Aantekeningen omtrent de godsdienstige begrippen der Karo-Bataks [Notes on the religious concepts of the Karo Batak]. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 41: 208–53.