

# EARLY TRACES HINDU-BUDDHIST INFLUENCE ALONG THE NORTH COAST OF CENTRAL JAVA: ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE DISTRICT OF BATANG

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**Abstract.** *In Coastal Central Java, archaeological research dealing with the Hindu-Buddhist period is almost always focused on the coastal area between Kedu and Yogyakarta, which was controlled by the Matāram Kingdom around the 8-9<sup>th</sup> Century AD. Research that attempts to investigate and reconstruct the social conditions of coastal communities during the pre-Matāram period has yet to be undertaken. This paper is such an attempt. It explores Hindu-Buddhist remains in the Batang District, a district which, we believe, was an important entry point for Hindu-Buddhist traditions prior to the emergence of the Matāram Kingdom in the hinterland of Central Java. Data collected through the survey, further archaeological data relevant will be conducted descriptive analysis to answer questions in the study. The survey results have identified a number of important findings such as statues, temples and inscriptions ranging from coastal areas to inland Batang. Based on the identification of a number of archaeological findings it apparent that the area in Batang already appear influence of Hindu-Buddhist long before the emergence of the ancient Matāram Kingdom around the 8<sup>th</sup> Century AD.*

**Keywords:** *Archaeological survey, Batang, Hindu-Buddha, North Coast.*

**Abstrak. Jejak awal Pengaruh Hindu-Buddha di Sepanjang Pantai Utara Jawa Tengah: Survei Arkeologi di Kota Batang.** Penelitian arkeologi di pantai utara Jawa Tengah mengenai kehidupan masa Hindu-Buddha hampir selalu dipusatkan pada wilayah antara Kedu-Yogyakarta, yang dikuasai oleh Kerajaan Matāram pada sekitar abad ke-8–9 Masehi. Penelitian yang berupaya mempelajari dan merekonstruksi kondisi sosial masyarakat di daerah pesisir masa pra-Matāram selama ini belum pernah dilakukan. Karya tulis ini berusaha melakukan eksplorasi pada masa pra-Matāram di Jawa Tengah, khususnya di Kabupaten Batang yang diduga sebagai salah satu daerah yang penting pada awal periode sebelum munculnya Kerajaan Matāram di pedalaman Jawa Tengah. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui survei, selanjutnya data arkeologi yang relevan dilakukan analisis deskriptif untuk menjawab pertanyaan di dalam penelitian. Hasil survei berhasil mengidentifikasi sejumlah temuan penting seperti arca, candi dan prasasti mulai dari wilayah pesisir sampai pedalaman Kabupaten Batang. Berdasarkan identifikasi sejumlah temuan arkeologi tersebut tampak bahwa wilayah Batang sudah mendapat pengaruh Hindu-Buddha jauh sebelum munculnya Kerajaan Matāram kuna sekitar abad ke-8 M.

**Kata Kunci:** Survei arkeologi, Batang, Hindu-Buddha, Pantai Utara.

## 1. Introduction

The growing maritime trade between China and India in the early centuries CE encouraged the emergence of Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms in Southeast Asia. According to

Chinese records, several polities engaged in this international trade network were situated in the Indonesian Archipelago, in Java and Sumatra (Takakusu 1896). The exact location of these early polities, only known by their Chinese

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names, is still the subject of fierce debate. So far, only two early Indonesian kingdoms have left inscriptions: Taruma in West Java and Kutai in East Kalimantan (5th c. AD).

In Central Java, where the political landscape was dominated by the kingdom of Matāram, the earliest dated inscription is the inscription of Canggal (732), which commemorates the establishment of a *lingga* by a king named Sañjaya. However, less than 50 years later, the kingdom founded by this Hindu prince appears to have been ruled by a Buddhist king from the Sailendra dynasty (Degroot 2009: 9).

## 2. The Problem and Method

For the period from the eighth to the tenth Century, the majority of the remains attributable to the Matāram Kingdom are temples located on the plains of Kedu (district of Magelang, Central Java Province) and Yogyakarta. No one can dispute the fact that the region, which has also yielded many inscriptions, was the cultural and probably the political epicenter of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms of the time. The magnificent ruins of Yogyakarta and Magelang have almost made us forget that it is through the north coast - the only one suitable for sailing - that Indian traditions and new ideas traveled. Archaeological researches in the northern districts have so far been limited to four - largely incomplete - inventories and to the excavation of two sites (Lebaksiu and Deles). Essential data such as the amount, distribution, and nature of the sites are still missing. Hence, the history of the region during the Hindu-Buddhist period remains unclear. Should we consider the north coast as the outskirts of the southern kingdoms, as a mere transit point without any cultural impact? Did the coast play a key role as cultural crossroads, as place of exchange between Java, the Malay world, and the rest of Asia?

Although the north coast has so far not yielded remains comparable to those found in the southern plains, some elements suggest that

the region does have an important archaeological potential: the 205 sites of archaeological interest identified by the inventory of 1914, the large number of sculptures from the area kept at the National Museum in Jakarta (Museum Nasional Indonesia), the discovery, near Batang, of the oldest inscriptions of Central Java, and finally the presence on the coast of West Java and in the region of Rembang of major pre-classical sites suggest that the north coast deserves some attention.

Our project, the first results of which are presented here, will explore the archaeological potential of the north coast of Central Java so to better understand the extent and the nature of the occupation of the region during the classical period. An archaeological survey will be carried out over several years and will help to establish a descriptive inventory and an archaeological map covering all the regencies (*kabupaten*) of the region inventory. The aim of this work is to identify the largest number of remains, not only those that can still be seen by surface surveys, but also those that have disappeared but that can still be traced through Dutch sources, museum catalogues, and local archives.

One of the problems that we encounter is the fact that administrative boundaries have undergone many changes, in colonial times as well as since the independence. This lack of consistency is a source of error and makes the localization of some sites mentioned in ancient documents difficult and, sometimes, even impossible. The lack of precision of existing inventories (absence of the name of the village or that of the district) and the wide distribution of certain place names (as Candi or Krajan) also make the task difficult. Successive transfers of sculptures (for example, from the site to the local office of the department of tourism, then to Semarang and finally to the Museum Ronggowarsito) have sometimes led to confusion and information about their place of discovery have not always been transmitted

correctly. Finally, and this is certainly a major problem, the increasing urbanization of the coast has led to the disappearance of many sites, buried under the modern buildings or destroyed without further ado. The thefts and attempted thefts of items listed as national heritage - but only under the villagers' supervision - as well as the sale of freshly unearthed antiques are also relatively common and contribute to the destruction of the archaeological heritage of the region. Surface survey has often been a race against the clock to document the sites the best that we could before they disappear.

### **3. Previous Research Archaeological Sites in The District of Batang**

The ancient history of the district of Batang is little known and there are very few publications about it. The antiquities of the region are subject to a chapter in inventories Verbeek (1891: 132-134), Krom (1914: 136-140), Satari (1977: 6-10) and Tjahjono (2000: 37-40). The lists of sites supplied by these four inventories are very diverse. Understandably, the oldest inventory is also the one that lists the fewer sites: for Batang, Verbeek mentions only Simpar, Deles and Sigemplong. In the inventory published in 1914, Krom adds eleven locations, bringing the total of sites of archaeological interest in the district of Batang to fourteen. Among these sites, only one has truly yielded architectural pieces (Deles), while others have yielded either statues (Limpung), *yonis* (Panoendan, Wanasari) or metal objects (Simpar, Tegalsari, Kedondong, Siglagah, Bandjar Kidoel, Karang Tengah, Wanar, Babadan Ageng and Soerdjo). In October-November 1975, Satari conducted the first survey of the north coast of Java of the post-colonial era. She identified fourteen sites; four yielded remains of construction (Pejaten, Kecepit, Kepyar and Bendosari), three inscriptions (Banjaran, Sojomerto and Indrokilo) and seven stone sculptures or *yonis*. Although the number of sites is the same as that given

by Krom (1914), the lists of Krom and Satari do not overlap: only one site (Kecepit/Deles) is found in both inventories. The reason is simple: Satari apparently eliminated from her inventory sites that yielded only small finds and listed only those places where remains were still visible in 1975. In his inventory published in 2000, Baskoro Daru Tjahjono identifies only nine sites, including three that yielded temple stones (Kecepit, Bendosari and Kauman), two sites that yielded inscriptions (Sojomerto, Kepokoh) and four that yielded stone sculptures. Once again, the lists do not overlap much: only four sites (Pejaten, Kecepit, Bendosari and Sojomerto) are found in both the inventory of Satari (1977) and that of Tjahjono (2000).

### **4. Geography of The District of Batang**

Before presenting the archaeological inventory, it seems necessary to briefly describe the region. The district of Batang is located on the north coast of Java, in the province of Central Java. It is bordered by the district of Pekalongan (west), the district of Kendal (east) as well as the districts of Banjarnegara and Wonosobo (south). The territory of Batang is divided into six sub-districts with contrasting landscapes. Bordered by the sea to the north, the land rises rapidly to the south, where the district boundary corresponds to the ridge line of the North Serayu mountain range, over 2500 m above sea level.

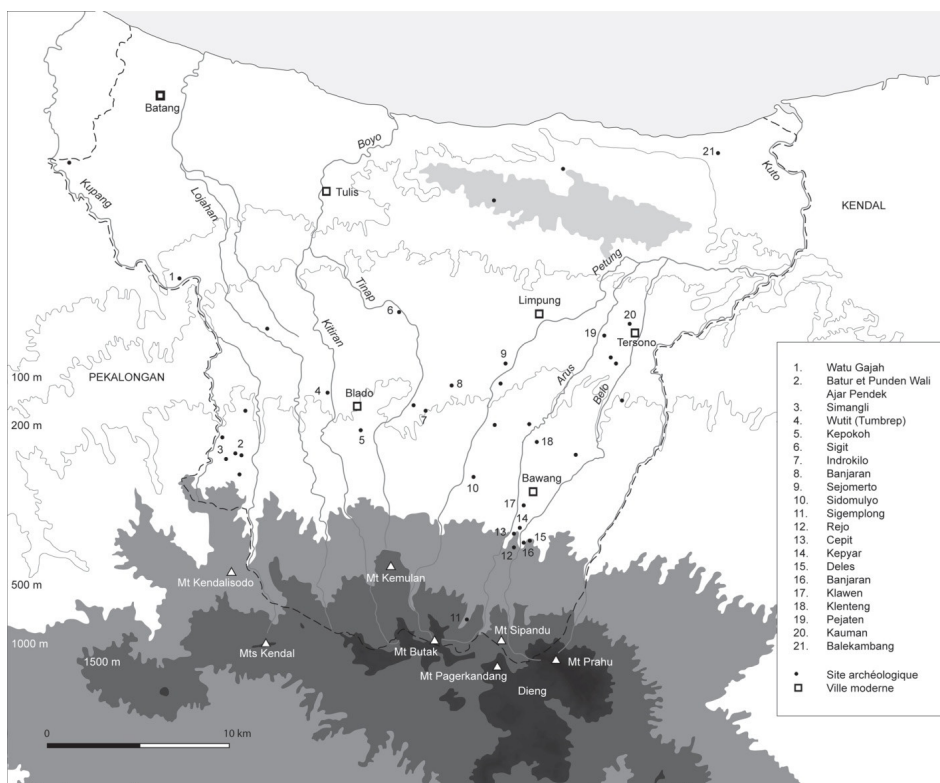
The coastal plain, generally narrow and at most a few kilometers large, only widens in the regions of Tulis and Batang (west) and in the eastern part of the sub-district of Gringsing (east). In other regions, a chain of dry hills culminating at an altitude of 350 m runs parallel to the coast. South of the coastal plain and of the hills, the landscape is shaped by the volcanic range that dominates the center of Java. Valleys and hills alternate, following the north-south orientation dictated by the presence of Mounts Prahū, Kemulan and Kendalisodo. In the higher parts of the mountains, the valleys are narrow and

the slopes are steep. In the lower parts (below 800 m above sea level), the landscape opens up and expands in places, turning into small plains, especially around the cities of Limpung, Tersono, Blado and Bawang and in the region of Sojomerto.

The district is crossed by hundreds of small rivers flowing from south to north, as well as by four major rivers (Kupang, Lojahan, Boyo and Kuto) taking their source near the summits of volcanoes of the Serayu range. The Kupang River, which takes its source on the upper slopes of the Kendal Mountains and empties into the sea at Pekalongan, constitutes, along a most of its course, the border between the districts of Batang and Pekalongan. The Boyo River, whose estuary is located in the sub-district of Tulis, comes from the reunion of two other rivers: the Kitiran, which has its source near Mount Butak, and the Tinap, which flows down from Mount Kemulan. Finally, the most important river system of the region is probably that constituted by the Kuto River and its three main tributaries,

the Petung (originating from Mount Kemulan), the Arus (from the Mount Ngaglik) and the Belo, that descends from Mount Prahau. The three rivers follow a south-north course until their confluence in the district of Tersono. There, the course of the river born from their encounter changes direction, going eastward along the east-west hill chain located between the foothills of the Serayu and the coast. The river then takes a south-north direction before emptying into the sea near the village of Gempolsewu in the district of Kendal.

Agriculture has adapted to the diversity of landscapes. In the floodplains of Batang and Gringsing, irrigated rice fields dominate, while the hill range along the coast is covered with tree plantations (especially teak and rubber) and non-irrigated crops. South of this area, the agricultural landscape is very fragmented. The hills are occupied by trees (*melinjo*, *sengon*, etc.) and vegetables, but the valleys and the areas with a less rough terrain are dedicated to rice cultivation. The rice fields are often irrigated, but there are also dry rice fields, especially in



Peta 1. Distribution of archaeological Site in Batang District (Source: author).

the eastern part of the district. Above an altitude of 700 - 800 m, rice fields disappear and are replaced with tree plantations, non-irrigated fields and forests (above 1200 - 1300 m).

## **5. Inventory of The Archaeological Sites of The District of Batang**

The survey that led to the establishment of the inventory of archaeological sites in the district of Batang was conducted in April 2012. A list of the sites, along with their administrative location and their geographical coordinates is given in the appendix to the present article.

Forty-two sites were identified. Out of these, nine were identified only on the basis of secondary sources and do not seem to have left visible traces on the surface. The site Kebonbatur, for example, is only known to us by a note in the archives of the Department of Tourism and Culture of the District of Batang, which tells us that a small *yoni* was still visible in 1984/1985 (Tim Penyusun 1985). Similarly, the site of Penundan, where our exploration of April 2012 did not yield any results, yielded two small *yonis* in 1903 (Notulen 1903a: 103; 1903b: XC; Sell 1912: 170; Krom 1914 No. 418; Photo OD 5572). Both are now in the National Museum in Jakarta (MNI 363b/4547 and 363c/4548).

In only three sites, Sigit, Batur and Punden Wali Ajar Pendek, we observed the presence of a structure still in place. At Sigit (Pecalungan), in an area of little low hills between the valleys of Limpung and Bawang, one can see a small mound of earth and stones of about 5 m long and 80 cm high, on which we found fragments of the statue of a bull. A little further, in front of a house in the village of Siguci, stands a heavily damaged Gaṇeśa which, according to the locals, comes from Sigit. The site of Batur (Silurah, Wonotunggal), located in the foothills of Mt Kendalisodo, consists of three superimposed earthen terraces reinforced by retaining walls made of river stones. In the northeastern corner of the second terrace, there is a *yoni*, a few stones

with a profile and a small, very damaged and headless Gaṇeśa. The Punden Wali Ajar Pendek, situated in the village of Batur, is also a terraced structure built of river stones, but it has not yielded remains clearly attributable to the Hindu-Buddhist period.

Apart from these three structures still in place and visible on the surface, nine sites have yielded material (sculptures, stones and fragments of architectural decoration) suggesting the presence of an ancient building. These sites are Cepit, Kepyar, Deles and Klenteng in the sub-district of Bawang, Balekambang in the sub-district of Gringsing, Sidomulyo in the sub-district of Reban, Pejaten and Kauman in the sub-district of Tersono and Watu Gajah (Kupang) in the sub-district of Wonotunggal. All these sites have yielded sculptures that identify them as places of Hindu worship, except Kepyar, which has produced no sculpture, and Balekambang, which has yielded a statue sometimes identified as Śrī, sometimes as Vasudhārā.

Most of the other sites have yielded sculptures and/or *yonis*. Four have yielded only small objects (bronze, ceramic). One should also note that seven sites have yielded inscriptions: Wutit (Bandar), Deles (Bawang), Kepokoh (Blado), Balekambang (Gringsing), Indrokilo (Pecalungan), Sojomerto (Reban) and Banjaran (Reban). Before going further into the historical interpretation, it is interesting to give a more detailed description of the main sites of the district of Batang. We will focus on the sites of Balekambang, Pejaten, Klenteng, Cepit, Kepyar, Klawen and Deles.

### **5.1 Balekambang**

The site of Balekambang is located at approximately 1 km from the sea, on the eastern slope of a hill forming the eastern end of the chain which borders the coast from Gringsing to Tulis. The hill, which is fifty meters high, is covered with trees and partially transformed into a rubber plantation owned by PT Perkebunan Sawangan.



**Picture 1.** Balekambang site (Source: *Doc. of Pusarnas and EFEO*).

At its foot, at a place called Balekambang, there is a source with a relatively important water flow, which transforms into a small river named Kali Buangan. The Kali Anyar/Segan, in which fishing boats still wet, flows about 600 m east of the site. To the east of Balekambang, until the Anyar River and even beyond, the plain is covered with irrigated rice fields. The site of Balekambang consists of three parts: a part of the site is located directly on the hillside, another at the foot of the hill and the last is in the alluvial plain.

The part of the site which is located on the hill has been partially destroyed by a land slide and little remains are left. Yet, it is from this place that the inscription of Balekambang comes from. The stone, which originally measured 85 x 44 x 34 cm, is broken in half and is now preserved in the Museum Ronggowarsito (MR 04.00076 and 04.00078) in Semarang. It is composed of five lines of text in the so-called Pallava script and in Sanskrit language.

Soekarto Atmodjo dated it to c. 600 AD and identified a possible reference to the Yamuna River (Nitihaminoto *et al.* 1978: 19). The inscription of Balekambang was recently studied by A. Griffiths (2012: 474-477), who, based on a paleographic comparison with the inscription of Kalasan, would place the writing of the Balekambang inscription in the second half of the seventh Century. The same author proposes a transcription and translation, that we reproduce here: ‘May this life (on earth) be long for this



**Picture 2.** The Goddess Śrī Vasudhara (Source: *Doc. of Pusarnas and EFEO*).

man the strength of whose arms is unsurpassed, who has revealed the crystal-clear water , ... by name!’.

About a hundred meters away, at the foot of the hill, near a source now partly covered by a concrete structure, other remains have been found. On the site, one can still see a sculpture of a nāga (whose head has been redesigned with cement), as well as many temple stones, partly reused in the construction of a modern bathing place. Satari (1977) saw at this place two statues of goose (today at the Ronggowarsito Museum, no MR 04.00254 and 04.00255) and a makara with a bird in its mouth (MR 04.00266). This type of makara is very frequent in the art of Central Java, but the symmetry of the trunk, the necklace made of lotus petals and the plant-like motif behind the head are details that link the makara of Balekambang to those of Loro Jonggrang and therefore place his postquem dating around the middle of the ninth Century.

In addition to these sculptures, the survey of 1978 (Nitihaminoto *et al.*) reported the presence of a representation of a seated goddess, who was identified as Śrī Vasudhara. The statue is badly damaged and the cement used to restore

it does not help, but one can still discern its main features. The goddess is shown seated cross-legged on a lotus, a halo behind her head. She has four arms. In the upper right hand, she holds a rosary and, in the upper left hand, an ear of rice. Her lower right hand is in *varada-mudrā*, while her lower left hand rests on her lap, a lotus on the palm. The goddess wears a tiara, heavy earrings, a necklace, a double beaded band on the bust and straps. The presence of three bracelets on each arm, as well as the way the cloth falls on the front of the throne, recalls the art of Plaosan or Loro Jonggrang, placing the sculpture in the course of the ninth Century.

According to the inventory of the Ronggowarsito Museum, six other sculptures would also come from Balekambang: a statue of *Durgā* (MR 04.00077), a second *makara* (MR 04.00079), two *jaladwara* (MR 04.00080 and 04.00081) and two *antefixes* (MR 04.00082 and 04.00083). The *Durgā* is broken into three parts and unfortunately so eroded that it is impossible to define her style. The goddess is depicted standing on the buffalo. She has eight arms and one can still distinguish the conch in her upper left hand and the disc in her upper right hand. The second upper right hand probably held a short sword or a club. The remaining attributes are unidentifiable. The second *makara* attributed to the site of Balekambang in the inventory of the Ronggowarsito Museum does not form a pair with the one we mentioned above. It likely comes from a staircase. The trunk is clearly symmetric and wrapped. The necklace is entirely plant like and in the monster's mouth one can see a lion's head. Behind the head of the *makara* one can find a pattern quite similar to the one of the first *makara* discussed above, which suggests that the two *makara* are more or less of the same period (ninth Century). Of the two *jaladwara*, one is a simple duct without decor (MR 04.00080), while the other is of a singular kind (MR 04.00081). The end of the duct has the shape of a crocodile, mouth open and all fangs visible. A young

woman sits astride the crocodile, legs bent, her chest leaning forward and her hands resting on the head of the animal. Her hair falls in ringlets down her back and to her feet. The duct is unfortunately cut in a coarse conglomerate and no detail is visible.

At around 200 m from the spring, to the north-east, a first surface survey has yielded numerous potsherds, the majority of which are Chinese and Thai ceramics from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth Century.

It is clear from the above information that the site of Balekambang was used at least from the seventh to the ninth Century. In the course of the ninth Century several religious stone structures were built, probably including a bathing place and a temple. The site also had a late occupation at the end of the fifteenth Century, but there is so far no material evidence in favor of a continuous occupation.

## 5.2 Pejaten

The site of Pejaten is located further inland, in the valley of Tersono, at about 300 m east of the Arus River. The place is now in the middle of a rice field. Archaeological material was found scattered over a fairly large area. Some large



**Picture 3.** *Gaṇeśa* from Pejaten (Source: Doc. of Pusarnas and EFEO).

format bricks are still visible in the rice fields, but most of the sculptures have been displaced. Gathered in the center of village of Pejaten, one can see a Gaṇeśa, a bull, an engraved stone, brick fragments and a large stone mortar. The lintel and the doorsill reported by Nitihaminoto *et al.* (1977/1978: 23) seem to have disappeared.

According to villagers, a stone urn containing a ring and earrings has been discovered in the nearby fields. In 1975, Satari (1977: 7-8, 11-13) noted the presence of four additional bulls, a Viṣṇu, a second Gaṇeśa, and two large door elements, as well as of various architectural fragments. She also mentioned the discovery, on the land of the same desa but in the hamlet of Rejosari, of two bull statues and of a top piece (Satari, 1977: 8, photo 14). Today, some of these objects are at the Ronggowarsito Museum. It is the case of the statue of Viṣṇu (MR 04.00067) and of two Gaṇeśa (MR 04.00013 and 04.00014). The museum inventory mentions three other sculptures coming from Rejosari, but without mentioning the exact origin: two bulls (MR 04.00090, MR 04.00091) and a Gaṇeśa (MR 04.00089).

The poor state of preservation of most of the sculptures makes it difficult to specify their style and date, but three of these sculptures are characterized by a somewhat unusual iconography: the Gaṇeśa still in Pejaten, the Gaṇeśa number MR 04.00089 and the statue (MR 04.00067) identified as a Viṣṇu by Satari (1977: 10; 1978: 4).

The Gaṇeśa that one can still see on the spot in Pejaten is a carved stele of almost one meter high. The statue is of massive proportions, his shoulders are broad and square, his belly is protruding and his thick trunk contrasts with his frail legs. The deity is shown seated, one leg tucked under the belly and the other slightly hanging. The arms are four in number but all hands are damaged, so that it is impossible to distinguish their position and the attributes they were holding. The god wears bracelets around his

arms and wrists, and a collar and a belt around the belly. Several factors make this sculpture atypical compared to the usual production of Central Java. The position differs from what might be called the Javanese canon, in which the elephant-headed god is depicted sitting cross-legged, with the soles of his feet touching each other. To my knowledge, the only Javanese representation of Gaṇeśa where we see the god in lalitāsana (or in a position close to it) are, on the one hand, the Indian influenced bronzes of the late eighth or early ninth Century and, on the other hand, the later tantric statues, generally associated with the Singhāsari-Majapahit period (thirteenth - fourteenth Century). In addition, mention should be made of Gaṇeśa of Jalan Ruslan (Palembang, Sumatra), the dating of which, after being initially placed in the twelfth Century (McKinnon 1985: 18), was finally assigned to the seventh - eighth Century (Brown 1987). The proportions and position of the Gaṇeśa of Pejaten seem however closer to the early statues than to the East Javanese sculptures. The treatment of the feet is also comparable to the sculptures of the eighth Century: the feet are of human length (not short as in the case of Gaṇeśa Singhāsari) and the left foot is placed with the plant upwards. The edge of beads bordering the stele also recalls the bronzes of the eighth or early ninth Century found in Central Java. The absence of *jatamakuta* is, to our knowledge, rather unique, since all other Javanese statues of Gaṇeśa represent the god crowned with the knot of ascetics. So far, the only Indonesian images that we can compare the Gaṇeśa of Pejaten with are of Indian manufacture or influence and are, for the most part, relatively old. The lack of *bun* still points in the direction of India, where the tradition is reported as early as the sixth - seventh Century.

The Gaṇeśa number MR 04.00089 of the Ronggowarsito Museum is stylistically so close to the Gaṇeśa of Pejaten that there is little doubt that the two sculptures actually come from the same site. They share the same characteristics:



massive proportions, a round and protruding belly girded by a rope, as well as short arms. The feet are in a unique position as well, but that differs from that of our first Gaṇeśa. The Gaṇeśa of the Ronggowarsito Museum is sitting cross-legged, like most Javanese Gaṇeśa, but the soles of his feet do not touch as it is usually the case: the left foot is placed on the right foot, a position that cannot be found on any other Javanese Gaṇeśa.

The statue number MR 04.00067, kept at the Ronggowarsito Museum in Semarang but originating from Pejaten, is by far the most unusual sculpture ever discovered on this site. On an oval stone slab is carved a relief, now strongly eroded, depicting a male deity with four arms, flanked with two acolytes. The god is represented standing. He wears a cylindrical miter, which led Satari (1977: 10; 1978: 4), and, in her wake Nadine Dalsheimer and Pierre-Yves Manguin (1998: 104), to compare this sculpture to the Viṣṇu No. 1 of Cibuaya and to place it within the well-known family of the mitered Viṣṇu, dated to the 5th-6th Century CE and found in many coastal sites of South-East Asia. This identification



**Picture 4.** Viṣṇu/Harihara statue from Pejaten (Source: Doc. of Pusarnas and EFEO).

and these stylistic links, however, become less obvious when one closely observes the statue. From an iconographic point of view, only two of the four attributes are clearly identifiable and match attributes of Viṣṇu: the conch (in the upper left hand) and the club (in the lower left hand). The object held in the upper right hand, identified by Satari as a disk, may actually as well be a rosary. While the disc is usually held between two fingers, on the statue of the Ronggowarsito Museum, the god's hand is clearly closed passing *through* the object, which is how the rosary is usually held. Satari did not identify the fourth attribute, in the lower right hand. On closer inspection, it seems to have the shape of a kendi that would be held horizontally. We can see its bulbous belly, its narrow neck and its sprout, pointing upwards. As for the identification of the god's two acolytes, it is difficult to agree with the proposal of Satari, who suggested they were the goddesses Śrī and Laksmī. The figure to the god's left is human-like, but the figure to his right, with its large triangular head, looks more like an animal. Instead of Viṣṇu, we might as well face a representation Hari-Hara with Viṣṇu's attributes (mace, conch and perhaps Garuda) on the one side, and Śiva's (rosary, kendi, bull) on the other side. This new identification would seem to be confirmed by the presence, in Pejaten, of a boulder carved with Śiva's triśūla and Viṣṇu's cakra. From a stylistic point of view, the large head of the statue, its awkward proportions and the center fold of his skirt, brings the statue of the Ronggowarsito Museum close to the Viṣṇu no 1 from Cibuaya. However, the Pejaten sculpture is so eroded that it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from these similarities. Nevertheless, we cannot help but note that the identification of the Ronggowarsito Museum sculpture as Hari-Hara, a divinity rarely represented in Java, reminds us of the relatively numerous statues of that god originating from southern and central Cambodia and generally dated to the seventh - eighth Century.

### 5.3 Klenteng (Sibebek)

Klenteng is located 7.5 km upstream of Pejaten, in the area of Bawang. The place is situated at an altitude of approximately 700 m, in the foothills of Mount Prahū. At about 200 m to the east flows the Tok Dandang/Kambangan River, a tributary of the Arus River. The site is now in the rice fields.

Along the road, under a shed, one can see a statue of Śiva's bull, a *yoni*, and two cylindrical stones, decorated with rows of lotus petals. According to our informant, these objects were found a few meters away, near the river, and later transported to their current location.

Nitihaminoto (1978: 15-17) noted, in addition to the above mentioned artifacts, the presence of a jar with four ears, a sculpture of 'Śiva Mahaguru' (Agastya), a statue of Nandīśvara, and a second *yoni*. The statue of Agastya (MR 04.257) is now kept in the Ronggowarsito Museum, Semarang.

The inventory of the Ronggowarsito Museum mentions a Durgā (MR 04.263) coming also from Klenteng. The goddess is depicted with six arms, standing on the body of the buffalo. Her upper right arm is raised, as if she was about to throw the *cakra* that she holds in her hand. The middle right hand holds a sword and the lower right hand a rope, tied around the tail of the buffalo. In the upper left hand, the goddess holds a conch and, in her middle left hand, a cylindrical object (perhaps a club). Her lower left hand is placed on the head of the demon, which emerges from an injury in the buffalo's neck. The demon, depicted as a dwarf, holds his hands in *añjali-mudrā*. The statue has many unusual details. First, it is one of the few six-arm Durgā found in Java (Durgā with eight arms being by far the most common type). Second, the club and the rope are not among the usual attributes of the Javanese Durgā. The rope, or more precisely the slip knot, appears at least on one other statue of Durgā, found in Semarang and now preserved at the National Museum (MNI 127a).



Picture 5. Durgā from Klenteng (Source: Doc. of Pusarnas and EFEO).

However, the way the string is represented on the Ronggowarsito Museum statue, wrapped around the tail of buffalo, is found, to our knowledge, on only one other sculpture, discovered on the Dieng Plateau (photo OD 11294). The goddess' lower left hand, gently placed on the demon's head, is also an unusual detail in Central Java. The latter iconographic element is actually mainly associated with statues of the Singhāsari period, like the Durgā from Candi Jago and Candi Singosari. The long loincloth of the Durgā of Klenteng is similar in structure to that of the Loro Jonggrang Durgā. The goddess' elongated proportions echo the Durgā of Sambisari and that of Candi Suko, a now disappeared temple near Boyolali. It is therefore likely that the Klenteng Durgā should be ascribed to the second half of the ninth Century.

The presence of a *yoni* and of a *dvarapala*, as well as of two gods (Durgā, Agastya) of the Javanese triad (the third one being Gaṇeśa), suggests that a temple once stood on the site of Klenteng.

#### 5.4 Cepit

Further upstream, on a hill crest, at 980 m above sea level, the site of Cepit overlooks the valley of Bawang. The hill is bordered by the Arus (west) and Belo Rivers (east). There, in the middle of a grove, near a Moslem tomb, one can see three stones: a large rectangular stone of 143 x 57 x 23 cm, a smaller stone of 46 x 26 x 17 cm, and the lower part of a *yoni* measuring 67 x 69 x 43 cm. The latter has a special molding, with a succession of three bands triples and without panels.

From older data it can be concluded that a temple once stood on the Cepit hill. The earliest description of the site is provided by G.A. Pet, an engineer at the Bagelen District (Notulen 1868: 23). Pet notes the presence, “in a place called Selo Kasoer, near the village of Deles”, of a male statue in a squatting position, a sculpture of a cow, a kind of jar, a decorated stone, a water tank (*water vat*), and “some other indescribable things.” This information was taken over by Verbeek (1891) and supplemented by Sell in 1912. The latter, who gave us the name of the hamlet (Lembu) where the remains were located, provided a fairly accurate description of the sculptures (Sell, 1912: 173-174). He identified, amongst others, a Gaṇeśa (76 cm high), a statue of Śiva’s bull (105 x 35 x 65 cm), three linggas, two decorated columns (*zuiltjes*), a conical stone surmounted by a button (height 74 cm, diameter 42 cm), a *yoni* made of two parts, and two large rectangular stones (127 x 42 x 20 cm and 132 x 46 x 34 cm).

When Satari visited the site in 1975, the place had not changed much, but more things were visible. She gave the most complete description of the remains. According to Satari (1977: 9), the site would consist of three groups, distant from each other of about 10 m. The first group, which is still visible today, was composed of a *yoni* (made of two parts) and fragments of stone blocks. The second group included a lintel adorned with a *kāla* as well as a few stones arranged in a square. The third group was the one with the most sculptures: a Gaṇeśa, a kind of top stone decorated with a lotus, the headless statue of a bull, two tall lotus-shaped stones, the spear of a dagob, and a lingga.

The site was excavated in 1978 (Nitihaminoto *et al.* 1978) ten excavation pits of 2 x 2 m were opened in the central area of the site. The research uncovered many stone fragments and a few potsherds, but no sculptures. Imported ceramics were all from the post-classical period, the oldest ones dating from the seventeenth Century.

Today, the statues are no longer in situ and we must therefore base ourselves on the observations made in the 1970’s to get an idea of the nature of the site. The presence of large rectangular stones (probably parts of a door frame) and of a lintel is a sufficient evidence to conclude to the former existence of a temple. In the light of the *yoni*, lingga, bull, and Gaṇeśa, we can also safely say that it was a Hindu monument. The lintel mentioned by Satari, which also appears on the photos of the 1978 excavations,



**Picture 6.** Fragment of *Kāla* from Cepit (Source: Doc. of Pusarnas and EFEO).

is now stored at the office of the Department of Tourism and Culture of the district of Batang. Its composition and style are typical of the Central Javanese period. The *kāla* is unfortunately incomplete (the upper part is missing) and damaged (not only by the wear of time but also by recent drops of cement). The absence of lower jaw, the relative simplicity of ornamentation and the profile of the vegetal scrolls along the edges the stone point to a resemblance with early Central Javanese *kāla*, older than those in Loro Jonggrang style (c. 850-928). It is therefore possible - although not certain - that the temple of Cepit was built prior to 850.

Cepit is not an isolated site: two other sites, namely Kepyar and Klawen, have been identified in its immediate vicinity.

### 5.5 Kepyar

The site of Kepyar is located at about 930 m above sea level, on a hill overlooking the valley of Bawang, opposite Cepit. The hill is bordered to the west by the Belo River and to the east by the Putih River. The place is now a Moslem cemetery but many temple stones lie around on the ground; some of them are reused in the tombs. Many stones are rectangular, but others have a more complex stereotomy. There are also antefixes, stones with moldings, and at least one crowning stone. None of the antefixes are carved yet, which suggests that the temple was never finished.

A lintel adorned with *kāla*, measuring 117 x 66 cm, was also found in Kepyar (Tim Penyusun 1985). Unfortunately, no picture of it is available.

### 5.6 Klawen

The hamlet of Klawen is located in the area of Bawang, below the hills of Cepit and Kepyar, at about 840 m above sea level. It is part of the village Candigugur, a name that can be translated as “the fallen (i.e. in ruins) temple.” The temple to which the name of the

village refers was probably located in Cepit or Kepyar.

A *yoni* once stood in front of a house in the village. It was transferred to Batang and is today at the office of the Department of Tourism and Culture. The pedestal bears no decoration, except moldings. These moldings are quite peculiar: the usual pattern (cyma, triple band, panel and pilasters, triple band, reverse cyma) is replaced by a cyma, a series of three triple bands, and a reversed cyma.

A *lingga* (Tim Penyusun 1985), two *yonis*, and a *peripih* (Nitihaminoto 1978: 8) were also discovered in the village of Candigugur. The *peripih* is most likely the one that is stored in the Ronggowarsito Museum under the inventory number MR 04.00260 and recorded as coming from “Bawang”. It is a square stone of 22 x 22 x 11 cm, with nine small compartments measuring 4.5 x 4.5 x 1.5 cm each.

### 5.7 Deles

Not far from Cepit, Kepyar and Klawen, in the middle of a rice field, there is yet another site: Deles. Today, only a *yoni* and a circular stone are visible in Deles. In 1975, Satari (1977: 10) was still able to see a sculpture made unidentifiable by erosion. Several objects kept at the Ronggowarsito Museum are listed in the museum inventory as coming from Deles. However, Deles is in this case the name of the *desa* (village) and not that of the *dusun/dukuh* (hamlet), hence the uncertainty concerning precise provenance of these objects. For most of them, there is every reason to believe that they actually come from Cepit (Desa Deles). Four sculptures representing Śiva’s bull, together with a fragment of *kāla*, cannot be attributed with certainty to either Cepit, Kepyar or Deles and are hence included here. Two of these bulls (MR 04.00039 and 04.00041) are damaged and badly eroded.

The third bull (MR 04.00042) is of excellent workmanship and comparable to the



**Picture 6.** A part of Kāla from Deles Site (Source: *Doc. of Pusarnas and EFEO*).

best statues of the Yogyakarta area. The bull's position is very naturalistic and his eyes expressed great gentleness. The last bull - which is also the one who is most likely to come from Cepit and not from Deles - is particularly noteworthy because of the inscription that it bears on the base. This brief text has been studied by Griffiths (2012: 473-474). He gives the following reading, "namaś śivāya janmaccheda [kāraṇāya]" (homage to Śiva, Cause of the cessation of rebirth) and dates it on paleographical grounds to the seventh or eighth Century.

The last object from Desa Deles kept at the Ronggowarsito Museum (MR 04.00028) is a block of stone, roughly rectangular, measuring 70 x 44 x 15 cm, with one side carved. In the center, in relief, one can see a rākṣasa, recognizable thanks to his thick hair. His left leg is bent and the corresponding hand is posed on his knee. He holds a club in his right hand. The background is entirely occupied by a plant like motif. To the right of the rākṣasa one can see remains of a kāla: a leg, palm turned towards

the visitor, a rounded cheek, and part of an ear or horn. A similar composition is found at Candi Morangan (Klaten), a temple usually associated with the second half of the Central Javanese period. The presence of a leg and, apparently, a lower jaw brings the *kāla* of Deles close to those of the Loro Jonggrang style and would therefore confirm a dating posterior to 830 or 850 AD.

## 6. Distribution Patterns

The main virtue of our survey in the district of Batang is likely to show that the inscription of Sejomerto, often cited by historians Java for its link with the Śailendra Dynasty, is not an isolated finding. It actually comes from a region much richer in archaeological remains than suggested by previous research.

In the district of Batang, most of the archaeological sites of the Hindu-Buddhist period are found in the small plains and valleys of the interior, mainly around Tersono, Bawang, Sejomerto and Blado. These areas also correspond to areas of volcanic soil, well-watered but away from major floods - in contrast to the lowlands of the northwest and northeast. There is probably in Batang, as in Central Java, a more or less direct correlation between the Hindu-Buddhist settlements and irrigated rice cultivation. It remains to determine whether the virtual absence of archaeological remains in the coastal plains is due to an old will to avoid floodplains and areas requiring complex systems of water control, to a significant shift of the coast line or, more prosaically, to the difficulty of identifying ancient sites under thick layers of alluvium.

In the state of our knowledge, it seems that the distribution of Hindu-Buddhist sites follows a distribution pattern favoring middle valleys. There are exceptions, of course, the most notorious being the group remains around Simangli, in the southwest part of the district, the ruins of Sigemplong in the south, and the site of Balekambang near the coast.

The sites of Simangli, Pejati, Batur and Punden Wali Ajar Pendek are located in the highlands, in an area that, still nowadays, is difficult to access. Since the area is also not suitable for wet-rice cultivation, it seems unlikely that these are remains of a large settlement. Without other data, neither textual nor material, it is difficult to get an idea of the precise function of these sites. Remote mountain or forest remains are often considered to have an almost exclusive religious function. However, the assumption of the presence of an ancient village cannot be ruled out. In a region where the main trade goods have long been the products of the forest, it would be wrong not to consider the possibility that such highland sites played a role in wealth production.

The function of Sigemplong, which we were unfortunately not able to visit but which was described by Dutch explorers (Notulen 1867: 91-92, 1868: 11, 23; 1871: 27), seems pretty clearly established: it is a staircase leading to the Dieng Plateau. Access to Dieng via Batang is not easy, but it is nevertheless possible. The road starts from Deles, follows a ridge between the rivers Arus and Belo before reaching the village of Sigemplong, where the road becomes a footpath. One branch goes via Mounts Sipandu and Pagerkandang and ends near the Telaga Merdada, west of Dieng. The other branch runs along the foot of Mount Sipandu until the village of Rejosari and leads to Dieng Kulon, not far from the temples of the Arjuna group. It is possible that Sigemplong was part of an ancient pilgrimage route leading from Deles to Dieng and that the remains of Deles, Cepit and Kepyar (and perhaps others, downstream) were also part of it. One should however not associate all the sites of the district of Batang to this "Dieng route." On the one hand, the site distribution in the lower valleys, without direct physical link with Dieng, makes this hypothesis unlikely. On the other hand, it raises the question of the anteriority of the remains.

In the current state of knowledge, the remains of Batang appear to be more ancient than those of Dieng. Hence, the region of Batang does not seem to have developed because of its proximity to the plateau. It is contrariwise likely that the Hindu-Buddhist presence in the region of Batang promoted the development of the religious center of Dieng, as the landscape of Batang is marked by the omnipresence of massive Prahau and mythologizing of this 2500 m high giant seems natural.

Among the sites located outside the area the densest in classic remains, the one that attracts the most the attention is Balekambang. Balekambang is indeed the only site located (almost) on the coast, at about 1 km from the modern beachfront, near a source of fresh water, at the foot of a hill which keeps it safe from the floods plaguing the alluvial plain. The Anyar River flows a few hundred meters to the east and is still used today as anchorage point for fishing boats. It is also possible that, during the Hindu- Buddhist period, the Kuto River, which is now at a distance of 2500 m, followed another course, slightly closer to Balekambang. The Anyar and the Kuto Rivers provide access to the interior valleys and, in particular, to the areas of Tersono, Bawang and Sejomerto, which are also rich in archaeological remains. The zone of Balekambang is actually almost the only one in the region to offer all these advantages (easy access to the sea and the hinterland, freshwater, dry land, anchorage place) and it would not be surprising that the surroundings saw the development of a port in ancient times.

## **7. Chronology of The Hindu-Buddhist Settlement in The District of Batang**

It is interesting to note that the Hindu-Buddhist culture was already settled on the coast and along the main tributaries of the Kuto in the seventh-eighth Century. This is at least what the first paleogeographical studies seem to suggest.

The inscription of Balekambang would indeed date back to the seventh century (Atmodjo in Nitihaminoto *et al.* 1978: 19; Griffiths 2012: 474-477). Inscriptions from the hinterland would date back to the seventh century for Sojomerto (Boechari 1966 2012: 355), and the eighth century for Banjaran and the ninth century for Indrokilo (Griffiths 2012: 479). The inscriptions of Deles (Griffiths 2012: 473-474), and Kepokoh (Machi and Soekarto 1986: 3; Griffiths 2012: 479) are also dated from a relatively early period: seventh - eighth Century. It is possible that some sites that have not yielded inscriptions date from the same period but, in the absence of data from excavations, it is still impossible to confirm this hypothesis. The site of Pejaten, with its atypical *Gaṇeśa* and its statue of *Viṣṇu/Hari-Hara* is perhaps an example of such an early site. It is also difficult to determine the duration of the use of most sites. However, one thing is certain: the region was a center of Hindu- Buddhist culture throughout the whole Central Javanese period. The possible move of the Śailendra's from Batang to the plains of Kedu and Yogyakarta did not cause the abandonment of the region. Religious foundations continue to be established at least until the second half of the ninth century, as evidenced by artifacts found at Balekambang, Klenteng, and Deles.

Regarding the period after the ninth-tenth Centuries, data are insufficient. A bronze mirror discovered at Kanyaran shows that the site was still used in the eleventh-twelfth Century. Besides, ceramics from surface survey show that Balekambang was still in activity in the fifteenth-sixteenth Century and Cepit in the seventeenth Century, which does not bring much to the discussion. More interesting perhaps is the mention of several place names of the region in the fifteenth-sixteenth Sundanese poem recounting the trip of Bujangga Manik (lines 750-754; Noorduyn and Teeuw 2006: 257). Three of the names mentioned in the text can still be localized (Noorduyn 1982:

423): Kupang (region Watu Gajah), Batang and Tumerep (Tumbrep, the village was discovered the inscription of Wutit).

## **8. Artistic Traditions**

Among the sculptures from the Hindu-Buddhist era found in the district of Batang, the vast majority, unsurprisingly, follows the tradition of Central Java. Some of these sculptures may seem crude, like the bull from Sidomulyo, but others, far from being second-class provincial productions, show great artistic skills. This is among others the case of the makara and the sculpture of Śrī from Balekambang and of a lintel from Deles. This implies that those responsible for these religious foundations had the taste and financial means to afford the services of skilled craftsmen, trained in the sites of the Progo Valley and of the southern plains. The monuments that they built in Batang did obviously not pale before the temples erected in the regions close to the political and cultural center of the kingdom of Matāram.

Some deviations from the Central Javanese model appear as poorly controlled attempts. We see this lack of mastery, for example, in the bull fragment from Sigit, where there is certainly an effort in the ornamentation, but whose square appearance is somewhat unfortunate. Contrariwise, the statue of Durgā from Klenteng, which was discussed above, might be the oldest representation of Durgā with his hand on the head of Mahiṣa and may therefore constitute an important step in the development of the iconography of goddess, foreshadowing the masterpieces of the Singhāsari period.

Apart from the sculptures belonging to the Central Javanese tradition, we find, among the statues from the district of Batang, representations that have little parallels in Indonesia. We will not dwell here on the case of two *Gaṇeśa* and of the *Viṣṇu/Hari-Hara* from Pejaten, which seem to have affiliations with India and the coasts of Mainland Southeast. We

wish here to draw attention to an equally atypical work, discovered in Kupang (Wonotunggal) and whose iconography has already been studied by Satari (1978: 5-8). It is a carved stone block in which the Indonesian archaeologist recognized a representation of Viṣṇu delivering Gajendra. The largest part of the stone is occupied by an elephant. Between the legs of the elephant, one can see the body, arms and legs of a kneeling figure. On the left side of the stone, one can clearly distinguish a wing, hence the identification of this figure with Garuda. On the shoulders of Garuda, whose head is missing, we see a second figure, seated, in which one must undoubtedly recognize *Viṣṇu*. As noted by Satari, although the iconography is Hindu, the style recalls the megalithic tradition, especially the sculptures from Pasemah. We are not facing a naturalistic representation, or even a logical one: Garuda, who is supposed to fly above Gajendra, is visible on both sides of the elephant. This particular sculpture may need to be considered into the broader context of interactions between the megalithic and the Hindu-Buddhist cultures. The same goes for the site of Batur, where the tradition of punden is mixed with the Hindu religion. Both sites seem to suggest that the megalithic culture, whatever its age, coexisted with Hinduism, at least in the western part of the district of Batang.

## 9. Conclusion

The region of Batang was an important center of Hindu-Buddhist culture in the seventh Century. The inscriptions in Old Malay and in Sanskrit, the India-influenced sculptures and the statues recalling Cibuaya suggest that Batang was part of a larger network that probably went from Bali to Sumatra, heir of the network that yielded the famous mitred *Viṣṇu*. Close to the mountains and their resources in timber and other valuable products, rich of a hinterland suitable for wet-rice cultivation, the region offered benefits that were probably crucial for its development. Perhaps do we glimpse the answer to the question asked

once by Wolters (1967). Perhaps is Batang one of these Javanese rivals that the nascent kingdom of Srivijaya was trying to submit in the late seventh Century.

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# Situs Balekambang

Jawa Tengah



Penelitian arkeologi di Situs Balekambang, Desa Sidorejo, Gringsing, Batang, Jawa Tengah berhasil menemukan sisa struktur bangunan berukuran 10 x 7 meter yang posisinya berada di sebelah selatan pertirnaan Balekambang. Di lokasi ini pernah ditemukan satu prasasti Balekambang yang secara paleografi berasal dari sekitar abad ke 7 Masehi.

Foto: Dok. Pusarnas