

ŚĀNTI

A RITUALISTIC OBJECT FROM BALI

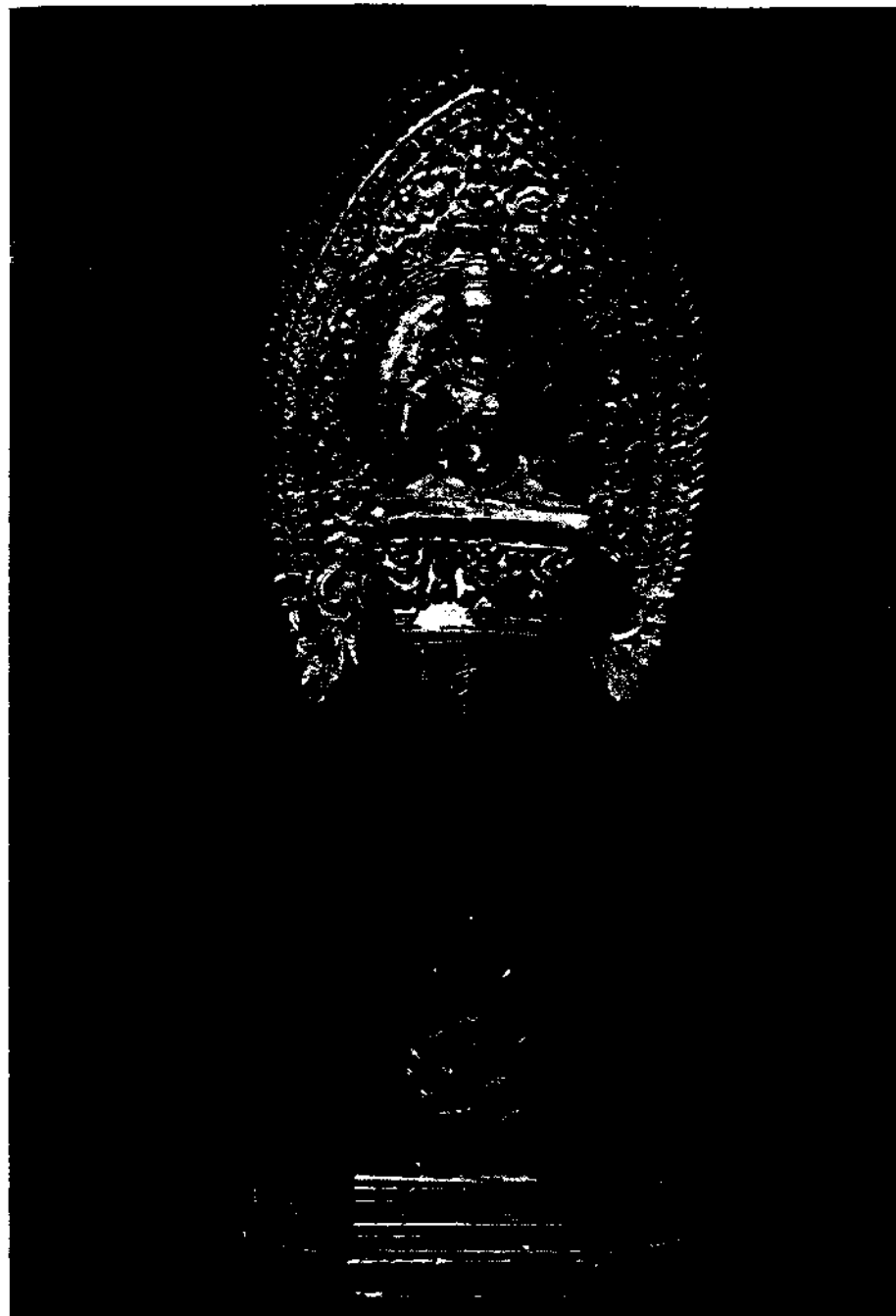
by C. HOOYKAAS

The National Museum of Bangkok, Thailand, quite recently included one of its treasures amongst the exposition which was on show in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. This was listed as object No. 90 in the German catalogue (Tafel 31; comments on p. 88), pl. 39 in the Dutch catalogue (comments on p. 24) and No. 90 in the English catalogue (comments on same page). According to Professor Van Lohuizen¹ in the Dutch and German catalogues this beautiful object to which she ascribes a ritual character and in which she is inclined to see a yantra, is of extraordinary interest, and she adds that its explanation has not yet been settled. Having to do with a mainly flat and symmetrical object, meant to be seen from one point of view and in that sense not three-dimensional, belonging to the twelfth-century sphere of Vajrayāna and felt to be ritual even though nowadays being used in a ceremonial way only—we might perhaps link it up with a ritual object of a still more flat appearance used by the twentieth-century Vajrayāna Buddhist priests of Bali and adjacent Lombok (conquered and colonized by the Balinese 1744–1894).

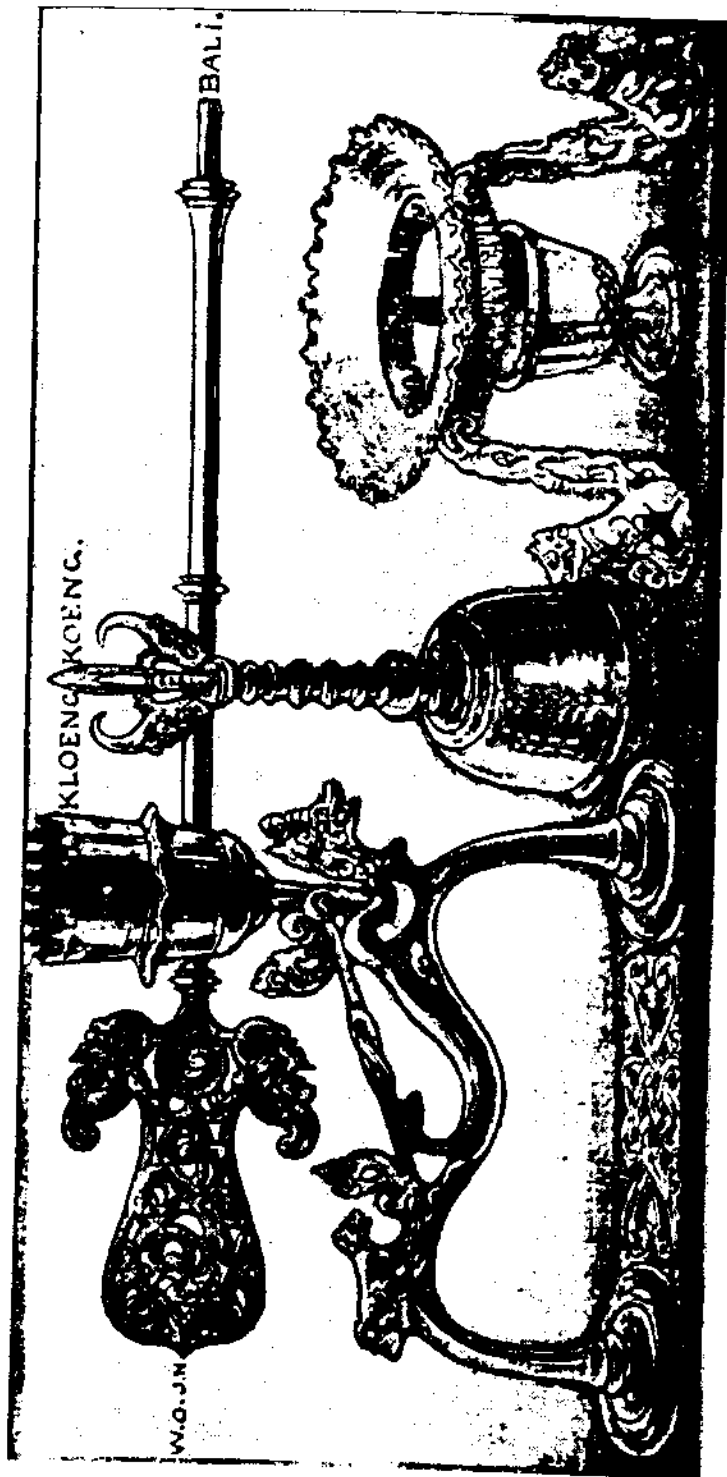
The geographical distance between Lopburi and Lombok is considerable; the historical distance between the twelfth and the twentieth centuries not less so, but even if the objects available in monasteries and museums in South East Asia might be found insufficient for suggesting any link, and if the linguists and historians might not be able to find the materials needed here, it remains worthwhile to remind the readers of *Asia Major* of the existence of seventeen Vajrayāna Buddhist priests in the diaspora of extreme South East Asia, and to show from photographs and texts the importance they attach to a really ritualistic object, the Sanskrit name 'śānti, peace' of which they at least have not forgotten.

Cultural phenomena in the diaspora, cast off from the main stream, have a tendency to become living antiquities, as for instance the shadow theatre in Kēlantan (Malaysia), cut off from Java and hence representing an older or backward stage of development which is definitely more exorcistic.

¹ I am indebted to her for the references to the German catalogue and to Coedès.



The popil or vén vienthien from the Thai art exhibition.



Buddhist ritual instruments (Bali)
W.O.J. Nieuwenkamp, *Zwerftochten op Bali*, Amsterdam Elsevier, 1910, p. 182

There is no doubt that the shadow theatre originated in an exorcistic rite, though nowadays the performer of this kind of theatre in Muslim Java is no longer considered to be a priest; so his performance is at the best a ceremony. It strikes me that the Thai museum piece is labelled as ritualistic, though its use as described is only ceremonial; it may be that far-off Bali and Lombok with their ritual use by the Vajrayāna Buddhist priest offer an explanation.

When in 1904 the Dutch draughtsman-author-collector W. O. J. Nieuwenkamp visited the practically independent islands of Bali and Lombok, some copper objects in that centre of coppersmiths, Klungkung near the South East coast, drew his attention and he made a drawing of them, reproduced here.² In the middle we recognize the common Balinese priest's bell, *ghaṇṭā*, the top of which is a *vajra*; its use is not confined to brahmin priests, Śaiva or Bauddha, for the non *tri-vaṅṣa pamanġu*, village- or temple-priest, and the equally non *tri-vaṅṣa* exorcist priest, *sēnguhu* or *ṛṣi bhujāṅga*, manipulate it as well. To the left we observe the *dīpa*, the lamp or light, representing the Agni-Rudra aspect of Śiva Sūrya or Śivāditya, the ritual object which the brahman priests (the Śaiva one of which sometimes calls himself a Saura) have reserved for their own group. To the right is the *tri-pāda*, tripod, and under it the vessel for holy water which the Śiva priests call *svamba* or *Śivambha* and their Buddhist colleagues *pamandianan*—under it to gain space for the drawing of the fourth object which clearly should be put up vertically in some kind of holder or pedestal. Its flat and winged appearance is evident, its environment of ritualistic objects not accidental, though Nieuwenkamp did not learn the object's meaning and in his concomitant text spoke about a fire fan.

Twenty years later, in 1924, the book "Mudrās, the ritual handposes of the Buddha priests of Bali" by Tyra de Kleen³ shows the *śānti* (*ṣānti* or *canti* as she writes it) as the tallest of the priest's ritual objects on her plates 4-23, now standing vertically in its hold. It is always rather sketchily done, *mudrās* being the artist's subject, but amongst the various *śānti* of the various priests we clearly distinguish one as winged in appearance as that meticulously drawn by Nieuwenkamp, another more compact, and two which appear to be lyre-shaped. For the moment it looks as if the shape of the *śānti*, though always flat and symmetrical, is less rigidly maintained than the *ghaṇṭā* and perhaps even more flexible than the *dīpa*. As to its function, Tyra de Kleen on p. 32 tells us: "Another implement in the Buddhist priest's outfit, not found in that of the Shaivite priest, is the *canti*, a sort of brass flag on a stand, which is turned toward the four cardinal points during the murmuring of prayers and *mantras*".

² *Zwerftochten op Bali*, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1910, p. 182.

³ London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

This is the moment for us to turn our attention to Buddhist ritual texts from Bali. During my last stay in Bali on sabbatical leave (1958/9) the Buddhist priest Padanda Gēdē Njoman Djlantik, living on the slope of Gunung Agung in the village Boda Kling (Karang Asēm), kindly went with me through his death ritual, BUDDHA VEDA, known from the Leiden MS Codex Or. 4165 and the Balinese Kirtya MS No. 2255, and copied for me his daily ritual, PŪRVAKA VEDA BUDDHA, hitherto not accessible in public collections. As a matter of fact, both of them contain the same long *mantra* during the muttering of which the priest should move the *sānti* clockwise. He, the *yogīsvāra*, pays homage to *bajra-dhūpa* and turns the *sānti* towards the East, to *bajra-puṣpa* while turning the *sānti* towards the South, to *bajra-dīpa* while turning the *sānti* towards the West, finally to *bajra-gandha* while turning the *sānti* towards the North. The action of dealing in this way with the four directions of the compass, *catur-deśa*, is called (*a*)*nātur-deśa*.

I never witnessed "my" priest do this or have his *sānti* amongst his cult instruments during his daily morning ritual. But then he never wore *sampēt*, the bandoleer (shoulder belt), invariably worn by Tyra de Kleen's models, who also invariably have a *sānti* erected before them. It is evident from this, that *sānti* does not occur in simple daily ritual and is confined to *madhya* (Tyra de Kleen's drawings) and *uttama*, when a mitre (*bava*) towers over the priest's head (photograph of "my" priest's father when officiating with his *sānti* before him.⁴)

The preceding practical indication for the Buddhist priest in his two main ritualistic compendia is not the only place where we find *sānti* mentioned (or miss it; this indication should have been printed in S. Lévi's Sanskrit Texts from Bali, GOS LXVII, Baroda 1933, Section III, BUDDHA-VEDA on p. 79 between line 9: *Yat pūrvam Buddha-mūle* and line 10: *Namo Ratnatrayāya*, but has been omitted, even though it is written in Sanskrit). There exists another passage in which we find the *sānti*, this time not in a mere indication concomitant to the uttering of four *mantras*, but in a final word of the *stuti/stotra/stava* of ten *ślokas* directed towards the Judge of the Dead, Yama-Rājā, who seems to have amalgamated with Mahā-Kāla, Lord of Time and Lord of Evil. This *stuti* is found as well in Śaiva as in Bauddha writings. Elsewhere⁵ this *stuti* ("totally unintelligible" according to Lévi o.c. p. 50) will be produced and discussed at full length, synoptically according to the Shaivite and to the Bauddha version, which vary slightly but not insignificantly. Consequently here it may be deemed sufficient only to draw attention to the main points.

⁴ Cf. also my "Bauddha Brahmins in Bali", BSOAS xxvi/3, 1963, 544-550.

⁵ "Yama-rājā, the Lord of Judgement" in Agama Tirtha, *Five studies in Hindu Balinese religion*, in the press (*Verh. Kon. Ned. Ak. v. Wet., Afd. Lett., N.R., LXX/3*).

The first four *ślokas* begin with the names of Iśāna's four aspects Sadyojāta, Bāmadeva, Tatpuruṣa and Aghora, repeatedly mentioned in the Śaivite priest's ritual, at the end of the *śloka* repeated in reversed order as can still be seen in Lévi's book; Iśāna in the fifth *śloka* is less well recognizable and this word may have been distorted intentionally. The five *ślokas* in their second *pāda* continue by producing the names of the *Pañca-rēṣi*, to wit Kurṣika, Garga, Métri, Kuruṣya and Prētañjala as they are called in Bali. Rather than peaceful hermits they are uninitiated and disobedient sons of Śiva according to Balinese belief. Though not unknown to Shaivite and Bauddha brahmin priests (the "high priests" of many an author), or to the *pamañku*, temple-, village-, or folk-priests, they take their most predominant position in the three-hundred-line exorcistic incantation of the *sēnguhu* or *rēṣi bhujānga*. This priest, be it said in passing, in his writings has the mention of his cult instruments preceded by the word *bajra*.⁶

The first five *ślokas* of the Yama-Rājā-stava mentioned the usual direction of the compass (*pūrvā*, East; *dakṣiṇā*, South; *paścimā*, West; *uttarā*, North, and *madhyā*, Centre); colours associated with them (*śveta*—white; *rakta*—red; *pīta*—yellow; *kṛṣṇa*—black, and for the Centre, somewhat surprisingly, *dhūmra*, reddish, smoky); and the *astra*, weapons or attributes of the gods: *bajra*—thunderbolt; *danda*—stick or club; *pāśa*—noose; *cakra*—wheel; and *padma*—lotus, in the Centre. Nothing of this is new or would be astonishing but for the fact that consistently *pādas* and *ślokas* should also partially be read backward, that the eighth and ninth syllables are the same, the seventh and tenth and so on. This *stuti* is not so much a poem as a riddle, part of which could be solved and part of which has not yet found its solution. But the fact is plain that the enumeration of the four directions of the compass is followed by mentioning *padma* in the Centre; such an enumeration of sa-ba-ta-a-i in Bali is called *pañca-brahmā*; the following na-ma-Śi-vā-ya is known as *pañca-tīrtha*.

The second pentad of *ślokas* actually contains this word *tīrtha* in the *śloka* and in the *pāda* where it might be expected; the words *Bayébya* and *Ersanya* stand for *Vāyavyā* (Northwest) and *Aiśānyā* (Northeast); the proper names at the very beginning of each *pāda* have suffered, but with F. D. K. Bosch's "Buddhist data from Balinese texts"⁷ in mind we recognize here his Navabava, Matthāna, Sinhāvaha and Vatsala (p. 117 top). And correctly as No. 5 Yama-rājā, after whom the *stava* has been called and to whom it is directed; when at the end of this tenth *śloka* and of the whole *stava* this name is repeated in the reversed order, as is done throughout the ten *ślokas*, we do not find Ya-ma-rā-jā, but Ya-ma-rā-ñi, his *śakti*!

⁶ More about him and his incantation in the volume in honour of Sir Richard Winstedt to be published shortly by the Oxford University Press.

⁷ In "Selected studies in Indonesian Archaeology", *Koninklijk Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Translation Series 5, 's Gravenhage, Nijhoff, 1961, pp. 109-133.

Corruption of the text or my own lack of experience in emending texts prevented me from recognizing more than the two points of the compass mentioned above; likewise I only found *padmarāga* and *śyāma* as colours; as weapons or emblems, however, *dīpa*—lamp, *khadga*—sword, *dhvaja*—flag, and *trisūla*—trident are found in the *ślokas* 6–9; the final word for the centrally placed object being *sānti*. This whole *stava* is certainly not a work of art but a mental exercise and a fabrication of a kind for which our days show less appreciation. Nobody, however, will deny the importance of the fact that this long *stuti* (according to Balinese standards) in honour of Yama-rājā, ends with the word Yama-rāṇī (in reversed order) preceded by *sānti* (in due order). This is the point to be made here: *sānti*, not used in daily ritual, but reserved for *madhya* and *uttama*, in a well-balanced enumeration of divine attributes has the last, *i.e.*, highest and central place. In Bali and Lombok, where the top half of the Buddhist priest's bell consists of a *vajra*, and where apart from that the Buddha priest manipulates a cult instrument called *vajra* and consisting of two such *vajras*, with their points in opposite directions, and where the *sānti* in harmony with its name bears no *vajra*, it occupies an elevated place in the priest's ritual.

The object on show in the Thai art exhibition, on the other hand, though described in the Dutch catalogue as having a ritual meaning, appears to be merely of a ceremonial character in present-day practical use. In the German catalogue H.R.H. Prince Subhadradis Diskul gives the following description:⁸

“Die Hauptfigur ist Vajrasattva, jener Buddha, der vor allem von der Vajrayana-sekte des Mahayana verehrt wird: man sieht in ihm den tätigen Abgesandten des Adibuddha, der obersten Weisheit, die das Universum lenkt. Vajrasattva sitzt auf einem von Löwen getragenen Sockel, in der rechten Hand hält er einen doppelten “Vajra” (Donnerkeil) und in der linken wohl eine Glocke. Über seinem Haupt sitzt auf einer gewundenen Naga Adibuddha. Am unteren Ende des Griffes ist die Maske des Kala-Ungeheuers angebracht.”

About its function the author tells us:

“Dieser Gegenstand könnte von einem Zeremonialwagen stammen. Coedès dagegen beschreibt ihn als einen Kerzenhalter, wie er bei der Zeremonie des “wientien” (“das Herumreichen von Kerzen um einen Kreis”) gebraucht wird.”

George Coedès in his “Bronzes Khmers”, *Ars Asiatica* V, Paris 1923, p. 51, writes in connection with our object, his Planche xxxix:

“Je donne le nom de porte-cierges à cet ustensile nommé en cambodgien *popil* et en siamois *vên vien thien*, qui est d'un usage courant

⁸ Schätze aus Thailand, Kunst eines buddhistischen Königreiches. Eine Ausstellung im Wallraf-Richartz-Museum zu Köln, 1963, p. 88.

dans un grand nombre de cérémonies et de fêtes domestiques ou religieuses: après y avoir fixé par une simple pression de petites bougies de cire vierge, les personnes prenant part à la cérémonie, assises en rond, se passent cet objet de main en main et de droite à gauche, en envoyant du revers de la main la fumée dans la direction du héros de la fête, qui se trouve au centre du cercle. Le *popil* moderne a la forme d'une feuille de figuier, au bord plus ou moins dentelé ou découpé, avec un motif brahmanique en relief au milieu de l'ovale.⁹ Bien que la pièce reproduite à la planche xxxix soit de dimensions sensiblement plus grandes que les porte-cierges actuellement en usage, et que le manche en soit creux comme s'il était destiné à être monté sur une hampe, la forme générale rappelle suffisamment celle du *popil* pour que l'identification puisse être proposée. L'intérêt du motif central, qui représente Vajrasattva surmonté d'un petit Buddha assis sur le nāga, a été signalé au cours de la discussion relative aux images du Buddha portant la tiare et les bijoux.”

The problem whether the *popil* or *vên vien thien* from the South-East Asian mainland has any relation with the Balinese Buddhist *sānti* cannot be decided by working with one objet d'art from the twelfth century and a description of the twentieth century practice with this kind of object without illustrations. More illustrations are needed, and if possible translations from texts in which the object and its function are mentioned. The linking up would be interesting and might lead to further results. For the moment the Balinese materials have been produced and we are looking forward to help from the mainland side, which in generously sending its treasures to Europe has elicited this short study.

⁹ Cf. la description donnée par Gerini, *Chūlakanta mangala*, Bangkok, 1893, pl. ii, No. 5. Sur l'emploi du *popil* dans les cérémonies cambodgiennes du couronnement, de l'ondoiement, de la tonsure, du mariage, cf. A. Leclère, “Cambodge, Fêtes civiles et religieuses” (*Ann. du Musée Guimet*, Bibl. vulg., xlii), pp. 45, 440, 494, 549.