

# ***Arjunawiwaha* on Nine Traditional Balinese Paintings from the Resink Collection**

MA Dissertation

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This Master dissertation will focus on nine traditional Balinese paintings collected by Ir. T.A. Resink and purchased by the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, The Netherlands, in 1971. The Resink collection consists of 117 paintings, many of which reside in the depot of the museum, without any detailed descriptions to their name. In 2004 N.R.L. Miedema has done her dissertation<sup>1</sup> on the same collection but concentrating on different paintings. She focused on the portrayal of the *Ramayana*, while this thesis will focus on the portrayal of the *Arjunawiwaha* (Arjuna's Wedding). This story tells of Arjuna (important character in the *Mahabharata*) and how he is tested by the gods to prove his worthiness, before killing the demon-king Niwatakawaca and marrying the seven heavenly nymphs.

It is a shame that these paintings have never been thoroughly identified and investigated. They have just been stored away in the depot, with no follow-up research. This thesis will give them the attention they deserve and discuss how the *Arjunawiwaha* is depicted on these traditional Balinese paintings. It will also look further into the connection between text and painting, and what can be said about the correlation between different types of paintings and their portrayal of the *Arjunawiwaha*.

For now, it is not possible to determine their exact date. All one can say is that they were made before the Second World War, as Resink collected them before that time.

## 1.2 Previous research

Traditional Balinese paintings are narrative canvases which find their origin in the stylised *wayang* figures. Although they are still made today, the village of Kamasan (East Bali) has been the epicentre of this type of art since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Miedema 2004:7).

When it comes to the research regarding these traditional Balinese paintings, there have been some scholars who have looked further into their history and development. Already early on, researchers saw the many similarities between the Javanese *wayang kulit* and the traditional Balinese paintings.<sup>2</sup> Not only do they share almost identical stylistic features, but also the surroundings, characters – like the servants Twalen and Merdah –, iconography and the subjects of the stories are very much alike (Klot and Bullough 1972:5).

In 1937, Miguel Covarrubias wrote his renowned book "Bali", in which he also dedicates a chapter to the arts of the island. Here, he touches upon the traditional Balinese paintings and their iconography, already acknowledging their fixed proportions, stylized elements, and set character features. Henceforth, this view on the traditional Balinese paintings was adopted by all the other scholars that came after Covarrubias. Everyone acknowledges that the paintings find their origin in the stylised *wayang* figures, and everyone agrees on the additional explanation of the iconographic elements, which will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

However, not a lot has been done with this information. Although it was established that certain clothing indicates a certain character, and that specific physical features signify a particular type of person, a lot of this information is not used for an iconographical research of the traditional Balinese paintings. Of course, some have used this knowledge for the sake of identifying the many traditional Balinese paintings collected around the world,<sup>3</sup> but this is often done in the context of a

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<sup>1</sup> Miedema, N.R.L. 2004. *Ramayana op de Traditionele Balinese Schilderingen in Kamasan-Stijl: 18 Doeken uit de Resink-Collectie Nader Bekeken (Vol. I and II)*. Master Thesis, Leiden University.

<sup>2</sup> Covarrubias 1972; Hooykaas 1961; Gralapp 1961; Gralapp 1967; Klot and Bullough 1972; Forge 1978; Djelantik 1986; H.I.R Hinzler 1987; Marrison 1995; Cooper 2005; Mann 2006; Vickers 2012; Vickers 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Hooykaas 1961; Terwen-De Loos 1964; Klot and Bullough 1972; Forge 1978; Worsley 1988; Miedema 2004.

museum catalogue, and the information given is most of the times incomplete. Not all the paintings are identified, or they are not described in detail, but just given one sentence to explain which story is depicted.

The scholars also agree on the three most important types of paintings, *ider-ider*, *langse*, and the *tabing*.<sup>4</sup> Although the earlier records by Covarrubias and Gralapp do not yet mention the *tabing*,<sup>5</sup> it is now general knowledge that these three formats are most common. The different types of paintings fall into these distinct classes in terms of their use and shape, and not necessarily in terms of iconography or story content (an element which will be examined in chapter four).

All in all, it seems as if a lot of attention has been given to the identification of the style and visual language of traditional Balinese paintings, but that it was left lingering there. Just a few scholars ventured into the actual identification of certain paintings and even fewer tried to interpret them in a cultural context.<sup>6</sup> A lot of paintings have been left unidentified and are stored away in depots. I would like to contribute to the further identification of these incredible paintings and look deeper into a possible relationship between the three different types of paintings and their use and content.

### 1.3 Function and Form

Paintings were considered immensely prestigious and sought-after decorations for ceremonies and rituals in temples. They had a specific use, which was to decorate the buildings during these festivities, partly hide the offerings, and assist the priest by being an informational backdrop to his actions (Forge 1978:7). These paintings are only hung up during certain festivals and ceremonies, which, for example, can be the birth of a child or the important tooth-filing ceremony. The *Arjunawiwaha*, which is the story focused on in this thesis, is commonly recited at Balinese weddings (Mack 1974:glossary).

#### Ider-ider

The term *ider-ider* can be translated as 'roundabout' (Fisher and Cooper 1998:40). This is a very fitting name, as the *ider-ider* is a narrow, but very long strip of canvas, which is hung around a building. They are commonly found on *bale* (small pavilions), where they are hung under the roof overhang, but one can also find them going around a temple. *Ider-ider* usually show a sequence of events in a story, scene by scene (Forge 1978:12).

#### Langse

The *langse* is a rectangular shaped canvas designed to be hung at the side of the *bale*, forming a sort of curtain, screening the offerings (Fisher and Cooper 1998:40). They can also be located flat on the walls in palaces (Forge 1978:7). According to Forge, *langse* often only show one scene, or a composite of related scenes from a story. The most important scene is given a central position in the composition (Fisher and Cooper 1998:50).

#### Tabing

The *tabing* is a roughly square shaped canvas usually located at the back of the *bale*. They form the backdrop to the offerings during the ceremonies (Forge 1978:7) and are hence easily visible to everyone. The important characters are likely to be situated near the centre (Forge 1978:10).

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<sup>4</sup> Forge 1978; Hinzler 1993; Marrison 1995; Fisher and Cooper 1998; Cooper 2005; Mann 2006; Vickers 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Gralapp (1961:24) does mention a third type, but this category is called *palelintangan*, which are calendars of zodiacal significance.

<sup>6</sup> Worsley, Peter. 1988. 'Three Balinese Paintings of the Narrative *Arjunawiwaha*.' *Archipel* 35: 129-156.

#### 1.4 Organization of the Thesis

The main aim of this thesis is to identify and document the nine paintings that portray the *Arjunawiwaha* in the Resink collection. To do this, knowledge of the iconography, character and decorative elements is needed. The information on the character features (such as eyes, hair, jewellery) and decorative elements (tree, rock, plant motifs) is situated at the end of this thesis in **appendix 1**. It is advisable to first read this appendix before continuing with chapter two. Here, the most important characters and their iconography are discussed in order to better and quickly understand the paintings, and it will prevent me from repeating myself during the actual identification process.

Before continuing to chapter three, I would also highly recommend turning to **appendix 2** for a brief summary of the *Arjunawiwaha* story. For this thesis I have chosen to make use of the quite recent translation by Stuart Robson,<sup>7</sup> as this is the most complete, and well-written translation I could find. Chapter three focusses on dissecting the paintings and identifying them correctly. It also analyses the connection between text and painting to see if the artists had any knowledge of the text itself, or if they were simply copying previous work.

Chapter four divides the nine paintings into the three types discussed above (*ider-ider*, *langse*, *tabing*) and looks deeper into the differences between the three formats, trying to examine if the shape of the canvas has any influence on the scene selection and portrayal of the story.

The last chapter will evaluate what has been discussed and discovered in the thesis.

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<sup>7</sup> Robson, Stuart. 2008. *Arjunawiwaha The Marriage of Arjuna of Mpu Kanwa*. Leiden: KITLV Press.





## Chapter 2: The Characters of the *Arjunawiwaha*

### 2.1 Introduction

Knowledge of the iconography and visual language of Balinese paintings is of the utmost importance for the understanding of the depicted scenes, and the subsequent message they try to convey. This visual language adheres to certain conventions, which are mainly connected to the division between *halus* (refined) and *kasar* (coarse) characters, as well as social status, but also to the familiarity with certain hand gestures, motifs, decorative elements and other details and their meanings. To prevent repetition throughout the entire dissertation, the most important aspects of this iconography are explained in **appendix 1**. The rest of this chapter will focus on the most important characters depicted in the paintings and their corresponding iconography.

### 2.2 The Characters:

As the Balinese artists work with these two types (refined and coarse) the following characters are firstly divided into *halus* and *kasar*, and secondly hierarchical discussed (gods, royals, brahmans, demons etc.).

#### 2.2.1 *Halus* Characters:



Fig. 1. Indra

#### Indra:

Indra is the king of the gods and is thusly almost always surrounded by a nimbus, which is the sign of divinity. Next to this, he has a third eye, very refined features and a thin moustache. He wears a high crown and an abundance of jewellery. He is either portrayed in long (or short) pants and a cloth secured around the waist, as well as a white scarf fastened across one shoulder.

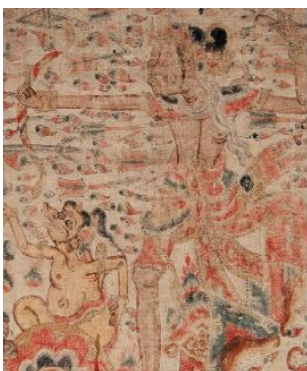


Fig. 2 Siwa as the hunter

#### Siwa:

Siwa is not often portrayed in these paintings, but when he is, he is depicted as a hunter (as this was his disguise). A nimbus may surround him, but not necessarily, and his clothing can vary. However, he is generally depicted with a thin moustache, a white scarf across one shoulder, jewellery and shoulder decorations, a short cloth fastened around the waist, and a diadem with a *garuda mungkur*. As a hunter he also carries a bow.

#### Kubera:

Kubera is quite frequently depicted next to Indra and is the god of wealth. He is always surrounded by an aureole and wears the same clothes as Indra. His facial features are quite refined, but he does have a moustache, and always two wrinkles between his eyebrows.

Baruna:

The next deity portrayed is Baruna, god of the sea/ocean. He has an aureole and wears the same crown and clothing as Kubera. He is recognizable by his big, bulging, eyes, thin moustache, and big eyebrows with three wrinkles between the eyes.

Yama:

Yama is the god of justice and hell. He decides who will go to heaven and who will go to hell. His outfit is similar to the previous two deities, but his animalistic facial features snout-like nose, big lips, fangs, wide eyes, big eyebrows and more fangs protruding from his cheeks – make him easy to recognize. Apart from these *kasar* facial features, the rest of his body is very refined.

Indra, Kubera, Baruna and Yama represent the four guardians of the cardinal directions and “presumably signify the totality of the divine kingdom over which Indra rules” (Worsley 1988:132).



Fig. 3. Kubera, Baruna, and Yama



Fig. 4. Werhaspati

Werhaspati:

Werhaspati functions as the priestly advisor of Indra (Worsley 1988:132). He wears a long, often floral, jacket and a long undergarment. His hair is quite characteristic, with either one or two ponytails folded, so that the end of the tail is fastened in the neck. The eyes are another distinctive feature of the priest, as his eyes do not signify the refined male type, but the wavy female type. He has round wrinkles in between the eyebrows, a hairy moustache, and protruding lips.

Arjuna:

Arjuna is the main character of the story and is often depicted in ascetic garb, with a *ketu*, a long jacket and a loin cloth. He is portrayed as a highly refined person, no facial hair, thin lips, straight nose, and a light skin. He is also sometimes illustrated as a princely warrior, with the *gelung supit urang* on his head, shoulder decorations, and many other ornaments.



Fig. 5. Arjuna

### Heavenly Nymphs:

The nymphs are an immensely important aspect of many of the paintings discussed in this dissertation. Although many different types of women can be depicted, the nymphs are recognizable by some distinctive features. They are discernible by their diadems, clothing which signifies their high status, and also an abundance of jewellery. However, one will see that more women wear this type of clothing, shoulder decorations, or headdresses. The one element they are most recognizable by is the way they wear their hair. The celestial nymph wears her hair in a long, very well-kept and tidy braid.



Fig. 6. Female servant high class, low class, and heavenly nymph

### Female Servants:

The female servants can belong to higher and lower classes. The lowest female servant is incredibly small, and almost bald. They wear the flower ornament on top of their ear and simple clothing, and maybe a bracelet. The slightly higher servant is bigger in stature and has more hair, but also rough facial features like a big mouth and lips, wrinkles in between the eyebrows and slightly less refined limbs. They can also have a darker or greyish skin colour. The highest female servants can wear the same ornamentation and clothing as the heavenly nymphs, however, their hair is not in a long, smooth braid. Their coiffure is a more messy and frayed hairdo, with long strands of hair.

### **2.2.2 Kasar Characters**



### Niwatakawaca:

The demonic king Niwatakawaca is recognizable by his demonic features, such as his big, bulging eyes, his snout-like nose, big mouth with fangs and bushy eyebrows. In 4491-51 he is also portrayed with much body hair. He is clad in royal attire and wears the same crown as Indra. He can have dark brown skin.

Fig. 7. Niwatakawaca

### The Servants:

In traditional Balinese paintings there are four servants who play an important role. These clown-like servants (*panakawans*) belong to two sides. Twalen and Merdah adhere to the “good” side and Delem and Sangut belong to the “bad” side. They are small, plump men, with misshapen faces and are almost always seated on their knees (Miedema 2004:47).

### *Twalen*

Twalen is the main servant of the good side and is often depicted with a light-brown skin. He has a small, sharp nose, and wavy female eyes. His mouth is quite big with protruding lips and aligned,

white teeth. He often has a beard and a moustache and wrinkles in between his eyebrows. He frequently wears a black-and-white chequered loincloth around the waist and some type of jewellery.

#### *Merdah*

The junior partner of Twalen is Merdah, who normally has slightly darker brown skin, and a long, round nose (Marrison 1995:18). He is smaller in stature than Twalen, but also on the heavy side. He wears a red-and-white chequered loincloth and jewellery. In most of the following paintings Twalen and Merdah wear white headdresses that seem to resemble flat turbans. Although in painting 4491-50 and 4491-51 they wear little caps where their ponytails stick out.



Fig. 8. Twalen and Merdah

#### *Delem*

Delem is the bigger servant of the "evil" side but is still a small and plump man. He is predominantly recognizable by the lump under his chin, his big round eyes, small nose, and big mouth with fat lips. He wears a cap where his hair comes out and big earrings. He often has dark brown skin, a thin moustache and wears a loincloth which is fastened between the legs.

#### *Sangut*

The smaller servant of the "evil" side is Sangut, who has light brown skin. He is distinguishable by his profoundly protruding lips and slightly bigger eyebrows. He too has round eyes, a thin moustache, a small nose, and wears a cap on his head. He also wears some jewellery and a loincloth.

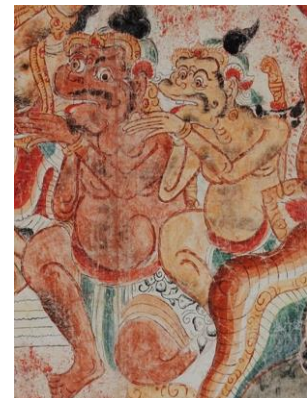


Fig. 9. Delem and Sangut



Fig. 10. The Wild Boar

#### The Wild Boar:

The wild boar is also depicted in some paintings. This is the demon Muka in disguise and usually has a black-and-white striped skin. In 4491-43 his striped skin is coloured blue, red, and greyish, and in 4491-49 the boar has black round spots on his white skin.





Fig. 11. RV-4491-43. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

## Chapter 3: The Paintings and the Influence of the *Arjunawiwaha*

In this chapter the nine traditional Balinese paintings will be examined in detail. Through the knowledge we have acquired in the previous chapter and its appendix, we will be able to identify what is depicted. Next to the identification of the paintings, this chapter will simultaneously compare the paintings with the *Arjunawiwaha* text, and explore how influential the actual text was, if the artists had any knowledge of it, or if they perhaps only copied previous work.

### 3.1 RV-4491-43

**General:** This painting, an *ider-ider*, is 692 cm long and depicts nine scenes. The *ider-ider* reads from left to right and portrays the beginning of the *Arjunawiwaha*, where the hero of the story, Arjuna, undergoes several tests to prove his worthiness. Every scene is divided by a diagonal flame-like triangle motif<sup>8</sup> and the empty space around the subjects is filled with *awan-awan* of the teardrop kind.



Fig. 12. 4491-43, Scene 1

**Indra Instructs The Nymphs:** The nymphs are instructed by the god Indra to seduce Arjuna. On the left, Indra is seated on a type of animal, with his hands in a talking gesture. To the left of Indra stands Werhaspati. The text makes no mention of his presence in this scene, nor do they refer to Indra sitting on an animal. The addition of these two elements is an interesting decision of the artist. In between Indra and the nymphs, a tree is depicted, symbolizing the act of conversation between the two groups as mentioned in appendix 1. All nymphs are seated on their knees, folding their hands in front of their heads in a respectful and devotional manner. The first six women are all refined (*halus*) nymphs, with long, braided hair. The last and seventh woman is of the coarser (*kasar*) type. This is evident by her greyish skin colour, her coarse facial features, her specific hairstyle and her bared breasts.<sup>9</sup> The six refined nymphs wear many embellishments, while the coarse servant wears little to none. She also wears no upper garment. She merely has a scarf around her neck, and a *sarong* covering her lower body. The text mentions the presence of seven beautiful nymphs.<sup>10</sup> Evidently, this is not the case, as there are only six nymphs and one servant which is another deviation from the text by the artist.



Fig. 13. 4491-43, Scene 2

<sup>8</sup> See Galapp 1961:22; Covarrubias 1972:190; Fisher and Cooper 1998:49.

<sup>9</sup> For more information see Galapp 1961:23; Covarrubias 1972:165 and 191/192; Forge 1978:15; Fisher and Cooper 1998:53/54.

<sup>10</sup> Robson 2008:41, Canto 1, Verse 7.

**Test 1:** In the second scene the famous seduction of Arjuna is depicted. The six nymphs and their servant have come down from Indra's heaven to test Arjuna's strength. In the centre, Arjuna sits inside his hermitage cave. His legs are crossed, and his hands come together at his heart in a meditating posture. He wears the *ketu* on his head and is dressed in ascetic garb.

On Arjuna's right three nymphs are depicted in various postures, attempting to distract Arjuna from his meditation. On his left, another two nymphs are trying to seduce the meditating Arjuna. The first nymph, closest to Arjuna, seems to be wearing a see-through skirt. Continuing to the right, the two servants Twalen and Merdah are depicted. Merdah with his dark-brown skin is seen on the left, and Twalen is depicted on the right. In contrast to Arjuna, both servants are easily distracted by the woman. One lifts her skirt for Merdah, and the coarse-looking servant dances for Twalen. In the right corner of this scene a pig is visible. This is an interesting addition to the scene, and one that is not mentioned in the *Arjunawiwaha* text. As for now, it is unclear what this little pig is meant to be doing. However, he could just resemble the location of the scene, which is a lush mountainous place, and might be filled with animals of all sorts. The servants, Twalen and Merdah, are also not mentioned in the text. However, they are wildly used in the *wayang kulit* performances which explains their presence in the Balinese traditional paintings.



Fig. 14. 4491-43, Scene 3

**Niwatakawaca And Muka:** This third scene is a demonic intermezzo. Here, the demon king Niwatakawaca, who has been wreaking havoc in Indra's heaven, is talking to the demon Muka. Niwatakawaca orders Muka to turn himself into a wild boar and kill Arjuna. The demon king, on the left, is clad in royal attire and wears the highly respectable crown. Muka is also of high class, apparent by his elaborate ornamentation and clothing. Behind Muka, Delem is depicted, and in front of Niwatakawaca, Sangut crouches on the ground. Both servants wear the type of cap where their ponytails stick out. In the middle of the scene, a tree is illustrated, symbolizing conversation. In Robson's translation there is one sentence that refers to Niwatakawaca ordering Muka to kill Arjuna.<sup>11</sup> The text does not mention Sangut and Delem, but that which is said about Twalen and Merdah also applies to them.

<sup>11</sup> Robson 2008:63. Canto 7, Verse 3.





Fig. 15. 4491-43, Scene 4

**The Nymphs Return:** On the left side Indra stands in front of the group of nymphs, who have come back to report that they have not been able to break Arjuna's resolve. The nymphs are sitting in a posture of reverence, with their heads leaning against their hands. There are now seven nymphs, instead of the previous six, and still the one female servant.



Fig. 16. 4491-43, Scene 5

**Muka Transforms Into The Boar:** This brief scene shows the demon Muka transforming into a wild boar, preparing to attack Arjuna. This scene is not spoken of in the *Arjunawiwaha* text, but the artist might have chosen to portray it nevertheless in order to make it easier for people to follow the story.



Fig. 17. 4491-43, Scene 6

**Test 2:** In the middle Arjuna is seated in his cave in a meditative posture. His clothes have changed, as he is now wearing a long-sleeved upper garment. On his right side, an aged ascetic is depicted, who is actually Indra in disguise, testing Arjuna as concerns his motivation. The sage is carrying a stick and wearing a blue jacket. His under garment exists of a type of loincloth, fastened around the waist,

with long ribbons falling all the way to his ankles. The ascetic is also wearing anklets and earrings. In the text, the sage is not wearing any clothes at all. That the artist has chosen not to portray the sage naked is an interesting decision, and one that every painting to come will also display. The sage's face shows some coarse features, and his eyes are the wavy female type. He also has a thin moustache. To the left of these two figures the servant Merdah is kneeling. Above him a bird (*burung*) flies away, holding a ribbon in his beak. According to Fisher and Cooper a bird flying overhead may indicate fright at the scene below (Fisher and Cooper 1998:56). However, in this case it seems unlikely that the bird portrays fright, as the text makes no mention of any hostility between the sage and Arjuna. On Arjuna's left, Twalen is also seated on his knees.



Fig. 18. 4491-43, Scene 7

**Indra And Arjuna:** Scene seven seems to be a continuation of the conversation between Indra, in sage-disguise, and Arjuna. The only problem with this assumption is that there is no tree depicted between the two main figures. The absent tree might indicate that their conversation has turned hostile. Although the text does not mention this, it could explain the flying bird in the previous scene. Arjuna has left his cave, and now stands in front of the ascetic. On his knees, in between the sage and Arjuna, Twalen is seated, and behind Arjuna Merdah also sits on his knees. All three are facing Indra in disguise.



Fig. 19. 4491-43, Scene 8

**Indra's Reveal:** This eighth scene is quite clear. This is the moment the sage lifts his disguise and turns back into Indra, after being satisfied by Arjuna's motivation. Arjuna, Twalen, and Merdah are all in a kneeling position, with their hands together, in a respectful and reverencing manner. Something noteworthy is the absence of the aureole around Indra, which is normally depicted to showcase his divinity.



Fig. 20. 4491-43, Scene 9

**Wild Boar:** The ending of this *ider-ider* seems to be quite abrupt, as there is only one half of the wild boar painted. However, it does seem to be done deliberately, as the right edge is neatly finished with a pattern. This scene must be the beginning of the scene where the demon Muka, disguised as a wild boar, tries to kill Arjuna.



Fig. 21. RV-4491-44. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

### 3.2 RV-4491-44

**General:** This painting is another *ider-ider* and it measures at 576 cm long. It is meant to be read from right to left. This painting is badly damaged in quite some places, but this does not interfere a lot with the identification of the scenes. In comparison to the previous *ider-ider*, the style of this one is more intricate, detailed and filled to the brim with different kinds of motifs and decoration.



Fig. 22. 4491-44, Scene 1

**Indra Instructs The Nymphs:** The first scene of this painting takes place in the palace of the king of the gods Indra. This is evident by brick motifs (Worsley 1988:132). In this scene, Indra, depicted on the right side of the centre tree, is instructing the seven heavenly nymphs and their two servants to seduce Arjuna and test the strength of his meditation. The seven nymphs are represented as refined women, while the two servants are depicted in a coarse manner. Indra is surrounded by an aureole and he is standing on a lotus cushion. He makes the gesture of conversation, and is wearing royal clothing, as well as his elaborate crown, and jewellery. Behind Indra stand Baruna and Yama.

On the other side of the scene, behind the nymphs stand Kubera (surrounded by the aureole) and Werhaspati. The priestly advisor wears his long, floral jacket, a diadem, earrings, and a royal undergarment.<sup>12</sup> Werhaspati, together with Baruna, Yama and Kubera are not mentioned in the text when Indra is instructing the nymphs. The text also does not refer to a specific place where Indra instructs the nymphs. In this painting, the artist has chosen Indra's palace as the location, while this scene in the previous painting probably takes place outdoors.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 23. 4491-44, Scene 2

**Travelling Of The Nymphs:** Scene two seems to be the procession of the nymphs on their way to Arjuna. Starting from right to left, the first two women are of the less-refined type and are the servants of the nymphs. Although the paint on their heads is damaged, their hair is still visible, as

<sup>12</sup> See Hinzler's drawing of royal clothing in Hinzler, H.I.R. 1993. *Balische Teken- en Schilderkunst*. Leiden: Instituut Indonesische Cursussen, image 92.

<sup>13</sup> As there are no brick motif borders.

well as the facial features of the second servant, which are clearly *kasar*. Next to these two figures, the first nymph is depicted. She stands out from the rest of the nymphs because she is wearing a bright yellow undergarment. It is possible that this figure represents the leader of the group of celestial nymphs, and also the most beautiful one, Suprabha. The six following nymphs are also wearing the same shoulder decoration, headdress, and jewellery. On the left of this scene stand three other figures. The tallest of the three is a hand-maiden of high status. The two small figures are servants of very low social status, indicated by their short physique, lack of beautiful long hair, the flower on top of the ear and the further absence of jewellery.

The background of this scene is filled with details indicating that the scene is taking place outdoors. Many floral features, like a tree, grass and flowers on the ground are depicted in between the figures, and a rock with a one-eyed monster head<sup>14</sup> (*karang bintulu*) is visible underneath the tree on the left side of the scene.



Fig. 24. 4491-44, Scene 3

**Bathing Of The Nymphs:** This third scene represents the bathing scene, where the nymphs are washing, and preparing themselves whilst discussing their plans to seduce Arjuna. Most of multi-coloured ovals underneath many of the women represent water (either a pond or a lake).<sup>15</sup> However, if there are two of the ovals on top of one another, they represent rocks. Starting from the right, four women are depicted. The two top women are celestial nymphs. Underneath them two servants of high status are kneeling. The top left nymph is seated on an animal. The four women are facing four other women, of which the first one is a servant of high rank who is kneeling and has folded her hands in a respectful manner. Next to this figure, another nymph sits on top of a rock. On her right, kneeling on the ground, is a servant of high status and next to this figure, seated on a rock, a fourth nymph is depicted. These eight women are talking to one another, indicated by the tree in the centre of the two groups, and the hand gestures made by three of the eight women.

Next to this group, a fifth nymph sits under a tree. She is facing a group of three other women, seated on the other side of the tree. The top figure is the sixth nymph, recognizable by her beautiful braid. Kneeling underneath her are two other servants of high rank, making a talking gesture.

Beside this second group, the last three figures are depicted. Two servants are kneeling and folding their hands in a respectful gesture, while facing the seventh nymph who is seated on the same animal as seen in the beginning of this scene. A third tree is standing in the centre of these women. The animals depicted in this scene are not referred to in the text, and it remains unclear why the nymphs are seated on them. The stones upon which some women sit are mentioned in canto 2, verse 4, where it is said that "A stone would be their couch to rest on" (Robson 2008:45).

<sup>14</sup> Miedema 2004:53.

<sup>15</sup> Hinzler, H.I.R. 1993. *Balische Teken- en Schilderkunst*. Leiden: Instituut Indonesische Cursussen, image 19.



Fig. 25. 4491-44, Scene 4

**Test 1:** See fig. 26 for an enlargement of this scene. In the centre of this scene Arjuna is depicted in meditation, sitting in front of his hermitage cave. To the right and left, his servants Twalen (right) and Merdah (left) are easily distracted by the beautiful women. On the right, Twalen is seduced by a bare-breasted servant. The woman wears a short skirt, no upper garment and a flower on top of her ear. Next to this a nymph is seated on an animal. This is a different animal than before, since this one has a trunk (elephant). A servant of high status kneels in front of the animal and the nymph, while behind her another nymph stands.

Arjuna is seated on a rock in front of his cave. He is dressed as an ascetic priest (Worsley 1988:133). His knees are bent, so that the back of his feet touch each other. On either side of him, nymphs try to distract him from his meditation. The two closest to him are bare-breasted. The nymph to his right has placed his right hand over her shoulder and is touching his leg. To the right, another nymph stands upright, holding a *pudak*.<sup>16</sup> Beneath her, a servant kneels.

On the other side of Arjuna a nymph is standing, and a servant of high status is kneeling on the ground. Next to these two women a female figure is facing to the left. She is kneeling and has her right hand raised to the side of her chin, indicating her disappointment of not being able to seduce Arjuna (Worsley 1988:136). Above her a nymph sits on a rock and has her arms raised in a seductive manner. The first kneeling woman is looking at a servant who is standing sensuously in front of Merdah. Merdah sits on a rock and seems to be infatuated by the woman who is lifting her skirt. His left hand tries to touch the bared bottom of the seducing servant.

The left side of this scene is filled with an interaction between three women. They are sitting around a tree, indicating conversation. The first woman (on the right), sits on the left side of Merdah with her back towards him. She is kneeling and has her hands in a talking gesture. Next to her, a nymph is seated on an animal. The two women are facing a third woman, who is also kneeling. Above her head a star (*bintang*) is visible, indicating that it is night time.

Many trees, rocks, and floral motifs fill the empty space in this scene, signifying the lustrous nature surrounding Arjuna's cave on Mount Indrakila.

In total, there are eight nymphs visible in this scene, which does not correspond with the seven nymphs spoken of in the text. In this scene, as in the previous one, two nymphs sit on a type of animal, which is another deviation from the text.

<sup>16</sup> A "*pudak* is a flower of the *pandanus*, a particular botanical genus resembling the pineapple [...] The flowers are arranged in yellowish spongy layers inside a rectangular sheath, ending in a point at one end, and become visible when the sheath bursts open [...] The petals of the *pudak* were used for writing on." Zoetmulder 1974:134-135. See also Hinzler, H.I.R. 1993. 'Balinese palm-leaf manuscripts.' *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Manuscripts of Indonesia* 149, No. 3:438.



Fig. 26. Enlargement of 4491-44, Scene 4





Fig. 27. 4491-44, Scene 5

**Test 2:** On the right of this fifth scene Arjuna has ceased his meditation and is now standing in front of his cave. On either side, his servants Twalen (his right) and Merdah (his left) are kneeling. Arjuna is making the gesture of conversation. The trio is facing towards the left where a male figure is standing. In between them a tree on a rock is depicted, emphasizing the act of talking. This is Indra disguised as an aged ascetic, there to test Arjuna's motivation. He is not holding a stick, which is unusual for an ascetic, and which is also mentioned in the text. Again, the sage is not portrayed naked, but dressed in garments.



Fig. 28. 4491-44, Scene 6

**Indra's Reveal:** This scene is on the one hand quite clear, but on the other hand to a certain extent confusing. This brief scene unmistakably shows the aged ascetic transforming into his true form, the king of gods Indra. However, the old man is carrying a stick, which he did not have in the previous scene, and his clothes have changed. He first wore a blue, red, and white striped jacket, but he is now wearing a jacket with a floral motif. It is quite unclear why the artist has chosen to dress the sage differently in this scene, as the text does not refer to a change in clothes, because the sage is meant to be naked. Indra is surrounded by a nimbus and is standing on a lotus cushion.



Fig. 29. 4491-44, Scene 7

**Arjuna Pays His Respect:** The last scene of this *ider-ider* portrays a kneeling Arjuna, Twalen and Merdah. They are in front of Arjuna's hermitage cave and have folded their hands in front of their bodies in a respectful gesture. This gesture is meant for Indra, who has just revealed his true identity. Indra, surrounded by an aureole, has put his left arm around Arjuna's neck. He stands wide-legged, with a piece of cloth hanging between his legs.



Fig. 30. RV-4491-45. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

### 3.3 RV-4491-45

**General:** This third traditional Balinese painting is a *langse* of 66,5 x 236 cm. This canvas focusses primarily on the meditation scene of Arjuna, as it takes up the entire left side of the painting, as well as the instructing of the nymphs, their journey to Arjuna's cave and the preparation of the nymphs before their attempted seduction. In this *langse* the painter has chosen to depict quite some stars in the scenes. Something which the previous paintings did not necessarily have.



Fig. 31. 4491-45, Scene 1

**Indra Instructs The Nymphs:** The first scene of this painting is situated on the lower right side and reaches all the way to the centre. This scene is enclosed by the brick motifs, indicating an indoor environment. Here the palace of Indra is depicted, who is standing on a lotus cushion on the right of the centre tree. He stands in front of the seven heavenly nymphs and one of their servants. The women kneel or stand in a respectful manner, while Indra is instructing them on their task ahead. Next to Indra, his priestly advisor Werhaspati is depicted, wearing a long floral jacket, and a tiara. He is also facing the eight women.

Behind the king and his confident is a group of seven men. Three of them are the divine figures Kubera, Baruna and Yama, recognizable by their aureole, and their characteristic facial traits. Kneeling in front of these three divine royal persons are four men of princely rank (Worsley 1988:132). Although their clothing and adornments signify their similar status, their physical features (skin tone, eye-types, moustaches) indicate a diversity in temperament (Worsley 1988:132). The two on the right are talking to one another, as they are gesturing polite conversation. The two closest to Indra face towards the women.

This interpretation of Indra instructing the nymphs deviates quite a bit from the Robson translation. The inclusion of Kubera, Baruna and Yama in this scene, as well as the addition of the four princely men is an interesting choice. However, I believe the Kamasan artist is trying to represent the audience in a royal court.



Fig. 32. 4491-45, Scene 2

**Travelling Of The Nymphs:** Looking at the chronology of the text and the scenes depicted in this painting, the next scene is situated directly above the first scene. Enclosed by the rock motif, this small scene runs in a narrow, horizontal band, in which seven heavenly nymphs and one servant are depicted.<sup>17</sup> All heads are turned towards the centre of the painting. Focussing on the five nymphs on the right-hand side, above every left shoulder a star is visible, indicating night time. In this scene the nymphs have left Indra's palace and have commenced their journey to search for Arjuna (Worsley 1988:133).



Fig. 33. 4491-45, Scene 3

**Bathing Of The Nymphs:** This third scene takes up the upper centre space of the painting, and it is surrounded by *gunung-gunungan* motifs (rocks). It depicts the seven nymphs bathing, and dressing themselves, while discussing their plans to tempt Arjuna. On the right side of this scene, two nymphs sit on rocks on either side of a tree. The one on the right is nearly naked, apart from the see-through skirt. Her left hand is placed in front of her breasts, while her right arm rests on the knee of her right leg, which is crossed over her left thigh. The nymph opposite her is still completely dressed and has her right hand raised to straighten her hair behind her ear (Worsley 1988:133). To the left of these two women, three other nymphs sit under a tree. The two on both sides of the tree hold up a mirror, while the third nymph observes them. Below this group, the heads and upper bodies of two other nymphs are visible, facing each other on either side of a pond. At the top of this scene, five more stars are depicted.

<sup>17</sup> Worsley believes there are eight nymphs depicted here. However, I believe that the woman whose head is only visible in between the second and third nymphs from the left, is a servant and not a nymph. She does not have the same hair or the same attitude (Worsley 1988:133).



Fig. 34. 4491-45, Scene 4

**Test 1:** This fourth and final scene is situated on almost the entire left side of the painting. Here, the nymphs and their hand-maidens are trying to seduce Arjuna and his servants Twalen and Merdah. In the upper centre space of this scene Arjuna sits on a rock in front of his cave in meditation. His head is adorned with the priestly turban (*ketu*) and he is dressed as an ascetic priest. Golden chains hang from his waist, and his legs are folded in such a way that the soles of his feet touch. Two nymphs stand on either side of Arjuna. The one on the right is bare-breasted, and only wears a see-through skirt. She has placed his left arm around her neck and over her left shoulder and breast. On Arjuna's right side, the nymph rests her left hand on the rock upon which Arjuna sits, making a gesture of conversation. Behind these two nymphs closest to Arjuna are other nymphs. The two on the right are seated on rocks. The one furthest from Arjuna waves her arms in the air, while the nymph on her right makes a gesture of conversation. In between the two nymphs two stars are depicted. The two nymphs on the opposite side are also seated on rocks. They are sitting under a tree above which are four stars. The one on the left carries a *pudak* in her left arm. Unfortunately, it is impossible to see what the other nymph is doing, due to the big patch of paint that has disappeared.

In a horizontal band across the bottom of the scene are one nymph, five female servants of high status and two female servants of low status,<sup>18</sup> as well as Arjuna's servants Twalen and Merdah. On the left, Twalen is seduced by a female servant of low status. He wears a black and white chequered cloth and a red upper garment. He is staring intently at the alluring servant in front of him, who has her skirt raised and has exposed her behind. On the right side, Merdah wears a red and white chequered cloth, and is also being seduced by a female servant of low status. She too has her skirt raised, which seems to be working for her, as Merdah's right hand is raised near her pubic area.<sup>19</sup> Six other women are depicted in the midst of all this, seated in twos and talking to one another. The woman on the left, the only nymph, kneels on one knee on a double rock. She talks to a female servant of high status, who has raised her hand to her chin in a gesture of disappointment. The servant farthest to the right also makes this gesture.

<sup>18</sup> Worsley identifies six nymphs, however, five of the six have ragged hair. I believe that those without the long braid, and who have long hair but with ragged endings, are not nymphs but hand-maidens of high status (Worsley 1988:136).

<sup>19</sup> Worsley says it is Merdah's left hand which has disappeared under the servant's skirt, but his left hand is raised to his chest. It is his right hand which is approaching the servant, however the hand is still visible, so it has not gone under her skirt (Worsley 1988:136).



Fig. 35. RV-4491-46. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

### 3.4 RV-4491-46

**General:** This second *langse* is 82 x 215 cm and has an interesting distribution of scenes. The seduction of Arjuna does not seem to be the centre of attention in this painting. Instead, all three tests of Arjuna are important. This painting is the first in which the third test of Arjuna, where Siwa is disguised as a hunter, is portrayed. The instructing of the nymphs by Indra also appears to be significant, as it is one of the biggest scenes. Another interesting distinguishing element in this canvas is the more open display of sexuality in the seduction scene. Although it is less intricate than some previous seduction scenes, it is not afraid to display some sensuality and lust.



Fig. 36. 4491-46, Scene 1

**Indra Instructs The Nymphs:** The first scene of this painting is situated on the lower right side. It is marked off by the brick motifs, as this scene is taking place in the court of Indra's palace. Indra is depicted on the right side of big centre tree, surrounded by a nimbus. He is seated cross-legged on a raised platform, gesturing conversation with his hands, while instructing the nymphs. Although Worsley identifies eight women in total, seven nymphs and one servant woman in the bottom line on the other side of the tree (Worsley 1988:137), I can only deduce seven women. Although the text speaks of seven nymphs, I believe these figures represent six nymphs and one servant. The seven women are kneeling and have adopted a respectful demeanour. Indra is accompanied by many male figures. Behind him, three princely men are standing. Below these three, are two small, kneeling servants, two additional princely figures and Merdah and Twalen. On the other side of the tree, above the nymphs, four priestly figures are depicted. On the far left, Werhaspati stands in a respectful manner. The three other figures wear turbans (*ketu*) and long coats all in different styles and colours. The male attendants demonstrate a diversity in their facial features, indicating different temperaments. As for now it is not possible to correctly identify these three other priestly figures. The addition of the three priestly figures is quite an intriguing one, and something which has not been portrayed before and is not referred to in the text. As for the many male attendants, this has been discussed in the previous painting and might just be an attempt of the artist to portray the audience in a royal court.





Fig. 37. 4491-46, Scene 2

**Test 1:** This simpler rendition of the attempted seduction of Arjuna is located on the lower left side of the painting. Arjuna is seated on a rock in front of his cave in deep meditation, while six nymphs surround him, all in various stages of undress. The one on his left side, closest to him, is practically naked, except for the see-through undergarment she wears, which exposes her genitals. She is reaching out with her right hand, grasping Arjuna's left under arm, while cradling a *pudak* in her left arm. The nymph on her left side is still completely dressed and next to her another nymph is standing on her left leg, while her right foot is resting against her left knee. Both have raised a hand to their chins in a gesture of disappointment. On Arjuna's right side, the nymph closest to him is making a direct sexual advancement by lifting her right breast<sup>20</sup> towards him attempting to distract him from his meditation. Her left hand tightly grasps Arjuna's right upper arm. Beside her, two other nymphs are depicted. The one on the right gesturing conversation. All the way in the left corner a seventh nymph sits alone, wallowing in sadness and disappointment by the undistractable Arjuna. The five nymphs whose feet are visible are standing on stone slabs.

An unabashed display of sexual behaviour takes place in the bottom left-hand corner, where the two servants are gawking at the genitals of the female servant who stands in front of them with her skirt raised. Twalen's enormous erect penis can be seen emerging from between his legs, while the smaller proportions of Merdah's penis are also visible (Worsley 1988:140). In the text, the seduction scene is also quite sensually described: dresses fall open, skirts are just short enough for the wind to raise them, and many nymphs use their breasts in different ways to seduce him. Thus, it is not necessarily odd that this scene is portrayed rather sexually.

<sup>20</sup> Worsley again is mistaken by the correct usage of left and right, as he tells the reader that the woman is lifting her left breast towards Arjuna (Worsley 1988:140).



Fig. 38. 4491-46, Scene 3

**Test 2:** This third scene is situated directly above the previous scene, in the upper left-hand corner. Here, Arjuna is depicted standing in front of his cave in his ascetic attire. He is speaking with an old priestly figure (Indra), standing on the opposite side of a tree. The sage carries a long stick in his left hand and wears a long floral coat (again not naked). Behind Arjuna Twalen (on the left) and Merdah (on the right) are depicted, intently listening to the conversation. An interesting addition to this portrayal is the presence of Arjuna's bow and quiver hanging outside the cave behind Arjuna. The text actually refers to Arjuna's weapons in the cave. In canto 5, verse 6, the sage talks to Arjuna to test his interest in worldly power, and mentions 'a coat of mail, bow and sword lie at the ready. This is evidence of the intentions of someone who strives for happiness through deeds of valour' (Robson 2004:57).



Fig. 39. 4491-46, Scene 4

**Indra's Reveal:** To the right of the previous scene, this fourth scene shows Arjuna, still in his ascetic clothes, kneeling in front the king of gods Indra, who has just revealed himself. Arjuna, as well as his servants Twalen and Merdah, gesture their reverence towards the god standing opposite them. In between Arjuna and his servants, and Indra stands a tree. Indra, surrounded by an aureole, is slightly bowed towards Arjuna and is gesturing polite conversation. In the background, Arjuna's cave, as well as his bow and quiver, are still visible.



Fig. 40. 4491-46, Scene 5

**Test 3:** The last scene takes up all the space above the first scene. Arjuna stands outside his cave, under which Twalen and Merdah are visible, waving their arms in the air as a sign of distress. Arjuna holds his bow in his left hand, and stands combative astride, with his right arm raised above his head (Worsley 1988:141). In front of him, with his head towards Arjuna, stands a black and white striped boar with only one arrow in its back. Above the boar the sun (*matahari*) is depicted, indicating the hot season and military campaigning (Worsley 1988:143). Behind the boar, a divine figure, dressed as a princely warrior, stands facing Arjuna. He also carries a bow in his left hand and waves his right arm threateningly above his head. Behind this godly figure are the two servants of the demonic side, Delem and Sangut. Sangut, on the left, is waving a pistol above his head, while Delem, on the right, is carrying a shield and wielding a *kris*.<sup>21</sup> To the right of them stand six princely figures,<sup>22</sup> all armed with spears. This scene illustrates the conflict between Arjuna and Siwa (disguised as a hunter) over the boar (Muka in disguise).

Siwa finally makes an appearance in this interesting first rendition of the third test. His entourage is explained in the text, which refers to 'a group of *Siddhas* and *Rishis*.'<sup>23</sup> It is remarkable that Delem and Sangut are present in this scene, as they usually are portrayed to represent the 'evil' side. However, in this case it is quite probable that they are there to represent the opposition between Arjuna (the good side) and the unknown hunter (the enemy side). Another noteworthy element to point out is the pistol and *kris* held by the two servants. The *kris* is a typical Indonesian dagger, which makes it not necessarily surprising to see it being depicted in this Balinese painting. However, the pistol is not in keeping with the time in which the *Arjunawiwaha* takes place. In the text there is only talk of spears and bows and arrows. The pistol is a modern addition to the story, selected by the artist.

<sup>21</sup> Worsley is quite unclear in his identification of Delem and Sangut: "Behind this godly figure the two *parekan*, Delem and Sangut, the one waving a flint lock pistol in the air above his head and the other a *kris*." In my opinion this indicates that he identifies Delem as the one waving the pistol, and Sangut as the one with a *kris*. This is not correct, as we know that Delem is recognizable by the lump under his chin, which the one with the *kris* has (Worsley 1988:141).

<sup>22</sup> Worsley again identifies incorrectly. He states that five princely figures are depicted, while in fact six figures can be counted (Worsley 1988:141).

<sup>23</sup> Robson 2008:63, canto 7, verse 7.



Fig. 41. RV-4491-47. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

### 3.5 RV-4491-47

**General:** This painting is the first *tabing* and measures at 101 x 152,5 cm. On this canvas, the viewers' attention is immediately drawn to the centre, where the most important character is depicted. Only two events of the *Arjunawiwaha* are illustrated in this painting: the first and second testing of Arjuna.



Fig. 42. 4491-47, Scene 1

**Test 1:** Scene one, the temptation of Arjuna, takes up the entire lower part of this painting, emphasizing its importance. Arjuna is depicted in the centre of the canvas. He is seated on the triple throne in front of his cave, in deep meditation. He is flanked on both sides by a seductive heavenly nymph. On his right side, a nymph is making the gesture of conversation, while the nymph on his left side holds a *pudak* in her arms.

On the left side of this scene, the servants Twalen (left) and Merdah (right) are seduced by two female servants. Both women wear no upper garment and have raised their skirts to expose their genitals, while the two *parekan* are in awe by their advances. On the right side of the scene, two nymphs are standing very close to each other. The left nymph has wrapped her arm around the neck of the other nymph, while they are standing and talking. On their left, two servants of high status are kneeling. As we have seen in previous paintings, the number of nymphs in this scene does not correspond to the number of nymphs discussed in the *Arjunawiwaha* text. Here, just four nymphs are depicted, instead of the prescribed seven.



Fig. 43. 4491-47, Scene 2

**Test 2:** Scene two is situated in the right upper corner. In the middle of the scene a tree is depicted, and on the left side of this scene stands Indra in disguise. He holds a long stick in his left hand, and is dressed in a long, red coat. He is making a gesture of conversation. Opposite the old man stands Arjuna. He is dressed in his ascetic wear and is also making the conversation gesture. Behind him the two servants Twalen (left) and Merdah (right) are kneeling. In the upper right corner Arjuna's cave is portrayed.



Fig. 44. 4491-47, Scene 3

**Indra's Reveal:** This last scene illustrates Indra's reveal after he is satisfied by Arjuna's motivation. This scene is to be found in the upper left corner of the canvas. On the right side Arjuna, Twalen and Merdah kneel before Indra, who is depicted standing in front of them on the left. A puzzling missing element is the aureole that is supposed to surround Indra. Arjuna and his servants have folded their hands in a respectful manner. In the left upper corner, a sun (*matahari*) shines exuberantly.



Fig. 45. RV-4491-48. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

### 3.6 RV-4491-48

**General:** This second *tabing* is 167 × 144,5cm and only exists of three scenes. Again, the most important scene is depicted in the centre of the painting, which is occupied by the meditating Arjuna and the seductive nymphs. Some intriguing elements are to be found in this scene, such as a striking decorative element beneath Arjuna's cave, and a curious depiction of the Kartika constellation.

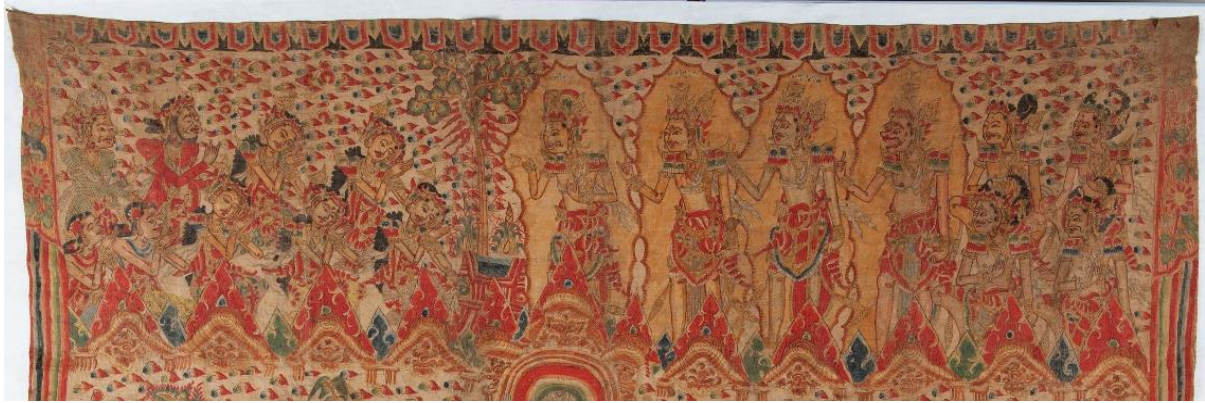


Fig. 46. 4491-48, Scene 1

**Indra Instructs The Nymphs:** Scene one stretches the entire width of the painting and occupies 1/3 of the length of the canvas. It is a long horizontal band at the top of the painting. On the right side, four divine figures are depicted. The first one on the left is the king of gods himself, Indra. Next to Indra stand, in order, Kubera, Baruna and Yama. In their aureoles, above each of their heads, some writing is visible.<sup>24</sup> Behind these four aureoled figures four other, princely figures are depicted. According to the exhibition catalogue<sup>25</sup> these four men are the commanders of the army of heavenly nymphs Citranggada, Citrasena, Citraratha, and Jayantaka. On Indra's right side, on the opposite side of the central tree, five nymphs and two female servants kneel before Indra and his companions. In the upper left corner, a sage, recognizable by his turban and long coat, and Werhaspati are depicted. The female figures have folded their hands in front of their face, in a respectful manner, while the two priestly figures in the left corner make a gesture of conversation, just as Indra.

A lot is happening in this scene that is not described at all in the text. Neither the presence of the gods Kubera, Baruna and Yama is expressed in the *Arjunawiwaha*, nor do the commanders of the army attend the instruction of the nymphs by Indra. The unknown sage in the left corner is another deviation from the text, as well as the company of Werhaspati, and the fact that there are only five nymphs depicted.

<sup>24</sup> I believe these writings are the names of each divine figure.

<sup>25</sup> Hooykaas 1961, description 17, scene 1.





Fig. 47. 4491-48, Scene 2

**Test 1:** This scene is another interpretation of the temptation of Arjuna and is situated directly beneath the first scene. In the centre Arjuna sits in front of his cave, meditating. His cave is decorated by a demon head in the middle and a *garuda* ornament on either side. On Arjuna's right, a bare-breasted nymph is putting her left hand on the rock upon which Arjuna is sitting. Her undergarment is a see-through skirt and she has raised her right hand towards her face, fingers pointing down. On Arjuna's left another standing nymph is trying to seduce him. Beneath Arjuna's throne an interesting image is visible. In the centre, a two-eyed demonesque head, similar to the one above his cave, is flanked on either side by an animal. On the left, a red, dragon-like figure is depicted. The top of its head seems to resemble flames, which are also detectable going down along its back. On the right, it looks like a tiger is portrayed. These elements are quite difficult to understand. They are definitely not referred to in the text itself, and they also do not make an appearance in any of the other paintings discussed so far.

Continuing with the rest of the scene, on the left a nymph is seated on a rock. Next to her, depicted somewhat above her, another nymph, with the hairdo of a princess,<sup>26</sup> is sitting on a rock facing Arjuna. The nymph is accompanied by a female servant, located near a pool with bamboo.<sup>27</sup> Underneath this scene a seated nymph is holding her right leg. She is sitting on the right side of a tree, whilst on the other side a servant is talking to her.

On the right side of the scene, in the upper corner, a servant is sitting behind a nymph. According to the catalogue, this nymph is facing the constellation Kartika (The Pleiades), which symbolizes "soon to be loved by princes".<sup>28</sup> Above this constellation another star is depicted. The presence of this constellation is quite baffling, and it is difficult to ascertain the reason behind its portrayal. It might refer to the future, in which Arjuna saves Indra's heaven, and makes him loved by everyone, including princes. Underneath this, on the far right, a seated nymph with a cloth and flowers on her lap is facing a servant. On either side an animal head is attached to the seat. The servant she is facing sits back-to-back with another female servant, who kneels in front of a nymph. The nymph has her arms raised in a dancing position, while the servant is offering her a tray possibly filled with flowers.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Hinzler, H.I.R. 1993. *Balische Teken- en Schilderkunst*. Leiden: Instituut Indonesische Cursussen, image 105.

<sup>27</sup> Hooykaas 1961, description 17, second scene.

<sup>28</sup> Hooykaas 1961, description 17, second scene.

<sup>29</sup> Hooykaas 1961, description 17, second scene.



Fig. 48. 4491-48, Scene 3

**Seduction Of The Servants:** The last scene of this painting is situated at the bottom of the canvas. On the right, Twalen is seduced by a female servant of low status. He points at the exposed genitals of the woman standing in front of him, who is bare-breasted and lifting her skirt. Next to this a servant of higher status kneels, while she looks at Twalen and the servant exposing her genitals. She has her right hand raised to her face, perhaps in a gesture of astonishment. Next to her another servant kneels, while looking up at a seated nymph. The latter sits on rocks facing a second nymph. In the centre of this third scene a tree is depicted, with a nymph on either side. Both nymphs are sitting on stone slabs, whilst talking to each other. Back-to-back with the nymph seated on the tree, to the right, is a fifth nymph. She holds a *pudak* in her right hand, while a servant kneels below her. A sixth nymph observes them. On the far right of the scene Merdah is being seduced by a second female servant of low status. Merdah holds the right hand of the bare-breasted servant, while he holds her left hand to the left side of his face.



Fig. 49. RV-4491-49. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

### 3.7 RV-4491-49

**General:** This seventh traditional Balinese painting is another *tabing* which measures 126 × 181cm. Although the centre scene is again occupied by the meditating Arjuna, which emphasizes the importance of that scene and him as a figure, one of the most fascinating and beautifully painted scenes of all the 9 paintings is situated in the upper left corner. An incredible portrayal of Garuda in combat with a snake is at first confusing, but with the right explanation completely logical. Another noteworthy component is the sight of Arjuna's servants during the seduction, who seem to be restraining themselves instead of touching and gaping.



Fig. 50. 4491-49, Scene

**Travelling Of The Nymphs:** In this first scene of 4491-49 the nymphs are probably journeying towards mount Indrakila, in search of the meditating Arjuna. In this small scene situated in the bottom left corner of the painting, seven nymphs are depicted. All nymphs face towards the right side of the painting except for one, the first one on the right of the middle row, who faces the group of nymphs.

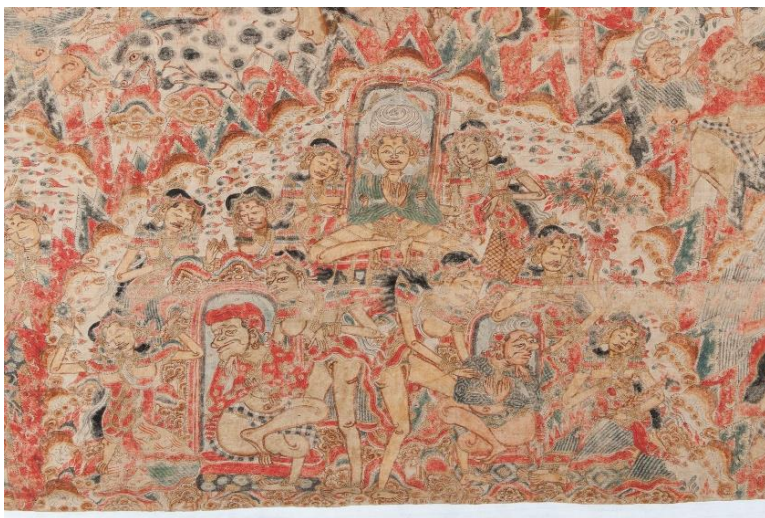


Fig. 51. 4491-49, Scene 2

**Test 1:** Scene two is the seduction of Arjuna by the heavenly nymphs and is positioned on the right side of the first scene. In the middle, at the top of the scene, Arjuna sits in his meditating position in front of the cave. His legs are bent, and his right foot is crossed over the other. He has his hands at his heart, and above his turban his bow and arrow are visible. On either side a nymph is grasping his arm, and the nymph on his left side is wearing a see-through skirt unveiling her genitals. On the left side of the scene, situated somewhat lower than the nymph at Arjuna's side, are two other nymphs facing each other. The nymph on the right holds the little finger of the right hand of her companion.

Underneath them Arjuna's servant Twalen is seduced by a nymph and her servant. The nymph is kneeling next to Twalen and raises her arms in the air. Twalen's head is turned away from the female servant, who is working hard to attract his attention. She is not wearing any upper garment, except for shoulder decoration, while she leans her bosom towards Twalen. She also raises her skirt to show him her genitals. Quite remarkable is the significantly different posture of Twalen in this depiction of the seduction. Here, he has crossed his arms in front of his body in a resolute gesture, while his head is turned away from the seductive servant. It is possible that he is simply looking towards the nymph, however, his body language seems to tell the viewer that he is trying to ignore the enticing attention. This is a demeanour not yet seen before and might be another example of the artistic freedom.

On the right side Merdah is also seduced by two nymphs and their female servant. The servant is again bare-breasted as she lifts her skirt for him. She has placed her left hand on Merdah's left shoulder and her right hand on his right shoulder. Merdah sits cross-legged, with his hands at his heart, and his head turned towards the right side of the painting. Here, a nymph sits nursing a *pudak* in her arms. Above Merdah, another nymph is leaning on his seat and looking at the nymph holding the *pudak*. Although Merdah's posture exudes less decisiveness, he is neither gawking at the women, nor is he trying to touch them. This is quite a significant difference in comparison to the other paintings.



Fig. 52. 4491-49, Scene 3

**Test 2:** On the right side of the previous scene, scene three is to be found in the bottom right corner. Arjuna is facing the old sage, Indra in disguise. Arjuna still wears his ascetic garb. On the other side of the centre tree, the sage holds a long stick in his left hand. Kneeling on either side of the tree are Twalen (left) and Merdah (right). A peculiar element in this scene is the striped background, but the

most probable explanation is that the artist wanted to represent rain. In the text, it is explicitly mentioned that the episode of Indra disguised as a sage takes place during 'the season of rain'.<sup>30</sup>



Fig. 53. 4491-49, Scene 4

**Indra's Reveal:** In this fourth scene, situated above scene three, Indra has revealed his true identity. Surrounded by a nimbus he looks down upon Arjuna and his servants, who kneel in front of him and gesture their reverence towards the god. An interesting detail is the decoration in the upper right corner of the scene. This ornament symbolizes threatening clouds during a fight,<sup>31</sup> which prepares the viewer on what is to come in the fifth and final scene.



Fig. 54. 4491-49, Scene 5

**Test 3:** On the left of this epic scene Arjuna stands wide-legged with his right hand raised above his head. He carries his bow in his left hand and Merdah sits at his feet. Next to Merdah the boar (Muka) seems to be screaming in pain as an arrow is protruding from his back. On the other side of the boar, Twalen is wrestling with Delem. Twalen's right hand is grasping Delem's right ear, while his left hand has grabbed Delem's chin. Next to Delem's head a big circular shield-like object is depicted, above

<sup>30</sup> Robson 2008:57, canto 5, verse 3.

<sup>31</sup> H.I.R. Hinzler 1993, *Balische Teken- en Schilderkunst*. Leiden: Instituut Indonesische Cursussen, image 6.

which Sangut crouches. Behind him, the hunter (Siwa in disguise) is also standing menacingly astride. His left arm is raised, while his right arm is completely stretched, holding his bow in his hand.

One of the most striking details in this fifth scene is the immense Garuda devouring a big red snake. Although Garuda is not part of the story of the *Arjunawiwaha*, the latter does offer an incredibly detailed description of the weapons used during the fight between Arjuna and Siwa. During their physical encounter in cantos 8-9, both parties fire supernatural arrows. For example, in canto 8 arrows in the shape of a hurricane, colossal clouds, a mountain, and fire are used (Robson 2008:67). This fire-arrow is depicted also in this painting, on the left side of Siwa's bow. As a last resort, the hunter "took aim with his Snare Weapon. An arrow with a body in the form of a fetter and the head of a snake that fiercely uttered challenging yells" (Robson 2008:67). However, Arjuna strikes with the "Wainateya Arrow"<sup>32</sup> to confront the snake arrow.<sup>33</sup> This confrontation between the two arrows is personified in the shapes of the actual Garuda and snake.

In addition, the air is filled with many arrows. Another peculiar circular symbol is depicted between Arjuna and Garuda.

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<sup>32</sup> As Robson explains in his comments: Wainateya is Garuda (i.e. the son of Winata), and the enemy of snakes (Robson 2008:171).

<sup>33</sup> Galapp also gives this explanation in his article *Balinese Painting and the Wayang Tradition* (Galapp 1967:261).



Fig. 55. RV-4491-50. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden



### 3.8 RV-4491-50

**General:** This rather chaotic looking *langse* focusses on an entirely different part of the *Arjunawiwaha* story than all the previous paintings. It measures 96 x 215,5 cm and the central scene is the final fight between good and bad, gods and demons, preceded by Arjuna saving Suprabha from the demonic hands of Niwatakawaca. This visually challenging and intricate work of art is completely filled to the brim with people, decorative elements, weapons and other features. This makes it, on the one hand, difficult to actually see what is happening on the canvas, but on the other hand incredibly intriguing to look at and fascinating to decipher.



Fig. 56. 4491-50, Scene 1

**Saving Suprabha:** The first scene is situated on the right side of the painting. The flame-like border and rocks on the left separate it from the rest of the composition. Starting at the top of this scene, the male figure in the middle is Arjuna. He stands with his left leg slightly raised, and his gaze directed down. On his left, the heavenly nymph Suprabha is depicted. Next to her, Merdah stands at the border of the scene. Above them the sun is shining. Behind Arjuna Twalen is pounced by a woman of low status. He has her right foot in his right hand, while she tries to grab him around the neck. Underneath Arjuna's left foot, following his gaze downwards, a small opening is visible. The arm of demon king Niwatakawaca is outstretched towards Arjuna. Under the demon king numerous of his demon soldiers lie defeated on the ground, while Sangut (left) and Delem (right) are also pointing towards Arjuna. In this scene, Niwatakawaca has been seduced by Suprabha to reveal his weak spot. After telling her the tip of his tongue is his vulnerable spot, Arjuna kicks down the gates of Niwatakawaca's court, and they are able to fly away.



Fig. 57. 4491-50, Scene 2

**The Final Fight:** The rest of the painting is occupied by scene 2, which illustrates the final fight between the army of the gods and the demon army. In the upper left corner Yama is depicted, surrounded by an aureole. Next to him stand Werhaspati and Indra, and beneath this row, Baruna and Kubera are portrayed. Arjuna stands on his chariot, on Indra's left side, firing his deadly arrow. Above him are two umbrellas and two flags. His driver is depicted in front of him, attending to the horses. Opposite Arjuna, stretching his right arm and holding an arrow in his left hand, Niwatakawaca also stands on his chariot. Arjuna's arrow has entered his mouth and found the tip of his tongue. In between Arjuna and Niwatakawaca, various bizarre figures and many fires are depicted. Next to Arjuna's bow, a small naked figure is on fire, and hangs suspended in mid-air. Behind and above Niwatakawaca's outstretched arm a serpent, an elephant head, and another type of animal are visible. Although there is no mention of these odd elements in the text, Fisher and Cooper (1998) have an excellent explanation. They mention, that because of all the supernatural powers among the two armies, some weapons may take on "fantastic forms, such as fire-balls, monsters, giant serpents, and human limbs" (Fisher and Cooper 1998:54).

In the lower part of this scene the soldiers of both armies fight to the death, killing each other with knives, clubs, arrows, and their bare fists. In the lower left corner Twalen (left) and Delem (right) are wrestling, while in the lower right corner Merdah (left) and Sangut (right) are also engaged in a fierce fist-fight. In the text the four army leaders Citranggada, Citrasena, Jayantaka, Citraratha are a big part of this final fight, which is why I deem it quite probable that these four are also portrayed in this lower part of the scene. For one, I believe Citrasena is depicted just on the left side of the wheel of Arjuna's chariot. It is mentioned in the text that he is carrying a bow. If we look closely, this figure is also holding a bow, together with the fact that he is standing close to Arjuna (the main character of the story) it seems plausible that this could be Citrasena. The other three I cannot identify in the scene.



Fig. 58. Citrasena



Fig. 59. RV-4491-51. Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden

### 3.9 RV-4491-51

**General:** The final painting to be discussed in this dissertation is full of curious details and eccentric elements. This *tabing* is 120 × 148cm and looks quite a bit different in comparison to the previous eight paintings. The colouring is significantly lighter, a lot of the background is not completely filled with motifs, but has simply been coloured in, and one scene is entirely unidentifiable.

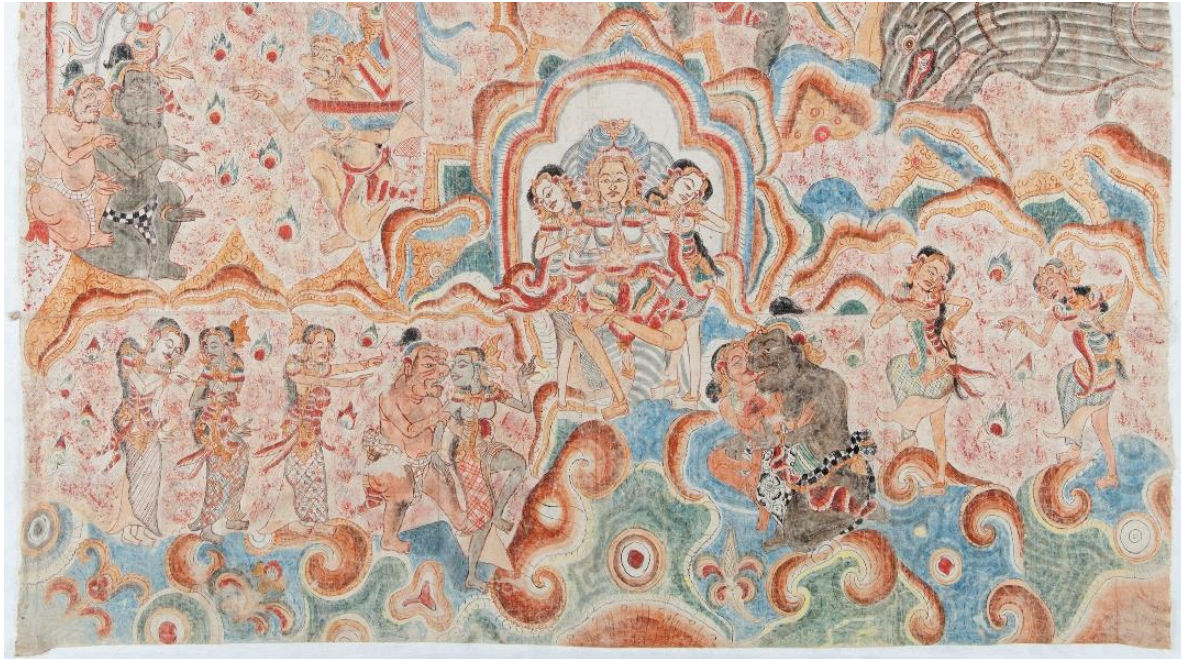


Fig. 60. 4491-51, Scene 1

**Test 1:** The first scene takes up the entire lower part of the painting. Here the attempted seduction of Arjuna and his servants is portrayed. In the middle, Arjuna sits in a rather peculiar position. His left leg is bent, so that his foot rests on his right thigh. His right leg stands on the ground. On either side of Arjuna stands a heavenly nymph. Slightly lower, Twalen (right) and Merdah (left) are seduced with success. On the lower left side, three heavenly nymphs are depicted. The two on the left are talking to one another, and the third stands in an odd pose, with her two arms outstretched to her left side. Merdah walks behind a fourth nymph, who seems to be depicted in a dancing posture. On the lower right side, two more nymphs are portrayed. They both have their left leg raised, which also seems to suggest movement, either dancing, or walking. The nymph on the right has a *pudak* in her left arm. Twalen is amorously entangled with a female servant. He is touching her right breast, whilst attempting to kiss her.

This meditation scene differs in quite some ways from the other meditation scenes previously discussed. Arjuna's sitting position is curious, as it does not show him in his normal cross-legged posture. Merdah is portrayed walking, instead of his usual sitting position, and Twalen has completely lost control of himself as he is entangled in a fierce kissing session with one of the servants, while he too is usually depicted sitting down and merely looking at the women.



Fig. 61. 4491-51, Scene 2

**Test 2:** In this scene Arjuna, Twalen and Merdah are reverencing the imposing figure standing in front of them. A peculiar addition to this scene is the other kneeling figure opposite them, who seems to be Sangut. He is carrying a big basket and pointing with two fingers at Twalen and Merdah. Not only the fact that Sangut is depicted in this scene is strange, but he is also wearing a turban, which is mostly only reserved for ascetics, Siwa and Indra. There is no logical explanation for the presence of Sangut dressed in a turban, carrying a bowl. Sangut might again just be used to indicate the opposition between the two sides, but this does not explain his turban, or his bowl. Another mystery is the content of the bowl.

The imposing figure is neither surrounded by a halo, nor does he have a third eye on his forehead. Another element which makes it difficult to identify this scene correctly is the absence of the scene in which Indra is disguised as an old sage. In the other paintings in which the scene with Indra's reveal is depicted, it is preceded by the scene with an old ascetic, which is missing. However, the logical argument to believe that this scene depicts Indra, is that the illustration in which Siwa reveals himself has not been portrayed in any of the paintings discussed. So, it is quite probable that in this instance Indra is depicted.

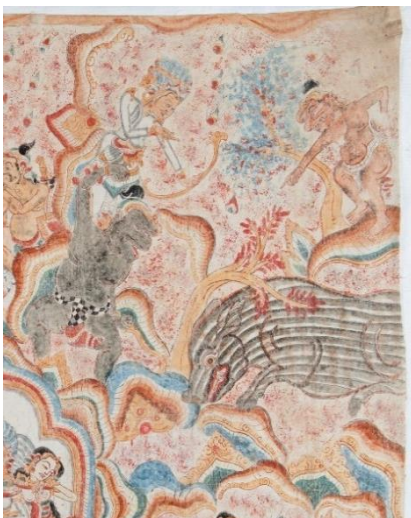


Fig. 62 4491-51, Scene 3

**Test 3:** Scene three portrays Arjuna shooting an arrow at the wild boar. Arjuna is depicted in the upper left corner, holding his bow in his left hand, aiming at the black-and-white striped boar in the lower right corner. Merdah, above the boar, points at it, while Twalen (lower left corner) raises his right arm and clenches his fists.

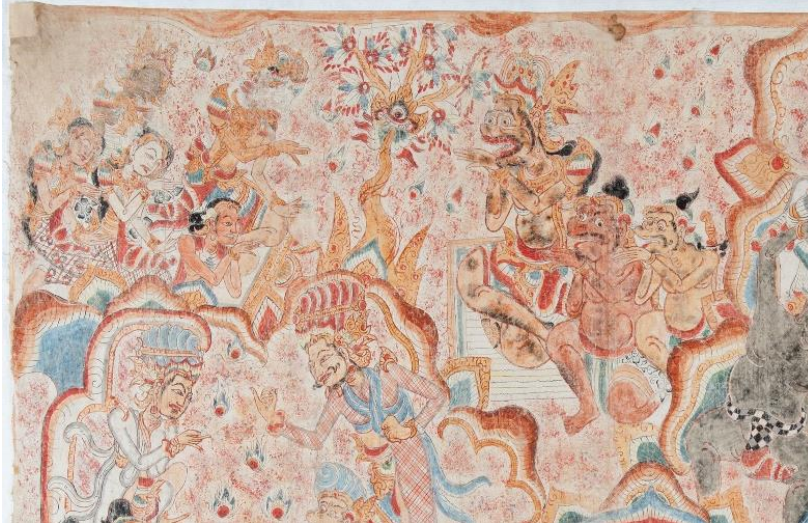


Fig. 63. 4491-51, Scene 4

**Conversation Between Arjuna And Niwatakawaca:** The last scene is situated in the upper left corner and is another unusual element in this already confusing painting. In the middle, a tree with the one-eyed monster (*karang bintulu*)<sup>34</sup> is depicted. On the right side sit Niwatakawaca, Delem and Sangut. The two servants are kneeling on one knee, while Niwatakawaca sits, cross-legged on a platform. All three keep their hands together in front of their body in a reverencing gesture. On the other side of the tree, a man of high status, three heavenly nymphs and a female servant also sit on a platform. Unfortunately, the paint on the face of the man is badly damaged, making it impossible to see the face of the person. The three nymphs all have a different skin colour. The female servant and the two nymphs behind her also have their hands in a respectful manner. This scene is quite confusing. The man of high status probably depicts Arjuna, however, the text does not speak of an encounter between Arjuna and Niwatakawaca in a respectful conversation. Maybe the nymph behind “Arjuna” is Suprabha (as her head decoration is more elaborate than the others), and they are in some way or another engaged in a conversation with the demon king, whilst Suprabha is undercover for Indra. However, this would still not explain the presence of the other women, or the fact that the demonic side is showing respect for Arjuna.

### 3.10 Analysis

To see if there is a clear correlation between text and painting – or in other words if the artists knew the text at all, or if they were just copying earlier paintings they had seen – we need to look at the similarities and differences between the paintings and the text. There are some obvious and frequently seen differences in most of the paintings. The most common differences are the addition of the servants Twalen, Merdah, Sangut and Delem (who are never mentioned in the text, but are taken from the *wayang kulit* performances), the clothed sage (who is supposed to be naked according to the *Arjunawiwaha* story, but is dressed in every single depiction), the presence of Werhaspati, Baruna, Yama, Kubera, and many other figures in the nymph-instructing-scene, and

<sup>34</sup> Miedema 2004:53.

lastly the fact that in some scenes, the number of nymphs is either less or more than the seven nymphs the text prescribes. Some other smaller deviations are also noteworthy, such as the addition of multiple seats with animal heads, the choice to depict the nymph-instructing-scene inside Indra's palace (while no notice of this is made in the text), and a few remarkable individual additions. With this I refer to the pistol held by Sangut in RV-4491-46 (fig. 40), the elaborate decoration of Arjuna's cave, as well as the depiction of the constellation Kartika in RV-4491-48 (fig. 47), and lastly scene 2 (fig. 61) and 4 (fig. 63) from RV-4491-51, which are impossible to trace back to the text, and also not to be found in any of the other paintings.

However, there are also many features that show the artists also had knowledge of the text while producing these paintings. First, although some scenes depict less or more nymphs than said in the text, most of scenes do portray the seven heavenly nymphs specified in the *Arjunawiwaha*. The stars seen in the 4491-45, scene 2,3 and 4 (fig 32, 33, and 34) correctly indicate night-time, as stated in the text. The sexual connotations in many of the seduction scenes, and especially in 4491-46, scene 2 (fig. 37), are an apt translation of the sensual description. Other elements that are specifically mentioned in the text and accurately portrayed in the paintings are the bow and arrow in the background of 4491-46, scene 3 and 4 (fig. 38, 39), the entourage of Siwa in scene 5 of 4491-46 (fig. 40), the rainy background of scene 3, 4491-49 (fig. 52), the fitting personification of the fire, snake, and Garuda arrow in scene 5, 4491-49 (fig. 54), Arjuna kicking down the door to Niwatakawaca's court in scene 1, 4491-50 (fig. 56), and the final fight scene in scene 2, 4491-50 (fig. 57).

### **3.11 Conclusion**

By discussing the similarities and differences the paintings show regarding the *Arjunawiwaha* text it is reasonable to assume that the artists were indeed aware of the text and its subject matter. They have incorporated certain aspects in their paintings that are specified in the text, but not depicted in other illustrations, which makes it clear that there was familiarity with the *Arjunawiwaha* story.

However, the paintings also illustrate deviations from the text, many of which can be detected in multiple depictions. This means that the artists also looked at each other's paintings and copied their work. The artists also had a particular amount of artistic freedom, evident by the individual additions depicted in some paintings. All in all, I believe the artists must have relied on an adept interplay between their actual understanding of the text, their own artistic perspective, and the interpretations of their fellow painters.





## Chapter 4: Further Examination of the Paintings

Now that the nine paintings are discussed, it is clear that there are three different types of formats used: the *ider-ider*, the *langse*, and the *tabing*. It would be interesting to look deeper into the differences between these three formats and see if there is something to be said about how different shapes of canvas are used for different purposes, regarding their scene selection and way of portrayal.

### 4.1 *Ider-ider*

In the previous chapter, two of these long, narrow paintings have been discussed. 4491-43 and 4491-44 exist of 9 and 7 scenes. They have four of these scenes in common with one another: instructing the nymphs, Test 1, Test 2, and Indra's Reveal. Both paintings seem to put emphasis on a story-like telling of the *Arjunawiwaha*, so that one can read the painting in the manner of strip cartoon (Forge 1978:7). There is a type of flow to the paintings, with extra scenes to make it easier to follow the story (think of the demonic intermezzos in 4491-43 and the elaborate portrayal of the nymph's travel, and bathing in 4491-44). It is clear that these types of paintings show a sequence of events in a story (Forge 1978:10), which is not strange considering they were tied under the eaves of pavilions in the temples and palaces as mentioned in the introduction. Looking at the scene selection, 4491-43 distributes its attention evenly among the different scenes. Although the instruction and test 1 are slightly longer in length than the others, enough emphasis is put on the rest of the scenes. 4491-44 however is quite occupied with the run up to test 1, the seduction. The longest scenes are when the nymphs are instructed, travelling, bathing and seducing Arjuna, which indicate that these part of the story is are also important.

### 4.2 *Langse*

Three of the nine paintings are *langse*, rectangular paintings usually used as curtains to screen the *bale* where the offerings are laid out, or just hung up on walls in certain palaces (Forge 1978:7). As explained, *langse* mainly show one scene, or a combination of connected scenes, with the most important one given a central position in the composition (Fisher and Cooper 1998:50). However, this is not necessarily visible in the *langse* discussed in the previous chapter. The four scenes in *langse* 4491-45 follow the run up to the seduction of Arjuna, with this last scene almost taking up the entire left side. Nevertheless, the instruction of the nymphs by Indra is given almost the same amount of space. This scene is also generously illustrated in 4491-46, where it is located in the same place, but depicted in a slightly different way – the main difference being the company present in Indra's palace. Furthermore, *langse* 4491-46 distributes its space more equally between the different tests of Arjuna, accentuating that all three tests and the instruction of the nymphs are important and central to the message of the painting.

Painting 4491-50 is a more traditional *langse* as it shows one very big scene, and an additional, smaller one. This canvas aims its attention at a completely different part of the story. Here, the big focal point is the final fight between good and evil, illustrating how evil is defeated and good prevails (also an important message to convey).

### 4.3 *Tabing*

The remaining four paintings are all *tabing*, roughly square shaped canvases usually put up against the back of the *bale* (centre of all household rituals), and temple pavilions (Forge 1978:7). As Forge describes it aptly, they form the backdrop to the offerings laid out on ritual occasions (Forge 1978:7), which makes their subject matter incredibly important, as spectator will see them in their entirety during the rituals and ceremonies. *Tabing* 4491-47's main focus is on the seduction scene, which occupies the lower and central part of the painting. The rest of the canvas is filled with the portrayal of test 2, also an important scene, as it is another way to test Arjuna's integrity.

The seduction scene is also the focal point of 4491-48, which takes up two thirds of the entire canvas, and is more elaborately illustrated than in the previous painting. The remaining one-third of the painting is not filled with the portrayal of test 2, but with the instructing of the nymphs by Indra.

The painting 4491-49 is mostly concerned with the testing of Arjuna. All three tests are illustrated on this canvas, however, test 1 occupies the central position, indicating its importance. Test 3 is also given plenty of space and demonstrates a lot of effort on the artist's part, with intricate details and skilful painting.

The last *tabing*, 4491-51, also puts considerable focus on the testing of Arjuna. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, multiple idiosyncrasies in the scenes make this painting more difficult to comprehend and confusing to identify. The centre is occupied by test 1, comparable to the former three *tabing*, and test 2 and 3 are depicted in the scenes surrounding the centre. That last peculiar scene is a curious addition whose origin cannot be traced back to text or painting.

### 4.4 Analysis

The long and narrow *ider-ider* are hung under the eaves of pavilions and can circle the entire *bale* structure. They are meant to be read as a strip cartoon, which makes their scene selection different from the other two formats (*langse* and *tabing*). They exist of more, smaller, and connecting scenes, which make it easier to follow the narrative. It is clear that the focal point of the two *ider-ider* is indeed the testing of Arjuna, and the moral story that accompanies it. However, in order to convey this message as clearly as possible, the narrative flow is also of the utmost importance. In this way, the narrative is easy to follow for those that circle the *bale* and the moral of the story is clear.

As demonstrated, the general perception of *langse* – portraying only one important scene and multiple smaller scenes – does not apply to 4491-45 and 4491-46. 4491-45 gives two scenes central stage (Indra instructing the nymphs, and test 1), and 4491-46 seems to almost equally distribute its space between the different parts of the story. The testing of Arjuna is again central to both *langse*. As with the *ider-ider*, the narrative flow also seems to play a substantial role in these paintings. *Langse* 4491-50 is a slightly different story, as it is only made up of two scenes. However, one big scene takes up almost the entire painting – the final fight – accentuating its importance. All in all, the *langse* are not meant to be understood in one single glance, focussing only on one big scene. I believe they are intended to be read as a short story, portraying only that which is important to the message it wants to convey to its viewers.

The *tabing* 4491-47 and 4491-48, however, are expected to be understood in one single glance, as they exist of two, or three scenes, and mainly focus on the temptation of Arjuna. In *tabing* 4491-49 and 4491-51 test 1 is also in the centre of the painting, but it is surrounded by the representations of the other tests, emphasizing also their importance. It is acceptable to assume that the layout of the *tabing* should make it easy for the viewer to understand what is portrayed, as they form the backdrop of the ritual/ceremony and are thusly constantly visible. One should be able to deduce its meaning and message by just one glance. This presumption is true for the first two, but the last two (4491-49 and 4491-51) do not necessarily fit this description. 4491-49 depicts the

detailed interpretation of test 3 (with the personification of the weapons), and the scenes in 4491-51 include some very incomprehensible details. This would make it difficult for the attendees to immediately grasp the message of the paintings.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the three formats used to depict the *Arjunawiwaha* are indeed used for different purposes. Not only is the placement of the painting during a ceremony/ritual connected to the shape of the canvas, but also the scene portrayal depends on which format is used. The long *ider-ider*, hung under the eaves of pavilions, are intended to be read by the attendees as a strip cartoon. They have more connecting scenes and thusly put more emphasis on the narrative character of the story. The chosen scenes focus on the testing of Arjuna.

The rectangular *langse*, hung on the sides of the *bale* or just flat on a palace wall, are also meant to be read, but more as a short story, and focus in this case on two bigger scenes, and not just one big one (apart from 4491-50 of course). The scenes chosen for the *langse* also aim their attention at the tests Arjuna is subjected to (and the final fight in 4491-50).

The square *tabing*, put up against the back of the *bale*, makes it possible to grasp the underlying moral of the story in just one glance by centralizing the most important scene. Although 4491-49 and 4491-51 have more scenes surrounding the central one, their intention is clear: they too focus on the temptation of Arjuna and his additional tests.

All three formats focus mainly on the seduction of Arjuna, his rejection of this temptation, and the additional tests he must undergo to prove his strength, integrity, worthiness, and good desires. It is clear that this strength of character is important to convey to the public during the designated ceremony. Although Mack writes that the *Arjunawiwaha* was mostly recited during Balinese weddings (Mack 1974:glossary), not one painting shows the actual marriage of Arjuna to the heavenly nymphs. However, the character traits Arjuna demonstrates during his tests are certainly wanted in a marriage. This fits the purpose of focussing more on the tests – thusly accentuating such important values – when getting married, rather than emphasizing the ceremonial event itself.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion

In order to correctly identify and interpret the nine traditional Balinese paintings discussed in this thesis, we first had to attain a better understanding of the visual language, or iconography, applied by the Balinese artists. In chapter two, with the help of appendix 1, it became clear that the Balinese painters make use of a substantial array of fixed motifs and stylized elements, predetermined character features, and set symbolical emblems, in order for people to understand who is depicted and what is happening. By obtaining this knowledge in chapter two and the appendix, we were able to continue and fulfill the main objective of this thesis, correctly identifying what is portrayed in the paintings.

We also looked deeper into the relationship between text and paintings and tried to determine whether the artists had any knowledge of the *Arjunawiwaha* at all, or if they were simply copying earlier renditions of the story. By discussing important and curious similarities and differences we concluded that the artists were indeed aware of the text and its subject matter, but that they also looked at each other's paintings and copied their work, as well as incorporate certain individual elements. All things considered, the Balinese artists probably alternated between their understanding of the text and the interpretations of their fellow painters, while retaining some sense of artistic freedom.

During the identification process we were able to divide the paintings into three types of formats, already discussed in the introduction. Here, we looked deeper into the differences between these three formats and see if we could say anything about how different shapes of canvases are used for different purposes, with regard to their scene selection and way of portrayal. The two *ider-ider*, three *langse*, and four *tabing*, were indeed used for different purposes, of course referring to their placement during a ceremony, but also to their scene portrayal. The long *ider-ider* were intended to be read as a strip cartoon and put more emphasis on the narrative character of the story. The rectangular *langse* were also intended to be read, but more as a short story, focussing on two bigger scenes. If people look at the square *tabing* they should be able to immediately understand what is depicted and what the message is. By just one glance, the intention should be clear, and this is achieved by centralizing the most important scene.

Interestingly, all three formats focused mainly on the same scenes; the seduction of Arjuna and his additional tests, proving his worthiness, and showing his strength of character. As the *Arjunawiwaha* is mostly recited at weddings, it was first puzzling why these scenes were chosen to be most important to portray during the ceremony, instead of the actual marriage between Arjuna and the nymphs. However, by successfully enduring each test, Arjuna displays character traits undoubtedly valued in a marriage, which makes it quite logical that the artists wanted to display these characteristics, rather than the ceremonial event itself.

At first glance, the traditional Balinese paintings look incredibly chaotic and extremely busy. They seem to be impossible to read and difficult to identify. However, with the right tools and knowledge one finds oneself able to actually understand the depicted scenes and appreciate their seemingly haphazardness. This study of nine traditional Balinese paintings of Museum Volkenkunde, has not only identified that which was previously unknown, but has also tried to look beyond the iconographical scope and examine a deeper relationship between text and painting, but also between the three formats and their scenes and purposes.

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## Images

### Figures 1-5, 9-63, 70

Most of the images used in this thesis are with courtesy of the Volkenkunde Museum, which has recently re-photographed its entire textile department. The images have been given to me by Ingeborg Eggink via email.

### Figures 6-8, 65-69

Photographs personally taken by the author.

### Figure 64:

Miedema, N.R.L. 2004. *Ramayana op de Traditionele Balinese Schilderingen in Kamasan-Stijl: 18 Doeken uit de Resink-Collectie Nader Bekeken (Vol. I and II)*. Master Thesis, Leiden University, pp. 34, figure 21.

## Appendix 1: Important Iconographical Elements

### Character Features:

#### Skin colour:

By giving certain characters different colours of skin is a way to indicate their refined (*halus*) or coarse (*kasar*) nature. Light colours are most commonly used for the refined figures, representing purity, innocence and youthfulness (Miedema 2004:34). A dark skin colour signifies a coarser character.<sup>35</sup>

#### Eyes:

The shape of the eyes (fig. 64) is another important indicator for the character, level of refinement, and gender of the figures.



Fig. 64. Eye-types (woman, man, demon, wavy)

The eyes of female characters are always

downcast, usually drawn as a straight line with a curved line below, giving them a demure appearance. The eyes of a refined male are made the other way around. They exist of a straight line with a curved one above, giving them a more alert expression. Demonic, evil, or aggressive subjects have big, round and bulging eyes, making them look wild, angry, and frightening. A fourth variant is always found on Twalen and Merdah and is a wavy eye-shape derived from the female eye.<sup>36</sup>

#### Eyebrows:

The refined characters all have very thin, arched eyebrows, whereas the coarser figures have bristly ones. These are also frequently connected to each other by means of arched wrinkles in between the eyebrows at the top of the nose bridge.

#### Nose:

Naturally, the *halus* subjects have a straight, thin and pointy nose, almost completely without nostrils. If the nose is even slightly bent, bulbous, or if the nostrils are enlarged, there is a lack of refinement present.

#### Mouth:

A small mouth with thin lips, straight, white and small teeth and a smile is equal to a *halus* character. Big lips, a protruding mouth, sharp, pointed teeth and fangs, and a knobby chin indicate a coarse character and is based on an animal model. However, the shape of the mouth can also be a combination of the two, as can be seen with Twalen. He has straight teeth, but a protruding mouth and a knobby chin. The more animal-like and demonesque characters are almost always depicted with extra fangs growing out of their cheeks (Forge 1978:15).

#### Facial hair:

The most refined men do not have any type of facial hair. However, there are many refined men that do have a small line running along the upper lip, curling down. This does not automatically mean that the person is *kasar*, as gods are also very often depicted with a moustache. However, the bigger, more bushy moustaches, that grow both around the upper and lower lip, are a distinct feature of

<sup>35</sup> Galapp 1961:23; Galapp 1967:240; Covarrubias 1972:192.

<sup>36</sup> On eyes see: Galapp 1961:22; Galapp 1967:240; Covarrubias 1972:192; Forge 1978:15; Vickers 2012:30; Miedema 2004:34.



coarseness. This coarser facial hair often occurs with *bulu*, which are tufts of hair on the side of the face (Forge 1978:15).

#### Headdresses:

The headdress (fig. 65) shows the social status of a character and has nothing to do with good or evil. The most important headdress is the high crown (*makutha*),<sup>37</sup> and is worn by gods and demons (*raksasa*). This crown exists of a diadem, worn on the forehead, a high middle piece, and a *garuda mungkur*<sup>38</sup> on the back of the head. Another headdress that Indra seems to wear is the *makutha* but with a turban-like middle piece. The third head ornament is the *gelung supit urang*, or the 'lobster claw', and is worn by men of high status and heroes like Arjuna (Forge 1978:17). The fourth important headdress is worn by the most powerful priests, who wear their hair in a turban called the *ketu*. Not only priests wear the *ketu*. It is also worn by Arjuna when meditating. Those of lower class have various unremarkable headdresses and often wild hair styles (Forge 1978:17).



Fig. 65. *Makutha*, Indra's crown, *gelung supit urang*, *ketu*

#### Jewellery:

Almost all the characters wear some type of jewellery, like ear ornaments, necklaces, bracelets, armlets, anklets, and shoulder decorations. Those of lower status, like the servants and handmaidens usually wear little to no jewellery, and a flower on top of the ear signifies their low rank.<sup>39</sup>

#### Hand Gestures:

The hand and leg postures of the characters are very important in traditional Balinese art, as it tells the viewer what is happening. Talking, listening, and being respectful (fig. 66) are most frequently depicted. When a person is talking, one hand is outstretched. The middle and ring finger are bent down, while the rest of the fingers are stretched. The other hand is kept alongside the body, and the palm is held parallel to the ground.

When one arm is held in front of the chest and another hangs along the side of the body the person is listening. The respectful hand gesture is recognizable by a kneeling person, either on both knees or only one, who has folded his hands together. The hands can be held in front of the chest, the face or above the head. This gesture is often made for Indra by Arjuna and his servants when he reveals his true identity.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Miedema 2004:39.

<sup>38</sup> This is an ornament in the shape of the head of Garuda, which wards off danger from behind (Marrison 1995:13).

<sup>39</sup> According to Hinzler, a flower on top of the ear indicates a figure of low social status (servants). See Hinzler, H.I.R. 1993. *Balische Teken- en Schilderkunst*. Leiden: Instituut Indonesische Cursussen, image 83.

<sup>40</sup> See the images of various hand postures in Hinzler, H.I.R. 1993. *Balische Teken- en Schilderkunst*. Leiden: Instituut Indonesische Cursussen, image 67.

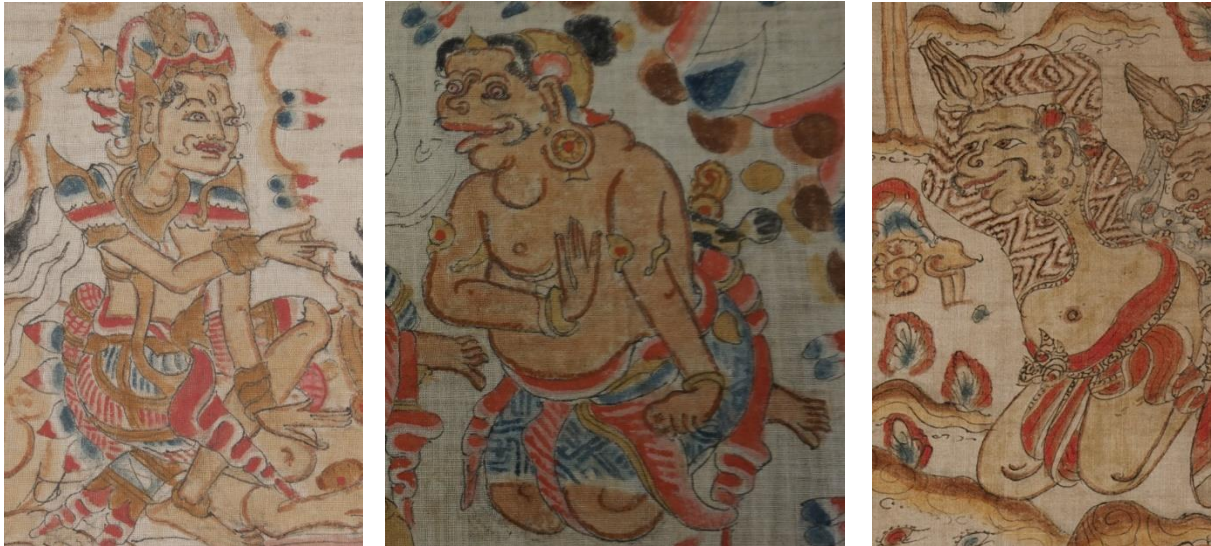


Fig. 66. Talking, listening and showing respect

### Decorative elements

Traditional Balinese, and also more modern, Balinese paintings are known for their incredibly busy canvases. Every tiny bit of empty space is filled with ornamentation. These are heat-haze/air ornamentation (*awan-awan*),<sup>41</sup> cloud motifs, rock ornamentation and wall ornamentation, as well as tree and plant motifs.



Fig. 67. Heat and cloud motifs

#### Air and cloud ornamentation:

The *awan-awan* in the paintings are oval/teardrop shaped figures. They can have cloud-like shapes, or more feather-like lines and always carry the colours red, white and blue. The cloud ornamentation is a horseshoe-like figure with wings (Fisher and Cooper 1998:53), and is also coloured in red, white and blue (fig. 67). These air and cloud motifs are replaced in some battle scenes by flying weapons of all sorts.

#### Rock ornamentation:

Rocks are used to indicate that a scene takes place outdoors in a natural environment. They are frequently seen at the bottom of a scene or scattered across the landscape. Stylized rock-mountains are used to separate scenes. The rocks are then diagonally stacked on top of each other and can be accompanied by what Miedema calls a "*hanenspoor*", which one can translate to "rooster trail" (fig. 68). The triangular motifs on top of the rocks are called *sekar taji gunung* or *perengge* (Miedema 2004:53).



Fig. 68. "Rooster trail"

<sup>41</sup> Hinzler 1987:11; Fisher and Cooper 1998:53; Cooper 2005:26.



Fig. 69. Brick motif

Wall ornamentation:

This type of ornamentation is used to indicate that a scene is taking place indoors. They have a type of brick-like look, where the stones are usually rectangular and square, and decorated with stripes, spirals and other types of embellishment (fig. 69).

Tree and plant motifs:

In every scene that takes place outdoors the background and landscape is filled with different types of vegetation. Clumps of grass, bushes, flower plant, and trees are all part of the ambience (Fisher and Cooper 1998:56). Trees however do fulfill another purpose. When on either side of the tree a person, or a group of people, is positioned, the tree indicates that a conversation is taking place (as well as the hand gestures of the characters naturally). The tree signifies that there is no conflict, even though they might be two opposing groups (fig. 70). When the conflict develops into a battle, the tree is left out.<sup>42</sup> A tree that indicates conversation can also be depicted inside a building (see fig. 31 and 36).

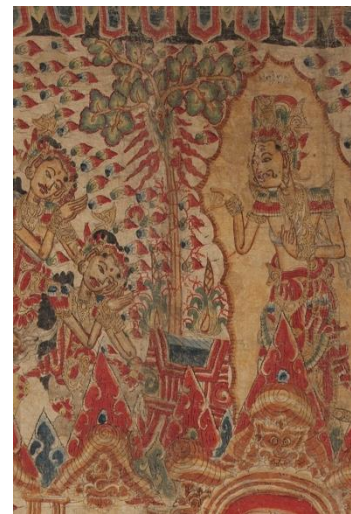


Fig. 70. Tree indicating conversation

<sup>42</sup> Hinzler, H.I.R. 1993. *Balische Teken- en Schilderkunst*. Leiden: Instituut Indonesische Cursussen, pp. 7.

## Appendix 2: Summary of the *Arjunawiwaha*<sup>43</sup>

The demon king Niwatakawaca is threatening Indra's heaven. Indra worries about him, as he cannot be defeated by gods, only by a man. The gods in heaven have heard of Arjuna and his austerities with the intention of being victorious in battle. However, Indra wants to test Arjuna to see if he is strong enough. The king of gods sends seven of the most beautiful heavenly nymphs, led by Suprabha and Tilottama, to tempt Arjuna and test his heart. The nymphs, together with their hand-maidens, go to mount Indrakila, where Arjuna is meditating. They prepare themselves for the seduction by bathing in a nearby pond and dressing themselves. However, Arjuna does not respond to the seduction of the beautiful women at all, and after three nights they report back to Indra.

The gods are delighted by this outcome, but there is still doubt. Will Arjuna use his meditation for worldly power? In order to test this, Indra disguises himself as an aged ascetic and visits Arjuna. He praises his concentration, but is surprised by the sight of his bow, sword, and coat of mail lying at the ready. The sage suggests he should pursue his practice to the highest level and abandon the world, but Arjuna's only goal is following his duty as a warrior and performing meritorious deeds for the benefit of others. At that point Indra reveals himself, satisfied with the answers, and encourages Arjuna to continue with his actions, as something good will happen.

On the demonic side of the story, spies report that Arjuna may be recruited by the gods to kill Niwatakawaca. As a counter measure the demon Muka in the shape of a wild boar is sent to kill Arjuna. The latter kills the boar with an arrow, but at the same time Siwa's arrow, who is disguised as a hunter to test Arjuna a third time, also hits the boar. The arrows become one, and the hunter accuses Arjuna of not being a good ascetic (as he uses weapons). A fight breaks out between the two, using supernatural arrows. At one point they leave their weapons behind and continue their fight wrestling. When the god is about to be thrown by Arjuna, he reveals himself and presents Arjuna with his boon, the arrow Pasupati. Siwa leaves.

Not long after, two heavenly beings (*apsara*) come down with a letter from Indra asking Arjuna for help against the demon Niwatakawaca. With a magic jacket and sandals, Arjuna flies with the *apsara* to heaven. Here, Indra discusses his strategy with Werhaspati and informs Arjuna on the threat. Werhaspati sends Arjuna, together with the most beautiful nymph Suprabha, to Niwatakawaca's court to discover his vulnerable spot.

At Niwatakawaca's court Suprabha seduces the demon king, while Arjuna hides. She persuades him into telling about his powers and he reveals his vulnerable spot: the tip of his tongue. Upon hearing this, Arjuna reveals himself and kicks down the gate. Niwatakawaca is distracted, and the two have the chance to fly away. Niwatakawaca realizes he has been deceived. He prepares his army and sets out.

Meanwhile, Indra orders his army to be drawn up. The two armies meet in a fierce battle and eventually Arjuna and Niwatakawaca find themselves in a fight to the death, using their powerful weapons. At the sight of the chaotic army of the gods, Niwatakawaca opens his mouth to taunt them, but at that moment his mouth is filled with arrows and he dies.

The dead and wounded gods are brought back to life, and they return to heaven. Arjuna is rewarded for his services by replacing Indra for seven nights as the King of Heaven (seven earthly months), and the marriage ceremonies with the heavenly nymphs take place. After seven months Arjuna returns home and is reunited with his brothers.

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<sup>43</sup> This summary of the *Arjunawiwaha* derived from the summary and entire translation of the text by Stuart Robson (Robson 2008).