Even till now, people of Central Java believe in a mysterious Queen of the Seas ......

This is the first report on the Legend of the South Sea Queen Kanjeng Ratu Kidul.. API will add more to this report as the investigation and research continues......

THE LEGEND OF THE SOUTH SEA QUEEN
The high cliffs of Jawa's southern coast go straight into the Indian Ocean. This is the domain of Kanjeng Ratu Kidul, the mighty Queen of the South Sea, which is her wife as well as the protective spirit of the rulers of the Javanese kingdom of Mataram.

Following the 19th century chronicle Babad Tanah Jawi, the prince of Pajajaran, Raden Joko Suruh, met a hermit which ordered him to found the kingdom of Majapahit in East Jawa. Joko Suruh discovered that the hermit in fact was a beautiful Lady, and fell in love with her. She rejected him, because she really was his aunt Ratna Suwida, who had lived in the mountains to meditate ever since she was a young girl. She told the prince she would soon leave to the southern coast of Jawa, to be the ruler over the spirit-world. When the descendants near the Gunung Merapi - not far from the southern coast - founded a principality, she would marry the successive rulers.

Generations later, Panembahan Senopati, founder of the second Mataram principality, went back to the southern coast to prepare an attack on the principalities at the northern coast. Kanjeng Ratu Kidul, who listened to his meditation, promised to help him. During three days and nights he worked on the secrets of army and rule - and the difficult game of love - in the undersea palace of Ratu Kidul. At Parangkusomo, south of Yogya, he came to the surface again. The story goes that Ratu Kidul had communion with all successors of Senopati. Every year representatives of the palaces in Solo and Yogya honour her at this spot.
The Mystery of Java's Spirit Queen

Written by fengshui
Monday, 14 August 2006 06:25 - Last Updated Tuesday, 11 September 2007 09:02

Senopati, founder of Java's Mataram dynasty, accompanies Ratu Kidul to her underwater palace.

The first sultan of Yogya, Hamengku Buwono I, ordered the construction of the difficult fortress and royal court, Taman Sari, with low ponds, and tunnels, surrounded with an artificial lake. It can be said that this is a replica of the undersea principality of Ratu Kidul. In the space below the surface, known as sumur gumuling, the sultan is believed to have contact with the goddess every year.

This version account how Ratu Kidul becomes a spirit queen:

The following story is about Nyai Loro Kidul or “Ratu Kidul” (Queen Kidul) as she is also known, the most beautiful and powerful goddess of Indonesia's southern seas.

According to the legend, Nyai Loro Kidul was the mortal daughter of a powerful ruler-king of west Java. This king's concubines jealous of her beauty would have used black magic to turn her into an ugly and old witch. (Other stories say it was a bad stepmother who cast a spell to give her leprosy) In anyways, because of her ugliness, she was forced to leave the palace when she started to wonder through the forest without direction. When she finally got to the ocean, she stopped to rest and fell asleep. She dreamt that she would be cured of her ugliness if she entered the water and drowned herself. She did it and then became the powerful goddess of Indonesia's southern seas.

Following the tradition, her favorite color is green and she is attracted to those who wear this color inside her marine kingdom. Besides that, this beautiful but sometimes evil goddess has a particular interest in surfers, not only because she has got absolute power and control over the waves of Indonesia's southern seas but also for been known to take young men and turn them into her slaves or lovers.

Both Javanese and sundanese people avoid wearing green when they go to her beaches and very often mothers lock their sons at home in nights when a sacred dance in homage to Nyai Loro Kidul is performed.

Even for those who are not superstitious, it is always good to be careful. There are recorded stories about surfers and other people who ventured in her waters wearing green and afterwards were troubled by some disgrace.

In one story published in “The Jakarta Post” in September 1995, a man who challenged this taboo wore a green t-shirt at one beach o the coast of Cilacap on west Java. “he can not look backwards now, because all he sees are monsters.” reported the post.

In another occasion, in Jan 1993, a huge fire burned completely the “Grand Bali Beach Hotel” in Sanur, Bali, leaving only 5% of the hotel undamaged. Only one room, room 327, stayed untouched by both the flames and smoke. Coincidentally room 327 was a “private” room that has always been specially reserved for the legendary sea queen.

To the balinese this was a clear message that the had not yet done enough work to please her majesty. Soon after they understood this sign, priests quickly start making religious offerings and prayers to prevent and calm down possible future hysterical attacks.

Since then the hotel has been rebuilt and room 327 has been redecorated with a lot more generosity and luxury.

NB: There is another room reserved for the Queen at 2401 (see report below).

Room 2401 - Bali Beach Hotel (noted the green colour)

In another similar account, in 1966, the then sultan Hamengku Buwono was expected for the opening ceremony of the Sumudra Beach Hotel in west Java. The night before the hotel's grand opening, he was visited by an old man (ancient). According to Jeffrey A. McNelly and Paul Spencer Wachtel (authors of the book “Soul of the Tiger”, 1988) “The old man told the prince that he had a dream the previous night in which an old lady said she wanted her offerings. She was dressed in green.”

“The sultan thanked the man but explained that he would not make an offering since he was attending the hotel opening in his civilian capacity as minister of defense and he wanted to separate affairs of state from the mystical duties of the palace.”

Shortly after the ancient left, there was a huge roar at the hotel, “like ten locomotives were coming towards the beach front terrace.” Out of nowhere came a 10 feet high wave from a previously calm waters, sweeping away the hotels buffet table, soaking the guests and taking out a couple of trees.

Soon after came the offerings and today, as at the Grand Bali Beach, the Sumudra Hotel has a special room for Nyai Loro Kidul.

However another version tells that Sukarno (Indonesia first president) received a message when he was praying to spare one room for the queen, and under Sukarno's instructions, Room 308 has always been reserved for the queen.
Reserved Room for the Queen - Samudra Hotel Room 308

Despite such negative incidents, the sea goddess is not always bad. According to the authors McNeely and Wachtel “She divides her time between land and sea, and appears as a youthful nymph in the first half of the month and as an ugly hag in the second half. Javanese believe her demeanor is at times bitter and malevolent, and that she can only be propitiated by strict observance of complex rituals. Yet with the fickle nature so typical of both Asian women and Asian gods, when treated properly she can also bestow great favors, such as ensuring a good catch to a fisherman.” Or even produce perfect waves for a group of surfers?!

The Javanese also believe that every ruler-king of Java must compulsively accept Nyai Loro Kidul as his wife and make homage to her every year with proper offerings that usually are made of parts of women’s clothes and pieces of hair and nails of the sultan.

Until the present days fishermen from Java and Bali make a ceremony every year in her honor. They believe this help to prevent disasters. They also believe that before entering the waters she rules, everybody should ask her permission otherwise something bad can happen. Sultan Hamengku Buwono X and Kangjeng Ratul Kidul
Sultan Hamengku Buwono X was crowned on March 7, 1989 after the death of the popular Hamengku Buwono IX, who once served as Vice President under Suharto.

Just after the coronation was the main event Wiyos-Dalern Kirab, the customary circumambulation of the city by the newly enthroned sultan. The procession was headed by the religious retainers, then palace guards, horses carrying heirlooms, princes on horseback, and the Golden Coach itself, carved with dragons and adorned with garlands of jasmine and floral rosettes.

It was not the modern but the mystical dimension of the sultan that was brought out by the stories on the kirab. There had been a certain amount of discussion in advance about the fact that the queen would not ride in the carriage with her husband. During the circuit, she sat with her guests in the Pagelaran, dressed in a long golden-yellow kebaya. In his carriage, the sultan sat against the right-hand side, and his brother faced him, sitting cross-legged.

What was the reason for this arrangement? A line of explanation was derived from an adventure that befell Prince Prabukusumo, who had been riding ahead of the carriage. He claimed to have seen a beautiful woman dressed in greenish yellow enter the carriage. Later, as the procession came past the post office, his horse reared and he was thrown. Strangely, he was unhurt, "I felt as if I had been caught in someone's lap." His clothing was slightly torn, and his keris had come out of its sheath. This he took for a sign that the keris was not appropriate for that occasion, and he gave it to someone for safekeeping. After that, the horse behaved perfectly. The prince added that he had earlier seen a woman's form between the two banyans on the North Square and that the horse had become skittish there as well. Joyokusumo said that he had felt "something" in the carriage, and HB X just smiled mysteriously.

The Sunday papers carried a close-up photograph of the sultan in the carriage shrouded in what was termed a "mysterious mist." To photographers, the blur was more a "technical error," but the speculation by then had begun to congeal into legend. These odd hints and allusions could mean only one thing: the sultan had been sitting to the right of the carriage so that Kangjeng Ratu Kidul, the sea goddess, could sit on his left. It was she who Prabukusumo saw climbing into the carriage. The figure of a sea goddess with a capricious temperament is found not only in Java but in many regions of Southeast Asia, but what matters here is that Kangjeng Ratu Kidul, Queen of the South Sea, is believed to act as consort to the kings of Java. To her are made the offerings each year at Parangkusumo and to her is attributed the origin of the sacred Bedhaya Ketawang, which describes her amorous encounter with the founding father of Mataram, Senopati, or his grandson Sultan Agung.

Ratu Kidul is believed to attend the annual performances of Bedhaya Ketawang at the palace of the Susuhunan in Surakarta. In Yogya, the Bedhaya Semang, also offered to her, ceased to be performed around 1914, but the myth is still powerful. Before he died, HB DC claimed to have seen her and said that he used to address her as Grandmother (Eyang), although she appears as a young girl when the moon is new.

Despite a sophisticated understanding of her role in legitimizing strategies to strengthen the Javanese kingdoms, she is still treated literally, as the reaction to the kirab shows. There was difficulty with the status of the legend for HB X, who had taken a strong stand about only having one wife. If this was to be the case, what about Ratu Kidul? The Queen, said some, had been left behind to let her husband be joined by his spirit wife. Local historians countered that the sultan used to ride with the Dutch governor on his left; no one explained why the present governor of Yogya had not been invited to take his place. The matter was even taken up by the national weekly, Tempo, and the sultan was asked about Kangjeng Ratu Kidul. His reply was ambiguous: "How you take it is up to you. For my part, there's no need for everyone to know what I experienced. I don't have to tell everyone things like that." Perhaps the best comment on the conundrum was the remark made by one of the palace widows, an aunt to the sultan, who drily observed that the sultan was sitting to the right to make space for where the Dutch governor would have been—and Kangjeng Ratu Kidul sat on his lap.

Source: Felicia Hughes-Freeland: A Throne for the People: Observations on the Jumenengen of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X
the Indonesian fight for independence he had fasted for two weeks, eating only rice and water in
true: A year later, the Japanese invaded Indonesia and evicted the Dutch.
mermaid?
not Bandung; my favorite participant sport is softball. I like algebra.
API reproduce the following article which was published in the International Herald Tribune
earth, Horatio/ Than are dreamt of in your philosophy”. He explained: “When I was
this is a replica of the undersea principality of Ratu Kidul. In the space below the surface, known
long and difficult. According to the Sultan, the crucial moment came when Loro Kidul appeared
After an hour, in danger of exceeding my ration of royal patience, I left, only half satisfied. I
orchestra tinkled away and the dalang sang a half dozen parts as Hardjonagoro continued. The
On this date Sultan Hamengku Buwono X of Yogyakarta will celebrate his official birthday by
courage during Indonesia’s war of independence from the Dutch.

People who pay special attention to royal affairs of the heart might clip a fingernail or two on
“The Sultan, of course, knew that the old man had seen Loro Kidul. His Highness
that the Dutch were on their way out and that the contract was irrelevant. Her predictions came
positions as Indonesian Minister of Finance and of Defence -- could pay homage every year to a

15th century ancestors: Senopati, an historical king of Java, and Nyai Loro Kidul, a mermaid

separate the affairs of the state from the mystical duties of the palace.” The gamelan

were coming towards the beach-front terrace where we were enjoying the hotel’s hospitality.

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The Water Castle also serves as a meditating place for the Sultan to bear offerings to the Queen of the South Sea. This practice has been dutifully fulfilled since the beginning of the Hamengkubowono rule. There is dark chamber where the Sultan supposedly still comes to meditate and fasts for three consecutive days before consummating with the Queen.
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Written by fengshui
Monday, 14 August 2006 06:25 - Last Updated Tuesday, 11 September 2007 09:02

Meditation Chamber
The Mystery of Java's Spirit Queen

Written by fengshui
Monday, 14 August 2006 06:25 - Last Updated Tuesday, 11 September 2007 09:02

API Raymond with Wiyono, Taman Sari guide for 30 years, explaining about Taman Sari and the links with Ratu Kidul

BEDOYO KETAWANG

The most holy dance of the kraton of Solo, the Bedoyo Ketawang, is showed only once a year to celebrate the day that the sultan ascended the throne. Nine dancers in classical Jawanese bridal dressing envite Ratu Kidul to appear and marry the susuhunan. As it is told, the goddess appears as a slightly visible tenth figure at the floor of the nine dancers. The Yogyan version of this dance, the Bedoyo Semang isn't performed anymore.

(The Kingdom of Mataram actually become divided into the Hamengku Buwono family based in Yogyakarta and the Pakuwubono family based in Solo in the 18th century). Up until recently, the dance is not open to public.

The Bedoyo Ketawang court dance depicts the courtship of the founder of the Mataram dynasty, Panembahan Senopati, with Kangjeng Ratu Kidul. The annual dance performed on the anniversary of the Sultan's coronation reaffirms the alliance of the ruling house with the powerful goddess.

When Pakuwubono XII died in 2004, there is a fight for succession between two princes among his 24 children from his 5 concubines, resulting in two coronations. One of the prince Hangabehi have the advantage of having the Bedoyo Ketawang performance for him and is now recognised as Pakuwubono XIII.
The Sacred Dance of Bedoyo Ketawang
On 20 Jan 1993, Inna Grand Bali Beach, formerly known as the Grand Bali Beach, was largely destroyed by a massire fire. The fire consumed the entire main building and all but one of the 600 odd rooms. Strangely enough room no 327 of the 3rd floor was not burnt at all, with intact interior and only darkened walls.

API finds there are 2 versions about this room 327.

One version involved the late president Sukarno:
Room 327 is special. It's the room the Balinese believe that Roro Kidul, their mythical Goddess of the South Seas, allocated to Sukarno, independent Indonesia's father. The hotel was gutted in the 1993 blaze but room 327 was the only one of 600-odd that survived wholly intact. Even today, the room is maintained in the vernacular of the era even though Sukarno never stayed in the hotel. His trademark black peci and white trousers lay on the bed. No one stays in the room but it's cleaned daily. On August 17, Indonesia's Independence Day, Balinese deliver cakes coloured the red and white of the national flag.

Another version:
There is a spiritual medium that can communicate with Ratu Kidul. Before the fire, the medium, having received a message from the Queen, ask the Bali Beach Hotel to reserve 2 rooms for the Queen, Room 327 and Room 2401. If the hotel management did not accept this request, she will punish the hotel. A deadline was set of 42 days for the hotel to comply.

After 42 days have passed, the hotel management did not act at all. On 20 Jan 1003, around 12.10 pm, Fire suddenly occured at the 10 storey tower building. Due to the strong wind from the sea, the fire burned rapidly and spread. Afer the fire died down the next day, it was found there is only one room that was not burnt. It was the room Ratu Kidul have asked for :Room 327. The other room 2401 was not on the tower building but a cottage room beside the tower building and so was not affected by the fire.

According to an eye witness who saw the room after the fire, “I still cannot believe it until now, all the surrounding rooms are totally burnt, but fire did not touch this room. Outside the room, everything is burnt. It is as if the wind comes from the middle of the room and blow out the fire”

After the fire, 7 months later, the hotel was renamed Inna Grand Bali Beach, and this time, the hotel management reserved Room 327 and Room 2401 especially for the Queen to rest.

API note: Although some other hotels also reserved room for the Queen, only the room at Samudra and the room at Bali Beach is considered sacred. and blessed with the presence of Ratu Kidul.

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