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THE MEGALITHIC CULTURE OF
INDONESIA**

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William James BY
W. J. PERRY, B.A.

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TO

W. H. R. RIVERS

A TOKEN OF AFFECTION AND REGARD

PREFACE.

IN 1911 the stream of ethnological research was directed by Dr. Rivers into new channels. In his Presidential Address to the Anthropological Section of the British Association at Portsmouth he expounded some of the effects of the contact of diverse cultures in Oceania in producing new, and modifying pre-existent institutions, and thereby opened up novel and hitherto unknown fields of research, and brought into prominence once again those investigations into movements of culture which had so long been neglected.

A student who wishes to study problems of culture mixture and transmission is faced with a variety of choice of themes and of regions to investigate. He can set out to examine topics of greater or less scope in circumscribed areas, or he can undertake world-wide investigations which embrace peoples of all ages and civilisations. These two modes of research are complementary: for extended inquiries give clues to difficulties encountered in limited regions; and detailed investigations in one area often suggest others of the widest scope. In this book I have confined myself to the region which has been my special object of study for some years, and in the Introduction I have stated the reasons why the subject treated is that of the Megalithic Culture.

I have tried to approach the study of the evidence without bias. But, in confining my attention to the data collected from the region I am investigating, and excluding the consideration of information derived from other regions, such as India on the west or Melanesia on the east, I have also striven to guard against the tendency of assuming, either consciously

or unconsciously, that these alien cultural influences, the origin of which I deliberately refrain from discussing here, did not play a part in the history of Indonesian Society. As a matter of fact, it became evident at an early stage in the inquiry that the obtrusive factor in the problem was the determination of the nature of such alien influences, which were mainly responsible for shaping the cultures of Indonesian peoples. I have resisted the strong temptation to search abroad for the sources of these immigrant practices, ideas, and beliefs, and have tried to analyse the evidence provided by Indonesia itself, and, from scattered fragments, to reconstruct the history of certain Indonesian customs and beliefs in places apparently free from the more obtrusive disturbing influences of the Indian, Chinese, and Arabian civilisations.

This necessarily involves the elimination of some of the most attractive aspects of the problem of the Megalithic Culture. But this gradual building-up of the history of Indonesia from the local data alone, even though tedious, has revealed a great many factors in the history of the civilisation of the world at large which might have escaped notice if some such laborious analysis as I have attempted here had not been undertaken.

I have discussed the burial customs but briefly in these pages, a fuller examination of the evidence being left to another book, upon which I am at present engaged.

Little cognition is taken also of the recent wide developments in the study of the distribution and spread of Megalithic Culture, generally. To have done so would have upset the scheme of the book, which is to provide mainly a foundation upon which future workers can build up wider arguments, and further develop the whole story of the migrations of early culture. If the book fulfils this function satisfactorily, I shall have succeeded in my aim.

Careful students of the evidence put forward will observe how many gaps exist in our knowledge of the cultures of Indonesian peoples. These lacunæ have seriously impeded the work of constructing the scheme; and it is my hope that the