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## Liquor in Glass Vessels: A Note on Glassware in pre-Islamic Java and on its Socio-Religious Symbolism

*Spiritueux dans de la vaisselle de verre: note sur la vaisselle de verre dans le Java préislamique et son symbolisme socio-religieux*

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## SOURCES ÉCRITES D'INSULINDE

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### Liquor in Glass Vessels: A Note on Glassware in pre-Islamic Java and on its Socio-Religious Symbolism

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#### Introduction: Glass Vessels in pre-Islamic Java\*\*

This research note aims to discuss textual evidence on glassware in *kakavins*, poems composed in the literary register of Old Javanese at the Hindu-Buddhist courts of pre-Islamic Java.<sup>1</sup> Though the texts give us mainly an insight into the symbolic meanings ascribed to glass vessels, rather than descriptions of actual glass objects, it may be useful to (re)consider textual evidence in view of reported finds of glass vessels from ancient Southeast Asia. In the last two decades, our knowledge of ancient glass vessels found in insular Southeast Asia has advanced considerably (Brill 1999; Guillot et

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1. Though *kakawins* have also been composed in Bali, and some of the texts authored there, such as the *Hariśraya A*, contain references to glass and glassware, these references are not discussed in this article. According to the current scholarly opinion, none of the *kakavins* authored in Bali predate the 16th century CE (Creese 1999); consequently these occurrences have no relevance for my analysis.

al. 2003; Dussubieux 2009; Perret 2014a). There is substantial evidence that scrap glass and chunks of glass imported from South Asia and the Middle East were reworked in several places in Southeast Asia, mainly to produce wound and drawn beads, bangles, and other small articles (Francis 2002; Miksic 2013:338).<sup>2</sup> Even though there is no evidence that glass vessels were produced locally until the 16th century CE, Middle Eastern, Chinese, and possibly also South and Central Asian glassware found its way to Southeast Asia, as suggested by fragments of glass vessels which are now documented from around 40 archaeological sites (Perret 2014a:23).<sup>3</sup> Export of Middle Eastern and Chinese glass vessels to ancient Southeast Asia is also documented in historical records (Schafer 1963; Meyer 1992; Borell 2011).

Compared to the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra, reported finds of glass vessels or their fragments from Java are extremely limited. Finds of glass bottles are known from the vicinity of Prambanan, Central Java, and fragments of glass vessels have been documented from Leran in East Java (Harkantiningsih 2002; Guillot in Guillot et al. 2003: footnote 8 p. 224; Perret 2014a). Miksic (2013:352) observes that a single shard of (ancient) glass has been recorded from 14th century Trowulan, a political centre of Majapahit. Yet, a spectacular cargo recovered from the so-called “Cirebon wreck,” a merchant vessel that wrecked around 970 CE on her way to Java (Liebner 2014:v), demonstrates a variety of blown-glass vessels that may have been available in pre-Islamic Java already by the late first millennium CE.<sup>4</sup> The wreck site yielded 39 translucent glass vessels, most of them complete, including drinking cups, bottles and flasks.<sup>5</sup> Apart from these objects, a number of glass shards were recovered. Glassware was identified as Middle Eastern (Liebner 2014:170). Fragments of glass vessels were also salvaged from the Intan wreck (Flecker 2002:87-9) and from the Belitung wreck (Flecker 2011:111).<sup>6</sup>

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2. Leftover fragments from glass-blowing, the so-called “punty-caps,” have been found at Kuala Selinsing in Malaysia and Takuapa in south Thailand (Lamb 1966:77-78). Shards of blown-glass bottles were found at Pengkalan Bujang, where Chinese ceramics date them to the 12th - 13th centuries CE (Perret 2014b:186). These finds have been interpreted as scrap glass, imported to supply raw material for local glass production. Recently, Miksic (2013:344) has suggested that after 1200 CE the source of scrap glass may have shifted from India or the Near East to China.

3. Perret (2014a:23) lists beaker, bottle, bowl, jar, flask, vial, and oil lamp among the documented types of ancient glassware. An intact glass vessel, dated to the 14th century CE, has been recovered from a grave in Riau (Miksic 2013:377).

4. The shipwreck’s position is taken as proof the ship was on her way to Java (Liebner 2014:v).

5. Commenting on the possible function of these glass vessels, Liebner (2014:171) finds parallels between some of the recovered bottles with the “demijohn for wine” found at Nishapur (Wilkinson 1943:176). Alternatively, suggests Liebner (2014:171), these vessels may have served as rose-water sprinklers or perfume bottles.

6. Discussing the glass recovered from the Intan wreck, Flecker (2002:89) has suggested that some of the broken glass was part of the ship’s cargo, and may have been intended for further processing into beads.

Two terms are used in Old Javanese texts to denote glass or glass objects: *kaca* and *gəḍah*. The first of them, a loanword from Sanskrit, is unproblematic, denoting glass as a material (Zoetmulder 1982:760). The meaning and origin of the Old Javanese *gəḍah*, on the other hand, is not entirely clear. Modern Javanese *gedhah* denotes translucent glass or porcelain, and objects made from these materials, mostly in green and blue colours (Pigeaud 1938:122). Yet, in Old Javanese texts *gəḍah* refers in all cases known to me specifically to drinking or serving vessels made from a fragile material.<sup>7</sup> When Zoetmulder published his *Old Javanese-English Dictionary* in 1982, evidence for glass vessels in ancient Southeast Asia was still very limited. In the case of Java, it remains sparse even today. Zoetmulder's definition of Old Javanese *gəḍah* as “vessel of a substance with a glazed surface (porcelain?) or of glass; (drinking-) bowl, glass” (1982:506) reveals the uncertainty about the actual referent of *gəḍah* in Hindu-Buddhist Java. Though very fine green-glazed wine cups modelled on metal ware were recovered from the Intan wreck (Flecker 2011:110), metaphorical associations ascribed to *gəḍah* vessels in *kakavins*, read against the factual rarity of glass vessels in ancient Southeast Asia and Java in particular, leads me to argue that the Old Javanese *gəḍah* refers in most, if not all, cases to drinking or serving vessels made from translucent glass. This suggestion is further supported by the finding that the Old Javanese *gəḍah* most probably derives from the Arabic *qadah* (“glass drinking cup”), an argument analysed in detail below. The term *gəḍah* thus represents a rare—and early—case of an Arabic loanword in the Old Javanese language.

### Liquor, Glass Vessels, and Siddha Alchemy in Old Javanese Court Poems

In all occurrences attested in Old Javanese literature known to me, *gəḍah* refers specifically to a vessel, in which an alcoholic beverage is stored or served. In virtually all pertinent passages, the beverage in question is not represented as palm wine, a drink that was only mildly alcoholic, common in pre-modern Java, but by alcoholic beverages intended for drinking at greater strengths.<sup>8</sup> These apparently strong alcoholic beverages are denoted by the Old Javanese words *madya*, *māstava*, *sīdhu*, and *surā*, all terms that are Sanskrit loanwords.

7. The fragility of *gəḍah* vessels became proverbial in Old Javanese literature: the image of a *gəḍah* vessel that falls on a hard surface, such as stone, and shatters into many pieces, is attested, for example, in *Bhāratayuddha* 5.6, and in *Sutasoma* 71.4. Not until certain Middle Javanese texts does *gəḍah* denote glass as a material, along with glass objects in the green-blue colour spectrum. Several references in Middle Javanese texts suggest that the green-blue colour was so typical for *gəḍah* objects that related terms derived from this word came to denote the colour itself as well: in *Vasit* 3.78b, for example, the term *gəḡəḡahan* designates the green-blue colour of a textile: “wearing *kampuh* of green-blue colour, with a white border” (*akampuh gəḡəḡahan atumpal sveta*). In stanza 2.125b of the same text, the term denotes the green-blue hue of earrings (*asuvān gəḡəḡahan*).

8. An exception to this pattern is found in the *Ghaṭotkacāsraya*, a *kakavin* composed in the second half of the 12th century CE by Mpu Panuluh (Zoetmulder 1974). From stanza 10.2 we gather that a *gəḍah* vessel is used to hold palm wine (*tvak*).

Scholars of Old Javanese literature generally interpret these beverages to be distilled spirits and translate them accordingly, such as “liquor,” “distilled liquor,” and “rum.”<sup>9</sup> From the inscriptional evidence it is clear that the highly-alcoholic beverages in question were not only *conceptualized* as such in fictive literature, but they were actually *consumed*, and hence produced, in ancient Java (Van Naerssen, Pigeaud and Voorhoeve 1977:58-61). There is, however, no compelling evidence that these beverages were made through the process of distillation. McHugh (2014:30-2) observes the same tendency to interpret some alcoholic beverages known from Sanskrit literature as distilled beverages among the scholars of ancient and medieval India. Yet, South Asian sources do not mention distillation of alcoholic drinks until around the 13th century (McHugh 2014:30). In the case of Java, alcoholic beverages such as grain beers (*brəm*) and mixed drinks based on fermented sugarcane juice (*māstava*), naturally had a much higher alcohol content than a relatively simple palm wine. Moreover, an increased alcoholic content in rice and tuber beers may have resulted from the process of aging, achieved by burying an earthenware vessel with a fermented liquid in the ground and storing it there for a period of time. True, distilled beverages may have become known in Java by approximately the same time as in India. Even though we lack direct evidence, it is entirely possible that *araqī*-style distillation was introduced to Java by the Mongol military troops who invaded Java in 1292 CE, as was the case in Mongol-occupied Korea, where detailed documentation clearly shows that the technique of distilling *araqī*-styled liquor spread there from Mongol military camps (Buell et al. 2010).<sup>10</sup> Whenever I use the term “liquor” in this article, it conveys, metaphorically, the meaning of “strong alcoholic beverage,” not necessarily denoting a distilled beverage.

Before discussing the literary image of a *gəḍah* vessel containing liquor, it is necessary to understand the importance of alcoholic beverages in pre-Islamic Java for this image depends for its metaphoric force on the natural attraction which an inebriating beverage is accepted as having. Though the study of the history of Javanese premodern drinking culture is still in its infancy, we know that the island was awash in fermented beverages. Several varieties of palm wine (*buḍur*, *sajən*, *tvak*, *varagañ*), rice and possibly millet beers (*brəm*, *brəm jaguñ*), fruit-based wines (*ciñca*), beverages made from

9. For *māstava*, see Zoetmulder (1982:1125): “(Skt *āsawa*) rum, spirit distilled from sugar or molasses, spirituous liquor in general.” For *madya*, see Teeuw and Robson (2005:225): “liquor.” For *surā*, see Zoetmulder (1982:1861): “(Skt) spirituous liquor,” and Worsley et al. (2013:321): “distilled liquor.”

10. Alcohol distilling was originally confined to just a few areas, where it was probably independently invented (Buell et al. 2010). Wilson has argued persuasively that early experiments with wine-distillation were conducted in Egypt in the early Christian era, if not earlier, by gnostics (2006:20). In China, alcohol distillation has been known since the Tang dynasty, and by the Song period the use of improved stills turned distilled wine into an affordable article of commerce (Huang 2000:292; Haw 2006:148).

the fermented juice of sugar cane (*kilañ*), are known from the Old Javanese literary and the epigraphical record. Some of the named beverages mentioned in the *kakavin* poetry, especially those denoted by Sanskrit loanwords, such as grape wine (*drākṣa*), may have been extremely rare, known only in the court environment. Alternatively, some of these names may refer only to the literary concept of inebriating drink. More research is, however, needed before we accept or refute this view.

Scholars have observed that alcoholic beverages conferred many advantages on premodern societies when consumed in moderation (McGovern 2009). A lubricant of social life, drinking of alcoholic beverages in *kakavins* is essentially symbolic in significance: it is expressive of reciprocity, sharing, and trust within society. Robson (1995:145) observes that even excessive, heavy drinking is not necessarily censured in Old Javanese texts: the *Deśavarṇana*, a *kakavin* composed in 1365 CE by Mpu Prapañca, suggests that especially the men who participated in state ritual ceremonies could have drunk themselves into a stupor without running the risk of being criticized.<sup>11</sup> In a number of texts, Javanese poets draw on the symbolism of intoxication (*vārō*) to refer to the process of spiritual transformation, and it is in view of this positive assessment of alcoholic beverages and consequences of inebriation that we must understand the image of liquor in a glass vessel in *kakavins*. Far from representing only a poetical metaphor, the image carries a distinctly religious symbolism. In *Bhomāntaka* 27.7, prince Sāmba and his bride Yajñawatī hold a “Great Festival of Love” (*madanamahotsava*), which takes place in the bed (*śayana*), placed in the wedding bower:

*riñ rañkañ mañi rika sañ rva yan pasīvo  
muñgvi jro kacapuri ramya yan pasañḍiñ  
māyākāra sira katon agātra-gātra  
himpār madya kinākās iñ gəḍah lumimbak*

In a jewelled pavilion the couple sported,  
And within a glass palace they sat happily together.  
They looked unreal, taking various dim shapes,  
Undulating like liquor held in a vessel of glass.<sup>12</sup>

This stanza is of utmost importance: it may be the single-known passage (in the whole corpus of Old Javanese literature) where the two Old Javanese

11. The problematization of intoxicating beverages is by and large limited in Old Javanese court poetry to the anonymous author of the *Kakavin Rāmāyaṇa*, who has developed ingenious narrative strategies to censure alcoholic drinks. Interestingly, while Vālmīki mentions in the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* four fermented drinks (Achaya 1991:123), the author of the *Kakavin Rāmāyaṇa* lists no less than eleven alcoholic beverages. I intend to address the specific position on inebriating drinks exemplified by the author of the *Kakavin Rāmāyaṇa* in a study devoted to drinking culture in premodern Java I am currently preparing.

12. *Bhomāntaka* 28.14. The Old Javanese text and translation are taken from Teeuw and Robson (2005:224, 225).

words for glass, *kaca* and *gəḍah*, are used together. Teeuw and Robson (2005:621), whose translation of this passage is quoted above, take for granted that *gəḍah* denotes a glass vessel, and take the concurrent use of *gəḍah* and *kaca* as evidence that the rare compound *kaca-puri* means “glass palace” and does not refer to an “enclosed wall or fence,” as Zoetmulder has it in his *Old Javanese-English Dictionary* (1982:760).<sup>13</sup>

Glossing this passage in the commentary to the *Bhomāntaka*, Teeuw and Robson (2005:621) notice “a brilliant comparison here,” but they don’t elaborate on its meaning. In my view, the image of liquor in a glass vessel in this and related passages draws on the concept of spiritual inebriation and sexual sacrament known from the environment of Tantric Siddhas. Davidson (2002:263), analysing the social and religious practices of Indian medieval Siddhas, argues that in the coded language of the *Hevajra Tantra* the Sanskrit term *madya* (“wine”) refers to intoxication (*madana*) as the core of the Tantric feast. The liquor in the Old Javanese *Bhomāntaka*, denoted likewise *madya*, is “served” at the “Great Festival of Love” (*madanamahotsava*).<sup>14</sup> Davidson (2002:198) postulates that according to the concept of disciplined eroticism, conceived as the means to spiritual liberation, an adept draws a non-human woman to a secluded place and their sanctified copulation yields worldly benefits. In my view, Sāmba is represented in this scene as a yogin, who copulates with a non-human woman (Yajñavatī, born through ritual manipulations, was in her previous life a divine nymph) in the seclusion of a “glass palace.” Furthermore, the Old Javanese *madya* of this passage, as well as *surā*, and *sīdhu* known from contextually similar passages analysed below, may refer to the process of distillation, and hence to Siddha (Tantric) alchemical practices, hinted at in the *kakavins* composed between the 11<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.<sup>15</sup>

While scholars of Indian religion postulate that Tantric alchemy prospered in India between the 10th and 14th centuries CE (White 1998:52), its relative importance in Hindu-Buddhist Java has yet to be established. O’Connor (1985:68), for one, observes that “there is little more than intimations” that alchemy was practiced in ancient Java. One conspicuous category of artefacts associated by some scholars with alchemical practices are the so-called “mercury jars,” narrow-mouthed stoneware bottles, made with minimal care (Miksic 2013:318-21). O’Connor (1985:68), for one, has observed that bottles

13. Zoetmulder (1982: 760-761) identifies the term *kacapuri* rather tentatively: “(prob.:) part of a building; enclosing wall or fence (of bamboo or stone, shaped in a part. way?). Cf GR kw: pagēr sajro ning beteng.”

14. *Bhomāntaka* 27.7.

15. White (1998:4) emphasizes that Hindu Siddhas flourished in India in the 12th and 13th centuries CE, at the same time that the Old Javanese *kakavins* containing the alchemical imagery of the *gəḍah* glass vessel with liquor (*Bhāratayuddha*, *Bhomāntaka*, *Smaradahana*, and *Śumanasāntaka*) were composed.



used to store mercurial substances dated by the context to the 13-14th CE, were found in several parts of insular Southeast Asia, including Santubong in Sarawak and Fort Canning in Singapore.<sup>16</sup> Alternative views have been advanced, and “mercury jars” have been interpreted as vessels holding gunpowder, flaming oil for use in combat, perfumes, and alcoholic beverages (Miksic 2013:318-21). Heng (2009:188-89), for one, has suggested that the vessels were utilized to transport southern Fujian rice wine. White (1998:101) has further argued that the “export” of Siddha alchemical practices to Southeast Asia is supported by the finds of mercurial *lingga* and other alchemically prepared elements in Candi Bukit Batu Pahat in Kedah, the Malay Peninsula, dated to the 12th or 13th century CE. Important in this context, ancient Kedah provides especially rich evidence on glassware; the corpus from Pengkalan Bujang, encompassing some 6000 fragments of glass vessels, may well represent the densest site in terms of glassware finds in Southeast Asia (Lamb 1961, Perret 2014a:23). In view of these data, it is interesting to reconsider the origin of the Old Javanese term *gādah*. Long ago, Rouffaer (1899:114, note 2) suggested we trace the Javanese term *gādah* to the Malay toponym “Kedah.” Kedah is one of the most important regions in the Malay Peninsula where the Hindu and Buddhist civilization flourished, prior to the process of Islamization (Jacq-Hergoualc’h 2002). The toponym Kedah is ancient, and it is mentioned in the 14th-century *Deśavarṇana*; it is also attested (as part of a personal name) in the *Hikayat Raja-raja Pasai*, a text composed in classical Malay in the late 14th century CE (Braginsky 2004).<sup>17</sup> In his analysis of lexical influences from north India to maritime Southeast Asia Tom Hoogervorst (2016: 296) has recently suggested that the ultimate origin of the Old Javanese word may be the Arabic *qadah*, denoting in modern Arabic “drinking bowl; (drinking) cup; goblet; glass tumbler; tea glass” (Wehr 1976:745). This valuable insight helps to re-appreciate the actual referent of the Old Javanese term, which seems to have initially denoted imported glassware, and represents most probably an early Arabic loanword (Hoogervorst, 2016: 296).

It cannot be excluded that translucent glass vessels reached Javanese ports predominantly from the Malay Peninsula, especially from Kedah, a region known during the 11-13th century CE for its imports of glassware (Perret 2014b). In my view, set forth here as a hypothesis, translucent glass may have been perceived in ancient Java as a material of ritual purity, used to store and dispense strong, aged alcoholic beverages, both perceived as products of “alchemical” manipulations. The finding that the motif of liquor in a glass vessel is attested only in the *kakavins* composed at the same time alchemists

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16. I am grateful to Andrea Aciri for this reference.

17. The search in the Malay Concordance Project database, established by Ian Proudfoot, has yielded two occurrences of this term: in *Hikayat Raja-raja Pasai* 20.28 and 21.4. Accessed 11/3/2015.



were active in Kedah, during the 12-13th centuries CE, may represent more than a pure coincidence; in fact, complex alchemical imagery is attested in a number of *kakavins*, hinting to the possible presence of (Siddha?) alchemists in Java. Though the literary traces of some unorthodox religious groups in Hindu-Buddhist Java, such as the Pāśupatas and Kāpālikas, has been recently studied by scholars (Nihom 1995; Aciri 2014), evidence pertaining to the Tantric Siddha alchemists has not yet been analysed and I can offer here only a few disconnected observations.<sup>18</sup>

As already reviewed above, fermented beverages intended for drinking at greater strengths, were not only imagined in Old Javanese literature, but they were actually produced and drunk in pre-Islamic Java. From the epigraphical record we gather that at least two varieties of strong drinks made from fermented juice or sugar cane syrup (*māstava*, *sīdhu*) were well-known enough to be served at social and ritual occasions outside the court environment (Van Naerssen, Pigeaud and Voorhoeve 1977:58-61).<sup>19</sup> White (1998:4) argues that procreative fluids became perceived with early Tantrism as “power substances” for the worship of and the identification with gods and goddesses. I suggest that the image of *madya* in a glass vessel in *Bhomāntaka* 28.14 symbolically refers to the ejaculated fluids exchanged between Sāmba and Yajñavatī in a sanctified copulation. The inebriating quality of liquor refers to the intoxicating quality of the copulation, referred to in stanza 27.7, where we encounter an image of impassioned Sāmba, depicted as “very drunk” (*davā*) at the moment he is loosening Yajñavatī’s skirt.<sup>20</sup> In many places in the *Bhomāntaka* references are made to the presumed identity of Sāmba and Yajñavatī with the divine pair

18. White (1998:101) observes that there were never institutionalized orders of Siddha alchemists in medieval India and most were attached to royal courts rather than to monastic or religious orders. It is tempting to speculate that in Java the situation was the same, for alchemical imagery is known mainly, if not exclusively, from court poetry. See, for example, section 23.2-4 in the *Arjunavivāha*, in which Vidyādhara marching to battle display a number of powerful artefacts which refer to alchemical concepts. Notice also the use of mercurial substances (*pārada*) mentioned in Old Javanese poetry, and the enigmatic canto 29 of the *Arjunavivāha*, in which the process of alchemical distillation is mentioned. In fact, the well-known motif of Arjuna’s airborne travel, conducted with the help of magical sandals and a flying jacket, may refer to the Siddha ability of flight, one of the most popular subjects in Sanskrit Siddha literature (Davidson 2002). Unlike other unorthodox religious groups, such as the low-class Pāśupatas, Tantric Siddhas may have been attached in ancient Java exclusively to royal and princely courts.

19. Three strong beverages, *madya*, *māstava* and *sīdhu*, are mentioned among the alcoholic drinks listed in the *Kakavin Rāmāyaṇa*, the earliest known specimen of the *kakavin* genre, datable according current scholarly opinion to the 9th century CE (Aciri 2011: xv). In my view, none of these drinks represents a distilled liquor; compared to palm wine, however, they were indeed “potent” drinks. The process of distillation (but not necessarily of alcohol distillation) is hinted at in the *Arjunavivāha*, a *kakavin* composed in the first half of the 11th century CE (Robson 2008:127). For an interesting parallel of an alcoholic drink as a symbol of nectarous essence among Tibetan Siddhas, where strong millet beer was used, see Ardussi (1977:118).

20. Compare the same phrase in *Sumanasāntaka* 130.1, where it refers to the “mistress of Śaiva” (*strī niṅ śaiva*), who was “very drunk” (*vārō davā*).

of Kāma and Ratī, and to their sexual sacrament.<sup>21</sup> The purpose of this ritual, says Davidson (2002:198), was for the adept to “experience sexuality while in relationship to a divinity, often visualizing himself and his partner as the divinity and its consort.”

Coming back to the subject of the materiality of *gəḍah* vessels, rather than representing porcelain or stoneware vessels, objects imported to Java in great quantities from the ninth century CE onwards, the Old Javanese *gəḍah* may have initially referred to translucent glass, a material sufficiently rare in pre-Islamic Java to convey the quality of ritual purity, associated in *kakavins* only with rare substances, especially rock crystal and gold. Perret (2014b:186) observes that the peak in the use of glass vessels in Southeast Asia occurred between the 9-13th century CE. Since the 14th century CE, high-quality porcelain has become the preferred material for luxury tableware everywhere and 14th-century archaeological sites are conspicuously poor in glassware finds. It may be that since the 14th century CE the term *gəḍah*, originally denoting glassware, has (also) been identified with glazed porcelain. This claim is further supported by the *Sumanasāntaka*, a *kakavin* composed by Mpu Monagūṇa at the beginning of the 13th century CE (Worsley et al. 2013). In stanza 129.2, the poet describes a convivial drinking of alcoholic beverages upon the occasion of the wedding of prince Aja and princess Indumatī:

*surāsira-siran rasanya surasārəbu-rəbu suməḍah kinahyunan  
manik pinakajaṅga tan papəgatan kucur ika kadi pañcuran juruh  
kilan brəm inalap ginanti kadi tīrtha madhu mamulakan sakeṅ gəḍah*<sup>22</sup>

Liquor in great quantities, tasting deliciously, comforting and intoxicating,<sup>23</sup> was much in demand.

The drinks poured continuously from rock-crystal pitchers like fountains of palm syrup. Fermented juice of sugarcane and rice beer were drunk one after the other, like holy water and mead welling up from glass vessels.<sup>24</sup>

The passage gives us an utterly positive assessment of strong and apparently prestigious alcoholic beverages: (filtered?) rice beer (*brəm*),<sup>25</sup> and a drink made from the fermented juice of the sugar cane (*kilan*). The term *surā*, rendered here “liquor,” seems to have served in Java as an umbrella

21. See, for example, *Bhomāntaka* 21.1.

22. *Sumanasāntaka* 129.2. Old Javanese text taken from Worsley et al. (2013:320).

23. I take a difficult term *suməḍah* to denote a quality of intoxication, rather than meaning “fermented,” as has been tentatively suggested by Zoetmulder (1982:1725).

24. I have based my translation on that proposed by Worsley et al. (2013:321), though in several cases I have rendered the terms pertaining to alcoholic drinks in a different way than the editors of the text.

25. Unlike only mildly alcoholic palm wine, fully fermented and filtered rice beers (“rice wines”) do have a relatively high alcohol content, in the range of 10-15 per cent by weight in modern rice beers (Jennings et al. 2005:281), and may cause violent intoxication even if consumed in small amounts.

term covering particularly potent fermented beverages, at least prior to the introduction of alcohol distillation in the late 13th or 14th century, when *surā* covered distilled beverages as well (compare McHugh 2014:34-35 for the meaning of *surā* in ancient and medieval India). In a striking image, alcoholic beverages are likened to holy water (*tīrtha*), a liquid used in Hindu-Buddhist Java in ritual ceremonies as a purificatory substance. Dispensed to the participants at a wedding from *gəḍah* vessels, translucent glass is represented in this passage as being of the same ritual purity and excellence as the rock crystal from which the pitchers (*maṇik pinakajaṅga*) are made.<sup>26</sup> Strikingly, a similar evaluation of translucent glass as a material associated with ritual purity is attested from Tang and Song China (Shen 2002:78).<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, in medieval India, pulverised glass was utilised in pharmacy (Gode 1946:148). Apart from broaching the theme of glass vessels, the description of drinking practices in the *Sumanasāntaka*, especially stanza 129.3, suggests that some of the wedding guests and participating religious figures engage in heavy drinking to reach a state of “ritual inebriation.” For example, a figure denoted by Acri (2014:24) as a “mistress of Śaiva,” depicted as being “very drunk” (*vārö-vārö davā*), engages in a burlesque religious performance. The theme of ritual inebriation and the ritual-cum-cultic function of alcoholic drinks in Hindu-Buddhist Java, hinted at in this and other passages, still needs to be analysed by scholars of Javanese religion.

Another text in which the image of inebriating liquor in the drinking cup figures prominently is the *Smaradahana*, a *kakavin* composed in the 12th century CE by Mpu Dharmaja (Zoetmulder 1974). In an intriguing eulogy passage, Mpu Dharmaja identifies his patron, the Javanese king Kameśvara, with the god Kāma (called Smara) and the queen with Kāma’s wife Ratī. Hooykaas (1964:138) has offered an interesting reading of this stanza:

Such is her loveliness, moving and sweet, to be compared with mead in a chalice;  
together with her as his principal spouse did Smara come down to earth;  
King and Queen as Ardhanareśvarī continuously on the jewel lion-throne;  
King Kameśvara in lotus’ inner part, having as śakti the eight goddesses after their arrival.<sup>28</sup>

26. Worsley et al. (2013:503) admit that “pitcher” for *jaṅga* is a guess based on the context. Quoting Zoetmulder (1982:727), the editors of the *Sumanasāntaka* further observe that “what *jaṅga* means here is unclear. The usual meaning of the word, ‘a particular kind of climber with fragrant flowers, probably = *gadung*’ does not make any sense here” (Worsley et al. 2013:503). According to Zoetmulder (1982:727), a related word form *jinaṅgan* (“to provide with a *jaṅga* pattern”), refers to the decorative motif on cloth. It is tempting to speculate that *maṇik pinakajaṅga* refers to cut rock crystal (or glass) vessels, a lapidary method well-known from early Islamic rock crystal and glass vessels, in which the surface decoration indeed oftentimes resembles “vine-like” floral ornaments.

27. Viewed as ritually pure material, translucent glass was used in China, along with rock crystal, to hold Buddha’s relics, and glass vessels were also included in foundational deposits of Buddhist monuments during the Tang and Northern Song periods (Shen 2002:75).

28. *Smaradahana* 39.7. Old Javanese text taken from Poerbatjaraka (1931:53).

Hooykaas's poetic rendering of the sequence *sīdhu muṅviñ vuluh* as "mead in chalice" is beautiful and reflects the gnostic spirit of this stanza well. It is, however, not entirely precise for there is no evidence that the Old Javanese *sīdhu* denotes mead, an alcoholic beverage made by fermenting honey diluted in water. Mead, in itself, is designated in Old Javanese quite consistently with the term *madhu*, another loanword from Sanskrit.<sup>29</sup> Hooykaas may have followed the rendering of this textual sequence advanced by Poerbatjaraka (1931:113) in his Dutch edition of the *Smaradahana*: "*mede in een kelk*" ("mead in a chalice"). The exact meaning of *sīdhu* in Old Javanese is, in fact, not entirely clear. In Sanskrit, the word denotes, according to Achaya (1991:127), a distilled liquor made from sugar cane juice, flavoured with *dhātaki* flowers, which was "exceptionally strong [...], commonly used by the non-Āryan population." In my view, the Old Javanese counterpart of the Sanskrit *sīdhu* may quite reasonably denote a potent liquor made from the fermented juice of the sugar cane, or (sugar cane) molasses. The drink called *sīdhu* is not known exclusively from Javanese literature; it is mentioned in Old Javanese inscriptions as well: Van Naerssen, Pigeaud and Voorhoeve (1977:61) provide epigraphical evidence of Old Javanese *sīdhu* as "rum." The term *vuluh*, denoting a vessel in which liquor is served, and rendered by Hooykaas as "chalice," originally denotes a vessel made from a section of bamboo.<sup>30</sup> It is specifically the species known as "ivory bamboo" that is often mentioned as holding palm syrup or palm wine. Elsewhere, I have discussed another metaphorical association between the bamboo "drinking cup" and human blood (Jákl 2013). This complex association is attested, for example, in *Bhāratayuddha* 13.3, where blood gushing from the dead body of Sāmba is likened to the sap oozing from the crushed section of an ivory bamboo (*vuluh gaḍiñ rəmāk*).<sup>31</sup>

29. See, for example, *Kakavin Rāmāyaṇa* 7.38; *Sutasoma* 68.3.

30. See Zoetmoelder (1982:2326) "bamboo, bamboo shaft, bamboo vessel, esp. the bamboo vessel in which the liquid sugar (syrup) is kept."

31. The associations between human blood and alcoholic drinks in ancient Java seem to have been complex and much of this lore is lost on us. The key term pertaining to the ancient symbolism is the word *laṅgā*: while in Modern Javanese the verb *anglangga* refers to a particular way of drinking by pouring a drink to one's mouth without touching the lips to the surface of the drinking vessel (Robson and Singgih Wibisono 2002), its Old Javanese counterpart has sinister associations in many cases: a number of *kakavins* suggest that the term (*m*)*aṅlaṅgā* may be best rendered "to drink [blood or alcoholic beverage]." In the *kakavins*, the word is associated exclusively with demonic characters, or persons representing *adharmā*. It is also found in the "curses sections" of Old Javanese inscriptions. A detailed analysis of this term in the Old Javanese textual record will certainly provide us with further insight into the drinking culture of ancient Java.

## Conclusion

Glassware was rare in ancient Java. Far from representing objects of daily use, glass vessels were imported in very limited quantities, and viewed as precious objects, prestigious gifts intended for members of a local elite (Perret 2014b:180). Though simple glass items, such as beads and bangles, were already manufactured in the pre-Islamic period, there is no evidence that glass vessels were produced in Hindu-Buddhist Java. Unfortunately, no text gives us any insight into the way the premodern Javanese viewed, or conceptualized, the glass-manufacturing process. Old Javanese *kakavins*, however, suggest that (imported) glass vessels, denoted by the term *gədah*, were associated in court circles with the socio-religious framework of Siddha alchemy, and viewed as ritually powerful containers, used to store and serve strong alcoholic beverages, including, quite plausibly, aged filtered grain beer, and a potent drink made from the fermented juice of sugar cane. It has been further suggested that the glass cup metonymically represents the liquid which it contains, and it also shares the metaphoric associations of the sanctified copulation perceived in the framework of Siddha Tantrism as a ritual act. In more general terms, the glass cup filled with liquor is represented in Old Javanese literature as a locus for the realization of “divine reality,” sharing gnostic values pertaining to an inebriating beverage (Khere 2005). This finding further supports a view that pre-Islamic Java, admittedly a geographical periphery of the premodern world, was culturally an integral part of a wider Eurasian cultural sphere.

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