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Warriors Killed, Sliced as Cucumber: Food Symbolism in the Martial Scenes of Old Javanese *Kakawin*s[1]

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INTRODUCTION

In several important descriptions of battles found in the Old Javanese courtly poems in Sanskritic metres known as *kakawin*, slain warriors are compared to chopped, sliced and other processed food ingredients or, alternatively, to food preparations made from such ingredients. This imagery is well-attested already in the earliest known specimen of the *kakawin* genre, the Old Javanese version of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, dated by a current scholarly opinion to the mid-9th century AD. This article pursues a socio-cultural approach to this literary motif by looking at the cultural meanings and religious significance ascribed to the symbolism of chopped food ingredients and dishes prepared from them. I consider this literary motif to reflect discourses that resonated with their intended audience in a Javanese setting; I do not assume that *kakawin* poems necessarily reproduce and transmit practices that were current in pre-Islamic Javanese society. Throughout the text, therefore, I try to distinguish an actual social practice, accessible to us oftentimes only in the form of a metaphorical allusion, from an ideological representation of this practice; yet, at the same time, I acknowledge the tight interdependence of these two dimensions.
This article develops its argument as follows. First, I discuss a singularly interesting motif of Abhimanyu's ritual death, detailed in the Old Javanese *Bhāratayuddha* (12th century AD), in which the symbolism of 'crushed food ingredients' stands central. I argue that the author interprets, and elaborates, a literary theme of the pressed *soma* plant, as alluded to in the motif of Abhimanyu's death in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, by employing locally well-understood metaphorical elements rooted in the complex symbolism of a masticated betel quid. In the second part of the article I analyze several *kakawin* passages in which

1 I transcribe Old Javanese according to the system implemented by Zoetmulder (1982) in his *Old Javanese-English Dictionary* (hereafter OJED), with one deviation: *ŋ* becomes *ṅ*—the standard sign used in the internationally-recognized systems for transliterating Indic scripts to render the velar nasal. In order to avoid any confusion, I have also standardized the spelling of quoted primary sources according to this convention. All translations from Old Javanese are my own, except when otherwise indicated. I am grateful to Andrea Acri and Adam Bowles for the numerous comments and insights to an early draft of this article.

the imagery of killed warriors likened to food ingredients, or to the dishes prepared from them, serves to reconceptualize an Indian motif of 'battle-sacrifice' (*raṇayajña*)[2] in terms of Javanese Tantric magico-religious views. I argue that what is reflected in these passages is actually a sublime critique voiced by the poets against malicious, power-oriented practices of Tantric Siddhas aimed at harming an enemy. In the *kakawin* poetry, such ritual acts are ascribed invariably to demonic figures (*rākṣasa*) or other characters representing unrighteousness (*adharma*). In the third part of the article I analyze, using primarily rich evidence culled from the anonymous *kakawin Bhomāntaka*, the complex symbolism ascribed to the dishes consumed by warriors in pre-battle feasts. As it is apparent from similar events and procedures detailed in several other *kakawin*s, these feasts are likely to represent ritual affairs. I argue that, on the plane of ritual symbolism, dishes prepared from the chopped meat of animals, birds, and fish reflect the archaic idea that slaughtering (and subsequently consuming) animals constitutes an imitative action of killing enemy soldiers in an approaching battle. Summarizing the subject, I conclude that, while affirming social and religious values assigned to a pre-battle feasting of soldiers, poets criticised Tantric practices that employed malevolent techniques of sympathetic magic aimed at harming enemies.

THE SOMA PLANT IN JAVA: ABHIMANYU SLAIN, CRUSHED AS A LEAF OF BETEL

The motif of ritual killing of warriors is well-known in Old Javanese literature. Consider the following two passages. Reference to ritual killing in battle is made in the introductory maṅgala of the *Bhāratayuddha*, an Old Javanese abbreviated rendering of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* in the form of a *kakawin* court poem:[3]

> Desiring the annihilation of all hostile powers, the hero devoted himself
> to the performance of his sacrifice on the battlefield.
> Gracefully he used as flower-offerings the head ornaments from the hair
> of his fallen enemies;
> As grains, the forehead ornaments of deceased kings, and the burning
> palaces of his adversaries as his sacrificial fire-pits,
> Into which he constantly sacrificed the heads of his foes decapitated
> while fighting valiantly in their chariots.[4]

A second pertinent passage, which details a ritual style of killing, occurs in the 14th-century *kakawin Arjunawijaya*. In stanza 50.2, Mpu Tantular, author of the text, describes how the Hehaya soldiers killed by Rāwaṇa's *rākṣasa* troops were slain as if they were sacrificial animals:

2 The literary motif of 'battle-sacrifice' is also known in the Sanskrit literature under the alternative designations of *raṇasattra* and *śastrayajña* (Feller 2004:253).

3 Curiously, this text was authored by two poets, Mpu Sĕḍah and Mpu Panuluh, in 1157 AD.

4 Translation taken from Supomo (1993:164); *Bhāratayuddha* 1.1: *saṅ śūrāmrih ayajña riṅ samara mahyun i hilaṅa nikaṅ parāṅmukha / līlākambaṅ urā sĕkar taji ni keśa niṅ ari pějah iṅ raṇāṅgana / ūrṇā niṅ ratu māti wījanira kuṇḍanira nagara niṅ musuh gĕsĕṅ / sāhityāhuti tĕṇḍas iṅ ripu kapökan i ratha nika suśramāṅlaga //.*

> They (i.e. the *rākṣasa*s) killed them in various ways; some as if they were butchering swine and dogs, others as if they were slaughtering goats, deer, wild and domestic buffaloes to be offered in sacrifice.[5]

Both passages are literary reflections of the idea that war represents a form of sacrifice that takes place on the battlefield. The rich imagery of the first passage represents an Old Javanese version of the extended metaphor of the 'battle-sacrifice' (*raṇayajña*), a well-known trope of Sanskrit literature. In the *raṇayajña* motif, correspondences are established between battle and sacrifice, most prominently between the weapons and sacrificial implements, or, as in the passage quoted above, between (killed) warriors and different kinds of offerings. This imagery is developed at length in the Sanskrit *Udyogaparvan*, the 'Book of Preparations', in a passage where, on the brink of the 'great battle', Kṛṣṇa tries to manipulate Karṇa to take the side of the Pāṇḍavas. Refusing all of Kṛṣṇa's offers, Karṇa chooses to remain loyal to the Kauravas and fight for them in the ensuing war. In a bold speech, Karṇa describes the war between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas as a *raṇayajña* battle sacrifice, in which the Pāṇḍavas must act as sacrificers, while the Kauravas are destined to be sacrificed (*Udyogaparvan* 5.139, vv. 29–51).[6] Brodbeck (2009:13) calls the 'battle-sacrifice' of the Kurukṣetra war as 'the *Mahābhārata*'s central ritual event'. It is interesting to note that the concept of *raṇayajña*, an iconic trope of the *Mahābhārata* textual tradition, had a profound influence also on the Old Javanese court poems that were based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* textual tradition. Not realized by Old Javanese scholarship so far, the trope of *raṇayajña* is attested for the first time in the Old Javanese literature in the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*.[7]

Recently, Indologists have shown an increased interest in the epic reworking of Vedic ritual themes, including a particular style of ritual killing that apparently played a role in shaping the mainstream concept of *raṇayajña*. In the case of the *Mahābhārata*, Hiltebeitel (2001:115) argues that rather than 'ritualize', transpose or allegorize Vedic stories, epic poets made 'knowing allusion to Veda, its rituals included, within the primary texture of their composition'. Following a similar line of argumentation, Patton (2005:136) observes that the restyled Vedic themes that prop out here and there throughout the *Mahābhārata* do not serve any ritual agenda intrinsic in the epic poem, but should be viewed in the context of elucidationg *dharma*, which represents the main agenda of epic poets. Yet, I argue that in several Old Javanese *kakawin* knowing allusions to Vedic themes are made, and that these allusions testify to the poets' full understanding of the ritual associations of these motives. Here I focus on one particular instance, i.e. the *Bhāratayuddha*'s characterization of the ritual death of Abhimanyu, whose slaying clearly involves a complex sym-

5 *Bhāratayuddha* 50.2: *akweh bhāwanya n anyat hana kadi mamunuh sūkara śwāna tulya / dudwaṅ kadyāmunuh minda hariṇa gawaya mwaṅ krĕwag carwa donya //.*

6 In fact the concept of raṇayajña is exposed for the first time, in a less elaborate and much more concise form, in vv. 12–14 of *Udyogaparvan* 5.57, where Duryodhana informs his father Dhṛtarāṣṭra about a future war between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas.

7 This finding is important as it demonstrates that the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, or at least the *Udyogaparvan*, was known in Java by the time the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* was composed, that is in the 9th century AD. The *raṇayajña* literary formula is fully developed in stanza 22.53 of the *kakawin*. The trope of *raṇayajña* is attested neither in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* nor in Bhaṭṭi's *Rāvaṇavadha*, both oof which were important sources for the gestation of the Old Javanese R*āmāyaṇa kakawin*.

bolism. The death of Abhimanyu is described in some detail, its basic narrative following the events told in the Sanskrit *Droṇaparvan*, the second of the four 'battle books' of the *Mahābhārata*.[8] I argue that Mpu Sĕḍah's masterful rendering of this episode demonstrates that what seems at first sight to be an erudite excursus added to the main narrative, is actually a strikingly well-informed 'transposition' of a Sanskrit theme into the local cultural setting of pre-Islamic Java.

Analyzing the motif of Abhimanyu's ritual death in the Sanskrit *Droṇaparvan*, Hiltebeitel (1990:340) observes that at the moment when Abhimanyu dies, he is encircled by six of the foremost Kuru warriors; five of them are incarnations of Vedic deities—Droṇa of Bṛhaspati, Kṛpa of the Rudras, Karṇa of Sūrya, Aśvatthāman of Mahādeva (as the complex embodyment formed by the Rudras Antaka, Krodha, and Kāma), and Kṛtavarman of the Maruts. Finding himself inside the cakravyūha battle formation, which is similar in its shape to a ritual enclosure of Vedic sacrificial grounds, Abhimanyu is deprived of nearly all of his weapons and other accoutrements of the warrior by several well-aimed arrow shots. Left only with a mace, he engages in the final duel with Droṇa. In view of the participation of all the figures who incarnate Vedic deities on the Kuru side, and of the use of 'mace on the head' strikes, Hiltebeitel (1990:341) suggests that the closest parallel to Abhimanyu's death is the Vedic motif of the ritual pounding of the *soma*—the nectar of immortality par excellence.[9] In the *Ādiparvan* (1.61.86) of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, Abhimanyu is indeed identified as 'the splendid son of *Soma*'. Hiltebeitel (1990:337) argues that *Soma* here is the moon, though he adds that certain resonances of the archaic double character of *Soma* as both sacrificial plant and moon are detectable in the epic figure of Abhimanyu. Both Hopkins and Dumézil already pointed out that the brief sixteen years of Abhimanyu's life correspond to the sixteen *kalā*s or days in the light half of the lunar month (*śuklapakṣa*).

Mpu Sĕḍah, author of part of the poem under discussion, was apparently aware of the *soma* literary symbolism in the motif of Abhimanyu's death found in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*. In the *Bhāratayuddha*, Abhimanyu's link with the *soma*, a 'plant of immortality', is ingeniously reworked by means of a strikingly innovative, and locally well-understood, imagery. I argue that in his effort to render the theme as faithfully as possible to his (Sanskrit) textual model(s), Mpu Sĕḍah introduces betel vine in order to gloss a *soma* plant.[10] To further elaborate on the motif of Abhimanyu's mutilated body likened to a masticated betel leaf, the poet adds a supervenient, typically Javanese symbolism of

8 While there exists an Old Javanese prose version of the *Bhīṣmaparvan*, the remaining three 'battle books' (*Droṇaparvan*, *Karṇaparvan* and *Śalyaparvan*) were either never rendered into Old Javanese, or more probably, their Javanese versions did not survive the perils of time.

9 A correspondence is thus drawn between the ritual pressing of the *soma* plants, crushed with press-stones (or stampers), and the ritual killing of Abhimanyu, whose head is crushed by Droṇa's mace.

10 The botanical identity of the Vedic *soma* remains unknown. Dozens of plants and some non-plant organisms have been identified with the *soma* by scholars. For a recent review of the problem, see Houben (2003). While acknowledging that there is no scholarly consensus on the identity of the Vedic *soma* plant, Houben suggests that several species of the genus *Ephedra* seem to meet best both the textual and pharmacological requirements for the botanical referent of the *soma* plant. The matter is complicated by the shifting identity of the *soma* within South Asian societies themselves; it is highly probable that different plant species were styled as the Vedic *soma* in the course of Aryan migrations southwards and eastwards. Apparently, once the concept of the *soma* sacred plant reached Southeast Asia, it was reconceptualized in accordance with the local cultural preferences and ritual experiences.

chopped food ingredients. Let us compare the telegraphic and rather unimpressive description of Abhimanyu's dead body in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* with the poetic rendering of the same motif in the Old Javanese *kakawin*. In the Sanskrit *Droṇaparvan* (48.31), Abhimanyu's slain body is finally recovered by the Pāṇḍavas:

> The Pāṇḍus looked upon the broken (*patitam bhūmau*, lit. 'fallen down on the earth') figure of Abhimanyu who had once been bright as the sun and moon and they were struck down with sorrow.[11]

It is only from the previous description of a duel between Abhimanyu and Droṇa that the reader could actually envisage an image of Abhimanyu's 'crushed head' and his mutilated body. In the Old Javanese *Bhāratayuddha* 14.1, the description is much more detailed:

> *ri pati saṅ abhimanyu riṅ raṇāṅga*
> *těñuh araras kadi sewaleṅ tahas mās*
> *hanan aṅaraga kāla niṅ pajaṅ lek*
> *cinacah alindi sahantimun ginintĕn*
>
> So Abhimanyu was slain in the battle,
> [His body] crushed as finely as a 'leaf of betel' [in a spittle], in the golden spittoon;
> Laying motionless in the moonlight,
> Cut to shreds as delicately as [sliced] cucumber, mashed.[12]

This stanza makes several interesting allusions. The plainest of them is found in line c, where the link between Abhimanyu and the moon is evoked through the image of a dead body illuminated by the moonlight. Mpu Sĕḍah was well-aware of the sacred pedigree of Abhimanyu and about his links to the moon and to the *soma* plant of immortality.[13] We do not know much about the way *soma* was conceptualized in early Java, but it is clear that the poet wished to employ a concept of the sacred *soma* plant—and the juice extracted from it—in the *Bhāratayuddha*'s literary fabric. I argue that by using the betel chewing symbolism to gloss the *soma* plant, Mpu Sĕḍah actually tells us quite a lot about the way *soma* was imagined in pre-Islamic Java. First, as betel plant (*Piper betle* L.) is an evergreen perennial creeper, the parallelism would indicate that the *soma* plant was regarded to be a kind of vine.[14] Second, betel is definitely a stimulant, not a hallucinogen, and Mpu

11 Translation taken from Pilikian (2009:377; my additions within parentheses); *Droṇaparvan* 48.31: *taṃ dṛṣṭvā patitaṃ bhūmau candrārkasadṛśadyutim / tāvakānāṃ parā prītiḥ pāṇḍūnāṃ cābhavad vyathā //.*

12 I translate ginintĕn as 'mashed', in view of my understanding of the verb as describing the final phase of the process of mutilation of Abhimanyu's body. The word seems to be attested only in the *Bhāratayuddha*, thus representing a *hapax legomenon*. OJED 516 reads *ginĕntĕn* in this passage, tentatively translating '(pf.) to slice?'. The word might actually be related to the verb *aṅgĕntaṅ*, which means, according to OJED 516, 'to pound (in a pounding-block)'..

13 Falk (1989:82) observes that not only does *soma* create wakefulness, but that it originally must have been offered to Indra during the night.

14 While the *soma* plant is often styled as a creeper in post-Vedic literature, this morphological feature is not pronounced expressly in the *Ṛg Veda*, the major source for our knowledge of the Vedic *soma* lore. So, for example, Padhy and Dash (2004:19) describe the Vedic *soma* as 'a creeping, somewhat twisting,

Sĕḍah's choice reflects the fact that *soma* too was styled in Java of the 12th century AD as a stimulant rather than a hallucinogen. Chewing of betel quid prevents sleep, and the same seems to be indicated by Vedic characteristics of the *soma* plant, which, according to Falk (1989:82), contributes to staying awake all the night.[15] Third, while the color of the *soma* juice is not a transparent issue, in some Sanskrit sources it is recognized as a hue of red, similar to the bright red color of betel juice.

The therapeutic and ritual properties of betel were widely known and appreciated in pre-modern Java. The leaf of betel vine is one of the three basic ingredients of a betel quid. Two other main ingredients of the quid are the 'nut'[16] of the Areca palm (*Areca catechu* L.) and slaked lime (calcium hydroxide).[17] The quid is chewed as a mild stimulant. While there are arguably problems regarding the comparability of different experiences, betel chewing results in physiological and psychosomatic responses similar to those associated with the consumption of the *soma* juice in the Sanskrit texts. As summarized neatly by Zumbroich (2007:90), betel chewers experience 'a sense of well-being, heightened alertness, a warm body sensation, improved digestion and increased stamina'. The interaction of the ingredients during the process of chewing results in a bright red-colored saliva, also called 'betel juice', not dissimilar in color and texture to blood. After mastication, most of the betel juice is spat out. This symbolism of red-colored betel juice is exploited by Mpu Sĕḍah in stanza 13.32, where the blood flowing out of Abhimanyu's crushed head is to the Javanese poet remindful of 'red spittle' (*hidu baṅ*). Mpu Sĕḍah has apparently considered the juice resulting from a mastication of betel quid to be a plausible (parallel) rendering of the juice obtained by pressing *soma* plants.

Betel plant is introduced into the passage which details the condition of Abhimanyu's dead body through an original metaphor. Masticated betel leaf is envisaged as sewala, which is apparently considered not to be the *soma* itself, but a plant sharing some of its qualities. Not considering its metaphorical connotations, the editor of the *Bhāratayuddha* has been perplexed by the meaning of the word *sewala* in this stanza, proposing a rather forced translation of the term as 'moss' (Supomo 1993:189). In his commentary to the text, however, Supomo (1993:269) admits that the exact meaning of *sewala* is 'far from certain'.

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semi-shrub with a series of leafless shoots, which contain an acidulous milky juice'. While many botanical identifications of the *soma* take the creeper-like character of the plant into account (for identifications as grape and hop vines, see Houben 2003), other scholars do not take this morphological characteristic into account (see, for example, Wasson 1972). The *Bhāratayuddha*, in any case, conceptualizes the *soma* as a creeper, and this accords with one major candidate for the Vedic *soma* plant, i.e. the East Indian vine, aptly known also as the 'Moon plant' (*Sarcostemma acidum* (Roxb.) Voigt), previously identified as *Sarcostemma brevistigma* (Wight & Arm). It is worth noting that the plant of immortality, fetched by Hanumān in order to revive slain simian warriors, is named in *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* 23.31 as 'the vine of the great cure' (*mahoṣadhilatā*). This plant too, then, appears to have been styled as a kind of creeper (*latā*).

15 Identifying the *soma* plant as a stimulant, and not a hallucinogen, Falk proceeds to single out *Ephedra sinensis* as the plant corresponding to the Vedic *soma*.

16 The so called 'nut' is technically not an actual nut, but a seed. This seed is primarily made up of reddish brown endosperm with dark waxy lines, and it is masticated after the process of de-husking and slicing. In this text, I prefer to follow a traditional designation and will speak of areca 'nuts'.

17 Slaked lime is added to the quid in order to reduce the astringency of the tannins and to help to release the alkaloids contained in the areca nut. The lime thus makes the betel quid both more palatable and physiologically more effective. Slaked lime is traditionally prepared in coastal areas by heating the shells of marine mollusks or coral. Lime, reacting with other ingredients, is also responsible for turning the saliva bright red.

Sewala, an Old Javanese rendering of the Sanskrit *śaivāla*, is arguably a difficult word.[18] OJED (1754) is perplexed by this term too, identifying *sewala* with '*Blyxa octandra*, a kind of duck-weed or green moss-like plant growing in pools'. Apparently, OJED derives this identification, as well as those of most other Sanskrit plant names, from Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.[19] In the Pandanus database of Indian plant names, *śaivāla* is also referred to *Blyxa octandra* (Roxb.), but it is confounded here with *jalanīlī*, and both names are referred as synonymous to *Ceratophyllum demersum* (L.).[20] Both *Blyxa octandra* (Roxb.) and *Ceratophullum demersum* (L.) are grass-like, free-floating aquatic plants, known in English as hornwort.[21] Balinese interlinear commentaries to Old Javanese texts, however, regularly gloss the term sewala with the word lumut (OJED 1754), and in several such texts *sewala* seems to designate a plant that is fully aquatic. On the contrary, the Old Javanese word *lumut* is generally used for diverse kinds of moss, lichen and possibly some ferns. It seems that the Sanskrit word *śaivāla*, originally designating a grass-like aquatic plant, has been subject to a semantic shift in Java and Bali when it started to designate rootless, entirely submerged species of aquatic moss. Some mosses are indeed adapted to an aquatic habitat, such as the 'Java moss' (*Taxiphyllum baribieri*), producing rhizoids, root-like structures which attach the moss to rocks or other objects. Clusters of moss plants then appear as if floating on the surface of the water.

After this excursus into the realm of botany, I would like to contextualize the symbolism of the *soma* plant for immortality as depicted in *Bhāratayuddha* 14.1. I propose that the word *sewala* is metaphorically used there for the masticated betel leaf, which in turn glosses an inherent 'crushed' *soma* plant of the Sanskrit *Droṇaparvan*. Designating probably several kinds of free-floating aquatic plants, *sewala* has reminded Mpu Sĕḍah of the green particles of masticated betel leaf 'floating' amidst red betel juice retained in a golden spittoon. While this image may arguably be unpleasant or even repelling to modern Western aesthetics, it was subjected to a qualitatively different assessment in pre-modern Java. Similar to the appreciation of black colored teeth that is stained by a habitual

18 There is at least one characteristic common both to the Vedic *soma* plant and *śaivāla*: both of them are supposed to grow in the mountains. In the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa*, Śaivāla designates also the name of a mountain. It is worth mentioning that betel plant, too, requires higher altitudes to grow successfully.

19 Monier-Williams (p. 1090) reads: '*śaivāla*, n. the Śaivala plant, MBh.; Hariv. &c.; m. N. of a mountain MārkP.; (pl.) of a people, MBh; VP.'. Present-day distribution of *Blyxa octandra* (Roxb.) is disjunct and it is not found in Indonesia, while it is reported from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea and Australia. Its close relative, *Blyxa aubertii* (Rich.), however, is known from Indonesia. Both of these plants grow in marshlands and rice-fields.

20 Pandanus electronic database of Indian plant names, http://iu.ff.cuni.cz/pandanus/database, accessed on 3.11.2012.

21 *Blyxa octandra* (Roxb.) actually grows fully submerged, with emergent flowers only. In this context, it is interesting to observe that the *Suśrutasaṃhitā*, which details diverse 'varieties' of the *soma* plant, reports that some of them grow in aquatic and semi-aquatic habitats in the Devasunda and Mānasa lakes in Kashmir. This is a marked departure from an original Vedic identification of *soma* as a plant growing exclusively in the mountains, suggesting that in the first centuries of the Common Era, at the latest, the soma could have been styled (also) as an aquatic plant. This may also show a possible direction of how *sewala* found its way into the Old Javanese *kakawin* as 'the' *soma* plant.

consumption of betel quid and considered a mark of beauty, the spittle of betel juice was held in high regard as a propitious matter.[22] To quote Rooney (1993:31):

> Betel spittle is considered especially powerful in dealing with illness. If transmitted by a medium, its ability to exorcize supernatural forces is unlimited. Gazing into a bowl of betel spittle, a medium chews a quid, and receives an omen. Then she sprinkles the juice of her quid over the body of a person who is ill.

Mpu Sĕḍah projects a similitude between the pounded *soma* plant and masticated betel leaf. The observation that the plant alluded here is indeed betel vine, is supported by several other facts. As already mentioned, blood flowing out of Abhimanyu's wounds is likened to *hidu baṅ* (red spittle), an apparent allusion to the bright red color of saliva, which is a typical consequence of chewing a betel quid. Another clue is the use of the term *tahas*. This word usually designates a decorative bowl, but here it is used more specifically for a spittoon, one of the implements employed in betel-chewing practices. OJED (1899) defines tahas as 'metal bowl or salver' and gives an example from the late *Kiduṅ Pamañcaṅah* (2.60), where a golden salver holds a pre-masticated betel quid.[23] This important identification says much about cultural, religious and social values attributed to betel chewing in pre-Islamic Java.

While the *soma* plant of Sanskrit literature used to be processed by pressing, the betel leaf is crushed by being masticated. The custom of chewing betel quid has its origin in island Southeast Asia, from where it spread to neighboring regions (Zumbroich 2007). Interestingly, neither areca nuts nor betel leaves, two of the three basic ingredients of betel quid, are mentioned in the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* or *Mahābhārata*,[24] which suggests that the habit was probably not yet common in India by the beginning of the first millennium AD (Mahdi 1998:404).[25] Around the first century AD, areca nut and betel leaf were integrated into the medical system of Āyurveda and regular chewing of the betel quid became a part of oral hygiene. The *Suśrutasaṃhitā* details the properties and benefits of areca nut and betel leaf in the Āyurvedic system.

Apart from its stimulative and healing effects, the betel quid was a lubricant of social life in pre-modern Southeast Asia, endowed with abundant cultural and religious connotations. Rooney (1993:12) observes a special connection between betel quid and the lunar calendar, another feature alluded in Abhimanyu's *soma*-betel symbolism:

22 Arguably less abhorrent to modern Western aesthetics, but still curious, wads of the half-masticated betel quid were passed freely from one person to another, particularly from man to woman in an act of courtship, as a sign of personal affection. Abhimanyu himself engages in such betel quid exchange with his lover, Kṣiti Sundarī, in the 12th century *kakawin Ghaṭotkacāśraya* by Mpu Panuluh, a co-author of the *Bhāratayuddha*.

23 Another attestation of *tampan* employed in betel-chewing practices is found in the *kiduṅ Harśawijaya* (1.73a).

24 The term *tāmbūlika* 'betel seller' is actually used in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* (2.90.23), in a variant reading (in place of a usual *prāvārika*, 'maker of upper garments') in Gorresio's edition of the Bengal recension. Zumbroich (2007:116), acknowledging a personal communication with Robert Goldman as his source, considers this interpolation to be 'of a relatively late date'.

25 However, both betel leaves and areca nuts are mentioned in the Sri Lankan chronicle *Dīpavaṃsa*, in a passage detailing events surrounding Aśoka's coronation in around 270 BC. The chronicle itself was composed around the 4th century AD. In the *Mahāvaṃsa*, another Sri Lankan chronicle, the first reference

> It is believed to facilitate contact with supernatural forces and is often used to exorcize spirits, particularly those associated with illness. In its symbolical role, it is present at nearly all religious ceremonies and festivals of the lunar calendar.

In addition to this symbolism, the very name of one of the authors of the *Bhāratayuddha*, Mpu Sĕḍah, is one of the terms (*sĕḍah*) denoting betel leaf.

On the basis of evidence gathered from Old Javanese *kakawin*s,[26] it may be argued that betel symbolism is deeply embedded in the local characterizations of the Indic character Abhimanyu. His sacrificial killing, likened to the pounding of the *soma* plant in the *Mahābhārata*, is depicted in the *Bhāratayuddha* through a comparison of Abhimanyu to a crushed (masticated) betel leaf.

RAṆAYAJÑA AND THE COOKING OF THE ENEMIES

Another theme found in the complex symbolism of Abhimanyu's death and his mutilated body is the motif of finely cut food ingredients. Abhimanyu's slashed body is likened in the *Bhāratayuddha* to a 'sliced cucumber"' (*cinacah* [...] *sahantimun*), which represents an interesting departure from the reading of a corresponding passage in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*. A suggested similitude between Abhimanyu's mutilated body, considered 'beautiful' by Mpu Sĕḍah,[27] and 'sliced cucumber' is striking and calls for an explanation. The motif of killed warriors equated with food preparations is not unique to the *Bhāratayuddha*; it is found in several other *kakawin* and seems to represent a literary reflection of typically Javanese martial imagination. It is never encountered in a similar context in the Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*.[28] In another passage of the *Bhāratayuddha* (27.5), Karṇa boasts that he will single-handedly kill all of the Pāṇḍawa warriors, namely:

to the practice of betel chewing is found in an event dated to the middle of the 2nd century BC., while the chronicle itself was composed only in the 5th century AD. (Zumbroich 2007:117).

26 Another interesting piece of evidence of the importance of betel symbolism in a literary figure of Abhimanyu is found in the *Ghaṭotkacāśraya,* in which Abhimanyu serves as a page (*dyah*) entrusted with carrying the betel set of his lord.

27 Mpu Sĕḍah describes Abhimanyu's mutilated body as 'beautiful' (*tuhun raras i patinira*) in stanza 13.35.

28 The only similar example of this literary motif is attested in Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* (3.54.22), in what Pollock (1991:23, n. 37) aptly characterizes as 'a scarcely figurative threat' addressed by Rāvana to Sītā: 'Listen to what I have to say, my lovely Maithilī: If within the space of twelve months you do not yield to me with a sweet smile, the cooks shall chop you into minced meat to my breakfast'. Both the context and the meaning of this interesting passage is, however, quite different from that found in the Old Javanese literary examples. The passage from Vālmīki's Sanskrit *Rāmāyaṇa* just quoted above testifies, albeit in a rather extreme manner, to the well-known fact that Rāvana was considered to be a human-eater. Dietary habits of the king of rākṣasas is detailed in several other passages; for example in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (5.11.11), where Hanumān, looking unsuccessfully for Sītā in Rāvaṇa's palace, expresses his fears that '[...] perhaps poor Sītā, cut off from her kin, was eaten by cruel Rāvaṇa as she attempted to defend her virtue' (Pollock 1991). On the contrary, Javanese poets use the motif of 'sliced food ingredients processed into a dish' exclusively in a martial context, and as will be seen, they ascribe a completely different meaning to this motif than does Vālmīki in his *Rāmāyaṇa*.

> [...] cut them to pieces like curry-meat, and reduce them to pulp like the heart of the banana trees.[29]

This passage is a part of an Old Javanese reflection of the famous dialogue between Karṇa and Śalya found in the *Karṇaparvan*, the third 'battle book' of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*. When Duryodhana asks Śalya to serve in a battle as Karṇa's charioteer, Śalya agrees only on the condition that Karṇa does not insult him. However, Karṇa who is famous for his bragging and narcisism, continues with his offensive speech, so that Śalya rebukes him, employing an imagery superficially similar to that encountered in Karṇa's own words:

> How could I not laugh at your boast to destroy such a valiant and fearsome enemy!
> How can that be true, for such an outcome is absurd. Indeed, it is you who will be cooked by Bhīma and Pārtha [...].
> And I will see them stirring [the soup of] your heart with their arrows, to be consumed by the tongue of the Death.
> O yes! Your body will surely become the crust of hell's cauldron later. There is no doubt about that.[30]

Śalya's words are clearly meant to question Karṇa's ability to kill the Pāṇḍawas as easily as he boasts to do. Even though fighting for the Korawas, Śalya actually sides with the Pāṇḍawas to whom he is related by Nakula and this ambivalent loyalty marks Śalya's actions in the course of the great war. The annihilation of enemies is conceptualized in the two passages in terms of 'cooking' and 'eating', reflecting the interesting fact that the Javanese conceived of battle and food preparation with a common set of words and concepts. Several correspondences are suggested between the act of killing (enemy) warriors and preparing food. Enemies are visualized as being processed into a dish (meat stew, dish of banana heart, soup) which is subsequently consumed by an adversary. I argue that what we encounter here is not simply one of many poetical metaphors found in the *kakawin*, but a literary reflection of the view that enemy warriors to be killed are conceived as ritual dishes to be offered at the sacrifice of *raṇayajña*, a well-known concept in the Old Javanese *kakawin* world.[31]

29 Translation taken from Supomo (1993:216); *Bhāratayuddha* 27.5b: *byaktan syuh lwir gilen de niṅ iṣu niyata yāpiṇḍa haryas rineñcĕm*. 'Heart of the banana trees' (*haryas*) is a common designation of the inner part of the banana pseudo-stem which consists of numerous layers of banana leaves. Until nowadays, Balinese prepare a vegetable dish called ares by boiling cut up parts of the banana pseudo-stem with abundant spices (Eiseman 1992:325).

30 Translation taken from Supomo (1993:216); *Bhāratayuddha* 27.7: *ndin ṅwaṅ tan guywa dentan paṅucap amburaṅ śatru śūrātirodra / ndin tuhwāpan hiwag ṅhiṅ juga kita liwĕtĕn de nikaṅ Bhīma Pārtha / ndak ton prāṇanta harwākĕna riṅ iṣu mĕnen bhuktin iṅ mṛtyujihwa / ḍöhḍöh byaktekuṅ aṅgan patĕmahana hitip niṅ kawah dlāha waswas //*. The topic of kin relationship between Śalya and Nakula is further elaborated in the Old Javanese *Bhāratayuddha* when Kṛṣṇa sends Nakula to persuade Śalya not to fight against the Pāṇḍawas, an action without a parallel in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* (Supomo 1993:35).

31 To define a Javanese pre-Islamic understanding of 'magic' is not an easy task. Contrary to the Modern Javanese word *sihir*, which is derived from Arabic, there is not a single term to designate a set of magical beliefs and practices in the Old Javanese. It seems, however, that the word *sulap* covers some of the magical

The symbolism of processed food, used in a literary context of warfare, may convey an archaic idea that harm could be done to an enemy by a mere act of simulation. By the 'law of similarity', defined in a classical way by Frazer (1890), actors infer that they can already secure victory over an enemy prior to a battle. Typically, an 'effigy' substitutive of an enemy is erected and destroyed in a ritual session. While *kakawin* do not supply direct evidence that such practices were conducted in pre-Islamic Java, the texts support a view that malicious 'black magic' practices of ritual destruction were conceptualized in Hindu Java as a part of the 'left current' division of the Tantras.[32] A correspondence was drawn between killed enemy warriors and the dishes prepared in a way suggestive of combat (such as pounding, slicing, stirring).[33] It is highly significant that in the texts, this kind of food symbolism is encountered exclusively in the context of pre-battle preparations, finalized on the night prior to the march for an encounter with enemy. On that very night, as testified by poets, several ritually-marked activities have were conducted, some of them described in vivid detail in the texts. It is probably not by chance that a colloquial register of Old Javanese predominates in these sections, adding a feel of liveliness to the scenes described. Moreover, what is common to all the passages that contain this distinct food symbolism is the utmost and unbridled aggression in which these statements are made.

I argue that whenever Javanese poets employ in their texts this motif of killed warriors, they do so actually in order to disqualify malicious, power-oriented practices of Tantric Siddhas and hence to stigmatize the persons to whom such religious views and practices were allusively ascribed. In fact, vicious practices of Tantric magicians, aimed at securing a victory in war, are mentioned already in the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*. In an extensive description of Hanumān's search for Sītā inside Rāwaṇa's residence on Laṅkā, detailed in the *sarga* 8, numerous religious activities of rākṣasas are described. In the sequence of stanzas 29–31 of this *sarga*, which has no close parallel in the Sanskrit prototype of the *kakawin*, i.e. Bhaṭṭi's *Rāvaṇavadha*, demon-ascetics (*wiku rākṣasa*) engage in gruesome religious practices, identified by Hooykaas (1958:265) as 'Tantric orgies practiced during poet's own time'. These practices of subjugation, immobilization and annihilation,

practices in vogue in pre-Islamic Java, while in Modern Javanese *sulap* lost its magical connotations and designates mainly simple tricks performed in order to amuse the audience. Acri (2011:80) argues persuasively that one of the words which could be interpreted as 'magic' or 'magical skills', among other of its meanings, is *guṇa*, a term used regularly in Sanskrit-Old Javanese *tutur*s.

32 Ritual practices of 'black magic' aimed at securing a victory in battle are detailed in the Sanskrit *Vīṇāśikhatantra*, a scripture which is a part of the left-current (*vāmaśrotas*) of Mantramārga Śaivism, and which has survived in only a single Nepalese manuscript. While the *vāmaśrotas* seem to have disappeared from South Asia at an early date, according to Goudriaan and Gupta (1981:16), they were practiced for some time in Cambodia and pre-Islamic Java, on the basis that a *śāstra* called *Viṇāśikha* is mentioned in the Sanskrit Sdok Kak Thom inscription from Cambodia, and two stanzas of the *Vīṇāśikhatantra* have been identified among Balinese Sanskrit stutis (see Goudriaan 1981 and Acri 2006:118).

33 An interesting parallel to the symbolism of chopped food ingredients, apparently conceptualized here from the point of view of a court lady attendant, is found in the *Rāmāyaṇa kakawin* 17.85. Here, Trijatā, who has just returned from her mission to the mount Suwela, reports to desperate Sītā that Rāma is still alive, camping on the side of a mountain, where he makes preparations to attack Rāwaṇa's fort at Laṅkā. Trijatā praises the strength of the simian army, and, in order to belittle a military potential of Rāwaṇa's demon troops, she likens the enemy to a 'face-cream' (*kasay*), which could easily be ground to powder (*musuh kadi kasay hiḍĕpnya pususĕn ya riṅ kṣaṇika ya*). The poet gives us a court lady's perspective and interpretation of an apparently popular symbolism in which destroyed enemies were likened to crushed substances.

censured as *aji śāstra wĕgig* in *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 8.31, are to be best understood as acts of Tantric sorcery (*ṣaṭkarmāṇi*). It is significant that these malicious acts are attributed in the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* only to *rākṣasa* demons:

> There was a hall, spacious indeed,
> It was there that he [Hanūmān] headed to enter;
> Demon-ascetics were filling the place,
> Magicians applying their mantras, casting sleep-causing spells.
>
> Others were uttering the *bajrakāya* formulas,
> Abhicāra incantations, which make the enemy to lose consciousness.
> Spread over the floor, [*rākṣasa*s] clapped their hands, grinning,
> Performing a terrifying yoga, roaring with jeering laughter.[34]

As in many other *kakawin*s, literary characters and places could be identified with historical personages and localities of pre-Islamic Java. It is significant that in his narrative of Laṅkā an anonymous author seems to describe scenes of urban life of 9th century Java. As persuasively argued by Hooykaas (1956:298), Rāwaṇa's *rākṣasa* soldiers represent the subjects of a Buddhist king Bālaputra of the Śailendra line, who was defeated by the Śaiva ruler Rakai Pikatan of the Sañjaya line; the fortress of Laṅkā would thus allude to a stronghold and residence of a defeated Buddhist monarch, situated probably on the Ratu Baka promontory in the vicinity of Prambanan.[35] Literary political allegory is well-attested both in the Old Javanese *kakawin* and in the Sanskrit *kāvya*. In his edition of the *Araṇyakāṇḍa* of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, Pollock (1991:75) points at an apparent similarity drawn between the world of men of Ayodhyā and the literary conceptualization of the world of *rākṣasa*s inhabiting Laṅkā:

> Unlike the monsters of the forest, then, the *rākṣasa*s of Laṅkā inhabit a sociopolitical domain fully comparable to that of the human community of Ayodhyā and familiar to the poem's audiences at large.

I argue that as a part of a process called by Pollock (1996:27) 'epicization of a regional political space', political opponents were stigmatized by their allegorical identification with *rākṣasa*s and other literary personages of adharmic qualities. Abhorrent religious practices detailed in the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, stigmatized by Hooykaas (1958:265) as 'drunken ribaldry and heretical disputations', form a part of an enemy's morale profile as constructed by this narrative strategy. Once again, we encounter allusions to the practices of

34 *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 8.31 (Soewito Santoso 1980:207): *wwara śāla yekana wiśāla tĕmĕn / ya tikā paran nira masuk ta sira / wiku rākṣasekana isinya kabeh / mamasaṅ-masaṅ* [ṅ] *aji sirĕp si sulap // aji bajrakāya pinasaṅnya waneh / abhiśāra mona hana tāji tiḍĕm / makupik makuṇḍah aṅadĕg mrĕgigih / atirodra yoga sabhayāṅikikan //.* An application of mantras in order to harm an enemy is mentioned also in *Bhomāntaka* (82.3); during the night devoted to war preparations, 'worship and meditation with the application of mantras would be the means of destroying the enemy' (Teeuw and Robson 2005:449). For an interesting discussion on the 13th century inscriptional evidence of Tantric practices aimed at securing a victory in war, see Hunter (2007:35–6).

35 A detailed discussion of these extended metaphors may be found in Aichele (1969) and Acri (2010, 2011).

Tantric sorcery in allegorical parts of *sarga* 24 and 25 of the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*.[36]

The idea of 'ritually consumed warriors' was restyled in the Old Javanese *kakawin* using the concept of 'fiery energy' and the related notion of the capacity of warriors to draw upon this kind of energy. Known in Sanskrit textual sources as *tejas*, this subtle energy substance is eminently transferable and through appropriate mantras could be united with a regular weapon, preferably an arrow, producing a weapon of a completely new quality.[37] In the Old Javanese literature, however, the Sanskrit word *tejas* is used rarely to designate the fiery energy of divine weapons; Gonda (1973:517) observes that the meaning of the Old Javanese *teja* is wider. The term commonly used in the Javanese context in to denote fiery subtle energy was *śakti*. In the texts, a very important role is ascribed to an amount of this energy amassed by individual warriors. *Śakti* could be channeled not only via supernatural weapons but could also be stored in items of a warrior's apparel, such as belts, jackets, armor and earrings. Whitaker (2000:98) suggests that one of the principles governing the way the fiery energy operates is that superior *tejas* can absorb and neutralize an inferior source, but a superior source can also repel the energy altogether. In *kakawin*s, poets employ the idea of 'fiery energy' to express the understanding that (enemy) warriors could be 'consumed' by more powerful adversaries. This is the reason why Śalya could counter Karṇa's boastful words in *Bhāratayuddha* 27.5 by using the imagery of food: '[...] it is you who will be eaten by Bhīma and Pārtha [...] I will see them stir [the soup of] your heart with their arrows'. The same principle could be detected in yet another image employed by Mpu Sĕḍah in the same textual sequence: the image of flying moths consumed by the flame of fire. In order to question Karṇa's ability to kill the Pāṇḍawas,

36 In the long textual sequence of *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 24.87–126), a peaceful and harmonious life of plants and animals alludes a condition of revitalized Laṅkā, where Wibhīṣaṇa reigns over his *rākṣasa* subjects after the death of Rāwaṇa. The whole section, which represents a substantial departure from Bhaṭṭi's *Rāvaṇavadha*, is a multi-leveled allegory, in which non-human figures impersonate religious characters, and, possibly, some political figures of the 9th century Java. It is important, however, to realize that these humanized figures represent *rākṣasa*s, former subjects of Rāwaṇa, converted now from warriors to non-violent characters. Acri (2010:494) has suggested that the critique behind the allusive descriptions of some bird characters is directed 'at groups of birds that seem to follow the lifestyle and the weird ascetic observances of wandering Śaiva adepts, such as the Pāśupatas and Kāpālikas' and that 'the opposition in the text is between the mainstream householder-oriented or moderate monastic form of religiosity and the extreme, and often power-oriented, asceticism of the Tantric Siddhas'. In stanza 24.112, the important character of the *widu*, who is connected with 'magical practices' as well as staged performances (*widu mawayaṅ kom guṇya saguṇa*), is allegorically represented by the *kuwoṅ* bird. Aichele (1969:134), based on his improved reading of an allegorical passage in the Old Javanese *Nītisāra* (4.8), was the first who interpreted the figure of *widu* as an exorcist-magician. Recently, in his complex analysis of the *kuwoṅ* bird, Acri (2011:80) has associated the figure of the *widu* with a Śaiva ascetic, claiming that *widu*'s 'magical skills' represent 'a typical motif in Sanskrit literature, where Śaiva ascetics of the Pāśupata and Kāpālika sects are made object of satire and described as a class of evil magicians'. As an integration and fine-tuning of Acri's hypothesis, I suggest that the whole sequence, thoroughly informed by a martial terminology, should be read as an allegory of warfare, in which birds and animals represent *rākṣasa* soldiers, and malicious religious practices aimed at securing a victory in war are ascribed to the character of the *kuwoṅ* bird. Due to constraints of space I cannot explore this suggestion, but intend to do so in a future paper. Interestingly, White (2000:35) notes that in a case of absence of state patronage, the deployment of *ṣaṭkarmāṇi* ritual technologies 'often amounts to little more than black magic'; this condition seems to be alluded in the case of the figure of *widu* / *kuwoṅ* in the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*.

37 For more information on the Old Javanese literary concept of 'fiery energy' and the symbolism connected with it, see Jakl (2012:50–54).

Śalya urges Karṇa to prove his martial strength, and to demonstrate the amount of *śakti* energy he has amassed:

> Enough of your talk! Fight your enemy now without delay!
> I am eager to see them killed by you, as moths fallen into a fire![38]

The Pāṇḍawas could be killed by Karṇa as easily as moths could be consumed by flames of fire, but only if Karṇa's *śakti* were stronger than the *śakti* of his opponents. This is exactly what Śalya doubts in the *Bhāratayuddha* when he replies to boastful Karṇa. Comparatively weak warriors of inferior *śakti* (Korawas, represented here by Karṇa) are perceived as moths consumed by fire, representing here fiery energy of superior warriors (Pāṇḍawas, whose case is represented by Śalya). It is apparent that Javanese poets aim to educate their audience by disqualifying traditional magical practices as inefficient or ridiculous by linking them with morally compromised, or openly demonic, literary characters. Remarkably, a narrative strategy employed by Mpu Sĕḍah in this *kakawin* court text assumes a surprising voice of 'modernity'.

A very complex literary image in which *raṇayajña* ritual oblations are equated with particular food preparations is found in *Bhomāntaka* (or *Bhomakāwya*) 80.1–2, an anonymous *kakawin* composed probably in the second half of the 12th century.[39] The two stanzas are part of a passage in which Bhoma, the king of demons, receives a report from his emissaries that Kṛṣṇa and his Yadu warriors, together with soldiers of allied kings, are prepared to attack Prāgjyotiṣa, Bhoma's fortress and residence. Red with anger, Bhoma delivers a bragging speech:

> Who is fitting to be an adversary for me? Krĕṣṇa and Baladewa will be as dangerous as a ball of rice in my hand,
> And in particular the other kings, beginning with Pārtha, I will stir like boiled vegetables.
> I with my two hands will make porridge of his palace, and without help I will set it on the stove;
> My syrup will be the blood of my enemies, and I will spice it with my bare hands.
> And I will be the one to pound up the enemies' heads, so their brains will be the coconut milk.
> I deserve to eat my fill of fame—I am obsessed with winning merit on the field of battle![40]

38 Translation taken from Supomo (1993:216); *Bhāratayuddha* 27.6cd: *haywākweh de niṅ ojar palaga juga lawan teku śatrunta śīghra / agyānoneṅ pĕjah lwir śalabha tumĕḍun iṅ bahni ta ṅwaṅ tĕkapta //*. The word *śalabha* designates, both in Sanskrit and Old Javanese, any kind of 'moth'. It is interesting that in most other instances of the same context, a more common image of swarming ants (*laru-laru* or *suluṅ-suluṅ*) is employed in Old Javanese literature.

39 This dating was suggested recently by the two editors of the text; previously, the *Bhomāntaka* was dated to the 13th century (Teeuw and Robson 2005:48).

40 Translation,—done with a remarkable sense for the details of food symbolism—taken from Teeuw and Robson (2005:431); *Bhomāntaka* 80.1–2: *syapa teka yogya lawanaṅkwa / krĕṣṇa baladewa wiṣṭya kĕpĕla / ṅuniweh tikaṅ ratu makādi pārtha raměsĕṅkwa tulya kuluban // aku kārwa hasta mubure puranya tak*

Bhoma styles himself in this speech as both a sacrificer and receiver of the sacrifice. On the contrary, warriors fighting for Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa himself, are perceived as sacrificial victims—a wishful thinking which will not come true as Bhoma ends up killed at what turns out to be his own sacrifice. In fact, Bhoma resumes a position occupied by Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata*—that of an enjoyer (*bhoktṛ*) of the sacrifice ('I deserve to eat my fill of fame').[41] As in the case of Karṇa in the *Bhāratayuddha*, Bhoma's speech is situated in the pre-battle context and delivered in a state of extreme wrath. The whole passage is centered upon a very complex imagery of sacrificial dishes and could be understood as representing a version of the literary motif of raṇayajña, reconceptualized from the point of view assumed by Bhoma. The aim of this passage is to question the (insufficient) *śakti* of the warriors fighting for Kṛṣṇa ('who is fitting to be an adversary to me?'). Particularly interesting are the correspondences drawn between the 'standard' oblations of the *raṇayajña* (flesh of dead warriors, blood and brains) and their victual counterparts specified by Bhoma. These represent dishes and drinks which were consumed as daily fares in pre-modern Java (balls of rice, vegetable stew, porridge, palm sugar syrup and coconut milk). Interestingly, all of the terms used to designate these dishes and drinks are purely Javanese words, suggesting that this travesty of food is meant as a critique of ritual practices of some local, Javanese communities, allegorically symbolized by Bhoma and his *rākṣasa* subjects. Supporting evidence for this hypothesis is found in *Bhomāntaka* 79.11, where the author identifies Prāgjyotiṣa as the 'chief of the non-Āryan regions' (*ādīkaṅ anāryadeśa*) where 'nobody observes the distinction of caste' (*tanora pwa ya warṇabheda*).

Bhoma's opponents are envisaged as victims of the 'battle sacrifice' and at the same time, in an act of conscious inversion of food symbolism, belittled as ridiculously easy to overpower and 'consumed' as the dishes and drinks listed by Bhoma. There is an interesting graduation of suggested correspondences in this sequence, adding to the dramatic effect of this powerfully worded passage. First, the two most important actors, Kṛṣṇa and his brother Baladewa, both of them incarnations of the gods, are likened to a mere ball of rice (*kěpěl*). There is a two-fold symbolism in this striking image; while making a ball of sticky rice is one of the possible ways of how to eat cooked or steamed rice, *kěpěl* conveys at the same time an idea of a sacrificial rice ball, which in Sanskrit is called a *piṇḍa*. The *piṇḍa* is a ball of cooked rice, mixed with other ingredients such as sesame seeds, milk and honey, offered to dead ancestors in the course of the *śraddhā* funeral ceremony as a transitional food mediating between death and birth (Doniger O'Flaherty 1980:6). Arguably, Kṛṣṇa and Baladewa are imagined as two balls of sacrificial rice, held by Bhoma in hands and served for his breakfast in an act alluding to the *raṇayajña* or 'battle sacrifice'. The same motif is attested already in *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 13.34, where Rāwaṇa's patih Prahasta, boasting This status of an enjoyer of the sacrifice is most graphically demonstrated in the *Mahābhārata* (11.26–9), where Kṛṣṇa shows himself to Arjuna in his terrible cosmic form devouring the killed warriors of both the armies (see Feller 2004:280). to be capable of devouring even the moon, threatens that if Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and their simian soldiers

arowaṅāṅhapuyana / gulanaṅku rāhnya ripu ni ṅhulun rahatanaṅkwa riṅ karatala / kalawan ya deṅku śirah iṅ musuh rěměk utěknya santěna nikā / saphalanya ku n kīrtya moha maharěp yaśeṅ pabharatan //.

41 This status of an enjoyer of the sacrifice is most graphically demonstrated in the *Mahābhārata* (11.26–9), where Kṛṣṇa shows himself to Arjuna in his terrible cosmic form devouring the killed warriors of both the armies (see Feller 2004:280).

come to Laṅkā, he would 'eat them for breakfast' (*kĕpĕl-kĕpĕl tulya nikā yadin tĕkā*).[42] The literary symbolism of the piṇḍa rice ball offerings found in the *Bhomāntaka* suggests that the killing of Kṛṣṇa and Baladewa is styled as a sacrificial act. We know that in India *piṇḍa* rice balls were occasionally used in Tantric rituals, especially those associated with the terrifying form of goddess Durgā.[43]

Being second in rank and significance after Kṛṣṇa and Baladewa, allied kings fighting for the Pāṇḍawas are threatened to be 'stirred like boiled vegetables' (*raměsĕṅkwa tulya kuluban*). Bhoma explicitly mentions Arjuna, who will ultimately kill him in a duel fight, as the first among these kings. While I follow here an excellent translation of this passage by Teeuw and Robson (2005), it is worth noting that Old Javanese *kuluban* conveys a wider range of meaning than does its Modern Javanese counterpart which restricts the interpretation of this dish to boiled green vegetables.[44] On the contrary, the Old Javanese kuluban covers several kinds of stews prepared by boiling meat and non-meat ingredients in a cauldron, as the word figures in descriptions of *rākṣasa*s' feasting which is generally not associated with the consumption of vegetables. Considering the well-established literary theme of *rākṣasa* demons' fondness for animal and human meat, it is probable that the kuluban in the *Bhomāntaka* refers to a meat stew.[45] I argue that the author has consciously explored a conceptual tension between a common, vegetarian *kuluban* and its meat version, associated with demons' dietary habits, in order to emphasize the triviality of killing Arjuna and the allied kings fighting for Kṛṣṇa. This is also the reason why I follow Teeuw and Robson's translation of *kuluban* as 'boiled vegetables' rather than translating it

42 The interpretation of *kĕpĕl-kĕpĕl* in *Rāmāyaṇa kakawin* 13.34 as 'breakfast' goes back to Juynboll's *Kawi-Balinesche Glossarium op het Oudjavaansche Rāmāyaṇa* published in 1902. Santoso (1980:338) accepted Juynboll's interpretation, translating the line in question as follows: 'When they come, they will merely become my breakfast'. In his commentary to the text, Santoso (1980:758) speculated that 'for Prahasta, a breakfast is certainly less than lunch or dinner, at least that seems to have been in the mind of the Javanese writer of the RK'. While we don't know much about the way 'breakfast', the first meal of the day, was conceptualized in pre-Islamic Java (*sarapan*, a modern Javanese word for breakfast is a later Arabic loanword), it seems to me that Prahasta's ritual 'breakfast' is styled rather on the motif of Kumbhakarṇa's gargantuan meal, devoured by Rāwaṇa's giant brother after being woken up from his deep sleep. Called 'breakfast' (*kĕpĕ-kĕpĕl*), the meal is described in some detail in *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 22.10–12; it consisted of rice 'in millions of rice-steamers' (*iwu-iwu lakṣa koṭi kukusan*) and a 'bush-meat' stew prepared of lions and elephants (*kĕla-kĕla māṅsa siṅha haliman*). It is interesting to notice that in some Sundanese areas of Western Java, the word *kĕpĕl* still designates a morning meal consisting of balls of rice, served either simply with salt, or with diverse accompanying dishes.

43 Doniger O'Flaherty (1980:9) gives a striking example how in India the funeral *piṇḍa* has been adapted in a Tantric *pūjā* to the goddess Kālī: 'In this ceremony, the male and female participants take in their left hands balls of food (mixed with the four Tantric "m"s) called *piṇḍa*s, and they eat them in an action referred to as *tarpaṇa* ("satisfaction", the term also used to refer to the offerings of *piṇḍa*s to the ancestors). This inversion is introduced not in order to change re-death into re-birth but in order to reverse death altogether, to change it into immortality through the secret ritual'.

44 See, for example, Robson and Wibisono (2002:409), who translate Modern Javanese *kuluban* as 'briefly boiled green vegetables'.

45 *Rākṣasa*s partaking on *kuluban* prepared apparently from human flesh were observed by Hanumān on Laṅkā in *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 8.33. Demons, consuming *kuluban* prepared from the meat of boar, are described in the *Abhimanyuwiwāha* (8.6). Interestingly, the carnivorous dietary regime of the *kuwoṅ*, ascribed to this bird by Acri (2011:60) and identified by him with the character of *widu*, accords well with the proposed demonic affiliations of the *widu* magician, be he either a Śaiva ascetic or a Tantric Siddha sorcerer.

as 'meat stew'. The act of cooking the kuluban stew (*ramĕsĕngkwa tulya kuluban*) conveys an understanding that bodies of enemies would be dismembered, hacked into small parts, in a process similar to cutting and slicing ingredients for a stew.

Third, Bhoma threatens to raze Kṛṣṇa's palace to the ground without any assistance, setting it on fire as a dish of porridge placed on the stove. A literary image of a destroyed building likened to rice porridge (*bubur*) is common in the Old Javanese literature, testifying to the fact that the Javanese perceived the act of physical demolition of a stone or brick building in terms of cooking porridge (*amubur*). Both of these acts include an application of fire and heat, while bricks and stones were possibly perceived in this imagery as rice grains. At the same time, the symbolism of a demolished palace found in the *Bhomāntaka* refers to one of the stock figures of the trope of *raṇayajña* where destroyed palaces are conceptualized as sacrificial vessels. In the powerfully worded introductory maṅgala of *Bhāratayuddha* 1.1, the hero devoting himself to the performance of the sacrifice on the battlefield (*ayajña riṅ samara*) uses 'the burning palaces of his adversaries' (*nagara niṅ musuh gĕsĕṅ*) as his sacrificial vessels (*kuṇḍanira*). In my view, however, the most important link in *Bhomāntaka* 80.2 is that between a destroyed palace, the seat of Kṛṣṇa's royal power or *śrī*, turned into porridge that is 'consumed' by Bhoma. In this literary symbolism, Bhoma styles himself as the figure of Kāla who devours everything. Bubur porridge figures among sacrificial dishes in several other *kakawin*; an oblation of rice porridge (*caru bubur*) is mentioned, for example, in the 15th century *Śiwarātrikalpa*.[46] Specified here as 'porridge cooked with syrup' (*bubur gula liwĕt*), it also helps to identify the 'syrup' (*gulan*) mentioned in the next line of the *Bhomāntaka* passage as an ingredient of Bhoma's ritual dish of porridge.

Fourth, Bhoma indeed swears to prepare his 'syrup' (*gulan*) from the blood of killed enemies. As noticed by the editors of the *Bhomāntaka*, the kind of syrup alluded in this passage was made of red sugar (Teeuw and Robson 2005:645). The syrup in question can be probably identified as a sweet, thick, red-colored treacle made from palm sugar, which was often flavored with various spices and kept in bamboo tubes to ferment, as attested in several *kakawin*s.[47] Apparently, such syrupy, mildly alcoholic mixture was one of the major ingredients of (ceremonial) porridge.[48] It seems that a correspondence is drawn between the blood and fermented syrup made from the sap of sugar palm. Both of these substances are of bright red color and both of them seem to have been considered intoxicating (*awĕrö*) in pre-Islamic Java.[49] It is tempting to speculate that a red-coloured fer-

46 In the *Śiwarātrikalpa* (37.4) it is Śiwa himself who orders to prepare a kind of porridge as an oblation used during the 'Night of Śiwa': 'And as offering milk porridge and molasses porridge, mixed with green peas' (Teeuw et al. 1969:141).

47 For spiced syrup see, for example, *Sumanasāntaka* 49.5; for the syrup kept in bamboo tubes, see *Pārthayajña* 18.7

48 Until nowadays, sweet ceremonial porridge, called *bubur sungsum* in Modern Javanese, is prepared from rice flour and palm sugar. It is interesting to realize that sungsum designates 'bone marrow', a possible reflection of an earlier Javanese ritual preparation of porridge mixed with marrow.

49 Intoxicating quality of blood is mentioned, for example, in *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 8.34, a passage where feasting *rākṣasa* demons devour raw meat and drink blood copiously. The author informs us that 'drunken blood made them wild and elated' (*ininumnya rāh wija-wijah mawĕrö*). The theme is associated in the Old Javanese literature with the drinking habits of demonic characters, used sometimes in a moralizing context, as in the Buddhist *kakawin Kuñjarakarṇa* (8.3). In a vivid description, servants of Yama, who are likened to Bhairawa, get drunk on the blood of tormented sinners: '[...] like Bhairawa they roared with

mented palm syrup could have functioned as a substitute of blood in some Tantric rites. Blood-drinking was actually a part of a ritual practice of some Tantric sects in India, such as the Śaiva Kāpālikas, and it may have found its literary reflection in the image of Bhoma imbibing the blood of killed enemies. Now, it is a well-known fact that blood symbolism has a particularly rich tradition in the Old Javanese literary imagination; especially in descriptions of battles, the symbolism of blood-spilling is omnipresent. War scenes abound in gruesome imagery of killed warriors, their mangled bodies forming mountains of flesh amidst the pools of blood. In the *kakawin* poetry, the spilling of blood has nearly always positive connotations, which accords well with an idea that battle represents a form of sacrifice (*raṇayajña*). A literary motif of blood-drinking is attested already in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*, particularly in the famous, though ambiguous act of Bhīma imbibing the blood of dying Duhśāsana in the course of a 'great battle'. The ritual dimension of Bhīma's act is clearly emphasized in the *Udyogaparvan* by Karṇa, who informs Kṛṣṇa that 'when the son of Pāṇḍu drinks the blood of Duhśāsana, howling his roars, then the *Soma* will have been duly drunk' (Garbutt 2008:343). In this passage, blood is styled as *soma*, a life-giving substance drunk by a victorious Pāṇḍava in the course of a battle-sacrifice. A similar symbolism of *soma* and blood is attested in *Bhomāntaka* 13.33; the blood gushing out of Abhimanyu's body is likened to a 'liquid sugar' (*gula drawa*). As I have demonstrated in the first section of this article, the act of killing Abhimanyu is conceptualized in the *Bhāratayuddha* as a masticating of the betel leaf. Further, I argue that in order to emphasize the sacrificial aspects of Abhimanyu's death, Mpu Sĕḍah draws a correspondence between 'blood-spilling' and the process of tapping palm sap—a substance used to produce 'palm sugar', the syrup mentioned in the *Bhomāntaka*. On a symbolic plane, the incisions made into the trunk of a tree are similar to the wounds in Abhimanyu's slashed body.

Fifth, brains envisaged as spilling out of crushed heads of Bhoma's enemies are equated with coconut milk (*santĕn*). In this imagery, a correspondence seems to be drawn between the milk, a traditional ingredient of *caru* (an oblation prepared by boiling milk and butter with other substances, see OJED 310), and 'coconut milk', which was obtained by pressing coconut meat. In a similar image found in *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 22.53, mashed brains are styled, along with blood, as 'a perfect offering dish'. Arguably, a literary motif of *raṇayajña* was expanded in the *Bhomāntaka* to include a Tantric food symbolism. A traditional theme of killed warriors, envisaged as victims of the 'battle-sacrifice', has been restyled in the *kakawin* to encompass symbolic correspondences drawn between these human victims and regular food items. In order to understand the meaning of this theme, it is important to realize that the *Bhomāntaka*, as well as many other *kakawin*s, contain numerous elements of political allegory. Teew and Robson (2005:48) argue persuasively that a detailed description of the court of Kṛṣṇa and Baladewa in Canto 1 is an allusion to the Javanese court at Kaḍiri of the 12th century. They have also suggested that a royal lineage of Bhoma listed in the canto 2 supports a view that the *Bhomāntaka* was composed as an allegory of local political power (2005:54). I argue that the food symbolism found in Bhoma's speech is a literary reflection of a view that enemies could be harmed by an imagined act of their annihilation, conceptualized in the *Bhomāntaka* as a consumption of sacrificial dishes. In the *Bhomāntaka*, as well as in the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, such practices

a terrible noise, intoxicated and daubed with bright blood they danced fast and furious [...]' (Teeuw and Robson 1981:95).

are ascribed to *rākṣasa*s and other adharma characters. In view of the fact that *Bhomāntaka* was conceived as a political allegory, it is safe to assume that the author of the text, through allusion, criticizes practices of Tantric Siddhas who were serving a political opponent of the poet's patron. This (unknown) historical personage is identified in the text with Bhoma, the king of *rākṣasa*s.

While malicious, power-oriented ritual acts of Siddhas are subjected to a sustained critique, Tantric views of projecting a similitude between killed warriors and 'destroyed' food items are ascribed in the texts even to some dharmic personages. Now, I believe that this approach could be applied with success to achieve a better understanding of several *kakawin* passages in which this symbolism seems to play a pivotal role. For instance, in the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* the poet uses the symbolism of Hanumān's plunder of Rāwaṇa's pleasure garden on Laṅkā. In an act that could be understood as foreshadowing the physical destruction of Rāwaṇa's residence in Laṅkā and the annihilation of his *rākṣasa* soldiery, Hanumān kills many of the garden's animal inhabitants and uproots numerous precious trees, knocking off their ripe fruits. In a suggestive description, found in *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 9.57, the poet describes the fate of humanized, mutilated fruits, which lie now on the ground, in a fashion similar to decapitated heads of young soldiers, scattered on the battlefield:

> The beauty [of the garden] was spoilt, all the animals living in the garden were pitiable, as well as all of the fruit, its sweetness wasted, as it fell down to the ground, split, trodden [by Hanumān]. Its juice came out, as if the fruit was sadly weeping because it was misshapen, squashed and squeezed.[50]

I argue that the poet's elaboration of the fruit imagery found in this passage, attested in neither Vālmīki's text nor Bhaṭṭi's *Rāvaṇavadha*, suggests that the Javanese author wished to explore the literary potential of the anthropomorphic symbolism of fruits lying in a pitiable state on the ground, trodden (*kāmbah*) by an elated simian hero, with the juice of the fruits squashed like the blood seeping out of the bodies of slain warriors. It is interesting to quote Feller (2004:272, n. 37) on a parallel understanding of this phenomenon in the case of the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*:

> Not only do the dead lie on the ground: it also seems to be true that whoever lies on the ground is as good as dead. This is especially noticeable in the case of Duryodhana, who, though suffering only from broken thighs, is left lying on the ground and considered as good as dead. No one attempts to rescue him from his fate.

While Hanumān acts here as a plunderer of the garden, in another scene—which appears to be informed by the symbolism of smashed fruits—simian warriors dine on fruits in a fashion similar to pre-battle feasts described in detail in several *kakawin*s. Stanza 16.46 of

50 *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 9.57: […] r*ūmnya rūkṣāpasah kāsyasih satwa sakwehnyan uṅgwiṅ taman maṅkana wwa-wwahan kapwa heman manisnyenigū saṅ hanūmān babar yyan tibā riṅ lĕmah kapwa kāmbah humīs duhnya duhkānaṅis lwirnya yāpan salah lwir rĕmĕk yārĕmuk* […].

the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* depicts how the tired, thirsty and hungry monkeys reach Mount Suwela, finding it covered with abundant fruit trees. Eagerly, they eat their fill of diverse fruits, which are carefully listed by the author of the text. While monkeys quarrel over the food, many of the fruits fall down, get smashed, and their juice is splattered around (*phala makabarĕbĕl ya kontal waneh / hana rĕmĕk arĕmuk wiśīrṇnān sirat*). It is important to notice that this episode happens prior to the battle of Laṅkā and therefore structurally parallel to pre-battle feasts. An analogous fruit symbolism is attested in *Bhomāntaka* 96.12, where the decapitated heads of enemies are considered to be the 'fruits of battle'. In *Bhomāntaka* 99.22, an interesting correspondence is drawn between the act of killing enemies and the 'fruit harvest'.

The motif of smashed and deformed fruits is not exclusive to the genre of the Old Javanese *kakawin* poetry. In the *Pararaton*, a chronicle composed in the late 15th century in Middle Javanese prose, there is an interesting passage describing a sojourn of Ken Angrok, founder of the Singhasari dynasty (1222–1292), at the village of Sagĕnggĕng. During Ken Angrok's stay at the house of a local religious teacher, numerous fruit bats emerge from his forehead at night, destroying the jambu fruits in the garden of his master. The scene is placed just prior to the commencement of Ken Angrok's military career as a bandit and robber so that there seems to be a link between mysterious annihilation of the jambu fruits and future killing exploits of this historical figure.

RITUAL MEAT CONSUMPTION AND HARMING OF AN ENEMY

In pre-Islamic Java, meat-eating was closely related with festive occasions and was a marker of social and religious status. Reid (1988:32) argues that in pre-modern Southeast Asia generally, the consumption of meat always had a ritual character because of its close association with the sacrifice of animal life. It is apparent that *kakawin*s are selective in the way they reflect eating habits of pre-Islamic Javanese population. It seems that, as highly formalized texts, *kakawin*s even help to codify dietary habits of some religious groups.[51] It is important to recognize how much the texts manipulate and often parody dietary codes adapted from Sanskrit prescriptive works and how much presentation of food in the *kakawin* reflects concerns of particular writers. The texts provide evidence that very diverse kinds of meat were available to a pre-Islamic Javanese population, even though the texts specify that consumption of some of these meats was not permissible to higher-ranking members of the court milieu. It is interesting to observe that several *kakawin* detail specific dietary habits of soldiers during the night before a march to battle, when an abundant consumption of meat and alcohol stood at the centre of what seems to have been a period of ritual preparations for war. The dishes served to soldiers at this occasion are very similar to the fares preferred in *kakawin*s by *rākṣasa* demons. In Old Javanese literature, *rākṣasa*s are consistently conceptualized as prominent meat-eaters; an abundant

51 For instance, Acri (2011:59–60) has pointed at passages of the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* where the carnivorous diet of the 'fierce' *kuwoṅ*, which allegorically represents a *widu* ascetic character, is opposed to the vegetarian diet of other birds, which arguably represent different categories of ascetics. Acri notes that in the Javano-Balinese Śaiva *tutur Ṛṣiśāsana* the meat of carnivorous 'fierce' birds (*krūrapakṣi*)—including the *kuwoṅ*—is explicitly forbidden to ascetics belonging to the Śaivasiddhānta (*saṅ siddhānta* or *siddhāntabrata*).

consumption of flesh of wild beasts, such as lions and elephants, alongside with feasting on human meat (*naramāṅsa*), appears to have been the main part of their diet. In a previously mentioned textual sequence from *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 8.32–34, which specifies the religious practices of Rāwaṇa's *rākṣasa* subjects, the dietary regime of demon warriors is described with abundance of details:

> A troop of rākṣasa soldiers were holding a market,
> Human flesh is what they always eat;
> Drunken blood made them wild and elated,
> Squabbling with one another, all together.
>
> Rākṣasas were tireless in their drinking;
> Whatever they ate was either raw or cooked.
> They cut off a thigh [from a human corpse], tearing off the flesh,
> Cooking it with spices and vegetables, some made into a stew.
>
> They drank wildly from a large cauldron
> Full of cooked fat mixed with blood;
> They drank it up all, in one swallow,
> And when became drunk they would talk noisily.[52]

The ribaldry of unruly *rākṣasa* soldiers, stuffing themselves with copious servings of meat and blood, assumes in this passage a nearly carnivalesque dimension. However, the whole sequence should not be read as a simple travesty of food preparation. As reported above (p. 12), the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* has been identified as an early example of a political allegory in which Rāwaṇa, a demon king of Laṅkā, represents the historical figure of Bālaputra, a defeated Buddhist adversary of the Śaiva ruler Rakai Pikatan. This famous Javanese king has been allegorically identified with the literary character of Rāma. Since the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* would represent a literary reflection of socio-political and religious conditions of 9th century Java, the passage quoted above may be understood as a hyperbolical critique of some dietary habits ascribed in the text to Rāwaṇa's *rākṣasa* warriors, who allegorically represent soldiers fighting for Bālaputra. It is significant that also in this passage an abundant consumption of meat dishes takes place precisely at the moment when *rākṣasa* soldiers finalize their battle preparations, being well aware of the fact that Rāma with his simian soldiers are in search of Sītā, who is held captive at Laṅkā.

Evidence of a ritual significance of some of the meat dishes mentioned in the passage of the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* analyzed above is found, for example, in the already quoted *Bhomāntaka* 27.5, where Karṇa swears to kill single-handedly all of the Pāṇḍawa warriors and to 'cut them to pieces like curry-meat'. It would be interesting to ascertain the precise referent of, and significance attached to, this particular dish. 'Curry-meat' mentioned in

52 *Kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 8.32–34: *hana len sagulma ya watĕk mapĕkĕn / naramāṅsa yeka pinaṅanya lanā / ininumnya rāh wija-wijah mawĕrö / patukar-tukarnya inucapnya kabeh // hana teka rākṣasa bĕtah maṅinum / amaṅan tasak-mĕtah asiṅ sahanā / manĕwĕr pupū ya manisig ya dagiṅ / amĕcĕl-mĕcĕl hana kulub-kuluban // ininumnya rodra sakawah ya magöṅ / ibĕkan wuduk kinĕla len rudhira / ininum hĕlĕd pisan ikaṅ sakawah / mawĕrö kabeh ya paḍa wāk prakaṭa //.*

this passage is a very tentative English rendering of the enigmatic Old Javanese word gilen (see OJED 525); the only other known occurrence of this rare lexical item, this time in a form *gilay-gilayan*, is attested in the 'feasting passage' in *Bhomāntaka* 81.38. Here, Kṛṣṇa's Yadu warriors, along with the soldiers of the allied kings fighting for Kṛṣṇa, participate in a pre-battle feast in which diverse meat preparations are served, many of which are apparently uncommon, yet ritually significant dishes. The author informs us that 'the various curries were so extraordinary that no one dared touch them'.[53] One could only speculate what kind of flesh went into the dish of gilen from which even weathered elite soldiers, partaking of numerous other listed sorts of meat, abstained in this preparation. In view of the first occurrence of gilen in *Bhomāntaka* 27.5, where Karṇa swears to prepare gilen by cutting the bodies of the Pāṇḍawas, it is not impossible that the term constitutes a taboo word for a preparation of human flesh. However removed these 'ritual meals' may appear from the warfare practices of pre-modern Java, it is important to realize that ritual cannibalism was still an integral part of Javanese warfare culture in the 17th century, in a period when most, if not all, of the Javanese were at least nominally Muslims. In 1679, for example, when the rebel Trunajaya was finally tracked and stabbed to death by the King Amangkurat I himself, all high-ranking Javanese officials were required to take part in what seems to have been a gloomy ritual. Trunajaya's body was hacked by numerous slashes of the kris dagger and the officials were asked to partake in eating the liver, while Trunajaya's head was severed and placed beneath the king's throne (Ricklefs 1993:57).

The 'feasting passage' of the *Bhomāntaka* is among the most extensive, and most interesting, food discourses constructed around the theme of commensality to be found in Old Javanese *kakawin* literature. While in most texts the literary diners give us small snippets discretely dropped here and there, in *Bhomāntaka* 81.34–49 a communal pre-battle feasting is described in an impressive sequence of sixteen stanzas. Teeuw and Robson, the editors of this anonymous, possibly 12th century *kakawin*, consider this part—which is rich in assonances and puns—to be one of the most obscure passages in the whole corpus of Old Javanese literature (2005:647).[54] However, along with the description of a royal banquet in *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 26.23–28, it is also the most detailed account of specific, predominantly meat dishes, served and consumed at festive occasions in pre-Islamic Java. The feast in the *Bhomāntaka* is a part of pre-battle preparations taking place in Kṛṣṇa's fortress on the Rewataka mountain. First, Yadu soldiers take numerous measures in order to meet an attack of Bhoma and his *rākṣasa* soldiers, checking and mending their weapons and performing ritual war dances.[55] Part of the military exercise was the act of 'spearing an assembled enemy' (*anunduk i musuh atumaṅ*), which seems to be a reference

53 Translation from Teeuw and Robson (2005:445); *Bhomāntaka* 81.3: e*ndah ikaṅ gilay-gilayan olih inilag-ilagan*.

54 Entirely analogous considerations can be made with respect to the previously mentioned 'allegorical' sections of *sarga*s 24, 24 and 26 of *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*, which have been studied by Hooykaas (1958), Aichele (1969), and Acri (2010, 2011).

55 It seems that soldiers, apart from carrying their own weapons, were issued some offensive and defensive articles from their lord's armory, and mended and cleaned their arms prior to their departure for war; *Bhomāntaka* 81.27 specifies that '[the soldiers] did their best to clean the weapons, so that they looked fine'. It is possible that the phrase 'to clean the weapons' (*amahayu sañjata*) indicates not only a process of physical upkeep, but also a procedure in which weapons were charged by mantras, believed to ensure a success in the war. Ritual war dances, accompanied by a drumming of slave soldiers, is described in stanza 81.26, and a performance with an offensive shield (*akañjar-kañjar*) is described in detail in stanza 81.31.

to the act of ritually harming an enemy's effigy, a 'magical' procedure aimed at enfeebling the adversaries.[56] Then, a lavish feast was held for the assembled soldiers:

> When the troops had gone to rest, night approached and the sun set.
> It was almost the eighth hour[57] when they set about holding a drinking party.
> Nobody failed to do justice to the feast among the champions adorned with flowers,
> And the dishes were piled so high that those who saw them were repelled.[58]

Some of the diners seem to have been repelled by the mere sight of the dishes. Teeuw and Robson (2005:647) argue that the word 'repelled' (*apurik*) used in this passage is an indication of the fact that the food was aimed for a lower-class consumption This observation is, however, almost certainly wrong, as the core of participating diners is represented by the elite Yadu *kṣatriya* warriors. In order to understand this problem I would like to call attention to one interesting detail: the term used to designate dishes mentioned in this stanza is tambul. This word is not a general term for any dish or meal, but it is used in Old Javanese in a more restricted sense to designate delicacies to accompany alcoholic drinks. Furthermore, many of the dishes enumerated in the lengthy list which follows are not regular, daily fares but rather special treats prepared for an occasion of ritual eating. In the whole 'feasting passage', at least ninety-eight dishes are enumerated, the majority of which are meat preparations. It is significant that there are hardly any vegetable dishes in the list, which seems to reflect the warfare context of the whole sequence. In Old Javanese *kakawin*s, non-meat food based on tubers, vegetables, and fruit, is typically linked with hermits and their self-sufficient communities.[59] On the contrary, in Canto 81 of the *Bhomāntaka* we have an incredibly rich account of dishes prepared from lungs, hearts, intestines, tripe and marrow. The section provides a rare insight into the cultural concepts of food consumed by warriors in preparation for battle; food is used in this passage as both a real and

56 Compare also Teeuw and Robson's (2005:441) interpretation of line 81.27d: 'The whole content of the square was a means of scaring and making their adversaries powerless'.

57 The 'eighth hour' in pre-Islamic Java corresponded to 6 p.m. in current standard time calculation. This would mean that the feast commenced at dusk, which at the tropical latitude of Java starts around 6 p.m, with slight differences throughout the year. For details on Javanese time reckoning, see Zoetmulder (1974).

58 Translation taken from Teeuw and Robson (2005:443); *Bhomāntaka* 81.34: *sampun aḍeñ tikaṅ bala těkaṅ wĕñi rawi sumurup / meh tumibāṅ ḍawuh wwalu paḍālĕkas aṅinum-inum / tan hana tan paṅiṅwani rikaṅ juru-juru masĕkar / tambul ikāṅulumpuk apurik taṅ umulat iriya //.*

59 Dietary regimes of Javanese pre-Islamic religious communities seem to represent an exception to a common pattern in which meat was relatively common and held in high regard. It would be probably wrong to extrapolate modern dietary patterns of Javanese peasants, with their heavy reliance on rice and vegetables, back on the conditions of pre-Islamic Java. We could suppose that in sparsely populated pre-modern Java, with abundant resources and few dietary taboos, peasants enjoyed a much more varied diet then their modern descendants. It seems that predominantly, or purely, vegetarian dietary regime was a matter of a conscious choice rather than necessity caused by limited resources or other inhibiting factors. In this sense, Old Javanese literature helps to codify a view according to which the members of some religious communities refrained from most kinds of meat, relying in their diet heavily on tubers, vegetables and fruit (compare above, fn. 51).

a metaphorical subject. I argue that what actually concerns the author of the text are not the commensality aspects of the feast, but rather the detailed description of the dishes themselves. Even though parts of the passage are far from clear, what is common among the different dishes is the similarity between the way food is prepared and the act of killing enemies in a battle. Apart from the important fact that numerous animals had to be slaughtered first, a correspondence is drawn between the dishes consisting of chopped and sliced food ingredients and enemy soldiers stabbed to death. In other words, a literary, highly formalized theme of a pitched battle, foregrounding the motif of total annihilation of enemy soldiers with their bodily parts hacked to pieces, is likened to a pre-battle consumption of dishes consisting of diversely prepared meat. It is interesting to observe that many of the named dishes contain meat chopped into small morsels,[60] in some cases mixed with blood, fat, and marrow. This mix is detailed, for example, in stanzas 81.35–36:

> The dishes consisted of salted eggs, pork necks in small cuts,
> And *paběkan* cooked in hot sauce, licin chopped to small pieces,
> [...] bloody mince of tripe with diverse red salads,
> Heart, its drops not cold, and sizzling, drippling of turtle.
>
> And their stews consisted of *lańsuban* with marrow and tongue in rolls,
> In addition with steamed mushrooms and crisp flakes of jellyfish,
> Liver with rump accompanied by roasted lungs,
> Breastbone, intestines on skewers, and hot fatty kebabs.[61]

Along with the dishes made from the meat of domestic animals, preparations include meat of wild birds (thrush, *pěruk*, *pupuk*, wild pigeon, cuckoo), fish (for example *kyaṅ*, *layur*, swordfish), prawns, crabs and shrimps. Still, other listed dishes consist of mussels (*kraṅ*), snails (*salisur, kul, teruṅ*) and whip scorpions (*katuṅgyaṅ*).[62] The exact meaning of some of the named dishes is not known and we could only speculate if, for example, *lańsuban* of the *Bhomāntaka* was exactly the same dish as its modern counterpart.[63] It is

60 This is in clear opposition to meat dishes served at post-battle or other 'peaceful' festive occasions, where the served preparations seem to consist mainly of large joints of meat, or entire animals, which were often spit-roasted; see, for example, *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa* 26.24.

61 *Bhomāntaka* 81.35–36: *tambul ikāntigāgarĕm ikaṅ katupaṅ ayuṅ-ayuṅ / mwaṅ paběkan pĕcĕl-pĕcĕl ikaṅ licin acĕka-cĕkah / rumbah abāṅ babat saha lalab nikana mira-mirah / twas tan atis titisnya pĕlĕm iṅ barabas aṅĕṅĕsi // len kulubanya lańsuban asumsum ilat asuhunan / membuh atumtumaṅ jamu-jamur kurupuk uwur-uwur / limpa lawan lamuṅsir adulur paru-paru sinaṅa / taṅkas usus tinunduk awuduk jata-jatahan aṅöt //.*

62 While scholars habitually translate Old Javanese *katuṅgyaṅ* as 'scorpion' or 'wood scorpion', the word is actually an early form of *ketoṅgeṅ*, a term which designates 'whip scorpion' in Modern Javanese. These imposing, robust tropical predators are also arachnids, forming their own biological order *Uropygi*. Having no venom gland and no sting, the most characteristic features of the whip scorpions are their impressive raptorial pedipalps and a thin caudal appendage ('whip').

63 OJED 983, for one, bases its definition of the Old Javanese *lańsuban* on a much later, 19th century Balinese usage of the word attested in the Tuuk's *Kawi-Balineesch-Nederlandsch Woordenbook*. OJED interprets the term as 'a delicacy consisting of *ĕmba*, *limo* and *santĕn* in a *cobek* to which the blood of animal being slaughtered is added; eaten raw'. However, marrow, an ingredient never used in a modern Balinese version of the dish, seems to have been an important part of the *lańsuban* of the *Bhomāntaka*. It is possible that numerous other dishes named in the Old Javanese literature were not prepared in exactly the same

also worth noting that many of the named dishes are known only from this passage of the *Bhomāntaka* and from a description of a royal feast in *sarga* 26 of the *kakawin Rāmāyaṇa*.

While we will never know whether any communal feasting in pre-Islamic Java encompassed all the dishes listed in Canto 81, the richness of meat preparations accompanying alcohol drinks in this passage is truly remarkable. This suggests that the poet's mention of soldiers being 'repelled' by the sight of piled dishes in stanza 81.34 cannot be regarded as an indication that the food was aimed for consumption by members of the low classes, as suggested by Teeuw and Robson. Considering the apparent Tantric elements of the motif of *raṇayajña* in *Bhomāntaka* 80.1–2, i.e. in the Canto directly preceding the passage discussed above, I propose that 'piled dishes' could be seen as a metaphor for mutilated bodies of dead *rākṣasa* soldiers.[64] It is tempting to speculate that a martial context of communal consumption of food prepared from the meat of slaughtered animals reflects a view that victory could be secured prior to a battle by partaking on the flesh and blood of slaughtered sacrificial animals, which are envisaged on a ritual level as killed enemies. In this connection, it is of some interest that the vocabulary used in the description of food in stanza 81 of the *Bhomāntaka* includes several important terms used also in descriptions of battles.[65]

It is necessary, however, to point out that the complex symbolism of meat consumption is not limited to the theme of ritual and magical manipulations. In my view, by aggregating as many sorts of dishes as possible in one coherent textual sequence, the author strives to foreground two other major aspects connected with the feasting in pre-Islamic Java.[66] First, the availability of such a wide range of dishes emphasizes the secular power of a king, the ultimate organizer of a banquet, over the resources of fields, woods, rivers and oceans and hence the economic might of the poet's own patron—who is allegorically identified in the *Bhomāntaka* with the epic character Kṛṣṇa. This literary 'display' also partially helps to explain the liking of Javanese poets for 'lists', whether related to food items or not. Second, in the theme of communal consumption of alcoholic drinks and meat dishes, the text introduces an element of conviviality, which is very important in forging cohesion among the soldiers who were brought along by the lords allied with the king waging a war. Third, meat consumption was believed to impart on warriors some desirable qualities ascribed to animals served at the feast. For instance, *Bhomāntaka* 81.38 remarks that consumption of fish guts results in sharper eyesight. Elements of sympathetic magic, meant to fortify the warrior's spirit and senses, are well-discernible throughout the whole 'feasting passage' of Canto 81.

way, and with the same ingredients, as their modern Javanese or Balinese counterparts are prepared. Thus, most of the glosses provided by OJED could be spurious. See also my fn. 44 and 45 above on the Old and Modern Javanese usage of the term *kuluban*.

64 I am not able to ascertain how important in this literary metaphor is the fact that *rākṣasa*s can habitually assume any form at will. Diverse species of killed animals would thus represent various groups of *rākṣasa* soldiers fighting for Rāwaṇa. .

65 In a similar fashion, a previously described ritual act of 'spearing an assembled enemy' (*anunduk i musuh atumaṅ*) uses the terms attested again in the feasting passage in a description of skewers prepared from 'speared' intestines (*usus tinunduk*).

66 Parallel cases of this strategy of enumerating dish items in one long list are found in the descriptions of royal feasts in the *Rāmāyaṇa Kakawin* and the *Deśawarṇana*.

CONCLUSION

The literary imagery of killed warriors being likened to chopped food ingredients, attested in several Old Javanese *kakawin* court poems, reflects the interesting fact that pre-Islamic Javanese conceived of battle and the preparation of food through a common set of ideas and concepts. The rich symbolism of this theme originates in the belief that battle represents a kind of offering conducted on the battlefield (*raṇayajña*), a concept fully developed in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata*. Having analyzed in detail the striking imagery constructed around the theme of Abhimanyu's ritual death in the *Bhāratayuddha*, I have argued that the Sanskritic image of the pressed *soma* plant, used in the *Mahābhārata* to describe the mutilated body of Abhimanyu, has been replaced in the Old Javanese text by the image of a masticated betel leaf. Used locally as part of a betel quid, a well-known mild intoxicant, betel vine was apparently perceived as sharing some of the properties ascribed to the enigmatic *soma* plant. The plant's visualization as a creeper in the 12th century *Bhāratayuddha* makes an interesting contribution to the discussion of historical changes in the identity of the *soma* plant in both South and Southeast Asia.

In the second part of this article I have argued that Javanese poets elaborated the concept of raṇayajña by restyling a traditional literary model in the framework of Tantric religious views, drawing complex correspondences between killed enemy warriors, standard ritual offerings, and regular food items. The theme represents a literary reflection of the idea that harm could be done to an enemy by a mere act of simulation. In the texts, such views are ascribed only to the figures of very powerful warriors, mainly *rākṣasa*s and other characters representing *adharma*. I have offered the hypothesis that the religious symbolism of the trope was employed as a part of a narrative strategy aimed at criticizing views and practices of power-oriented Tantric Siddhas.

Finally, I have analyzed several passages detailing yet another facet of the food symbolism found in a martial context of Old Javanese *kakawin* poems. Using the extensive evidence provided by *Bhomāntaka* 81.34–49, I have discussed the symbolic meanings ascribed to dishes consumed by warriors in pre-battle feasts and, on account of their being detailed in several other *kakawin*s, I have suggested to interpret them as ritual affairs rather than trivial occasions aimed at displaying secular power. I have argued that, on the plane of ritual symbolism, dishes prepared from the chopped meat of animals, birds and fish reflect the archaic idea that the slaughter (and a subsequent consumption) of animals is an imitative action of killing enemy soldiers in an approaching battle.

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