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Nipah or Gebang?

A Philological and Codicological Study Based on Sources from West Java

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Abstract

This article takes up the question of writing supports, the physical media on which texts were recorded on the island of Java before paper and printing were introduced, with special focus on the western region and the Old Sundanese tradition. In the past, two types of indigenous writing materials prepared from the leaves of palm trees were identified, one known among scholars in the Dutch tradition as '*nipah*', the other as '*lontar*'. While *lontar* is a common, widely used designation for the type of palm-leaf writing material used in the vast majority of surviving manuscripts, the *nipah* is rare and not commonly thought of as a writing material outside of scholarly circles. In an effort to understand the place of *nipah* in the tradition, the author turns to descriptions of writing materials in old written as well as oral sources and concludes that the terminology used there is at odds with the accepted idea that the second, rare type of leaf used in the palm leaf manuscript tradition came from the *nipah* palm. Instead, it was prepared from another palm species called *gebang*. At the same time, the author provides new insight into indigenous conceptualizations that differentiate the types of texts recorded on *lontar* and *gebang* materials.

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Keywords

palm leaf manuscripts – West Java – *nipah* – *gebang* – Old Sundanese

It is widely accepted and regularly repeated among scholars that there are two types of palm leaves that were historically used as writing supports in manuscripts from the Indonesian archipelago: leaves of the sugar, or toddy, palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) and those of the nipa palm (*Nypa fruticans*). These palms and their leaves are known as *lontar* and *nipah* respectively. These two types of leaves can easily be distinguished by the naked eye: the latter are thinner and stiffer, and they are of a lighter colour than the former. The manner of inscribing text on these two sorts of leaves is also different: *lontar* are inscribed through a process of scratching or incising, while *nipah* are written upon directly using black ink.

In contrast to *lontar*-leaf manuscripts, which make up the vast majority of all known palm leaf manuscripts from Lombok to Sumatra, use of the *nipah* leaf as writing support has been the subject of only limited codicological research, receiving almost no attention in the literature (Van der Molen 1983:88). The only testimony to the use of *nipah* leaves for writing material is De Clercq (1927, as quoted in Van der Molen 1983:89), who states that he heard that formerly, in the hinterlands of South Sumatra, and perhaps up to the time of his report, *nipah* were used for writing ephemeral love letters. Beyond this, the literature is silent on the characteristics of this rare writing material. There are, to be sure, a small number of articles or catalogue notes that discuss *nipah*, but they are limited to the investigation of available *nipah* manuscripts; the writing support is in such sources categorized as *nipah* without further question. The processing and preparation of *nipah* leaves for writing also remains an uninvestigated question, as does their use.

The first notice mentioning the existence of manuscripts written on palm leaves from the Priangan area was published by Netscher (1853:474), although he still designated the writing material of the *Arjunawiwāha* codex (later acquired by the Bataviaasch Genootschap [hereafter BG] with accession number L 641) as *lontarblad* (*lontar* leaf). Holle was the first to use the term *nipah* in 1862 (*NBG* 1, 1862–1863:14; Van Lennep 1969:16).

Five years later Holle (1867) described three *nipah* leaf manuscripts donated by Raden Saleh.¹ Holle identified these three manuscripts as MSS A, B, and C,

¹ Raden Saleh's gift in 1866 totaled 38 manuscripts (*NBG* 5, 1867:155), but Cohen Stuart (1872)

and it can be determined that MS A is now catalogued as PNRI number L 632 (*Kabuyutan Galuhguni*); MS B is L 630 (*Sañ Hyañ Siksa Kandari Karāsian*), while MS C is number L 631 (*Chandakarāṇa*)² (Holle 1867:452–64).³

But the discussion which touches most directly upon the use of *nipah* leaf as a writing medium is the general sketch given by Holle in the introduction to his *Tabel van Oud- en Nieuw-Indische alphabetten* (1882), a work on palaeography that makes use of epigraphic sources as well as later records on organic materials. There are three important things to note from Holle's study: (1) the sites where *nipah* manuscripts were collected; (2) the writing implements used to inscribe them; and (3) the style of script and other aspects of palaeography. Holle states that most *nipah* manuscripts originated in West Java, with a small number also acquired from the hermit-scholar collections in the Merapi-Merbabu mountain region of Central Java. With regards to writing implements, he says that *nipah* manuscripts were inscribed using a type of ink fabricated from the *nagasari* plant (cobra's saffron, *Mesua ferrea*) and *damar sela* resin (Sundanese, *harupat*). In relation to the writing itself, Holle states that the letters inscribed on the *nipah* were in a quadratic Kawi script. He also provides a table of characters drawn from several *nipah* manuscripts found in West Java, that is, in Talaga, Cirebon, and Ciburuy (1882:7–8, 17, 25–6).

A few other investigations of *nipah* manuscripts by scholars of subsequent generations also need to be mentioned here. Among them is the promising investigation by Van Lennep in her 1969 undergraduate thesis done at Sydney University. Her research is important because it notes details of the original acquisition of *nipah* manuscripts by the BG, and takes a different look at aspects

only recorded 35 of them. The three manuscripts not noted by Cohen Stuart were all made from *nipah* leaves. This is rather surprising recalling that Holle 1867 had already provided descriptions of them. See also Van Lennep 1969:11.

- 2 A complete edition of this manuscript is available in Lokesh Chandra 1995. See also Appendix 1 of this article.
- 3 A quick word on the fraught matter of spelling in this article. In order to avoid confusion due to variation in orthography in quotes from various printed and hand-written sources in three languages (Sundanese, Old Sundanese, and Old Javanese), all quotes from older literary sources have been standardized according to the system used in Zoetmulder's *Old Javanese–English dictionary* (OJED) (1982), with slight changes as follows: the *e-pepet* is rendered as *a*, not *ě*, while *ḥ* becomes *ḥ̣*. Furthermore, because the orthographic system used in Old Sundanese manuscripts does not distinguish between the vowels *a* and *eu*, it is not necessary nor even, in my opinion, desirable to distinguish between the two in transcription. I have therefore used only the character *a* where modern orthography distinguishes *e* and *eu*. All quotes from *pantun* have been standardized according to Modern Sundanese spelling as used in the *Kamus umum basa Sunda* (Panitia Kamus Sunda 1976).

of *nipah*. Van Lennep also hypothesizes that the BG's trove of *nipah* manuscripts was part of a royal manuscript collection of the Pajajaran Kingdom in West Java which, when under threat due to the rise of Islam in the sixteenth century, was removed to (or hidden in) the surrounding mountains, such as Mt Cikuray near Garut (Van Lennep 1969:29–33).

Another important codicological contribution is Van der Molen's careful physical examination (1983:90–3) of one particular *nipah* manuscript containing a *Kuñjarakarna* text (LOR 2266), edited in his Leiden doctoral thesis. Through meticulous attention to small details he was able to observe traces of a press or pressure device in the form of marginal lines—one on the right, one on the left, and two in the centre of the leaves—sometimes quite clear, other times faint. Observations on the distance between these lines, measured to the millimetre, indicated that the processing of leaves for use as writing supports was a precision craft. Following Grader (1941:25), who established a relationship between the variability of dimensions of manuscripts and the use of different tools by different artisans, Van der Molen (1983:91) arrived at the hypothesis that there are two possibilities related to such variability. If tools or equipment are the source of variation, then indications regarding the identity of workshops can be derived from manuscript features such as length, breadth, distance between holes, and distance from holes to leaf-edge. If the type of leaf is the most significant variable, then measurements can be the same over a wide area.

The most recent study of interest for our investigation is Aciri's (2011a) investigation of the *Dharma Pātañjala*, an Old Javanese Shaivite text. This wide-ranging study includes identification of nearly every known *nipah* manuscript. The specific *Dharma Pātañjala* text Aciri focused on was found in a manuscript from the Merapi-Merbabu area, not West Java, where most *nipah* manuscripts originated. With respect to the place where the manuscript was found, Aciri suggested that there may once have been a relationship between scriptoria in West Java and the manuscript repositories of the Central Javanese massif. It is possible that several *nipah* manuscripts from West Java could have made their way to Merapi-Merbabu some time before the middle of the eighteenth century, and from there ended up in the great Windu Sono collection of Merapi-Merbabu manuscripts that was later transferred into the possession of the BG. Cultural ties between these two centres of literary production might have led to the exchange of manuscripts in the past (Aciri 2011a:44–7).⁴ This completes the sur-

4 On the Merapi-Merbabu scriptoria, see Wiryamartana 1993. The relationship of those scriptoria with West Java was indirectly referred to by Bujangga Manik, a sixteenth-century Hindu-

vey of principal sources on manuscripts hitherto identified as being inscribed on so-called *nipah* leaves.

Among the studies mentioned above, only those of Holle will continue to retain our attention in this article, for Holle was the first to identify the writing medium that is the focus of our attention here as *nipah* and to furnish codicological explanations about both the material and the utensils used to write on it.

It is unclear on what basis Holle arrived at this identification, as he mentions no source. There seem to be two possibilities: either Holle himself established this botanical identification (with or without the help of an anonymous botanist), or he obtained this information from his local contacts in West Java, where he lived. There is something to be said for the first possibility, because we find that Kern wrote, just a few years later: ‘according to the opinion of the botanists it is palm leaf, I take it to be very thin bark’ (*NBG* 25, 1887: 179; Van Lennep 1969:16). The second possibility also makes sense, as the word *nipah* had already been recorded in the Sundanese dictionaries that date from the same period (Rigg 1862:s.v.; Geerdink 1875:s.v.), and was almost certainly known to Holle’s informants as some kind of palm tree.⁵

But we must remember that Holle’s explanations date to a time when, as reported by Netscher (1853), the practice of writing on *nipah* leaves was no longer a living tradition. For this reason, we may ask ourselves whether the identification received from an informant was merely based on the physical appearance of the leaves, or whether the informant was actually familiar with the use of the same leaves as reported from Sumatra by De Clercq a few decades later (1927). We may indeed ask ourselves whether Holle’s identification can be accepted at all. In this article I will propose a new identification of this type of palm leaf used as writing material, using sources that were not used by Holle in determining his identification.

Sundanese pilgrim who visited Damalung (an old name for Mt Merbabu) to study there (Noorduyn 1982). Damalung is also mentioned in the *Sri Ajñāna* (ll. 45–53, Noorduyn and Teeuw 2006) as the name of a place where a heavenly protagonist was exiled to earth in punishment for his sins.

- 5 One of Holle’s most important informants was his friend Muhammad Musa, a religious leader (*penghulu besar*) from Garut and an important figure for Sundanese literature in his time (see Moriyama 2005:100–42). One example of the important role that Musa played as an informant for Holle is the fact that in his study of the Batu Tulis inscription at Bogor, Holle refers to the authority of his friend when he translates the word *ñusuk* found in this inscription with the verb ‘to establish’: ‘Volgens den Panghoeloe van Garoet wordt het Soendasche njoesoek nu nog wel eens in de beteekenis van een dorp of stad stichten gebruikt’ (Holle 1869:485).

Nipah Manuscripts

The total number of *nipah* manuscripts is a tiny fraction of those written on *lontar*. When all *nipah* manuscripts in Indonesian and European collections are added up, they number only 29 out of the many thousands of Indonesian palm leaf manuscripts in existence. At least 20 of these 29 manuscripts are in the collection of the Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia (National Library of Indonesia; hereafter PNRI) in Jakarta;⁶ three are in the Kabuyutan (hermitage) of Ciburuy, Garut;⁷ and a single manuscript is in the Sri Baduga Museum at Bandung.⁸ In Europe there are at least five such manuscripts: two in the library of Leiden University,⁹ one at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (French National Library) in Paris,¹⁰ one at the Staatsbibliothek (State Library) in Berlin,¹¹ and one at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.¹² Others may exist, but they have not yet been detected or described.

Although there are a few exceptions, nearly all *nipah* manuscripts have been found in West Java, as indicated in the institutional records on their acquisition history. The origins of the *nipah* manuscripts at the PNRI are indicative. Manuscripts L 374 and L 630–632 were obtained from the Galuh area of East Priangan by the well-known Javanese artist and cultural figure Raden Saleh

6 Consult Holil and Gunawan's study (2010) on pre-Islamic, West Javanese manuscripts (including so-called *nipah* manuscripts in Old Javanese) in the collection of the PNRI.

7 Acri and Darsa 2009 initially identified four *nipah* manuscripts from Kabuyutan Ciburuy in Garut, in addition to 23 *lontar* manuscripts kept in the same location. But based on more recent data, it appears that there are only three *nipah* and 24 *lontar* manuscripts in the Kabuyutan Ciburuy. I would like to thank Andrea Acri for this information (private email communication, 19 March 2013), and for his permission to include the list of manuscripts in appendix 2 to this article.

8 A manuscript titled *Saṅ Hyaṅ Raga Dewata*, MS 07.106 (Darsa and Ekadjati 2004).

9 The manuscript mentioned earlier (LOR 2266, containing a text of the *Kuṅjarakarna*) and LOR 2267, containing the *Tiga Jñana* (Pigeaud 1968:94).

10 Manuscript no. Mal. Pol. 161 (Cabaton 1912:254). In Cabaton's catalogue this manuscript is not given a title, but Acri (2011a:645) has identified it as containing a text of the *Saṅ Hyaṅ Hayu*. Several other manuscripts with the same title are found in the collection of the PNRI (L 634, L 637, L 638); an edition of *Saṅ Hyaṅ Hayu* based only on PNRI L 634 and L 637 has been provided by Darsa 1998.

11 The manuscript is titled *Dharma Pātañjala*, Cod. Schoemann I-21 (Pigeaud 1975:111–2). An edition of this manuscript has been offered by Acri 2011a.

12 Manuscript titled *Rasa Carita*, MS Jav.b.1; a portion of this manuscript was photocopied, transliterated, and annotated by Voorhoeve and Soegiarto, and is available as item LOR 8515 in the Leiden collection (Ricklefs and Voorhoeve 1977:177; see also Pigeaud 1968:479).



FIGURE 1 'Nipah' Manuscripts. a. Arjunawiwāha (Old Javanese, 1334 CE, cod. PNRI L 641); b. Sañ Hyañ Hayu (Old Javanese, 1523 CE, cod. PNRI L 634); c. Sañ Hyañ Siksa Kandañ Karāsian (Old Sundanese, 1518 CE, cod. PNRI L 630). NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA.

(Cohen Stuart 1872; Holle 1867); manuscripts L 633–642 were acquired by the *bupati* of Bandung from near Cilegon, Garut (Netscher 1853; Krom 1914:71); L 643 originated from Talaga, Cirebon (NBG 4, 1866:118; Krom 1914:92); manuscripts L 1095, L 1097, and L 1099 all came from Kabuyutan Koleang at Jasinga, Bogor (Krom 1914:32). There is some uncertainty about the provenance of three PNRI manuscripts, that is, L 455, L 627, and L 628. However, in copies of these manuscripts in the K.F. Holle Collection (PNRI Peti 89) the reader finds notes indicating that the last three came from Merbabu (cf. Acri 2011a:46 n. 9).

The situation regarding provenance is similar for *nipah* manuscripts in European collections. The two manuscripts kept in Leiden, *Kuñjarakarna* (LOR 2266) and *Tiga Jñana* (LOR 2267), are thought to come from West Java (Pigeaud 1968:94; 1970:21, 56). The *Rasa Carita* at Oxford (MS Jav.b.1) is one of a pair of manuscripts donated by Andrew James during the seventeenth century and very likely to have originated in West Java, the other manuscript being in Old Sundanese (Noorduyn 1985). The provenance of the manuscript in Paris is unclear, but noting that its text contains the *Sañ Hyañ Hayu*, which is also found at Ciburuy and in three PNRI manuscripts known to originate near Garut, it must be closely associated with the textual tradition of West Java. One exception is the Berlin collection, whose *Dharma Pātañjala* came from Mt Merbabu in Central Java (Pigeaud 1975:111–2; cf. Acri 2011a:44).

Local Sources

As mentioned above, De Clercq stated in 1927 that in South Sumatra *nipah* was used as a writing material for a specific function—love letters. The function of so-called *nipah* manuscripts in Java, that is to say, the type of texts found copied

on *nipah* leaf manuscripts, was quite different. Judging by the surviving corpus of such manuscripts, they never contain love letters. This difference in use or function is what prompted Van der Molen (1983:89) to ask, ‘Can De Clerq’s information be applied to literature and to Java?’. In other words, are there sources from Java that designate *nipah* as a writing material? We can say from the outset that the answer to this question is resoundingly negative. Although in an article on Old Javanese writing materials Hinzler (2001) states that *nipah* was a type of writing support mentioned in older Javanese texts, she does not indicate the textual source upon which this claim is based. The word she is referring to is found in the *Tuhañaru*, *Warin’in Pitu*, and *Balawi* inscriptions, as quoted in Zoetmulder’s OJED under the entry *nipah* (1982:1183). But the form of the word quoted there, *anipah*,¹³ and the fact that it appears in a context containing references to *payuñ walu* (round parasol?), *mopih* (wrapping or covering), and *ruñki* (a type of woven basket?), does not indicate any relationship to writing. In any case these inscriptions all originate in East Java. Outside of the realm of epigraphy, I have not found a single textual passage involving *nipah* that could be quoted here.

The identification of the rarer of the two types of palm leaf manuscript as *nipah* until now has hinged on a single scholarly assertion. It has become part of ‘common knowledge’ about palm leaf manuscripts in Java, though it is not based on thorough philological or codicological research. This article will show that this is a case of mistaken identification which has escaped the attention of researchers working on so-called *nipah* manuscripts. What we have come to know as *nipah* manuscripts are probably not actually made from *nipah* leaves. In any case, there are no known references to *Nypa fruticans* as a writing support in the textual traditions of Java and Sunda. Because so-called *nipah* manuscripts generally originated from West Java, sources from this region should interest us before all others in an effort to clarify the identity of these writing materials and the terminology associated with them. Relevant passages have been identified in several texts and in passages from the oral tradition of Sundanese *pantun*, as outlined in the following paragraphs.

Sañ Hyañ Śāsana Mahāguru

The first source that mentions palm leaves and their use as writing materials is the *Sañ Hyañ Śāsana Mahāguru* (hereafter *Śāsana Mahāguru*), a prose work. As

13 In his study of the *Tuhañaru* inscription from Sidoteko, Mojokerto, Sarkar (1935) cautiously suggested that *anipah* is based on *sipah* (from *səpah*?) with prefixed *a-*, and that its meaning relates to ‘*sirih-plums*?’.

far as is known there are two manuscripts containing this text, both written in Old Sundanese script and language on *lontar* leaves; they are PNRI manuscript L 621 and another manuscript, identified as *kropak* 26, in the collection at Kabuyutan Ciburuy. The text is a *tutur* presenting the teachings of a guru (*sañ pandita*) to his student, a religious devotee (*sañ sewaka dharma*), presented in typical form as a question and answer narrative. The parts of the text that are of specific relevance are the *mañgala*, or introduction, as well as a section containing an enumeration of the ‘ten improvements’ (*dasawrddhi*), or ten types of material used as writing media. An edition of this text based on manuscript L 621 is provided in Gunawan (2009).

Bhīmaswarga

The second source is a prose text in Old Javanese, the *Bhīmaswarga*, which recounts the adventures of Bhīma, second of the five Pāṇḍawa brothers, as he journeys to heaven. There are a number of versions of the Old Javanese *Bhīmaswarga* text. Hinzler (1981:194–203) notes one prose and two poetic renditions in the Balinese tradition. Among the Merapi-Merbabu manuscripts, Setyawati, Wiryamartana, and Van der Molen (2002) have recorded six copies of a prose *Bhīmaswarga* that differs from the Balinese version. There is also a prose *Bhīmaswarga* that originates in West Java that is different again from either of the aforementioned. This is the version employed in this study.

The West Javanese *Bhīmaswarga*, an edition of which is currently being prepared by this writer, is known from three manuscripts, two of which are currently held at the PNRI in Jakarta and one in Ciburuy. The first manuscript, L 455, is inscribed on *nipah* leaves in a script that resembles that found in the *Kuñjarakarna* manuscript, LOr 2266, at Leiden. The second is manuscript L 623, inscribed in Old Sundanese script on *lontar* leaves. The third manuscript from the Kabuyutan at Ciburuy is incomplete and has been separated into two separate fragments catalogued as *lontar* Ciburuy VII and *kropak* Ciburuy XII. It, too, is written in Old Sundanese script.

Although the core text is entirely in Old Javanese, certain sections display affinities to the pre-Islamic manuscript tradition that is specific to West Java. First, both L 623 and the Ciburuy manuscript are written in local script. Second, the colophon found in L 623 is written in Old Sundanese and states that the text, here given the title *Bhīmalāpas*, was composed (or copied) at Mt Cikuray, situated in the Garut district of West Java.¹⁴ Finally, although it is recorded

14 The colophon reads: *itih kahuwusanin pu[s]taka bimalāpas haranika, samapta sampun sinurat [riñ] wulan kasa, sañ anurat panadaan saka pat pun, ə[n̄]cu nu ñaherañ bukit cikuray*



FIGURE 2 *Source Manuscripts.* a. Sañ Hyañ Śāsana Mahāguru (PNRI L 621); b. Sañ Hyañ Śāsana Mahāguru (Ciburuy Kropak 26); c. Bhīmaswarga (PNRI L 455); d. Bhīmaswarga (PNRI L 623); e. Bhīmaswarga (lontar Ciburuy VII); f. Sañ Hyañ Swawarcinta (PNRI L 626). NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA.

that L 455 was acquired from Mt Merbabu, the writing material indicates the possibility alluded to earlier, namely that the manuscript was originally produced in West Java before ending up in the Merbabu manuscript trove.

Sañ Hyañ Swawarcinta

The third source is a poetic text in Old Sundanese, the *Sañ Hyañ Swawarcinta*, available in PNRI manuscript L 626. This is a *codex unicus*. It is inscribed on *lontar* leaves in a form of Old Sundanese script. It contains a long narrative by an author who considers himself quite young (*boñcah*), and who asks his readers for permission to present them with *ilmu*, knowledge. Its contents

samapun Ø 'This is the end of the book called *Bhīmalāpas*, its writing was completed in the first month, written by *pa na da an* (?) Śaka year four (?), grandson of the one practising meditation (at) Mt Cikuray. Finished.'

include numerous depictions of the everyday lives of the Sundanese people at the time the text was written, such as the stories they recited, types of food, manners, and the like. An edition based on this manuscript was published in Wartini et al. (2011).

Pantun

The last source is *pantun* literature. *Pantun* form part of the Sundanese oral tradition, consisting of tales about the initiation and exploits of cultural heroes. They are recited without reference to a written text by a *juru pantun*, usually accompanied by a *kecapi* lyre, in a performance that lasts most of the night. According to Noorduyn and Teeuw (2006:279) there is a historical relationship between Old Sundanese poetic literature and *pantun*, which is apparent not only in the shared feature of composition in octosyllabic lines, but also in the formulaic expressions found in both. My sources for these come predominantly from transcriptions of *pantun* tales made by Ajip Rosidi: *Carita Kembang Pan-yarikan* (1973), *Tjarita Demung Kalagan* (1970), *Carita Gantangang Wangi* (1973), and *Tjarita Parenggong Jaya* (1971).¹⁵

Nipah or Gebang?

In this section, passages containing information about writing materials from the sources listed above will be presented. In this way the tradition can itself testify about writing materials and their historical use.

In the *maṅgala* of *Śāsana Mahāguru* the writer dedicates his work to Bhaṭāra Gaṇa (Gaṇeśa), the creator of writing implements. Below is the relevant quotation:

*anrəguṅ ta jantra sri batara
gana, sinamburatkən riṅ manusa
madyapada, matəmahan ta ya
gəbaṅ lawan lwantar, tipuk diwasa
pupus gəbaṅ lawan lwantar, tinut
pinada-pada, lwane lawan dawane,
tinitisan asta gaṅga wira tanu.*

Śrī Bhaṭāra Gaṇa's trunk trumpeted, so that it sprayed towards humankind in the middle realm. He created *gebang* and *lontar*. [When] the time came for the *gebang* and *lontar* to form young leaves, they followed precisely the same pattern

15 Further information about *pantun* performance is found in *Ensiklopedi Sunda* 2000:493. On the relationship between *pantun* and Old Sundanese literature, see Noorduyn and Teeuw 2006:10–1; 279–81.

*apa ta sinaṅguh asta gaṅga wira
tanu, asta naraniṅ taṅan, gaṅga
naraniṅ baṅu, wira ta naraniṅ
panurat lawan panuli, tanu naraniṅ
maṅsi, tinulis de saṅ pandita, pinaca
de saṅ apuṅguṅ |6^v| tambah
uni-uniṅana, winaləran de saṅ kawi.*

Śāsana Mahāguru III

with respect to their width and length, [so that they could have] *hasta gaṅgā wira tanu* applied.

What is it that is called *hasta gaṅgā wira tanu*? *Hasta* means hand, *gaṅgā* means water, *wira* means pen and brush, *tanu* means ink. They are used for writing by a holy man, for reading by one without knowledge [in order that] knowledge might increase, as determined by the poet.

We see that in this *maṅgala* the writer dedicates the work he is composing to Bhaṭāra Gaṅa, whose trunk trumpeted and sprayed a gift to the realm of humankind. Through this gift he created (*matəmahan*) both *gebang* and *lontar*. After the first green shoots of *gebang* and *lontar* appeared (*pupus*), they were formed in precisely the same way (*tinut pinada-pada*) in their length and breadth, making them ideal to be used as writing materials that could subsequently 'be sprinkled' (*tinitisan*) by the four instruments of writing, that is, the hand (*hasta*), water (*gaṅgā*), pen or brush (*wira*), and ink (*tanu*). These are all instruments used by a *pandita* to write a work that can then be read by someone lacking understanding so that their knowledge can grow; they are instruments by which the passing on of knowledge is determined or limited (*winaləran*) by the poet (*saṅ kawi*).

The quartet *hasta-gaṅgā-wira-tanu* as writing instruments or elements can also be found in the text of the *Bhīmaswarga* below, with the difference that in this text we find a set of three elements, *gaṅgā-wira-tanu*, while *hasta* is not mentioned:

*bima dakwarah ta kita, mulaniṅ
pustaka hirəṅ, roninṅ gəbaṅ, tinut
pinada-pada hwane lawan dawane,
tinitisan gaṅga wira tanu, gaṅga ri
baṅu, tanu ri maṅsi, wira ri panulis.*

L 623 f. 6^r; L 455 f. 7^r

Bhīma, I will instruct you, the beginnings of a book (*pustaka*) are black. *Gebang* leaves, they followed precisely the same pattern with respect to their width and length, [so that they could have] *gaṅgā wira tanu* applied. *Gaṅgā* is water, *tanu* ink, *wira* pen.

The words 'black' and 'ink' in this context are key. These terms are relevant only for manuscripts written on the palm leaf type identified by scholars as *nipah*.

With *lontar*, as is well known, the writing itself is created by colourless incisions which are only subsequently made visible by the application of oily lampblack or a similar soot-based blackener.

Elsewhere in the *Bhīmaswarga* we find mention of *gebang* again in relation to books (*pustaka*), as can be seen in the following allegorical enumeration of Bhīma's divine allies:

*sadasiwah pustakañku, papanku
brahmaśiwah, gəbañku bhaṭāra
bayu, taline pustakañku, sañ hyaṅ
suntagi manik.*

L 623 f. 10^r; L 455 12^r

Sadaśiwa is my book, Brahmaśiwa is my cover board, Bhaṭāra Bāyu my *gebang*, Sañ Hyaṅ Suntagi Manik my book's binding string.

In the *Bhīmaswarga* text, in addition to gods, the Pāṇḍawa are also represented in ways symbolically linked to a book or *pustaka*:

*manih bima, yudistira pinakagəbañ,
arjuna pinakatali, sakula sadewa
pinakapapan, tulis in pustaka, sañ
hyaṅ darmaraja, kañ asəḍahan
pustaka, hyaṅ bagawan citragotra*

L 623 f. 8^v; L 455 f. 10^v–11^r

And further, Bhīma, Yudhiṣṭhira serves as the *gebang* leaf, Arjuna as the cord, Sakula [that is, Nakula] and Sahadewa as the cover boards, the writing in the book [is] Sañ Hyaṅ Dharmarāja [Yama], the one responsible for writing the book is Bhagawān Citragotra.¹⁶

This quote paints a picture in which *pustaka* is the term for book (manuscript) as a whole, which consists of several parts: *gəbañ* refers to the leaves; *tali* to the string passed through the perforation in the middle of the stacked leaves; *papan* refers to the box (*kropak*) or wooden cover boards of the manuscript.¹⁷

16 In the *Korawāśrama* (Swellengrebel 1936:112) Citragotra is also said to have the responsibility for writing *pustaka* (*bhagawān citragotra pwa masəḍahan pustaka*). The character referred to here is none other than Citragupta, the assistant or clerk of Dharmarāja (Yama), who keeps the book of humanity's *karma*.

17 In an Old Javanese text from Bali, the *Tutur Aji Saraswatī* (*Cod. Gedong Kirtya 2289*), there is also a symbolic identification of the Pāṇḍawa with the components of a *pustaka*. In place of *gebang*, this text has *lontar*. The twins, Nakula and Sahadewa, between them symbolize the two cover boards (*cakəpan kalih*), Arjuna the *lontar* leaf (*əntal*), Bhīma the string, and Dharmatanaya the textual contents (*śāstra*) (Rubinstein 2000:56–7).

Based on these excerpts from West Javanese sources, we have at this point been introduced to two types of writing support: *lontar* and *gebang*. Furthermore, in the *Śāsana Mahāguru* it is stated that these two writing materials represent two of ten types of writing media:

[...] *na naha nu dimantraan eta? ah kena karah aiñ ñahwa dek mijilkən aksara: sastra muñgu di na omas, sastra muñgu riñ salaka, sastra muñgu riñ tambaga, sastra muñgu riñ cundiga, sastra muñgu riñ bəsi, sastra muñgu riñ batu, sastra muñgu riñ paduñ, sastra muñgu riñ pajwa, sastra muñgu riñ taal, sastra muñgu riñ gəbañ.*

Śāsana Mahāguru III

For what purpose am I uttering this mantra? Well, it is because I know [what must be done] when one wishes to produce letters: writing on gold, writing on silver, writing on copper, writing on steel, writing on iron, writing on stone, writing on wooden strips, writing on *pejwa* (bamboo?), writing on *lontar*, writing on *gebang*.

As enumerated here, the ten writing supports are (1) gold (*omas*), (2) silver (*salaka*), (3) copper (*tambaga*), (4) steel (*cundiga*), (5) iron (*bəsi*), (6) stone (*batu*), (7) wooden boards (*paduñ*), (8) bamboo? (*pajwa*), (9) *lontar* (*taal*), and (10) *gəbang*. For the purposes of this article, only the last two are of direct interest.

Further along the *Śāsana Mahāguru* gives a more detailed explanation of terms and functions related to writing on *lontar* and *gebang*:

[...] *sastra muñgu riñ taal, diñaranan ta ya carik, aya eta mənəñ utama, kena na lain pikabuyutanən. diturunkən dəi, sastra muñgu riñ*

[...] writing on *lontar* is called incising (*carik*), indeed it has its virtues for it is not to be used for sacred texts (*kabuyutan*).¹⁸ Let's

18 I choose to translate *kabuyutan* as 'sacred text', not as 'place of worship'. The latter meaning does not suit the context because *kabuyutan* (in the sense of a place) actually denotes a place for storage of manuscripts of various types. Besides the meaning 'place of worship', OJED (s.v. *buyut*) also records other senses of this word, namely 'object of worship, status of elder'. Furthermore, in the actual contexts where we find the word *kabuyutan* in Old Sundanese sources, it clearly does not always denote a place, but also denotes things that are 'holy, sacred' in a more general way, for example, 'words', as in *Sewaka Darma* (lines 513–4): *saur dipikabuyutan, sabda dipirahasea* 'words are held sacred, sounds are kept secret' (Darsa 2012:383); or 'cloth' in *The sons of Rama and Rawana* (lines 179–81): *diais ku sabuk wayañ, dibaur dən kabuyutan, sañ hyañ gula gumantuñ* 'He carried the boy in his

gəbañ, diñaranan ta ya cəməñ, ini ma iña pikabuyutanən, naran sañ hyañ ripta, ya sunya, ya ləpihan, ya mastra, ya lepwakarana, iya pustaka katunġalanana.

Śāsana Mahāguru III

go down again: writing on *gebang* is called black (*cəməñ*), and this is for the sacred texts, in other words, for such texts referred to as manuscripts (*sañ hyañ ripta*), the means for attaining emptiness (*śūnya*), leaves (*ləpihan*), *mastra* (?), the smearing (of ink, *lepwakarana*?), and *pustaka* are synonyms.

Thus, a technical demarcation is established between the two media in terms of use and function: writing on *lontar* is called *carik*, while writing on *gebang* is called *cəməñ*. The word *carik* means ‘scratch, line’; *lontar* manuscripts are written by incising, cutting, and scratching shapes onto the leaf surface using a type of knife (Balinese: *pengutik*; Sundanese: *péso pangot*). As for *cəməñ*, its meaning is simply ‘black’ (cf. Javanese *cemeng*). Perhaps ‘black’ is used to signify black ink, such as we find used on *nipah*, as stated by earlier scholars? Compare also the term *hirəñ* as written in the opening of the *Bhīmaswarga*’s first passage on the *pustaka*. The material distinction between *lontar* and *gebang* as writing supports is paralleled by a distinction in the type of text that each is meant to bear: *lontar* are not meant to hold writings of an inherently sacred character (*lain pikabuyutanən*), while *gebang* leaf is specifically intended to be the medium for conveying sacred texts (*pikabuyutanən*).

Another useful source is the Old Sundanese text *Sañ Hyañ Swawarcinta*, ll. 447–52, which provides the following overview:

447 *kaguritkən kaguratkən,
dina gəbañ lawan lo(n)tar,
ləmpihan kukuluntuñan,
dicarik (ku) tanah hirəñ,
ampar gəlar susuratan,
əsi sañ hyañ pustaka.*

Written incised, on *gebang* and *lontar*, leaves or rolls, incised with black *tanah*, the writing spread out, containing a sacred book.

The meaning of *tanah* (l. 450) raises several questions.¹⁹ Zoetmulder (1974:129–35) has identified this writing implement in the Old Javanese tradition as a sort

decorated sash, with his sacred cloth, the sacred Gula Gumantung’ (Noorduyn and Teeuw 2006:183).

19 On the meaning and use of *tanah* in Old Javanese, see Zoetmulder 1974:129–35 and Robson 1976.

of slate pencil made from a soft stone; it could be sharpened with the fingernail and was simply thrown away when it was broken or worn down to a nub. Interestingly, the quote links *tanah* directly to *lontar* and *gebang*, while in *kakawin* sources it is regularly paired with *karas* (a writing slate) and never with palm leaves. In the excerpt above it is stated that the *tanah* is black. Can the *tanah* intended here be linked to the spines (*lidi*) of Enau sugar palm fronds (*Arenga pinnata*), called *harupat* in Sundanese, as stated by Holle (1882:17)? Can the characteristics of *tanah* as identified by Zoetmulder be linked to those of the *lidi* of the Enau palm, which in fact is black, easily bent, and capable of being sharpened with the fingernail?

Let us turn our attention now to the final set of sources: the *pantun* of the oral-tradition. The relevant portions for the purposes of this article are the *rajab* in the *pantun* stories. *Rajab*, which are usually performed by the *juru pantun* at the beginning of a performance, are sung prayers asking the gods to prevent the occurrence of any disturbances during the performance of the tale:

*Mopoya(n)keun kandana anu
baheula,
urang diguratkeun cenah ku urang téh
diguritkeun,
kana pus gebang,
na pus gebang gé pondok lontang,
cecekan guguluntungan,
sabeulit tamba pamali.*

Demung Kalagan, p. 4

This is a tale from the days of yore,
incised and composed by us on
gebang shoots, on *gebang* shoots and
young *lontar* leaves, dotted on a
rolled [leaf?] and twisted once to
ward off taboos.

The word *pus* is a short form of *pupus*, meaning ‘the young (just unfolding) leaf of the banana and the lirang-palm’ (OJED, s.v. *pupus*). In the next line we find as synonym of *pupus* the word *pondok*, which appears to be a mispronunciation by the *juru pantun* of, or a mistranscription/misprint for, the more archaic word *pondoh*, which is still noted in dictionaries with the meaning ‘young palm leaf’ (Danadibrata 2006:s.v. *pondoh*). This may be compared with the case of the synonyms *pucuk*, which also means ‘young leaf’, and *pondok* (again mispronounced/mistranscribed for *pondoh*) in the *pantun Kembang Panyarikan* cited below.

Lontang is also a mispronunciation/mistranscription for *lontar*. *Sabeulit*, ‘one twist or turn’, indicates a length of string wrapped once through the perforation at the middle of the manuscript leaves (Balinese: *song*) and then wound once around the cover boards. In the context of the quoted sentence, the word *sabeulit* indicates that the *juru pantun* intends to finish the entire

narrative in a ‘single wrap’ of the manuscript (though in fact the performance does not involve actually reading from a physical manuscript). The entire story must be finished as a *tamba pamali*, or protection from forbidden things.

The *rajab* (introduction, introit) reproduced above is parallel with the *rajab* at the opening of the *pantun* called *Kembang Panyarikan*, as below:

*Caturkeun,
urang cuang caritakeun,
cuang diajar mupulihkeun nu bihari,
mopoya[n]keun nu baheula,
diguratkən diguritkeun,
kana pucuk gebang pondok lontar,
ecekan guguluntungan,
sabeulit tamba pamali.*

Kembang Panyarikan, p. 7

Let the story be told. We relate and we learn while speaking of old tales, which were incised and composed on young *gebang* leaves and young *lontar* leaves, [the letters] sprinkled onto rolled leaves wound around once and serving as a *tamba pamali*.

*Gebray geuning pucuk kawung
beukah,
lain gebay pucuk kawung beukah,
apus gebar mana lawé lontar,
ngaranna lulumbang siang,
mun surat kukuluntungan.*

Perenggong Jaya, p. 5

Split, it seems to be the *aren* shoot that has split. No! It is not the *aren* shoot that has split, but the *gebang* string and the *lontar* cord. This is called *lulumbang siang*, a letter that is rolled up.

In this passage, *gebar* is a mispronunciation/mistranscription of *gebang*, the same phenomenon of /r/ and /ng/ being switched (as in *lontar* < *lontang*) seen in the *Demung Kalagan* excerpt. The quote above also shows the word *lawé* being used as a synonym for *apus*, meaning string or cord. The word *lulumbang* is assumed to have the meaning of *lulumban* in modern Sundanese (*ng* < *n*), meaning ‘to be joyful’ (Satjadibrata 2005:235). *Lulumbang siang* may perhaps have a meaning similar to *baranang siang*, ‘a clear day’, which, in the above context, indicates a bright and joyful mood. It appears the writer intended to offer good tidings through the *gebang* and *lontar*, whose leaves have been opened:

*abis gobang lawé lontar,
cekcekan guguluntungan,
dituruban ku bandepung.*

Gantangan Wangi, p. 8

cord of *gebang*, string of *lontar*, drops [of ink] in a rolled-up [writing], wrapped in a protective cloth.

Abis gobang is a mispronunciation by the *juru pantun* (or mistranscription) of *apus gəbang* (*gebang* cord), as becomes clear from the next phrase, *lawe lontar* (*lontar* string), a near synonym. *Bandepung* may be taken as a variant of *mandepun*, a piece of cloth used to cover up objects set on a tray. A *mandepun* is also used to wrap up ‘manuscripts’ and other sacred heirlooms (Panitia Kamus Sunda 1976:301). Once again we see the equivalence of /ng/ in *pantun* usage to /n/ in modern Sundanese.

The excerpts from the *raja*h of *pantun* stories offered above strengthen Noorduyn and Teeuw’s assertion (2006) that *pantun* are closely related to the Old Sundanese written tradition. In practice, *juru pantun* performed *pantun* tales without relying on a written text, but when the reciter began his performance by uttering the opening *raja*h, it is clear that the story about to be related had originated in a text recorded in a manuscript (*kandana baheula*) consistently described as *gebang* and *lontar*.

Gebang

As has been shown above, the analysis of West Javanese sources, both in the form of ancient manuscripts preserved in West Java and in oral tradition, provides reasonably strong evidence that the term *gebang* is used to refer to a type of writing material in the manuscript tradition of West Java. By contrast, the word *nipah* never figures anywhere in ancient sources in the contexts that concern us here. Although there are physical similarities between *nipah* and *gebang*, and both belong to the same botanical family (namely, the *Areceaceae* palm family), they are distinct species belonging to different genera. There appears to be no indication in Sundanese, Javanese, or Balinese sources that *nipah* has ever been commonly used as a writing support.²⁰

20 As for sources in Old Javanese not transmitted in West Java, I first note that Zoetmulder (1982:505, s.v. *gəbaŋ*) cites just one text, namely the *Pārthayajña*, which mentions this word among other trees. A so far unrecognized occurrence of the word *gəbaŋ* is to be found in a passage in the *Agastyaparwa* (Gonda 1933:381 lines 27–30, 1936:266): *kunaŋ anak bhagawān pulastya i saŋ wirudhinyaŋ odwad, sabwiriŋ odwad, sakwehiŋ rumambat mwaŋ dukut, pətui, nyuh, hano, tal, gəbaŋ* (em., *gəŋaŋ* ed.), *salwiriŋ twaksāra. nahan tānak bhagawān pulastya i saŋ wirudhi* ‘And the children of Bhagawān Pulastya with Wirudhi, they are the hanging plants, all types of hanging plants; all creepers and grasses, bamboos, coconut-palms, aren-palms, *lontar*-palms, *gebang*-palms, all types of trees. Those are the children of Bhagawān Pulastya with Wirudhi.’ The emendation to *gəbaŋ* is unproblematic in palaeographic terms (*ŋ* and *b* are very similar in Balinese script), and evident in the

It is worth noting in this connection how palm leaves were historically used as a writing material in other, related cultural settings in South and South-east Asia. Throughout this extensive zone, *Borassus flabellifer* L. and *Corypha umbraculifera* L. (both members of the subfamily *Coryphoideae*) are the two types of palm most widely used (Jahn 2006:923). A survey of studies of palm leaves as writing support from Tibet to the Philippines confirms that the genera *Corypha* and *Borassus* are the raw materials of first resort in societies that manufacture writing materials from palm leaves. Writing about India, Hoernle (1900:93) explains that two types of palm leaves were traditionally used as writing supports there—just as we have seen in Java. Those two species of palm were the *tādatāla* (*Borassus flabellifer*) and *tāḍitāli* (*Corypha umbraculifera*). *Tādatāla* is the same species as *lontar*. *Tāḍitāli* is the leaf of a different type of palm, called talipot; its leaves are thinner, wider, and have a smoother surface than the *Borassus*. Thus we see that in India, too, two types of palm leaves are used as writing materials, one identical to *lontar*, the other a close relative of *gebang* (*Corypha utan* or *Corypha gebanga*).²¹ Indeed in a very recent article, Perumal (2012:159) notes that *Corypha utan* is a third type of palm leaf used as a writing support in Tamilnadu, South India, in addition to *Corypha umbraculifera* and *Borassus flabellifer*, while *Nypa* is notably absent.²²

When we regard these plants in their natural environments in Indonesia, *gebang* is a common and well distributed variety of palm tree (Rigg 1862s.v.). It is naturally known by a variety of terms in the languages of the archipelago. The Dayak people know it as *gabang*, the people of Timor call it *gawang*, in Madura it is *pocok*, to the Betawi it is *pucuk*, among the Batak and Sasak it is *ibus*, while in Minahasa it is *silar*. Physically, a mature specimen ranges between 15 to 20 metres in height. *Gebang* leaves form a fan shape, like the fingers of an open hand, with a diameter of 2–3.5 metres, joined at the tip of a stalk. This tree is most commonly found in coastal areas near rivers and

light of the West Javanese textual evidence presented above. The *Agastyaparwa* passage and this emendation were pointed out to me by Arlo Griffiths.

- 21 For more details on local names for *Borassus flabellifer* and *Corypha umbraculifera* in India and Indonesia, see the table provided by Jahn (2006:927–8). Interestingly, in this table, *Corypha umbraculifera* and *Corypha utan* are considered to be the same.
- 22 This article presents two misconceptions that need to be clarified. First, it states that *Corypha umbraculifera* grows in dry climates. In reality the opposite is true: this species does not thrive in dry zones. Second, *Corypha utan* is referred to as *lontar* and is said to grow in wet zones. *Lontar* is not *Corypha utan* but *Borassus flabellifer*, and only grows in dry zones.

swamps; it is also encountered in hilly countryside, though more sparsely. *Gebang* have a slow rate of growth and are not found above elevations of 300 metres (Heyne 1922:301). The geographical origins of this species are not clear, but its distribution today includes tropical Africa, India, Burma, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

By contrast, the *nipah* palm is more rarely found in Java (Gallop 1998:16). Local toponymy gives a clear reflection of the relative abundance, importance, and familiarity of natural landscape features, flora, and fauna. An examination of gazetteers reveals that *nipah* is almost completely unknown in the toponymy of West Java. *Gebang*, by contrast, is widely used in place names, including Bantar Gebang in Bekasi, Gebang sub-district in Cirebon, and Ciawi Gebang in Kuningan. Several of these place names are located in lowland areas (such as Bantar Gebang and the Cirebon sub-district); others are in areas of low hills (Ciawi Gebang). One can deduce that areas named after this type of palm tree are places where the *gebang* once grew in a way that made it stand out. *Nipah* stands out only by its absence as an element in place names.

Although our focus here has been on Java and in particular its western stretches, it should be noted that there are references outside of West Java to *gebang* as a writing support. Ketut Ginarsa (1975:92) once wrote that ‘in Bali, in addition to *lontar*, *gebang* (*Corypha utan*), sometimes called “forest *lontar*”, is also said to be related to writing implements (for example in the prayer accompanying wayang performances uttered by dalang in North Bali)’. Hinzler (1993:438) quotes Cox (1931) in the opening to her article on palm leaf manuscripts in Bali, adding that the *gebang* palm was, at least in the 1930s, very rare in Bali, whereas *lontar* palms grew abundantly in dry areas. No further information offering insights into their use along the lines found in West Javanese sources is mentioned.

Conclusion

Holle’s misidentification of *gebang* as *nipah* more than 130 years ago was taken up uncritically by subsequent researchers. It is contradicted by sources from West Java, both manuscripts and the oral *pantun*, which describe use of two types of palm leaves as complementary writing materials: *gebang* and *lontar*. *Nipah* does not enter into these passages, though other types of material that can be used for writing on are enumerated. As long as no other sources are found that contain references to *nipah*, one should rely on the term *gebang* (*Corypha gebanga*, *Corypha utan* Lam.) to designate the palm-leaf writing support that is written on with ink, not incised with a knife or stylus. Indeed, the

character of manuscripts copied through use of 'black' (*cəmān*) rather than 'incising' (*carik*), is differentiated in important ways. Writing on *lontar* is 'not intended to be used to preserve a sacred text' (*lain pikabuyutanən*), that is, a text imbued with sacral power and dealing with matters of transcendent knowledge. This theoretical notion is substantiated by the fact that, in general, Old Sundanese texts found on *lontar* tend more to have the characteristics of 'literature' as understood by modern readers. Writing on *gebang*, by contrast, is 'intended for use in preserving sacred texts' (*pikabuyutanən*). This statement, too, is substantiated by the fact that nearly all texts written on *gebang* are of the *tutur* or *tattwa* variety, that is to say, didactic religious works in prose containing teachings of sacred knowledge structured as an exchange between a guru and a student, and often accompanied by several *śloka*.²³ The special, religious character of these texts is reflected in the use of Old Javanese, the cosmopolitan language of Java and Bali in that period, which is relatively dominant in texts written on *gebang*.²⁴ It is worth noting that in Sanskrit and descendant Indo-Aryan languages *Corypha* is also called *śrītāla* (Jahn 2006:929). The addition of the element *śrī* (sacred) to the word *tāla* in this compound may indicate the special character of *Corypha* compared to *Borrassus*.

Gebang manuscripts available to us at this time provide evidence that, although the *gebang* leaves are physically less robust than *lontar*, as a writing support they are very long-lasting and able to survive in the humid tropical climate of Indonesia. The oldest of the *gebang* manuscripts, giving a text of the *Arjunawivāha* (PNRI L 641, dated 1334 CE), is nearly seven hundred years old. Although it has been late in coming, further codicological research on the production process by which leaves become writing supports, such as that carried out by Hoernle for palm leaf manuscripts in India more than a century ago, remains an important task to be pursued today. The conclusions reached here on philological grounds should also be strengthened by botanical research on *nipah* and *gebang* through laboratory experiments. Although this could not yet be offered here, such experimental evidence will be important to determine with greater precision which type of leaf was actually used in the past to

23 A detailed account of *tutur* or *tattwa*, including chronology, typology, and relationship between these texts and their Sanskrit antecedents, can be found in Acri 2006 and 2011a:8–10.

24 Such as *Saṅ Hyaṅ Hayu* (PNRI L 634, L 637, L 638, see Darsa 1998), *Dharma Pātāñjala* (cod. Schoemann I-21, see Acri 2011a), *Sikṣa Guru* (PNRI L 627, L 628, L 643), *Kuṅjarakarna* (LOR 2266, see Van der Molen 1983), *Arjunawivāha* (PNRI L 641, see Poerbatjaraka 1926), and others.

produce the type of writing material that I propose from now on to designate as *gebang*.

Pun. Lewiwih luangan kurang wuwuhan.

Finished. Whatever is excessive, please reduce; whatever is deficient, please supply.

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Appendix 1. *Gebang* Manuscripts in the Collection of the National Library of Indonesia

Abbreviations

NBG Notulen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen.

TBG Tijdschrift van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen.

No.	MS no.	Title	Description
1	L 374 Peti 16	?	Fragments w/o cover boards, 35 × 3.4 cm (longest leaf), 10 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Sundanese and Old Javanese language, prose. Title on label 'Old Javanese/Sundanese?'. Contents: not further identified, mentions <i>jati niskala</i> , state of <i>sunya</i> (emptiness) dan <i>acintya</i> (inconceivableness of god).
2	L 455 Peti 16	Bhīmaswarga	34.9 × 3.9 cm, 36 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. In Holle's copy (260 peti 89) there is a note saying that L 455 came from Merbabu. This manuscript may not be from West Java. Contents: tale of Bhīma's journey to heaven to meet Bhaṭāra Guru in order to have the gift of heaven bestowed on Pandu, Bhīma's father. It consists almost exclusively of question-and-answer exchange between Bhaṭāra Guru and Bhīma. Copy of manuscript: No. 260, peti 89.
3	L 627 Peti 16	?	38.7 × 3.7 cm, 26 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Leaves damaged, out of order. Contents: religious text, unidentified, mentions <i>sapta-patala</i> . Copy of manuscript: No. 261, peti 89.
4	L 628 Peti 16	Siksa Guru	35 × 3.3 cm, 23 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Some leaves broken, edges damaged, holes due to insects.

(cont.)

No.	MS no.	Title	Description
			Place copied: Lurah Kamulan? Title on label 'Old Javanese/Sundanese?'
			Contents: religious teachings of Sañ Pandita to Sañ Sewaka Darma about life in this world. Core of teachings centred on mastering <i>bayu</i> , <i>sabda</i> , and <i>hadap</i> and potential of the <i>dasaindria</i> possessed by humans
			Copy of manuscript: No. 262, peti 89.
5	L 630 Peti 16	Sañ Hyañ Siksa Kandañ Karəsian	35×3.5 cm, 29 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Sundanese language, prose. Time of writing: third month of 1440 Ś (1518 CE). Manuscript from Galuh (Krom 1914:98).
			Copy of manuscript: Plt. 131, peti 119; No. 263, peti 89.
6	L 631 Peti 15	Chanda-Karaṇa	44×3.1 cm, 49 leaves, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Note saying this was a MS from Raden Saleh. Holle (<i>TBG</i> 16) calls this MS C. From Galuh.
			Contents: teachings on the art of writing <i>kakawin</i> , <i>amaramālā</i> (Sanskrit-Old Javanese lexicon).
7	L 632a Peti 16	Kabuyutan Galuṅguṅ	34×3 cm, 6 leaves (4 leaves separate from case), 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Sundanese language, prose. Leaves adhere to cover boards, middle part missing, leaf edges damaged and breaking.
			Contents: begins with genealogy of Rahyañ Baña, continues with advice of Darmasiksa to care for and protect <i>kabuyutan</i> in Galuṅguṅ.
			Copy of manuscript: Plt. 120, Peti 119; No. 265, peti 89. Pleyte himself, in the manuscript Plt. 120, Peti 119, gave the title 'Darmasiksa'.
8	L 633 Peti 16	Siksa Guru	22.6×4 cm, 41 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Sundanese language and Old Javanese. Manuscript from Tarogong, Garut (Krom 1914:71). Time of writing: <i>bulan kasapuluh</i> (tenth month). Place copied: Desa Sunya. Title on label 'Serat Sewaka'.
			Copy of manuscript: No. 264, peti 89.

No.	MS no.	Title	Description
9	L 634 Peti 16	Sañ Hyañ Hayu	47 × 3.6 cm, 80 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Manuscript in good condition, well-bound, neat. Time of writing: 1445 Ś (1523/4 CE). Place copied: Desa Mahapawite (read Mahapawitra?), Tajak Barat, Giri Wañsa. Manuscript from Cilegon, Tarogong, Garut, gift of Rd. Tumenggung Suria Kerta Adi Ningrat (Netscher 1853:469–79; Krom 1914:71). Copy of manuscript: No. 267, peti 89; No. 268, peti 89.
10	L 635 Peti 16	Sañ Hyañ Hayu	36.8 × 3.6 cm, 122 leaves, 4 lines/ leaves, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Manuscript from Tarogong, Garut (Krom 1914:71). Title on label 'Serat Buwana Pitu'. Copy of manuscript: No. 155 (Ciburuy 1), peti 89 (Javanese script); No. 274, Peti 89.
11	L 636 Peti 16	Sañ Hyañ Hayu	42.5 × 4 cm, 83 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Place copied: Giri Sunya. Copyist: Sañ Bujañga Rəsi Laksa. Manuscript from Tarogong, Garut (Krom 1914:71).
12	L 637 Peti 16	Sañ Hyañ Hayu	37.6 × 4 cm, 103 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Place copied: Desa Mahapawita (read Mahapawitra?), Tajak Barat. Manuscript from Tarogong, Garut (Krom 1914:71).
13	L 638 Peti 16	Sañ Hyañ Hayu	38.6 × 4 cm, 129 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Time of writing: begun on Tuesday Kliwon, seventh month and completed on Pon in the ninth month. Year of composition: 1357 Ś (1435 CE). Manuscript from Cilegon, Tarogong, Garut, gift of Rd. Tumenggung Suria Kerta Adi Ningrat (Netscher 1853:469–79; Krom 1914:71). Title on label 'Serat Dewa Buda'. Copy of manuscript: No. 270, peti 89.
14	L 641 Peti 16	Arjunawiwāha	47.5 × 4 cm, 38 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language. Date of composition: 1256 Ś (1334 CE). Place copied: Sañ Hyañ Mandala Katyagan in Gugur. Copyist: Sañ Guguron? Manuscript from Cilegon, Tarogong, Garut, gift of Rd.

(cont.)

No.	MS no.	Title	Description
			Tumenggung Suria Kerta Adi Ningrat (Netscher 1853:469–79; Krom 1914:71). Title on label ‘Serat Wiwaha Kawi’.
			Copy of manuscript: No. 272, peti 89; KBG 346 (Javanese script).
15	L 642 Peti 88	Siksa Guru	37.5×3.6 cm, 23 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Sundanese language and Old Javanese, prose. Manuscript from Tarogong, Garut (Krom 1914:71). Place copied: Desa Mahapawitra in the Śaka year <i>hlai</i> (2) <i>twaya</i> (4) <i>wu</i> (1) (142×, that is, 1498–1509 CE).
16	L 643 Peti 16	?	34×3.8 cm, 14 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Manuscript from Talaga (NBG 4, 1866:118; Krom 1914:92). Title on label ‘Old Javanese/Sundanese?’. Manuscript in poor condition. Contents: religious treatise on mastering the three elements <i>bayu</i> , <i>sabda</i> , dan <i>hədap</i> . Text incomplete.
17	L 647 Peti 16	?	Fragments, manuscript in shambles, 4 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Javanese language, prose. Title on label ‘Fragment Stukken’. Contents: not yet identified.
18	L 1095 Peti 69	Laṅgəñ Jati	31×3.8 cm, 37 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Sundanese language, prose. Place copied: Gunuñ Jati Sunya, upstream from the silent forest of Mandala Puntañ. Manuscript from <i>kabuyutan</i> Koléang, Jasinga (NBG 50, 1912:44, 86; NBG 51, 1913:24; Krom 1914:32). Title on label ‘Sundaasch’. Contents: religious text containing teachings on the highest wisdom (<i>ajñana</i>). Copy of manuscript: Plt. 116, peti 119; No. 275, peti 89; No. 155, peti 89 (Ciburuy 111).
19	L 1097 Peti 69	Carita Jati Mula	21.4×3.7 cm, 57 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Sundanese language, prose. Place copied: Sagara Wisesa. Title on label ‘Sundaasch (met

No.	MS no.	Title	Description
20	L 1099 Peti 68	Sañ Hyañ Tattwa Ajñana (Pakeən Raga?)	<p>inkt). Manuscript from <i>kabuyutan</i> Koleang, Jasinga (<i>NBG</i> 50, 1912:44, 86; <i>NBG</i> 51, 1913:24; Krom 1914:32). Contents: religious text on the essence of the true soul not swayed by praise and other worldly disturbances. Copy of manuscript: Plt. 149, peti 119; No. 277, peti 89; No. 155, peti 89, Ciburuy v (Javanese script).</p> <p>24.5 × 3.7 cm, 70 leaves, 4 lines/leaf, Old (West) Javanese quadratic script, Old Sundanese language, prose. Manuscript from <i>kabuyutan</i> Koléang, Jasinga (<i>NBG</i> 50, 1912:44, 86; <i>NBG</i> 51, 1913:24; Krom 1914:32). Contents: didactic religious text containing teachings on meditation that leads the soul to achieve final liberation (<i>moksa</i>). Copy of manuscript: Plt. 118, peti 119; No. 155, peti 89, Ciburuy v (Javanese script); No. 278, peti 89.</p>

Appendix 2. *Gebang* Manuscripts from Kabuyutan Ciburuy

Information on manuscripts below is drawn from the descriptions in Aciri and Darsa (2009). These descriptions were appended as an index for the Ciburuy manuscript digitalization project, sponsored by the British Library through its Endangered Archive Program (EAP) in 2009. Digitalized copies are kept at the National Library of Indonesia with an additional copy deposited at the British Library as the sponsoring institution (http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP280).

No.	Ms. no	Description
1.	Kropak Ciburuy I 280_Petizb_krpkCbrI	<p>Former title: n.a.</p> <p>86 leaves, 51 × 4 cm, 4 lines.</p> <p>Script: Old (West) Javanese quadratic. Language: Old Javanese.</p> <p>Title: Buana Pitu (?); time and place of writing unknown.</p>

(cont.)

No.	Ms. no	Description
2.	Kropak 23 280_Petizb_krp23	Former title: 24 Bud/B.P.C. 5 3 leaves damaged, 36×4 cm, 4 lines. Script: Old (West) Javanese quadratic. Language: Old Javanese. Title: Tattvajñana (see Acri 201b); time and place of writing: unknown.
3.	Kropak 24 280_Petizd_krp24	Former title: 25 Bud 7 leaves + some broken leaves, ca. 35×4 cm, 4 lines. Script: Old (West) Javanese quadratic. Language: Old Javanese. Title: Sañ Hyañ Hayu (?); time and place of writing: unknown.
