

## The Javanese way of law: early modern sloka phenomena

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### Abstrak

The author's investigation of early-modern Javanese law reveals that judicial authority does not come from the contents of legal titles or juridical texts, but from legal maxims and variations thereof. A century and a half ago Simon Keyzer, a recognized scholar of Javanese law, noted that understanding of that law is dependent upon a grasp of such pithy expressions, which provide the key to the whole body of suits. (\*Preface\*, C.F. Winter, *\*Javaansche Zamenspraken\**, 1858, which examines hundreds of *\*sloka\**, the majority of which are directed to prevailing legal practice). Drawing upon the contents of 18th century Javanese legal texts, the present work builds upon Keyzer's and Winter's references to '*\*sloka\*-phenomena*', namely *\*sloka\** proper (maxims) and its derivatives *\*sinalokan\** (that made of *\*sloka\**), *\*aksara\** here meaning legal principles, and *\*prakara\** (matter, case). These are usually conveyed in vignettes illustrating their function and as a group, constitute the essence of traditional Javanese written law.