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Playing Along Infinite Rivers: Alternative Readings of a Malay State

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

by

Syed Husni Bin Syed Abu Bakar

August 2015

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Hendrik Maier, Chairperson
Dr. Mariam Lam
Dr. Tamara Ho

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The Dissertation of Syed Husni Bin Syed Abu Bakar is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Playing Along Infinite Rivers: Alternative Readings of a Malay State

by

Syed Husni Bin Syed Abu Bakar

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Comparative Literature
University of California, Riverside, August 2015
Dr. Hendrik Maier, Chairperson

This dissertation deals intimately and critically with the fundamental question of Malay statecraft. It presents texts that have been uncritically considered ‘cartographic’, ‘historical’ and ‘literary’ on Perak a step into the different possible ways of navigating and thinking about a Malay geopolitical entity beyond prescribed Cartesian maps and boundaries, by first exploring the context of the cartographic encounter between 18th century European and Malay paradigms, ones which underlie the different modes of representing the world in map-making, writing and reading. These two maps – an 1876 Malay map and a 1792 British map - could be considered as prototypical products of map-making technologies prevalent then, showing distinctive mechanisms of selective representation that make certain places/points/aspects/people present while obscuring others. It provides an introspective and comparative analysis of these maps with other contemporaneous visual (maps) and textual (narratives) in English and Malay to address the looming descriptive questions of how the maps came to be, and how they came to be as such. In other words, what stories do the maps tell of the processes involved in their making and how the world (of which the state of Perak is a small, yet for the purpose of this study, the most immediate and interesting part) was seen from the eyes and in the

minds of their makers? Literary perspectives of early scholars/authors of texts on the state exhibiting manners in which Perak and its population have been written about and languaged by way of stories, anecdotes, and historical narratives are thoroughly examined. In the process of cultural and textual translation, from one into the other, and the ‘other’ into mainstream historical texts during the inception of modernity in the region, unilateral impositions of labels, laws and ideals correspond with ones that had already been long institutionalized in Europe. The construction of a historical reality through the acts of compiling, reading, writing about and translating Malay texts, the British historical and literary paradigms (and their supposed biases for primitive, fantastic, enchanting tales that befit the stereotypical notion of people living in villages in previously uncharted tropical land) decided which Malay texts would be printed, reprinted, and incorporated into it. Ultimately determining the logical and cultural grounds on which the people of Perak might be understood through long-accepted discourses such as ‘history’ and ‘literature’, this dissertation offers methodologies and critical paradigms of seeing beyond the constraints of discursive practices, and into the silences buried between the lines of canonical histories.

Central to alternatively archaeologizing these silences are the *syair* in *Misa Melayu*, and maps that have been considered irrelevant to factual historiography, as well as other Malay *syairs*, namely *Syair Bahr An-Nisa*, *Syair Perahu 1* and *Syair Perahu 2* with similar thematic foundations of aquatic navigations, ships, and rituals involved in linguistic/literary/historical representations of the Malay world. Based on the underlying notion of the ‘cosmos’ as the fundamental stuff being represented in the texts, the main

foci points of this dissertation are the metaphorical and physical correlations between the *syairs* and meaningful embodiments of these texts in the historical reality of Perak specifically and more generally the Malay world. A further step into the realm of the oral/aural world of Malay narratives necessitates an intricate discussion on the communities of imagination from which these fluid texts were recited and heard, produced and read. Reflecting nuanced Malay gnoses/noetics of the past, literary artifacts like the *syair* carry with it ethereal poetic elements that have been long buried under the dust of history. Also put into consideration are religious texts that circulated contemporaneously with the *hikayats* and were the earliest to be recited, translated, and read, and therefore relationally connected as they provide early bases for the first Malay lexicons used in translations of any *hikayat*. Rather than imposing any definite status on the *hikayat* as religious or non-religious, it is more practical to examine the fact that the *hikayat*, and texts that have been considered religious and exegetical were circulating in the same literary space, and thus deserve a more refined and attentive reading. In short, all throughout these pages, hopefully meaningful, poetic connections between the world, the reader and texts beyond prescriptive, familiar concepts could be drawn by readers other than myself.

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To the subtle, infinite memory and reverence
of the innumerable, inconceivable gods
of stories, of truth, of water, this text is dedicated.

To ask for a map, is to say, tell me a story.

Peter Turchi

At the beginning of time, the ant's waist was not narrow.
It's all in Genesis, in the version that circulates by word of mouth on Colombia's Pacific coast. The ant was round and filled with water.
But God had forgotten to water the world. Realizing his blunder, he asked for help. The ant refused.
Then God's fingers pinched his belly.
Thus were born all the rivers and the seven seas.

Eduardo Galeano

Introduction

Before anything, perhaps it is important to acknowledge that this is a dissertation about reading and writing in/of/about/along a state in the Malay peninsula in its inception in the 18th century. To justify its necessity in academic fields – area studies, particularly Southeast Asian Studies, Anthropology, Comparative Literature, and other fields in the humanities and social sciences - would be a moot point, due to the unspoken-about abundance of texts on texts. Literally they fill up the shelves of dedicated professors, invested students, and interested lay-readers. Figuratively they crowd minds of many readers with multitudes of theoretical narratives on things we have considered we have known all this while. It is with the awareness of these facts that I read *Misa Melayu*, a Malay *hikayat* ‘oral-narrative’ with a critical, alternative, curve. On these pages, I have sought the possibilities of not only asking many typological, anthropological, philosophical, literary, historical, and historiographical questions about the text, but also to bring them forth in such a manner that would appeal to a non-academic audience. Also a factor that I keep in mind throughout the writing of this dissertation is the perspective of a reader completely uninitiated to Malay oral folklore, that would, during the course of a chance reading of a *hikayat*, spark up a different set of questions than readers with an academic background. Therefore I tread firmly, gently and carefully, and whenever I get the chance, playfully, on the decaying rungs of the suspended bridge of theoretical discourse, picking as I go along which rung to step on and which ones to skip. A wrong step and one might fall into the abyss of incomprehension. All the while, attempting to

get closer to the ever-running streams of abstract concepts often used in literary unwrapping of Malay texts.

There have been many books written on the subject of Malay reading and writing, reflecting, enunciating, explaining, describing, some proscribing and prescribing, the multiple ways in which the world is viewed, sensed, perceived and written about in the Malay language. Such works have taken certain concepts, theories and metaphors as givens, be they literary, historical, anthropological, geographical, archaeological, epistemological, philological, cultural, and so on. They include, but are not limited to, ‘Malay’, ‘Malayness’, ‘history’, ‘culture’, and ‘literature’, and are utilized as means to certain explanatory ends, mainly to gain a better perspective on a people and their thought patterns, in which human beings, languages and worlds interact, interwine, intersect, and indeed, interrupt each other in remarkable ways.

Some works devoted to this metaphorical penchant towards understanding Malay literature are Shahnnon Ahmad’s *Sastera sebagai Seismograf Kehidupan* (1991) (‘Literature as Seismograph of Life’), Vladimir Braginsky’s *...And Sails the Boat Downstream* (2007), Barbara Andaya’s *Perak, the Abode of Grace: A Study of an Eighteenth Century Malay State* (1979) and Henk Maier’s *We Are Playing Relatives: A Survey of Malay Writing* (2004), Muhammad Hj Salleh’s *Romance and Laughter in the Malay Archipelago* (2006), G.L. Koster’s *Roaming through Seductive Gardens: Readings in Malay Narrative* (2007). As apparent in the titles, certain metaphorical concepts, or idiomatic expressions are taken, adopted to be conduits of meaning for enlightening explorations and discoveries in Malay literature. While in a parallel manner emulating these works in the act of putting into academic practice common expressions, words and phrases that are already present and in circulation, this dissertation is geared towards a

destination that is, while present, still underexplored and understudied: translation in its multitudinous omnipresence – from language to language, from world to language, from culture to culture, from culture to language, from language to culture, from one literary form to another, from world to language to culture and so on. And as such it is a piece of work that stands on its own, more of like an island connected to stable mainlands of factual knowledge and other remote islands of alternative theory by oceans, seas and rivers.

In the larger Southeast Asian context, works such as Thongchai Winichakul's *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (1994) and Shelly Errington's *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm* (1989) have informed, and inspired the methodological, theoretical and philosophical approaches in this dissertation. However, there is a need, from my point of view, to step further away from an embedded concentration on the geopolitical nature of recognizing and getting to know Southeast Asia, which as a geopolitical unit and term of reference, 'Southeast Asia' did not exist until mid 20th century. In light of the mindblowing cultural and linguistic, and also literary, diversity in and of the region is often ignored in favor of the self-serving importance of institutionalized forms, however impossible and unfavorable it is.

In the second paragraph of his book Terry Eagleton (2007) asks a very amusing, yet discussion-worthy question – 'What is the taste of geometry?' Nonsensical and out of touch with reality, the literal, and realistic-minded reader might think, much like the Chomskyan sentence 'Colorless green ideas sleep furiously', perhaps the most-quoted example of how syntax could defy semantics in the construction of linguistic forms.

Among other things, these expressions, one from a philosopher (who, in a footnote on the same page denied that he is one) and another from a linguist cum political critic, illustrate the bifurcative reality, and the gulf dividing two schools in Western academic and intellectual thought when it comes to thinking about life and language. Eagleton's question strikes us because it combines a word that is emotive and sensory 'taste', with a word that represents a field of science dealing with measuring the earth, that, like many if not all scientific fields are absent of emotions. An interesting claim related to Chomskyan theory of language is that "there is no Chomskyan person, for whom language is pure syntax, pure form insulated from and independent of all meaning, context, perception, emotion, memory, action, and the dynamic nature of communication."¹ Clearly the missing piece of the ginormous puzzle with connective protrusions that could possibly fill in the in-between discursive blank spaces contains a fundamental definitive feature of humanness, and therefore, all human literary, and/or linguistic expressions. While not necessarily filling in this space in a universal sense, the discussions in this dissertation could provide alternatives for understanding sense-making through many languages and discourses. As such a text, it is intended for serious academic readers of Southeast Asia, and/or of Malaysia, and layreaders and aficionados of literature in general.

An inclination towards sciences such as cartography, linguistics, cognitive science, geography, is expected in any academic work written on a state, for various canonical and institutionalized reason. And in the writings of historians who documented the state of Perak, this inclination is easily visible in the geometric maps, lexicons,

¹ (Lakoff and Johnson 6)

numerical records and ethnographic surveys incorporated into historical texts of the state. An entire part of the world and its contents are filled into the discursive orifices constructed by the same hands that fill them, over and over again due to its prescribed acceptance in newer civilizations – non European; and normalized consumption in the older ones – European. This necessitates a creative, systematic, coherent deconstruction and deformation of the rational. Or an interruption of it, and/or an escape from it by resorting to objectifying the discursive and epistemological means that have been utilized, and a deliberate abstracting mutation of the orifices that have been normalized in our knowledge. Either way, this performative act of stepping away from accepted discourses in institutionalized knowledge has to be done carefully, by selectively picking out the discursive forms, or *epistemes*, that require critiquing, and willful (wishful?) transformations by those who wish to learn more about a state, beyond its constructed nature, in print and outside of it.

Few have ventured to such a nondescript place from which one might view metaphysically the ongoings of knowledge, for being at such a place entails holding oneself back from accepting at face value any text that has been produced about a state. I make no claims to have been to that place. The discussions in this dissertation compile fragmentary attempts at reaching, grasping towards it by first acknowledging the lacks and absences of a ‘beyondness’ in canonized discursive forms in epistemologies on Malay literature. Along with the familiar, unfamiliar concepts – such as non-space, non-theory, the unthought, the unread, the unwritten, the untalked about, textual silences – are mobilized. Here, I wish to make it clear that in reading and writing about the primary

texts in this dissertation that I do not dismiss all canonized literary and historical, and other discursive forms, indeed they have been beneficial in many instances. Rather, I provide addenda and disclaimers to them, mere reminders that there are alternatives available when it comes to reading and understanding our reading consciousness. Furthermore, what I find truly exciting, are inspirations for these alternatives could be found in the texts themselves.

Misa Melayu starts with a genealogy that link the ancestry of Perak rulers to Alexander the Great, much in the fashion of many other Malay *hikayats*². A combination of poetry and prose, it tells the story of, for the most part, the reign of Sultan Iskandar Syah in the state of Perak from 1756 to 1770. The first part, mainly comprising prose, tells us about the early Sultans of Perak and their sprawling web of kinship, as well as wars and family feuds in it.

It starts with the reign Almarhum Jalilu'llah, the first sultan of Perak, who left 2 princes. One of them, Marhum Besar³ succeeded the throne and reigned for 120 years. Unfortunately, he did not have an heir to the throne, resulting in the ascension of his nephew, Sultan Ala'uddin Riayat Shah who ruled for 20 years. The next sultan - Mudzafar Shah, was the younger brother of the previous one. He was Raja Chulan's uncle and was the one who commissioned Raja Chulan to write *Misa Melayu*. During his time in power, Perak was split into two between him and his brother, Sultan Muhammad Shah. This dispute was later solved through the marriage between the son of Sultan

² such as *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* and *Sulalat as-Salatin*

³ *Marhum* or its longer form *almarhum* may be translated as 'the late' or 'the deceased', derived from the Arabic word *ruh* that means 'soul' or 'spirit'

Muhammad Shah, Raja Muda Iskandar and the daughter of Sultan Mudzafar Shah. Raja Muda Iskandar then became the ruler of Perak, known as Sultan Iskandar Dzu'l-karnain. The *syair* in the text captures the voyage of this Sultan going downstream along the Perak River to the sea. In the last few pages, Raja Chulan tells us about about the successor of Sultan Iskandar Dzu'l-karnain (also known as Marhum Kahar posthumously), Sultan Mahmud Shah, who ruled for 8 years, and was succeeded by final Sultan mentioned in the story.

I wrote my summary above by condensing information in the Malay and English⁴ outlines of the story in the 1962 edition. Both used the word 'history' (Malay *sejarah*) to describe the text. Ironically, this word is nowhere to be found in the text itself. In fact, there is a big possibility that the Malay outline was translated from the English one, thus also importing the historical leaning of Richard Winstedt, the British scholar-officer who is responsible in the modern publication of the text. From one angle, a 'history' is similar to a summary in the sense that they are both abridged forms of information, only including in them what is important, and excluding what is less important. All the bits from *Misa Melayu* in the outlines are from the prose part. The whole *syair* is described in just one line in the Malay outline in the preface that praises yet obscures it. The shorthanded treatment of the *syair* in the context of summarizing *Misa Melayu* can be compared to how British historians have looked at *Misa Melayu* in 'summarizing' Perak's history, neglecting it in favor of something more familiar and more important, so to speak. R.J. Wilkinson, Winstedt's mentor and co-author of *A History of Perak* (1974),

⁴ These outlines frame the Pustaka Antara publication of the text

preferred the earlier-dated *Sejarah Melayu* as a native source material to tell the history of Perak instead of *Misa Melayu*.

In an early ethnographic text on Perak, the state was not even noticed by the ‘public’ until a British resident was killed there⁵. Case in point, the murder of J.W.W. Birch in 1875 - probably the most infamous chapter of Perak’s history. So much so, that it eclipses other events happening in that period. So much so, that whatever happened before it is relegated into the realm of unimportance. It is a fact that in Perak history, as we understand it now, events concerning the British have priority over any other events. This colonial molds of history have pre-determined what matters and what does not, its existence, initiated by British scholar-officers in the past, is continuously refortified through the machinery of modern education in Malaysia⁶, fossilized in Perak and Malay historiography:

Nationalist histories, which might be expected to provide an alternative to colonial accounts, have been particularly culpable in their failure to produce a different understanding of the past. While post-independence researchers challenged colonial histories in various ways – by reading British sources against the grain, by drawing on non-Western source materials, by adopting Weberian or Marxist or Foucaultian frames of reference, by studying social rather than political history, or by writing “history from below” – they retained British Malaya as their starting point and frame of reference. The centrality of the British administration, the colonial export economy, and relations with London, continues to be widely accepted.”⁷

Although British and Dutch writings from the 16th century onwards have provided a wealth of knowledge about Malays, they have too much liberty in shaping and concatenating representations of events to imply causality and give them certain

⁵ “This Malayan State, it will be remembered, came into public notice in 1875-76, through the murder there of the British Resident, and the despatch by our Government of a combined naval and military force to exact satisfaction for the outrage” (McNair i)

⁶ “In the early years, the instruction of history in Malay schools was not clearly separated from the teaching of classical Malay literature like *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. The Windstedt Report of 1917, however, proposed that history teaching based on Malay chronicles be replaced by a more scientific method.” (Soda 195)

⁷ (Kratoska 231)

meanings⁸. These “fictional” aspect(s) should make us think twice before upholding certain texts or sources as being closer to reality than others:

The reality of Malaysian history, like the reality of the history of any other country, is that it consists of the activities of ordinary people earning a living, feeding their families, raising and educating their children, seeking amusement, falling ill and getting well, and as a rule avoiding the government whenever possible.⁹

Perhaps why the Sultan himself went beyond the walls of his *istana* (‘palace’) to see the outside world in its complex, chaotic, vibrant, veracity, is because there is no institutionalized governmental presence in the everyday. Therefore, his journey offers a metaphorical cue for the everyday reader, someone like myself - to explore Malay narratives in their real-life contexts. Reading the two main texts, or literary artifacts, of this dissertation along with this awareness: the *syair* in *Misa Melayu* and a Jawi-Malay river map dated 1876, might make for better explorations of narrative spaces, and better sight of possibilities of meanings, wordplays and nuances at work. However, this is only possible by first critically understanding the structural framework of knowledge production through which the Malay *hikayat* has been read, or disregarded, before.

These two texts are given the treatment of literary artifacts on the Malay state represented, Perak. Reading texts on early days of modernity in postmodern times, or ‘post-postmodern’ times bring in a barrage of critical readings that have been produced on the main texts, by a wide range of personalities such as history professors, British scholar-residents, and Malay ‘men of letters’. Barbara Andaya, a professor on Malay history, and an expert on Perak history, has compiled in a succinctly coherent and

⁸ “...for example, what Michelet in his great history of the French Revolution construed as a drama of Romantic transcendence, his contemporary Tocqueville emplotted as an ironic Tragedy.” (White 85)

⁹ (Kratoska 243)

historically linear manner the important events in the history of the state. Her work, seminal, interesting, and inspiring, open up the doors of possibilities for a *hikayat* to not be dismissed as a ‘literary’ text and to be considered seriously as a ‘historical’ text, too. And in the world represented in the main texts as well as the world of the reader-writer-translators, the ways in which one could incorporate into one’s imagination a semi-abstract space such as a state is many and manifold. Yet, these two epistemes have consistently held their grounds in most writings about the state.

In the first chapter, a critically ‘playful’ reading of the main texts is presented, taking the cue from Sultan’s ‘pleasure journey’ along the Perak river after the death of his wife, sailing on a boat, making multiple stops at different places along the way. He ventures beyond his palace, “the center of the Malay *negeri*”¹⁰, witnessing life elsewhere in the vicinity of Perak as shown in the *syair* and in the 1876 map.

¹⁰ (Muhammad Haji Salleh 161)

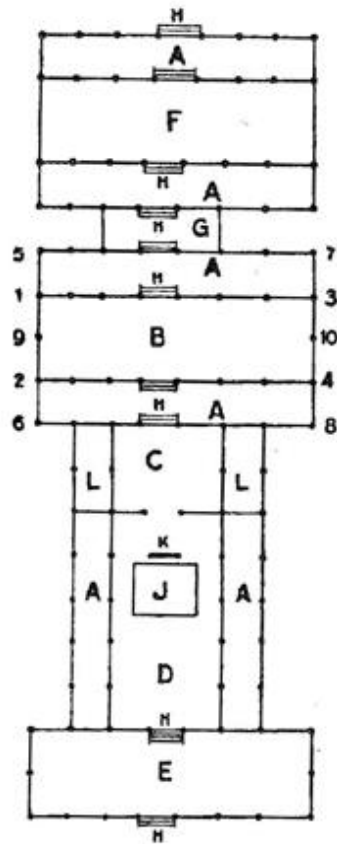


Fig 1.: The ground plan of a Perak Palace, most probably of Istana Iskandariah in Kuala Kangsar, Perak. The letters on the plan indicate the various parts of the palace:-

- A *serambi*, verandahs.
- B *istana*, palace proper.
- C *balai rong*, inner hall, sometimes reserved for ladies.
- D *balai besar*, central hall or audience.
- E *balai penghadapan*, outer hall of audience.
- F *penanggah*, kitchen.
- G *selang*, passage.
- H *pintu tangga*, doors and steps.
- J *peterana*, dais for princes of the blood.
- K *singasana*, throne.
- L *bilek kundang*, rooms for pages.
- 1-4 *tiang sudut*, corner pillars
- 5-8 *tiang rembat guntong*, verandah pillars.
- 9, 10 *tiang tinggi*, tall central pillars.

Selesai sahaja hari perkabongan atas kemangkatan Raja Permaisuri itu, baginda berangkat dengan segala pengiringnya. Segala kisah keberangkatan baginda bermain-main di laut ini, ada diterangkan oleh pengarang buku ini dengan jalinan syair yang panjang lagi menarik.

Right after the mourning day of the passing of the *Raja Permaisuri*, His Highness departed with all his escorts. The whole story of the sultan's journey at sea is told by the author of this book with a long and interesting *syair*.¹¹

There is no better cure for grief than to play, *bermain* (and its reduplicated form *bermain-main*) as exemplified by the Sultan in the *syair* in his long journey along the Perak river, downstream to the sea . Inspired by this expression, I read and write about the *syair* in *Misa Melayu* in the hopes of gaining a more balanced and holistic perspective on Malay poetics and imagination invisible, and inaudible to an audience distracted by compulsions of reading a 'historical' and/or 'literary' text. And alongside the 'playful'

¹¹ (Raja Chulan 17)

reading, readings of texts that have been produced by authors who have had the single-handed, unilateral privilege of determining the status of native literary artifacts, perhaps unbeknownst to them, are also provided. Many of these texts are ethnographical, documentative and (auto)biographical, some travel-oriented and navigational, some of them historical and literary, others more spurious, lively and story-like sketches. Many of the authors who wrote them – John McNair, Frank Swettenham, R.J. Wilkinson, R.O. Winstedt, W.E. Maxwell, J.W.W. Birch, Thomas Forrest – were British gentlemen who were messengers of industrialized, ‘civilized’ Europe, tempered by an Enlightenment-based worldview that is prevalent in the pages of their books. If making sense of a Malay state is a guessing game (the crucial question at hand remains “What is Perak?”), then all these writers would be players, along with the nameless cartographer who made the 1876 map and Raja Chulan, the poet-composer of *Misa Melayu*, along with Barbara Andaya, and along with countless others who have written on the state.

As a Malay saying goes, *tak kenal maka tak cinta* ‘not to know means not to love’, alluding to recognition as the proverbial precondition of getting to know someone or something. Obviously the meaning could be applied to describe the initial encounter between Europeans and Malays in the first days of the arrival of modernity on the Malay peninsula. Another possible application of this proverb is to a present-day reader reading European texts about Malays in the 17th – 21st century onwards. In efforts to purposefully dodge the profoundly serious compulsion of a historical and literary modes of reading, and the certainty they bring to the reading table, getting to know the players more intimately through a close, yet critical, reading of their texts would lend itself to a more

balanced, empathic and nuanced understanding of Malays and Malayness as seen through their eyes.

In the second chapter, complementary and disparate spatialities – historico-literary, poetic, narrative - are discussed in relation to acts of translation and languaging in the context of the transfer of meaning from world to text, and from one language to another. Parallel to an embedded, prescribed subjectivity within the discourse on statecraft and its historicization, run streams of imagination – the Malay one, next to, and/or perhaps intersecting with the European one at various points. Both of them are guided by pasts that inform as they restrict, and place foundationally, truths possible to be imagined, about an unknown place populated by unknown peoples, before the arrival of the English language. Therefore, the pre- or the ante- to the beginning of English thought and writing about Perak would be a state of ‘nothingness’, the ‘unspoken’, ‘unwritten’, ‘unthought’. It is within this ‘unknownness’ that multiple tensions between representations surface, challenging long-accepted truths, tempting further introspection and providing opportunities to reconfigure reading paradigms to include both an appreciation of ‘factual’ representations, and an experimental dive into the silences beyond discursive possibilities. The ‘non-factual’ or the ‘fictive’ and the ‘poetic’ lie in the domain of the latter, vulnerable and delicate reflective pieces of meaning, and picking them out requires tactful hops along and across discursive streams, one that does not miss ornately hidden parts that are ‘truths’ in/of their own, to be read, interpreted and thought about.

In the third chapter, the beginning of *Misa Melayu* is discussed together with the usage of Jawi script as being a tell-tale sign of the text's religious framing, thus necessitating a hermeneutics with a sensibility towards recital technologies, emotivity and embodiments of meaning that it entails. Also, the primordialities of cosmic beginnings in religious texts and epics of various origins circulating in the Malay peninsula are taken into question and discussion, especially in the matter of time, and/or temporality. Between the physical and metaphysical features of reading lies the liminal space of mediation of meanings of highly localized notions salient in the *syair*. In between the intricate multiplicities of Malay and British 'cosmo-narratives', and ways of traveling and living, lie hidden anatomies – physical and metaphysical - and systems of emotions that could be finely traced and mapped out, for the sake of figuring out metonymical, metaphorical, cartographical, textual, navigational, literary, ontological, philosophical connections between the word and the world.

The fourth chapter presents a critical discussion on practicalities, issues, and relevant data with regards to translating, and transliterating Malay manuscripts. The resplendent and rich oral/aural past of *Misa Melayu* has been buried under a heap of archival information, random bracketed letters, slashes and decimal points. There are many copies, published versions and discrete components of *Misa Melayu*, and also many other related Malay texts, now kept in libraries in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Holland, and the United Kingdom. The diversity and widespreadness of the locations of these texts make it impossible for any version to be deemed as 'the original'. This chapter is concluded with the full transliteration and translation of the *syair* in *Misa Melayu* -

Sultan Iskandar Bermain-main ke Laut 'Sultan Iskandar Journeying to the Sea'. Probably this *syair* is the biggest instance of a silenced narrative hidden by a historiographical consciousness that does not have space for a full appreciation of Malay literary forms from the past. The first translation of this *syair* is available in Andaya's 1975 dissertation, yet it did not make it into its monograph version.

CHAPTER 1:

Playing along the Perak river: readings of an 18th century Malay state¹²

Perak: a summary

From an old bundle of notes¹³ compiled by a British officer, W.E. Maxwell¹⁴, on the royal families of Perak, Barbara Andaya, a historian researching on the 18th century Malay state of Perak discovered a Malay map dated 1876. She later included this map in the introductory pages of her dissertation, later published as a book, entitled *Perak: The Abode of Grace* (1979). If one were to categorize this work, it would not be inaccurate to call it a history of Perak. To be more specific, it is a history of the Malay state of Perak in the eighteenth century. If one were to read about the state at present it would usually be described in terms of its primary resource – tin, the mineral that mythically gave the state its name (*perak* in Malay means silver, referring to the color of the alluvial tin deposits abundant in the state) and its constantly changing political situation following the win of the Opposition coalition in March 2008 and the subsequent takeover by the ruling government of Malaysia.

¹² I would like to thank Narumi Shitara and Sunandini Lal at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University for providing editorial remarks to the article version of this chapter, published in *Southeast Asian Studies*, 4(1), April 2015.

¹³ MS 46943, “Notes on Genealogies of Rajas and Chiefs of Perak” compiled by W.E. Maxwell, Royal Asiatic Society, London.

¹⁴ “Born 1946: Son of Sir Peter Benson Maxwell, (one time Recorder and Judge in the Straits Settlements). Served in Malaya from 1869 to 1895, latterly as British Resident, Selangor (1889), Colonial Secretary, 1890. Founder of Maxwell’s Hill, Taiping (1876) when Assistant Resident Larut. Keen supporter and contributor to the Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, (over 30 articles or notes). Vice President of the Society in 1894-95. Died at sea, while Governor of the Gold Coast, West Africa, December, 1897. Father of Sir George Maxwell, later Chief Secretary F.M.S.” Short biography of Maxwell from (Winstedt and Wilkinson, inside back cover).

A precursor of Andaya's work in Perak history is *A History of Perak* (1974), which included three articles by W. E. Maxwell – two on historical manuscripts and one titled “Shamanism in Perak”. Central to both histories – Andaya's and the Europeans' – is the presence of trade, as events with regards to Perak history are explained in terms of the concentration and movement of capital, complex networks of kinship and power, and the multifaceted relations between factions competing for control of Perak's resources – the British, the Dutch, the Achinese, the Bugis, the Perak Malays, and the Siamese. This is an indicative of a modern understanding of the English word ‘history’ as being laden with dates, timelines, important agents – usually those in power - and the overarching presence of trade as the main catalyst of events. What Niall Ferguson systematically unravels in *The Ascent of Money* (2008), that “financial history is the essential back story behind all history”¹⁵ had been iterated by Winstedt and Wilkinson in the introduction of their book, claiming that “...at the back of all Perak history has been trade.”¹⁶ The parts on Perak in national histories have unsurprisingly followed this tradition, and as a result, Perak is known popularly in Malaysian history usually for two events: the signing of the Pangkor Treaty of 1874 that allowed British to act as royal advisors to the Malay sultans, effectively starting the British Malaya period of Malaysian history; and the murder of J.W.W. Birch, a British resident, by Seputum, a slave of Dato Maharajalela, a royal chief.

With the prominence of trade and printed sources in historiography, it is easy to overlook the cognitive, linguistic, and cultural nuances in the paradigm that underlie native historical source materials, such as the 1876 Malay map and *Misa Melayu*, the 18th

¹⁵ (Ferguson, back cover)

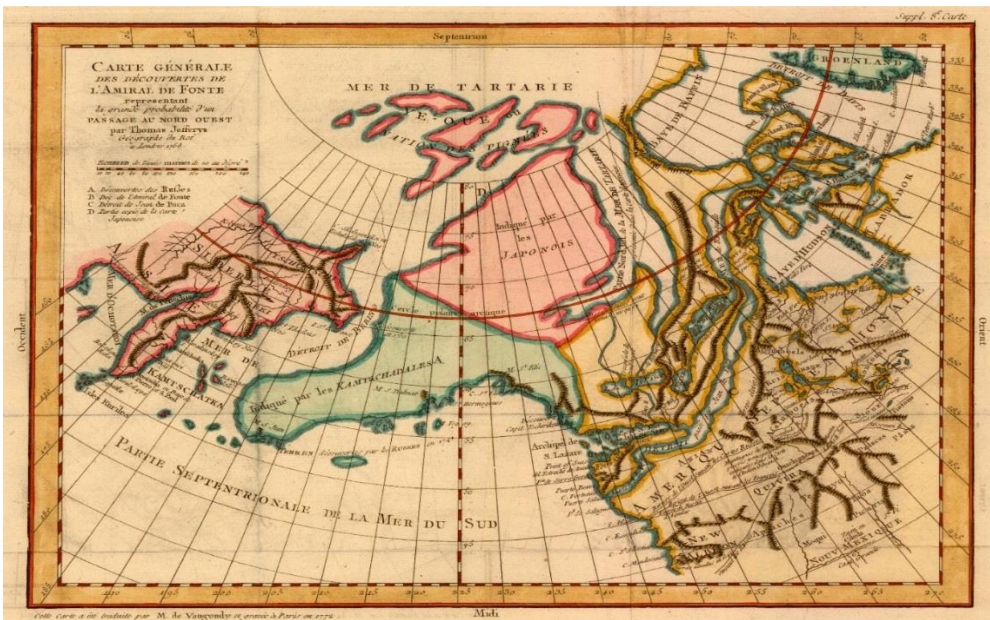
¹⁶ (Winstedt & Wilkinson, 1)

century Malay text about the sultanate of Perak in the 18th century. I contend that the historical approach to these source materials must be balanced with complementary and supplementary information, as well as other modes of comprehension gained from alternative readings that illuminate aspects beyond historical considerations

Readings of strange maps: mythology of/on the peninsula



Map 1: 1639 map of California as an island, apparently influenced by a quote from *Las sergas de Esplandian* (1510) by Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo. (Jacobs 7)



Map 2: A 1762 update of a 1768 English map showing the Northwest Passage by Didier Robert de Vaugondy, cited by Jacobs (2009) as “a prime example of wishful mapping” – taken from *Strange Maps* blog - <http://bigthink.com/strange-maps>

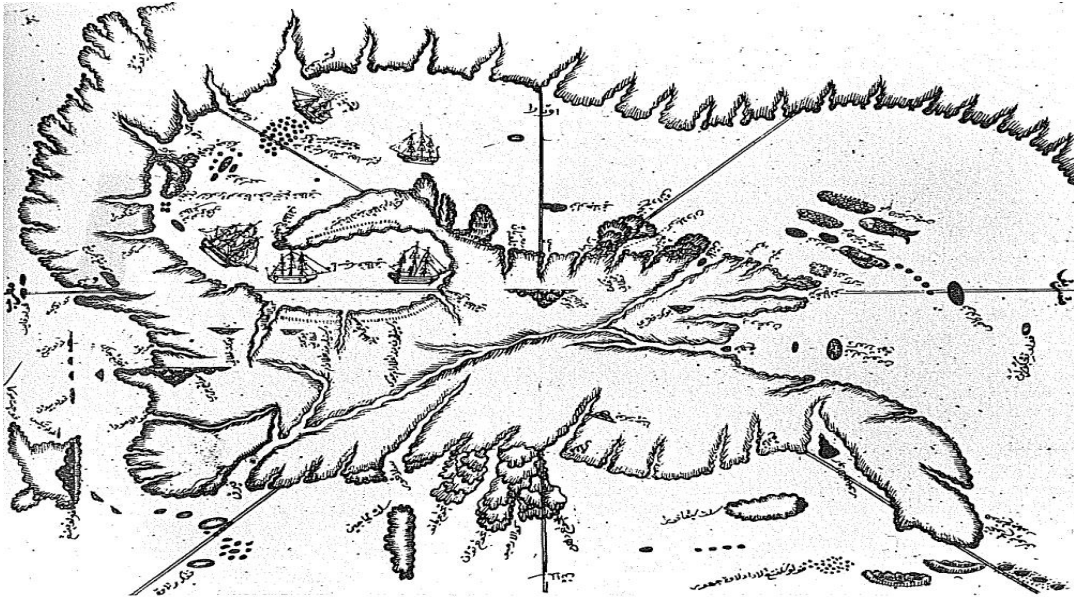
Strange Maps, an anthology of rare maps, compiles and discusses non-conventional cartographic curiosities including maps with non-existent waterways or water bodies such as an 18th century map showing the mythical Northwest Passage¹⁷ – a fictional aquatic route from the Gulf of California to St. Lawrence River near Quebec; and a 1639 map depicting California as an island¹⁸. The map in Fig. 3 shows a similar mixture of fact and myth – both Perak and Kelantan rivers geographically exist as separate rivers instead of the single continuous flow represented as a canal running through the Peninsula. Beyond our appreciation for these aspects of an old cartographic document, there lies a lesser-known story about the production of the map, how the representation of a currently non-existent waterway and the most interesting one of how we, as (post?)modern map readers should read these imaginative depictions. Paul Wheatley (1966) in his seminal research on the early mappings of the Malay peninsula, the transpeninsular channel appears in 46 other European maps predating the one discovered by Phillimore and part of it actually represents a *penarikan*¹⁹ – a semi-aquatic route for sea vessels to go through on which ships have to be dragged. The directions of the bowsprits seem to indicate to us that the ships have just passed through the transpeninsular channel on their way to Pattani, a renowned regional and international trade center in the 18th century. Benjamin (1986) listed six transpeninsular channels that

¹⁷ <http://bigthink.com/ideas/548-wishful-mapping-a-half-baked-alaska-and-the-passage-that-wasnt-there?page=all>

¹⁸ (Jacobs, 7)

¹⁹ A derivation of the Malay word *tarik* ‘to pull’ or ‘to drag’, *penarikan* could be translated as ‘drag-way’ or ‘portage’

criss-cross the Malay peninsula, with some converging at certain points, in which the one that included in this chapter is labeled ‘the Perak-Patani route.’²⁰



Map 3: An early eighteenth century Malay map of the Malay Peninsula with the mysterious Perak – Kelantan transpeninsular channel. Despite its geographical inaccuracies, the map served its purpose by showing the most convenient trade route for ships coming to and going from Pattani. In R.H. Phillimore, ‘An Early Map of the Malay Peninsula’ *Imago Mundi* 13 (1956): 175-79”.

In ancient maps of the Malay peninsula, there is no one fixed name for any location, they change and keep getting revised from one map to another, as do the representations of Southeast Asia²¹ land mass as a sub-unit of the larger continent of Asia. Lineages of Portuguese, Greek, Arab, Turkish, Chinese cartographers that wished to map the world were mostly working on maps that were drawn by sailing explorers, or privateers, who explored uncharted waters and documented them using their own craft. Through comparing, copying, and charting various cartographic representations of the

²⁰ The 6 transpeninsular channels discussed in Benjamin (1986) are: (1) the Kedah – Patani route, (2) the Perak-Patani route (3) the Bernam-Pahang route, (4) the Kelantan-Melaka route, (5) its Pahang branch, and (6) the Sembrong route.

²¹ As a geopolitical unit and term of reference, ‘Southeast Asia’ did not exist until mid 20th century.

water and land bodies, the mapmakers come up with very diverse ideas on how to represent the world and its constituents. The first to map a space/place would most commonly be the authoritative voice in deciding how a continent or a sea would look like on a map, gaining a certain kind of primacy over the ones that come after it, subtly subjugating them under an old, overarching spell of cartographic canonicity. Such is the effect of Ptolemy on the mapping of the Malay peninsula, which went through several revisions of cartographic representation – from *Aurea Chersonese* (the Golden Chersonese), *Malacca* with its various spelling (*Malacha*, *Malacca*, *Mallacqua*, *Malaca*), *Alta India*, *Malaya* – each one of them distinctly different from each other yet indirectly reflects those that came before them. A question that could be asked here is what made the cartographer decide not to merely reproduce older names and come up with new ones? Why or how exactly did Southeast Asia and its contents change on these 15th and 16th century maps? An answer partially lies in the predominant cosmological understanding that the cartographers have, another probably lies in the developments that pushed exploration and cartography as ways of documenting parts of nature into a cyclical stage of constant revisions, parallel with the ebbs and flows of linguistic change that inevitably pass with time. More pressing questions on these maps - what is the basis of these changes in place names? What is the factor that underlies a cartographer's inclination to rename a place/space and/or represent it in a different way from how it has been represented before?

“The Ptolemaic Southeast Asian mainland is retained as well, though it is dwarfed by the false peninsular subcontinent. Martellus places various Southeast Asian islands known from Marco Polo and other travelers in relation to the bogus peninsula rather than true Ptolemaic Malaya. He also inscribes the new subcontinent with Polian comments about the Malay Peninsula, reinforcing the original *error*. The Martellus map (or its unknown prototype) thus gave birth to an error that would have a profound impact on the mapping of Southeast Asia, as well as on the mapping of America, for the next half century.”²²

Cartographic errors, at least in the case of the maps mentioned above (if not the entire corpus of pre-modern Southeast Asian maps), can be attributed to their conformity to the three basic attributes of modern geographical and geometrical cartography: “scale, projection and symbolization”²³. Mostly the errors are results of the fictive imaginaire of the cartographers transferred onto a form that requires metrical correctness, based on the modern functions of the map – to delineate landscape and land space, for purposes of determining one’s *loci* in the universe’s infinite *topoi*. Indeed, reason-based fact-making did not come to surface in maps that include the Malay peninsula until the late 18th century via Dutch and English maps. Against these maps, a map such as the 1489 Martellus map of the ‘dragon-tail’ peninsula, which causes uncertainty regarding the land space it represents, between Latin America (and Southeast Asia (which includes the Malay peninsula), would seem incongruent. Complications arise in the onomasto-genesis of the place- and space- names that populate the maps, and the directionality of the peninsula, begging for a new and more flexible hermeneutics in cartography.

William Richardson (2003), in a controversial paper rejects a popular assumption that the peninsula actually represents Latin America, particularly around Tierra del Fuego and the Strait of Magellan, due to the fallibility of the toponymic claims and coordinate-based feature analysis on the ‘dragon-tail’ peninsula, citing the suggestion as ‘not

²² (Suarez 94)

²³ It is suggested, perhaps correctly, that “each element is a source of distortion” (Monmonier 5)

substantiated'. Thomas Suarez (1999), likened the peninsula to a phantom, dubbing it 'fake' due its non-corroboration to the Ptolemaic 'truthful' map of Southeast Asia.

Present standards of cartography would make any serious considerations of the errors on the Martellus' as irrelevant and unimportant, as it is not a geometric map. Similar to these is a 1639 map of California as an island, which apparently internalized a derivational error from an oft-referenced and rarely seen fictional text²⁴, positing a strait between California and mainland North America. The educated, yet conjectural, error analyses on these maps could be sidestepped by taking into account the meta-fact that the errors are only errors because they do not corroborate to the spectral factuality of the geographies of Ptolemy and Mercator and . Being temporally flanked by these two main progenitors of classical cartography, Martellus' map is one of many that are full of false, hyperbolized 'errors' that provide grounds for fascinating origin myths for place-names and land shapes in a present-day map.

As map readers living in the 21st century, it is convenient for us to dismiss all cartographic errors as just that, and relegate maps which contain them into the realm of obscurity and nonsense. When this happens, the 'erroneous' map is merely appreciated for its visual aesthetics and probably nostalgic value instead of being given the deep, steady attention-filled gaze one would give a modern map.

²⁴ "One of the most famous misconceptions in cartographic history is of California as an island. The origin of this error is *Las sergas de Esplandian*, a romantic novel written in 1510 by Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo, stating that "on the right hand of the Indies there is an island called California very close to the side of the Terrestrial Paradise; and it is peopled by black women, without any man among them, for they live in the manner of the Amazons." (Jacobs 7)

The 1792 British map of the same river that predates the Malay map probably makes more cartographical sense to the present-day reader, as it represents the river in a geodesically more accurate manner, by replicating its curves and scaling them down to size, with one inch representing 10 nautical miles. The labels – mainly names of places, geographical points on land – share cartographic space with short descriptions of environmental conditions along the river and the coastline near the mouth of the river as well as principal tin mining areas, a Dutch factory and a ruined Dutch fort. “Where the King of Perak lives”, his huge, magnificent *istana* is represented by three little boxes surrounded by dots in the upriver area. The map’s main purpose seems to be navigation, and trade. Unlike the Malay map, the river does not occupy a central position. It does, however, feature a captain, who is also the cartographer (instead of a sultan) – Capt. Thomas Forrest, a renaissance seaman – whose name is written in clear font on the map itself.

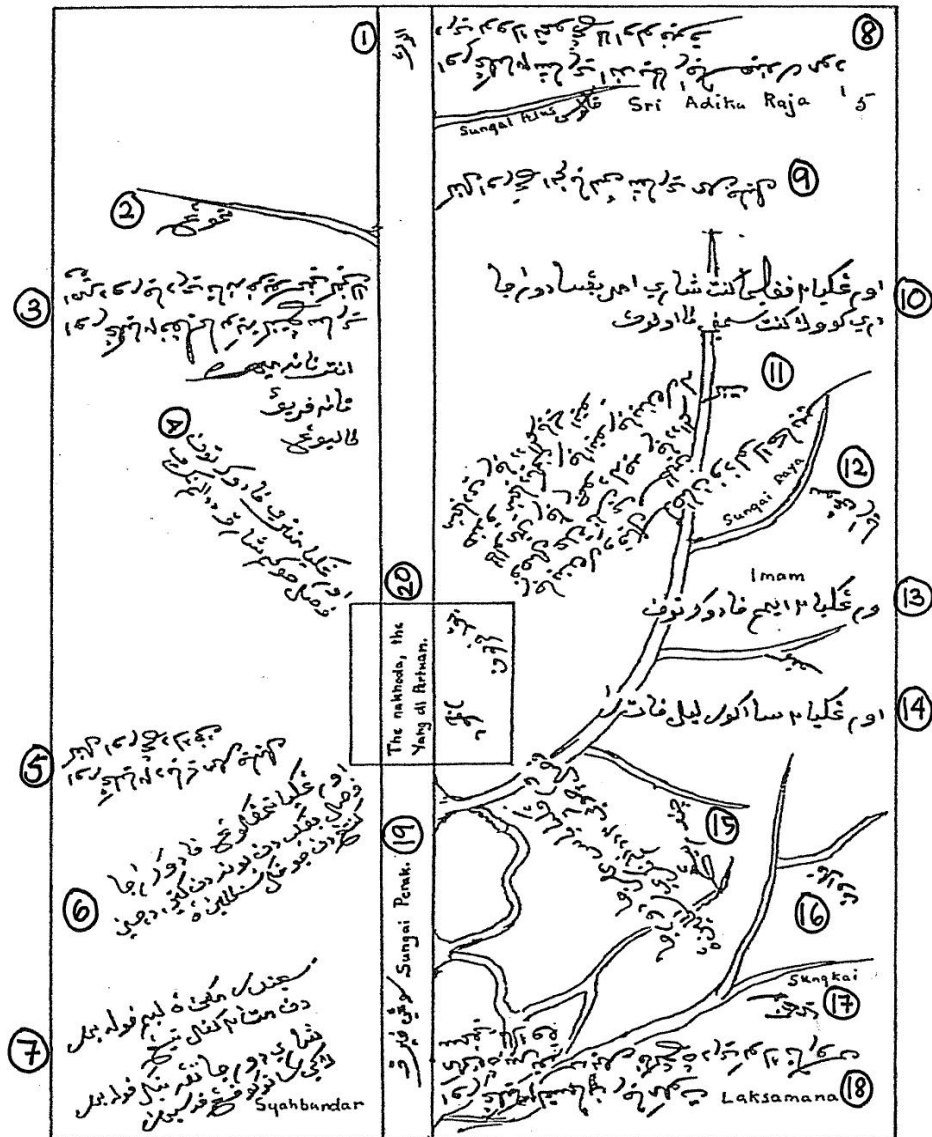
Essentially, both the 1876 Malay map and the 1792 European map represent the Malay state of Perak circa late 1700s to late 1800s, with underlying narratives of how the geopolitical entity was conceptualized from two paradigms – a European one that has become so familiar and a Malay one that is still underdescribed. The former was prepared with measurement tools, was a product of print technology, is mainly land-based, and generally more scientific compared to the latter which was made through estimation, drawn with pen and ink, and is focused on the flowing Perak river and its dendrites. In one of his short stories entitled *On Exactitude in Science* fashioned poignantly as a quote from a 17th century text, Jorge Luis Borges captures

and almost ridicules the Enlightenment-based empiricism that is in constant search of the ultimate be-all-end-all way of representing reality and nature by telling readers the story of a fictional map that is the actual size of the empire itself.

“ . . . In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.
Suarez Miranda, *Viajes de varones prudentes*, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lerida, 1658”²⁵

The map in the story serves as a supposed ideal for cartographers, yet it is impossible to produce, reminding us that there are always shortcomings in a geographical, scientific, cartographic map, despite the impression of accuracy it gives. The exertion of divine control and rule over the entirety of its territory by the Empire is summarized by the map. To the fundamental questions of Malay statecraft in the 18th century, i.e. “What is Perak?” and “How is the state produced in print?”, the two maps of Perak offer radically different explanations, based on the paradigms governing their constructions.

²⁵ (Borges, *Collected Fictions*, 325)



3. A MALAY MAP OF PERAK, 1876

Map 5: A Malay map of Perak, 1876; from W.E. Maxwell's notes, MS 46943, Royal Asiatic Society, London, as published in *Perak: The Abode of Grace: A Study of an Eighteenth Century Malay State* by Barbara Andaya (1979). Some words – names of places and court nobles – on the map have been transliterated by Andaya. Arabic numerals in circles are my annotations used as a guide in the transliteration and translation of the Jawi text to romanized Malay to English (see Chapter 4)

The map above depicts the Perak river prominently with two arrow-straight lines in its center, both sides of it flanked with meandrous tributaries flowing from various points. Accordingly, the Jawi text labels are diverse in their orthographical (or cartographical) alignment – upside down, diagonal, upright – they are written in such a manner that there is no ‘upright’ position to read the map. The main river itself is identified with the *nakhoda* ‘captain’ and *Yang diPertuan* ‘the one who is made Lord’, as also shown by the Romanized transliteration of the Jawi labels– a title assigned to Sultan Iskandar Dzulkarnain of Perak (r. 1752-1765), the chief character in *Misa Melayu*, an 18th century Malay text which contains accounts of the Perak royalties and their relations with Dutch Batavia. Similar to the river, the tributaries on the left and right are labeled not only with names of places but titles and names of Perak nobles, with brief descriptions of their legal and administrative roles in the state, with regards to taxation, tradition and criminal law. The top of the river is labeled *ulunya* – a Malay term that can refer to several things – ‘the upper waters (of a river)’ or ‘upriver’, ‘up-country’, or ‘the interior of a country’ and also ‘the head of -’.

It is not surprising that any reader will find this map a little bit strange due to its lack of border lines, legends, metrical scale and compass – usual furnishings of a contemporary geographical map. In *Misa Melayu*, the Malay word *peta* ‘map’²⁶ does not occur in its base form but as a passive verb, twice – one to describe the beautiful imagery of one of the nobles’ (*Orangkaya Temenggung*) conjured up in one’s thoughts

²⁶ *Peta* map, plan *p. angin* weather chart; *p. timbul* topographical plan (of clay); *petakan* to draw, sketch, *dipetakan dalam angan-a.* imaged in one’s thoughts (of a loved face); *perpetaan* topography

and the other describing the making of a blueprint of a ship. Evident here is the fact that the 1876 map is not necessarily a navigational tool among the Malays of Perak in the 18th century as much as it is a projection of human imagination, on paper, of the riverine state.

As a part of the set of written documents about the history of the statecraft of Perak in the 18th century, the 1876 map is an invaluable piece of text. It tells another story of how the state could have been imagined in the past – through the flow of the Perak river and its tributaries combined with the titles of the court royals. Reading this map alongside *Misa Melayu*, a text that “celebrates not only the present but the *tanda* (signs) of that present – a new city, a fort, a mosque.”²⁷, one might be reminded of the fact that the map itself could be considered a sign of the present or of modernity, and is as obscure as the text. It could be the case that this map, just like *Misa Melayu*, was produced at the request of a modernized Sultan who wants the state to be represented in a manner understandable to Europeans and other foreign elites or merchants that were dealing with the state government at that time. It would not be difficult to

²⁷ One contender for consideration might well be an obscure eighteenth century text originating from the Malay state of Perak. Known as the *Misa Melayu*, it was written by Raja Chulan, a respected poet, at the behest of his cousin Sultan Iskandar, who desired a *hikayat*, a story, that would celebrate “*zaman kita*,” our time. Unlike many Malay works, the *Misa Melayu* accords little space to past myth and royal genealogies. Instead, it celebrates not only the present but the *tanda* (signs) of that present – a new city, a fort, a mosque. Through their very newness these *tanda* both anticipate the future and ensure that the ruler will be remembered “in the days to come.” In its depiction of the ruler as initiator and innovator, whether it is as mosque-builder or sea traveler, the sense of transformation that Berman sees as intrinsic to the experience of modernity infuses the text. What is overwhelmingly absent here is Berman’s correlate of modernity, a sense of rupture with the past that invites a challenge to tradition. The evocation of “our time” does not mean a denigration of what has gone before, for the past has set the standards by which the present can be measured. Sultan Iskandar’s achievements emulate former times and simultaneously surpass them. In looking backward to the past and forward to the future, he is, in Malay terms, a modern man.” (Andaya 1997, 405)

imagine the map being in the possession of the Perak elites, or the Sultan specifically as part of his regalia, as suggested by old paintings of European kings and queens (and sometimes estate-owners) with a globe or a map in the background. And much like other maps from the 1800s and earlier, the 1876 map would be a piece of knowledge that is secret, sacred, and only available to a privileged few - the royal elites and the British officers.

The word ‘map’ could be a misleading translation/label for the 1876 text, just like how the word ‘epic’ is an inadequate translation for the Malay *hikayat*, a genre label under which *Misa Melayu* is subsumed. Although the surface forms of these two textual documents show features they share with other maps and epics, the underlying intentions and paradigms behind their production are overshadowed by the connotations of those labels.

On the first few pages of Andaya’s 1979 monograph there is a comparison of cartography (also epistemology) being presented – one a map of Perak, as drawn by a European scholar, and the other by a Malay. The first one is Cartesian, it has boundaries and space contained within them, with various places labeled. On the Malay one, a river, with branches that are labeled with the places the sailing Sultan Iskandar visited, as depicted in the *syair*. Although Andaya did not discuss too much about the *syair* in her thorough historical narrative, she did call for a reexamination of the emphasis on land that has, for a long time, been the mainstay in Southeast Asian studies. On this precolonial Malay map of the state of Perak, there are accompanying notes that say - “...the raja is the captain and that the duties of ministers mirror those

of crew members”²⁸. The river, which is just a rupturing line in the land-based European map of Perak, is the essence of the Malay one. Going by the metaphor presented with the map, the ‘raja’ as captain, and ministers as crew members, it could be inferred here that the state of Perak itself, in precolonial Malay epistemology (or at least cartography, which is a misnomer) was imagined with the river as its quintessential core, rather than land space.

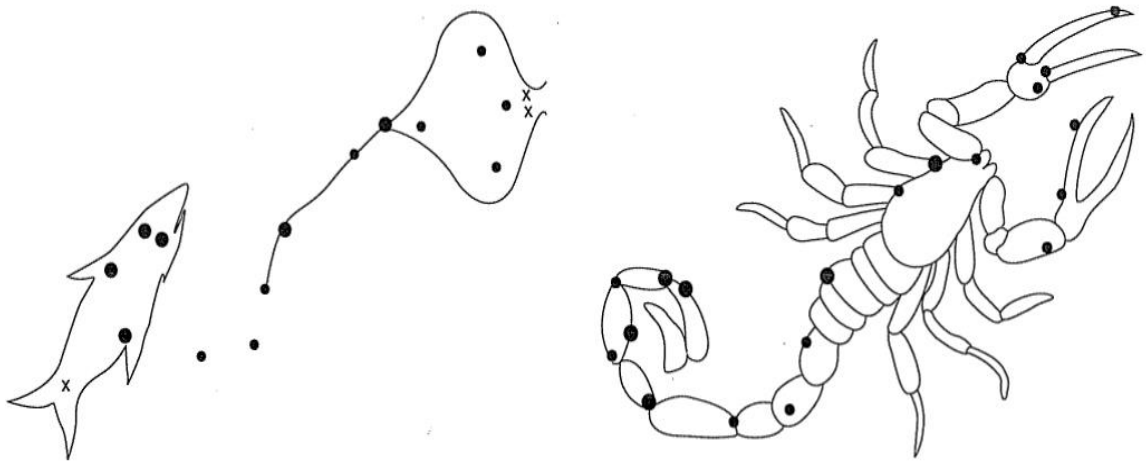


Fig. 2: Different paradigmatic interpretations of the same constellation, ‘Scorpio’ is seen by Bugis seafarers as a shark and a sting ray instead of a scorpion.

Water bodies in Southeast Asia, previously viewed by European lenses to be just uninteresting interstices between pieces of land on which property can be built and profit gained, is currently being reexamined as a key aspect of life in Southeast Asia. Water was the conduit through which the ships of the Muslim merchants, and the European galleons came in contact with various areas in Southeast Asia. In the final

²⁸ Andaya (2006) accessed from http://www.japanfocus.org/-Barbara_Watson-Andaya/2410

line of the sixth stanza in the *syair* in *Misa Melayu*, it is said that the *sultan* goes on a journey at sea (the word used here is *bermain*, which also means ‘play’ and ‘go places’) in a state of ‘perfect faith’ or *sempurna iman*, which could very well be an expression based on the Muslim travellers who brought with them the word and the notion *iman*. Andaya (2006) also mentions the arrival of a Dutch ‘stranger-king’ on the shores of Sulawesi, to whom local tribes refer to settle disputes. In the seas of Southeast Asia, European order did not get fully established in its full form although there have been attempts that resulted in Bugis seafarers being considered pirates because they did not heed European law²⁹ (until now, the most famous Malay character in Europe is Sandokan, ‘The Tiger of Malaya’, a fictional pirate character created by Emilio Salgari in novels, cartoon, and films). At present, there are still communities of seafarers called *Orang Laut* ‘sea people’³⁰, who are well versed in aquatic navigation and who consider the infinite sea their home.

How do we reconcile the maritime discoveries above with myopic European histories of Southeast Asia which, for the most part, were preoccupied with land and order, instead of water and fluidity? How do the nautical relate to the Malay noetic at present and in the past? These questions can be the motivations for Southeast Asianists to not necessarily do away with, but contest European historicist views to give some

²⁹ Hugo Grotius formulated a justification based on concepts of honor and vengeance for any aggressive act by European merchant ships against local seafarers that were considered as obstacles, or ‘pirates’ on their trade routes. *Mare liberum*, established by 16th century Dutch scholar was considered the natural law that extends across the globe, with the Europeans themselves as the self-proclaimed police enforcing it, while ensuring the law worked to their advantage of possessing land, spice ports and ironically waters in Southeast Asia. For more elaboration, see (Rubin 31)

³⁰ For more examples on research on seafaring communities in the Malay archipelago, see Chou (2005) and Ammarell (1999)

‘space’ (and ‘time’) to another way of viewing Southeast Asia. After all, it is part land and part water (mostly water), hinting at the prospect of the harmonious coexistence between Euro-leaning approaches (land-based) and ones that are challenging them (maritime), like the waves³¹ lapping the shores the many beaches in the region, altering its landscape constantly and persistently.

Perhaps Sandokan, as a fictional character, could lead us in understanding the disparity between land and sea, and its implication on the establishment of order during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when British influence was spreading across the archipelagos of Southeast Asia. As a rebel pirate, he is the nucleus of the main counterforce leading the local natives against British colonization in Borneo, under the rule of James Brooke, the white rajah. His demeanor is gentle and reserved, reminiscent of a Malay *pendekar*, warrior-like and fearless.

In Salgari’s novel cycle the spirit of the tiger is immortalized through the epithetic and zoomorphic character of Sandokan, who is dubbed the Tiger of Malay(si)a , fierce and relentless in his stance against the forces of colonization led by the White Rajah James Brooke. In one of the historically detailed film versions, he slays a tiger with a *keris* in the style of a true *pendekar* to save his love interest Marianna, after she had fallen off her steed. Prior to that, another tiger was killed by a mysterious dark-skinned youth, to save the nearby *kampong* from its terror.

Mompracem in the films and novels could be read as a microcosm of the entire colonized Malay world, or as one of the prime examples of how natives are more

³¹ (Maier, *Complit and Southeast Asia*, 2003)

resistant to the Queen's army on an island. For Salgari and many of his readers, which I imagine to be mostly Europeans during the time when the novels were first published, Sandokan is possibly the only Malay hero created by a European in fiction, and thus he cannot help but reflect the traditional mold of a romantic hero. The only strange thing about him is, despite being respected and upheld as a leader by the locals, he does not really fit in their community and does not really belong to the categorization of Malay. Yet, through his demeanor he is performing the act of being Malay, or rather, being a Malay hero, to, for and against the Europeans, who were probably charmed by the exotic, exoticized stories of traveling authors and their traveling heroes.

The tiger is a recurrent theme throughout Malaysian literature, political history and pop culture. A few examples - on the national emblem, two Malayan tigers are depicted flanking the insignia; the national football team is called 'Harimau Malaya'; P. Ramlee, Malaysia's top silver-screen legend – author, actor, director, scriptwriter - writes about a horrifying man-tiger terrorizing a *kampong* in *Sitora Harimau Jadian*. In *Misa Melayu*, the tiger is a metaphorical symbolism reserved for the Sultan:

*Telah turun kenaikan Sultan , Sikap seperti harimau jantan , Terlalu indah rupa
perbuatan , Dikarangkan syair ikat-ikatan.*³²

The Sultan descended from his vessel, manner similar to a handsome tiger, gallant in form and demeanor, For him this syair is composed.

Oral-based Malay texts like *hikayats* and *jatakas* have been read, interpreted and analyzed through examining the plots, characters and motifs of the tales, with

³² (Raja Chulan 122)

Hindu epics as well as Persian and Arabic tales. For example, Alton Becker (2000) analyzed *Aridharma* by its “frames” which are defined by “who is saying what to whom, about what, and in what language”³³. By doing this, a common story is identified between the Javanese tale of *Aridharma* and other texts such as the Malay *Hikayat Syah Mardan* (also known as *Hikayat Indrajaya*), the Thai *Lin Ton*, the Buddhist *Kharaputta-jataka* and the *Arabian Nights*’ “The Ox, the Ass and the Farmer”. In his analysis of *Hikayat Inderajaya*, Farish Noor (2006) identifies scenes and “leitmotifs” from the tale as being similar to the ones in the Burmese-Thai rendition of *Vessantara-jataka*, *Jataka Wetsandon*, particularly the exile of the main character in both tales in the forest as a form of purgatory³⁴. Aside from that, he also relates the existence and interaction of Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist elements in *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa* and *Hikayat Inderajaya* to the historical context of the coming of Islam as a gradual process, replacing Hinduism and Buddhism as the main religion in the region.

I find Becker’s notion of ‘framing a tale’ helpful as an alternative way of analyzing ancient oral-based tales, beyond the language of strata and layers. Rather than levels upon levels of influences based on temporal linearity, cycles of framing are posited as structural elements in which these stories are presented, that affect their mediation and perception (therefore also appreciation, or lack thereof). The justified emphasis on language, allows analysts, like readers of the stories who I imagine to be fortunately unfamiliar with the systematic categorizations of religious influences in

³³ (Becker 140)

³⁴ www.othermalaysia.org/2006/10/12/012-a-muslim-hindu-buddy-story

literary studies, to read tales like *Aridharma* as a Javanese story, rather than a Hindu one that is glossed and coated with Javanese elements.

Readers (or listeners) of the *hikayats* with elements from Hindu epics - *Hikayat Seri Rama* or *Hikayat Pendawa Lima* or *Hikayat Indraputra* – must be acquainted with the characters from the Hindu epics and learn the differences and distinctions between them and for example, the Islamic elements in the stories, before they could categorize them in different boxes. This is very unlikely in pre-modern times, as these boxes were constructed at a later point in history, used and prescribed by proponents of a European-based tradition of religious knowledge governed by Christian soteriology and emphasis on scriptural writing rather than oral-based tradition, and are usually consciously learned.



Playing with strange texts

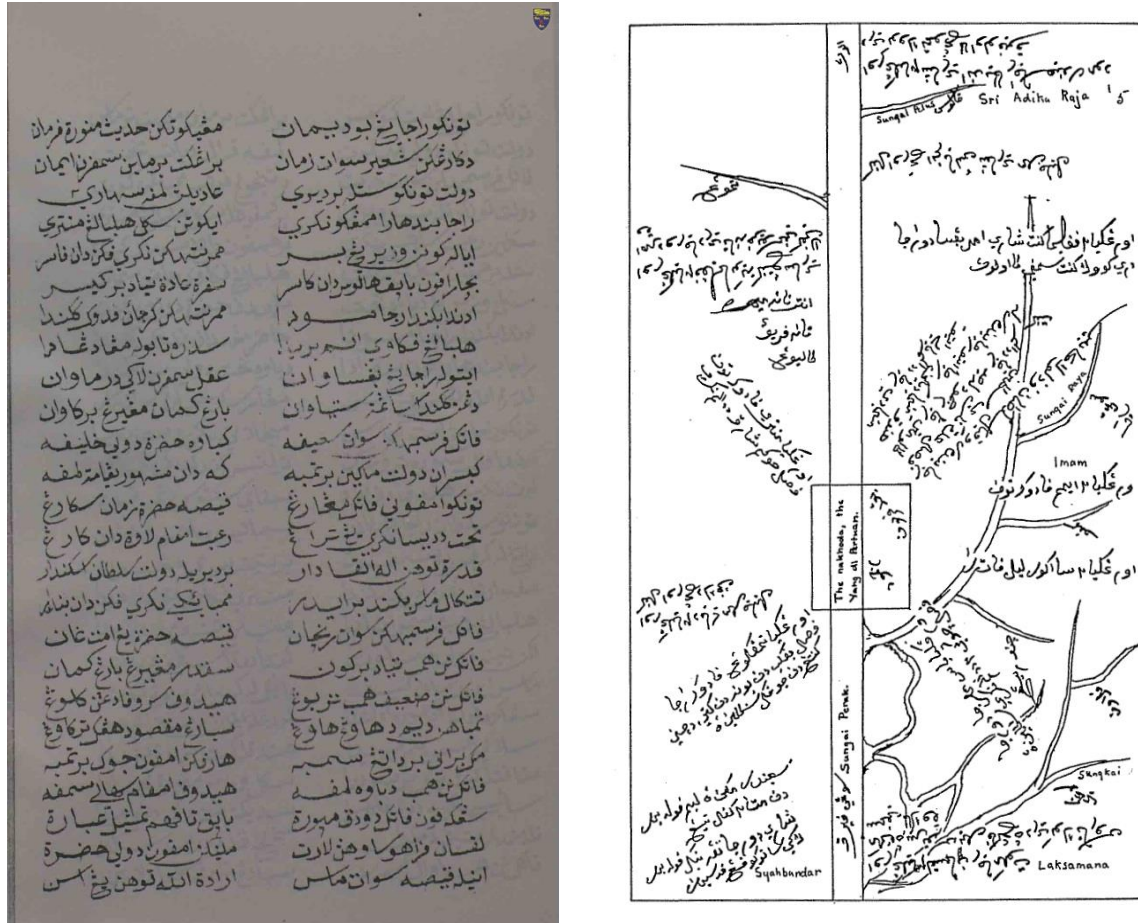


Fig. 3: A page of the manuscript of *Misa Melayu* (Maxwell MS 25, 77) showing the *syair* (left) and the 1876 map. The straight line depicting the river acts as an orthographic divider, similar to the blank space in the center of the manuscript page. On the map, as on the page, the central space is flanked by bits of narrative about the Perak royalties and nobles and their activities at locations along the river.

...ada yang **bermain membaca** hikayat Jawa dan *syair* ikat-ikatan berbagai-bagai ragam

*bunyinya riuh-rendah siang dan malam.*³⁵

...there were ones 'play-reading' a Javanese *hikayat* and *syair* arrangements with various modes of sounds in a hullabaloo, day and night.

The Malay word *bermain*³⁶ is used multiple times in *Misa Melayu* to signify

'playing' and 'traveling' or 'sailing'³⁷. In the quote above it is combined with the word

³⁵ (Raja Chulan 55)

membaca, that means ‘to read, or rather to read out loud’, as that would be the mode in which a *hikayat* such as *Misa Melayu*, was experienced in the eighteenth century Malay world. The written *hikayat* is sometimes compared (or contrasted) with Islamic texts, because of it being written in Jawi, a written form of Malay that is “chirographically controlled”³⁸, and therefore having the same values as the scriptural medium of Islam – Arabic – and the orthographical medium of many Sufi tales – Farsi. Jawi stands taller than the unwritten, yet spoken, Malay, and its Islamic prestige being upheld as a “language of the book”. The word ‘Jawi’, from Persian *Djawij* signifies ‘something that is placed’, ‘a placed language’, and also the adjectival form of ‘Jawa’ used by Arabs for Java and Sumatra³⁹. Moreover, in the *kromo* (royal) register of Javanese, ‘jawi’ shares the referent ‘Javanese’, conjuring a lofty and esteemed prestige of the script, and the high-status of the court as the Javanese literary center, far from the realm of the wandering *fakir* or *dagang* ‘traveling mendicant’ who exchanges stories in the oral/aural realm. Textually the Malay *syair* is reduced to mere In a letter to a Dutch officer, Raja Ali Haji, a Bugis poet⁴⁰, gestured to a semantic

³⁶ 43 appearances in the text, searched on the Malay Concordance Project website

³⁷ “The Malay phrase for such expedition is *pergi bermain-main* ‘to go and enjoy oneself’ and this is echoed in the Dutch word *speeltochtje* ‘pleasure trip’. But their purpose was not just amusement, for while the ruler was engaged in pastimes like elephant hunting or tuba fishing, he was also carrying out a personal inspection of the area. In a sense he was showing the flag and it was during such trips that the reality of the ruler was made splendidly manifest to people in remote districts who might otherwise have been only dimly aware of his existence. One of the themes of the *Misa Melayu* is the interaction between Sultan Iskandar and his people, during those royal progresses through the country, he moved among his subjects, personally dispensing justice, receiving tribute and accepting declarations of loyalty.” (Andaya 420)

³⁸ (Sweeney 54)

³⁹ (Sweeney 56)

⁴⁰ A nobleman, a writer and a scholar from Riau. Among his famous works are *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (‘The Precious Gift’) and *Bustanul Katibin* (‘Garden of the Poets’) who could be considered a *dalang* ‘reciter/purveyor of soothing tales’ or a *penglipurlara* ‘master storyteller’.

component of the *syair* that could only be accentuated by its orality. From a splendidly musical existence on the oral-aural domain, its richly textured and varied rhyme patterns⁴¹ are relegated to mere letters on a page, forcing the reader to comprehend it in its silence.

*Syahdan jika sahabat hendak bermain-main satu waktu, coba panggil seorang orang Melayu yang pandai bersyair, suruh baca dengan lagunya yaitu seperti nyanyi, maka lebih terang lagi maknanya*⁴²

Hence if you want to have fun sometime, try to summon a Malay person that knows how to (recite a) *syair*, tell him to recite it melodically, like singing, so that the meaning becomes clearer.

⁴¹ Some of the patterns found in *Misa Melayu* are aaaa, aabb & abab. A thorough, albeit outmoded definition of the poetic form - "The *syair* is a less popular and less well-known form of Malay poetry than the pantun in that each stanza, though also made up of four lines, is part of an entire poem and is naturally linked to the stanza before and to that which follows. The rhyme scheme is a-a-a-a. In a pantun the symbolism and allusion of the first two lines make clear the meaning of the second couplet. There is almost no scholarly research which has been done on the *syair* form." A Teeuw, "The Malay Shair. Problems of Origin and Tradition", BKI, 122, 4 (1966), 429-446, especially pp. 431-432 and 440. (Andaya, *Dissertation*, 611)

⁴² (Jan van der Putten & Al Azhar 51)

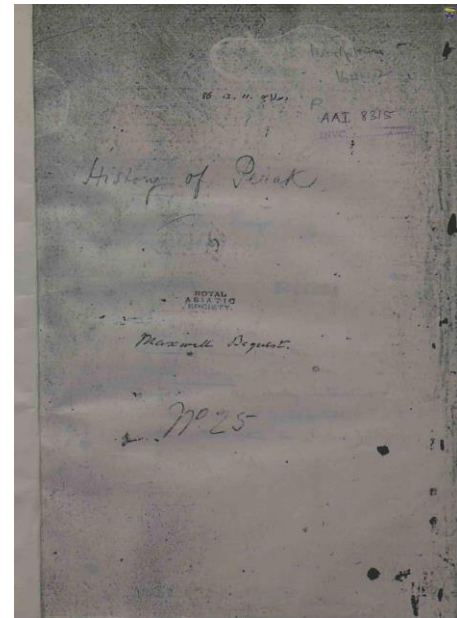
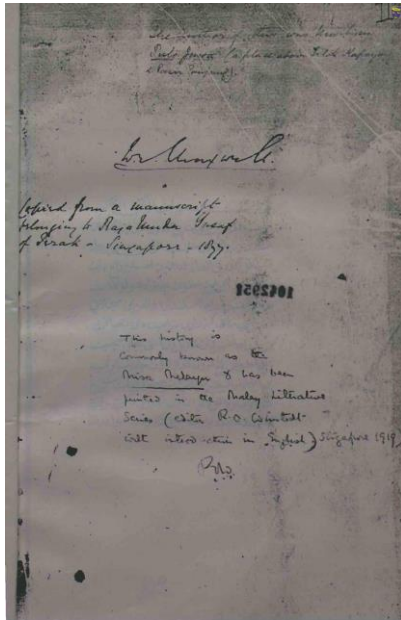


Fig 4: First two pages of Maxwell 25 version of *Misa Melayu* – that displays what could be identified as Maxwell’s signature, some remarks as recorded in Ricklefs and Voorhoeve’s “Catalogue of Indonesian Manuscripts in Great Britain” displays some tell-tale signs of the surfacing of the episteme, “*Misa Melayu*. A history of Perak down to c. A.D 1770, containing particulars on relations between Perak and Batavia, etc. Inside the cover a note by W.E. Maxwell: ‘copied from a manuscript belonging to Raja Muda Yusuf of Perak-Singapore 1877.’ 121 pp. Italian paper: Benedetto Gentili Vittorio’, 31.5 x 21.5 cm. 25 lines. Maxwell bequest, 1898.”

In the frontmost page of the manuscript in large cursive writing, is written ‘History of Perak’, with the smaller stamp ‘Royal Asiatic Society’, under which is written ‘Maxwell Bequest’. On the same page as the colophon, there is a note, possibly written by Winstedt, “This history is commonly known as Misa Melayu & has been printed in the Malay Literature Series (editor R.O. Winstedt – with introduction in English) Singapore 1919.”

Misa Melayu, as shown in the notes above, is framed as a ‘history of Perak’, a sultanate on the Malay peninsula, and has been printed as in a ‘literature’ edited by Winstedt, evoking a ‘historical epic’ mode of reading, legitimizing its use by historians to formulate a narrative based on ‘factual’ information from the text and attributing it to Perak and its semantic extent including the present-day space of the state, its people and especially the Perak sultanate. The episteme of history is what is evoked in the action of labeling the text as such, an action which, to a certain extent, influences subsequent readings and analyses of the text, which has now been

homogenized and standardized - Maxwell 25 being the standard version transliterated into Roman alphabets - it being initially, authoritatively described as a literary and historical text. Surely this is not a problem if there is a level field of comparison between *Misa Melayu* and the historical and literary works that scholars like Winstedt and Maxwell upheld in their minds, works that became a yardstick by which *Misa Melayu* was measured against. And naturally, works that correspond the closest to European ideals in history and literature, which are usually Homeric and come from the Greek and Latin conventions (as the word ‘epic’ without fail suggests), are held in the highest regard.

The epistemes operating in this instance, which could be characterized as the ‘literary’ and the ‘historical’⁴³, have far reaching consequences in Malay historiography and the readings of Malay histories. For example, Andaya’s (1979) thorough narrative on the history of 18th century Perak as a Malay state, comparatively and meticulously analyzed *Misa Melayu* with Malay and Dutch historical sources.

The historian’s “intellectual journey” starts with the text, then goes out into the realm of context, asking circumstantial questions and finally coming back to the text to address any issues during the time the text was produced is not too different from a literary theorist’s/narratologist’s. Of importance here are questions that deal with the second stage in the analytical reading above, concerning the “paradigm of knowledge” the text was produced in⁴⁴, and how it compares to other contemporaneous sources, in other words, the occurrence of writing itself, and how the structure of a narrative

⁴³ not mutually exclusive - according to Foucauldian epistemes may overlap each other

⁴⁴ (Cheong 93)

influences what kind of information is included and what kind is excluded in a text. A map, in this particular sense, is no different from a narrative because of the limitations imposed by the ‘need for selection’.

“The need for selection means that every story contains, and is surrounded by, blank spaces, some more significant than others. When we create a fictional world, our decisions include geography, or setting, but also where and when a narrative begins and ends, who it involves and who it doesn’t, which actions and conversations are worthy of inclusion and which aren’t.”⁴⁵

However, it is important to note here that a heightened awareness of ‘silences’ in a text (especially one written in a language that is either temporally or spatially foreign) and a narratological mode of reading does not promise, in my view, a superior or a better reading. Rather, it is about exploring into the uncharted territories of over- and under- interpretations of that text based on epistemes that are related to it. After all, both the narratological and strictly historical modes of reading are inevitably problematic ways of reading old texts because they are strategic, teleological steps taken as a pathway to a goal and developed in the 20th century. O.W. Wolters (1982) in *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* practices a different type of textual analysis that does not require going out of the text, as most of the texts he was discussing are authorless:

“...the literatures of earlier Southeast Asia are a promising field for experimentation. Most literary materials are anonymous, so that one does not need to be distracted by questions about a writer’s situation or personal intentions. One does not immediately have to look outside the texts to account for what is inside. Instead, one has to learn to read groups of texts in the same culture and genre to discern the presence of a local social collectivity which is expressing itself through language usage. Textual studies can also highlight something which tends to be given short shrift in accounts of earlier Southeast Asia: elements of “strangeness” in the various cultures when compared with each other and with cultures in other parts of the world. Literary texts are bound to be “strange” because they depend on figurative language. Various forms of

⁴⁵ (Turchi 42)

literary strangeness are part of the “ranges of experience” which need to be opened up to allow satisfactory general accounts of earlier Southeast Asia to be written.”⁴⁶

Note both the generic, deductive framework used by Wolters and the “strangeness” with which he esteemed literary texts from another culture. It would be too redundant to echo criticisms and shortcomings of Wolters research in terms of specificity and scope of the terms ‘culture’, ‘literature’ and ‘language usage’. Instead, I would like to point out the way in which he decentralizes authorial intention and deliberately brings attention to the strangeness of earlier Southeast Asian texts, which would include *hikayats*. I read this ‘strangeness’, which has not given much emphasis before, as also the ‘silences’ that have not been much explored by modern historical readings of the *hikayats*, such as the readings of *Misa Melayu* by Andaya (1979) and Arbaiyah Mohd Noor (2006). It could also be mentioned here that this “strangeness” can not only be posited due to the literariness of the texts, but a perpetuation of standards of normalcy based on the established notions of ‘literature’ and ‘figurative language’. Regarding this weak relation drawn between strangeness and figurative language posited, this question comes to mind: What if in a particular language (culture language), say 18th century Malay, what is now perceived as ‘figurative language’ is the normative way of expressing oneself, that is only strange through the constricted lens of English literary standards in the present?

Wolters’s focus on the literary aspects of old texts - although he still evaluates ‘literariness’ from a Western standpoint - is crucial in providing the balance to the constant subjection of these texts to historicism, that only sheds light on certain parts

⁴⁶ (Wolters72)

of the texts (the ‘factual’) and relegates other parts to the realm of historical nonsense. Wolters ignores the episteme of the ‘historical’ to focus on the ‘literary’. Wolters’s reading of *Misa Melayu*, much like Andaya’s, Winstedt’s and mine, are ‘response statements’ that are products of institutional academic training, conditioned by disciplinary traditions such as history and literature, that train the reader to look for, pay more attention to and write more about certain parts or tropes in a text. A reader’s response usually contains a specific kind of information (that answer questions about a text asked in a particular discipline) without acknowledging its theoretical-methodological background, which is often taken for granted and to be less important than the information itself. Modern histories and scholarly narratives about Perak, as response statements to literary artifacts, inevitably contain information about the scholarly approaches of the readers that is unfortunately not given as much lip-service as data concerning geography and economy of the state.

“A response statement aims to record the perception of a reading experience and its natural, spontaneous consequences, among which are feelings, or affects, and peremptory memories and thoughts, or free associations. While other forms of mentation may be considered “natural and spontaneous,” they would not be so in this context. Recording a response requires the relaxation of cultivated analytical habits, especially the habit of automatic objectification of the work of literature....Normally, the act of objectification inhibits awareness of response.”⁴⁷

With this in mind, I analyze fragments from past readings and readers of *Misa Melayu* – Andaya, Wilkinson, Winstedt and Maxwell – without unnecessarily historicizing every part of *Misa Melayu*, by switching back and forth between the two epistemes the ‘historical’ and the ‘literary’ to discover how the text became the subject of epistemological labeling and categorization.

⁴⁷ (Bleich, *Subjective Criticism*, 147)

I choose to read *Misa Melayu* as a discursive microcosm in which some Malay notions can be examined in their contextual uses so as to inform us more about the connections between those notions and the world in the spatial and temporal context in which it was written. This approach is similar to Michelle Rosaldo's research on Ilongot notions of self and social life⁴⁸, in which she consciously veered away from treating language as merely "an ordinary vehicle of reference, logic and cognition", and instead examined the occurrences of 'knowledge' and 'passion' linguistically by navigating through nuances and metaphorical meanings beyond the simple gloss of a word. By doing this, I hope to get away from rigid analyses based on abstract concepts that are assumed to be universal (such as 'border', 'trade') and step closer to the "rough grounds" of the circumstances back then, specifically Malay language use in the 18th century. Basically, instead of scanning the text for 'information' or certain 'facts' that would supposedly tell us about the historical past like an ethnographer or a historian, I read the text as a reader who tries to be sensitive to "what language tends to pass over in silence".

Unfortunately, this approach is still unpopular in mainstream scholarship on Southeast Asia, specifically Malay studies. Most popular histories of Southeast Asia cite trade and commerce as being major factors in the changes that occurred in the region, without explaining what the circumstances on the ground are, especially on the production, consumption and circulation of texts (including maps) and how they have

⁴⁸ Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist. *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 1980.

traveled through time and space to become influential in present cognitive conceptions of Perak in the past.

These are all features that are not graspable if the complexities of the notion of ‘reading’⁴⁹ were not examined in the oral/aural literary community. In *Misa Melayu*, for example, the *syair* (Malay poetic form) which is presented together with the prose part of the text has been largely ignored by scholars – namely Winstedt and Andaya – who both considered the text a ‘history of Perak’, as scribbled by W.E. Maxwell, the British scholar who initially obtained and owned the Jawi manuscript which was transliterated and printed in codex form.

***Misa Melayu* & the quandary of translation**

Misa – the exact meaning of the first word in the text’s title remains unknown to this day, and it is only appropriate that we start off any discussion of this text with an uncertainty that matches this lexical enigma. William Maxwell, a British scholar of the Malay language, who was probably stumped by this unfamiliar word, first speculated that it is a corrupted form of the Arabic loan-word *misal* that means ‘example’⁵⁰. For some time this became the meaning of the word for scholars of Malay language. However, he later realized that his guess was wrong when he saw a Javanese text with the same word in the title⁵¹, thus ruling out the possibility of it being misspelled. He then thought that the word was used in the title because of the text’s similarity in content to the Javanese text. His colleague, R.O. Winstedt, bewildered by

⁴⁹ (*mem*)*bac*a in Malay, means both ‘to read’ and ‘to recite’, similar to the Arabic polysemous *qira’at/iqra’*

⁵⁰ (Maxwell, “Notes on Two Perak Manuscripts”, 185)

⁵¹ *Misa Perbu Jaya* or *Misa Jawa* in the introduction of (Raja Chulan 4)

the guess, later pointed out that the word means ‘water buffalo’ in Javanese and is sometimes used as a nickname for a person. Winstedt expressed his doubt about this claim due to the fact that animal-based nicknames are not common among Malays. As ludicrous as they seem, these two guesses are all the present-day reader has if she or he is interested in figuring out the absolute meaning of the first half of the text’s title.

Melayu, translated into English as ‘Malay’, is a term that has been subject to increasing attention, contest and deliberation by scholars - from historians to sociologists - in debates concerning a unifying ethos⁵² of groups of people spread throughout maritime and mainland Southeast Asia, mainly on the island of Sumatra and the Malay peninsula. For linguists, it is a category referring to a spectrum of Austronesian languages which are always not mutually intelligible, spoken in present-day Indonesia, Malaysia, southern Philippines, southern Burma, southern Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, Timor Leste, Sri Lanka, Easter Islands, and Madagascar. As a language, it has official status in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei, although it is important to note that different variants are spoken in different regions.⁵³

The academic field most concerned with terms like ‘Malay’ and more recently, ‘Malayness’ is Malay Studies, in which classical Malay texts, mostly from the 16th up to the 19th century have been the main foci as ‘native’ sources. From a cornucopia of texts varying in content and form, ones known as *hikayats*⁵⁴ – *Misa Melayu* can be

⁵² For a summative example of a research on Malay identity, based on expressions of *Melayu* in a number classical Malay texts, see Matheson, V. ‘Concepts of Malay Ethos in Indigenous Malay Writings’. *JSEAS*, 2. (1979): 351-71.

⁵³ concise ethnolinguistic information on different Malay variants is available on www.ethnologue.com

⁵⁴ *Hikayats* were stories told by folk storytellers called *penglipurlara* in the old Malay-speaking world, stretching from Sumatra to what is now southern Philippines. As oral-based tales, they are amorphous to

considered one - have been studied as important historical source materials because many of them contain genealogical and ‘panegyric’⁵⁵ stories of origins of Malay sultanates. The *hikayats* are considered to contain valuable information on Malay history and the contents of these stories are classified as ‘mythical’, ‘historical’ or otherwise⁵⁶, evaluated and scrutinized for ‘facts’ that corroborate information from other sources – the bulk of Malay and European (mainly British and Dutch) writings about the region. It is a network of complex processes, involving many translations and cross-referencing, centered around the ‘historical method’ as its guiding principle.

The popular *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, for example, has been branded a “historico-heroic epic”⁵⁷, and discusses its contents on the Melaka and Johor Sultanates and their relations with Jambi in Sumatra in the context of historical events, such as the Johor-Jambi war in 1666. Stemming from philology, such literary treatments of *hikayat* are often based on European genres such as the ‘epic’, and elements such as the ‘hero’ and the interaction between the ‘epic’ and history. A similar approach is used in Andaya’s (1979) thorough narrative on the history of 18th century Perak as a Malay state, in which *Misa Melayu* is comparatively analyzed with Malay and Dutch sources.

Although “the temptation to force the material into tidy patterns has been resisted”⁵⁸,

the current ebb and flow of the literary context in which they are presented and have influences from other literatures and traditions that preceded them. The Malay-Arabic word *hikayat* can be translated as ‘story’ or ‘narrative’ first made its appearance in literary texts in Malay languages with the ascent of Islam in Southeast Asia.

⁵⁵ (Braginsky, *The System of Classical Malay Literature*, 58)

⁵⁶ Ibid. - Terms like ‘historicity’, ‘historiographic’ and ‘historiosophic’ are also used in assessing *hikayats*.

⁵⁷ (Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature*, 465)

⁵⁸ (Andaya, *Perak: The Abode of Grace*, 9)

the *hikayat* is considered by the historian as “a product of Malay historical method”⁵⁹. Two key issues here: first, the ‘Malay historical method’ mentioned is subject to our understanding of the phrase, inevitably affected by all the connotations and footnotes that come with the English word ‘historical’ such as dates, timelines, important agents – usually those in power - and the overarching presence of trade as the main catalyst of events; second, the assumption that the text was produced with history in the mind of the author. In this essay, I wish to sidestep European-based historical and literary values that have been tagged on the *hikayat* and offer the perspective of simply a reader of the story who turns a critical eye on the problems of translation – of words and notions – in its analysis.

To read *Misa Melayu* is to imagine royal court life in 18th century Perak, a Malay state often dubbed the successor of the traditions of the Malaccan⁶⁰ and Johor Sultanates. The “talented”⁶¹ author, Raja Chulan⁶², who was an aristocrat wrote himself into the text which gives an insider’s perspective on the lives of the Perak elite (*orang besar*⁶³), their feuds, marriages, and their dealings with the Dutch (*Holanda*) involving tin and *rial Holanda*, or Dutch bank notes. A significant portion of the text is a poetic tribute to the Sultan’s voyage down the Perak river while the other parts are intimate and elaborate accounts of festivities and processions. In Winstedt’s words:

⁵⁹ (same as above)

⁶⁰ Until now, the Malaccan sultanate is considered in many histories of Malaysia to be the seat of Malay civilization on the Malay peninsula.

⁶¹ *pengarang yang ulong* (Raja Chulan, back cover)

⁶² “raja, (1) king, queen, (2) any prince or princess...a prince with a title conferred by a ruler” in (Winstedt, *Dictionary* 285). In this case, the title is hereditary from his father, Raja Hamid, who is the prince of Sultan Mansur Shah. Raja Chulan’s full name is named Raja Chulan Ibni Raja Hamid Ibni Yang Dipertuan Muda Sultan Mansur Shah.

⁶³ a literal translation would be ‘big person/people’.

“Recording the names of contemporary Perak chiefs, and incidents in the relations of Perak with the Dutch and with Selangor and Kedah, and throwing unconsciously a deal of light on the life of a Malay State in the XVIIIth century, the *Misa Melayu* is one of the more valuable of Malay historical works; and it is surprising that it has not been printed before. The *shaer* or long poetical recital of Marhum Kahar’s trip down the Perak river and round the coast to Matang has literary as well as historical value. The prose portion of the book, though not equal in style to that Malay masterpiece the *Sejarah Melayu*, is not lacking in merit.”⁶⁴

Other than *Misa Melayu*, there are several titles associated with the text such as *Hikayat/Ikatan Raja ka-Laut*⁶⁵ ‘The Story of the King Going to the Sea’, *Sultan Iskandar Bermain-main ka-Laut*⁶⁶ ‘Sultan Iskandar Journeys to the Sea’, *Hikayat Misa Melayu* ‘The Story of *Misa Melayu*’ and *Hikayat Salasilah Negeri Perak*⁶⁷ ‘The Descent/Genealogy of the Perak State’. The first two refer to the exquisite *syair*⁶⁸, a Malay poetic arrangement that intertwines ‘meaning’ and ‘form’ in ways that make them almost impossible to be incorporated into history.

The version of *Misa Melayu* used as the primary text for this research is the 1968 reprint of a 1962 edition based on Winstedt transliteration of the Jawi text from three manuscripts⁶⁹, of which the main one used is dated 1836. It includes Winstedt’s introduction and outline of the content in English from the first edition, as well as their Malay translations and some commentaries by Pustaka Antara⁷⁰. In all of the auxiliary materials accompanying the text, the ‘historical’ value of the text is highlighted.

⁶⁴ (Raja Chulan 208)

⁶⁵ (Raja Chulan 207)

⁶⁶ (Raja Chulan 116)

⁶⁷ (Raja Chulan 195)

⁶⁸ Contemporary spelling of *shaer*.

⁶⁹ As stated on the Australian National University’s Malay Concordance Website - http://mcp.anu.edu.au/N/Misa_bib.html. Some editorial notes – “The Winstedt text is based on the manuscript in the possession of the Sultan of Perak (“Naskah A”), but is not a diplomatic edition. Winstedt also drew on two other incomplete manuscripts. Winstedt’s edition was republished in full by Pustaka Antara in 1962, and its text was republished (in modern spelling) in 1991 by Pustaka Antara. The editors have normalised the text to some degree. In 1992 a further edition was published by Ahmad Fauzi Mohd. Basri and provided with a new introduction.”

⁷⁰ A publishing house in Kuala Lumpur.

Perhaps, ironically, that was the reason why the text had not been given much attention, as it was compared to *Sejarah Melayu*, a much-quoted 17th century Malay text originally titled *Sulalat as-Salatin* or ‘The Descent of Rulers’, and considered to be, as the translated title ‘The Malay Annals’ suggests, a canonical source on the history of the Malays. This comparison makes it not surprising that Winstedt found it necessary to point out the “merit” of *Misa Melayu*, as it is being measured against a text that has been elevated to a position of authority over other ‘historical’ classical Malay texts. And from his evaluation of the former, we could see that he still favored *Sejarah Melayu* by calling it a “Malay masterpiece”. On this matter, the questions I ask are similar to the ones Jacques Derrida asks about Franz Kafka’s *Before the Law* – What decides that *Misa Melayu* belongs to what we think we can understand in the name of ‘literature’ and ‘history’? And who decides? Who judges?⁷¹

On one level at least, apparently one answer to the questions above is Winstedt. His “writings more than anybody else’s set the standard in Malayistics from 1915 onwards”⁷², and based on the same criteria that constitute British historical sources, imply that every *hikayat* deemed ‘historical’ should be “read against the background of the *Sejarah Melayu*, and ever since the primacy of the Malay Annals has never been subverted.” Scholarship in Malay Studies, until today, continues to accept and to be (mis)guided by such a unilateral imposition of British empiricism on indigenous Malay texts. In this framework, *Misa Melayu* would undoubtedly be seen as a lesser

⁷¹ “What then decides that *Before the Law* belongs to what we think we understand under the name of literature? And who decides? Who judges?” in (Derrida, *The Law of Genre* 181)

⁷² (Maier, *In the Center of Authority*, 30)

historical text, just as Perak is generally just considered one of the offshoot states of the Malaccan sultanate, rather than having a unique history of its own.

With regards to all this, Winstedt's 11-page English outline - of over 200 pages of poetry and prose, in classical Malay - informs us about which kinds of information were important for him. And it is not too difficult to imagine that Raja Chulan could not possibly have had Winstedt's standards of a "Malay historical text" in mind when he was writing *Misa Melayu*. I am curious as to what lies beyond Winstedt's (and many historians') chronological and linear notion of 'history' in the text and how to get to it in a methodologically sound manner. One way is by reading what has been de-emphasized by historically-inclined scholars, or thrown in the background, as is the case for the parts of *Misa Melayu* that did not make it into Winstedt's outline. Another way is by simply asking - what would be the intended purpose of *Misa Melayu*? Perhaps it was to be read by (or to) Sultan Mudzafar Shah, who commissioned Raja Chulan to write it, and maybe some members of the royal family? What would be the reading context of *Misa Melayu* and is there an opportunity to peer out of this context, through the text? It is, again, a problem in translation that shrouds this text, as every reading of *Misa Melayu* would be influenced by our language of history. To overcome the perilous compulsion of a historical reading, a question that I use as a directive would be what is 'unsaid' when *Misa Melayu* is translated into, or related to, historical discourse:

"The stupendous reality that is language cannot be understood unless we begin by observing that speech consists above all in silences. A being who could not renounce saying many things would be incapable of speaking. And each language represents a different equation between manifestations and silences. Each people leaves some things unsaid *in order* to be able to say others. Because *everything* would be unsayable. Hence, the immense difficulty of translation:

translation is a matter of saying in a language precisely what that language tends to pass over in silence.”⁷³

The quote above might as well be a parable of the colonial encounter in the Malay world, where multiple attempts of translation ensue instances of language contact. On the pages of the 1968 *Misa Melayu*, this contact is exemplified by Winstedt supplementary text side-by-side with Raja Chulan’s narrative, one discourse saying what is silent in the other and vice versa. Underlying this discrepancy is a difference in language, and more importantly, discursive methods by which concepts like ‘history’, ‘literature’ and ‘law’ are constructed and reinforced. Obviously, these are colossal notions that could be considered systems or frameworks of knowledge, each containing their own interconnecting vast networks of ideas.

This phenomenon would explain the language (and the existence) of treaties, such as the 1874 Pangkor Treaty, a colonial document signed between British administrators and Perak royals, one of many that initiated British advisory system in Malaya, that was an exclusive agreement between the two parties in complete disregard of the consequences of the onset of British imperialism in Malaya. Treaties like these are mainly framed in legalese decided by the British, transferred through the process of translation into Malay, and demand agreement from the Malay royals, rather than vice versa. In a language firmly rooted in the conventions of European nation-states, the Malay voice would be incongruent, saying the unsayable in that language. Although the sovereignty of Malay polities are asserted in some *hikayats*, including *Sulalat as-Salatin* and *Misa Melayu*, they lie buried in the silence of the

⁷³ (Ortega y Gasset 246)

treaty, undermined by a voice more authoritative, if only for the reason that it decides so itself.

In *Misa Melayu*, as well as many other *hikayats*⁷⁴ that have been labeled as state histories, *negeri* is the most ubiquitous self-referential word representing a polity. Parts of it correspond to the European ‘state’, such as the existence of taxation laws and state revenue. However, its geography consists of humans – rulers and subjects (mostly silent and kept out of the texts) – who were constantly traveling. In a sense, *negeri* was not bound exclusively to one area of land, instead, it is a mobile political unit comprising the palatial institution and its subjects. This performative aspect of *negeri* was obscured in the 1874 treaty by oversimplification and ignoring any signs of the existence of a complex and abstract political system that is as elusive as the ‘nation’ or ‘state’. Instead of imposing land-borders marking a geopolitical region, within the literary space of the *syair*, the Sultan is said to be ‘making a state’ on the islands in the Perak river.

“Zaman Sultan Raja Iskandar
Membuat negeri di-Pulau Chempaka;
Eloknya pekan dengan Bandar,
Tempat dagang datang berniaga
Membuat negeri di-Pulau Chempaka,
Di-gelar Pulau Indera Sakti;
Dagang senteri datang berniaga,
Ka-bawah duli berbuat bakti.
Tuanku Raja Sultan Iskandar,
Takhta di-Pulau Indera Sakti;
Indahnya lagi jangan di-sedar,
Kota pun sudah bagai di-hati.
Takhta di-Pulau Indera Sakti,
Di-sembah tentera sa-isi negeri,
Kota pun sudah bagai di-hati,
Bertambah kebesaran sa-hari-hari.”

“The time Sultan Raja Iskandar
Making a state on Chempaka Island,
A fine town with a city center,
Where the merchants come to trade
Making a state on Chempaka Island,
Named Indera Sakti Island;
(Where) wandering merchants come to trade,
Devoted under the protection of the royal highness.
Tuanku Raja Sultan Iskandar,
Bethroned on Indera Sakti island;
Its beauty not to be compared,
Its fort immortalized in the heart.
Bethroned on Indera Sakti island,
To whom the entire state’s army give obeisance,
Its fort immortalized in the heart,
Adding to its magnificence day after day.”

⁷⁴ such as *Hikayat Merong Mahawangsa*.

Notions of *negeri* as how it is presently understood, would be incongruent compared to the word as it is used in the *syair* – that presents *negeri* as a pleasurable, progressive act, rather than something that is constative, or already built. Such is the problematic of translating the past into present terms, the mismatch in semantic relations offer us no way in remembering the reality of the state's past other than looking through the narrow constrictive lens of the present, that does not allow us to escape into the realm of the state's glorious narrative past, beyond the grids of archetypal symbols – flags, political institutions, geometric maps - that we are more used to in the present. It is anachronistic and misleading, therefore, to understand the word and the concept *negeri* through present-day sense.

One of the reasons to dive into the margins of a canonized discursive space of Malaysian and/or Perak (a Malay state in the 18th century) history and historiography is to take a possible look at the other 'data' consigned to the margins by the upholding of linearity, and linearization in the histories of nation-states in Southeast Asia.⁷⁵ Southeast Asian history can be problematized further by the application of novel literary theories that will give rise to a whole new set of questions. For example, in attempts to translate *Hikayat Hang Tuah* from Malay to English – what tense should be used?⁷⁶ Seemingly simplistic, this question hinges on a deeper issue of the spectral hegemony of linear time deployed by the episteme 'history' in the study of old Malay

⁷⁵ See discussion in relation to Rey Ito's criticism of the linearization of Filipino history (Yong Mun Cheong 95).

⁷⁶ (Errington 'Some Comments on Style in the Meanings of the Past', 234)

texts. Much like space, time is assumed to always exist in any consciousness as unidirectional and linear by many historians via timeline-based narratives of the past regardless of the absence of any symptomatic signs of its consideration as such. Malay does not have any tense, and specificity in time is often marked by lexical temporal markers, and thus, a translation of a Malay text into English automatically impose the tense system of the latter onto the former, overshadowing any concept of time (or the absence thereof) in the former.

In a similar way that it cultivates inquiry of the upheld notions of historical, literary, social, cognitive and physical space, Southeast Asian studies' disciplinary plasticity allows the incursion of a healthy form of skepticism, stemming from literary theory, of the way time was considered in old Malay texts. Narratology, the study of narratives and its structural makeup, essentially a form of close-reading, can be an instrument to challenge the assumptions of the 'historical' and also therefore the labeling of a text as 'historical' (instead of 'literary', 'religious' or otherwise). This form of textual analysis is used by Anthony Milner in studying the 'silences' in a Malay nationalist, Ibrahim Yaacob's speech *Surveying the Homeland* (1941) after the Japanese invasion, delving into what he did not say as well as what he did.

Misa Melayu could be read as a key text in understanding textualized oral narratives – *hikayat* and *syair* – beyond the constraints of time and space of its contents. To do the text justice is to read it in multiple modes of reading, unlocking doors and opening windows of matrices in/of Perak's past, present and future, leading us to understand it in an interdisciplinary, performative way of how the state had been

constructed by the powers that be, by way of textual and cartographic maps. By bringing texts (maps could be subsumed under this categorical term), events and characters around the so-called ‘historical’ and/or ‘literary’ text that have been overshadowed by constative reading practices that have been seemingly set in stone for centuries, we can only gain more by unraveling new paths that map networks of meaning that were previously untrodden. Parallel to serious, excavative, archaeological means of reading, we might find other ways of deciphering bits and pieces of sacred knowledge buried in the soothing orality of its language, - now silenced by textual modes of knowledge production – by playfully wandering in and around the text, harvesting from our consciousness jigsaw pieces of reimaginings of senses from which a geocognitive space has been understood, construed, and cyclically produced and revised. Ultimately, of course, in reading the *hikayat*, the choice lies in the readers’ hands, whether to be bound by the narrow confines of normalized, academicized reading methods, or to play freely, sensibly with game-pieces from within or without the text, creating novel and deeper comprehensions, from the uncharted territories of the reading imagination.

CHAPTER 2:

Reimagining narrative paradigms: reading beyond the historico-literary.

Translating a *terra incognita*

“It is hardly too much to assume that, prior to 1875, when the sad news reached England of the rising of a people under British protection, and the murder of Mr. Birch, the state of Perak was to the majority of people, a *terra incognita*.”⁷⁷

Imagining Perak before the British explorers had their imperialist encounter and settlement could be difficult, as indicated by the phrase *terra incognita*⁷⁸ - ‘unknown land’, ‘uncharted territory’ – that was only created on paper through the *cogito* or ‘thinking’⁷⁹ of the first map drawers and text makers, the ones who were actually responsible for coining the term ‘Perak’ and implying an onomastic relation between the name and a piece of land. The Cartesian strand of thought that allowed ontological projection into discourse - the transposition of the stable, seemingly unitary and whole subject “I” from the thinkers’ minds into language, printed or

⁷⁷ (McNair 1)

⁷⁸ Also found in other texts as a description for the unknown nature of Perak and Malay peninsula prior to British colonization – e.g. “At that time the Malay Peninsula was a *terra incognita* to white men, and the characteristics, customs peculiarities and prejudices of the Malay had yet to be learnt.” (Swettenham, *Stories and Sketches*, 74)

⁷⁹ Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* - “This proposition, I think, therefore I am, is the first and the most certain which presents itself to whoever conducts his thoughts in order.” - can be extended to a place discovered by the British, “I think about a place and therefore it exists”. The textual manifestation of representations of Perak through historical languaging by the first British explorers literally made Perak magically appear as a state with indigenous and non-indigenous populace, governed by a Malay feudal political system of based on customs and traditions that was viewed as backwards and primitive, thus in dire need of a British resident to provide advice to the rulers. In other words, the way that Perak was written about in the 18th century completely justified British settlement and rule in the state. Earliest among enlightenment thinkers of the Malay peninsula, these British explorers were driven by a necessity of seeking a method of producing knowledge, and of knowing the space that they encounter, inhabit and interact with. Some of them seek a “pure” or “essential” form of knowledge by diving into local sources, however this did not allow them to escape the tendency of formulating this knowledge in a way that was free from the way they knew their ‘selves’, a subtle, underlying form of the what Goenawan Mohamad termed as the “knowing-ego”. In his book, *On God and Other Unfinished Things*, he quotes Camus in presenting what could be considered an averted antithesis to the Cartesian unquestioned logic – “I rebel, therefore *we are*”.

otherwise, permitted the establishment of order in texts that the European explorers, such as McNair, to not just write about Perak, but write about it in a particular way that naturalized the presence of British agency in the historical cast of characters of the states' past, an agency that affected and molded the portrayal of the diverse groups of people in the state. Seemingly simple at first glance, the multifaceted problematique of the agency brought by the first person pronoun is discussed by Derrida in *The Law of Genre* (1980) by first elaborating on the usage of the pronoun in terms of providing an account of oneself in the face of the law, claiming that the law by nature demands the presence of the pronoun to operate. Early written histories and maps are creations of written language and therefore necessitate the subjectivity and the 'realist' logic fallaciously presented by the pronoun, and dictates that it *must* be used by the people who, willingly or not, are being subjected under early modern laws in the region. I argue that the inputting of this first person logic via pronoun has an unignorable impact on translations of Malay manuscripts, summarizable by acknowledging the filtered process of translation, and acknowledging that the translated English version of any Malay work would be essentially incongruent. Discursively, the output language of the translation, instead of English, would be more accurately termed as 'translationese'⁸⁰ – a mediating variant between English and classical poetic Malay.

⁸⁰ Translationese could be defined as a creole-like, non-native variant emerging from the process of translation. See page 174 for a more extensive definition.



Fig. 5: Picture of Capitan Chung Ah Kwee, Leader of the Hai San in Larut, Member of the first Perak State Council 1887 from National Archives Malaysia (PLATE XVI), (Winstedt and Wilkinson, between 116 and 117)

By fitting the perceived into conceived discursive spaces, with the latter dictating how the former is termed, framed and understood, and imposing a restricted kind of subjectivity to the populace of Perak into the grand narrative of the British empire. For example, any mention of the Chinese in the histories of Perak would be mostly in regards to business, taxation, tin-mining and riots between Ghee Hin and Hai San⁸¹, instantly imposing a certain way of seeing the Chinese that history readers and writers, and the lay population interested in history, are compelled to believe as it is the most widely circulating account, and most possibly the only kind of narrative used to tell the stories of a supposed minority of Perak. Set apart from the main historical

⁸¹ Chinese mining gangs or secret societies that held power in mining areas in Perak (mostly Larut) and other regions of the Peninsula, from Province Wellesley to Singapore.

narrative by a subliminal, superimposed tendency to view the state as predominantly Malay, these secret societies are referred to as “territorial-dialect groups” who are “deeply conscious of their regional differences”⁸², and therefore need to be rigorously considered in terms of sociolinguistic differences that doubtlessly affect their worldview and ours, those who are reading about them from the vantage point of the present. And through the supposedly superior, institutionalized lenses that provide visions for historical reading and writing, and for public discourses of history, they remain to be treated as a “minority”. Subsequent historical narratives did not break away from these casts of stereotypes engendering their existence inside and outside of the historical texts, until today histories of Perak, and histories of Malaysia continue to propagate a national ontology and epistemology based on the containment of the minorities, discursively and in reality – by adhering to relatively derived, biased categories and categorizations. In turn, this becomes the main defining factor of how subjectivity is viewed from the perspective of the reader, a person of the non-dominant, non-majority language or ethnic group would be represented with a concrete, yet conditional subjectivity, to be perceived in an unbalanced comparison against the majority.

Prior to getting into any more balanced, deeper discussions of possible philosophical extensions of *cogito*, and what its usages and meanings might bring or hide, we might benefit from acknowledging the apparent linguistic bias in the Cartesian statement that others the translations of the same statement in target

⁸² (Kim 118)

languages with no ‘be’ verb, or copula. The closest reflection of the aphorism in such languages is “I think, therefore I”, a phrase that we might consider as strange and incomplete, if we were to adhere to prescriptive, traditional, top-down grammatical rules of English, as its readers, speakers, listeners, writers and to an extent imaginable in our minds, comprehenders. A major part of ontological and phenomenological preoccupation of philosophers stem from somewhat overfocusing on the Latin ‘be’, accepting it as an organic, natural, and in most cases, the most important part of human cognition; and as such, has been problematized rigorously, cyclically to no end, as a multilateral semiotic and semantic source of production of representations, of the self and of worlds that could exist via one’s perspective(s)⁸³. This very disjoint in translation from Latin into other languages could be summed up as an existentialist linguistic problem: the copula “to be” or “being”, in its verbal form, immanently exists in Latin as an omnipresent signifier through which one establishes one’s existence in the world and the existence of the world, and *how* one exists in the world. In a language with no copula, this signifier would be translated or posited as a null element, an invisible linguistic illusion that is nothing more than a convenient assumption to ameliorate the difficulties, or rather, the impossibilities of translation. This is of course untrue for speakers of languages without the compulsory copula.

⁸³ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh, New York: SUNY Press (2010) and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel Barnes, New York: Open Road Media (2012)

On narrativizing a state

Structuralist tendencies in historical texts manifest themselves in a discourse that inevitably denote subjectivity (*res cogitans*) and objectivity (*res extensa*), or from other perspectives – dimensions (extensionality), orientation (vectorality), affinity (homographies)⁸⁴. What is represented in the text is by essence things outside of the text, that a historian, or the manipulator of a discursive space decides to be important and/or significant to be represented. Within the historico-literary space that McNair, Swettenham, Winstedt and their peers occupy via their writings, there is a finite set of visual and textual signifiers that are used to represent the infinite variabilities of the possible individual human experiences embodied by the native peoples objectified in print. Such texts, while informing readers on the conditions of Perak's past, restricts to a certain extent any interpretation that does not corroborate the units posited by the discourse. The dynamic, polyvocalic, polyglossic, lively nature of the people is made static by the act of writing history, an act that is reserved to privileged scholars bestowed (by the British crown and the force of circumstance) with agency and power to narrate the state and its inhabitants. It is impossible to get an idea about the actuality of the daily lives of the people of Perak by reading what is written, and these historical texts are only helpful in providing information in rigid and constative terms, and to a certain extent, detached from reality.

⁸⁴ (De Certeau 123)

Despite the present-day translatability of word-concepts such as ‘state’ and ‘narrative’ into Malay *negeri*⁸⁵ and *cerita*, grounds for such hasty translinguistic equations remain shaky, due to the indeterminability of mutuality in their comprehension. The word *negeri* is often found in loose interchangeability with the word *benua* ‘continent’ in numerous *hikayats*⁸⁶, *Misa Melayu* being one of them⁸⁷.

“On their side, natives of subject communities react to the white man by re-echoing the phraseology in which they receive their orders. Everywhere the new speech product consists of more or less deformed European words strung together with a minimum of grammar.”⁸⁸

The cobbling of scenes, facts, anecdotes, texts, artifacts into a chronological historical order neatly presented in a codex of neatly bound pages that contain organized chapters and paragraphs so familiar to the historical reader now, is a by-product of the historians’ reading and interpretation of the blanks left by earlier historians, an inevitable literary result of sense making of and in a world newly encountered. Through this ‘linguaging’ of Perak, we come to know such names as Winstedt, Birch, and Wilkinson as household names when discussing the state’s history. In fact, the only Malay text dubbed as the ‘history of Perak’⁸⁹, *Misa Melayu*, is physically and literally a textual pastiche of three different texts discovered by Winstedt that he thought to be parts of the same text. “Once more and yet once more

⁸⁵ *negeri* land, country, settlement; *negeri akhirat* the next world; *negeri awak*, *negeri sendiri* one’s own country; *negeri luar*, *negeri asing*, *negeri luar* foreign country; *ibu negeri* capital of a country, *isi negeri* inhabitants of a country; *sa-buah negeri* Min., a collection of hamlets or states under one chief (or ruler). (Winstedt *Dictionary*, 244)

. Sanskrit. town, city, state. (Wilkinson, *Dictionary*, 674)

Other definitions have included ‘territory’ (Kim 3), in reference to the land area that surrounds the river of the state.

⁸⁶ *Sulalat as-Salatin*, *Hikayat Siak*, *Hikayat Aceh*

⁸⁷ This complication is similar to the one brought by semantico- spatial ambiguity of toponyms such as America, that is inherently semantically ambiguous, between the continent and the country.

⁸⁸ (Bodmer 447)

⁸⁹ As indicated by the colophon on the first page of the manuscript, see Fig. 11

glory in a gap”.⁹⁰ Winstedt, taking cues from the older histories of the hinterland of the Malay peninsula, filled in the blanks of an older historical narrative mold⁹¹ with his own sense-making, internalizing, producing and reproducing Perak through endless cycles of reading and writing.

Two of the modes of the (hi)story-telling on Perak could be identified as:

1) The European one with a linear timeline with fixed blanks that were filled with local native names of people and of places, as well as things in nature, and primarily concerned with the resources that could be tapped into by European forces, in Perak’s case tin and the events around overall flow of capital – taxation, logistics, mining, gang feuds - that would eventually decide the fate of European administrative clout and influence on the state. Some texts that exhibit the features of this mode are Swettenham *About Perak* (1893) and McNair’s *Perak and The Malays* (1878). Usually written in a journalistic, autobiographical voice, such narratives do not really distinguish between the author’s opinionated claims dictated by his personal biases and judgments, and his recorded observations about the circumstances and verisimilitudes of life in the state in the 18th century. Everything is told through one authorial voice that inevitably subsumed all other discursive modes of history production, incorporating local sources through translation and references, making all representations of the first-hand experiences of the British explorers and residents of Perak the main historical works that have dictated how modern and post-modern

⁹⁰ (James 332)

⁹¹ Remarkably, Winstedt compiled, translated and published prolifically on Malay history and literature, gathering and bringing to light existing texts in Malay and English during his life. *A History of Perak* (1974) includes earlier papers by W.E. Maxwell, and records a diverse set of primary and secondary sources in Malay, English and Dutch.

histories of the state are written, successfully incorporating the British not only as mere characters of the going-ons in Perak back then, but also as powerful agents dictating how history of Perak should be told, written, read and subsequently taught, understood and imagined.

2) The Malay one which is mostly preoccupied with the royal family, recounting through accounts, parables, tales, and poems about their business and non-business relations, and interactions, sometimes interspersed with fantastic elements. *Misa Melayu* as a Malay text could be considered as a specimen for this kind of paradigm of (hi)story-telling of Perak. Despite being written in Malay by Raja Chulan, a royal narrator who had an insider perspective to the events of the palace, all other factors that render the text readable, literary and historical came from Winstedt's patching together three shorter versions of what he saw as parts of the same text, that later was published by a renowned Malay printing press in codex form at the turn of 20th century. Through the acts of compiling, reading, writing about and translating Malay texts, the British historical and literary paradigms (and their supposed biases for primitive, fantastic, enchanting tales that befit the stereotypical notion of people living in villages in previously uncharted tropical land) decided which Malay texts would be printed, reprinted, and incorporated into other historical works. In turn, the remnants Malay story-telling voice(s) from the oral world – the *dalang* 'puppeteer' telling soothing stories by inventing magical worlds and characters that would entrance the audience, and the *dagang* 'traveling mendicant' relating didactic tales of adventures, travel and encounters – became secondary to the authoritativeness of the objective

historical voice discussing the *hikayats* as textual artifacts. Any *hikayat* that came to be known in history or as history had to be one that catered to the whims and fancies of the British taste for literature and history coming from a strange, foreign land.⁹² Therefore, a text like *Misa Melayu* could be considered a Malay text that appealed to the British notion of what a Malay is, rather than being representative of any inherent, immanent local literary consciousness of Malays in Perak and/or the Perak population at large.

John Frederick Adolphus McNair, a young British explorer in the 19th century imagined Perak as a state, taking the political concept as a given and a basis for his book on “Perak and the Malays” of what he encountered when he reached the shores of Malaya. Written after his return to the Britain, partly inspired by the ‘jungle fever’ he contracted in Perak, it is infused with the symptomatic of British explorers in the late 19th and early 20th century, the quest to fill in the gaps in the Enlightenment-based rational knowledge of the world by way of putting Malay states on the map and

⁹² “naturally enough, the works chosen by the British for use in vernacular schools were those which most accorded with their taste rather than with that of the Malays. Indeed, this was realized and openly acknowledged (Wilkinson 17) after mentioning several titles published “through European agency,” cites a number of works “published, without European assistance, by Malay printing-presses, “which had recently been established and remarks that, “The book-market indicates very decisively the difference between Malay and European taste.” Examples of works favored by Europeans were the Hikayat Abdullah, the “primitive rhapsodists’ tales,” and “farcical” tales. Abdullah, a Malay only in the sense of being a Muslim, wrote for a European postulated audience, thus one which a Malay reader would find it impossible to identify. He made no attempt to establish common ground with a Malay postulated audience, nor were his many criticisms of the Malays intended to reform them. Rather, he was concerned with creating a favorable ethos for himself with his European audience. British approval of his work demonstrates that Abdullah fulfilled his purpose admirably, but for this very reason his work was unlikely to appeal to Malay taste, and it is thus that Malays have had problems appreciating his Hikayat up to the present day.” (Sweeney 6-7), translationese of British scholars had to be adapted to suit the taste of the texts’ audiences, mainly educated and from a higher social class. Thus, any translated Malay text had to be spiced up with features that the critical reader would label exotic, at times outdated, at other times novel, at other times uncannily familiar, to suit the reader’s mind that seek excitement, intelligibility and a way to identify the other.

putting a map on the Malay states. That is to say that the endeavor of early British officials consisted mainly of surveying the environs and populace by taking brief notes and expanding them based on the narrative style of their precursors. As a member of a budding discursive community of British officers which later included Winstedt, Swettenham and Low among many others, McNair adopted an approach that compartmentalized the state of Perak textually into mini subchapters, ranging from geographical descriptions to portrayals of life in the Malay villages, from the kinds of costumes worn by the people to the exotic tropical fruits. Unlike Birch, who captured his experience by writing in his own journal, McNair chose to write his findings in this previously unknown and unheard of region in a hybridized form that chiefly relied on British and Malay historical source materials, fusing it with little heartfelt anecdotes of his encounters with the people, the flora and fauna, with the upbeat delight of a little schoolboy going on an adventure in the woods for the first time.

While much appreciated by the publishers then and even now, it would not be far-fetched to say that early scholars', such as McNair and Swettenham, descriptions of the people would be seen by the local postmodern critical historian, such as Farish Noor, as being "crude and stereotypical". Only three years before the publication of his book the murder of Birch took place, resulting from "his ignorance of the Malay saying "When you enter a byre, low; when you enter a pen, bleat"⁹³ and his demeanor of administering Perak "like a Victorian rationalist schoolmaster", which meant being punitive and strict - imposing the British laws without any sensitivity or regard to the

⁹³ (Winstedt, *Malaya and Its History*, 66)

local customs - much to the contempt of the local chiefs and Sultans⁹⁴ who felt threatened by the Birch's show of power. The metaphorical construction of space in the Malay saying paints the borders of the cultural space by defining the interaction between the outsider or newcomer and the 'indigenous' populace of the space. The process of representing the cultural space now known as Perak only allowed for unilateral impositions of labels, laws and ideals that correspond with ones that had already been institutionalized in Europe at the time. For this reason, is important to acknowledge that Birch comes from a long succession of British scholars, therefore his inheritance of any administrative assumptions regarding the Malays could be considered a given.

McNair was fitting perceived data into conceived spaces, with the latter dictating how the former is termed, framed and understood. In the chapter 'People of Perak', the subchapters are titled Malays, Bugis, Kerinchi, Mandeiling, Jakun, Sakai, overlooking coexisting communities in the state, such as various groups of Europeans and the Chinese, which are mentioned in passing, giving the impression that there is a

⁹⁴ Before the end of 1874 Abdullah sent a secret message to the deposed Sultan Ismail: "If Mr. Birch asks you for the regalia or desires to install me, do not consent. Should you consent to my installation as Sultan, Perak will be given over to the English; for my words have caused me to be much indebted to them. Should I myself ask for the regalia in the presence of Mr. Birch, do not consent to give them up." Mr. Birch explained his programme for future taxation to a gathering of chiefs. In the words of one of the Sultan's retainers, the Malays concluded that "he had nothing to fill his belly and came to Perak to collect the revenue of others". Abdullah sent a deputation to the Governor at Singapore. There were grievances over minor matters such as the Resident's arbitrary fixing of a district boundary against the weight of local evidence. But the chiefs decided to confine their complaint to important issues. They wanted Sir Andrew Clarke to forbid Mr. Birch to interfere with religion and custom and to counsel him to consult Sultan and chiefs, and not to deprive them of feudal dues, at present their only source of income, or to assist the escape of slaves, their property by custom 3000 or more years old. Sir Andrew was retiring and handing over to his successor. Nettled by the Sultan's action, he told the deputation never to bring the Governor letters that had not been seen by the Resident, and he wrote to Abdullah to obey the Governor, describing himself as one "who lifted you out of your misery and sorrow, giving you position and honour and Mr. Birch!" (Winstedt, *Malaya and its History*, 66-67)

certain kind of importance placed on the so-called native groups in the text. Elsewhere, there are brief mentions of Chinese, especially in regards to business and tin-mining, stereotypes that would be endlessly regurgitated in history textbooks as being their defining features. The ‘natives’, on the other hand, are described in terms of their physical features, their demeanors, idiosyncratic behaviors, language, and geographical origins, with a similar methodology that someone would apply on artifacts. As a textual reconstruction of the state, the text projects divisions and boundaries on to the social space, imposing Cartesian subjectivity from a mental space that was imposed conveniently to fit Perak into the grand narrative of the British empire in the 18th century. Land dissections on the text and in the state do not necessarily correlate with Malay conceptions of space that is pointed out which is more focused on the place of the individual and his/her relations to the surrounding environment as iterated by the saying *Di mana bumi dipijak, di situ langit dijunjung*⁹⁵ which means “Wherever the earth is treaded on, there the sky is upheld” that excludes any mention of borders, and hints at a more flexible sense of subjectivity.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *situ* has no accurate corresponding translation in English, other than the obtuse ‘yonder’ or ‘there’. The latter choice is problematic due to its semantic collapsibility with *sana*.

⁹⁶ This resistance to constativity is also found in William Marsden’s *The History of Sumatra* (1811, first edition 1784), written from across the Strait of Malacca, in which a *Rejang* man of Sumatra was mistaken as a Malay man by Marsden, showing the complexity of categorizing and compiling ethnolinguistic, and social identities in a historical text. Most Malay-speakers were/are multilinguals, and have diverse affiliations when it comes to identity, yet the incompatibility of this multilingualism in the colonial framework of research resulted in further inquiry and deduction by Marsden – as he found it necessary to state the “mother tongue”, the primary, essential language that the man spoke and thought in, probably based on some European assumptions that he had been more accustomed to. The complexity is only clarified by a self-narration from the man himself. “The distinction will appear more strongly from this circumstance, that whilst the sultan of *Anak Sungei (Moco-moco)*, ambitious of imitating the sultan of *Menangkabau*, styles himself and his immediate subjects Malays, his neighbor,

Another preoccupation that is apparent in McNair's text is the canonical and well-established standards of geopolitical 'correctness' due to Perak's locational importance for business, particularly for East India Company and prior to that the Dutch East India Company. Centuries before the 1876 Malay map became available, a representation of Perak and the Perak river appeared in a map from 1668. The river was labelled as 'incorrect'⁹⁷ due to the fact that it represents a tidal creek instead of fluid lines dividing land units, with hues of blue representing flowing bodies of water⁹⁸. Obviously the same kind of understanding that evaluates any map based on modern standards of geography would not be helpful in interpreting any non-geographical map. Correctness is, then, a variable that is dependent on the function of the map rather than the form⁹⁹. Instead of merely accepting McNair's reading of the 1668 map as being erroneous, we could take into consideration the possibility of them being manifestations of an ongoing process to represent the world on paper, with the state of Perak being one of its subsets.

the *Pangeran of Sungai Lamo*, chief of the *Rejangs*, a very civilized Mahometan, and whose ancestors for some generations were of the same faith, seemed offended, in a conversation I had with him, at my supposing him (as he is usually considered) a Malay, and replied, with some emotion, "*Malayo tidah, sir; orang ulu betul sayo*. No Malay, sir; I am a genuine, aboriginal countryman." The two languages he wrote and talked (I know not if he be still living) with equal facility; but the *Rejang* he esteemed his mother tongue."

⁹⁷ "Mapmakers are human, and they make mistakes. Although poor training and sloppy design account for some errors, most cartographic blunders reflect a combination of inattention and inadequate editing. If the mapmaker is rushed, if the employer views willingness to work for minimal wages as more important than skill in doing the job, or if no one checks and rechecks the work, missing or misplaced features and misspelled labels are inevitable." (Monmonier 35)

⁹⁸ "quaint but very correct map of the Malayan peninsula, prepared by M. Cassini, the Director of the Observatory of Paris in 1668, from which is gathered the fact that Perak then continued to be looked upon as second only to Malacca on the western coast. The river Perak is not very correct in its representation, being made more to resemble a tidal creek. This is doubtless due to the information that the rivers to the north joined the Perak, which in the case of the Juramas and the Bruas is very nearly correct." (McNair 345)

⁹⁹ "Function dictates form, and a map more "accurate" in the usual sense would not work as well" (Monmonier 35)

This kind of documentation, one could imagine, would be helpful for the succession of scholar-officers that would continue to occupy various important positions in the palace, due to its comprehensibility and ease-of-access by European-trained scholars. It allows unfamiliar persons to get acquainted with a new universe through a hybridized literary medium that has been solidified in its rigidity and bareness, a façade for objectivity that reigned supreme in primary historical sources. Assumptions led the way as these gentlemen seek their way through the woods, dutifully recording aspects of nature with their Latin names and illustrations that accompany them, things that were totally unbeknownst to the native population, a new form of knowledge imposed on the natural world around them. As scientific terminology was juxtaposed with nature-based metaphors and proverbs, the state and its contents began to be introduced and re-introduced as a compartmentalized zone that is ordered, and analyzable by disciplinary segments. This proclivity of renaming also spread to the streets and buildings early during the onset of modernity in the state, as a sort of filter through which the state came to be known by the officers, providing them with the ability to navigate, build, develop, and become self-proclaimed land experts in the state.

Each of the scholar-observers had their own style in making sense of Perak through language, while also expressing themselves through writing – McNair, influenced by his military training prior to coming to the state exhibited a significantly more orderly manner in his book; while Swettenham, quite the romantic author, is more carefree and informal in stories of his journeys; and Winstedt's writing tied it all

together since he was from a later generation of residents, bringing a sort of modern coherence to the textual life of Malaya in general, Perak specifically.

Beyond descriptions of nature, Swettenham in particular has a shrewd sensitivity toward local myths and romances, as shown in his anthologies of sketches of life in Malaya. Fancy tales of piracy, cock-fights, *joget*¹⁰⁰ gatherings in riverside villages, affairs and beautiful sceneries occupy his narrative imagination, probably as an escape from his official designation as a British resident advisor. *Malay Sketches* (1895) shows his exquisite penmanship in furnishing localities along the Perak river - Kuala Kangsar, Blanja and Bota – with fictional and historical characters, incorporating them into his (and therefore his successors', readers' and potentially, our) understanding of the physical space that he lived in. As a resident advisor, scholar, guest, man, observer, writer, socialite, administrator, traveler, and man of letters, he could be considered to have lived up to “the myth of the heroic (and homosocial) frontiersman”¹⁰¹, creating the idealistic image of a British gentleman living in faraway colony. Aside from mythifying himself in a transcendental manner¹⁰², most particularly in *Unaddressed Letters* (1898), a compilation of honest, heartfelt and abstract expositions that exhibit his true feelings for the space that he was living in, Swettenham created myths for generations of British readers that would continue to read, project and understand what they read through another more superior authorial voice. As such, his works could be considered as a small part in the grand

¹⁰⁰ A type of early modern Malay dance usually performed in village gatherings

¹⁰¹ (Blair 551)

¹⁰² “I am not a dancing man-my time has been spent in communion with Nature, in reading in the open book of Truth...” (Swettenham, *Unaddressed Letters*, 186)

corpus of literature that mythologizes Perak in a specific and exceptional way, spontaneous and spurious, very much unlike any history or geography textbooks that would later dominate the epistemological space devoted to the teaching and learning about the state.

Between ‘representations of/in factual literature’ and ‘the true language/language of truth’

“What should interest us in the discussion of “the literature of fact” or, as I have chosen to call it, “the fictions of factual representation” is the extent to which the discourse of the historian and that of the imaginative writer overlap, resemble, or correspond with each other.”¹⁰³

Representation, a common feature shared between any kind of literature, is something that is constantly put into question by historians, linguists, literary scholars and readers, a result of the transference of content, or rather, meaning, from one form to another. Its discursive intersectionality could be either a rupture or a transparent common ground between two or more paradigms. Stretching the call in the quote above to push for a curiosity of this intersectionality between ‘the literature of fact’ and ‘the fictions of factual representation’, one might ask the question regarding ‘representations of factual literature’ and ‘representations in factual literature’ (the latter could assume its academic conceptual cloak as ‘historiography’) and the restrictions that they impose on the imagination, via a prescriptive grid blanketing written characters and symbols present in any physical space, from textbooks to geographical maps, to monuments and memorials in cities and states, and consequentially on every attempt to remember the past of these spaces by. The overlaying of this grid or matrix dictates silences and saliences in a cityscape and

¹⁰³ (White 121)

thus, collective memory. The act of remembering the past becomes a strictly logical, concrete, directed process that is almost incompatible with, and almost always superior than, the act of imagining the past in which nodes of thoughts are connected through a web of concatenative or disparate private, semi-collective or collective experiences, thus rarifying the occurrence of the intersectionality¹⁰⁴. How could we come up with a balanced hermeneutics that recognizes differences and commonalities between an overarching literal imaging of the space of the state, the singular imaginaires of each subject of the state and the collective imaginaire of the general population of the state, by which memories are formed and the past reconstructed? An approach that could be useful here as a critical lens is one that builds connections beyond the constraints of historicity, one that recognizes fictionality as an alternative and useful concept, by which the objectification and account for the existence of the grid as a template for the construction of historical monuments could serve as a benchmarking point.

“If there is such a thing as a language of, a tensionless and even silent depository of the ultimate secrets for which all thought strives, then this language of truth is – the true language.”¹⁰⁵

“The city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language”¹⁰⁶

In the English language, there is no term coined with Greek stems, similar to ‘toponym’ (place-name), hinting at a lack of mobile, panoramic and intensely shifting perspectives. What does this absence of/in terminology mean? For one, the existence

¹⁰⁴ This point comes with a disclaimer: there is a need to acknowledge the existence of historical works of fiction – literary texts filled with historical data – and fictionalized histories in the forms of fable episodes inserted into actual histories, and perhaps these are what White is referring to.

¹⁰⁵ (Benjamin 259)

¹⁰⁶ (Barthes 92)

of such a word embeds the concept into the linguistic, scientific consciousness of its speakers, thus imbuing primacy into ‘place’ or ‘*topoi*’¹⁰⁷, and inevitably into socio-cultural narrative production and understanding. Realistically speaking, we spend most of our time reading, and listening to names of real or fictional names of places – intentionally or not – in daily conversations, stories, histories, monuments, street signs. If names could be considered a type of historico-literary currency unit, then some would be circulating more than others, their salience in occurrences predetermined by hidden factors – among others, by the rubric of modernity.

Here, it could be suggested that determinants of the ‘truth effect’, the connective aspect between the signifier and the signified that ascertain the verity of discourses – cartographic, literary, historiographic and others – is related to a ‘cognate effect’¹⁰⁸. If a particular exuberance, an utterance, a structural part (of language, literature, architecture, points in a historic/literary/geographic/cartographic/physical space) of a discursive instance is also part of the surface makeup of another discourse, it becomes something that is verifiable, closer in connection to a stable, fundamental basis of a more universal discourse, a discourse that supposedly is comprehensible by any human being that has undergone the institutionalized education system that is the unquestioned result, recursive reason, and consequence of civilization. My aim here is

¹⁰⁷ Further discussions and historical backgrounds of *topoi* as a spatial concept could be found in Casey (1998).

¹⁰⁸ A point that must be acknowledge here is that the very concept of ‘cognate’ is founded upon a structural theory of linguistics and history (and also many other discourses of knowledge), that have been subject to Foucauldian objectification by the providing of a method for the study of ‘epistemes’ and their rudimentary parts. Then, it has been applied in many subsequent investigations of historiography and cartography, one example would be the looming question regarding silences and exuberances – “What are the ‘truth effects’” of the knowledge that is conveyed in maps, both of its more emphatic utterances, and also of its equally emphatic silences?” (Harley 107)

to bring up a critical discussion of the relations that have been crystallized in cartography, historiography and literature, in particular, those that have been applied in the studies of literatures and cartographies that have been exoticized and from the perspective of European, Enlightenment-based, constructions of knowledge, considered to be foreign. In doing so, exploring possible ways in which they could be further dissected, analyzed, questioned, in efforts to gain deeper, more sensitive understandings, and acknowledge the possibilities of the existences of other structures or non-structures.

Understanding that each form of representation of any entity, or any part of a city or a state, is both unique and universal at the same time would be the first step towards achieving any kind of critically informed interpretation. Unique, in the sense that every representation is specific to a place, its tradition and populace (and this is where we arrive never-ending quest for origins, often taking for granted the fact that the end of the quest might be an open field). Universal, in the sense that patterns exist across textscapes, cityscapes and statescapes, and motivations for the existence of these representations are more or less the same – to transfer some kind of semantic content via construction of the symbolic, a process that do not recognize itself as being a construction, so to speak, yet still reflect an underlying or overlayed schema. Monuments and buildings imbued with meanings from another time-space become subsumed in a city (also a state, and so on) and a historical narrative, a multi-directional, intersectional reflective connection is created between disparate loci in texts and chronotopes they signify.

Reading doubles, or the ‘cognate effect’

Let us say that the foundation of historical narratives is an epistemic pattern, supposedly from which truths would come into fruition in the lines of the narratives. This abstract foundation has within it many initially empty, blank fixtures that when filled become important signposts that are automatically paid attention to in the readings, re-readings, re-writings of history. Important, due to the fact that an internarrative line of similarity, comparativity might be drawn between the filler of one blank and another, and from them to a preconceived narrative locus. Even more attention would be paid to homologous fillers in one narrative and another. In these instances, focal points in histories are generated by way of using same building blocks, and/or the same kind of arrangement of certain blocks. In a sense, similarity, comparativity, homologousness, become the reason for the high currency of certain names, categories, orders, hierarchies, divisions, and so on. We find the same features highlighted throughout typological, temporal and spatial continuums of mapping, narrativizing and historicizing, each containing same types of information as another.

Frank Swettenham, in his attempt to provide an all-encompassing textual summary of Perak as implied by the title of his book *About Perak* (1893) leans toward a more opinionated description of the state. The book begins with a short dialogue between him and an expert on silos on the location of Perak. The expert asks questions about Perak as a Straits Settlement, mistaking it for a place in Canada, and upon finding out that it is not in Canada nor does it have any silos, continued on his way. Swettenham critically considered this case as being very typical of the British mindset

of not having the desire to know any unknown place that is not considered profitable¹⁰⁹. Following the footsteps of McNair in compiling geographical and historical descriptions to objectify and spatialize the previously uncharted state of Perak – he acknowledged the ways in which European cartography would not be ideal in placing the state, and instead resorted to a narrative sketch of Perak that is relative to the places (and spaces) nearby that were more well-known to the Europeans back then.

Rather than writing chapters that described whole populaces of people who live there, he focused more on presenting an account of the Malays and the Europeans in the state, the two groups of people that had political clout over the other ethnic groups, and throughout most of the 19th and early 20th centuries the latter more than the former. These two texts – *About Perak* (1893) and McNair's *Perak and the Malays* (1878) - contribute to the earliest form of languaging of Perak that in its format would continue to be manifested in other later historical sources. Of course, both of their writings were heavily influenced by their backgrounds in respective fields of work and training as 'scholar-observers', reveling in the unknown, yet exciting environment that promised profitable occupations, uncommon social and natural encounters, and political supremacy.

In the process of reading, transliterating, translating, analyzing, understanding, and writing about the primary and secondary historical texts of Perak, multiple

¹⁰⁹The last line of the dialogue read ““Ah! Then I'm not interested in the place,” and my friend quickened his pace and left me. He is a wealthy man and a great authority – on silos.” (Swettenham, *About Perak*, 2-3)

instances come up to surface with the pages turned, much like opening a Pandora's box that is full of historic-narrative *doppelgängers* and namesakes, as informing as they are confusing to go by in following strands of narratives. Among many cases of overlaps, coincidences and similarities of forms, names, structures of representations, scenes, historical agents a vaguely tangible coherence, a transparent, interconnected, reflective network of similar names seem to surface: 1) there is the fact that Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain is a namesake for an illustrious figure in world history – Alexander the Great, Alexander the Two-Horned, Alexander of Macedon that have been widely celebrated, discussed, debated over, and on which many stories and histories have been written about. 2) Raja Chulan is the name of three related figures in the history of Perak, by royal lineage. Only one of them is the author of *Misa Melayu*, yet all of them played significant roles in the history and the history-writing of Perak. 3) Maxwell is the family name for two former British residents in Perak – W.E. Maxwell, a keen collector and compiler of texts responsible for the preserving many manuscripts related to Perak history including among others, the multiple disparate copies and parts of *Misa Melayu* and the 1876 Malay map. The other Maxwell is his son, George Maxwell, who held a number of official posts in the states of Kedah and Perak. Along the same lines, Birch is also a name of three British officials – J.W.W. Birch, E.W. Birch both residents of Perak and Arthur Birch, a British official who discovered Penang¹¹⁰ 4) Riverside is the name of both the place I was reading from and the place I was reading about, points on the globe separated by

¹¹⁰ (Swettenham, *About Perak*, 2)

at least 10000 miles of the Pacific Ocean, and is also one of the most common toponyms in continental America.

Amongst these intricate interlaced network of names and referents that separates and distinguishes, connects and divides, lies a non-linear mode of reading and thus, understanding, that might clear up as it sidesteps the prescribed sequentially ordered pattern by which history has been read throughout the ages. Furthermore, in the case of Perak's history, the coexistence of historical facts, agents, and events from a myriad of cultural backgrounds, and a poetic sensibility of history as shown by the *syair* in *Misa Melayu*, complicates any attempt at coming up with an absolute, entirely inclusive, accurate representation of the narrative space. Upon this conditional conceptual complexity, in cyclical processes of (re-)reading, (re-)writing, (re-)translating and (re-)imagining the space, one might rapidly adopt one concept as a basis of coherence in place of another. Or in the awareness of the infinite multiplicity of the existences of such concepts, gape and merely point towards the complex heteroglossic dimensions interreflecting one another, across distinct spatialities, acknowledging parallelities, in flows of consciousness that allow for hidden patterns overlapping multiple flows of consciousness to surface.

The two 'Riversides' as false friends

A map copied from another one printed in 1876¹¹¹ shows a few toponyms that are qualified with the word 'false', evoking a lurking onomastic question of cartography, how do places get their names, and upon having been named, how does

¹¹¹ (Halim, 13)

one decide their ‘truth value’?¹¹² If their true namesakes have already been represented, then other ‘false’ representations would logically be excluded. These hollow, phantom containers of meanings would not make any logical sense if one were to consider it geographically, they exist solely due to the stories told of journeys, explorations, discoveries of truth and error in cartographic representations and revisions, that make them false. Without these stories, the distinctions would be meaningless and purposeless other than for the sake of a cartographic sleight-of hand.

One almost universal feature that is prevalent in many cartographic maps is a cardinally-governed division between north and south of a particular geopolitical unit. Among other instances, California has one such division, Northern and Southern California (NorCal and SoCal, as they are more intimately referred to by Californians, and those familiar with the locality) are somehow cognitively separated by an invisible line or infinite vastness between the two – an region that is often referred to as Central California, stretching for more than 200 miles! These regions are defined in terms of their metropolitan centers, Los Angeles in the south and San Francisco in the north, and many other specificities drawn from the cultures, lifestyles, topographic features and many other factors of the populations, that have been subsumed, manipulated, expounded upon in many permutations of exuberances and of silences, yet seldom questioned, and almost impossible to be ignored.

Representations of the state of Perak, in maps – cartographic, textual, poetic, and later geopolitical – exhibit a comparable division to the North-South. Even in

¹¹² Distinctions between ‘true north’, ‘magnetic north’ and ‘grid north’ have a similar question underlying them, what makes the ‘true north’ true?

formalized, standardized maps of present geographical standards, remnants of a riverine statecraft in which the state was carved into two parts – Perak Hulu and Perak Hilir - by references to *hulu* ‘the upper waters (of a river)’ or ‘upriver’, ‘upstream’ and by extensions ‘upcountry’ and ‘the interior of a country’, ‘the head of’ (*penghulu*), and *hilir* ‘lower reaches (of a river), ‘downriver’, ‘downstream’ and by extension its verbal form ‘to go downstream’.¹¹³ Reflective of the political realities of the state at that time, both *hulu* and *hilir* districts had their own Raja – Raja di Hulu and Raja di Hilir.

The entirety of the state of California is connected by a hidden subterranean line, the San Andreas Faultline, barely traceable in any cartographic maps, whereas in Perak’s case it is the Perak river that links its two regions. Being the centrifugal theme of the *syair*, and the 1876 Malay map, the river has a bifurcated, paradoxical representational quality – as both the line that connects and divides the *hulu* and *hilir* regions. Instead of concrete centerpoints being determinants, aquatic directionality becomes the main scheme of the manifested division. One land-based and one water-based, the bases for an assumed naturalized, unity of each state remains intricate, illusive and complex, if we were to objectify, and in some instances, sidestep the vicissitudes of cartography.

Perhaps a coincidental point to be added here is that the site where I was reading from, Riverside, CA, is an ideal reflective example of memorialization or monumentalization of historical figures. The central downtown area is populated with,

¹¹³ *hulu* and *hilir* showed up 27 and 42 times respectively in both the prose and poetic parts of *Misa Melayu*, pointing to the prevalence of a water-based way spatialization in Malay thought in the 18th century.

other than businesses and people, an archipelago of statues commemorating figures not only in the city's history, but also US and world histories. Statues and quotes by prominent figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Dosan Ahn Chang Ho, Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, Benjamin Franklin, and Ssgt. Ysmael R. 'Smiley' Villegas all within walking distance apart along a promenade in the center of the city majestically decorate the landscape of the city. Made with precious marble and bronze, they give the city a subtle layer of a diverse, complex yet prototypical historicity of any modern city.



Fig 6: A memorial displaying quote by K. Wallace Longshore, a resident of Riverside, carved into the path leading up to a monument of Gandhi, constructed in 2005. A striking feature is the proximity of both insignias of Riverside and India on the slate and the reference made to language.

"That the City of Riverside recognizes the 'great-souled one' whose spiritual and political greatness came to fruition in a land located on the opposite side of the Earth, in another century, and in a language most of us would not understand, speaks loudly of the richness of Riverside's soul."

Embodying in visual-architectural forms the loaded vagaries of history, any kind of concrete fixture in a city could be read as corresponding to certain meanings, or turns of events, semantic signifieds that is other-than-itself, yet is in-itself. While the fixtures and structures are concrete, they are only tied to meaning as far as the reader is informed about the bases of their existences. Beyond the absolute rules of

representation, the rigid grid whose points are represented via these concrete structures, lie a more ephemeral, elusive set of meaning that could be situated closer to the notion of a language's, or a 'linguaging's' soul, discursive projections that are only partially visible, represented, and knowable, and barely emotionally tangible. A question worth noting, and thinking about here is how to bridge from the factual understanding of the concrete, to what could be perceived, is connected to, yet unsignified by a historical site's existence.

The name 'Riverside' – a shared place-name for the place that I am writing from in California and the place that I am reading about in Perak (of course, these are not the only two places in the world with such a name – Riverside is one of the most common toponym in the US¹¹⁴ yet the coincidence is still not ignorable). Riverside, California is a city in which my campus is located, taking as a point of reference the Santa Ana river which the city is located next to, in the inland part of Southern California, around 70 miles from the Pacific Coast. The 'Riverside' in Perak is a rest stop (or an R&R (rest and recreation) stop as it is more colloquially known by the locals), located at an intersection between an offshoot of the Perak river, the Kangsar river and a highway. Both corroborate the intertwining geo- and hydro- bodies represented in their names, one could literally imagine the locational identity by just knowing the meaning of the name.

¹¹⁴ (Jennings 31)

The Santa Ana river presents a unique case for a cartographic investigation, as the section of it that crosses and is the closest to¹¹⁵ Riverside is dry most of the year, with occasional mini rain breaks during winter and spring, yet it is still represented on many topographical, geographical, and utilitarian maps with a thick light blue line that implies, and concretizes, its aqueousness even when it is not, in fact, flowing. The cartographic nomenclature and signifier, in this instance, diverts us from the visible, experienced reality true for most of the year - an exposed sandy riverbed, waterless, and lifeless (as a river is alive only when it is flowing), lined with trees, animals and campouts of transients on little deltas sprinkled throughout the length of the river. It is as if the river is a false one during these times, in which they could be through a temporally-based logic, instead of a spatially-based one between true and false name,. be called 'False Santa Ana River'.

Beyond constricted considerations of the river, the spatiality of Riverside could be visualized in concentric circles, when speaking of Riverside we could be referring to either the city or the county; the latter would include more than 20 other cities such as Indio, Palm Springs, Banning, Palm Desert. The embedded, geographic multidimensionality that posits the hierarchy of spaces (town-city-county-state-nation), minimizes the effect of any assumption that it is one or the other, and necessitates some allusion of the context to ensure referential precision.

While reading about another river on the other side of the globe, the Perak river, I could not help but have the Riverside that I was residing in nestled in some

kind of schematic cognitive space¹¹⁶ that is devoted to this toponym, aside from being affected by the physical and social factors of the place, an indescribable interconnectedness that merely forms the surface of a readerly psyche floating in between historical knowledge and literary imagination, conceptually shy of willing another label that might consume or ignore both ends of the consciousness spectrum.



Fig. 7: A memorial clock tower near the city hall in downtown Riverside, with flowing water from its peak.

Cenotaphs, catacombs, mausoleums, tombs and monuments, aside from immortalizing historical events, compress time and space in multiple sites in the state. Reflecting specific pages of histories, one may travel from one site to another, charting a narrative path tinted with a sense of nostalgia, and any sentiment that accompanies

¹¹⁶ This line of thought is inspired by the fact that for most of the time, after disowning my car, the bus became my main mode of transportation, and aside from panoramic views of the actual landscapes in Riverside - multilayered, multi-hued beautiful orange sunsets, magnificent views of the mountains – a visual object that I see almost daily is maps of bus routes. These kinds of maps are labeled ‘schematic’ maps – maps that allow passengers or readers to glance through to get required pieces of information for the sake of practicality. (Monmonier 35)

the experience of sightings, based on the paradigmatic standpoint from which they are viewed. Structures built in the vicinity of the city, constructed, and together with the concrete, bricks, mortar, marble, bronze and any other material used in its production, internalize certain kinds of factual and historical value. And this is via a process of translation, from textual narratives to a physical structural one, a world of meanings is transferred from one space to another. A city or a state's historicity, is thus brought to surface by way of constructions of buildings, monuments, memorials connected to certain historical facts, derived information, compressed time and space in physical forms and its interpretation as being representational of points in history the systematic prescription of structure-meaning relation. In other words, historical sites that populate a city could be and have been read and interpreted in ways beyond prescriptive relations. If a narrative is a map, from one point to another, then writing, or rather the act of constructing a narrative is an act of guiding how to get from one point to the next, to the next, until one reaches the destination, and reading, is the act of traveling. Of course, the main constrain or limiting effect is the linearity that could not exist without close-endedness. Without the idea of an ultimate endpoint to travel towards, a map or a narrative would be deemed purposeless in the pragmatic sense, yet could bring forth many unexpected, novel discoveries.

Reading deaths as historic-literary exuberances

In one of his letters entitled *Of Death, In Fiction*, Swettenham writes:

“It seems to me- “to my stupid comprehension,” as the polite Eastern constantly insists that this failure is due to two causes. First, most fiction is founded on fact, and the writer has, in history, in the newspapers, in his own experience or that of his friends, met with some record or paragraph, some adventure or incident, that has served for the foundation of his story; but unless purely historical, he has been obliged to supply the last scene himself because in reality

there was none, or, if there was, he could not use it. In our own experience, in that of every one who has seen a little of the world, have we not become acquainted with quite a number of dramatic, or even tragic incidents, that have scarred our own or others' lives, and would make stories of deep interest in the hands of a skilful writer?"¹¹⁷

In the quote above, Swettenham clarifies a major issue in the comprehensibility, perception, circulation of historical texts¹¹⁸, which are apparently more realistic than the fictions that have ever been written on Perak. Based on his comprehension, any work of fiction is as good as history, illuminating still parts of life in a particular place or space, as a method of perceiving, understanding and producing any kind of knowledge about Perak. His narrative style is evidently distinct from the usual coming-of-age novels that we often find as foundational stories for nation-states. Rather, he charts his own path, narrativizing his experience through abstract metaphors that correspond more to journal-writing, or metapassages about writing, inserting himself via a third-person pronoun so as to remain innocuous and inconspicuous to the reader. As a literary compendium of sorts, his anthology displays a mythologized rhetorics of space that renders the world around him and his psychic microcosm in abstract concepts and personal observations, side-by-side with funny, amusing, scary characters that populate most of his more conventional folktales and short stories.

Is Swettenham writing about his own literary death, as suggested by his mention of 'the polite Eastern' and 'a skilful writer', as if it is not him who is talking? Or is he only talking to himself about himself, while giving the opportunity for the eavesdropper or the voyeur reader to take a look into his mind? Could it be the case

¹¹⁷ (Swettenham, *Unaddressed Letters*, 130-131)

¹¹⁸ The texts in discussion here are McNair's *Perak and the Malays*, Winstedt's *Malaya and its History*, Raja Chulan's *Misa Melayu*, and Swettenham's *About Perak*.

that he is mimicking the reservation and polite insistence of the stereotypical, orientalized Asian? Teetering between fiction, observant commentary, and occasional humor, his writing does not correspond with the common genres of historical texts, yet shows significant sophistication in penmanship. A painter working with words, he paints a cognitive imaginary space with a verbose myth-logic, visualizing the landscape, interweaving sense and intellect centered on a sentimental first-person based perspective, and awareness that his mind longs to belong in a foreign country. As a lonesome resident who has travelled continents, he is semi-separated from the local population by the linguistic and cognitive barriers, and the only way that he could make sense of the slowly changing modernized world around him is by writing for himself through a literary mode is inherited by his British forefathers, understood by no one in his location at the time, except for the readers and writers of English who share his background. Such is also the case for McNair, and such is also the case for Winstedt. Paradoxically, the main stuff of the literary works are about the people, animals and things that he saw and experienced in the time and space that he was in during his residency. Perhaps his writing is just one way for him to escape the mundane nature of compiling numbers and facts for the profit of the British crown.

Before his death in 1875, Birch was a man who recorded his everyday encounters, he kept a journal in which all his letters to the Malay chiefs and officials were recorded. In addition, to that, he was an amateur cartographer who drew simple, schematic maps of parts Perak for practical purposes. Before his name was immortalized in the historical narratives of Perak, he memorialized the state first in his

writings, much like other British residents of Perak, bringing about a cyclical relation between his memorialization of the state and the state's memorialization of him as an unforgettable, uneraseable personality in the historical narrative of Perak.

More than it should, the bloody episode Birch's death defines the history of Perak in the sense that it is historically unforgettable in the collective memory of historians and lay readers alike, perhaps, for the reason that it symbolizes the independence of a people that have been under British rule for some years. Every written book about Perak – Swettenham's, Winstedt's, Wilkinson's, McNair's – among others, cite the murder of Birch as the turning point in Perak, if not Malaya history.



Fig. 8: Black and white picture of J.W.W. Birch, from *The Journals of J.W.W. Birch: First British Resident to Perak 1874-1875* – a posthumously published collection of letters, journal entries, maps, and documents throughout his period of residency.

Fig 9: A clock tower monument memorializing Birch's death in Kinta, Ipoh, Perak.



Beyond accusations, conflictual narratives, and binary black-and-white, us-versus-them understanding of history, Birch's story is as complex as any other historical figure, and must not be read as a simple colonialist one. A conflicted soul, he was a British explorer, who, under the order of the British crown back then, sought a way to impose British rule in a subtle manner by first, learning about the state's trade mechanism and how the system worked under feudal rule, this he did by dealing with royals and aristocrats, journeying throughout the state's extent in the process. Though he did not write nostalgia-inducing stories in the fashion of Winstedt and Swettenham, he documented his time in Perak in his journal pages, writing about his voyages up and down the river, as well as encounters and exchanges that he had with the proud Rajas of Perak. Within the pages of his journal can be found many letters, telegram

exchanges, and important records of his life as a colonial adviser. In letters he referred to the addressee frequently as *sahabat kita* ‘our/my friend’¹¹⁹, which could be read plainly as his attempt to blend into the community, or sarcastically as an underhanded way to wiggle his way into establishing a British colony out of Perak, or literarily as a reflection of his agreement of the letter-writing conventions back then. One could never guess the true intention of the man who, throughout the entirety of Perak’s history from then until now, had been painted as a diabolical figure to be hated. Such presumptuous reading of history is not only lopsided, but short-sighted, as it prevents us from moving on and paying attention to more interesting parts of Birch’s personal life specifically and the rich multi-faceted history of the state that is often buried in the silence of mis-, under- or over-interpretations.

In his final journal entry as documented by historian P.L. Burns, he did not write much other than mundane comments about the rain and how he was looking forward to getting the help of a few Perak men to finish building his house:

“24 October, Sunday

Very cold in the morning. Got the boats all moored, as water was rapidly rising. Rain very heavy in the morning and showery all day. Several men of Perak came and engaged themselves to take jungle at as fixed price. Raja Te’ of Bendimin behind here came and asked to cut timber for me and on what terms. I accepted his terms once for my house, which I am very anxious to finish.”

25 October, Monday”¹²⁰

Birch’s final entry in his journal in Nov 1875 marks a revolutionary cusp in Perak history, or so would be the claim of most historians of Perak, the assumption that his presence was insulting to the Malays of the country lives on with history

¹¹⁹ A slightly different emulation of the same templatic mannerism used “to attribute a narrative to its source, by referring to the ‘owner of the narrative, in the phrase *sahib al-hikayat*” (Proudfoot 122). In both cases, the reference to ‘friend’ implies an etiquette-filled penmanship and readership.

¹²⁰ (Swettenham, *Malayan Journals*, 371-372)

books, and fragmentary folk (hi)stories passed on from one generation to the next, repropagated as indisputable fact. His period of residence was loaded with controversial dealings with Sultan Abdullah and other Malay royalties. Supposedly, petty debacles involving violations of customs of the Malays caused Birch to be the straw man of Perak history, as if he were the arch-nemesis of the Sultan back then. According to some alternative sources, Birch was not as diabolical as he was made out to be. It was an unforeseen, and unfortunate coincidence that his arrival in the state to establish trade and political relations ended in terrible bloodshed. The controversial incident became somewhat of an anti-colonial template for actual revolutions to take place in other federated and unfederated Malay states established by the British. More importantly, in the sense of historical writing, it became the very mold that made the whole process of narrativizing Perak's transformation into a state independent from British's influence a more convenient task, by filling up the formative historico-narrative spaces with agents that were going against each other. Swept under the proverbial historical rug are all the underlying motives, complexities and competing narratives around the highlighted event.

The historicization and the multiple conflictual narratives of Birch's death form a sensationalist, revolutionary discourse, if only for the reason that it marks the victory of the locals against British imperialism. Other historical connections, continuities and relativities - such as subjective effects of how other historic-narrative elements represent Perak's history - become overglossed by the prescribed, subliminally induced focus on Birch's murder case, obscuring one point as it

illuminates countless others. An example of a historical event or point not being given due attention to is the 1874 Pangkor Engagement, which, by way of dodgy, double-handed terminologies masked in an elevated register of early 'legalese', managed to persuade Sultans of sovereign Malay states to agree to British terms in administration of rule of law regarding geopolitical boundaries, trade, and more importantly, vicissitudes of cognition when it comes to the representation of a state. Judging by this fact, it seems that the concept of a disrespectful person bestowed with authority being murdered by a team of local revolutionaries is closer to the a vernacular historical consciousness, however unfair it might be from the legal perspective, which is one that is determined by the same powers that allowed for the transformation of sovereigns into political machines that would ultimately serve a ruling class of aristocrats, British and Malay, disconnected from the circumstances of everyday life.

To make matters more intricate, as a consequence of the trial of Birch's death, Sultan Abdullah (Sultan of Perak 1874-1876), was accused of being complicit in the murder of the British resident, and thus was exiled to Seychelles in 1877. Indicative of the conditions of the Malay states under British occupation, relationships between sultanates and British residents were lopsided with the sultan being on the receiving end of British advice. Almost as a precondition of political order of the state back then, British supremacy in Perak did not end with Birch's death. Sultans, royals and the people of Perak were subject to constitutional laws constructed and applied by the British residents, many of which have been preserved and are still being practiced today. In many historical sources, Birch's murder was considered an unfortunate result

of a high-handed attempt by the British resident in imposing a biased rule of law that did not take into consideration safeguarding of the Sultans' sovereignty. It is indeed a no-win situation, Sultan Abdullah, who was supposedly innocent and wrongfully accused, suffered legal consequences following the murder. Even during his reign, the Sultan did not have full rights in implementing their own laws. As just a symbolic representation of cultural and religious power, who did not have any direct political clout, Sultan Abdullah, like other Sultans of Perak, was ultimately under legal jurisdiction of the British as far as the administration of land and trade¹²¹, and criminal law went.

Another more contemporaneous, and occurring within the same narrative, or historic-literary space to it is the death of Raja Chulan the author, equally mystifying, framing the text of *Misa Melayu*. In the introduction section from the publisher it is written that the renowned poet faced an unlucky fate of dying from being stabbed by a vengeful husband (details of what happened prior to the killing was undisclosed), and as a result of his death, the murder weapon, *keris tiga lok*, was prohibited from being used in the entire state of Perak. He was then posthumously bestowed with the royal martyr title *Marhum Pulau Juar*.¹²² Conversely and mysteriously, in the note accompanying to the *hikayat* written by Winstedt, he provided an alternative

¹²¹ tithe (1/10 of any land or property paid to the governing institution as tax), represented in 1876 map was an applied derivation of the colonial tax law system developed in other colonies. The application of this law brought a disagreement with regards to its compatibility with Malay customs and religion between British residents Swettenham and Maxwell. (Hussin 776)

¹²² “Penya’er yang ulong ini, pada akhir-nya menerima nasib yang amat menyedehkan: Beliau mati ditikam oleh sa-orang suami yang menuntut bela, dan dengan kematian-nya itu terjadi-lah huru-hara dalam negeri Perak sa-hingga keris tiga lok, iaitu senjata yang membunuh Raja Chulan itu, di-larang menggunakan-nya di-seluruh negeri Perak. Beliau di-gelar Marhum Pulau Juar.” (Raja Chulan 3)

explanation for the death of his namesake. Instead of being stabbed with a *keris*, he was claimed to die a natural death. Both explanations for his death were provided in the same text which was the 1919 version of *Misa Melayu*, complicating the backstory of the text and providing grounds for having more detailed and pluralistic visions of the text's makeup.

Extending to spaces beyond understandings of history predetermined by cases of death and murder, perhaps due to the pleasant scent it evokes¹²³ or due to the royal prestige tied to it, the name Raja Chulan became a desirable toponym to decorate cityscapes. At present, there are two streets, one in Kuala Lumpur and one in Kuala Kangsar, and a monorail train station adorned with the name Raja Chulan. Reflecting the multiple figures named Raja Chulan in the entirety of Perak history, it became the reason for confusion in determining factual data on *Misa Melayu* and on the namesakes. Raja Chulan, the author of *Misa Melayu* was born with the full name Raja Chulan ibni Raja Hamid ibni Raja Mansur (1720-1787), and bestowed with the title Raja Kechil Besar by Sultan Muzaffar Syah III, during whose reign the *hikayat* was started. He was cousin of all four brothers of Sultan Iskandar who ruled from 1752 until the end of the century and had close relations through marriage as one of his sisters married Sultan Alauddin and another married Raja di Hilir Inu, who became Raja Bendahara. He was made Raja Bendahara in 1766. In one research on the text, he was thought to live for 100 years, due to an honest mistake in the analysis of the *hikayat* which was thought to be written by the same author from the beginning until

¹²³ A plant whose flowers are used to scent tea and clothes. *Aglaia odorata*. Alternative names: *pacar culam*, *pacar culan*, *pacar cina*

the end. This mistake shows the shortcomings of assuming a linear timeline, the text was begun to be written some time around 1728 to 1756 and completed in 1836. The fragmentariness of the text's construction and induction into the print world was only clarified in the last sentence of the 1919 version which disclosed the name of the copyist, one Haji Uthman of Mukim Bandar, who was probably the one to add the last part of the text.

Other authorless *hikayats* come to mind, such as *Sejarah Melayu* and *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, in which the authorlessness of the text displaces the burden, or rather the creative responsibility of authorship to the transliterator, translator, the copyist, and other agents involved in the text's publication¹²⁴.

There were two others with the same name – one Raja Chulan is Sultan Shahbuddin Riayat Shah (1830-1841), son of Raja Inu Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ahmaddin Syah, whose tomb was memorialized, and listed among other tombs of the illustrious rulers of Perak. Another Raja Chulan is the son of Sultan Abdullah of Perak, his official full name is Y.A.M. Raja Sir Chulan ibni Almarhum Sultan Abdullah Muhammad Shah Habibullah¹²⁵, a violinist who was apparently claimed to be the actual composer of the Perak National Anthem as a derived version of a French tune entitled *La Rosalie*, which he discovered during his father's exile in Seychelles.

¹²⁴ “The first section covers event in Perak from the beginning of the 18th century until 1758 and is the work of a contemporary chronicler, Raja Chulan. He also composed the long *syair*, or poem, which makes up the second section of the text and describes a voyage to sea by the ruler in 1761. The last part, briefly recounting events from the death of Sultan Iskandar in 1765 and ending with succession of Sultan Alauddin in 1773 was added later probably by another writer. Subsequently, a copyist joined the three texts together in which form it was romanized and published by Winstedt in 1919 and has since been reprinted several times.” (Andaya, *Historicising Modernity*, 7)

¹²⁵ “There was Raja Chulan, one of Abdullah's sons, then in government service, the first Malay other than a ruler to be knighted and for more than thirty years my very good friend.” (Winstedt, *Malaya and its History*, 82-83).

The same song inspired the composition of a keroncong song *Terang Boelan* and was later made the national anthem of Malaysia, *Negaraku*.

As they are memorialized in history, so they are memorialized in the state's geography. Names of historical agents – Birch, Raja Chulan, among others - were transferred from being signposts in historical texts, into toponyms populating the cityscapes of Malay(si)a. Birch's death was immortalized by a clock-tower monument in Kinta district in Ipoh, built during the reign of Sultan Idris and completed in 1917. Inscribed on and around it are about 44 prominent figures in history and religion – Jesus, Moses, Buddha, Shakespeare, Charles Darwin, and at one point apparently there was also a figure of Muhammad, which incited protests from the locals. It is as if monumentalizing and memorializing Birch's death was opening the door towards the incorporation of an illustrious set of indispensable figures that modern history has ever known into the cityscape.¹²⁶

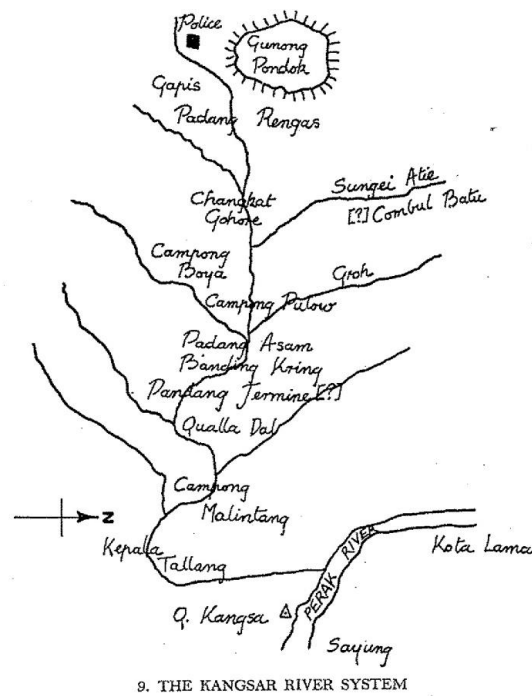
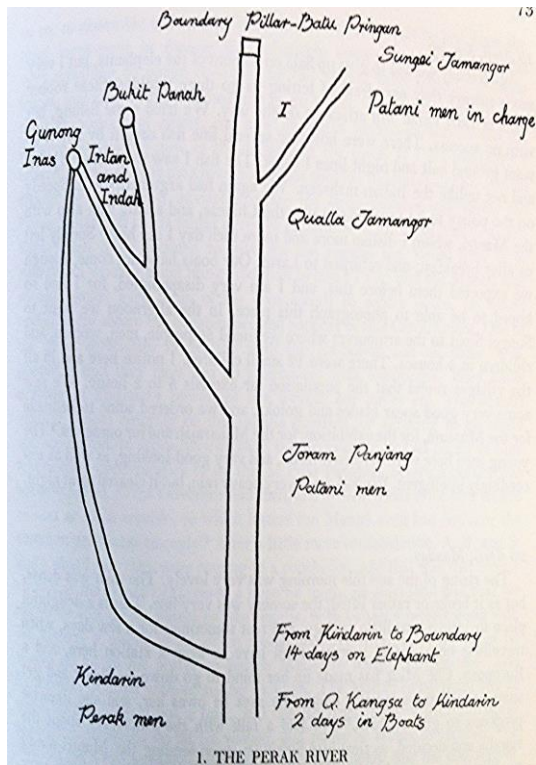
Other memorials of the British resident include a bust made of bronze located at another clock tower, and his tomb, both significant historical artifacts populating the state at present. Birch's tomb, situated in Bandar Bharu, Kampung Gajah, Perak, is not too far away from the tomb of his interpreter, Mat Arshad, a Malay who was proficient in English at a time when very few were. Despite being a Malay, his life was not spared in the tragic attack on the boathouse 'Dragon' by the Malay royal Dato Maharaja Lela and his accomplices at Pasir Salak. The dramatic, yet tragic scene is captured by multiple accounts in many texts, increasing the primacy of this scene in

historical literature, a scene stuck not only in the machinery of historico-literary

knowledge production, but also in the sensibility from which it is perceived and read:

“At 11pm on 1 November accompanied by a small Sepoy guard Mr. Birch arrived at Pasir, moored close by the Maharaja Lela’s house and slept in his boat. It was now three days since his assassins had been appointed. Unsuspecting the allowed his companion Mr. Abbott, a naval lieutenant, to cross the river at dawn to shoot . The sepoys and boatmen went ashore to cook their rice. Mr. Birch who was recovering from a sprained ankle sat in his boat smoking a cigar. The Dato’ Sagor came aboard and talked for half an hour. The Resident sought an interview with the Maharaja Lela but his request was refused. The Maharaja Lela seated in his open hall of audience declared that he would submit to no one but the Sultan, and he sat waiting to hear if the Resident would post those proclamations about taxation which boded the end of feudal rights and feudal rule; he had ordered his men to tear them down and if they were posted again to run amuck and kill. The Resident directed his clerk again, Mat Arshad, to stick the notices on the wooden walls of the Chinese shop-house ten yards away, and himself entered the floating bath-house to which the boat was tied A sepoy sentry armed with a revolver guarded the door. Mat Arshad shouted to his master that the Malays were tearing down the proclamations, at which Mr. Birch called back to him to post them again. Mat Arshad set about the job, pushing one of the crowd aside. The Malays stabbed the elderly whiskered clerk and leaping on to the bath-house speared the Resident through the flimsy palm-leaf walls: as he lay half in the stream, one man Seputum hacked him with a sword; the body fell into the river and disappeared. The sentry jumped into the water without having fired a shot: no one had given the order! The Dato’ Sagor stood a silent accomplice. As so often in tragedy, the end was squalid butchery.”¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Birch’s murder has been and still is a morbid staple in biographical and historical literatures, both Swettenham and Winstedt dedicated a chapter in their memoirs. (Winstedt, *A History of Perak* 114). Also see Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali “Pembunuhan J.W.W. Birch: suatu kajian tentang pembunuhannya”. *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics and Strategic Studies* 09, 1979, 59-72



Maps 7 & 8: Maps of J.W.W. Birch: A 1874 Perak river map (right) and 1875 sketch map of the Kangsar riverine, an offshoot of the Perak river (representation seen on the bottom right hand side), which served as practical guides for his travels around Perak. Visually, they are both similar to the 1876 Malay map sans the *jawi* labels, and descriptions of royals, alongside the tributaries. As integral parts of his journal, with a few other topographic sketch representing parts of Perak landscape, it furnishes complementary details not present in the 1876 map. A significant feature of the 1874 map is the compass marking the north as being on the right. The 1875 map displays an uncanny resemblance to the 1876 map, with the main river stretching down the center of the paper, and logistical information regarding Birch's travels. At the very end of the river, a 'Boundary Pillar' (*batu pringan*) is shown, representing a border between Perak and Patani, and consequently one of the main distinction between Birch's map and the Malay map.

A feature that is available on Birch's 1874 map that is not present in the 1876 map is the existence and marking of a 'Boundary Pillar' at the end of the upriver section of the map. As a represented point of discontinuation of the river flow, a detail that could be read not only as a representation of Birch's idea of Perak river, but also as a metaphor of his experiential journey in the state, both ending in an abrupt stop, a

dead end. Here, one might note the close similarity between *batu pringan* and *batu peringatan*, with the latter meaning ‘memorial pillar’ or more directly ‘memorial rock’. Many of these are listed and depicted in N.A. Halim’s 1981 book as historical sites, commemorating and landmarking at the same time important points in Perak’s history.

On one hand, death silences the historical agents in real life, however, on the other hand, the silences become amplified, and made larger than life. As time passes, the memorials become infused with more meanings and readings, from different conflicting interpretations and encounters by various groups of people. A tomb or a cenotaph is a posthumous ‘habitus’¹²⁸ that houses the soul and any kind of ephemeral meaning tied to a historical agent, and its context is the entire historical, geopolitical, and textual space of the state. To the present-day traveler¹²⁹ wandering around the state, a trip around historical sites, would be a revelation that most of them are monuments memorializing the dead. In this case, experiencing the sights of these monuments would be a process by which history is internalized, and the historical imaginaire is triggered. Despite its privileged status in the academic, intellectual realm for reasons of we now define as ‘knowledge’, its dominating effect over ways of thinking about the past teases out the question – what about alternative imaginaires possible in thinking about the past? Perhaps the poetic? From cognitive and concrete proxemic manipulation of narrative space, we arrive at the issue of translation, from

¹²⁸ a habitus is a ‘durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations which ‘produces practices’ which in turn tend to reproduce objective conditions which produced the generative principles of habitus in the first place. (Bordieu 78)

¹²⁹ In Halim (1981), published by the National Museum Department compiling historical site in the state of Perak, nearly 70 percent of the historical sites are tombs and mausoleums.

text to physicality, from text to visual images, pictures, views, and vice versa. As tombstones of the so-called historical agents fill up the historical narrative on Perak, and become stepping stones traversing any historical narrative, forming a traceable path across the complex set of events comprised in the history of Perak, *hikayats* are at present only experienced on the surface of contemporary literature by glorified distant reflections – adaptations, republications, repackaged editions – that highlight their grand titles, and classical status. Starting at the turn of the century, acts of remembering through/and reading, by which history is reconstructed become highly tied to the rise of modern printed materials. Shifts in reading modes – from aural/oral to print, and the advent, popularization and increasing growth and familiarity of modern texts - novels, and to a lesser extent newspapers, short stories, and textbooks, have subtly retuned the taste and attention of readers of Malay literature in favor of modern literature. The obscure canonicity of the *hikayat* genre, partly due to the historicity conferred upon it, marks a screaming gap in Malay literary world, hollowing and muting a lively, once celebrated literary space. Much quoted for their authority in history and literature, yet seldom read and experienced, most *hikayat* manuscripts are now being kept on dusty shelves in archives around the world and hidden in private collections, gilded morgues for these esoteric, sacred, and dead texts.

“Like everywhere else in the world, the term ‘Great Work’ came in use for a text that no longer work if it ever did. *Karya Agung*: the term sounds like the death bell for a text that once upon a time was so brilliantly composed by one or more nameless Malay geniuses. It has been laid to rest, fossilized and frozen, before it could sweep its public away. The Tale of Hang Tuah is essentially denied any significance in these days of confusion and modernization in which no longer the moral of the tale counts but the meaning of life, as Benjamin once contextualized the demise of the epic and the rise of the novel.”¹³⁰

¹³⁰ (Maier, *Hang Tuah*, 127)

While discussing the constant presence of deaths in historical writings, also worthwhile to be addressed are the livelihoods and the ‘deathlihoods’ of languages. Threads of historical coherence, or rather, homologousness, traceable through lexical continuities across texts from different time-spaces lead to assumptions of similarity, or sameness, when discussing a language, an ethnic group and/or a geographical space. We may encounter mentions of Malay in academic texts, and think of it as being the same ethnolinguistic tree from which sprouts the *hikayat* and the Malay novel, and then Malay films, comedies, docudrama and so on. ‘Malay’ becomes the assigned coherence and cohesion, from which a line might connect the mythical, mythologized Malays in *hikayats* – Hang Tuah and Mahsuri for instance -, the historicized Malays in historical texts – for example Dato’ Maharajalela and Raja Abdullah – and Malays of the present – which is a category that is utmostly and infinitely diversified. While we know the fallible nature of this false coherence, a discontinuity that some might even acknowledge, the word ‘Malay’ becomes a decisive, and blinding, historical rearview lens. This course of thought ignores the half-hollow equation of textualization, and canonization of classical Malay, which for the sake of accuracy must be considered a dead language – for it died the moment the word is written on scrolls and papers of manuscripts, framed in a historical, literary, and/or academic context(s). For classical Malay to be understandable to the present-day reader, there is no other way than translating into colloquial Malay – such would be the case for the impossibility of writing, or composing a *hikayat* at present, and such would be the case for defining connections, or the lack thereof, between a classical language and its supposed,

suggested modern, or postmodern relative variant. The living postmodern variants of Malay would be false relatives to the classical Malay of *hikayats*, forever dead, entombed and buried, with textual, archival, canonical preservation providing it with a superficial sense of existence, kept in ‘cemetery-archives’ but seldom, if not at all, read and understood, let alone recited in front of an audience.

Detached from the world of meaning that they were once connected to by cycles of reimaginings, translations, reinterpretations, rereadings, and framings, much like any other classical texts, they are often reshaped to conform to standards of modern literature. A new life of updated script, ameliorated language, and fanciful, brighter and more contemporary design is given, both distancing them further from their original context of circulation, and improving their distributive chances in the postmodern world.

A text’s place within or without the corpus of classical literature decides the mode in which it is read and interpreted, and also the meaning gained from the readings and interpretation. Classical Malay literature is a canonical genre that is defined by an inner spectral hierarchy that influences what populates the cognitive space of readers of Malay literature when they think about *hikayat*. Inescapably, the word *hikayat* would trigger certain titles in the collective literary mind, which would be the most canonical amongst the canonical, and in most instances, *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, *Sulalat As-Salatin* would be the titles brought to the literary conversation table when one is discussing Malay literature. It seems that the numerousness of less popular *hikayats* do not have any effect on the more elevated positions of these two,

and referential connections made to the supercanonical often decide the meanings and the light of interpretation under which a *hikayat* text is read. In other words, there are some texts that are deader than others, and a reading of a *hikayat* such as *Misa Melayu* would be a mere shadow of readings of the supercanonical *hikayats*, affecting processes of meaning derivation and understanding of a lesser-known *hikayat*.

Under these same circumstances of transmission, monuments, statues and memorials immortalize translated meanings from historical facts, through the aggrandization of figures and details in historical narratives, and association made between popular figures in history.

“Unlike a work of literature, translation finds itself not in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without asking, aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one. Not only does the intention of a translation address or differ from that of a literary work – namely a language as a whole, taking an individual work in an alien language as a point of departure – but it is also qualitatively different altogether. The intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, manifest; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational.”¹³¹

There are many boundaries to overcome in bringing, transporting meanings from a foreign language – structural, semantic, nuanced connotations, paralinguistic utterances, poetic freedom, among others – that only make methods of approximations possible in determining how to represent one meaning in one language in another. As silently articulated in the quote by the Riverside resident, the translating of historical figures into silent, unmoving statues lends itself to a preservative transmission of meaning that is partly a result of the tangibly incomprehensible nature of the language of Gandhi, thus shifting the focus from the form into the content, the ‘soul’ of Gandhi’s language, and translocating it, attemptively into a permanent abstract locale,

¹³¹ (Benjamin 258-259)

‘Riverside’s soul’ which is where the statue is. By way of the “derivative, ultimate and ideational”, a closer link is drawn between modes of expression that are thought to be purer, and an elusive, non-static meaning, a loyal companion to the poet’s intention. In the reflective wake of such a ‘soul’, the river of the late poet of *Misa Melayu* flows.

Reading the ‘fictive’ and the ‘poetic’ in/of a state

Like the much-fictionalized California, Perak could be considered a fiction-state¹³², via imagined and re-imagined narratives in archived volumes, books, travel guides (Lonely Planet, National Geographic), and websites. It has undergone vast developmental, sociopolitical changes, from the first mention of the state’s name ‘Perak’ in 1614 in McNair, in relations to Aceh, Malacca, and Portuguese, in a list of trade destinations of the East India Company as a place of “much wealth”.

Like any postcolonial city, its capital, Ipoh, has undergone much change in terms of the city-scape, especially during the transitional period between administrative systems. An instance of this change is visible on road signs in the city, inscriptions of street names are transliterated from Jawi to Latin, and names are changed from English ones to Malay ones, marking political changes that are deliberate and pre-arranged, that both affect and are affected by how people think about the city’s history and how travelers think about their routes within a ‘civilized’ town/city, consciously and subconsciously. In efforts of heritage preservation, many road signs have both the Romanized names printed and its Jawi counterparts, imbuing visual navigational narratives with nostalgia and novelty. Otherwise, streets would just

¹³² Comparable to ‘concept-city’ (De Certeau 95)

be streets, asphalt-paved roadways without any historical value to them. Maps, digital, printed or verbal, in all cases they first have to be imagined, of travelers' routes are populated with names of streets, landmarks, buildings etc. These names occupy the imagination in the same manner they occupy the maps – authored in the traveler's/the reader's consciousness by an omniscient cartographer.

Name during British Administration	Current name
Port Swettenham	Port Klang
Maxwell Hill	Bukit Larut
Birch Road	Maharajalela Road

Fig. 10: Postcolonial street name changes in Perak.

It is crucial to note here that some of the names with colonial connotations are still being used in everyday conversational exchanges, perhaps for the fact that they are so fossilized in people's minds. What is completely unacceptable to the critical anti-colonial mind, could be seen as mere practicality to the masses. In whichever case, street names are toponymic indicators of history, providing us with a window to understanding postcolonial effects of modernity. Rapid industrialization affect the languaging of a place, and historical facts (or fictions, or myths) that it embodies.

To escape the cacophonous, stunting effects of reading in industrialized environment - a suggestion is that we take a break from constative, rigid discursive, physical and cartographic spaces initially prescribed by the European academic endeavor, the spaces with established standards that have been upheld for a long time, their prescription causing the same analytical tools and models to be used again and again. Instead, we can learn more by paying attention to nature, playing with rivers,

waves and trees¹³³, shared experiences between European and Southeast Asian literatures, instead of just reading Europe into Southeast Asia, by using the same methodological tools and reading approaches prescribed in the world of literary studies. One should close-read¹³⁴, paying attention to subtleties and possible silences muffled by the prominent voices in a story or a novel, noticing that some formats do not allow for organic expressions (literary forms like the short story and the novel in Southeast Asia have a limited history, as they were part of the translation phenomenon during the colonial period). In addition, one should also ‘distant-read’ literature from faraway countries and uncommon languages, even if it means reading it through translation, as they always have something to teach us about life, beyond the emphasis of trade and administration, beyond the preoccupation with structure, and systemic, linear knowledge.

In *Provincializing Europe* (2000), Dipesh Chakrabarty embarked on a new paradigmatic project to “decenter...an imaginary figure (Europe, my addition HAB) that remains deeply embedded in *clichéd and shorthand forms* in some everyday habits of thought that invariably subtend attempts in the social sciences to address questions of political modernity in South Asia.” It is a project from within, aware of the naturalization of “Enlightenment rationalism” in which he is not superficially rejecting every kind of universal posited and translated in relation to India, rather it is a Spivak-like dive into subaltern territory through uncovering “layers of Eurasian elite and Anglo-native ethnicities, that supercede and overshadow the historical subaltern.”

¹³³ (Maier, *Complit and Southeast Asia*, 233)

¹³⁴ (Maier, *Complit and Southeast Asia*, 244)

One interesting aspect of his approach, which I find useful and wish to mention here is the dichotomization of history: History 1 which is “the past established by the capital”, “reproduction of capitalists relationships/the logic of the capital”; and History 2 which “did not necessarily look forward to the capital” and “not separate from the capital but interrupt capital’s logic.” These two categories could serve as useful labels for reading, appreciating, understanding, and evaluating historical texts. The former involves a linearized, diachronic perspective of looking back into the past, taking for granted the process of a state’s establishment, in order to make way for empirical data to support the occurrences of past historical events, focused on trade and economic relationships, thus are filled with statistics. The latter is somewhat critical of the processes of modernity responsible for a state’s establishment, apparent through its mythical logic that decentralizes, bringing to surface voices, events, characters hidden under the veil of History 1’s rationale.

“...the facts do not speak for themselves, but that the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is- in its representation-a purely discursive one. Novelists might be dealing only with imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real ones, but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the *object* of a representation is a poetic process. Here, the historians must utilize precisely the same tropological strategies, the same modalities of representing relationships in words, that the poet or novelist uses. In the unprocessed historical record and the chronicle of events which the historian extracts from the record, the facts exist only as congeries of contiguously related fragments. These fragments have to be put together in the same ways that novelists use to put together figments of their imaginations to display an ordered world, a cosmos, where only disorder and chaos might appear.”¹³⁵

The way of writing fictional and factual narratives can be compared through the shared, common trope between the two: the need to be interwoven in/by a discursive methodology, both historical events and fictional events are combined,

¹³⁵ (White 125)

arranged, fused, made sense of in texts by the authorial voice. Along a similar vein, the art and function of mapmaking incorporate, bringing together pieces of geographical, navigational, financial, topographical, hydrographical, socio-political information in one visual-textual unit, bound by the same narrative gel that binds the parts of a novel together. And it is important for us to acknowledge the absence of certain kinds of information in these primary sources - *Misa Melayu*, the 1876 map, the 1792 Forrest map – for the very notion that the silence projected by these absences allow for other kinds of information to be included in the materials and reign supreme over things that are left out. An example of this deliberate and unavoidable ellipsis would be the inclusion of hydrographical and geographical information such as the gradient depths of the shoreline of the Malay peninsula especially near Dindings where Forrest's ship reportedly came to shore, representations of the Malay polity, names of places on land (or spaces that are divided by land boundaries within the state of Perak) and names of rivers and their tributaries. The packaging of these kinds of information as such forms a quasi-opaque filter of perspective that allows and highlights representations of the metrical and physical sense (quad-directional compass, legends, numerical data, scales) and obstructs any kind of pre-existing native methodologies of geographing and hydrographing to surface. In short, although the area mapped could be dubbed as 'Malay' (even this term is debatable when considering the population diversity of the Malay peninsula in the 1700s, I adopt this label due to its recognizability for the purpose of analysis), it has been Britishized, or Europeanized through its inculcation via British means into modern cartographical knowledge. In essence, the 1792 map

remains a British map of a previously unknown territory, and by way of being further up the ladder of ‘accuracy’ via the metrical system, it subtly became part of the local geopolitics, as did all of its Euro-based successors, in becoming the popular geographical format of representation for the Malay peninsula, ruling out most, if not all, native ways of understanding the world that had been omnipresent (only mostly not represented on paper). During the few decades after the production of the Forrest map, Malay governments accepted the British administrative system, which was applied to the formation of the nation-state of Malaysia, and together with it also its cartographic system into the educational institutions as a standardized, neutralized form of knowing about the world. On a closer look, it is as much ridden by silences as early 19th century maps.

If we were to shift paradigms, and read into the *hikayat* that has been considered the *History of Perak*, then Perak might be called a ‘poetic’ state. A state, that by manners in which it has been defined, delineated and represented, eludes historical exuberances of the prescriptive language(s), and/or languaging(s) of historico-literary facts. This paradigm of seeing a state, or rather, reading one, would be decoratively filled with the subtleties of nuanced metaphorical expressions of nature, and one’s journey through it. Complementary to the factual truths unavoidable, if only for their fossilized existences in domains of historical and literary knowledge, is the sacred, permeable, amorphous flow of the river of words, that fills and travels through a narrative space, providing meanings where previously there was none, or different ones. Such a paradigm would also contain features and remnants of a

rhythmic, poetic logic obscure to the strictly logical historical methodology, and in my humble readerly opinion, more worthy and valuable, if not a more interesting one, to be sought after.

Reading narratives as divergent paths of/in historic-literary spaces

“Narrative succeeds to the extent that it hides the discontinuities, ellipses, and contradictory experiences that would undermine the intended meaning of its story. Whatever its overt purpose, it cannot avoid a covert exercise of power.”¹³⁶

All the British authors sought to educate via documentation and compartmentalizing the physical world that they encountered in the forms they held in high regards, and this requires them to only discuss some aspects and disregard others. All the texts that have any scholastic value published during the early years of British occupation, predecessors of modern textbooks in Malay(si)a, reiterated widely-known factual knowledge with the purpose of solidifying the educational institutions. Ironically, these texts, with the underlying structure of disciplinary colonial knowledge, are targeted to educate students in Malaya back then about their own locale, without necessarily them knowing about subalternizing logic of the texts, thus allowing them to be accepted as teaching and learning materials at face value, uncritically. Books such as *A History of Perak* (1974), that could be considered an offshoot of other books written by Wilkinson, Winstedt¹³⁷ and the likes, forward a discourse laden with veiled positivistic and progressivist elements – linear history coupled with orderly geography, combined with concrete terminologies of territoriality, resources and market-based industrialization, and sociocultural

¹³⁶ (Cronon 1349-50)

¹³⁷ *Kitab Tawarikh Melayu, Sejarah Alam Melayu*.

distinctions – that continue to be accepted to this day. Seemingly diverse in content, as a volume it hides from the plain sight of readers an essential episteme that could be traced back to Descartes, that externalizes any experiential and performative mode of narrating aspects of life on the Malay peninsula. Rather than striking fancy or invoking any kind of organic response, these texts are expected to be internalized in the minds of generations of students that would sit in classrooms and recite their contents as proof of being civilized. Blocks of concrete buildings, shops and houses, government-administered schools and institutions rose up with the currents of early modernity, reflecting (or are reflected by) the rigid borders within the texts, ruling out the irrational in favor of the rational, fact over fancy, as normative representations of reality on paper.

Many questions could be raised here to gain a deeper understanding of the matter - how do we free ourselves from traditional reading method that has been crystallized by years and years of dominance of canonical texts? “How do literary traditions – of genre, canonization, dissemination-give shape to human interactions with an environment or landscape?”¹³⁸ Is there a possibility of coming up with a new methodology in reading texts – history books, geographical and non-geographical maps, documented oral (hi)stories, folktales – that is, ideally so, free from presuppositions that could hamper non-conventional interpretations? We have the knowledge that history and literature as genres of textual representations of realities of the past of a collective are never perfect or complete, and therefore necessitate

¹³⁸ (Blair 554)

alternative ways of critique, close-reading, interpretation, and discussion that open new doors of discourse.

Between overly exoticized, and rationalized fragmentary (literal) images of the past of a state, lie silences that are created, directly or indirectly, by narrative patterns that we have grown so familiar and complacent with. Experiential paths of the mundane in everyday life - where one goes to eat, work, do daily chores that ensure safety, health and survival in general is not significant enough according to some inflexible orthodox standards in history¹³⁹ – to be included in the writings from the past (and therefore, our readings and interpretations of it).

The profound thoughts and sayings of Greek philosopher Socrates, for example, are only received by many through the writings of Plato, which means that there are no direct languaging from his thoughts to what is read and understood by readers of Greek rhetoric as his philosophy. What is written is an inevitable outcome of the onset of writing culture, and later on, print culture, putting history into words on paper rather than letting them fly and float around in the ephemeral, transient realm of orality.

In numerous epics from around the world, oral works that are intentionally or otherwise transformed into textual pieces resulting in a reduction, or possibly alteration, of possibilities of interpretation, and an alteration in modes of reading. To imagine a world without printed pages or technology, a significant part of the reality in which oral works have circulated in the past, is to reconstruct the audience's reception

¹³⁹ Here I am referring to History 1 as termed by Chakrabarty (2000), that is more factual in its discursive nature, entertaining not any emotive modes of historiography.

back then, and the difference, or rather, the gap between oral and written works. As stated in previous chapters, metaphors are essential in drawing connections between elements of the cosmos, and how story-tellers, story-readers, and story-listeners relate to the reality. Literary interpretation, oral or written, often is characterized by gaps and frames of varying sizes, put together in a non-fictive literary space, in which pieces of literature are objectified by the reading/writing subjects – i.e. the author, the literary-trained reader, the reader of the literary-trained reader/author, and the reader of the author. As a person reads, she or he is going on a journey that activates multiple paths of meaning that create more meaning in the spur of the moment. Whether or not each path is undertaken, is a matter that is entirely up to the reader to decide on, and dependent upon the even more infinite circumstances of reading.

During my reading days at the beautiful campus UC Riverside, some mornings are pleasantly greeted with the scene of campus tours. Campus tour guides walk backwards (as if they're backtracking along the timeline of the campus), as the diverse group of curious visitors walk forward, while listening to informative tidbits offered. Wandering, led by experienced time-space navigators, while listening to stories of the campus's past that conjure up the ever-changing tropics of its present, and stories of the future for prospective students, by providing helpful information on programs and courses offered, all the while providing onlookers with a timeless performative metaphor on site and on sight, indeed, the scene is one to behold and appreciate.

Distinctive from the frequently trodden path of faculty and staff members and students, the path of the visitor is freshly concocted via a healthy mix of the past,

present and future, rendered instantly in the present of the visitor at the time of visit.

Although some parts of the campus tour are predetermined, there is no telling how or what might come up during the course of the tour, encounters and reactions of members of the group with members of the campus community. In other words, the present that is being presented, is, to say the least, an instant trans-geo-temporal literary mosaic of the campus, assembled in the spur of the moment, with narrative pieces memorized and improvised.

And how might these disparate yet reflective pieces of information that have been brought together circumstantially into a figuratively, literally, historically defined narrative space be osmosized by a group of readers who are as diversely colorful as the literary mosaics themselves?

CHAPTER 3:

Along veins of articulations: infinite flows

Beginnings of reading

“Praises to the Almighty God, Creator of the Universe”

Al-Fatihah 1:1

“In the beginning was the word”

John 1:1

“In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth”

Genesis 1:1

The beginning of *Misa Melayu* suggests a religious element-film, overglossing, framing the contents of the text itself. Here, we might begin by asking the question, is the text inherently religious in the same exact way of how we view religion, and the conceptual consequences bore by the label? Or could it be the elite, epistemological pressure of/on/from the all-mighty, yet shrouded, judges of literature that produced, maybe unnoticeably so, the grasping for information pieces that could provide helpful framing, however superficial, for the text’s reading.

*“Bismi 'llahi 'r-rahmani 'r-rahimi. Wabihi nasta`inu bi'llahi `ala 'l-kisah. Maka inilah hikayat yang kemudian daripada zaman as-Sultan Iskandar Syah Khalifatur-Rahman johan berdaulat zillullahi fi'l-alami. Adapun asalnya raja itu diceritakan oleh orang yang empunya cerita dahulu kala daripada hijrah Raja Iskandar Zulkarnain yang menjalani daripada matahari masuk ke matahari naik dan dan nasabnya daripada Raja Nursyirwan Adil, cucu cicit daripada Raja Suran yang turun ke dalam laut jatuh ke negeri Raja Fatihul-ardhi. Maka anak puteranya tajalli di bukit Siguntang Mahabiru. Maka lalu turun-temurunlah ganti-berganti Khalifatullah dengan beberapa julat sudah dahulu daripada zaman ini, maka sampailah sekarang.”*¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ (Raja Chulan 21)

“ In the name of God, Most Compassionate and Most Merciful. And thus we ask for God’s blessings on the story. And this is the story after the reign of Sultan Iskandar Shah most Gracious caliph, sovereign leader, merciful shadow of God in the Universe. And so in the beginning the king was narrated in the older times from the voyage of Sultan Iskandar Dzulkarnain who went from dusk to dawn and his genealogy/descent from Raja Nurshirwan ‘Adil grand-progenies of Raja Suran, who had descended into the sea which fell under the state of Raja Fatihu’l-ardzi. Then his prince present on Si-Guntang Mahabiru. Then, alternatingly following the change of God’s rulers with a few seasons that had passed from this epoch, then until now.”

Can we guess what beginnings entail for texts, inceptions into literary spaces, sacred and profane? All of the first lines above show certain emphases made – in the first verse of Al-Fatihah – praises, God and the universe, in John 1:1, the word and the beginning, and in Genesis, God the beginning and cosmic realms. I begin with a question in relation to the introduction of *Misa Melayu* and possibilities of its interpretation, genre-wise, which in turn could have considerable effects on readings. The reason I ask this question is because the text circulated, in the early days of modernity, and late days of premodernity, with other texts that are now considered to be sacredly and religiously profound, from the time of their initial arrival until the present. Traditionally and ritually respected, certain acts are required for them to be read. If so how would this affect multiple reading/interpretive communities?

A reconsideration, an intentional corruption of the ubiquitous idiomatic expression - Don’t judge a book by its cover, or beginnings, as they might be misleading representations of the book’s contents, limiting how it should or could be read. Or rather, don’t judge an entire text by the first sentence, fixed in its locational affecting, subjecting a whole text to its primordially. Also, don’t judge an epic by its textual version, because we might miss what goes on when it was transmitted orally. A reading is always divided into many possible beginnings, with overlapping orderings

between one end and another, with multiple temporal, schematic, spatial factors to be considered. Thus, the bookmark was invented to provide a little sign of where a reading stops, and where it begins again.

If we were to consider epics as ‘supreme songs of truth’¹⁴¹, regardless of their religious status, recital technologies decide how the world is created again and again with every instance of recital, cosmic creation that is timeless in the scientific sense of time, and could only be subtly felt by certain experiential and mythical considerations of meaning. Every verse recited is shaped when and as they are uttered, through the lips of the reciters and in the ears of the listeners, is abstract, without any predilections as to whether or not they match up to certain pre-existing tropes of meanings. As a point of comparison we have to consider calendrical, fixed, Gregorian, 24 hour based, systematic temporality as a linear, prescribed notion, and critiquing this normative idea would lead us to mythical time. Indeed, it is an uphill task trying to uncover the fabric upon which we have placed every single feature of literature, or of our lives, and accordingly organized them.

Misa Melayu is a text written in Arabic script called Jawi, upon the first glance of a present-day reader who is unacquainted with the Malay language, there could not be any distinction that could be made between an Arabic text and a Malay text. Thus,

¹⁴¹ These songs are canonized components of a ‘community of truth’, which is a version of a reading community is “a group that takes the epic more seriously than others and derives its social origin, rank, legitimation of certain rights and duties or morals from the contents and teachings of the narrative” (Honko 23). From one point of view it is similar to the Fishian interpretive communities and a flipped version of Andersonian “imagined communities” i.e. communities of imagination”. Further questions could be asked regarding the nature of the “imagined truth”, especially regarding its derivational patterns.

its form matches many other *hikayats* that have been produced, transformed versions from oral to print. In the larger temporal, social, epistemological, as well as literary and historical contexts, this text would have to be considered with some awareness that it circulated in the same contexts as other Malay texts. Every reading or recital would have in its background constant whispers of other *hikayats*, and contemporaneously produced texts, due to the similar features shared between these texts, a beginning of praises, and/or invocation of God, followed by a genealogic passage for the *hikayats* and a passage on cosmic creation for the religious texts in circulation around the same time. Reading from the very beginning of the text would undoubtedly result in the reading of the rest of the text as being a portal into a narrative world beginning from the first verse, an act defined by its semantic value. An invitation of the reading human from the real world to a world determined by verses reflecting, putting in narrative form the real world, a cyclical effect that begins, is created throughout and ends with every reading.

The primordial definitive basis of the Malay language, then, if readers were to consider the staunchly planted historicism in today's language politics, or political language, would be the legendary story of two brothers torn by their natures of loyalty in serving their kingdom in the 15th century. Any Malay would know the story, it is of Tuah and Jebat, one a *Laksamana*, one his loyal sidekick, together they formed a team of warriors, there were five, the other three were Kasturi, Lekiu and Lekir. Trusty to each other and to the Sultan they were. In the early days of the Malaccan kingdom, they roamed, traveled, fought off those who went against the kingdom and played. As

elevated, sacred role models of the Malay, the legendary tales of their journey are documented in *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, perhaps the most well-known amongst all Malay texts.

Konon-Chronon-Canon

“Time must die that we may live”¹⁴²

“Time flows not like a river but like the ticking of a clock, with “ticks” that about as long as the Planck time: 10^{-43} second. Or, more precisely, time in our universe flows by the ticking of innumerable clocks- in a sense, at every location in the spin foam where a quantum “move” takes place, a clock at that location has ticked once.”¹⁴³

Faced with the enormous, unfathomable expanse of ancient literature, epics, poetic and prosaic, that have been read, recited, repeated, reproduced, recirculated consistently throughout history, I restrict myself to certain variables identifiable in secondary literatures about these texts. In many of these readings and discussions of the epics, temporality and primacy are matters that have received considerable attention by scholars, the first, the very beginning of texts. Famous Greek philosopher Socrates, for example, is only received by many through the writings of Plato, which means that there are no direct languaging from his thoughts to what is read and understood by readers of Greek rhetoric as his philosophy. What is written is an inevitable outcome of the onset of printing culture, and print culture, putting history into words on paper rather than letting them fly and float around in the ephemeral, transient realm of orality.

Konon is an ambiguous Malay word that means ‘to ridicule’, ‘take something lightly’, that could be translated somewhat to ‘so-called’, a modal that could de-

¹⁴² Musser, George. *Scientific American* 21, 104-111 (1 February 2012)

¹⁴³ (Smolin 72)

emphasize the truth value of a certain description of an event when it is put at the beginning of the sentence or phrase. It could be used jarringly to irritate, to annoy or dispute a statement. I find it a valuable native term to bring into discussion critiques of temporality and canonicity when reading *hikayats*, by way of applying its valency to accepted linear, systematic notions of time that have been the template on which texts have been oversimplified and read. Especially so in the context of recitals, when time expands and contracts with each breath and utterance.

Chronon is a derivation of the name of the Greek god Chronos, that have been imported to many different disciplines such as physics and literary studies, to name two, to signify time units. It is the root for words like ‘chronological’, ‘anachronism’, ‘chronotope’ and so forth. As discussed in the first chapter, chronotope as a concept has been adopted by many literary scholars, namely Bakhtin, to signify surfaces upon which worlds in works of literature have been constructed, read, and written.

In numerous epics from around the world, oral works that are intentionally or otherwise transformed into textual pieces resulting in a reduction, or possibly alteration, of possibilities of interpretation, and an alteration in modes of reading. To imagine a world without pages or technology, the reality in which the oral works circulated in, is to reconstruct the audience’s reception back then, and the difference or rather gap between oral and written works. As stated in previous chapters, metaphors are essential in drawing connections between elements of the cosmos, and how storytellers, story-readers, and story-listeners relate to the reality. Literary interpretation, oral or written, often is characterized by gaps and frames of varying sizes, put together

in a non-fictional literary space, in which pieces of literature are objectified by the reading/writing subjects – i.e. the author, the literary-trained reader, the reader of the literary-trained reader/author, and the reader of the author. As a person reads, she or he is going on a journey that activates multiple paths of meaning that creates, and recreates the act of creation in the spur of the moment.

“But if one were to depict one’s own native world, the indigenous reality surrounding one, such specificity and concretization would be absolutely unavoidable (at least to some degree). A depiction of one’s own world – no matter where or what it is–could never achieve that degree of abstractness necessary for Greek adventure-time”¹⁴⁴

“The world for them is not a concourse of objects in space; it is a heterogeneous series of independent acts. It is successive and temporal, not spatial.”¹⁴⁵

“Mythical time/ time is mythical – “on land and during the rainy season, time is a historical and ritual phenomenon; at sea, and during the dry season, time is mythical”¹⁴⁶

Similar to the geographical incursion, the voyage into Perak, more generally into the Malay world, the *terra incognita*, entailed a need to figure out native forms of measuring time. A domain of *tempus incognitus*, subtly so, that it might not even occur to the early modern voyager, such as Swettenham and Bird, who were probably unaware of the absence of a linear temporality known and accepted in the modern world as standard time. Indicating a significantly distinctive flow of motions and events, alternative cultural temporalities, or indigenous time¹⁴⁷, so to speak, bring about patterns unrecognizable to the modern world, that deserve more attention. Malay word for ‘time’, *masa* is homologous, homophonous to Hindu time unit, and other temporal signifiers such as *zaman* ‘era’ and ‘epoch’, *jam* ‘hour’ and *saat* ‘second’,

¹⁴⁴ (Bakhtin 101)

¹⁴⁵ (Borges *Collected Non-Fictions*, 317)

¹⁴⁶ Jacques Ivanoff (Chou 2005)

¹⁴⁷ Such as *kamayok* and *quipu* guided time of Andean tribes, the extremely strict Japanese time, the Indonesian stretchable notion of *jam karet* (elastic time) and many others

among many other terms, exemplify the diversity of manifestations of temporal notions in a diverse etymologic, and cultural context.

As we go on into different domains and surfaces of time and space historically and geographically, readings of literary artifacts, have a certain transverse anachronism implanted. The text is always written with a different sense of time compared to the reading of it. Rhythms, tempos of our internal clocks are constantly adjusted by our imagination, triggered by the experiencing of the text. And this matter would be infinitely more complicated upon the encounter of certain literary or historical event that is elongated or shortened based on their importance. What about a text about readings or recitals, activities which have their own temporalities independent from the time the reading is done? This question would perhaps be worth looking into, and is timeless as the ancient texts themselves.

Language is a phenomenon inexplicably limited, constrained, and shaped, decided upon by temporal denominators and qualifiers. Words such as ‘before’, ‘after’, ‘during’, ‘pre-’, ‘post-’, ‘now’, ‘then’, ‘past’, ‘present’, ‘future’, ‘later’, ‘first’, ‘second’, ‘third’ and so on, delimitize our perception of events. An effect of the supremacy of the scientific discourse, chronotopia itself is a canonical term that could not be easily ignored. Its foundational hold on language production and perception leaves little room for a consideration of an alternative, however important it might be for a more meaningful reading of the past.

Contrastive claims between scientific, physical ideas of time, are weighed against the natural flow of the river. To examine this claim deeper, one needs to take a

look at the natures, or essences of the ticks of the clock and flows of the river. At the crux of this claim is a refutation for the scientific discourse, elevating it as some superior methodology of determining our existence, the existence of everything.

While very logically critical of the natural idea of the flow of the river, the claim above could not escape the incorporation of the lexical items that have been used in countless contexts to describe water bodies, the word ‘flow’. More than just being the qualifier for the word ‘time’, it has been used in many other contexts such as describing motions of air, and water (in some cases – fire). In the phrasing ‘time flows’, a purposeful paradox is presented, distinguishing time as an abstract notion from elemental notions such as water and air, yet in doing so, subtly agreeing with the subjectivity of both time and water, to the motional description modifier of the word ‘flow’. Meaningfully so, a next step that could be taken in diving into the meaning of the phrase in the context of the scientific of physics would be to examine other occurrences of this lexical item.

Perhaps one could turn the whole incongruity around to explore possibilities of extra-scientific interpretations of the phrase. Discrete sound units that a person hears from a flowing river could be considered little ‘ticks’ from the logic of the quote. Although to follow through completely with the claim would mean measuring the discrete, smallest components of the sound perceived and produced to see whether they match the Planck time unit at all. Of course, the entire business of measuring time with more units of time could be critically viewed as a profane redundancy from a

heuristic point of view that wishes it could flee from the cage of cyclical theoretical discourse.

Principally, chronotopic¹⁴⁸ units have dominated theoretical discourses – in science and literature as the dominant discursive surface- as well as the multileveled surfaces of the pages of a book. The physical surface spatializes the paginations, and the texts that they contain, as well as the page numbers, the covers, in other words the physical content of it. When we cease to pay attention to the lines written on the paper surfaces, and enter the world of meaning derivation and creation, a world that is full of conjectural, speculative interpretations, chronotopes become constants for the elemental components of the texts. An intentional meandering of the binarial, dichotomous interpretive possibilities of chronotope, as time-space for the ultimate, primal determiner for all context of all literary events, universes, characters, plots, scenes (What I am referring to are extensive definitions and meaning excavations and projections on notions of ‘time’ and ‘space’ as they have been understood, as exclusively definable lexical pieces that refer to their correspondences in the real world), could possibly lead to, among other perspectives, one that is attentive and sensitive to what brings into fruition the fertile grounds for these two to come together at all. Specifically, the order, structure, fabric, surface in discourses that underlies this portmanteauability, also the potentiality, and multiple entailments that could be brought from the peripheries of the reading attention to our focal points. Instead of sticking to focusing on temporalities and spatialities of text, and literary elements, we

¹⁴⁸ The chronotope is an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring. (Bakhtin 425-426)

might benefit from focusing on the non-matter of text and making sense of it. And beyond.

From one point of view, there is a possibility of considering centrality in reading as a convergence of centralities of attention and liminalities of levels of spatialities, reflecting a tacit knowledge of the world, of/in the reader. For ritualistic and traditional reading and recital modes, this ‘locus of the possible’¹⁴⁹, where text undergoes certain interpretive, didactic, objective, subjective, and experiential processes, the point is nearly impossible to specify. In relation to Eliade’s description¹⁵⁰ of the affinity of the ‘religious man’ with the center of the cosmos, readings and recitals of texts provide exactly that new-made again-old-made new again cyclical spheres, where elements of a rational schematism and an ephemeral real-time pathos of a read, recited text provide a divine magnetism for the eternal, infinite world to be reordered, reconstructed and recreated with every word’s utterance and interpretation. Constant, consistent reimaginings of the cosmos reoccur every single time a text is read, rematerializing the dichotomous strain between the concrete and the abstract. Such a tension could only be renegotiated with a balanced, focused and purposeful movements between printed and oral/aural spaces, that estimates carefully (im)possibilities of torsions and tangencies of/between these surfaces.

Maps could be considered as make-shift cosmopolitan representation of the past, combining and representing the entirety of the world on a flat and non-flat

¹⁴⁹ (Deleuze 109)

¹⁵⁰ “To us, it seems an inescapable conclusion that the religious man sought to live as near as possible to the Center of the World” – *imago mundi* – image of the universe. “...he knew too that his city constituted the navel of the universe” (Eliade 43)

surfaces – of paper, land that could be populated with symbols. The obvious point that could be brought up here is the compression of time and space that arrived with the advent and development of modernity has resulted in a compromise of our mode of reading cartographic and literary texts – oral and/or written in the postmodern world or post-postmodern world. In this chapter, I would like to discuss certain tangencies between aquatic vessels found in the syair in *Misa Melayu* and discuss ritualistic embodiments of meaning in varied arrangements, through processes and practice of native poetics and noetics. The 1876 Malay map of the Perak river could be seen, and read, on a micro-level as a hydropolitical representation of the Perak state, and its statecraft. As a map of a Malay microcosm, it only presents a piece of a larger mapping of the Malay world in the 18th century.

“Here the historiography is full of holes. There is no sustained ethnohistorical perspective on maps; one has to read for a geography of absences.”¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ (Harley 195)

Self/body

The self, like the world, is a text.¹⁵²

“I WILL proclaim to the world the deeds of Gilgamesh. This was the man to whom all things were known; this was the king who knew the countries of the world.” The Epic of Gilgamesh.

“that I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit” –

Descartes

Homo sapien : human being, ‘being’, the knowing human

Homo sacer: the sacred man, who is invincible to punishment, accursed, banned, chastised, ostracized, placed outside the circle of law, and society.¹⁵³

Homo oeconomicus: is not the human being who represents to himself his own needs and the objects capable of satisfying them; he is the human being who spends, wears out and wastes his life in evading the imminence.

Homo empathicus: is the human being soft-wired to belong to a group and feel the emotions of others.

Upon the arrivals of the gentlemen, gentlewomen scholar-resident-writers in the peninsula, and encounters that ensued afterwards, there were many cases of misunderstandings between the civilized and from their educated perspectives, the wild, the untamed, the primitive. Enchanted as the scholars were, they could not break free from the shackles of a limited understanding in which one lifestyle, and view of the world that could not be realized unless it is put in contrast to another, supposedly more inferior group of people. However, this obstacle did not stop the scholars from learning and studying everything they could about these people, making acquaintances

¹⁵² (Michaels 401)

¹⁵³ Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. By Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1998.

and friends as they go along. Despite all their efforts in collecting, documenting, surveying, in other words epistemologizing and logicalizing this new world, the Malay peninsula. Notwithstanding, a certain strangeness remains undetached, and unfigurable from the communities they encounter, due to the lopsidedness of the system used in the translation, and rationalization of communities that have their own ways of making sense of the world.¹⁵⁴

The births of the Malay subjects in texts written by these scholars – Winstedt, Swettenham, McNair, Wilkinson, Bird – through sketches and writings, then, must be viewed as must be viewed as occurrences or affects decided Enlightenment-driven epistemology with a heavy leaning towards empiricism and the construction of modernity.¹⁵⁵ Out of the consistent, yet obviously biased effort of the scholars, the previously unknown world was made to be known, transported from a fractured existence to a stable one, from no form to form, from chaos to order, where the native is always, although not so apparently labeled as the other.

In the early days of statecraft, circulations of epics are the foremost foundation of building a system of meanings, a common language that all the members of a community can understand. In the aural-oral world this happens mostly through ephemeral notions – elements of fantastic tales that have a certain kind of social power that have been transferred from the reciter to the audience. In the non-religious Epic of Gilgamesh, ‘I’ is the first word emphasizing the act of the hero-king, something that is

¹⁵⁴ See White (172-173) on wildness animal nature as antitype of humanity

¹⁵⁵ supplementing the subject of enlightenment through the translation of difference. Subjectivity is filled with ‘reason’ and this entails different systems of emotions on the sides of the Enlightenment and Bengali subjects. (Chakrabarty 124-129)

not apparent in many of religious and non-religious epic texts, hinting at a primordial, ontologically-derived world view.

Lines between one member of a community in which oral texts are circulating are blurry, thus creating a communal, collective sense of ontology and epistemology¹⁵⁶. The poet, bard, soothsayer, reciter, reader of epics serve the role of being a mediator in which texts and all the elements they contain are translated and through which they are disseminated creating a collective form of understanding. Before the age of print, recital practices are the main mode of circulation of language. Early civilized mode of transmission in these oral-aural sociolinguistic communities take a rhythmical form. From the vantage point of the present, this is the missing link between the literary and socio-phenomenological domains. Again, a certain kind of tension is created between the linguistic and the unseen often presently unthought of paralinguistic or paraliteral spheres the languaging of the past. Havelock (2004) discussed the conditional projection of exegetical didactic value of epic verses – directive verses are only effective if they are put in a rhythmical manner¹⁵⁷. The tough part of figuring out this historico-linguistic conundrum excavating rhythmic patterns in recital and performances of texts that form the silences and blank spaces in concrete historical narratives.

A step away from the usual stroll along the silent liminal spaces, visible and impossible to be ignored in the act of reading, where interpretation is automatically

¹⁵⁶ “The oral human lives in a sensation of a timeless rhythm where the distinction between “I” and “You” is not sharply defined. (Chandravarkar 20)

¹⁵⁷ Rhythmic sense is the preservative of speech (Havelock 140)

activated by establishments of connections between lines, letters, syllables, words, diacritical marks, notes, typographical features and so on. If only, maybe, in the forever unreachable plain of a perfect reading, these two paths may be imagined as converging at some willed points, then at other points, diverging into their own microcosmic complex of infinitely narratable occurrences that have an infinite possible variation in terms of features definable in language, language-able (to describe its proneness to language) so to speak, to bring more freely navigable hermeneutical surfaces. And the infinite worlds of meaning they entail, *ad infinitum*. (And still there is the distant echo of discursive constants, droning, as if motioning a return to conceptual conservatism.) (and so on) (and so forth)...

Male dominance of the definitions of the self, tellable through the ‘homo-’ could potentially be more sensitively and aptly balanced with female voice, voice beyond gender categories. Reflections on the ‘primal’ as a trope, as possibly the broadest common discursive denominator for characterizations and interpretations of differences that have been described in early modern literature as binarily contrastive with the ‘civilized’. Informed by such a dense theoretical background that supposes what could be instinctually opaque as discussable, negotiable elements, a reader might cling on to the familiarly present, yet sometimes unsteady, lexical and etymological hooks traverseable to a balanced, steady platform of balanced paradigms.

“In a feudal society when one is not a king or does not belong to the royal family or the chief’s, one is often taught to know one’s *place* or know one’s status, *tahu diri*. *Tahu diri* is essentially self-effacement, an act of downmanship – one rates downself much lower than one really is. Subsequently, this literary self-effacement and humility becomes part of an aesthetics of literature.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ (Salleh 240)

Maka berani berdatang sembah,
Harapkan ampun juga bertambah,
Patik nan hamba dibawah limbah,
Hidup umpama sehelai sampah.¹⁵⁹

With courage summoned doing obeisance,
Hoping for growing forgiveness,
I'm a mere servant under blessings,
Living like a mere piece of scrap.

Defying the expectations of reading a royal genealogic poem about a journey, Raja Chulan's humility, self-effacement, humbleness, as shown above, allows him not interrupt the grandiose of the events, royalties, and ships he describes in the poem. Faithful to the royal institution, he positions himself as being the lowest, despite the royal title 'raja' in his name.

In addition, his honest declaration that he is 'a mere servant', that has some religious Islamic undertones, reminds his audience his act of writing the poem is a privileged obligation. His use of the traditional pronoun for the specific purpose of addressing the king *patik* 'I', informs us of his awareness of the sociolocutional context. It is part of a traditional mannerisms of head-bowing and kneeling before the king, *berdatang sembah* 'doing obeisance'. In traditional Malay poetic ontological mapping the 'self' is presented as being lower than the king – physically, metaphysically, and spiritually, and consequences of this conceptual mapping manifest itself all throughout Malay classical literature. While the figure of the king or the Sultan is presented as being divinely ordained, as the 'shadow of God' on earth. It is because of this relation that the two figures – the vagabond narrator, and the Sultan – take the form that they take.

¹⁵⁹ (Raja Chulan 118)

Much in the same manner, another Malay story-teller, Munshi Abdullah, writes his *hikayat* in response to a request made by a British scholar. We are told of the writers of the *hikayat* inside the *hikayat*, and their positions in relation to royalties, aristocrats and Europeans, informing us that the literary acts of narrativizing and writing about their lives as among the first ontologically-driven acts¹⁶⁰. The self-referential phrase used in these texts is *sahib al-hikayat* ‘friend/owner of the story’.

“...orang besar Turki ternyata kagum melihat bakat Abdullah sebagai pelukis: ini orang mana?; dan “Kalau Basyah tau yaini tau menulis peta2 tentu diambilnya.” Sekali lagi perlu ditekankan bahwa saya bukan mempersoalkan benar tidaknya adegan demikian. Yang menarik justru bahwa Abdullah terdorong memilihnya untuk dikisahkan.”¹⁶¹

“...the Turkish nobleman clearly was impressed seeing Abdullah’s talent as an artist: You here, where are you from?; and “If Basyah knew that you here know how to make maps, of course he would take him in.” Once again it has to be stressed that I am not questioning whether such a scene is true or not. What’s interesting is that Abdullah chose to be narrated.”

Here the existence of the author, narrator, poet, story-teller, mapmaker, artist is made clear by being pointed out by someone else of a higher status. What is more remarkable is that both Raja Chulan and Abdullah are of a lower rank in the story, yet they have ultimate control of the contents of their narratives. The distinction made between two characters in both examples produces a gap that realizes as it separates the two –selves. One is of a noble rank, distinguished and of a higher class, and the other a talented vagabond, and each would remain invisible to the other if the encounter did not happen.

Probably it is due to this very reason that in both of these cases, early Malay sailor-narrators or sailor-poets, were the firsts to draw, narrate their journeys, and

¹⁶⁰ *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, for example, has no author, and exists without a self-referential first person perspective embedded inside the story.

¹⁶¹ (Sweeney, *Karya Lengkap Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munsyi*, 267)

make maps. That they realize the possibilities of visually representing, in a form other than illustrations and images, and words, the world they were traversing. By doing so, they would reach their high-brow audience, some of them totally foreign to the language of the authors.¹⁶²

An old Malay playful adage goes *Kapal lalu dimana?* that could be translated to ‘Where is the passing ship?’ to which if the one asked answers *di laut* ‘at sea’, the asker would immediately brush away the answer by changing the parsing of the question sentence, and instead say *Kapala*¹⁶³ *lu di mana?* which means ‘Where is your head?’, which could be taken as a rebound verbal nudge to the listener’s inattention. In fact, the efficiency of this kind of sentential play is dependent upon the ignorant willingness of the listener, and the cleverness of the asker in uttering the question. The answer to the second question would be *di sini* ‘here’, and if so chosen by the asker and if allowed by the duped listener/responder, the exchange could be extended back and forth endlessly¹⁶⁴.

In *Syair Perahu 2*, a symbolism of the body as an aquatic vessel is presented:

Wai muda, kenal dirimu,	O youth, know yourself!
Ialah perahu tamsil tubuhmu,	Your body is like a boat,
Tiada berapa lama hidupmu,	Your[earthly] life does not last long,
Ke akhirat juga tempat diammu ¹⁶⁵	Your eternal abode is in the Afterworld.

Immediately after the Sultan completed his journey along the river, from the beginning to the end of the *syair*, he went on an elephant-trapping expedition, after

¹⁶² “...cartography is an art of persuasive communication” (Harley 163)

¹⁶³ Alternative spelling for *kepala* ‘head’

¹⁶⁴ Further adding to the comic value of this kind of language-game would be the fact that a ship’s head or bow is a place for the ship’s toilet

¹⁶⁵ (Braginsky, ...*And Sails the Boat Downstream*, 306)

which he fell ill and met his end. After his journey of state-making, his soul departed to *negeri yang baka* ‘the eternal afterworld’, leaving his body behind, an empty vessel, a *jenazah* ‘corpse’ that underwent all the traditional royal funeral processions. After his death he was referred to as Marhum Kahar, or Marhum Kaharullah ‘the all-powerful deceased one’. An aquatic journey that ends with a land burial, presenting much to think about in regards to the metaphysical aspect of the metaphor of existence. Hamzah Fansuri, a seventeenth century Malay Sufi poet, in the second stanza of his *syair* puts forth a metaphor for the body and its limitations, and transcendental possibilities that follows the departure of the soul from its mortal vessel. To recognize the ‘self’ *diri* is not only to be in control of the vessel that is the body. It is also to be one with it and to be aware of its imminent destination. In the words of Descartes, “that I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit”.

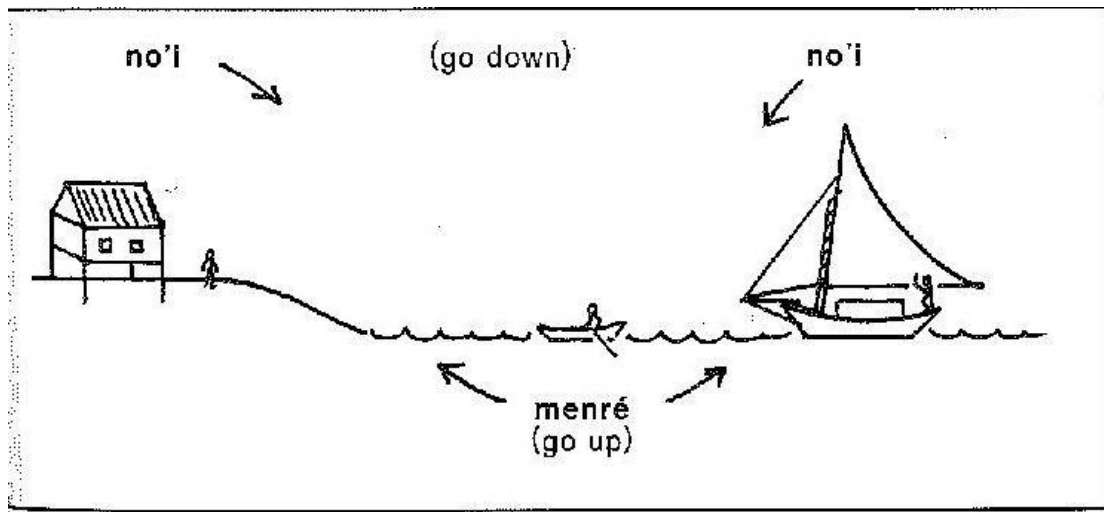


Fig. 11: An illustration showing directionalities Bugis nautical acts of boarding a ship from the shore. To board a ship and to go ashore is represented by the Bugis word *menré* 'to go up' ; to leave the shore and to alight a ship is represented by the word *no'i* 'to go down'. In *Misa Melayu*, aquatic vessels are represented, in some instances by the Malay word *kenaikan*, from Malay *naik* 'to go up'.

Descriptions of royalties, noblemen and their *kenaikan*¹⁶⁶ 'vessels' are prevalent throughout the *syair*, many ships and sailboats, and many selves, traveling along the riverines, some accompanying the Sultan on expeditions, others prepared for battles with the Dutch. There were many kinds – *perahu*, *sampan*, *kakap*, *penjajab*, *ghurab*, *kapal*, *lancang*, *pilang*, each described in terms of *usul* 'origin' or 'pedigree', *sifat* 'attribute' and *sikap* 'bearing'.

¹⁶⁶ From root word *naik* 'go up' or 'to mount'

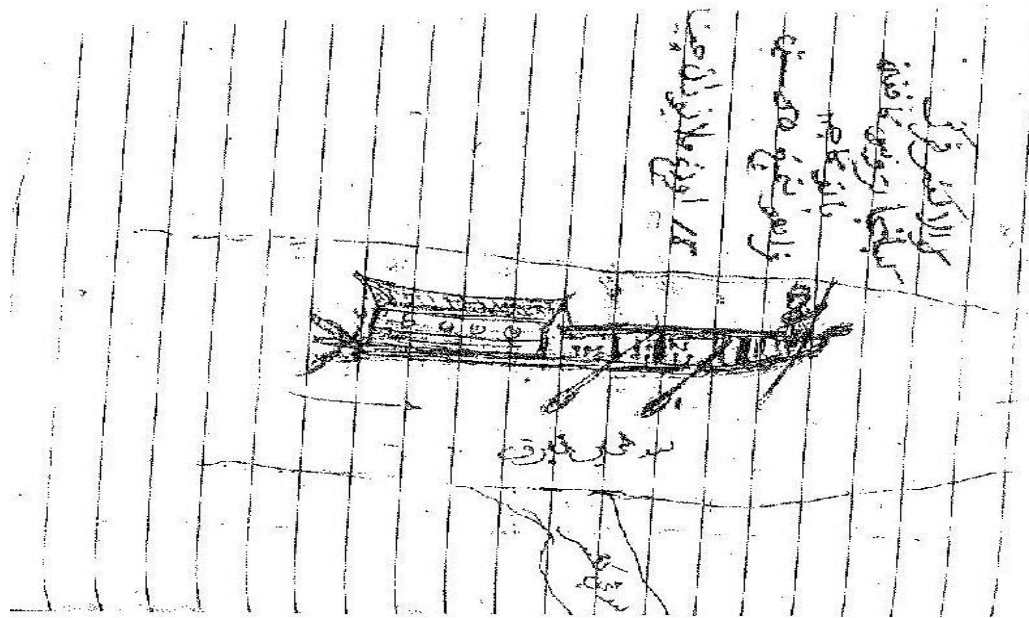


Fig 12 : A sketch map of the boat by/of Abu Bakar son of Raja Pinayongan a Sumatran migrant, on Sungai Perak. Written in Jawi – *Kuala Kangsar pergi ke Blanja terus ke Papan. Batu Gajah, perahu tambang 50 sen. Sungai Perak. Sungai Kangsar. 15 orang Melayu dan Cina* 'Kuala Kangsar going to Blanja straight on to Papan. Batu Gajah, boat fare 50 cents. 15 Malays and Chinese. Sungai Perak. Sungai Kangsar (tributary). (Lubis and Nasution 144)

Alhamdulillah puji yang nyata,
Dibahagikan Allah Tuhan semata,
Berkat Nabi penghulu kita,
Bertambah daulat duli mahkota.¹⁶⁵

Praise be to Allah, clearest praises,
Offered to Allah, the only God,
Blessings of the prophet our leader,
May the sovereignty¹ of the crowned *duli*¹ increase.

In the beginning of the *syair*, invocations and praises of God, the Prophet and the Sultan was arranged together in one stanza, a convention apparent in many Malay texts. The Malay word *penghulu* 'leader', 'headman' is attributed to the Prophet as a statement of collectivism, subsuming all characters mentioned in the *syair* by the pairing with the first person plural pronoun *kita* 'us'. The root for this word, *hulu* means 'upriver'¹⁶⁸, and in some cases could also mean 'head', depending on the

¹⁶⁷ (Raja Chulan 116)

¹⁶⁸ The state of Perak in the *syair* is one that is divided into two – *hulu* and *hilir*, based on the regions of the river they surround. Both of this subpolities have a Raja of its own – Raja di Hulu and Raja di Hilir, and are still around today as districts of the state of Perak.

variant of Malay used. Also derived from the word *hulu* is *hulubalang*, the official title of a palace noble that literally mean ‘captain of a one-masted boat’. Navigational, anatomical and social aspects of meanings are present in this word. Another word with similar multifurcation of meaning is *semata*, which means ‘only’, and also literally ‘one eye’ derived from the root word *mata* ‘eye’. A complete word that sematically and figuratively describes the Omniscient, All-Seeing God that is invisible to the naked sight, that exists beyond the cosmos as described in the *syair*. The very point of where a river starts, the ‘spring’ in the *hulu* is called *mata air* ‘eye of the water’. Reflecting a certain cosmic order of power, from God to the Prophet to the King *duli mahkota* ‘the crowned sovereign’¹⁶⁹, as the first stanza it is the perfect and complete poetic header.

Breath

Silence, before the breath begins, an inhalation of air, filling up the lungs of the reciter, then an exhalation of the same air, from the lungs through the vocal tract and into the mouth, released through the lips, with pronunciations, enunciations of words, verses that have been recited countless times before. Every utterance is a fresh embodiment, production and invocation of meaning, and its irruption a brief dissemination of abstract meaning that is infused with cosmic relevance, only manifest through the act, for without it, silence reigns supreme. Removed from the static nature of written literature, oral reading and method of telling a story, or listening to one are

¹⁶⁹ See p. 161 for extensive discussion on the semantic complexities of *duli*

closely connected to a consciousness that could be a vessel of circumstances, events, plots, characters. Affected constantly, closely, intimately, by a rhythmic flow, influenced by momentum of movements, breathing, sight, vision, it goes beyond the practice of paper reading that is punctuated by linearity of sight, and internal verbalization and imaging of every single word. Oscillations of breaths punctuate beginnings and ends of verses recited, a phenomenon that is further patterned by rhythms of the recitals.

In the oral Malay world of stories, words travel along with constant currents of wind (hence, the Malay phrase *khobar angin* ‘wind news’, meaning ideas, words and stories that arrive to a listener yet could not be ascertained to be true) and the gentle flow of water (*air dicincang takkan putus* ‘(flow of) water will not be broken when sliced’). Another ancient Malay saying *angin sepoi-sepoi bahasa* ‘soft zephyr’ or literally ‘soft wind of language’ ties the natural, transient, invisible motion of air to that of language. With the inhalation words are internalized, then, suspended in a brief moment of ‘pregnant silence’, before they are pronounced with the rhythm of exhalation back into nature, where language is invisible, yet present.

Nafas, the Malay word for ‘breath’ or ‘to breathe’ share the same etymology with *nafsu* ‘desire’, permutations of the Arabic trilateral root n-f-s, which could also mean ‘self’. Without one the other two do not exist – the links between these three becomes the core for understanding relational dimensions between the self and recital methods of oral/aural texts. A metaphysical reading of Jawi texts could lead us into the foray of mystical meaning invocation and creation through “the science of breath” or

“respiratory cabala”¹⁷⁰. There are many ways in which a text might be recited, yet they all share the common point of being regulated by breath. That the Sultan traveled in a state of perfected faith, reflects the manner in which the *syair* might be recited and internalized. One might come to a question at this point about *iman* ‘faith’ and its semantic consequences on the Malay self (or the reciter’s self), or metaphilosophically speaking – being. The relations between *nafsu* and *nafas* are inextricable as exhibited in many branches of Sufi gnostics, there are seven hierarchically arranged states of being altogether, seven *nafsus* that correspond with varieties of manifestations and dispositions of character, feelings, moods and desires. One would reach a state of ‘perfected faith’ only by transcending all these seven levels to reach a cosmic unity with the Divine being.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ (*Imagining Language*, 394)

¹⁷¹ There are many versions of the seven levels or aspects of being in Sufi gnostics, Braginsky (2004) works with a framework that lists 4 levels of *nafsu* and three stages of *fana* ‘transitory existence’ or ‘the dissolution of self in complete union with the Divine’ (p. 62) Other sources lists seven levels of *nafsu* – *amarah*, *lawamah*, *safiah*, *mutmainah*, *radhiah*, *mardhiah*, *kamaliah*, depending on the *tariqa* ‘path’ of Sufism.



Fig. 13: A Malay dug-out canoe on the Perak river

In *Syair Perahu 1*, an abstruse stanza about the wind, and a ship-master:

Nakhoda itu bukannya batin,
 Sekalian negeri tempatnya bermain(-main),
 Menyumburkan dirinya kepada arifin,
 Ialah tahu (ketika) haqiqat angin.¹⁷⁰

This ship-master is not hidden,
 All the countries are the places in which he wanders,
 He appears before gnostics,
 He knows the reality of the wind

The *nakhoda* ship-master is one who knows the directions, and meanderings of the wind as an element of nature, in his being able to internalize it as part of the reality of the cosmos. In Malay cosmography in its poetic form is not just a matter of translating the cosmos into a composition, it is also the translating of the body into the cosmos, in clearly physical, performative acts, one of them being *bermain* means both

¹⁷² (Braginsky, ...*And Sails the Boat Downstream*, 182)

‘to play’ and ‘to take a pleasure trip’. The world is experienced through the senses that operate within a space *negeri* ‘country/state’ and transformed into a poem. Through this act, the elements of nature such as wind, ephemeral, wild, unpredictable in its reality, are tamed into an interpretable language. This operation however is conditional on the knowledge of the ship-master, the *nakhoda*. In the 1876 Malay map, the title *nakhoda* is written in Jawi on the two straight lines representing the main Perak river, along with the title *Yang diPertuan* ‘His Lordship’, a referent for Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain. Without any illustrations of a ship, this simultaneously blur the lines between ship, captain, and river, and gives us a silent directive on ways in which all these narratemes are connected. Furthermore it creates an invisible metaphorical link between cosmic elements, meanings, power, and their human embodiments.

Tuanku [-lah] raja sangat budiman, Mengikut hadith, menurut firman, Dikarangkan syair suatu zaman, Berangkat bermain sempurna iman¹⁷¹	Your Highness the most benevolent king, Following <i>hadith</i>¹, abiding by <i>firman</i>¹, Composed a <i>syair</i> (for him)¹ of an epoch, Departing, journeying in perfect faith.
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The *Misa Melayu syair* describes¹⁷³ the Sultan traveling along the river, in a state of *sempurna iman* ‘of perfected faith’, which by the way hearkens back to the arrival of the ships of Muslim traders, who brought with them the notion of *iman*. Spaces on land, territories populated by trajectories of modernizing forces, industrial and material, before they were developed were reached by constant poetic negotiations with wind and water.

¹⁷³ (Raja Chulan 171)

For Braginsky (2004), this kind of poetics exhibit a ‘synthesis’ of Tantric and Sufi traditions, as shown by words and phrases of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit origins consequences of ‘syncretic’ framework that has been pervasive in historicizing the Malay world. Of course, it must first be acknowledged that writing about an oral/aural tradition that has undergone various permutations of circulations is a daunting task that requires analytical patience and perseverance. Especially with the complexities brought by the *Jawi* script written with a Sufistic temperament, in which every letter carries with it specific semantic contents that have been erased with the Jawi to Roman transition of the Malay language. Given this fact, we must be highly sensitive in reading Malay poetic cosmographies. A better solution is distracting ourselves with the flows of wind and water, intently and intentionally allowing our focus to follow the trails of certain words, mythologemes, and poetemes that bear weighty meanings in the poeticizing of the Malay worldview.

Soul/Spirit

“In most cases the author is transparent, existing only in the soul of the work, not in person, or with clear individual existence, or with clear evidence of what Foucault calls individualization.”¹⁷⁴

Beyond the textual manifestations of stories of the Malay world, an ungraspable orality looms in the background. There is a certain essence or pathos that gives whomever reading an opening to a sentimentality, or nostalgic sense, naturally absent from the printed forms. Holding true to a knowledge or an awareness of this

¹⁷⁴ (Salleh 186)

ephemeral pathos, would allow readers to gain a clearer perspective of the text. The spirit¹⁷⁵ or the soul that exists in a piece of work would only be present in a reading where the reader knows him or herself, and the text. In *Misa Melayu*, two lines provide us some inklings of the idea of spirit in Malay poetics.

Sharif Abubakar saudara yang tua,
Sebuah kakap ia berdua,
Selagi ada hayat dan jiwa,
Barang kerja boleh disua.¹⁷⁴

Sharif Abubakar the elderly kin,
A ship, two's company,
As long as there is life and soul,
Any task could be faced.

H

ere we see the convergence of all the native Malay concepts of 'individualization' - the self, as apparent by the name, and a position in a community *saudara yang tua* 'relative/kin'. Explicating upon the metaphor of the body as ship and the ship as self, we see the now the content of the vessel *hayat* 'life' and *jiwa* 'soul', that makes getting through any obstacle faced in a journey possible. Invisible to the *mata kepala* 'plain sight'¹⁷⁷, yet clearly present, in Malay gnostic and poetic texts. Formless, transparent, colorless without any hint of existence, it is often thought off as the center of the individual – as the 'life force' necessary for the undertakings of any tasks in life. And beyond, the manipulation of such energy to pull amusing tricks on the sight in conjuring up things which are not there, and making invisible the things which are there is called *silap mata* 'sleight of eye'. It is only in the instance of a great *silap mata* performance could we see or trace the existence of this energy at work, this center of being around which every one of our senses converge.

¹⁷⁵ Latin 'breath', also the word for alcoholic drinks

¹⁷⁶ (Raja Chulan 130)

¹⁷⁷ Lit. head-eye

“Terang” – yaitu asalnya sesuatu yang tampak kemudian daripada tiada tampak maka yaitulah makna hakikat terang tampak dipandang dengan mata kepala dan jika pada hijaz bolehlah dikata terang hati dan terang pendengaran dan terang bicaranya dan terang pekerjaannya dan lainnya, segala makna ... adapun terang hati maknanya lekas mendapat ilmu pelajaran dan makna terang pendengaran tentu sesuatu yang didengarnya ...¹⁷⁸

“Clear” – is something that becomes visible from being invisible, that is the essential meaning of ‘clear’. That which is seen with plain sight. To an extent¹⁷⁹, it could be used as such - clear heart and clear hearing and clear speech, clear action and everything else, every meaning. Clear-hearted means quick at learning, clear-hearing means being sure at everything one hears.

From the definition above, we might learn that the individual, the self has multiple faculties of perception – heart, hearing, speech, action - from which meanings of the world are perceived, processed, internalized, imagined, reproduced. Such is also the case for readings of text, for what is a text but a window to the world.

A piece of work, or a reading or recital might be deemed as ‘spirited’ or not, one can put one’s soul in the work or the reading, which means investing every single thing the self is in control of towards the focus of bringing into fruition meanings from words written and heard.

A spirited reading of an epic is one that could enchant and make clearer the faculties of perception, that could entertain and make one forget the worries brought by reason and doubt, one practiced for the sake of entertainment, delivering timeless emotions via a musical recital to the ears and hearts of the audience. The Malay word *baca* is a semantically complex one, that does not have a one-to-one correspondence with an English word. It could be translated to ‘to read’, ‘to recite’ and also ‘to cast a spell’, the latter’s meaning is more salient in the reduplicated form of the word *baca-*

¹⁷⁸ (Raja Ali Haji 256)

¹⁷⁹ *hejaz* – meaning uncertain, literal Arabic translation ‘barrier’

*baca*¹⁸⁰. When met with the incongruent term ‘oral text’, that at first glance would be an oxymoronic term that do not line up with our tempered (tampered?) understanding of the word ‘text’, that presupposes printed and/or written nature is not perceptually compatible with orality. My attempts to reconstruct in my imagination the oral dissemination of any *hikayat* resulted in an endless pursuit of complex philosophical and narratological questions, some of which I found highly relevant to discuss here. First, let us look to the top Malay *hikayat* for a guide - an amusing scene from *Hikayat Hang Tuah* informs us of a *hikayat* recital by Jebat.

*“Maka Hang Jebat pun datang menghadap oleh segala biduanda. Maka Hang Jebat pun datang menghadap. Maka disuruhnya oleh raja membaca hikayat, kerana ia tahu membawa suara bagai-bagai, tambahan suaranya terlalu baik. Maka Hang Jebat pun membawa hikayat, terlalu nyaring suaranya lagi merdu. Maka segala dayang-dayang dan perwara dan gundik raja sekaliannya pun duduk mengintai di balik dinding, mengintai Hang Jebat membaca hikayat itu. Maka segala gundik raja pun berahilah akan Hang Jebat. Maka raja pun terlalu sukacita mendengar Hang Jebat membaca hikayat itu, suaranya terlalu manis seperti buluh perindu, kerana Hang Jebat pandai mengadakan suara memberi sekalian mendengar dia pilu dan rawan; barang siapa mendengar dia menjadi kasih hatinya. Maka raja pun beradulah diribanya Hang Jebat. Maka Hang Jebat pun berhenti daripada membaca itu lalu bernyanyi pula mengulit raja beradu itu, terlalu sekali merdu suaranya. Maka raja pun tidurlah diriba Hang Jebat terlalu nyedar.”*¹⁸¹

“Then Hang Jebat came to pay obeisance by all the courtiers. Then Hang Jebat also came to pay obeisance. Then he was asked by the king to read the *hikayat*, because he knows a variety of voices, in addition his voice was too nice. Then Hang Jebat recited the *hikayat*, his voice really high-pitched and sweet-sounding. Then all the concubines and royal courtesans and harlots, together sat and peeked from behind the wall, peeking at Hang Jebat reciting the *hikayat*. Then all the royal courtesans became aroused. Then the king became immensely delighted listening to Hang Jebat reciting the *hikayat*, his voice sweet like an enchanted bamboo, because Hang Jebat was clever in making voices giving who were listening melancholic and forlorn; whoever listening their hearts became filled with longing. Then the king fell asleep on Hang Jebat’s lap. Then Hang Jebat stopped reciting and then started singing and serenading the sleeping king, so sweet was his voice. Then the king continued sleeping on the lap of the widely awake Hang Jebat.”

As the ultimate rebellious Malay figure, Jebat as a reader/reciter of the *hikayat* gives us an answer on the question on how a *hikayat* is read in the past, by sounding it sweetly and seductively, with a variety of voices, up to the point where it put the

¹⁸⁰ (Proudfoot 123)

¹⁸¹ (*Hikayat Hang Tuah* 313)

sultan to sleep. Surely, there has to be a reason for the bard who wrote *Hikayat Hang Tuah* to pick Jebat¹⁸² instead of the namesake hero of the *hikayat* himself. Tuah is the civilized exemplar, apparent through his loyalty to the palatial institution, while Jebat is the wild, untamed rebel, the ‘wild’ of the two. Caught within a dilemma of morality, and possessiveness, the two brothers fought against each other to death. An epic would stand as an archaic, classic, historically tall text compared to the shorter, concise, modernly digestible novel¹⁸³. Quite an unexpected, troubadour-like act by the most angsty, unruliest of the five warriors, most remembered for his *derhaka*¹⁸⁴ (savage-like disobedience) against the Sultan of Malacca. From him, one would not expect an exuberant recital, and for him to be *terlalu nyedar* ‘widely awake’ as the sultan fell asleep on his lap must mean that his way of reading has a certain seductiveness, a rare

¹⁸² “Hang Jebat, observing his shamed friend, becomes *sakit hati*, and amucks in the negeri. The fight between them is almost a stand-off: they are equal in tahu, say the commoners when they go to see the spectacle of the two fighting. And both will have a famous name, their deeds recounted in ages to come in the one case because of his loyalty and service to Sultan Melaka, in the other because of the perfection and extremity of his evil: If you are going to be evil, Jebat says, don’t go half-way. Jebat did not do it, he says, with his own strength or power (*kuasa*), so that his name would be famous; it was with His [Allah’s] will. But later he thinks to himself that he must amuck and kill many people, for otherwise his name will not be famous. It seems, in short, that Jebat is mapping out an entirely different way of being, as though he were Laksamana’s alter ego. The difference between them is loyalty to Raja Melaka. We see starkly in the two the results of *derhaka* or loyalty: of one, complete chaos; of the other, an energy which is bounded. Loyalty is not the ultimate source of continuity in the world, is not the grounds, which make the other aspects of the world make sense. That is the place of *daulat*. But loyalty gives a form to the world’s energy by linking it to *daulat*. It captures and directs the world’s energy, creating social form rather than confusion and formlessness.” (Errington, *A Study of Genre*, 119)

¹⁸³ “The novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God” (Lukacs 88)

¹⁸⁴ “Primitivists set the savage, both past and present, over against civilized man as the model and ideal, but instead of stressing the qualitative differences between them, they make of these differences a purely quantitative matter, a difference in degree of corruption rather than in kind. The result is that in primitivist thought reform is envisaged rather as a throwing off of a burden that has become too ponderous than as a constitution or reconstruction of an original but subsequently lost human perfection. Primitivism simply invites men to be themselves, to give vent to their original, natural but subsequently repressed desires, to throw off the restraints of civilization and thereby enter into a kingdom that is naturally theirs. Like archaism, then, primitivism holds up a vision of a lost world, but unlike archaism, it insists that this lost world is still latently present in modern, corrupt, and civilized man-and is there for the taking.” (White 171)

charm only present coming from an intentful, sensitive heart¹⁸⁵. Being a useless, and unplaced genre in the temporal, spatial and social contexts of its reading, perhaps, a refutation of ‘epic’, ‘epicness’, ‘epicism’ could be provided as a sort of purposefully applied form of *derhaka*. A defiance of the *daulat* of the epic genre¹⁸⁶ for the sake of a more neutral reading of any *hikayat*. Whether or not the spectral, lofty figure of canonical epicism is defeated by a rebellious reader/reading, intentionalities in both sides of the spectrum of classical literature defeat any possibilities of harmonious coexistence of the two. In the direct desire to kill the other figure, or rather, figure of the other, of literature, or of human beings, readers might find a guide to understanding the mutual cancelling out of each other. Reflecting an ancient, primeval tension between the wild man and the civilized, without clarity of spirit one would be damned whichever side is chosen.

A running joke in an old Malay film *Nujum Pa' Blalang* (1959) says that without the second dot in the first letter, his name would spell *buah* Malay ‘fruit’, instead of *tuah* ‘luck’. That silent dot marks the secret, hidden strength, or the spirit, of *Tuah*, the triumphant. His name is spelled, in Jawi with the letters *Ta, Waw, Alif, Ha*. Applying this orthographical analysis, or pseudoscience of letters on Jebat’s name would bear a similarly interesting result. The triconsonantal root of his name spells in Jawi the Malay word for handshake, *Jim, Ba, Ta*. Ironic, due to his unrequited desire for friendship, broken by a passion that goes against institutional affiliation. Upon his

¹⁸⁵ Perhaps this was the glimmer of character that Kassim Ahmad saw in his reading of the *hikayat*, in his *Characterisation in Hikayat Hang Tuah*. Kuala Lumpur: DBP, 1959.

¹⁸⁶ “determinate meanings as a function of “literary competence” (the text means what the community of professional readers says it means) – the only thing that matters is that the meaning be determinate, not subject to the whims of individual readers.” (Michaels, *The Interpreter’s Self*, 386)

death by the mighty keris Taming Sari, it is the spirit that leaves his body, transcending into netherworld, the rebel spirit of a *sahib al-hikayat* ‘friend of the story’ and friend of Tuah. And so goes the story for Marhum Kaharullah, disunited in the end, soul and body. How so, one could only imagine.

Compass(ionate)¹⁸⁷ readings

Far away from his home in England, Forrest knew that he had to manipulate and pull some strings to make this engagement work. Other than the rhythmic waves and the blue sky visible from the porthole, and his crew members, his dog-eared, trusty old shiplog, in which he tried to document every single detail of the long aquatic journey to the east, there is nothing else but the open seas –vast, mysterious and endless. Learning from legendary Dutch, Portuguese, English voyagers that travelled the same seas before the names of places, tribes, plants, animals, bodies of water, he records the world around him by producing lithographs and drawings of bluffs, islands, cliffs, crags, peninsulas, promontories, channels, straits and labeled them with terms that have been used by the voyagers before him.

Nov 1792: The harbor was empty save for a few *perahus*, and as the sands of the shores and the horizon welcomed him, worn out from his voyages from Calcutta to Mindanao to Aceh to Sumatra and now a peninsula barely known in world geography

¹⁸⁷ The compass for nautical purposes, is, at present used by the principal native traders of Malaya. In the Malay languages, the name for the magnet and for the compass and its divisions are almost exclusively native:

magnet – *besi berani* (powerful stone/iron), compass – *fa’adome’n*, *pandoman*, *paduman*, *pedoman* (guide)

The Malay compass is divided into sixteen parts, twelve of which are multiple of the four cardinal points. For the cardinal points, the different nations have native terms, but for nautical purposes those of the Malay language are used throughout (Dennys 142)

as the Malay peninsula. Focused on his engagement, he set out his men to survey the land by marking fathoms along the shoreline, taking land measurements and recording them. By this time, they have become real experts at what they do, after a rendezvous with the Sultan of Mindanao eighteen years back when Forrest was responsible for producing a maritime world map, incorporating Portolan and Bugis sea-charting techniques, making it a grand decoration in the Sultan's royal chambers. As an easy solution, he would do the same thing for the Sultan of this *terra incognita*, and for the Company. It has now become something that is expected of a traveler, a ritualistic practice, to draw a map, so that trade centers could be established unproblematically. His mission was to document and represent all his encounters on paper, which would be the template for all other works produced on a colony. Later in the same month, a hydrographic map of Perak river would be included in one of his many travelogues.

Another adventurer, Frank Swettenham, explored the land by foot, boat and on the back of elephants what he wrote about became encyclopedic sources about the state of Perak in the early days of its construction. In *Footprints in Malaya*, he maps out in a few chapters his journeys, hunting expeditions, explorations, and peregrinations. Documenting passionately many of his encounters and adventures in his travelogue hints at an applied cosmopolitanism that is both structured by a European sense of modernity and an awareness of his immediate surroundings in Malaya. His diary-like passages compiled entire adventures in different Malay states, Perak being one of them. Reading his text, one gets a sense of a balanced reading and writing about the state of Perak by one of the most prolific British author-resident of

the state. Modern readers of his text are presented with a diary-like textual map of a traveler's, and his companions', adventures in a foreign land made familiar, and real, through acts of logicalizing – writing and reading – that translate the microcosm of Perak into structured narratives comprehensible by the Western mind¹⁸⁸. His diverse range of motions in the state, made possible by varied modes of travel gives the leisure reader a sense of wonder, and the analytic critical reader problematics of parallelism in textual mapping to think about.

The most difficult act for these explorers, and perhaps the least pursued, is navigating and negotiating the sensitivities of the local populaces of the unknown land. Knowledge for them does not require emotive understandings. The most difficult act for a present-day reader reading these epistemologically-informed texts that could be complemented on the emotive side is understanding the circumstances from which the texts was written. Such is the endless conundrum of trying to read sense in these texts.

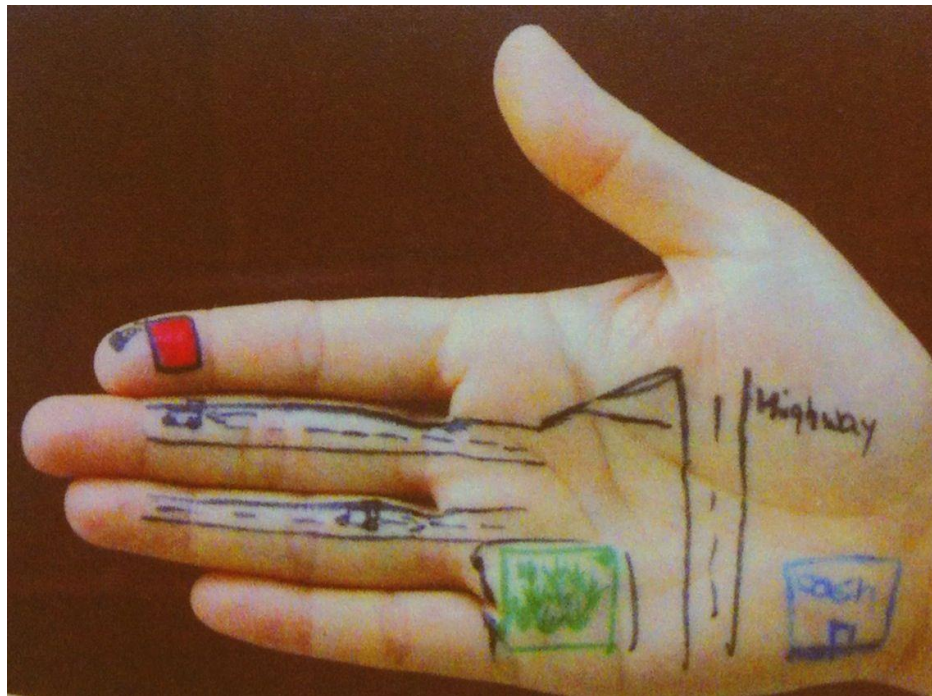
Of course, it is a given fact that the mission of opening pathways in a previously uncharted space requires some effort on the side of the explorers in finding their ways in spaces newly encountered - geographic, hydrographic, social, linguistic. Furnished with modern tools of traveling, surveying and mapmaking, these adventurer-scholars were mindful that they needed guides in order to compile and organize the girth of information that they were about to collect. The catch is, the guides have to be produced first, and they would be based on the very pieces of

¹⁸⁸ In one of the chapters entitled England and Italy, Perak and Pahang, the reader gets a clear sense of an East-West intermingling of thoughts, ideas and narrativizing that occurs in his writing. (Swettenham 87-92)

information that they are supposed to navigate through, and organize. Early dictionaries and lexicons made interlinguistic communication easier, and made it possible for them to learn about native animals, plants, buildings, and specific traditions and mannerisms. Without much of an inclination to leave the unknownness of a land as it is, the universality of order was an assumed fact, and thus the incorporation of native information by way of modern tools was an unquestioned process. It was easy for explorers like Forrest, Swettenham and Bird, all of them having possessed knowledge of geography, and the art of *belles lettres*. And having traveled extensively in other parts of the world, exploring a new place only requires them to apply these ways of knowing and using them as means to an end. In all of their books there are geographical maps provided, and a similar discursive format pervaded. Not surprising, a new land is a new playground for the toys of modernity – compass, lexicon, typewriter – to be put into action.

On the other hand, it could be said that it is not fun to play with rules only one team knows. In Malay there is a phrase for this – *bertepuk sebelah tangan* ‘to clap with one hand’. Obviously it makes no celebratory, fiesta-like sound. In the context of early incursion modernity perhaps it was the same one hand that holds the pen, that clasps the compass and flips the pages. Then again, such is the complication of epistemologizing a foreign land, full of fantastic myths and stories unheard, and beings unknown. In relation, in the 15th century, a Portuguese explorer Joao de Barros came up with a shorthand ‘hand map’ of continental Southeast Asia, where the stretch of index finger represented the Malay peninsula and Burma, the thumb represented India,

and the folded middle, ring and index finger and the rest of the fist represented regions now known as Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Maritime Southeast Asia – thousands of islands of present-day Borneo, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the water bodies – Indian Ocean, South China Sea, Phillipine Sea and the straits of Tebrau and Malacca - remains in the blank spaces, in-between the fingers and around the hand.¹⁸⁹



Map 9: A color-coded street map of a neighborhood in Boston that shows a postmodern kind of transfer of cartographic articulations and meaning onto an anatomical part, reminiscent of the hand map of 15th century Southeast Asia. (Harzinski 127)

Previously the definiteness of constructed perspectives and knowledge productions have been discussed and certain things could be rectified as fundamental for a criticalism, a speculativism, an escapism that could be productive for our understanding of a non-grammar of Malay poetics and a non-cartography for the 1876

¹⁸⁹ (Suarez 123)

Malay map. If anything, perhaps we might come up with an abstract compass to match the ones that were used by the ship captains mentioned in *Misa Melayu* to find our way deeper into a liminally present system of emotions in Malay poetics. Lest we might get caught in the privileged, elitist satisfaction of an uncritical, unsubtle and dangerously stable modern reading, we might be better off being caught in flows of the winds and rivers of words, and drown in the ocean of learning.

David Bleich (1975) provides an interesting literary experiment that could shed some light on this matter, by recording and discussing the interpretations of a few readers and readings of a poem.

““a man’s home is his castle” and manipulates its specified meaning according to what he thinks he sees in the poem.

The choice of possible refuges found in the poem, for example, is translated in G’s second paragraph into his own set of choices – a “small room” or a “garden path.” The overall mood of the restatement is reflective rather than homiletic, and the main thought of each paragraph is redundant. The first paragraph is the need itself; the second is the irrelevance of what form the castle is; the third, the nature of its importance; and the fourth, its use as a refuge. The only word in this restatement is taken from the poem is “signal,” which the respondent enlarges considerably from its original use.”¹⁹⁰

In the response, a word is extracted, repeated and formed the basis of an expanded statement, an interpretation, and more. Perhaps, and these points would be a distraction from the essence of the respondent’s intention in the statement, in Bleich’s commentary on the response are: 1) the apparent order prevalent signified by the words: first, second, third, and fourth; 2) the transfer of meaning by way of repeated words taken from the poem read, and 3) the attention given to terms referring to spaces, and movements on the literal, and signified spaces in the poem, and 4) the contrast between ‘homiletic’ and ‘reflective’ in the analysis of the response. It is

¹⁹⁰ (Bleich 31)

indeed a case of intertextual repetition following a predetermined order of expectations from one step of reading and meaning formation, to another, and the only refuge that has yet to be found is one that was referred to in the original poem, that would give the reader freedom from choice instead of freedom of choice. *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) presents a variety of narrative perspectives – teleological, phenomenological and subjective-conscious, presenting opportunities for an engagement with the liminal space(s) lying in between the text and the author, the reader, the text; and the reader and the author. A reader's engagement with the text is always phenomenological, occurring in the specific moment of reading, while meaning is being experienced, and created again.

We must then shake up the stabilities of ordered physicality brought by writings of scholar-residents that have been transported from the moments of colonial encounters, tempting vignettes of experiences as they might be, and throw ourselves into the metaphysical domains of interpretation underlying the inception of interpretations could be chipped away at further by looking at what Sartre calls 'choice', what Kierkegaard calls 'alternative', and what Merleau-Ponty calls 'doubt'. For beyond the constructed clarity offered empiricism, another truth is hiding, that "the global is not a universal in an ahistorical sense." Yet, we must tread with care as chains of empirical thought is as subtle, and spectral as the search for the hidden and unthought. Also, we must bring together all the agents of the historico-literary production into the forefront of reading and interpretation, and consider their stories by connecting them to the world they have reflected, translated and produced in their

texts. Many of the historical texts are autobiographical, intentionally or not, they are setting up examples to be followed by the rest of society.¹⁹¹

In Borges's short story *Tlön, Uqbar and Orbis Tertius*¹⁹², cosmographies of unknown, fictional places/spaces are presented in a section as a contextual reference that pierces the fabric of known fiction as a created world. Rife with manifold made-up metaphors dressed in the seriousness of the narratemical garb of historicism, they provide a continuous, introspective tunnel into a doubt-filled literary place, a point of departure for the reading imagination and a grounding point for other literary elements. The most interesting aspect of this kind of writing, I believe, is that the pseudo-historical, pseudo-geographical, and pseudo-cartographical creations blur the lines between imagined and factual meanings, and eliminate literary semantic groundedness with layers upon layers of references, true and false, correct and erroneous, up to the point where a reader is cornered into an interpretive space that does not distinguish between the dichotomous categories history and literature.

Empathic, and aware of each other's presence, these texts become literal spaces in which they mimic, renegotiate, complement, and sometimes negate comprehensions, knowledge, perception that produced early modern texts on the state. Strewn away from each other in time and space in their circulation and production, texts on Perak form little, episodic narrative islands of experience both connected and separated by bodies of water and humans. Wandering away from the factuality of these texts, a reader might wonder about the unthought, the unwritten, the unread, the

¹⁹¹ (Chakrabarty 124-125)

¹⁹² (Borges, *Collected Fictions*, 58)

undocumented, the information unfittable into a book no matter how an author tries. We arrive then at the abstract separation-connection could still be read much like the hyphen that articulates silences, and the blank spaces between comic panels¹⁹³. These empty spaces' repellent properties to similar interpretations applied to the contents of the semantic, conceptual containers they both divide and connect, could be considered connective portals to other literary planes, on/in/around which emptiness comes into play, in its entire visual, oral, aural kaleidoscopic, intermorphable, permutations. The sustained, continued attention held all the way through, from one frame to another, crossing the interweavings of these often neglected literary spaces could become the potential incursion into a more informed consideration of the loci and trajectories through what have been known as negative non-salient spaces, empty spaces, non-places, or non-spaces, as interpretable and articulable. Only a deep reading of these silences might save us from the sin of being slothful, and settling for a surface-bound, linear, heteronormative reading.

Parallel to the turnings of the compass needles and of the helms wheels of the ships that arrived on the shores of Malay peninsula, there are other turnings that might be paid attention to. All for the pursuit of a more complete reading of early narratives. As guides for alternative readings, we could learn more subtly about native Malay epistemologies in the 18th century by looking into the intersectionalities between instruments of modernity – such as the ship, and the compass - literary anatomical

¹⁹³ “the hyphen appears to make one out of two, but this two in one also indicates what is always more than one” (Derrida, ‘The Double Session’, 191)

references that could suggest more balanced opportunities of reading the Malay past and present through oral texts.

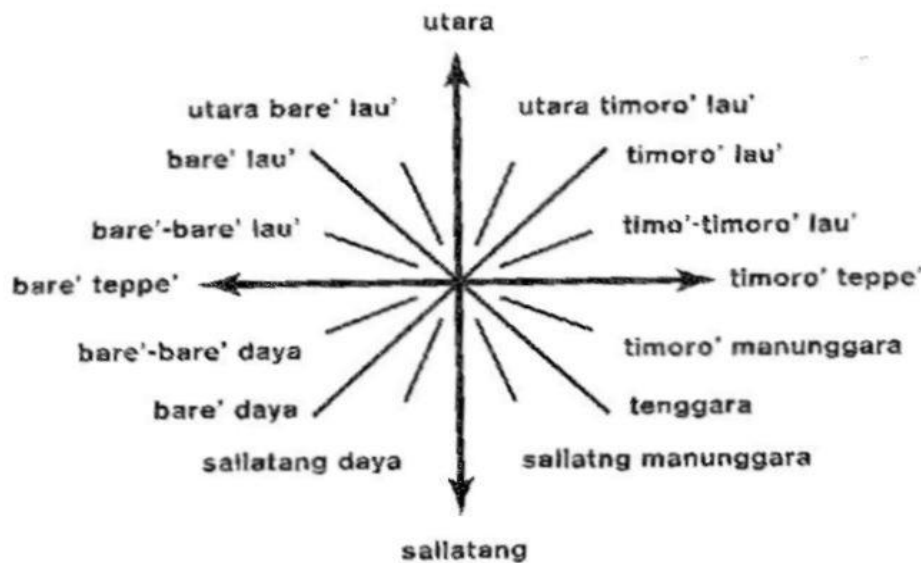


Fig 14: The Malay-Bugis wind compass, *mata anging* (lit. 'eye of the wind'). It has two functions: "to identify the direction of the wind at sea and to describe the course and heading of a ship." For navigational and measuring purposes a physical compass – *jangka* or *pedoman* is used. Figuratively, these two words also mean 'to imagine' or 'to reckon' and 'guide' respectively. (Ammarell 98)

Here, we might reinterpret the phrase *sempurna iman* as 'fullness of faith', and recall some oft-quoted *hadiths* in Malay didactic circles, from religious *kitab*s¹⁹⁴ - that *sabar* 'patience', *malu* 'shyness' or 'trepidation', and *bersih* 'cleanliness' are all fundamental parts of *iman*. It might be noted that each part is presented and quoted in disparate verses, indicating the enormous challenge in gaining *iman* in its fullness.

¹⁹⁴ Jawi books discussing Malay-Islamic prescriptive knowledge, most commonly found in religious *madrasahs* throughout the Malay speaking world. Some titles that are probably extinct now are *Nurul Yaqin* 'Light of the Truth' which compiles the history of the life of Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h, and *Zadul Muta'alim* 'Learner's companion' that compiles early modern basic Islamic curriculum of *fiqh* 'canonical law' and *tauhid* 'doctrine of the unity of God'. In some pedagogies they are practiced in a 'call-and-repeat' manner, in which the teacher would recite a line or a verse, which would then be followed by the students.

*Ilmu*¹⁹⁵ is the Malay word indicating ‘a field of knowledge’ or in the 18th century, it would be translated as ‘magic’ or ‘science’. In the infinitely complex and diverse Malay world, each Malay *suku* ‘tribe’ would have their own communal truth, ancestral, traditionally and ritually passed on from one generation to the next, and from one community to another. To gain a better understanding of native Malay epistemologies, we should instead look into specific words representing certain notions prevalent in poems, cosmologies, traditions and rituals. Gene Ammarell (2004) compiles Buginese cultural hydrography, cosmography, magic and rituals concerning aquatic navigation, *pantang*, diagrammatic figures of parts of a ship.

In the search for a Malay system of emotions, one might attempt to *jangka* ‘reckon’ or ‘imagine’ the arrangements of moods in oral recitations of *syair* and *hikayat*, and perhaps only then might one be brave enough to formulate the connections of the metaphorical transparencies between the word, the world and the body. I suggest that present-day practices of dissemination of oral texts, religious and non-religious, distantly reflect realities and non-realities of the same kind of practices

¹⁹⁵ In Winstedt’s 1963 dictionary, an extensive definition and the various application of the word *ilmu* is given, essentially presenting the branching of Malay epistemology: ‘*ilmu*, Ar., knowledge, magic, science: *i.akhirat* eschatology; *i. adab* ethics, *i.ugama* theology, *i.alam* physics; *i bahasa* philology, *i. bahas* dialectics; *i. bangsa* ethnography; *i. bangun* geometry; *i. bangun-bangunan* architecture; *i. batin*, *i. suluk*, *i. tarikat*, *i. tasawuf* mysticism, *i. batu* geology, *i. bedah* In. surgery; *i. bentok* morphology; *i. bintang* astronomy; *i.bumi*, *i.dunia* geography; *i. fakeh* Muslim canon law; *i. filsafat*, philosophy; *i. firasat* horoscopy, physiognomy; *i.ghaib*, *i. ruhani*, *i. wasitah* spiritualism; *i. haiwan* veterinary surgery, *i. hayat* biology; *i. insani* embryology; *i. jaringan tuboh* histology; *i.kesihatan* hygiene, *i. kimia* alchemy, *i. pisah* chemistry; *i. kira-kira* accountancy; *i. hisab* arithmetic; *i.makanan* dietetics; *i. mantik* Ar. Logic; *i. masharakat* Ar., sociology; *i.nujum* astrology; *i. pemuleh* physiotherapy; *i. peta-memeta* cartography; *i. pesti* In., mathematics; *i. pertanian* In., *i tanam-tanaman* agricultural science; *i. saraf* Ar., grammar, accidence; *i. tashrih* Ar., *i. urat tuboh* anatomy; *i. tauhid* theology; *i. tumboh-tumbohan* botany; *i. udara* meteorology; *i. udara* meteorology; *i. waba* epidemiology. (128)

in the 18th century Malay world. Below is an interesting anecdote of a nervous young imam delivering *khutbah* with a *hadith* excerpt:

“Before the imam takes to the minbar, the muezzin reminds the congregation of the following *hadith*.

Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah’s apostle (p.b.u.h) said, ‘When the imam is delivering the *khutbah*, and you ask your companion to keep quiet and listen, then no doubt you have done an evil act”

My 20-something muezzin stutters as he tries as he tries to recall the Malay translation of this *hadith*. He starts forgets it halfway, stops, and smiles to calm his nerves...He opens his eyes and triumphantly pronounces the *hadith* in its entirety:

“Jika kamu berkata kepada kawan kamu ketika imam berkhotbah pada hari Jumaat ‘Diam’, maka sia-sialah pahala Jumaat kamu.”

There was a time when this *hadith* would strike the deepest fears in my heart. So deep that I wouldn’t even crack my knuckles during the *khutbah*.”¹⁹⁶

Authoritative interpretations of the corpuses of religious texts are repropagated and upheld through orally-mediated translations into vernaculars with underlying implications of the measurability of one’s piety by one’s compliance to the translated chants and verses. Note that Shah used to feel afraid to even make the slightest noise when he heard this *hadith*. Note also that the imam was feeling nervous. Why? This phenomenon might be further explained by the incorporation of *rasa*¹⁹⁷ or ‘emotions’ into Islamic communal didactic practices specifically in relation to the recitation of *hadith* and the Qur’an¹⁹⁸, the holy book which after a certain point in Southeast Asia began to circulate and coexist with stories in the form of *hikayats* written in the same script. This “affective system” bound emotive modes to certain verses, and certain ways of reciting. An example of an emotive mode is *huzn* or ‘overwhelming sadness or awe’ in the *tilawah* (recitation) and *tadabbur* (exegeses) of *hadith* and Quranic verses. Another aspect of *tilawah* is *lagu*, or ‘song’, the melodic technique the reciter

¹⁹⁶ (Shah 20)

¹⁹⁷ Also could refer to ‘taste’, in both its noun and verb forms

¹⁹⁸ (Gade 204)

uses in reciting the Qur'an. Comparatively, a *hikayat* evokes melody through the incorporation of *syair*, performances of *wayang* demands the *dalang*'s musical voice while retelling the Indonesian/Javanese *Mahabharata*, a Pali chant has its lilts and modulations. These features are all ungraspable if the notion of 'reading' (*mem*)*baca*, *pembacaan* in Malay means both 'to read' and 'to recite', similar to Arabic *qira'at/iqra*), features that are both prominent in oral/aural literary communities of the Malay world.

The ways of navigating through a text, in which readings and recitals could be considered navigational activities, related to sociolinguistics and sociocognitive perspectives of communities of reading, communities of truth and communities of imagination¹⁹⁹. Should we consider *hikayats* as oral stories recited with specific cadences, rhythms and rhymes in the past, that are transferred onto the literal world via the advent of print culture, then we must also take into consideration the sonic, mnemonic, recital technologies with which these 'texts' are memorized, and shared with groups of people. In the attempt to make sense of the relations between cosmographic and recital technologies, bridges must be built – textually, cognitively, imaginatively, sensibly – between texts of different forms. So we arrive to the discussion of spatiality and temporality of the in-between in reading, the spaces that also populate the text filling in the gaps in between letters words and sentences.

¹⁹⁹ Similar to 'recipient-tradition' with a discerning node of 'comparative intuition' that has the independent ability "not only to juxtapose certain fragments or ideal concepts but also to discover their similarities and mutual correspondences" and has "its own ideological and aesthetic principles". (Braginsky, ...*And Sails the Boat Downstream*, 75)

There is only one *syair* melodic form known and circulating in the Malay world today, a musical structure applied to all recitals of the poetic form. Distinguishing it from other forms of Malay poetics such as *gurindam*, *sajak*, *puisi*, *lagu*, it has a melancholic, serene, soothing feel. Its soft lullings could calm disconcerted hearts, and tease the aural imaginaire of listeners bringing them back to a time before interactions between readers/reciters, texts, listeners, and their environment became a silent, silenced process, a singularity confined by the austere muteness of present-day print literature.

The Malay way of mapping, including the *syair* could not be correctly categorized under cosmography, as the lexical stem ‘-graphy’ suggests a continuum that does not exist between one system and another. Rather, the Malay *syair* could be posited as a kind of cosmo-narrative, with features manifesting in both the oral/aural form and the written form. A poem like a map like the world - populated not with only political units, buildings and land, but water and people (and even some intriguing metaphorical combinations of both), which have been given prominence in both poem and map. The *syair* in *Misa Melayu* has about 177 stanzas, detailed descriptions of aquatic vessels and their crew members that went on the journey with the sultan along the Perak river, stories of their adventures and encounters, religious invocations and humble self-effacements of the author to the sultan. Who is/are the aural audience here? It is still a mystery, one could imagine a royal palace recital, with drums and horns as accompaniments, as suggested by the end of the prose part that lists 10 *nobat* songs.

In any case whatsoever, the *syair* is an oral-aural text about explorative, highly mobile journeys, yet in the recital the body of the reciter would remain static, much like the recital of the Qur'an. Its movements are of the visual, abstract, aural imagination, with the rhythms of the breath and the rhythms of the heart, that often happens while the reader-reciter's body is in stasis. The perfect embodiment of the

Bahr an-Nisa yang sempurna ni'mat,
 Dalamnya lengkap sekalian alat,
 Airnya Zamzam yang amat lezat
 Memenuhi cita hati dan fuad¹⁹⁸

The Sea of Women [conceals] the fullness of bliss,
 Its depths are complete with all that is perfect,
 Its most delicious waters are those from the Zamzam well,
 [They] fill the mind, the soul, and the heart.

oral/aural text manifest itself in the visually, physically silent body, as the affective 'locus of the possible' in which the *aql* 'mind', the *ruh* 'soul/spirit' and the *hati* or *fuad* 'heart', through intentional regulatory control of breath, pronunciation, pitch, and rhythmic and melodic progressions of the recital.

It is said in the *syair* that the Sultan embarked on his pleasure journey in a state of perfect faith, yet a perplexed reader removed from the microcosmic and macrocosmic poetic languagings of the Malay world might ask many questions about *iman* 'faith' and *sempurna* 'perfect' or 'fullness'. One might deduce from the verses from these *syair* excerpts that the source and/or 'any-space-whatever' for the occurrences and irruptions of notions such as *rasa* and *iman* is metaphysical, a kind of unity of the senses. Dissolution of the temporary, material world in a state of ecstasy is reached when all the multiple directions are centrally converged in the metocorpus of the cosmos. Rather than searching haphazardly and looking in random directions, one

²⁰⁰ (Braginsky, ...*And Sails The Boat Downstream*, 82)

might be better off thinking about the static fulcral center of the compass, where the foursome, sixsome, sixteensome directions spring forth and converge.

As hinted by the excerpt above, the Malay word for ‘perfect’ is translated as *alat* while *sempurna* is translated as ‘fullness’, the body might only attain *ni’mat* ‘bliss’ only when it is full, physically, spiritually, metaphysically, and so on.

It is exactly bliss that was seen, and extrapolated upon, in a faithless reading of the Quran, divergent from the normative, traditional prescriptive interpretations that have guided many readings in the past. Lesley Hazleton, a female agnostic Jew reader of the Quran, a reader twice removed from the normativity of the majority of interpreters of the Quran who have been and are largely Muslim males. Going against the flow of normative, exegetical Quranic hermeneutics that fill up the public sphere of religious discussions, she gave a very conscious observation about how the book itself is seldom read, yet often-quoted. Introspecting four different translated versions, and controversial contexts accompanying public interpretations of religious texts, she begins with a caveatic claim that displays her carefulness – “I read slowly”. I find her disarming honesty an interesting, useful guide to consider in an exploration of possible readings of the Quran. Instead of focusing on the exegetical, didactic verses on laws and morality, she starts by going into detailed, idyllic descriptions of Muslim heavens she found in the Quran. Her intimate flights of fancy within the text allow the minds of the audience to wander away from the strict, institutional interpretations, recreating possible openings for freer interpretations. With a calm, yet resolute, voice, she evokes

scenes of rivers flowing²⁰¹ and beautiful and divine *houris* waiting the doers of good in paradise. Her experimental heuristics in reading the text is uncommon, and much needed in the academic scholarly domains of religious studies, and literary studies and the sociological world that they analyze with a singularly focused paths of reading, resistant from speculative possibilities from revolutionary helpful ideas for better future understandings.

“Men, have fear of your Lord, who created you from a single soul. From that soul, He created its mate, and through them He bestrewed the earth with countless, men and women.”

An-Nisa' Women 4:1

A critical point that might be brought forth in Hazelton's idyllic reading is that it is a silent reading instead of a melodic recital. The Malay phrase for this practice is *baca dalam hati* 'to read inside the heart'. Also, another familiar Malay expression might also be appropriated to describe the process, directionality and relationality of seeing and feeling - *Dari mata ke hati* 'From the eye to the heart'. A reader, such as myself and many who have invested their hearts and souls to gaining more insight about Perak would read all the printed autobiographical, historical texts produced about Perak, and also the 1966 printed version of *Misa Melayu* and its subsequent reprint. While missing the enchanting sounds, rhythms and melodies of a recital, this mode of reading gives way for other meanings and emotions of the heart to be learned from, kept in mind and thought critically of. In its multiple lexical projections, the word *hati* could *hati-hati* 'mindfulness', *perhatian* 'attention', *permerhatian*

²⁰¹ “Islamic civilization came to be characterized by the concurrent flow of two rivers, of rationalist and mystical disciplines of knowledge, and most of the time this coexistence was a peaceful one.” (in the introduction to *Al-Ghazali's Marvels of the Heart*)

‘observation’, and *jantung hati* ‘sweetheart’. To complicate matters even more, the word has also been translated to ‘soul’. Even more, Arabic words such as *fuad* and *kalbu*²⁰² also refer to the same notion.²⁰³



Fig. 15 : Boat of Che Mida, sister of Dato' Maharajalela, whom Swettenham encountered in his exploration of Perak.

Upon flipping open the cover of *The Golden Chersonese: Travels in Malaya in 1879*, Isabella Bird, adventurer and travel-writer by the reader encounters a colophon with the sentimental words – “To a Beloved Memory, this volume is reverently and sorrowfully dedicated”. Further reading into the preface would tell the reader that the colophon is written as such due to the loss of her sister during the process of editing the volume. Her book compiles her adventures of sorts, elephant-rides and such, in. She charts out her marvelous journey in detailed, astute observations of the tropical

²⁰² From Arabic *qalb*

²⁰³ *hati*, liver; fig., disposition, heart (to do, fight (Malay mystics distinguish *h. sanubari* physical heart (like a pineapple), *h. munafik* hypocritical heart, *h. salim* honest heart, *h. tawajuh* heart turning to God, *h. mujarrad* heart wholly devoted to God, *h. Rabbani* hearts that belong to God. The individual heart is *h. sanubari* physical; *h. ma'nawi* real or spiritual; *h. isri* the heart of the mystic. *Memperhatikan* to notice heed; *pemerhati* In. observer (for newspaper), *pemerhatian* observation; *perhatian* cognizance attention, notice. (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 122). Other Malay expressions of the heart include but are not limited to *jantung hati* ‘sweetheart’, *puas hati* ‘content-hearted’, *sakit hati* ‘heartache’, *sedap hati* ‘satisfied’.

jungles of Perak, some plain and documentative, others very heartfelt. In one of the passages, she talks about her meeting with W.E. Maxwell, who discovered the 1876 Malay map of the Perak river during the period when he was translating a Malay book McNair and Low, resident-scholars of the state. In her chapter on Perak, she compiled valuable information on the abundant natural resources, Chinese and Malay communities, her meeting with the Sultan and discussed the conflict that ensued the implementation of the British residential system in the state²⁰⁴. Her liberal usage of punctuations and adjectives shows her expressiveness and adeptness in translating the state into writing. Almost seamlessly, her reading and writing of Perak aptly combines disparate but related components of the state – geographical, social and political, intermingled with intimate observations that incorporates while they negotiate those of British resident-scholars who wrote on the same tangents, making her book a fun intertextual case study to explore.

“To a Beloved Memory” combines beautifully two of the deepest human senses – memory and love. And one could not help but wonder about the intricacies of these senses, that surfaces, overwhelms; and connects a human being with another. Especially with intimate and personal life events such as the death of a loved one, only the experiencer knows, or rather, experiences the entirety of such emotions, such matters of the heart. Risking being inadequate in sensitivity by way of intellectualizing such matters and bringing it into discussion, one could attempt perhaps to distantly

²⁰⁴ Regarding the conflict she wrote “Of both the superior and subordinate it may be truly said that, by tact, firmness, patience, and a uniformly just regard for both Malay and Chinese interests, they have not only pacified the State, but have conciliated the rajahs, and the in the main have reconciled the people to the new order of things. (Bird 272)

read the heart of a British travel-writer facing such a loss during the course of her journey in a foreign land, where languagings of experiences and of emotions have their own terms. Irregardless of the imposing circumstances of writing from a European-Enlightenment²⁰⁵ standpoint – tendencies of throwing biased, exotic descriptions and labels, and other similar sins, that are consequences or side-effects of modernity – her position as a European traveler in the Malay peninsula stands on the plains in between being empathic enough to be understood by locals and being sophisticated enough to be revered by her European counterparts. It is important to acknowledge first of all, that Bird's journey served the purpose of collecting and documenting data, as well as charting her experiences that on a physical level would be fairly easy to accomplish. If she were to write everything in the detached, impersonal, documentative language, a Malay would say that her writing lacks *perasaan* 'feeling'. And of course, this is not the case. Going deeper into the notion of *hati*, Malay phrases such as *ulu hati* 'head of the heart' and *mata hati* 'eye of the heart' indicate abstract sensory locations in which one gets in touch with the deepest essences of one's being, into the inmost possibilities of *rasa* and *perasaan*. Mere words would fall short of expressing the sadness and compassion felt for the soul leaving the body. By friends, families, kin, relatives, ones who have departed, would

²⁰⁵ "Writers and artists began to survey history, myth, and legend for figures that would at once express their innermost desires for liberation and still give expression to their respect for tradition, the old, and the familiar. In an age of universal rejection of the conventional image of "normal" humanity, a notion of humanity shot through with contradictions between its ideal and its reality, radicalism lay in the adoption of any antitype to that image that would show its schizoid dedication to mutually exclusive concepts of man's nature to be the sickness that it was. And as Bernheimer says, "Nothing could have been more radical than the attitude of sympathizing or identifying oneself with the Wild Man, whose way of life was the repudiation of all the accumulated values of civilization." (White 177)

forever be fondly remembered, by way of soothing, poetic language. Perhaps, this point is where the intentions of Raja Chulan's and Bird's compositions meet – both being narratives of adventurous lives well-lived. They are transcendental bridges of language that lead souls from the physical world to the beyond. The afterlife.

“...He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to beautiful Mansions in Gardens of Eternity: that is indeed the supreme Achievement.”

61:12, Al-Saf (The Row)

Hancur badan dikandung tanah, budi yang baik dikenang jua

The body is crushed to the soil's content, good deeds will forever be remembered.

Cosmologic rhythms

Silence. No sounds coming out of the words, yet they refer to glorious thunderous, rhythmic and trance-inducing songs played in the presence of a royal audience. The Malay In the end of *Misa Melayu*, a list of song titles are presented. Reading them one would get a sense of regality, each song seems to refer to certain experiences, moods and sentiments, that may be ideal accompaniments to palace rituals. Ending with a boom is infused with a distinctive meaning in this context, the end of a journey of playing and state-making, an exploration that marked the beginning of modern state, now postmodern. Mere names and titles could not provide enough sonic experience for meaning, more so if they are from the distant past. Certainly it is possible to imagine the affect of these songs by evoking scenes from the *hikayat* itself, poetry and prose, yet how could we attempt to grasp beyond the

limitations of text-based histories and imagine a soundscape filling in the gaps of textual histories?²⁰⁶

Tamatlah Hikayat Misa Melayu ini salasilah kemudian daripada Al-Marhum Jalilu'llah sampai kepada Sultan Ala'u'd'din Mansur Shah Iskandar Muda Khalifatu'r-Rahim pada hijrat Nabi salla'llahu alaihi wa-sallama sa-ribu dua-ratus lima puloh dua.

Maka inilah lagu nama-nama lagu gendang nobat kerajaan di-dalam negeri Perak ini. Ada pun lagu yang asli keluar dari laut lapan lagu: maka ditambah di atas kerajaan negeri Perak lapan lagu menjadi enam-belas lagu. Awal pertama-tama:

*Gendang berangkat
Arak Antelas
Kubang si-kumali
Rama-rama terbang tinggi
Arak-arakan panjang
Arak-arakan pandak
Dang gidang
Puteri mandi mayang*

*Juang beraleh
Lenggang Enche Kobat
Gendang perang
Anak raja basoh kaki
Tabal
Nobat Khamis
Nobat Suboh
Nobat Isha*

Inilah akhir zaman kebesaran dan kerajaan negeri Perak daru'r-Ridzwan. Termaktub ini Hikayat Misa Melayu pada 25 Jumadi'l-awal tahun 1326 di dalam Mukim Bandar, Haji Othman.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Andaya (2011) in her remarkable study discussed the acoustics and soundscapes of the early modern Malay world, which is heavily oral-aural.

²⁰⁷ (Raja Chulan 194)

So ends this *Hikayat Misa Melayu* after the descent from *Al-Marhum Jalilu'llah until Sultan Ala'u'd'din Mansur Shah Iskandar Muda Khalifatu'r-Rahim* on the hijrah year of the blessed Prophet 1252.

And these are the names of the royal drum songs of the kingship in the state of Perak. There are eight songs of coming ashore from the sea: then eight songs are added to the songs of the kingship of Perak, so there are sixteen songs. First and foremost:

Departing Drums
March of Antelas
Crumpled Wallow
High-flying Butterfly
Long March
Short March
Lady Gidang
Bathing princess

Shifting Fight
Enche Kobat's Sway
War Drums
A prince washing his feet
Coronation
Thursday Nobat
Dawn Nobat
Evening Nobat

This is the end of the epoch of greatness and the kingship of the state of Perak, the Abode of Grace. Written in *Hikayat Misa Melayu* on 25 *Jumadi'l-awal* 1326 in *Mukim Bandar, Haji Othman*.

Infinite silence.

CHAPTER 4:

Along divergent/convergent streams: translating rivers

Manuscript, Translation, and Transliteration

Poetry is a kind of speech which cannot be translated except at the cost of serious distortions; whereas the mythical value of the myth remains preserved, even through the worst translation.

- Claude Levi-Strauss

As a coherent text that is available at present in libraries and archives to be accessed by interested parties, scholars, aficionados of Malay literature, *Misa Melayu* is a cobbled text from disparate pieces that are found in different parts of the state of Perak and translated by a number of scholar-officers that were in charge of making dictionaries and lexicons that initiated not only linguistic but also cultural exchange in the Nusantara.

The copy that I accessed, read (not recited, unfortunately, as I definitely wished that this text could be read in front of an audience to recreate the context in which the text had been shared in the past). Winstedt, the one who is also in charge of translating the text and the one who compiled a dictionary – *An Unabridged Malay-English Dictionary* (1963), thus creating a complex situation with regards to the reading, understanding and translation of the text in the present. To further make matters more complicated, another dictionary that was thoroughly useful, especially for the fact that it has jawi transcriptions of the Malay words, comprehensively organized and alphabetized, is *A Malay – English Dictionary* (1901) by R.J. Wilkinson, Winstedt's mentor. Because these lexicons of the 'foreign' language – spoken, read in the distant past were constructed by 'foreigners' to the Malay language, who learned, wrote,

documented, listened to stories and tales, a more intricate situation surfaces; these dictionaries allow translations to take place yet it does not make any opportunities of escaping the catechistic trap of cyclical translation.

Upon realizing this matter, we encounter another issue in translation, the practical impulse to translate and compile lexicons and dictionaries itself, is something that was brought with the spread of modernity. In efforts of understanding the ‘foreign’ or the ‘other’, dictionaries were meticulously compiled and produced as the foundation of a linguistic and literal understanding of a world that transcends the boundaries of otherness.

At present, the primacy of any dictionary-based definition in translating a ‘foreign’ language would be accepted at face-value, without considering the fact that the underlying layer beneath the act of lexicalizing or dictionarizing a foreign language would be inseparable from a modernist, modernizing structure. A dictionary-based translation of any foreign language, then would not only take another form based on the definitions provided, they also would be inevitably yet impalpably affected by the underlying structure itself. Therefore, any translations produced by referring to dictionaries would be overglossed by an almost invisible, difficult-to-notice reflection of the foreign language as it has been understood by the dictionarist or lexicographer. And one could only imagine the complexity of deriving definitions of words in an initially encountered foreign language, from sources in the language itself, and then carrying them over into another language. In this sense, the seemingly simplistic action of making a dictionary would be an impossible task, and acknowledging the

paradox between this impossibility and the existing usefulness of dictionaries would mean recognizing intranslatability.

Any textual translation from one language to another could not help but be rerouted, rather than being a straight path between the target and source language, into a side road that is a by-product of this intranslatability. Inescapable by any translator, indeed, most do not even know that they are on it – that road, lying somewhere between the destination that is the target language and the source language that is the ‘foreign’ language, is translationese.

Being neither target or source language, translationese could be defined as a creole-like, non-native linguistic variant, its syntactic and semantic structures and lexicons mimic the target language, retaining meaning from the source language and transporting it through filters into the target language. Structurally possessing features of both target and source language, it occupies the liminal space between the two, set apart by the possibility of coining phrases, clauses and sentences that would be perceived as unnatural or ungrammatical in the target language, yet would be the most faithful translation of the original. As a linguistic variant prevalent in translated Malay works of literature, functioning by saying in the target language what is unsaid in the source language. Early Malay-English dictionaries and lexicons by non-native speakers who were scholars of early Malay literature such as Winstedt and Wilkinson, become the main tools for translating *hikayats*, and thus making them literary artifacts of Malay/English translationese.

An ontological linguistic catch-22 is raised by Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* - “Man acts as if he were the shaper and master of language, while it is language which remains mistress of man. When this relation of dominance is inverted, man succumbs to strange contrivances.” Without really understanding why, man helplessly follows a certain standard upheld in a particular time and space to manipulate language into a means of expression and to give a certain impression. The question of language becomes a question of being – how do we relate to ‘time’ and ‘space’ in/with language (or languaging)? Applying this question to the discussion about classical languages such as Shakespearean English or 18th century Malay is crucial to grasp at any (other) features, which may or may not be ‘time’ and ‘space’, that are salient in the cognizance processes at work then. In translating a classical work from a foreign language into English, lofty canonical register of Shakespearean or Miltonian standards would be assumed as most appropriate to be used. Prior to the age of postmodern interconnectivity of the digital age, the only reason for an association between Shakespearean English and 18th century Malay would be the academic background of the scholars who initially encountered the *hikayats*.

With *hikayats* such as *Misa Melayu*, a full understanding would be an elusive end for many scholars, especially those who were contemporaries of the text’s author or composers, some who made it their whole livelihood to collect, study, interpret, transliterate and translate these texts. Most versions of the *hikayats* are revised, rewritten, republished, which means that they are repackaged with new pieces of information throughout history, from the time they were written, until the present,

imbuing them with new possibilities of understanding and preventing any kind of fixed, static, unchanging comprehension. In any case, assuming a uniformity of comprehension, of meaning production and reception, across time and communities of speakers, listeners and readers for these texts, and of course, their authors, would be a literary crime of convenience, often committed by present-day readers, in efforts to reconstruct the past, the context in which the text was written. Questions abound: Who read these texts, other than the royal elites, colonial scholars, and academics? A canonically related question: How many of Shakespeare's contemporaries fully understood the text? This question assumes that the instance of 'fully understanding' is possible at all and exists in a hermeneutics vacuum. What does it mean to fully understand an oration in a play in Shakespeare's time? What does it mean to fully understand a body of printed text that was previously communicated orally? Is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original?²⁰⁸ Supposedly, there could be a "complete reader"²⁰⁹, a reader who knows the intentional quality of a text. This super reader would also know the "successive models of consciousness" attached to the word between the instance of the word's usage then and its usage now.

The existence of a complete/super reader of a *hikayat* is only useful to posit here as an unlikely standard, as the words, transported from an evanescent world of oral lore to a textual one, shed most perceptible marks telling us about any previous

²⁰⁸ A further question that could be asked here in the context of the *hikayat* is how is originality determined when almost every *hikayat* is a combination of not only elements from many stories from different cultures but also many different versions of itself, considered as a singular work only by the categorization of the reader? See also Chapter 1. (W. Benjamin 1),

²⁰⁹ In George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1975.

usage, oral or otherwise, making knowing the words' multiple dimensions of function and meaning impossible. This impossibility is further complicated by the traceable distinction between fact and fiction, and a cornucopia of mythical and fantastic signs attributed (in many analyses of *hikayat*) to sources ranging from mythical Sufi literature to Hindu cosmologies. I argue that this mode of distinction and attribution could only be conjectural, if a phenomenological aspect of language is to be considered, in the sense that it is not in any way inherent or natural to previous models of consciousness engaged with the oral and written language in the past. Thus, a holistic understanding of any *hikayat* could only be gained by way of a translation that is balanced between the semantic, literary and the structural, linguistic aspects.

Along similar lines, the 'completeness' of the version of *Misa Melayu* that is most available to be read by readers - be they 'super', which is very unlikely, or just plain literate - would be something that is arbitrary. The judgment that Naskhah²¹⁰ A is the best and most complete was made by Winstedt²¹¹ and indirectly by his mentor Wilkinson, scholars who were responsible for deciding the determinants of physical textual aesthetics – from the literary and historical framing of the text which could be seen in the 1919 edition, as well as the orthographic features of the texts such as textual arrangement, spelling, spacing, among others. These features could not escape revisional tendencies of the processes of translation, transliteration, editing and

²¹⁰ *naskhah* , original manuscript; prototype; draft of law, the original of anything ; first text or model.

²¹¹ In the introduction of the 1919 version, Winstedt states "The first of the MSS. I describe as 'A' or the 'Perak' MS.; the second as 'B' or the Blanja MS.' And the third as 'C'. B and C I am presenting to the Library of the School of Oriental Studies, London. A is the best version, but I have employed B and especially C to correct inaccuracies. In the *shaer* many readings (in square brackets) have been adopted from C, the readings from A being added in footnotes."

publication, within the increasingly fast-paced, industrially driven machineries of modern literary production. Same goes for W.E. Maxwell, who, by compiling the *jawi* version of one of the manuscripts of *Misa Melayu*, together with genealogies and folklores of Perak, created an invisible line, or pattern, a hidden network of coherence that connect these sources, imperceptible yet strongly decisive in the production of subsequent texts, in determining the shapes they would take and what other texts they would be read in tandem with, its very locality within the infinitely vast corpus of Malay literary and historical works.

My solution to this quagmire in reading and translation with regards to the 18th century Malay text is to read it beyond the ethnographic/ethnolinguistic or historical interpretations it has been given, and over- or under-interpret it based on the standards set by those interpretations. If, indeed, the oral text, as a genre, does not or rather, is not supposed to exist based on our present standards that inevitably are shaped by the canons, then the only way to read a text from the ‘oral past’ is to feed meaning into the silences of the text.

How are words used in different cultures and historical contexts? I extend this question to ask what constitutes a ‘historical context’ in the Malay world, when such a concept as ‘history’ never really surfaced from within, and retroactively imposed on some Malay texts found by British officials? Yet, it is prudent to look at the conventions apparent in a particular text to hazard a guess of the relations between the word and the 18th century world. However, we cannot assume that the distance, or rather the relations, that connect words and the world in one language is the same as

those in another, and an important point to be made here is that classical/pre/early modern Malay is a distinctive language than present-day Malay, much like how Shakespearean English is different from present-day colloquial American English, or British English (and even the unity of present-day language categories could be disputed ad infinitum). We can only assume that tendencies that shape our thoughts on how consciousness in organized do not have any natural grounds in the 'changing proceedings of consciousness in a civilization'.

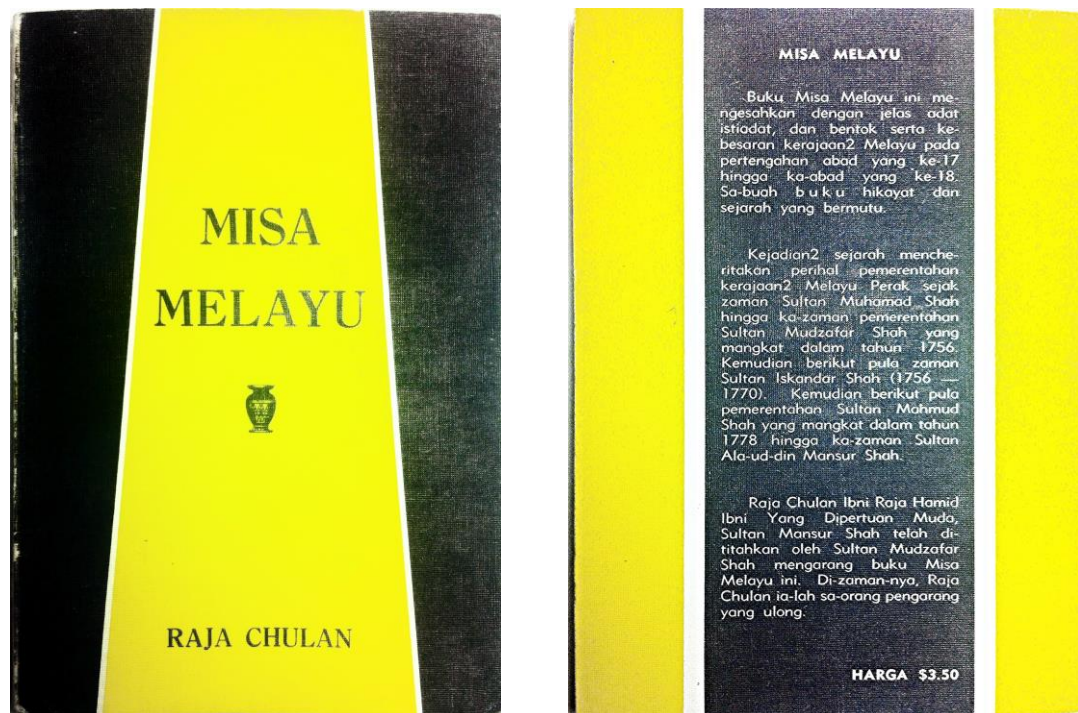


Fig. 16: Front and back cover of 1968 version of *Misa Melayu*, 5th print, 18x12 cm, Romanized script, contains a summary of the incorporated manuscript information (pp. 207-221), note explaining the death of Raja Chulan, Sultan Iskandar's palace on Pulau Indera Sakti, and alternate name for Brahman Indra. On pages 1-6 there is the introduction from the publisher, on pages 6-21 there is the summary (in modern Malay) of Perak's state history, conditions under the reigns of the two Sultans mentioned in the *hikayat* Sultan Mudzafar Syah (1728-1756), and Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain (1756-1770). Also included in the edition is a glossary of classical Malay vocabulary showing the meanings of archaic and rare Malay words, on pages 196-206.

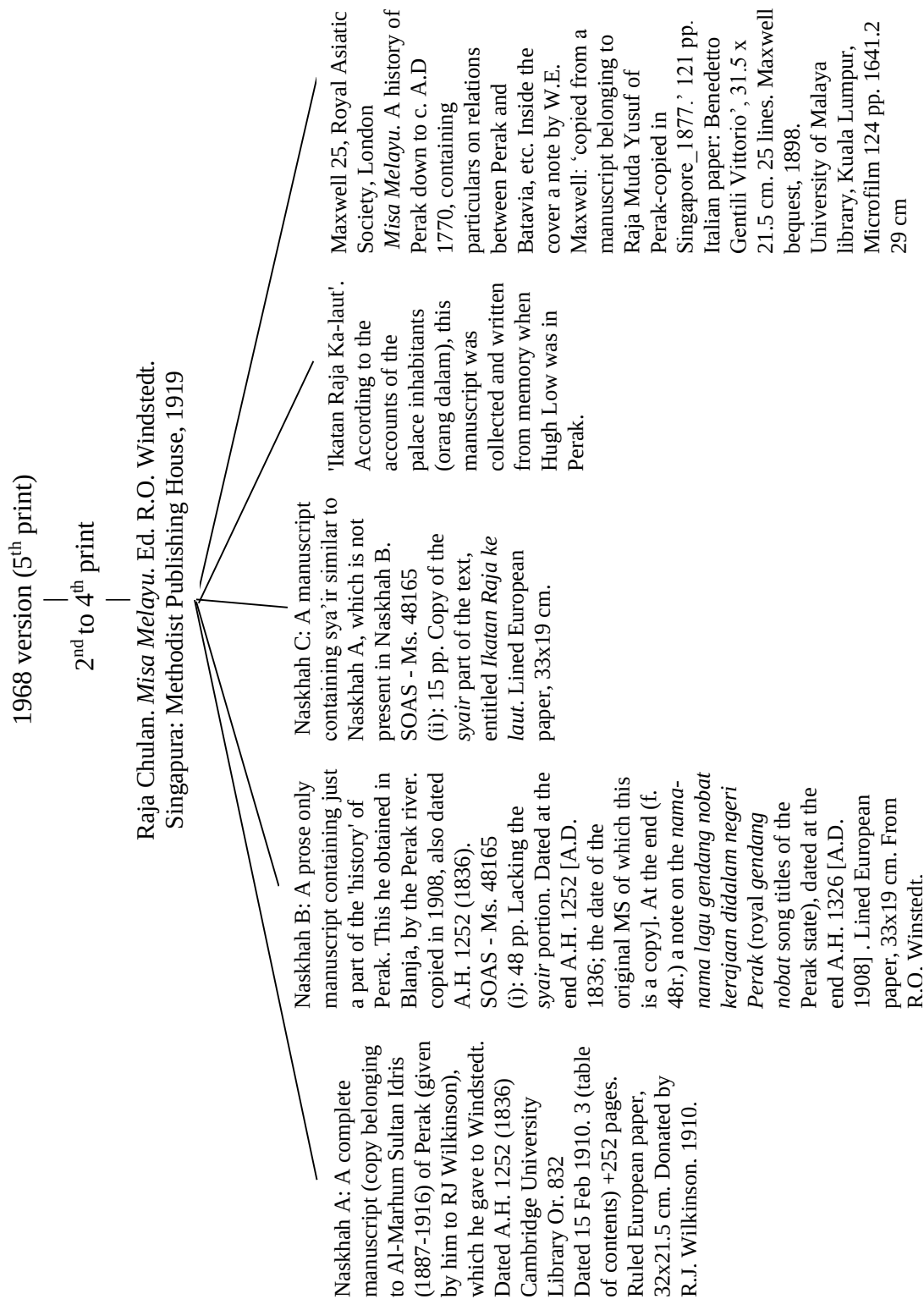


Fig. 17: Various manuscripts of *Misa Melayu* mentioned in the 1968 version.

List of related texts

1. D Or. 70 KITLV Hikajat Salasilah Perak, compiled by G.K. Niemann

Malay manuscript with the history of Perak. Combined in the manuscript notes of G. K. Niemann. On page 1, the date: 11-3- [18] 86. Donation of W. E. Maxwell. Described in "Catalogue of the Malay manuscripts of the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology of the Dutch East Indies by Ph S van Ronkel, 103 bl.; 34 x 21 cm, 1886.

2. Maxwell 24

A: ff. 1-22v. A treatise on fowls (for cock-fighting?), in 18 chapters

B: ff. 22v-26v. On casting bullets, shooting, etc. Dated at end A.H. 1299 [A.D. 1881], in Taiping (Perak). Maxwell mentioned as owner. Scribe Muhammad Hashim (cf. D below and Maxwell 15)

C: ff. 27r.-38r. A genealogical history of the kings of Perak, in 2 chapters. Microfilm in Leiden University FOr. A 97

D: ff. 38v.-48r. Hikayat Negeri Johor. Dated at end A.H. 1299 [A.D. 1881], in Permatang Larut (Perak). Maxwell mentioned as owner. Scribe Muhammad Hashim (cf. B above and Maxwell 15)

At front signed by W.E. Maxwell, Larut, 1882. Table of contents at beginning. 48 ff.

Lined Engl paper: 'Waterlow & Sons Limited London', 31.5 x 20 cm. 23 lines. Maxwell bequest, 1898. See Blagden 1899, p. 123; Voorhoeve, 1963, p. 71.

3. Maxwell 44

(1). Undang-Undang keturunan daripada Minangkabau, turun negeri Perak.

(2). Silsilah Raja Perak.

Maxwell 105. Silsilah Raja-raja Perak I

Maxwell 103. Silsilah Raja-raja Perak II

Raffles 32. Johor Adat

4. SOAS

Ms. 25027/2. A Book of Malay Charms belonging to a former Sultan Muda of Perak given to R.O. Windstedt by Raja Haji Yahya.

Ms. 40320. Letters from various Malay rulers and private individuals to Francis Light.

Ms. 40327. The Ninety-Nine Laws of Perak

Ms. 40333. List of Perak chiefs and Genealogy of Megat Family.

Ms. 46941. Notes on Folklore of Perak (compiled by W.E. Maxwell)

Ms. 46942. Undang-undang Perak.

Ms. 46943. Notes on Genealogies of Rajas and Chiefs of Perak (compiled by W.E. Maxwell).

5. Leiden

Cod. Or. 7304. Sejarah Raja-raja Melayu (Hikayat Siak)

Cod. Or. 1999. Adat of Malay Rulers

Cod. Or. 1724 (2). Aturan Setia Bugis dengan Melayu.

Cod. Or. 7645. Copy of Silsilah Raja-raja Perak I (RAS Maxwell 105)

6. Arkib Negara, Kuala Lumpur

Raja Kamaralzaman Papers

No. 13. Silsilah Orang Kaya Besar di Kuala Emas

No. 14. Silsilah Raja-raja Perak Berhubung dengan Sayid-Sayid Cenderiang.

No. 15. List of Court Titles

Transliteration and translation of the 1876 Malay map

1. *Ulunya* – upper waters (of a river), up-country, the interior of a country
2. *Temong*
3. (Upside down) *Orangkaya2 Panglima Bukit Gantang Seri Amar Dewaraja dari tanah Grik sampai ke paya laut.*

Noble Chief of Bukit Gantang from the land of Grik to the sea swamp.

Antara tanah <....> tanah Periuk Keling

Between the land of <....> the land of Periuk Keling

4. *Orangkaya menteri paduka tuan pasal hukum syarak didalam negeri*

Noble Minister of His Royal Highness regarding the *syariah* law in the state

5. *Orangkaya2 <.....> Maharajalela kapal orang d.k.p.t(n?)*

Noble ship people

6. *Orangkaya Temenggung paduka raja pasal <....> dan bunuh dan <....>*

Noble Admiral of His Royal Highness regarding killings and <....>

7. *Syahbandar <....> lima puluh bahara dan mata2 kapal <....> Seri Dewaraja tiga puluh bahara*

Harbour-master <....> fifty *bahara*²¹² and ship spies <....> Seri Dewaraja

thirty

satu kupang pada sebahara

one kupang for each bahara.

8. *Orangkaya2 Seri Andika Raja Syahbandar Muda dari Kuala Temong ke Ulu Perak. Sungai Alas*

²¹² Malay word which has spun out of currency referring to a weight, 1 *bahara* = 3 *pikul* = 400 lbs.)' (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 27)

Noble Seri Andika Raja Junior Harbour-master from Kuala Temong to Ulu Perak. Alas River.

(in Roman alphabets 'Sri Adika Raja', 'Sungai Alas', '5')

9. *Kapal Orang Enam Belas Seri Maharajalela*

Ship of the sixteen nobles of Seri Maharajalela

10. *Orangkaya² Panglima Kinta Seri Amar Bangsa Dewaraja dari Kuala Kinta sampai keulunya.*

Noble Chief of Kinta Seri Amar Bangsa Dewaraja from the estuary of Kinta to its source (ulu – upriver)

11. *Raja bendahara wakil sultan <....> pasal adat negeri sekalian. Kalau mati raja <....> raja di dalam hendak menjadikan raja itu raja bendaharalah menjadi raja didalam balai itu. Kinta.*

Royal Harbour-master representative of the sultan <....> regarding the traditions of the state. If the king dies <....> in the process of making that king, the Royal Harbour-master should be the king inside the hall. Kinta.

12. *Sungai Raya ('Sungai Raya')*

Raya River

13. *Orangkaya² Imam Paduka Tuan. ('Imam'). Kampar.*

14. *Orangkaya² <....>*

15. *Orangkaya <....> Maharaja Dewaraja pasal cukai² didalam negeri sekalian.*

Chenderiang

Nobleman <....> Maharaja Dewaraja regarding tax inside the entire state.

Chenderiang

16. *Palawan*

17. *Sungkai* ('Sungkai')

18. *Orangkaya*² *Laksamana Raja Mahkota* <....> *seratus bahara* <....> *dari kuala terus sampai ke laut*. ('Laksamana')²¹³

Noble Admiral Raja Mahkota <....> a hundred *bahara* <....> from the estuary to the sea.

19. *Sungai Perak* ('Sungai Perak')

20. *Nakhoda; Yang DiPertuan* (The *nakhoda*, the Yang di *Pertuan*)

²¹³ The *Laksamana* and *Orang Kaya-kaya Shahbandar Paduka Indra* are considered *anak kunci negeri dan segala orang di dalam negeri Perak di Tanjung Putus itu*. "the keys of the state and all the people within" (Raja Chulan 44)

Translation of the *syair* in *Misa Melayu*

Sultan Iskandar Bermain-main ke Laut

Hatta, maka tersebutlah perkataan
baginda Sultan Iskandar bermain-main
ke laut. Maka diperbuatkan pula
ikatan *syair*, demikianlah bunyinya.

Alhamdulillah puji yang nyata,
Dibahagikan Allah Tuhan semata,
Berkat Nabi penghulu kita,
Bertambah daulat duli mahkota,

Berkat sahabat yang keempat,
Menjunjung hadzrat raja bernobat,
Dengan sakalian semuanya rapat,
Seisi negeri penuh dan tumpat.

Dengan shafaat Said u'l-anbia,
Berdirilah daulat duli yang maha mulia,
Kebesaran limpah terlalu kaya,
Nurnya terang amat bercahaya.

Akan doa sekalian pendeta,
Berdirilah daulat duli mahkota,

Sultan Iskandar Journeying to the Sea

Hence, then the word was said of His
Highness Sultan Iskandar journeying to
the sea. And then a *syair* composition
was made, thus it sounds.

Praise be to Allah, clearest of praises,
Offered to Allah, the only God,
Blessings of the Prophet our leader,
May the sovereignty²¹⁴ of the crowned
*duli*²¹⁵ increase.

Blessings of the four companions,
Revering the presence of the installed
king,
With everyone all close,
The whole state full and crowded.

With intercession of the master of
prophets,
Upstands *daulat* of the most illustrious
duli,
Greatness overflowing, surpassingly
rich,
Its light shining very radiantly.

With prayers of all the wise men,
Upstands the *daulat* of the crowned *duli*,

²¹⁴ *daulat* or *dolat*: Majesty; the peculiar sanctity which invests the office of a king and carries with it responsibilities as well as privileges; the mysterious kingly power which is believed by Malays not to die with a king but to endure for the protection of a noble successor or for the punishment of an unworthy one. *Daulat tuwanku*: Your Majesty! – a phrase used in opening an address to a ruling sovereign; and also as an expression of homage at a coronation, the expression being used by the whole assembly immediately after the actual investiture. *Daulat tuwan-ku, bertambah-tambah kiranya daulat Shah 'Alam*: Hail, Your Majesty! May Your Majesty's glory go on increasing! *Di-timpa daulat*: struck down or afflicted by the mysterious power of departed Majesty; *Daulat* in this sense is confused by Malays with *taulah* or *tulah*, (Wilkinson, *Dictionary*, 304)

²¹⁵ *duli* (Sanskrit *dhūli*) Dust; the dust beneath the sole of a Prince's foot; (by extension of meaning) the Prince, the Sovereign, Your Majesty. The last meaning is due to the fact that the position of a subject is likened to the dust below a Prince's feet and that the subject must therefore address his words and lay his petitions before that dust. *Lebu duli pun terbangkit ka-udara*: the dust rose to the skies; *Hanchor luloh segala tulang-nya menjadi duli*: all his bones were crushed to powder; *Duli yang di-pertuwan*: Your Majesty. *Ka-bawah duli D. paduka, d. telapakan, d. baginda, and duli tuwanku*; The word *duli* is used with the meaning "feet in the expression *mata duli*, the ankle, occurring in the *Hikayat Indera Mengerna*; *Berduli*: to create a dust; (by extension) to move, used of the movements of the stars; In Kedah the word is pronounced *dēli*. (Wilkinson, *Dictionary*, 304)

Dikurniai Tuhan alam semata,
Sempurna limpah di atas takhta.

Bestowed by God of the Universe,
Perfect flow upon the throne.

Tuanku Sultan raja yang gana,
Mendapat hakikat amat sempurna,
Arif sangat bijak laksana,
Mengetahui ilmu Tuhan [rubhana].

Your Highness Sultan, the richest king,
Begetting the most perfect veracity,
Most learned, most clever and wise,
Knowing the divine knowledge of God.

Tuankulah raja sangat budiman,
Mengikut hadith, menurut firman,
Dikarangkan syair suatu zaman,
Berangkat bermain sempurna iman.

Your Highness the most benevolent king,
Following *hadith*²¹⁶, abiding by *firman*²¹⁷,
Composed a *syair* (for him)²¹⁸ of an epoch,
Departing, journeying in perfect faith.

Daulat tuanku setelah berdiri,
Adilnya limpah sehari-hari,
Raja Bendahara memangku negeri,
Ikutan segala hulubalang menteri.

Daulat of Your Highness²¹⁹ after it stands,
Its justice overflowing everyday,
Raja Bendahara ruling the state,
Followed by all chiefs and ministers.

Ialah konon wazir yang besar,
Memerintah negeri pekan dan pasar,
Bicara pun banyak halus dan kasar,
Seperti adat, tiada berkisar.

Supposedly he is the great vizier,
Ruling state, town and market,
Speech subtle and blunt,
Like *adat*, without alteration²²⁰

Adinda baginda Raja Muda,
Memerintah kerajaan paduka kekanda,

Younger brother His Majesty Raja Muda,
Ruling the government of his older brother,

²¹⁶ *hadith*: Ar., traditions about the prophet; *h. kuds*i commands from Gabriel to the Prophet, not recorded in the Kuran; *h. Nabui* sayings of the Prophet, reliable (*saheh*), recorded by one person only (*ahad*) unreliable (*dza'if*), preserved by an uninterrupted succession of authorities (*mutuwatir*), attributed directly to the Prophet (*marfu'*), plausible (*hasan*), preserved (*mauzu'*), concurring (*muttafik*) (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 119)

²¹⁷ Winstedt: *firman*: Ar., decree of God; *berfirman* to decree. (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 95)

²¹⁸ The very fact that this *syair* is written, according to the histories describing it, is by way of a commission by Sultan Muzaffar Syah III.

²¹⁹ There are no significant differences between the translation of *baginda* and *tuanku* into 'Your Highness' or 'His Highness', respectively. *baginda*: the fortunate = His or Her Majesty; a title for rulers and for Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law; *b. King*. H.M. the King. *tuanku*: Your Highness, His Highness- form of address to a Ruler and his consorts. (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 26). Worthy to be pointed out is the nuanced, ambiguous use of pronouns i.e. *patik*, *-ku*, *baginda* that has different linguistic consequences. When recited the reciter instead of the author becomes the referent for the word *patik*. Literal translation would be "My master/lord", "Lord-me", therefore the English translation, "Your Highness" would be an incongruous consequence of a certain kind orality in the *syair* in which there is no clear distinction between the first-person and second-person pronouns.

²²⁰ *kisar* also means change (of wind, of ship's course, of love) (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 183)

Hulubalang pegawai enom berida,
Sezarah tak mahu mengada-ngada.

Itulah raja yang bangsawan,
Akal sempurna lagi dermawan,
Dengan kekanda sangat setiawan,
Barang kemana mengiring berkawan.

Patik persembahkan satu sahifah,
Kebawah hadzrat duli khalifah,
Kebesaran daulat makin bertambah,
Khabarnya mashhor yang amat limpah.

Tuanku ampuni patik mengarang,
Kisah hadzrat zaman sekarang,
Takhta desa negeri yang terang,
Rakyat umpama laut dan karang.

Kudrat Tuhan Ilah Al-Kahar,
Bertambahlah daulat Sultan Iskandar,
Tatkala masa baginda beredar,
Membaiki negeri pekan dan bandar.

Patik persembahkan suatu rencana,
Kisah hadzrat yang amat gana,
Patik nan hamba tiada berguna,
Sekadar mengiringkan barang kemana.

Patik nan dzaif, hamba terbuang,
Hidup pun serupa dengan keluang,
Tambahan diam diawang-awang,
Sebarang maksud hingga terkarang.

Maka berani berdatang sembah,
Harapkan ampun juga bertambah,
Patik nan hamba dibawah limbah,
Hidup umpama sehelai sampah.

Sungguh pun patik duduk menyurat,

Chiefs, officials young and aged,
Not in the slightest bit²²¹ willing to
pretend.

That is the noble king,
Perfect mind, also generous,
With his elder brother most loyal,
Wherever he goes, accompanied by
friends.

I humbly present an epistle,
Into the presence of *duli* the caliph,
Daulat, greatness, ever increasing,
Its good tidings overflowing.

Your Highness, pardon me who
compose,
A story of the current times,
Bright countryside throne of the state,
Its people²²² like the sea and the reefs.

By the will of God the Dominant one,
May the *daulat* of Sultan Iskandar
increase,
During the time His Highness departs,
To improve state, town and city.

I humbly present an epistle,
A story of the richest presence,
I am merely a servant without use,
Merely accompanying wherever to.

I am poor, a servant in exile,
Living similar to a bat,
Furthermore, silent, in the clouds,
Of any meaning until its composed .

And then courageously doing obeisance,
Hoping for growing forgiveness,
I'm a mere servant under blessings,
Living like a mere piece of scrap.

Although I sit here writing,

²²¹ Lit. "Not an atom's worth"

²²² *ra'yat/rakyat* subjects of a country; conscript fleets; *Orang R.* aborigines of Malaya. Other possible translations – people, citizens. Collective noun, by itself it is assumed to be in plural form, maybe singularized by fronting it with a quantifier. (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 291)

Banyak tak faham tamsil ibarat,
Laksana perahu sauhnya sarat,
Melainkan ampun duli hadzrat.

Inilah kisah: satu masa,
Iradat Allah Tuhan yang esa,
Tuanku raja yang amat kuasa,
Berangkat bermain melihat termasa.

Daulat tuanku duli mahkota,
Limpah, karal di-atas takhta,
Patik persembahkan suatu cerita,
Di Tanjong Putus membangunkan kota.

Daulat tuanku telah berdiri,
Berkampung segala hulubalang menteri,
Sekalian rakyat seisi negeri,
Berhimpun datang sehari-hari.

Telah berhimpun sekaliannya rata,
Hulubalang pegawai habis semata,
Sekalian wazir dibawah takhta,
Mengadap hadzrat duli mahkota.

Adinda baginda Raja Muda,
Hadir mengadap paduka kekanda,
Raja Bendahara sertanya ada,
Dibawah takhta duli baginda.

Dengan kudrat Tuhan yang esa,
Mengharuskan hambanya suatu masa,
Tuanku raja yang amat kuasa,
Menjalani habis sekaliannya desa.

Daripada awalnya sudah terwa'ad,
Terlintas pula kedalam fuad;

Not understanding the similes and metaphors,
Like a boat with a heavy anchor,
Unless with the pardon of the royal highness.

This is the story: a certain time,
The will of Allah the one God,
Your Highness, king most powerful,
Departing, journeying, going sightseeing²²³.

Daulat of Your Highness, crowned duli
Abundant, rich upon the throne,
I humbly present a story,
In Tanjong Putus buiding a fort.

Daulat of Your Highness upstood,
Gathered all the chiefs, ministers,
All the people of the entire state,
Came and gathered everyday.

All of them gathered,
Chiefs and officials complete,
All the viziers beneath the throne,
Faced the presence of the crowned *duli*.

Younger brother His Highness Raja Muda,
Presence in the audience of his elder brother,
Raja Bendahara also in attendance,
Beneath the throne of His Royal Highness.

With the might of the Only God,
Compelling His servants with a time,
Your Highness, king most powerful,
Wandering throughout the entire countryside.

From the beginning, it has been promised,
Also crossed in the heart,

²²³ (Persian *tamasha*) A show; a spectacular festival ; the sights of any place ; any event worth seeing Also (Kedah) *temasa*. (Wilkinson, *Dictionary*, 180). A show. v. *tamasha* (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 349)

Kota negeri hendak diperbuat,
Supaya sentosa bertambah kuat.

City-state wanting to be built,
So tranquility will be strengthened.

Tuanku Sultan raja yang gana,
Semayam di atas peterana,
Datanglah gerak yang amat sempurna,
Seraya bertitah seri mengerna.

Your Highness Sultan, the rich king,
Residing upon the dais,
Coming with movements most perfect,
Thus spoke²²⁴ *seri mengerna*.

Meshuaratlah dengan adinda baginda,
Menteri pegawai tua dan muda,
Hulubalang rakyat semuanya ada,
Menantikan titah firman dan sabda.

Convening with his younger brother,
Ministers, officials old and young,
Chiefs and commoners all in attendance,
Waiting for mandate, *firman* and *sabda*.

Akan titah duli mahkota,
Kepada adinda sekalian dinyata,
“Masa ini zamannya kita,
Baiklah kiranya berbuat kota.

The royal word of the crowned *duli*,
To his younger siblings behooved,
“This time is our time,
It is best that we build a fort.

Sungguh ada sudah Holanda,
Kuranglah yakin didalamnya dada,
Selagi umur belum berida,
Hendaklah kita berbuat tanda.

It is true that the Dutch is present,
With less confidence in the chest,
As long as (we) haven’t aged,
It is incumbent upon us to make signs.

Muafakatlak kita tiga bersaudara,
Segala wazir menurut bicara,
Seisi negeri didalam pelihara,
Sedikit pun jangan diberi cedera.

In agreement us three brothers,
All the viziers obeying deliberations,
The entire state within protection,
Not even the least bit injury given.

Telah mendengar titah demikian,
Menjunjung kadam dari sekalian,
“Patik nan hamba awal dan kemudian,
Sebarang titah sahaja dilayan.”

After listening to such command,
In servitude from all (the royals),
“I am a mere servant beginning and end,
Every command, I will attend”

Berdatang sembah sekaliannya rata,
Kebawah hadzrat duli mahkota,
“Tuanku raja sempurna takhta,
Dimanalah dititah membuat kota?”

Doing obeisance fairly all around,
Under the presence of the crowned *duli*,
“O Your Highness perfectly throned,
Where must the fort be built?”

Baginda raja yang johari,
Bertitah kepada wazir bestari,
“Kerahlak rakyat seisi negeri,
Kita pun hendak [berangkat] sendiri.”

His Majesty, the clever king,
Commanded to the wise vizier,
“Mobilize all the people of the entire
state,

²²⁴ *titah*, (a) speech, of a ruler (= *kata*), (b) royal command, *t. di-junjong* your highness’ mandate is undertaken (lit., carried on the head); *t. lalu, sembah berlaku* the royal word has gone forth that your dutiful request is granted ; *bertitah* to speak (of a ruler), to command ; *menitahkan (orang)* issue a royal command to (people to do) , commission. (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 371)

Adinda baginda Raja Muda,
Dengan Raja Bendahara bersama ada,
Demi mendengar firman dan sabda,
Mengerjakan titah paduka kekanda.

Ada antara beberapa hari,
Hadir sekalian hulubalang menteri,
Berhimpun rakyat seisi negeri,
Sentiasa datang tiada terperi.

Telah berkampung segala hulubalang,
Rakyat pun tiada terbilang,
Kenaikan turun dari atas galang,
Dandannya elok bukan kepalang.

Perahu bergelar Kerketa Indera,
Tukangnya digelar Sang Setiara,
Usul dan sikap tiada bertara,
Laksana perbuatan dewa udara.

Ukir dan kalok berastakona,
Bertulis awan aneka warna,
Kenaikan Sultan raja yang gana,
Dipandang hairan terlalu bahana

Papan bercat perada terbang,
Bertatah permata emas Palembang,
Bertulis awan bunga berembang,
Rupanya indah seperti mambang.

Perahu handalan berkemala,
Ketika malam terang bernyala,
Kenaikan Sultan yang terala,
Dipandang tidak lagi berchela.

Turunlah dengan amat sempurna,

We also want (to depart) ourselves.”
His Majesty’s younger brother Raja
Muda,
With Raja Bendahara also present,
To listen to *firman* and *sabda*,
Carrying out his elder brother’s
mandate.

A few days afterwards,
All the chiefs and ministers in
attendance,
Gathered all the people from the entire
state,
Perpetually coming, beyond description.

Gathered all the chiefs in villages,
People cannot be counted,
Vessel descending from the rollers,
Its design fine beyond compare.

The ship named Kerketa Indera,
Its craftsman named Sang Setiara,
Origin²²⁵ and bearing matchless,
Like a creation of gods of the sky.

Carvings and curves in octagons,
Painted with clouds of various colors,
The rich king, Sultan’s vessel
Loudly admired in wonder.

Painted planks, flying tinsel,
Laced with golden gems from
Palembang,
Etched with clouds of framed flowers,
Its appearance beautiful, spirit-like.

Steadfast ship, magically lit up,
At night shining bright,
The exalted Sultan’s vessel,
Flawless to be looked at.

(It) descended most perfectly,

²²⁵ *usul*: 1. origin, *u. asal* pedigree; ‘*ilmu u.* knowledge of the tenets of Islam. 2. Manners, *u. sifat* look and behaviour. 3. thorough enquiry, *u. sifat* look and behaviour. 3. Thorough enquiry, *u. pereksa* thorough investigation ; *meng-usuli* investigate. 4. J., proposal at a conference, request; *pengusul* proposer. (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 385)

Berbagai jenis, sekalian warna,
Segala alat sudah terkena,
Sikap laksana unggas wilmana.

Berdirilah tunggul ular-ular,
Seperti naga tujuh bercula,
Segala yang pandang tercengang pula,
Hairan menggerak-gerakkan kepala.

Ada sebuah baharu direka,
Dandannya indah sikap belaka,
Ukiran kalok bertulis belaka,
Sikap seperti seekor naga.

Seekor mawas tegak dihaluan,
Seperti singa mencari lawan,
Dikurniakan duli Yang di-Pertuan,
Kenaikan Raja Putera bangsawan.

Perbuatan elok sangat bercahaya,
Tukangnya digelar Sang Setir,
Segala alat sudah sedia,
Sekalian orang muda belia.

Perahu bergelar Raksasa Indera,
Sikap seperti singa udara,
Awan berarak mega antara,
Usulnya tidak lagi bertara.

Didalamnya banyak alat senjata,
Meriam rentaka lengkap senjata,
Senapang pemuras jangan dikata,
Sekaliannya bertatah podi permata.

Tiadalah habis kisah dibilang,
Perkataan banyak lagi berulang,
Setelah turun dari atas galang,
Umpama ayam sudah terbulang.

Telah turun kenaikan Sultan,
Sikap seperti harimau jantan,
Terlalu indah rupa perbuatan,
Dikarangkan syair ikat-ikatan.

Telah terambang perahu kenaikan,
Sekalian alat pula dikenakan,

Various kinds, all the colors,
All the tools installed,
Its bearing like a bird of paradise.

Stood up the pennant pole,
Like a seven-horned dragon,
All witnessing stood agape,
Shaking their heads in astonishment.

A new one is designed,
Its decoration, bearing entirely fine,
Carvings, curves entirely engraved,
Its manner like a dragon.

An *orang utan* straight on track,
Like a lion looking for opponent,
Bestowed by *duli* His Lordship,
Vessel of the noble Raja Putera.

A fine construction ever so brilliant,
Its maker named Sang Setir,
All tools are ready,
(For) all the youths.

Ship named Raksasa Indera,
Its bearing like a sky lion,
With clouds floating around,
Its semblance ever unchallenged.

Within it many weapons kept,
Iron cannons fully armed,
Not to mention rifles and blunderbusses,
All studded with gems and jewels.

The story is not told to the end,
Words many and repeated,
After descending from the rollers,
Resembling a cock (with) spurs fastened.

Descended the Sultan's vessel,
Its bearing like a tiger,
Too fine in form and deed,
Inspiring a *syair* composition.

Edged upon the vessel, ship,
All the instruments are installed,

Tunggul panji-panji didirikan,
Eloknya tiada lagi terperikan.

Setelah beratur semuanya rata,
Lengkap dengan alat senjata,
Hebatnya jangan lagi dikata,
Sedikit pun tiada cedera dimata.

Antara selang berapa hari,
Hadirlah segala hulubalang menteri,
Berhimpunlah rakyat seisi negeri,
Berbagai ragam tiada terperi.

Setelah berkampung segala mereka,
Menantikan saat dengan ketika,
Berbunyilah meriam dengan rentaka,
Rakyat tentera datang belaka.

Kenaikan Sultan raja berdaulat,
Sudah terkena sekaliannya alat,
Berbagai jenis kimkha sakhlata,
Dipandang tidak lagi-nya ralat.

Terdirilah bendera tunggul larangan,
Alat raja kekuning-kuningan,
Senjata lengkap berbilang-bilangan,
Meriam pun banyak berguling-gulingan.

Meriam bertuah dihaluan,
Tidakkan dapat ditentang lawan,
Berkat daulat Yang di-Pertuan,
Barang bertemu menjadi kawan.

Anak Perak meriam bertuah,
Siapa mendengar hilang arwah,
Peluru mencari keatas kebawah,
Meski pun masuk kedalam kawah.

Datanglah gerak didalam kalbu,
Berangkatlah konon pada hari Rabu,
Rakyat mengiring ratus dan ribu,
Tinggallah adek kakak dan ibu.

Setelah alat sudah terkena,

The pennant post is erected,
Its excellence beyond description.

After everything's all lined up evenly,
Complete with weapons,
Its greatness not to be mentioned,
Not even a little sore to the eye.

Between a few days intervening,
All chiefs, ministers attended,
Gathered the people of the entire state,
With various kinds beyond description.

After all of them collect together,
Waiting for the fortunate moment,
Sounded the cannons and
blunderbusses,
Citizens, soldiers coming altogether.

Vessel of the Sultan, the divine ruler,
Already fastened all the equipment,
Various types of golden brocades,
Perfect to be looked at.

Erected the sacred flagpost,
The king's yellowish regalia,
Numerous complete weaponry,
Many cannons rolled out.

Magical cannon upon the bow,
Never could be fought by opponents,
Blessed by the *daulat* of His Lordship.
Whoever they met became friends.

Anak Perak the lucky cannon,
Whoever hears it will faint,
Cannonballs searching upwards
downwards,
Even if going into the cauldron.

Came a movement into the heart,
Supposedly departing on Wednesday,
Subjects following, hundreds and
thousands
Leaving brother, sister and mother.

After the instruments are installed,

Pawai beratur berbagai warna,
Sultan berangkat dari istana,
Ditentang hairan terlalu bahana.

Terkembanglah payung keempatnya,
Masing-masing pada tempatnya,
Segala senjata dengan alat-nya,
Terlalu indah dengan hebatnya.

Ditiuplah nafiri berjalan dahulu,
Serta serunai, gendang dipalu,
Gong dipukul bertalu-talu;
Mana yang tinggal berhati pilu.

Sekalian manera mengiringkan,
Berduli lantak ka-kenaikan,
Tunggul pun sudah didirikan,
Panji-panji alam dikenakan.

Sultan yang terjali diatas beranda,
Dibawah payung tulis perada,
Bentara andam berida,
Memegang jawatan tua dan muda.

Tidaklah habis kisah disurat,
Perintah adat duli hadzrat,
Kuranglah faham tamsil ibarat,
Takut menjadi karangan larat.

Anakanda baginda Raja Daha,
Putera saudara baginda yang tua,
Dengan kudrat Tuhan Ilaha,
Beroleh rahmat serta anugerah.

Umur pun sedang remaja putera,
Usul dan sikap sedang bicara,
Dikasihi oleh seri betara,
Sedia pun anak menjadi putera.

Ia pun anak raja bangsawan,
Sedap manis barang kelakuan,
Dititahkan oleh duli Yang di-Pertuan,
Diatas kenaikan bertulis awan.

Insignia lined, various colors,
The sultan departs from the palace,
Opposed by bewilderment, all too
visible.

All the four umbrellas opened,
Each one in its place,
All the weapons and equipments,
Surpassingly fine and magnificent.

Trumpet blown, marching in front,
With the clarionet, and drums beating,
The gong beaten continuously,
Those left behind sore-hearted.

All the ones²²⁶ following,
Dusted their soles, then boarded,
Mast has been erected,
Pennants and banners fastened.

The praised Sultan on the deck,
Underneath the silver-laced umbrella,
Aged, experienced court's heralds,
Holding positions, old and young.

Unfinished the story written,
Customary orders of the present *duli*,
Not understanding similes and
metaphors,
For fear of dragging the composition.

His Royal Highness's son Raja Daha,
Prince of his eldest relative,
With the might of God,
Begetting mercy and favor.

While in the midst of his princely youth,
Looks and manners well befitting,
Loved by the illustrious king,
Ready for (his) son to become a prince.

He is the son of the noble king,
Sweet, charming in his manners,
Commanded by *duli* His Lordship,
On the vessel, clouds engraved.

²²⁶ Also *manira* – of Javanese origin 'I, we' in classical Malay

Perahu bergelar Raksasa Indera,
Usul dan sikap tiada bertara,
Sikap seperti singa angkara,
Sedikit tidak gentarkan mara.

Tunggul panji-panji gemerlapan,
Dayungnya bagai jari lipan,
Segala orangnya terlalu tampan,
Seperti harimau lepas tangkapan.

Meriam tembaga dua sehaluan,
Didayungkan muda berkawan-kawan,
Berangkatlah Duli Yang diPertuan,
Seperti mega diarak awan.

Setelah bongkar kenaikan Sultan,
Adinda baginda mengiringkan,
Indahnya tidak terperikan,
Laksana bunga dihamburkan.

Kenaikan baginda Raja Muda,
Dipandang sikap seperti garuda,
Dandannya elok usulnya shahada,
Senjata banyak belanja pun ada.

Perahu bergelar Kota Beridar,
Indahnya lagi jangan disedar,
Dipandang tingkah dengan halidar,
Tidak boleh dapat diudar.

Baginda berangkat, mengiring kemudian,
Kenaikan lagi tengah dilayan,
Dikerjakan oleh orang sekalian,
Perahu bekas segala kedayan.

Raja pun sangat hemat bicara,
Barang perbuatan dengan kira-kira,
Segala senjata pun sudah terpelihara,
Banyak dibawa segala perkara.

Perahu didandan sangat bersahaja,
Lengkap dengan sekalian belanja,
Laksana besi sudah berbaja,
Sangatlah tajam barang kerja.

Ship called Raksasa Indera,
Origin and manners matchless,
Its manner like a brutal lion,
Not even the least bit fearful of danger.

With pennant post glittering,
Its oars like centipede's tentacles,
All its crew members too handsome,
Like a tiger released from captivity.

Two brass cannons in the same
direction,
Rowed by throngs of youths,
Departed *duli* His Lordship,
Like clouds marching in the sky.

After the anchor of Sultan's vessel is
lifted,
His younger brother accompanying,
Its magnificence beyond compare,
Like flowers being strewn.

Vessel of His Highness Raja Muda,
Upon sight, manner like a *garuda*,
Its ornamentation fine, its pedigree fine,
Weapons many, supplies plentiful.

Ship named Kota Beridar,
Its magnificence not to be realized,
Upon sight, played up.
Unable to be reeled.

His Highness departs, then
accompanied,
His vessel still being prepared,
Worked on by all the people,
Ships of all the commoners.

The king very careful in speech,
Calculating in every single act,
All the weapons are already secure,
Many items being brought.

Ship decorated most deliberately,
Complete with all the supplies,
Like steel, tempered,
Extremely sharp for all tasks.

Berangkatlah baginda Raja Muda,
Perawisnya lengkap semuanya ada,
Mengiringkan duli paduka kekanda,
Diiringkan segala adinda anakanda.

Kenaikan anakanda raja dahulu,
Dandannya indah bisai terlalu,
Gong dan gendang gegak dipalu,
Bunyinya gemuruh bertalu-talu.

Ini pun seorang anak raja,
Lakunya manis sedang remaja,
Jikalau barang sesuatu kerja,
Enggan sekali menghilangkan durja.

Menjadi putera Raja Muda,
Sekalian alat semuanya ada,
Orangnya banyak enum berida,
Setengah Minangkabau Rawa pun ada.

Raja Bendahara wazir yang tentu,
Ia pun sama putera ratu,
Kenaikan bergelar Si Ketam Batu,
Alat senjata banyak di situ.

Dengan titah duli mahkota,
Menjadi wazir dibawah takhta,
Seisi negeri semuanya rata,
Sekalian habis menurut kata.

Mengiringkan raja yang amat kuasa,
Menjalani negeri menjajah desa,
Dikurnia Allah Tuhan yang esa,
Langkah pun baik beroleh paksa.

Segala senjata hadir belaka,
Lengkap dengan meriam rentaka,
Lela yang besar ada di muka,
Seperti chula seekor naga.

Departed His Highness Raja Muda,
Materials complete, all present,
Accompanying *duli* his elder brother,
Accompanied by all his younger kins.

Vessel of son of the king ahead,
Its decoration magnificent, too smart,
Gong and drums loudly beaten,
Their sound thunderous, continuous.

This is the son of the king,
His demeanor sweet, in his youth,
If there is ever a task,
So reluctant in losing face.

Becoming a prince, Raja Muda,
All tools are present,
Plenty of experienced men following,
Half of them Minangkabau, some Rawa.

Raja Bendahara the fair vizier,
He is the together with the Queen's
prince,
His vessel named Si Ketam Batu²²⁷,
Equipments and weapons, many are
there.

With the order of the crowned *duli*,
Becoming vizier under the throne,
The entire state, all even,
All completely following orders.

Accompanying the all powerful king,
Voyaging the state, touring hamlets,
Bestowed by Allah the only God,
Every step good, begetting favor²²⁸.

All weapons are present,
Complete with iron cannons,
An enormous swivel gun up front,
Like the horn of a dragon.

²²⁷ Lit. "stone crab"

²²⁸ *paksa belayar* :favorable time to start a voyage. *angin paksa*: a favourable wind (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 253)

Anakanda baginda Raja Rahman,
Mengiringkan baginda di dalam ma'aluman,
Umur pun belum sempurna iman,
Sikapnya boleh menjadi minuman.

His Highness's son Raja Rahman,
Accompanying him in the know,
Age has not reached perfect faith,
His demeanor could be a potion to drink.

Adinda baginda Raja di-hilir,
Sebuah kenaikan sudah terhadir,
Sungguh pun kemudian mengiring hilir,
Segala senjata sudah terkilir.

His Highness younger brother Raja di-Hilir,
A vessel is already made for,
Although later accompanying downstream,
All the weapons are already sharpened.

Ia pun saudara kepada baginda,
Usulnya sedang gahari muda,
Jikalau datang musuh baginda,
Remaklah hilang jiwa berida.

He is a brother to His Highness,
His lineage still in equal rank,
If ever comes his enemy,
It is better to lose the old soul!

Sungguh pun anak raja diluar,
Sudah beroleh rahmat dan tawar,
Khial merasai ganja penawar,
Temannya Bugis mabuk melawar.

Although he is outside,
Already begetting cure and mercy,
Hallucinating, tasting the *ganja* antidote,
His Bugis friend drunk, playing the dandy.

Panglima Keling Muhammad Nina,
Janggut dan misai sangat mengerna,
Jikalau datang suatu bencana,
Remaklah badan mati disana.

Panglima Keling Muhammad Nina,
Beard and mustache very befitting,
If ever comes a disaster,
It is better to die over there!

Rahim seorang anak raja,
Umur pun belum lagi remaja,
Sungguh pun mengiringkan bermain sahaja,
Tajam laksana besi berbaja.

Rahim a king's son,
Age has not reached youth,
Although accompanying only leisurely,
Sharp like tempered steel.

Akan pengetahuan bersama-sama,
Orang Kaya Paduka Seri Rama,
Sungguh pun umur belumlah lama,
Boleh diharap jadi panglima.

To the collective knowledge,
Orang Kaya Paduka Seri Rama,
Although his age is not yet old,
Can be trusted to be a chief

Perahunya elok amatlah tampan,
Tempat membawa bekal santapan,
Orangnya banyak lagi cekapan,
Hadir dengan segala kelengkapan.

His ship magnificent, most handsome,
A place to carry meal provisions,
Its crew many and efficient,
Present with all equipments.

Ada seorang panchar Melayu,
Umpamanya dagangan sudah terpayu,

There is a Malay relative,
Much like priced goods,

Sungguh pun sekodi berlainan kayu,
Laksana kuntum bunga yang layu.

Even though a score of different woods,
Like a wilting flower bud.

Umur pun hamper akan beridar,
Emas pun kurang, belanja tiada,
Sebuah perahu mengiringkan baginda,
Bersama dengan Maharaja Muda.

Age is close to youth,
Lack of gold, no petty cash,
A ship accompanying him,
Together with Maharaja Muda.

Dengan titah duli mahkota,
Maharaja Indera bersama sekata,
Perahunya indah dipandang mata,
Sedang ugahari alat senjata.

With the mandate of the crowned *duli*,
Maharaja Indera together in agreement,
His ship magnificent to behold,
Weapons equal in rank on both sides.

Mengiringkan Duli Yang di-Pertuan,
Sungguh pun suka, berhati rawan,
Sangatlah tewas tidak berkawan,
Bicara pun tidak berketahuan.

Accompanying *Duli* His Lordship,
Even though delighted, emotionally
affected,
Extremely at loss without friends,
Deliberation made without knowledge.

Kepada niat sehari-hari,
Nama yang baik hendak dicari,
Jika diampun limpah diberi,
Mohonkan tempat desa yang bahari.

In everyday intentions,
A good name should be searched,
If forgiven, abundance given,
Pray let it be a beautiful hamlet.

Jikalau tiada dikurniakan,
Kemanatah lagi hendak dikatakan,
Sebarang titah diredzakan,
Rahmat dan azab disyukurkan.

If it is not bestowed,
However else should it be said,
Any order is permitted,
Blessing and torture are thanked for.

Ada seorang anak saudara,
Umurnya baharu remaja putera,
Mengiringkan baginda didalam pelihara,
Usulnya baik sedang antara.

There is a nephew,
His age merely in its princely
adolescence,
Escorting His Highness within
protection,
His pedigree good, perfectly just.

Maharaja Indera muda utama,
Dengan Melayu ia bersama,
Mengiringkan raja duli ulama,
Patut sekali menjadi panglima.

Maharaja Indera an excellent youth,
With the Malays he is together,
Escorting the king, *duli* all-knowing,
Most suitable to be a warrior.

Raja di-Baroh sebuah kakap,
Segala pegawai semuanya lengkap,
Dipandang kepada usul dan sikap,
Seperti laksana ikan siakap.

A ship Raja di-Baroh,
All officials are complete,
Looking at manner and pedigree,
Much like a sea-perch.

Badan pun hampir akan berida,

Body almost getting aged,

Perkara larang sudah tiada,
Dikasih oleh tuanku Raja Muda,
Tiada bercerai dengan baginda.

Ia pun dua bersaudara,
Dengan Raja Alang banjar setara,
Kakapnya camar duli Betara,
Seperti laku unggas udara.

Raja Sharif raja yang salleh,
Bangsa Hashim sedia terpilih,
Berkat shafaat Tuhan yang malik,
Pangkat yang mulia sudah terpilih.

Sharif Abubakar saudara yang tua,
Sebuah kakap ia berdua,
Selagi ada hayat dan jiwa,
Barang kerja boleh disua.

Hashim Jemali seorang saudara,
Kakapnya kecil sama setara,
Mengiringkan duli seri betara,
Memohonkan doa dengan sejahtera.

Sampailah ia orang yang mulia.,
Boleh diharap serta percaya,
Dengan kudrat Tuhan yang kaya,
Ia pun boleh pangkat bahagia.

Raja Kenayan ia pun ada,
Saudara sama seayah dan bonda,
Di dalam kenaikan putera baginda,
Ialah konon menjadi nakhoda.

Amir dan Koraish berkawan-kawan,
Mengiringkan Duli Yang di-Pertuan,
Mengikut raja putera bangsawan,
Kerana ia orang setiawan.

Setelah habis kisahnya nyata,
Tersebut segala wazir yang pota,
Hulubalang pegawai semuanya rata,
Dengan penjabab dibilang semata.

Orang Kaya Besar wazir yang lama,

Prohibited affairs already gone,
Loved by His Highness Raja Muda,
Not separating from him.

So are the two brothers,
With Raja Alang, equal in rank,
His ship the tern of *duli* Betara,
Like the manner of a bird of paradise.

Raja Sharif the pious king,
From the chosen Hashimite clan,
Blessings, intercession of God
Almighty,
The noble rank already chosen.

Sharif Abubakar the elderly kin,
A ship, two's company,
As long as there is life and soul,
Any task could be faced.

Hashim Jemali a relative,
His ship small, equal in rank,
Escorting the charmed, sacred *duli*,
Praying with tranquility.

So the noble person arrives,
Trustworthy and dependable,
With the might of God most rich,
He can also beget happiness.

Raja Kenayan also present,
Same kin, same father and mother,
In the vessel of His Highness's prince,
Supposedly he is the captain.

Amir and Koraish become friends,
Escorting *duli* His Lordship,
Following kings, princes and royals,
Because they are loyal followers.

After his story is clearly finished,
It is said by all the poor viziers,
Chiefs and officials all even,
With their ships²²⁹ merely counted.

Orang Kaya Wazir an old vizier,

²²⁹ *penjabab*: a Bugis warship (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 268)

Daripada Marhum sudah bernama,
Akal pun banyak sedang utama,
Dikasihi raja yang ulama.

Ialah konon wazir Bendahari,
Masuk memerintah di dalam negeri,
Rakyatnya banyak orang Malabari,
Perahu pun elok sedang gahari.

Seekor gambar dipucuk tiang,
Seperti laku tulis wayang,
Ditiup angin malam dan siang,
Rupanya bagai akan melayang.

Orang Kaya Temenggong wazir terula,
Perahunya tidak boleh dicela,
Sikap seperti naga gentala,
Perbuatan tukang dari Benggala.

Dandannya elok bagai dipeta,
Lengkap dengan alat senjata,
Segala juak-juaknya sama sekata,
Enggan beroleh nama yang leta.

Kapitnya Pakeh Si-Raja Dewa,
Ia pun sedang gahari tua,
Barang kerja boleh dibawa,
Sezarah tak mahu nama kecewa.

Menjadi Hakim duli baginda,
Tubuhnya besar seperti garuda,
Jikalau musuh datang menggoda,
Nama yang lari haram tiada.

Dato' Menteri wazir yang terutama,
Bangsanya Hashim lagi ulama,
Maksudnya hendak mengiring sama,
Ditinggalkan oleh raja kesoma.

Seri Dewa Maharaja kepala bentara,
Kebawah duli sangat mesra,
Dititahkan oleh duli betara,

Already betitled by the former sultan,
Wittiful, most eminently,
Loved by the wise king.

He is supposedly the treasurer-vizier,
Entering, ruling in the state,
Many of his people from Malabar,
The boat magnificent, equal in rank.

A picture at the tip of the mast,
Like acts from a shadowplay,
Blown by wind night and day,
It looks like it's going to fly.

Orang Kaya Temenggong revered
vizier,
His boat not to be insulted,
Manner like a wheeled dragon,
Made by a craftsman from Benggala.

Its decoration magnificent, as if mapped
out,
Complete with weapons, equipments,
All its sailors together in chorus,
Unwilling to beget a wretched name.

His assistant Pakeh Si-Raja Dewa,
He is also old, and of an experienced
age,
Whatever task could be performed,
Not wanting the name to be sullied.

Becoming a judge of His Royal
Highness,
His body big like a *garuda*,
If an enemy comes to challenge,
A running name nowhere to be found.

Dato' Menteri the most eminent vizier,
Of the Hashimite clan, also
knowledgeable,
It is his intention to escort together,
Left behind by the fair king.

Seri Dewa Maharaja the head of heralds,
Beneath *duli* ever so friendly,
Commanded by the sacred *duli*,

Ia pun membawa gendang Negara.

He brings the drum of the state.

Ada seorang dagang yang nyata,
Didalam negeri sudahlah pota,
Dikurniakan duli tuan kita,
Bergelar Raja Lela Mahkota.

There is an apparent mendicant,
In a state, already broke,
Bestowed by *duli* our lord,
Entitled Raja Lela Mahkota.

Ialah kapit Dewa Maharaja,
Boleh diharap pada barang kerja,
Perahunya tidak jendela didurja,
Tempat membawa kealatan raja.

He is the assistant of Dewa Maharaja,
Could be relied on for whatever task,
His boat not shabby in countenance,
The vessel that carries the king's
regalia.

Habislah wazir sekalian dibilang,
Tersebutlah pula segala hulubalang,
Beberapa puluh lanchang dan pilang,
Angkatan besar bukan kepalang.

All the viziers are told,
Then it is said about the all the chiefs,
Several tens of ships and sailboats²³⁰,
Huge fleet, incomparable.

Seorang hulubalang Rakna Mahkota,
Memegang rakyat rantau yang pota,
Dikurniai oleh duli mahkota,
Sebuah penjajab baharu dipeta.

One chief Rakna Mahkota,
In charge the poor people of the coast,
Bestowed by the crowned *duli*,
A new ship is on the map.

Kapitnya Maharaja Indera Dewa,
Sama sepakat barang bicara,
Jikalau dititahkan duli betara,
Barang kerja dengannya segera.

His assistant Maharaja Indera Dewa,
Together in concert in any speech,
If ordered by the sacred *duli*,
Any task completed with haste.

Seorang bentara Lela Pekerma,
Dengan Raja Bijaya saudara yang lima,
Mengiringkan raja yang terutama,
Sebuah balok ia bersama.

A herald Lela Pekerma,
With Raja Bijaya the fifth brother,
Accompanying the most eminent king,
Together in a small boat.

Seri Indera Muda dengan Jana Putera,
Ia pun sama satu bicara,
Sharif Mustafa bangsa terpelihara,
Diperahunya itu juga setara.

Seri Indera Muda with Jana Putera,
He is of one and the same deliberation,
Sharif Mustafa of a cherished race,
In his boat, of equal rank.

Orang Kaya Bongsu sedia berbangsa,
Dengan Maharaja Derma Wangsa,
Pergi mencari senantiasia,
Niatnya hendak beroleh pakas.

Orang Kaya Bongsu of good family,
With Maharaja Derma Wangsa,
Always going searching,
Intending to get kingfishers²³¹.

²³⁰ *Pilang*: large canoe like boat, about 42 ft. long, 5 ft. wide.

²³¹ *P.*, *burong p.* Kingfishers; Brown-winged Stork-Billed K., *Pelargopsis amauroptera*; Stork-billed, *P. capensis malaccensis*; Ruddy, *Halcyon c. coromanda*; White breasted, *H. smyrnensis fusca*; Black-capped, *H. pileata*; White-collared, *H. chloris humii*; *p. rimba* Banded K. *Lacedo p. pulchella*; *p. rimba besar* Chestnut-collared, *Halcyon c. concreta*; *p. chichit* Indian Common K., *Alcedo atthis bengalensis*;

Sedang mengiring duli baginda,
Sebuah penjajab ia pun ada,
Sungguh pun kecil janggal tiada,
Nama tersurat digada-gada.

Seri Lela pegawai yang damping,
Perahunya bernama Senjani Tanding,
Jikalau belayar sama tersanding,
Lajunya tidak boleh dibanding.

Sebuah penjajab Seri Indera,
Dandannya usul sedang antara,
Dikasihi oleh seri betara,
Boleh diharap barang bicara.

Orang Kaya Paduka Seri Raja,
Sebuah kakap dandan bersahaja,
Emas pun ada dengan belanja,
Tidak menumpang barang kerja.

Seri Pekerma seorang hulubalang,
Perahunya kakap sampan balang,
Ia pun anak wazir terbilang,
Remaklah jika bersama hilang.

Sebuah penjajab Indera Paduka,
Ia pun sama anak ayam baka,
Jikalau datang bala pestaka,
Haram tak mahu memalingkan muka.

Penjajab Raja Lela Wangsa,
Ia pun sama juga sebangsa,
Sikap seperti burung angsa,
Nama yang baik enggan binasa.

Paduka Seri Indera sebuah kakap,
Belum sudah dandannya lengkap,
Dipandang kepada usul dan sifat,
Sahajakan tidak boleh ditangkap.

Akan Raja Indera Mahkota,
Hulubalang tua dibawah takhta,

While escorting His Highness *duli*,
A warship he possesses,
Although small, not unpleasing to the
eye,
Its name emblazoned on the pennons.

Seri Lela a close official,
His boat named Senjani Tanding,
If sailing together next to each other,
Its speed cannot be compared.

A ship Seri Indera,
Its original design just right,
Loved by the illustrious king,
Dependable in his speech.

Orang Kaya Paduka Seri Raja,
A river boat, plainly decorated,
There is gold with expenditure,
Not lodging in whatever task.

Seri Pekerma a chief,
His vessel²³² a harbour boat,
Son of a renowned vizier,
It is better if they get lost together.

A ship Indera Paduka,
Similar to a pure-bred cock,
If any disaster or calamity comes,
Sworn not to turn his face the other way.

Ship of Raja Lela Wangsa,
Also the same of one kind,
Manner like a goose,
A good name won't be destroyed.

Paduka Seri Indera a river boat,
Before its decoration is even completed,
When looked upon origin and attributes,
Deliberately uncatchable.

Raja Indera Mahkota,
An old chief beneath the throne,

p. bukit Blue-banded, *A. euryzona* peninsulæ ; *p. api* Black-backed, *Ceyx e. erithacus*. *Guru p.* assistant teacher. *Keris ulu p.* a Patani creese with a long-nosed Javanese hilt

²³² *sampan balang*: also war-boat, two-masted galley for boarding becalmed ships

Ia pun sama disitu serta,
Umur pun lama bertambah pota.

Tidaklah habis lagi terbilang,
Kakap penjajab segala hulubalang,
Jikalau disebut berulang-ulang,
Habislah dakwat, kalam pun hilang.

Orang Kaya Paduka Tuan,
Dengan Seri Agar ia sekawan,
Ditinggalkan Duli Yang Di-Pertuan,
Menunggu istana Raja Perempuan.

Seorang bentara Seri Marat,
Ia pun sama menanggung isyarat,
Ditinggalkan oleh duli hadzrat,
Umpama perahu yang amat sarat.

Berangkatlah konon duli mahkota,
Alat pegawai sempurna takhta,
Bunyi bedil gegak gempita,
Hebatnya tidak lagi menderita.

Bongkarlah sauh kenaikan Sultan,
Dipasang meriam dihaluan,
Didayungkan muda berkawan-kawan,
Mana yang tinggal berhati rawan.

Tatkala masa Sultan berangkat,
Sungai Perak ayernya likat,
Kakap penjajab bagai disukat,
Laksana perang sudah terikat.

Tuanku Sultan raja yang jati,
Berangkat bermain bersuka hati,
Dari Pulau Indera Sakti,
Di Kuala Bidor baginda berhenti.

Hari pun sinar bertukar silam,
Berlabohlah kenaikan duli shah alam,
Air pun deras pasanginya malam,
Ada sebuah perahu tenggelam.

Seorang Bugis yang perkasa,

He is also there in attendance,
Age is old, increasingly peerless.

Not finished being said,
Boats and ships of the chiefs,
If written repeatedly,
The ink will run out, pen will be lost.

Orang Kaya Paduka Tuan,
With Seri Agar he is close friends,
Left behind by *Duli* His Lordship,
Waiting at the palace of Raja
Perempuan.

A herald Seri Marat,
Together bearing the signs,
Left behind by the present *duli*,
Much like a very heavy boat.

Apparently departed the crowned *duli*,
Instruments of the official perfectly
throned,
Sound of the gun salutes loud and noisy,
Its awe not suffered anymore.

Lifted the anchor of the Sultan's vessel,
Cannons installed upfront,
Rowed by throngs of youths,
Whoever left behind sad-hearted.

At the time of the Sultan's departure,
Perak River its water thick,
Boats and ships like measured,
As if war is already promised.

Your Highness Sultan the pure king,
Departed to play with delight,
From Pulau Indera Sakti,
At Kuala Bidor His Highness stopped.

The day's shine turned into gloom,
Harbored the *duli* king of the world's
vessel,
The water rapid tide rises at night,
There is a boat sunk.

A valiant Bugis man,

Datangnya dari sebuah desa,
Dikehendaki Allah Tuhan yang esa,
Perahu pun karam harta binasa.

Perahu dilabuh tengah muara,
Ada sedikit khilaf bicara,
Sekonyong-konyong beroleh cedera,
Hilanglah budi luputlah kira.

Setelah perahunya sudah tenggelam,
Sangatlah gundah hati didalam,
Mengadap kepada wazir ul'alam,
Mohonkan orang pandai menyelam.

Raja Bendahara amat johari,
Bugis mengadap menyerahkan diri,
Mohonkan perahu minta dibongkari,
Bahagi tiga upah diberi.

Akan baginda Raja Bendahara,
Kasihanlah dagang sudah cedera,
Disuruh kerja dengan segera,
Supaya harta boleh terpelihara.

Perahu pun sudah ditimbulkan,
Segala yang basah dijemurkan,
Tidaklah habis arif katakana,
Bongkarlah hilir kenaikan Sultan.

Baginda Sultan raja yang utus,
Berangkatlah sampai ke Tanjong Putus,
Rakyat pun banyak ribu dan ratus,
Disanalah bicara sekaliannya putus.

Tuanku Sultan yang amat sakti,
Dihadap tentera ribu dan keti,
Di Tanjong Putus semayam berhenti,
Mana yang jauh lagi dinanti.

Menantikan rakyat lagi berkampung,
Berbuat gelanggang tempat menyabung,
Ayam pun banyak taji berhubung,

Coming from a hamlet,
As willed by Allah the one God,
The boat sunk, goods destroyed.

Boat harbored in the middle of an
estuary,
There was a little scuffle,
Suddenly begetting injuries,
Intelligence gone, judgment slipped
away.

After his boat had already sunken,
Severely depressed within his heart,
Having an audience with *wazir ul'alam*,
To ask for skilled divers.

Raja Bendahara most clever,
The Bugis pays homage and surrender,
Requesting the boat to be turned over,
Divided by three pay is given.

To His Highness Raja Bendahara,
Pity the injured mendicant,
Ordered to work immediately,
So property could be protected.

Boat is floated,
Everything wet is put to dry,
Unfinished the wisdom words,
Heaved up downriver the Sultan's
vessel.

His Highness the Sultan delegates,
Departed until arriving at Tanjong
Putus,
People in the thousands and hundreds,
There all decisions were made.

Your Highness the most powerful,
Faced by armies, hundreds and
thousands,
In Tanjong Putus he stopped to reside,
Whoever far away is waited upon.

Waiting for people, assembled,
Making a ring, a place for cock-fighting,
Many cocks, with connected spurs,

Segala yang menang lompat melambung.

Sudah adat menjadi resam,
Seperti luka dibubuh asam,
Mana yang alah mukanya masam,
Hati didalam sejuk dan pesam.

Mana yang tidak rial dikandung,
Banyaklah malang datang merundong,
Tercanguk-canguk seperti tedung,
Mencari tempat hendak selindung.

Menyabung itu konon kerja yang salah,
Dilarangkan baginda Rasullullah,
Ada yang menang ada yang kalah,
Berbagai ragam diperolehlah.

Akan segala anak raja-raja,
Ramai bermain berkampung sahaja,
Ayam dan taji hadir dipuja,
Rial dibawa akan dibelanja.

Suatu kisah pula disurat,
Bukannya tamsil dengan ibarat,
Kenaikan Sultan duli hadhrat,
Segala penjajab habislah sarat.

Timah dibawa duli baginda,
Berapa ratus baharanya ada,
Diurupkan rial kepada Holanda,
Supaya suka didalam dada.

Holanda melihat hatinya gondah,
Memandang penjajap banyaklah sudah,
Pekerjaan ini bukannya mudah,
Ada juga suatu faedah.

Satelah datang sekaliannya rata,
Dengan pegawai lengkap semata,
Dititahkan oleh duli mahkota,
Sekaliannya itu membuat kota.

Tanjong Putus selatnya tiga,
Kota dibangun dimuka-muka,

All who won jumping up soaring.

Adat becoming custom,
Like a wound sprinkled with acid,
Those who lost sour-faced,
Inside the heart cold and lukewarm.

Those who did not bear money,
Many misfortunes come to pester,
Nodding like cobras,
Looking for a place to hide.

Cock-fighting supposedly is a
wrongdoing,
Prohibited by the Prophet,
There are winners, there are losers,
A variety of mannerisms were begotten.

As for all the princes and princesses,
Many playing leisurely in the village,
Cocks and spurs present, praised,
Money brought will be spent.

A story was written,
Not with similes and metaphors,
The Sultan's vessel, the present *duli*,
All the ships were filled.

Tin brought by the royal crown,
How many hundreds of pounds there
were,
Reals were converted to Dutch
(currency),
So inside the heart will be happy.

The Dutch looking, their hearts sad,
Seeing throngs of ships,
This is not an easy task,
There yet will be a benefit.

After all the people have arrived,
With officials complete,
Ordered by the crowned *duli*,
All of them built a fort.

Tanjong Putus has three straits,
The fort was erected with many fronts,

Seberang menyeberang bertentang juga,
Ditengah pulau sudah terjangka.

Tempatnya elok terlalu indah,
Dengan kampungnya hadirilah sudah,
Segala tanaman memberi faedah,
Nyiur pun banyak yang rendah-rendah.

Sekalian penghulu dengan sakainya,
Menetap segala pegawai-pegawainya,
Masing-masing dengan bahagiannya,
Sudah selesai segala kiranya.

Segala yang bekerja sudahlah lekat,
Teguh laksana bagai diperkat,
Daulat tuanku bertambah berkat,
Hendak kelaut baginda berangkat.

Muafakatliah konon adinda baginda,
Hulubalang pegawai enum berida,
Raja Bendahara dengan Raja Muda,
Menghimpunkan penjajap mana yang ada.

Ada antara beberapa selang,
Hadirilah sudah segala hulubalang,
Kakap penjajap tiada terbilang,
Habishlah turun diatas galang.

Adalah kadar barang sebulan,
Sudahlah penjajap berapilan,
Segala handai sahabat dan taulan,
Musta'idlah dengan perbekalan.

Mana yang kurang belanja tiada,
Dikurniakan oleh duli baginda,
Setengah dikurniai Raja Muda,
Dengan Raja Bendahara membeli ada.

Jika tiada perahu sendiri,
Oleh baginda sekalian diberi,
Disuruh berlengkap sehari-hari,
Barang kurang disuruhnya cari.

Segala tunggul dan gada-gada,
Sekaliannya dipatuti duli baginda,

Criss-crossing opposing each other,
In the middle of the island reached.

The place is good, ever so beautiful,
With the village present,
All the plants bearing profit,
Many low-hanging coconut trees.

All the headmen with their henchmen,
Stayed with all the officials,
Everyone with their share,
After completing all the calculations.

All who worked were bonded,
Strong, as if tied together,
Daulat of Your Highness increasingly
blessed,
Desiring to depart to the sea.

In agreement with his younger brother,
Chiefs, officials, young and aged,
Raja Bendahara with Raja Muda,
Gathering warships whichever are
present.

In between a few intermissions,
Arrived all the chiefs,
Ships and boats innumerable,
Completely descended on the rollers.

In about a month's time,
Ships were completed with gunshields,
All the close friends and companions,
Prepared with supplies.

Those lacking, without any provisions,
Provided for by the royal *duli*,
Half provided by Raja Muda,
With Raja Bendahara buying.

If one is without his own boat,
By His Highness one is given to all,
Ordered to be prepared everyday,
Whatever lacking ordered to find.

All the stumps and pennons,
Entirely made proper by the royal *duli*,

Setengah hitam, merah pun ada,
Laksana kuntum bunga seganda.

Layar kenaikan diperbuatkan kain,
Baginda sahaja hendak bermain,
Bukannya pergi ke negeri lain,
Sekadar mencuba ombak dan angin.

Setelah sudah sekaliannya lengkap,
Segala penjajap sampan dan kakap,
Dipandang kepada usul dan sikap,
Tidakkan boleh dapat ditangkap.

Segala yang tinggal berbuat kota,
Sangatlah gundah didalam cita,
Hendak mengiringkan duli mahkota,
Tambahan pula bermain serta.

Seri Nara Di-raja Bentara Kiri,
Bersama dengan Dato' Menteri,
Maharaja Lela gagah johari,
Dititahkan tinggal menunggu negeri.

Sekaliannya itu orang mulia,
Sahaja pun hamba lagi sedia,
Boleh diharap serta percaya,
Mustahil sekali membuang setia.

Seorang hulubalang Maharaja Lela,
Dirantau ulu sangat terula,
Dititahkan raja yang terala,
Memegang rakyat jadi kepala.

Jika dipandang usul dan sikap,
Bagai harimau akan menangkap,
Dikurnia baginda sebuah kakap,
Alat pawai semuanya lengkap.

Kapitnya Raja Indera Wangsa,
Sebarang kerja dengan periksa,
Tambahan faham dengan biasa,
Haram tak mahu nama binasa.

Seri Indera seorang bentara,

Half black, there's also red,
Like buds of fragrant flowers.

Sail of the vessel made of cloth,
His Highness wanted to travel leisurely,
Not going to another state,
Merely testing the waves and winds.

After everyone is completely ready,
All the ship, boats and canoes,
Looking at the appearance and bearing,
Never would they be caught.

All those left building the city,
Extremely nervous within the heart,
Desiring to accompany the crowned
duli,
Furthermore also journeying along.

Seri Nara Di-raja Bentara Kiri,
Together with Dato' Menteri,
Maharaja Lela, strong and clever,
Were ordered to stay, and protect the
state.

All of them were noble men,
Intuitively loyal servants,
Could be depended upon and trusted,
Most impossible for them to be disloyal.

A chief Maharaja Lela,
In the upriver region most revered,
Ordered by the king most high,
In charge of the people, as a headman.

If looked upon appearance and
demeanor,
Like a tiger ready to pounce,
Bestowed a boat by His Highness,
Complete with insignia and equipments.

His assistant Raja Indera Wangsa,
Any task approached with prudence,
Also understanding the norm
Not wanting his name to be destroyed.

Seri Indera, a herald,

Ia pun sama satu bicara,
Barang perbuatan semua dikira,
Sedikit tak mahu memberi cedera.

Lela Paduka hulubalang yang pota,
Ialah tinggal membuat kota,
Seri Maharaja baginda minta,
Hendak dibawa mengiringkan serta.

Kota pun sudah sekalian direka,
Aturnya sudah bagai dijangka,
Sekalian memandang terlalu suka,
Laksana kota negeri Melaka.

Indahnya konon kota negeri,
Sekaliannya baharu dipugari,
Tebing dipagar dengan baiduri,
Tanah ditambah Langkapuri.

Setelah sudah sekalian belaka,
Kota dibangun beratur tiga,
Holanda melihat hatinya duka,
Hendak mengadap takutkan murka.

Tuanku Sultan Mahkota desa,
Sempurna afir lagi kuasa,
Hendak berangkat melihat termasa,
Semuanya sudah dengan periksa.

Alat pawai sekaliannya sudah,
Perbuatan elok terlalu indah,
Segala perbekalan penganan juadah,
Banyak dibawa berpuluh gadah.

Sepuluh hari bulan Rejab,
Hadirlah sudah segala penjajap,
Berkat daulat yang mustajab,
Bertambah doa puji dan ucap.

Tuanku Paduka Seri Sultan,
Sempurnalah sudah dengan angkatan,
Segala senjata berkilat-kilatan,
Berbagai jenis akan perbuatan.

He is also in agreement
Every action is calculated,
Not even with the least intention to
harm.

Lela Paduka the peerless chief,
He is the one left building the city,
Seri Maharaja His Highness requested,
To bring him together accompanying.

The city's design entirely completed,
Its structure almost predictable,
Everyone looking at it absolutely
charmed,
Like the city-state of Melaka.

The beauty of the city-state,
Its entirety had been renovated,
Banks fenced with cowries,
Land banked up with Langkapuri.

After everything has been completed,
The city is constructed in three columns,
The Dutchmen witnessing sorrowful,
Fearing wrath upon encounter.

His Highness Sultan Mahkota of the
hamlet,
Perfectly wise and powerful,
Desiring to depart to see the fiesta,
Everything done with prudence.

Insignia and equipment all ready,
Their design fine ever so beautiful,
All the supplies, sweetmeats and cakes,
Plenty, brought in tens of containers.

Tenth day of Rejab,
All the ships have arrived,
Efficacious *daulat* blessings,
Adding to the prayers, praises and
sayings.

His Lordship Paduka Seri Sultan,
Perfect with his battalions,
All weapons shining, glimmering,
Various kinds of make.

Didalam kenaikan duli baginda,
Panglima Raja Indera Muda,
Sikapnya sedang usulnya shahada,
Akalnya baik berani pun ada.

Sampailah ia hamba yang gharab,
Barang kerja boleh diharap,
Sungguh pun muda belayar karab,
Ialah menjadi panglima ghurab.

Segala yang sedia hamba yang lima,
Senantiasa bersama-sama,
Empat orang dikurniai nama,
Semuanya dititahkan jadi panglima.

Hitam Fakir hamba yang biasa,
Tampan berani tubuhnya sasa,
Dibawah penangguh senantiasa,
Digelar Raja Setia Wangsa.

Enche Mai hamba yang sempurna,
Senantiasa dibawah istana,
Kebawah duli sahaja berguna,
Dikurniai gelar Seri Rakna.

Che Ali bergelar Maharaja Desa,
Ia pun hamba senantiasa,
Dikurniakan Allah Tuhan yang esa,
Perangai yang baik menambah bangsa.

Enche Siram hamba yang pasu,
Digelar Raja Dewa Bongsu,
Dipenanggahan raja sudah tersuku,
Ialah jadi panglima bongsu.

Jikalau dipandang tingkah dan laku,
Segala hamba duli tuanku,
Jika laksana perang bersuku,
Barang dimana boleh diaku.

Rupa angkatan zaman sekarang,

Inside his vessel His Highness *duli*,
Panglima Raja Indera Muda,
His demeanor sweet, his ancestry noble,
His wit sharp, and also courageous.

Arriving, he the foreign servant,
For any task could be depended upon,
Although young, he sailed often,
Becoming the commander of the
ghurab.²³³

All ready the five servants,
Always together,
Bestowed upon four of them names,
All of them ordered to be captains.

Hitam Fakir the ordinary servant,
Handsome, courageous, his body sturdy,
Underneath the kitchen always,
Named Raja Setia Wangsa.

Enche Mai the perfect servant,
Always underneath the palace,
Beneath the *duli* ever so useful,
Bestowed the title Seri Rakna.

Che Ali titled Maharaja Desa,
He, too, had always been a servant,
Bestowed by Allah the only God,
Of good disposition, and enhanced race.

Enche Siram, a valued servant,
Titled Raja Dewa Bongsu,
At the royal kitchen already stationed,
He became the youngest chief.

If judged by behavior and conduct,
All servants of Your Highness,
If there happens to be a clan war,
Wherever they were, could be
recognized.

The looks of the present fleet,

²³³ An Arab ship (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 113), A sloop (Wilkinson, *Dictionary*, 439), A large Malay two-masted trader, 300ft. by 30 ft. by 20 ft. (Andaya, *Dissertation*, 633)

Hebatnya bukan sebarang-barang,
Jikalau kiranya pergi menyerang,
Entahkan jidi gerangan perang.

Sudah berkampung semuanya lengkap,
Segala penjajab sampan dan kakap,
Dikerjakan dengan pantas dan rigap,
Berbagai ragam laku dan sikap.

Setelah habis sekalian berkampung,
Seperti ayam hendak disabung,
Jika beroleh sama bertembung,
Patah taji, keris disambung.

Segala penjajab dengan panglimanya,
Tidaklah habis tersebut dengan ismanya,
Masing-masing gelar dengan namanya,
Umpama ayam baik romannya.

Daeng Tomatin Raja Belawa,
Ia pula ada mengiringkan jua,
Gahari kadar badannya tua,
Barang kerja boleh disua.

Sayid Jaafar orang yang mulia,
Bangsa Hashim lagi aulia,
Mengiringkan Sultan raja yang kaya,
Sebuah penjajab lengkap sedia.

Sungguh pun mengiring berhati gundah,
Hendak mencari untung faedah,
Dipanggil ayahnya pulang ke Kedah,
Hutang piutang belumlah sudah.

Ada seorang pegawai yang pota,
Sedia hamba dibawah takhta,
Kerana sedikit memberi leta,
Direntikan oleh duli mahkota.

Sudah untung hendak bercacat,
Tengah bekerja menjadi terkinjat,
Sudahlah nasib akan terpecat,
Sungguh mengiring mukanya pucat.

Its magnificence not to be belittled,
If indeed it is going to attack,
Who knows, a war might happen.

Already together, all complete,
All the ships, boats and canoes,
Made with speed and elegance,
Various styles, demeanors and appearances.

After all have gathered,
Like cocks about to fight,
If a clash happened,
Spurs broken, keris spliced.

All the ships with their commanders,
Names too many to be said,
Each one titled with its name ,
Like a cock with fine feathers.

Daeng Tomatin Raja Belawa,
He is also accompanying,
Equal in power, his body old,
Any task could be faced.

Sayid Jaafar noble man,
From the Hashimite clan, saintly,
Escorting the Sultan, the rich king,
A ship already prepared.

Although escorting with a sad heart,
Desiring to search for profit and fortune,
Beckoned by his father to return to
Kedah,
All debts have yet to be settled.

There is a poor official,
A ready servant underneath the throne,
Due to a little misgiving,
Dismissed by the crowned *duli*.

'Tis destiny's desire for him to have a
flaw,
While working, startled,
'Tis fate for him to get expelled,
Escorting with a pale face.

Ada pula seorang orang muda,
Sebuah desa pergi semenda,
Sebuah penjajab sungguh pun ada,
Sudah terkeji dihati baginda.

Ia pun mengiring sama,
Sikapnya patut menjadi panglima,
Sedang dahulu dikurnia nama,
Sekarang pulang isma yang lama.

Sebuah penjajab Nakhoda Raja,
Lengkap senjata dengan belanja,
Bukannya tua berida sahaja,
Boleh disuruh barang kerja.

Nakhoda dagang pun sama di situ,
Dari Selangor tempatnya tentu,
Masuk ke Perak hendak bersatu,
Langsung mengiringkan paduka ratu.

Anaknya Megat Indera Bongsu,
Sedia hamba sudah tersuku,
Dipandang kepada sikap dan laku,
Boleh dititahkan duli tuanku.

Sebuah penjajab Sang Setia Sura,
Tukang kenaikan duli betara,
Sungguh pun ia desanya dura,
Kebawah duli sudah mesra.

Abang Jawa seorang panglima,
Lakunya bagai tentera Berama,
Dititahkan hilir hulu pertama,
Niatnya hendak mencari nama.

Ialah jadi panglima jangak,
Pergi segenap serok dan semak,
Jika bertemu manis dan lemak,
Segera diambil serta diramak.

Panglima Tabuk sebuah sampan,
Orang Bugis lagi cakapan,
Kerja berperang sahaja keharapan,
Harta pun banyak sudah tersimpan.

Setelah habis sekaliannya rata,
Tidaklah fakir panjangkan kata,

There is another youth,
Went to a hamlet to get married,
Although he had a ship,
Still he incurred royal dishonor.

He also went to escort,
Conduct befitting of a commander,
Long ago bestowed a title,
Now coming home with the old name.

A ship, Nakhoda Raja,
Complete with weapons and supplies,
Not only aged and experienced
Could be depended upon for any task.

Nakhoda trader was also there,
From Selangor the place is certain,
Going into Perak wanting to unite,
Accompanying the royal king.

His son Megat Indera Bongsu,
Ready servants already divided,
Looking at the manner and bearing,
Can be ordered by Your Highness.

A ship of Sang Setia Sura,
Craftsman of the sacred *duli*'s vessel,
Although his hamlet is far,
Beneath the *duli* already friendly.

Abang Jawa a chief,
His demeanor like the Berama army,
Ordered downriver and upriver first,
His intention is to pursue a reputation.

He becomes a sneaky thief,
Going into all rice-bins and bushes,
Upon finding sweetness and meat-fat,
Instantly taken and seized.

Panglima Tabok (had) a boat,
A competent Bugis man,
Only wanting to wage war,
Goods much already stored.

After all has been completed,
Not wanting to prolong the tale,

Segala yang mengiring duli mahkota,
Setengah tiada tersebut nyata.

Setelah hari hampirlah malam,
Datanglah konon wazirul-alam,
Masuk mengadap Duli Shah Alam,
Persembahkan segala perintah alam.

Akan baginda Raja Muda,
Masuk mengadap paduka kekanda,
Sekalian wazir semuanya ada,
Menantikan titah duli baginda.

Akan titah baginda Sultan,
Adindalah baik akan ikutan,
Oleh segala orang angkatan,
Pada barang segala perbuatan.

Raja Bendahara panglima besar,
Laksana gedung ditengah pasar,
Dagangan banyak halus dan kasar,
Perhimpunan sekalian anak Mengkasar.

Orang Kaya Besar panglima dalam,
Kapit di bawah wazirul-alam,
Boleh mengadap siang dan malam,
Senantiasa sinar dan silam.

Orang Kaya Temenggung panglima perang,
Sikapnya bukan sebarang-barang,
Tunggulnya merah amat benderang,
Enggan beroleh nama yang kurang.

Setelah sudah bersalin belaka,
Segala takwim kitab dibuka,
Rembanglah saat dengan ketika,
Esoklah baik berangkat juga.

Telah sudah putus muafakat,
Esoklah konon baginda berangkat,
Minta doa mohonkan berkat,
Bertambah rahmat dengan harkat.

Setelah siang keesokan hari,
Berhimpunlah segala isi negeri,

All those escorting the crowned *duli*,
Half not clearly mentioned.

When day is close to nightfall,
Apparently came *wazirul-alam*,
Entering to have audience with *Duli Shah Alam*,
Presenting all the orders of the universe.

To His Highness Raja Muda,
Entering to have audience with his brother,
All the viziers are present,
Waiting for the royal command.

Orders of His Highness the Sultan,
Better be followed his younger brother,
By all the people of the fleets,
In all the actions.

Raja Bendahara the great chief,
Like a store amidst the market,
Goods many, fine and rough,
Gathering of all Mengkasar youths.

Orang Kaya Besar chief insider,
Assistant underneath *wazirul-alam*,
Could be met day and night,
Always bright and dark.

Orang Kaya Temenggung chief of war,
His demeanor not ordinary,
His mast red, very brilliant,
Reluctant to beget a lesser name.

After a change of costumes,
All the calendars, books opened,
The second, the very moment looms,
It is best to depart tomorrow.

Having reached a consensus,
His Highness departing the day after,
Praying, asking for blessings,
May blessings increase with distance.

When afternoon comes the next day,
The populace of the entire state

Bulan pun sampai sepuluh hari,
Tengah naik ketika Musytari.

Terkenal alat kenaikan Sultan,
Indahnya tidak terperikan,
Tunggul kekuningan didirikan,
Panji-panji alam dikenakan.

Pawai diatur selengkapnya,
Pegawainya indah dengan hebatnya,
Segala panglima dengan sikapnya,
Berpatutan laku dengan cakupnya.

Senjata kenaikan Yang di-Pertuan,
Meriam pun dua satu haluan,
Tidakkan dapat ditentang lawan,
Musuh bertemu menjadi kawan.

Anak Perak meriam bertuah,
Siapa mendengar hilang arwah,
Peluru mencari ke atas ke bawah,
Meski pun masuk ke dalam kawah.

Musta'idlah sudah sekalian alat,
Dipandang tidak lagi yang ghalat,
Tuanku raja sangat berdaulat,
Cahaya durjanya umpama kilat.

Tuanku Sultan raja yang terutama,
Cahaya laksana bulan purnama,
Baginda memakai cara panglima,
Wajahnya tak dapat ditentang lama.

Semayam di atas Kerketa Indera,
Di hadap oleh sida bentara,
Di bawah payong berjentera,
Di hadap biti-biti perwira.

Dayang mendera berkawan-kawan,
Seperti mega diarak awan,

gathered,
On the tenth day of the month,
When Jupiter is on the rise.

Regalia of the Sultan's vessel installed,
Its beauty beyond compare,
Yellowish mast is erected,
Pennants and flags are raised.

Insignia arranged in full resplendence,
Officials decorated with prominence,
All the chiefs with magnificence,
Demeanor and speech in agreement.

Weapon of His Lordship's vessel,
Two cannons, one direction,
Never will be defeated by the
opposition,
Enemies met became friends.

Anak Perak the magical cannon,
Whoever hears it becomes deaf,
Cannonballs searching upwards
downwards,
Even if going into the cauldron.

All the tools already prepared,
Looked upon, no errors were found,
His Highness in full sovereignty,
His wrathful light like lightning.

His Highness Sultan the eminent king,
Bright like the full moon,
He dresses in the manner of a chief,
His face could never be stared at for
long.

Residing upon Kerketa Indera,
Faced by noble heralds,
Beneath revolving umbrella,
Flanked by royal concubines.

Court damsels, capricious²³⁴ in flocks,
Like clouds marching in the sky

²³⁴ *mendera* is an alternative spelling of *manera*: first person plural collective pronoun, 'we' or 'us', in this context it denotes diversity in mannerisms, perhaps costumes of the court damsels. Not to be confused with the affixed verbal form of *dera* 'to abuse'

Segala yang tinggal berhati rawan,
Setengah menangis bertawan-tawan.

Daulat tuanku sangat terala,
Nurnya terang amat bernyala,
Laksana manikam mercu kemala,
Cahayanya tidak lagi bercela.

Manikam kemala desa Melayu,
Seisi alam tidak terpayu,
Segala yang tinggal berhati sayu,
Setengah sakit mengidap rayu.

Baginda semayam di peterana,
Di atas kurong ukir rencana,
Alatnya lengkap amat sempurna,
Cahayanya sampai kemana-mana.

Seorang bentara Indera Mahkota,
Hadir mengadap dibawah takhta,
Barang titah hendak dikata,
Ialah menyampaikan sekaliannya rata.

Seorang pegawai Maharaja Indera,
Sangatlah diharap serta mesra,
Dititahkan oleh duli betara,
Memegang kemudi Kerketa Indera.

Ketika hari tengah rembang,
Kenaikan Sultan sudah terambang,
Tunggul terdiri payung terkembang,
Sikapnya seperti naga terbang.

Raja Muda saudara Sultan,
Laksana gunung permata intan,
Cahayanya bersih amat kelihatan,
Seperti pelita dalam angkatan.

Raja Bendahara wazirul-alam,
Ia pun saudara Duli Shah Alam,
Seperti gunung permata nilam,
Tiadalah alpa siang dan malam.

Lakunya manis amat budiman,

All left behind sad-hearted,
Half of them weeping, in tears.

Daulat of His Highness, most high,
Light shining ever so bright,
Like a jewel on a magical peak,
Its light without any flaw.

Magical gem of the Malay countryside,
Deemed priceless in the whole universe,
All left behind heartbroken,
Half of them sick, infected with
melancholia.

His Majesty residing on the dais,
In confinement, carving a plan,
His instruments complete, ever so
perfect,
His light reaching everywhere.

A herald, Indera Mahkota,
In presence underneath the throne,
Any orders to be given,
He is the one to convey all of them.

An official Maharaja Indera,
Most trustworthy and friendly,
Ordered by the sacred *duli*,
To control the rudder of Kerketa Indera.

While the day is looming ahead,
The Sultan's vessel came floating
around,
Mast erect, umbrella spread out,
Its bearing like a flying dragon.

Raja Muda brother of the Sultan,
Like a mount of priceless diamonds,
His light is visibly clear,
Like a lamp in the fleet.

Raja Bendahara *wazirul-alam*,
He is a brother of Duli Shah Alam,
Like a mount of priceless sapphires,
Day and night, never careless.

His demeanor sweet, very benevolent,

Usul dan sikap sempurna iman,
Anakanda baginda Raja Rahman,
Laksana mutiara dalam genggaman.

Raja di-Hilir saudara yang muda,
Sangat setiaawan dengan kekanda,
Laksana gunung intan seganda,
Cahayanya manis amat bershahada.

Akan Raja Kecil Bongsu,
Seperti manikam di atas mercu,
Cahayanya tampak di sinar syamsu,
Seperti intan di dalam pasu.

Ipar duai mentua taya,
Sekaliannnya ada semuanya kaya,
Lengkap dengan belanja biaya,
Durja pun manis amat bercahaya.

Raja Tengah raja bangsawan,
Cantik manis lagi dermawan,
Di atas kenaikan bertulis awan,
Seperti mega diarak awan.

Di atas kenaikan Raksasa Indera,
Sikap seperti mambang udara,
Umpama gunung mercu negara,
Bertatah pudu intan mutiara.

Juaknya banyak berkawan-kawan,
Sikapnya sahaja akan melawan,
Akan panglima Raja Pahlawan,
Dengan nakhoda Malik sama sehaluan.

Nakhoda Malik sahaja panglima,
Sikap bagai Maharaja Berma,
Di bawah duli sedia lama,
Belum bergelar berubah nama.

Raja di-hulu seorang anak raja,
Sikapnya sedang gahari sahaja,
Laksana bulan berkandung teja,

His manners and bearing of perfected
faith,
Son of His Majesty Raja Rahman,
Like a pearl in the grasp of the hand.

Raja di-Hilir the young brother,
Very faithful to his elder brother,
Like a mount of fragrant sapphires,
His light is sweet, most truthful.

As for Raja Kecil Bongsu,
Like a jewel on the zenith,
His light is visible in the sunrays,
Like a sapphire in a vase.

All the in-laws and their relatives,
All of them present, all of them rich,
Complete with money and expenses,
Countenance sweet and filled with light.

Raja Tengah the noble king,
Handsome, sweet, also generous,
On a vessel decorated with clouds,
Like clouds marching in the sky.

On the vessel Raksasa Indera,
Bearing like a wind spirit,
Like a mountain, peak of the country,
Decorated with sapphires, pearls and
gems.

Its sailors many, in companies,
Its mere bearing shows its fighting
spirit,
As for the chief Raja Pahlawan,
With the captain Malik in the same
direction.

Captain Malik the only chief,
Countenance resembling Maharaja
Berma,
Beneath the *duli* always ready,
Not bequathed a title, name unchanged.

Raja di-hulu son of the king,
His bearing equal in rank,
Like a moon carrying sunset clouds,

Cahayanya tampak gemilang durja.

Mengiringkan takhta paduka ayahanda,
Kasih dan mesra di dalam dada,
Mana yang kurang belanja tiada,
Perintah ayahanda Raja Muda.

Ia pun anak raja budiman,
Lakunya arif sempurna iman,
Laksana intan permata zaman,
Cahayanya bersih di dalam genggaman.

Raja di-Baroh dengan Raja Alang,
Keduanya sikap bukan kepalang,
Seperti mutia di dalam balang,
Cahayanya bersih gilang gemilang.

Sungguh pun pangkat aturan muda,
Badan pun hampir akan berida,
Sangatlah gemar duli baginda,
Mulutnya manis gurau dan senda.

Raja Itam muda yang cantik,
Laksana emas baharu dititik,
Lakunya manis sedang diatek,
Canggihnya panjang lengannya lentik.

Di dalam banyak hamba tuanku,
Patik laksana garam sebuku,
Sungguh pun serupa berlainan laku,
Barang diperbuat semuanya kaku.

Sama mengiringkan di dalam angkatan,
Seperti pohon rambutan jantan,
Sama berbunga berlebat-lebatan,
Buahnya tidak tampak kelihatan.

Di dalam mengiring sangat sengsara,
Amatlah luput kira bicara,
Perahu pun tidak sempurna sara,
Mohonkan limpah mahkota indera.

Tuanku titahkan patik mengarang,
Akal pun tidak, emas pun kurang,
Dari dahulu dengan sekarang,
Bezanya bukan sebarang-barang.

Its light clearly resplendent on the
surface.

Escorting the royal throne of his father,
With love and compassion in his heart,
Wherever he lacks in expenses,
Conferred by his father Raja Muda.

He is the son of a benevolent king,
His manners wise, of perfected faith,
Like a diamond, jewel of the times.
His light clearly within grasp.

Raja di-Baroh with Raja Alang,
Both of them, attitudes unmatched,
Like a pearl in a decanter,
Its light clear, gloriously resplendent.

Although in rank still a youth,
Body still close to coming of age,
In the favor of the royal *duli*,
Sweet-mouthed in joking and jesting.

Raja Itam the beautiful youth,
Like gold newly refined,
His demeanor sweet, cultivated,
His nails long, his arms curvy.

Among Your Highness's many servants,
I am like a lump of salt,
Although similar, demeanor is different,
Everything done with halts.

Together escorting with the troop,
Like a male *rambutan* tree,
Together in a rich bloom,
Its fruits nowhere to be seen.

In escorting suffering much,
Slipping away in reckoning and speech,
Boat imperfect in sustenance,
Requesting blessings from the divine
crown.

Your Highness pardon me who
compose,
Wit absent, lacking gold,
From then until now,

Daulat tuanku amat benderang,
Cahayanya laksana bulan yang terang,
Apalah sudah patik nan gerang,
Umpama sakit tiada mengerang.

Setelah sudah sekaliannya kalam,
Tamsil ibarat banyak di dalam,
Bongkarlah kenaikan Duli Shah Alam,
Dengan perintah wazirul-alam.

Membongkar sauh sekaliannya rata,
Sultan berangkat sempurna takhta,
Bunyinya meriam gegak gempita,
Asapnya kabut gelap gelita.

Tatkala bongkar darinya situ,
Berdayunglah dahulu Si Ketam Batu,
Segala kakap bertiang satu,
Seperti rupa kawan kelkatu.

Perahu diatur sama berbanjar,
Bunyi dayungnya terlalu gempar,
Tunggul dan alam berkibar-kibar,
Seperti laku keluang yang babar.

Kelengkapan Sultan zaman sekarang,
Hebatnya bukan sebarang-barang,
Jikalau dipandang sekaliannya orang,
Seperti rupa angkatan perang.

Setelah habis sekaliannya bongkar,
Bunyi bedil seperti tagar,
Gembiralah laku segala pendekar,
Rasanya bagai akan melanggar.

Tempik dan sorak terlalu garang,
Seperti laku orang berperang,
Segala panglima hatinya berang,
Rasanya bagai menyerang-nyerang.

Akan segala anak raja-raja,
Masing-masing nya durja,
Alat senjata sudah terpuja,

The difference is a hundred-fold

Daulat of Your Highness ever so
bright,
Its light like a glowing moon,
Anything (from Your Highness) excites
me,
Like being sick without groaning.

After everything is completely written,
Within it many metaphors and similes,
Lifted the vessel of Duli Shah Alam,
With the orders of *wazirul-alam*.

Hoisting the anchors of every vessel,
The *Sultan* departing, perfectly throned,
Cannons sounding thunderously,
Its smoke swirling in darkness.

While departing away from there,
Si Ketam Batu was rowed first,
Then all the ships with a single mast,
Looking like a swarm of flying termites.

Boats arranged together in rows,
Sounds of their oars ever so loud,
Mast and pennants waving,
Like the flapping of a bat's wings.

Equipments of the Sultan in these times,
Greatness not to be belittled,
If looked upon by all the people,
Looking like a war fleet.

After all completely lifted,
Sound of the gun like a distant thunder,
Joyful demeanor of all the warriors,
Feels like they will collide.

Shouts and cheers too fierce,
Like the demeanor of people in battle,
All the warriors hearts angered,
Feels like incessant attacking.

All the kings' sons,
Each of them looking grim,
Weaponry already blessed,

Seperti awan bercampur teja.

Like clouds combined with sunset.

Tunggul dan alam berkibaran,
Dayungnya banyak bersambaran,
Senapang pemuras berkaparan,
Bunyinya riuh bergemparan.

Mast and flags waving,
Their oars too many, pouncing,
Rifles, blunderbusses firing,
Their sounds loud, deafening.

Akan baginda Raja Muda,
Semayam di atas sampan bertunda,
Mengiringkan kenaikan paduka kekanda,
Siapa tahu banyak menggoda.

His Highness Raja Muda,
Residing upon a towed boat,
Escorting the vessel of his elder brother,
Who knows, many will persuade.

Raja pun arif sangat terbilang,
Hebatnya bukan lagi kepalang,
Laksana pudi intan diselang,
Cahayanya bersih amat cemerlang.

The king is wise, very renowned,
His greatness beyond compare,
Like laced gems and jewels,
Their light clear, ever so radiant.

Raja Setia dengan Encik Bada,
Didalam kenaikan Raja Muda,
Seorang panglima seorang nakhoda,
Keduanya sama diharap baginda.

Raja Setia with Encik Bada,
In the vessel of Raja Muda,
One is a warrior, the other a captain,
Both equally trusted by His Highness.

Melihat angkatan duli baginda,
Kapitan Belanda hatinya cinta,
Meriam pun tidak terpasang rata,
Takutkan orang melanggar kota.

Seeing the fleet of His Highness *duli*,
The Dutch captain, his heart filled with
love,
Cannons not entirely installed,
For fear of people wrecking the fort.

Holanda kutuk orang celaka,
Semena-mena berhati duka,
Rasanya sangat salah disangka,
Dikatakannya baginda takutkan murka.

Cursed Dutch, damned amongst men,
Immediately their hearts filled with
sorrow,
They feel like being wrongly
understood,
As told, feared the wrath of His
Highness.

Melihat laku segala makar,
Tambahan mendengar bedil istinggar,
Hati didalam sangatlah gobar,
Disangkanya gedung hendak dilanggar.

Seeing the manner of all tricksters,
Furthermore hearing the booms of the
guns,
Inside their hearts ever so gloomy,
Thinking the godown will be wrecked.

Kepada penjajab bagai dikarang,
Penuh tumpat seberang menyeberang,
Sikap dan laku sekaliannya orang,
Sepertikan sungguh akan berperang.

To the ship like it was arranged,
Dense and filled, criss-crossing,
Bearing and manner of all the people,
Much like really going to war.

Holanda kutuk sangat dukanya,
Berubah pucat warna mukanya,
Pintu gedung tidak dibukanya,
Sangatlah salah pada sangkanya.

Lepaslah angkatan darinya kota,
Baharulah pulih rasanya cita,
Jurutulis mari membawa kata,
Adalah manis dipandang mata.

*Setelah lepas kota Holanda,
Segala kelengkapan duli baginda,
Ramai bermain, orang muda-muda,
Suka tertawa bergurau senda.

Baginda pun sampai ke Terus Dulang,
Segala yang menghantar bermohon pulang,
Hati didalam sangatlah walang,
Gundah sebal bukan kepalang.

Hari pun hampir bertukar silam,
Berlabuhlah kenaikan Duli Shah Alam,
Di muka selat langsung ke dalam,
Dengan perintah wazirul-alam.

Setelah sudah baginda berlabuh,
Dipukul gendang nobat ditabuh,
Segala penjajap terlalu heboh,
Daripada petang sampailah subuh.

Telah siang terang menyeladang,
Nyatalah tampak sekalian dipandang,
Baginda pun turun sampan yang sedang,
Berangkat bermain menjala udang.

Paduka adinda mengiringkan serta,
Menjalani selat sekaliannya rata,
Berbagai ragam dipandang mata,
Udang dan ikan dijala semata.

Accursed Dutch, most melancholic,
His face changing, turning pale,
Door of the godown he did not open,
Extremely wrong in his judgement.

Passed the fleet from the fort,
Then the feeling of gladness is
recovered,
The scribe coming bringing the word,
Ever so sweet to be looked at.

After passing the Dutch fort,
The entire fleet of His Royal Highness,
Many of them playing, all the youths,
Delighting in laughing and fooling
around.

His Highness then arrived in Terus
Dulang,
All escorting ask to be excused,
In their hearts awfully troubled,
Sorrowful and deeply saddened.

The day almost turned into night,
Vessel of the *Duli* Shah Alam anchored,
Straight into the front side of the strait,
With the orders of *wazirul-alam*.

After His Highness completely
anchored,
Kettle-drums, percussions are beaten,
played,
All the ships all too noisy,
From evening up until dawn.

When daylight came brightly
overspreading,
Clearly seen everything looked at,
His Highness descended from a moving
boat,
Departing to play, catching shrimps.

His elder brother followed escorting,
Traveling throughout the strait,
A variety of sights seen,
While shrimp and fish caught.

Berlabuh disitu terlalu indah,
Ramai termasa riuh dan rendah,
Segala yang pergi menjala sudah,
Pulang memakan penganan juadah.

Hari malam tandang-bertandang,
Berbunyilah ragam gong dan gendang,
Segala yang banyak beroleh udang,
Ikan belanak diperbuatkan pindang.

Menjala itu baik beringat,
Takut kena ikan bersengat,
Sondaknya tajam bisanya sangat,
Barang kena mengidapkan rengat.

Adalah seorang hamba Allah,
Perinya sahaja berbuat olah,
Hendak disebutkan takutkan salah,
Kerana ia bukan hafilah.

Ke perahu fakir ia bertandang,
Diperjamu makan penganan rendang,
Hendak segera menjala udang,
Kerisnya tinggal tidak dipandang.

Ke sana sini pula dicari,
Serta menumbuk dada sendiri,
Cintanya sangat tiada terperi,
Dikatakan orang jua mencuri.

Adalah antaranya dua malam,
Berbunyilah gong wazirul alam,
Hilirlah kenaikan Duli Shah Alam,
Sampai ke Sungai Ketam Dalam.

Baginda berlabuh di situ pula,
Penjajab yang banyak rambang kualah,
Tampaklah penar laut bernyala,
Banyaklah pening sakit kepala.

*Tidaklah lagi dipanjangkan kisah,
Duduk di perahu terlalulah susah,

Anchored there, with beautiful sight,
Many were feasting in a hulabaloo,
All who were done going fishing,
Returned to feast on sweetmeats and meals.

Nighttime came for roaming,
Sounded various gongs and drums,
Those who procured many shrimps
and grey mullets, made into sour
soups²³⁵.

When netting better be reminded,
Fearing the bites stinging fish,
Sharp spikes extremely venomous,
Whoever stung would be infected.

There was one servant of Allah,
His demeanor laidback and whimsical,
For fear of errors, he will not be named,
Because he was not clean nor careful.

To the boat of the *fakir* he went to visit,
Served with sweetmeats and *rendang*²³⁶,
In a rush to go shrimp-netting,
Left his *keris* without seeing it.

Here and there he went looking,
While pounding his own chest,
His desperate longing undescribable,
People said it had been stolen.

In between two nights,
Sounded the *gong* of *wazirul-alam*,
Downriver went the vessel of *Duli Shah Alam*.
Until it reached Sungai Ketam Dalam.

His Highness anchored there,
Where many ships roved the estuary,
Visibly luminous, the sea lit up,
Until many were dizzy with headaches.

Not to make the story longer,
Sitting in a boat is extremely difficult,

²³⁵ *pindang* - a type of soup/stew made with tamarind, and fish or shrimps.

²³⁶ *rendang* – a kind of dry stew cooked with meat and coconut milk, a dish for festive occasions.

Dihempas gelombang perahu belisah,
Memancar peluh, badan pun basah.

Sampailah waktu dini hari,
Berbunyi gendang dengan nafiri,
Mendengarkan bunyi gong yang bahari,
Berdayunglah lantas ke tengah puri.

Setelah nyata terang sekali,
Gong berbunyi adalah tiga kali,
Segala manera mengiringkan duli,
Memandang laut rasanya ngeri.

Mendengarkan Raja Bendahara,
Kakap penjajab bongkar segera,
Kenaikan baginda Kerketa Indera,
Berdayung lantas ke tengah muara.

Lajunya tidak boleh dicela,
Seketika lepas ambang kuala,
Tampaklah Pulau Sembilan kepala,
Tanjung Kepah hampirlah pula.

Kakap penjajab umpama payar,
Laksana ikan didalam air,
Minta doakan batin dan zahir,
Baginda pun menyuruh naikkan layar.

Sekalian bersiap dayung diletak,
Mengucap selawat, angin dipinta,
Aleh temberang, layar disentak,
Betullah menuju ke Pulau Katak.

Layarnya kain terlalu indah,
Seperti bunga dikarang sudah,
Mengerjakan dia bukannya mudah,
Belok dan turut makin bertambah.

Turunlah angin menimba ruang,
Ombak memecah di Tanjung Karang,
Berbunyi genta berderang-derang,

Battered by waves, restless was the
boat,
Gushing out sweat, entire body was
soaked.

Until the day broke dawn,
Sounded the drums and the trumpet,
Listening to the beautiful sounds of the
gong,
Then rowed to the midst of the palace.

After it was clearly bright,
The gong sounded three times
All the ones accompanying His
Highness,
Looking at sea feeling terrified.

Listening to Raja Bendahara,
Ships and boats immediately lifted,
Vessel of His Highness Kerketa Indera,
Paddled then to the midst of an estuary.

Its speed not to be insulted,
After passing the edge of river mouth,
Became visible Pulau Sembilan ahead,
And nearby was Tanjung Kepah.

Ships and boats like guardians,
Similar to fish in the water,
Offering prayers for what was hidden
and apparent,
Then His Highness ordered to set sail.

After oars were placed down,
Incantations²³⁷ recited, praying for wind,
Stays adjusted, sail was hauled,
In the right direction to Pulau Katak.

Sails made of cloth ever so fine,
Like flowers completely arranged,
Controlling them is not an easy task,
With every turn and release, enlarging.

Wind came down filling the hollow,
Waves breaking in Tanjung Karang,
Sounded the bells tumultuously,

²³⁷ *Selawat*: blessings for the prophet, often recited in ritual and ceremonial gatherings.

Bersambutan dengan genta temberang.

Setelah sampai ke Teluk Batu,
Pancaroba angin tak tentu,
Setengah penjajab singgah disitu,
Sendi dan tulang bagai dilutu.

Sampailah antara Pulau Sembilan,
Banyaklah penjajab yang bertinggalan,
Sekalian sahabat handai dan taulan,
Barang dimakan tiada tertelan.

Tuanku Sultan raja berdaulat,
Belayar dengan sempurna alat,
Turunlah angin menegangi kelat,
Sampailah kenaikan kedalam selat.

Setelah sampai ke Selat Pangkor,
Segala yang tinggal sangatlah tafakur,
Dayung di tangan bagaikan gugur.
Seperti mabuk meminum anggur.

Di Pulau Pangkor baginda berlabuh,
Dipukul gong gendang dan tabuh,
Segala yang tinggal datangnya gopoh,
Riuh dan rendah terlalu heboh.

Seorang wazir duli tuanku,
Sedap manis sikap dan laku,
Dikurniai tempat suatu suku,
Di Sungai Pengkalan ia bertunggu

Sedia pun hamba yang sempurna,
Sahaja pun lama dibawah istana,
Dikurniai gelar Laksamana,
Boleh dititah barang ke mana.

Datanglah ia dari Pangkalan,
Diiringkan segala handai dan taulan,
Perahunya lengkap dengan apilan,
Teman pun banyak orang handalan.

Datang mengadap duli mahkota,
Orang Pangkalan bersama serta,

brilliantly,
Exchanging with bells of the stays.
After arriving at Teluk Batu,
Unpredictable troubled winds came,
Half of the ships rested there,
Limbs and bones feel assaulted.

When reaching Pulau Sembilan,
A lot of ships left behind,
All good friends and companions,
Whatever eaten cannot be swallowed.

Your Highness Sultan the divine king,
Sailing with perfected instruments,
Came down wind, mainsheet tauting,
Arrived the vessel in the strait.

After arriving at Selat Pangkor,
All left behind deep in thought,
Oar in hand as if falling out,
Like being drunk from drinking wine.

At Pulau Pangkor His Highness
harbored,
Gong, drums and percussions were
beaten,
All left behind came rushing,
Extremely noisy, in a raucous din.

A vizier of His Highness,
Sweet, charming bearing and manners
Bestowed with a place of a tribe,
At Sungai Pengkalan he waited.

Ever so ready the perfect servant,
Having long served beneath the crown,
Bestowed with the title Laksamana,
Set to be ordered wherever.

Came him from Pangkalan²³⁸
Escorted by friends and comrades,
His boat equipped with gunshields,
Befriended by many experts.

Came to pay homage to the crowned
duli,

²³⁸ Larut, a historic site in Perak

Lengkap dengan alat senjata,

Sikapnya tidak boleh dikata.

Akan kapitnya Penghulu Pematang,
Dengan Amar Pahlawan bersama datang,
Kepada niatnya pagi dan petang,
Mencari-cari pembayar hutang.

Sudah dekat perahunya tampak,
Oleh panglima lalu ditembak,
Disangka perahu musuh perompak,
Di laut tidak ibu dan bapak.

Ia pun sama hendak melawan,
Disangkanya bukannya perahu kawan,
Telah nyata sudah ketahuan,
Langsunglah menghadap Yang diPertuan.

Tiga buah penjajabnya datang,
Masuk menghadap, hari pun petang,
Menjunjung hadzrat kadam ditentang,
Persembahkan kerang berpuh gantang.

Sekaliannya rata dipersembah belaka,
Semuanya jap seorang seraga,
Sampailah ia hamba yang baka,
Turun-temurun hamba pesaka.

Setelah malam sudahlah hari,
Segala rakyat bersenang diri,
Ketika waktu dini hari,
Berbunyilah nobat gendang nafiri.

Hari pun siang terangnya nyata,
Riuhlah bunyi orang berkata,
Naik ke darat sekaliannya rata,
Berbagailah jenis pemandangan mata.

Nyatalah terbit sudah matahari,
Baginda pun naik berangkat sendiri,
Bermain langsung ke gedung yang bahari,

Together with the people of Pangkalan,
Complete with weapons, equipments,
Magnificence beyond worded
description.

To his assistant Penghulu Permatang,
Coming together with Amar Pahlawan,
To his day to day intentions,
Hunting for debt payers.

When the boat is visibly near,
Shot at by the passing warrior,
Thinking it was the boat of a pirate
enemy,
At sea without any elders.

He also wanted to fight together,
Knowing it was not a boat of a comrade,
Clearly it was already known,
Immediately they faced His Lordship.

His three ships arrived,
Entering to pay homage in the evening,
In servitude, soles resting upon their
heads,
Presenting tens of gallons of cockles.

All of them presented altogether,
Every one bringing a basket each,
Until it reached the eternal servant,
From the descent of rightful servants.

When night became day,
All the people eased themselves,
While dawn was in its inception,
Sounded the kettle-drums, trumpets,
percussions.

Midday came, clear in its brightness,
Noisily sound of people conversing,
Coming to shore all of them together,
Various kinds of sights for the eyes to
see.

Clearly the sun had risen,
His Highness rising himself to depart,
Then playing to the beautiful godown,

Berbagailah rupa tidak terperi.

Various forms, beyond description.

Gedung itu lama sudahlah sedia,
Holanda konon empunya dia,
Orang besarnya lagi mulia,
Habis dilanggar oleh seri dia.

The godown was built long ago,
The Dutchman, as if he owned it,
Its great official, also noble,
Entirely infringed upon by his charm.²³⁹

Akan baginda adinda Raja Muda,
Naik dahulu dari kekanda,
Menyuruhkan segala anak bibuanda,
Membaiki sungai pancuran yang ada.

To his younger brother Raja Muda,
Boarding before elder brother,
Ordering all the palace servants,
Fixing all the flows of the fountains.

Sultan kembali bermain sudah,
Bersiram ke Sungai Penjaring yang indah,
Raja Muda membuat faedah,
Tempayan dan buyung sekalian ditadah.

The Sultan having returned from his trip,
Bathed in the beautiful Sungai
Penjaring,
Raja Muda making profit,
Urn and water-jars all opened.

Fakir pun ada masa itu,
Ramai berhimpun semua di situ,
Fakir pun membuat pancuran satu,
Naik ke darat mengiringkan ratu.

The *fakir* also present at the time,
Many gathered all there,
The *fakir* then made a fountain,
Coming ashore escorting the queen.

Sudah bersiram, baginda kembali,
Naik ke kenaikan langsung sekali,
Segala yang ada mengiringkan duli,
Memandang ragam rawan dan sali.

After bathing, His Highness returned,
Boarding the vessel at once,
All present escorting the *duli*,
Watching the sad and strong hearted.

Yaumul-juma'ah ba'ada 'salat,
Terkenal pula sekaliannya alat,
Kenaikan baginda raja berdaulat,
Belayarlah dari dalamnya selat.

On Friday after prayers,
Fastened all the equipments,
Vessel of His Highness, the divine king,
Sailing from the inner strait.

Penjajab diatur tanding-bertanding,
Semuanya layar sama tersanding,
Kenaikan laju tiada terbanding,
Masuk menuju Kuala Dinding.

Ships aligned with each competing,
All of them with sails unfurled,
The fastest among them unchallenged,
Entering towards Kuala Dinding.

Berlabuh di kuala sungai yang sempit,
Perahu yang banyak apit-berapit,

Harboring at the narrow estuary,
Where many boats crowded,

²³⁹ This *rangkap* could be interpreted either literally or figuratively. Andaya's 1975 translation offers a historical referential point, locationally and temporally. Another side to this interpretation perhaps lies in the understanding of the word *langgar*, which has a figurative side as suggested in Wilkinson (1901) dictionary. Either one could possibly be the dominant interpretation, and semantically both are not mutually exclusive. However, in finalizing a printed translation there could be no other way but to choose either one or the other, and for this translation the latter was chosen.

Kiri dan kanan sangatlah bersepit,

Segala yang kecil takut terhempit.

Sudahlah tetap berlabuh di situ,
Riuh rendah tiada bertentu,
Setengahnya pergi segenap batu,
Mencari rezeki barang suatu.

Segala hamba duli tuanku,
Berbagailah ragam tingkah dan laku,
Masuk ke hutan bersuku-suku,
Pergi mencari damar berbuku.

Setelah malam sudahlah hari ,
Muafakatlh dia sama sendiri,
Pergi ke sampan menjala pari,
Setengah mengisa ikan berduri.

Daripada waktu dinihari,
Sampailah terbit matahari,
Segenap pantai berlari-lari,
Membawa serampang menikam pari.

Suka melihat kekayaan Allah,
Ada yang benar ada yang salah,
Ketam dan kertah berbagai olah,
Masuk segenap batu yang belah.

Teritip dan tiram banyak di situ,
Hinggap kepada segenap batu,
Jikalau hendak makannya itu,
Dengan besi pula dilutu.

Suatu tempat baginda bersiram,
Sebuah sungai, airnya curam,
Batunya banyak umpama biram,
Dihempaskan ombak deram menderam.

Berbagailah jenis aneka warna,
Lalai menentang terlalu bahana,
Tuanku raja yang bijaksana,
Senantiasa bersiram di sana.

Suatu kisah pula dikarang,

Left and right extremely packed,

Alas, all the small ones might be
cornered.

After set and harbored there,
Noisy hullabaloo without order,
Half of them going the full distance,
Searching for some turnover.

All the servants of Your Highness,
Various kinds of behavior and manners,
Entering the jungle in many factions,
Going to search for lumps of resins.

When night came replacing the day,
With each other in agreement,
Going to the boats to net stingrays,
Half of them catching catfish.

From when the sun sets,
Until the sun rises,
They ran on the entire shoreline,
Carrying spears to stab rays.

Reveling in watching the greatness of
Allah,
There is right, there is wrong,
Crabs scurrying with various quirks,
Going into cracks and crevices of rocks.

Mussels and shellfish, many were there,
Latching on the rocks,
If they were to be eaten,
Must be cracked open with iron.

At one place His Highness bathed,
A river, with rapid waters,
With many rocks, like elephants,
Hurled on by roaring waves.

Various kinds of assorted colors,
Dreamy, facing extreme bewilderment,
Your Highness the wise king,
Frequently bathed there.

A story was then composed,

Perinya khabar zaman sekarang,
Dipandang tak nyata, periksanya kurang,
Memberi susah sekaliannya orang.

Ketika hari hampirlah petang,
Panglima Garang segera datang,
Katanya, “Dato’ perhamba tentang,
Perahu orang banyak layar terbentang.

Perhamba lihat berulang-ulang,
Dua belas perahu banyak dibilang,
Di Selat Pangkor di alang-alang,
Entahkan raja entahkan hulubalang.”

Orang Kaya Temenggung hatinya berang,
Mendengarkan khabar Panglima Garang,
Menyuruh bersiap sekalian orang,
Kerana ia panglima yang garang.

*Pergilah kepada wazirul-alam,
Bersama dengan Panglima Dalam,
Langsung menghadap Duli Shah Alam,
Persembahkan khabar sekalian kalam.

Bagindalah raja yang berkuasa,
Menitahkan segala hulubalang perkasa,
Pergi melihat dengan perkasa,
Siapa orangnya ketahuan desa.

Pergilah segala orang merata,
Mengerjakan titah duli mahkota,
Segenap teluk dijalani rata,
Satu pun tidak dipandang mata.

Telah tiada nyata kelihatan,
Sekaliannya kembali menghadap Sultan,
Persembahkan khabar segala perbuatan,
Menjadi panjang berlarat-laratan.

“Daulat tuanku sedia terula,
Sudah dicita daripada mula,
Sebuah kapal datanglah pula,
Kapitan Inggeris dari Benggala.

Of conditions, descriptions of present times,
Unclearly seen, lacking prudence,
Giving trouble to all the people.

When day turned to evening,
Panglima Garang hastily came,
Said he, “Humbly I recount,
The many boats with unfurled sails.

Many times I have seen,
There were twelve boats, I counted,
In Selat Pangkor lying crosswise,
They might be either kings or chiefs.

Orang Kaya Temenggung, his heart angered,
Listening to the news by Panglima Garang,
Ordered all the people to be prepared,
Because he is a fierce warrior.

Left to meet *wazirul-alam*,
Together with Panglima Dalam,
Straight to face Duli Shah Alam,
Presenting news all that is written.

His Highness, the all-powerful king,
Commanded all the valiant chiefs,
Going to investigate, gallantly,
Whoever it was, from which hamlet.

Departed all the people everywhere,
Carrying the orders of the divine crown,
The entire bay traversed,
Not even one was seen by the eyes.

After clearly none was sighted,
All of them returned to face the Sultan,
Presenting news of all their doings,
That became tediously lengthened.

“*Daulat* of Your Highness emblazoned,
Already hoped for from the beginning,
Another ship then arrived,
An English captain from Bengal.

Di Selat Pangkor ia berlabuh,
Hampir kepada gedung yang labuh,
Dipasangnya meriam bagaikan tabuh,
Kelasnya banyak mulutnya riuh.

Baginda mendengar khabar yang nyata,
Sangatlah suka di dalam cita,
Siapa yang pandai berkata-kata,
Dititahkan oleh duli mahkota.

Panglima Maharaja Indera Muda,
Dengan Seri Lela bersamalah ada,
Daeng Tumanin orang berida,
Dititahkan sama oleh baginda.

Seorang Megat Indera Bongsu,
Dititahkan pergi bersekutu,
Enche Tadong jurubahasanya itu,
Pergi serta, disuruhkan ratu.

Setelah siang waktunya pagi,
Segala yang dititahnya semuanya pergi,
Sebuah sampan layar sebiji,
Langsung menuju kepada kechi.

Telah bertemu dengannya Inggeris,
Sekaliannya naik bersiap keris,
Ia berbahasa cerus-ceris,
Disuruhnya duduk sama sebaris.

Setelah naik segala yang pitah,
Serta duduk menyampaikan titah,
Berkata-kata dua tiga patah,
Sambil melihat alat perintah.

“Kami sekalian dititahkan Sultan,
Disuruh memanggil Tuan Kapitan,
Di Sungai Dinding dengan angkatan,
Silalah tuan jangan berlambatan.”

Serta Kapitan mendengarkan titah,
Tidaklah lagi berbanyak olah,

In Selat Pangkor it harbored,
Close to the godown's trail,
On it installed cannons like drums,
Its sailors many with noisy mouths.

His Highness upon hearing the clear
news,
Tremendously delighted within his
heart,
Whoever was skilled in talking,
conversing,
Ordered by the crowned *duli*.

Panglima Maharaja Indera Muda,
With Seri Lela together, present,
Daeng Tumanin an experienced man,
Ordered to escort His Highness.

One Megat Indera Bongsu,
Ordered to go join together ,
Enche Tadong his interpreter,
Going together, as asked by the king.

When the day was bright in the
morning,
Those who were ordered, all left,
A boat with a sail,
Immediately headed towards the ketch.

When they met with the English,
All of them boarded prepared with *keris*,
The language sounded *cerus-ceris*,
Ordered to sit together in a row.

After all who were fluent boarded,
And sat down conveying orders,
Spoke two or three words,
Whilst looking at instruments of regalia.

“All of us had been ordered by the
Sultan,
Ordered to call on the Lord Kapitan,
At Sungai Dinding with the fleet,
Please come sir, do not be late.

When the Kapitan heard the order,
Without much fooling around,

Turun di sampan lakunya pitah,
Diiringkan kelasi seorang tak bantah.

Masuk ke Sungai Kuala Dinding,
Dilihatnya perahu banyak bertanding,
Dengan apilan siap tersanding,
Hebatnya tidak lagi berbanding.

Memandang rupa laku angkatan,
Hati di dalam bimbang ketakutan,
Disuruhnya dayung oleh Kapitan,
Segera menuju ke kenaikan Sultan.

Setelah sampai dekat kenaikan,
Titah baginda suruh rentikan,
Undur sedikit suruh labuhkan,
Tempatnya lagi diperbuatkan.

Segala wazir duli mahkota,
Hadir mengadap di bawah takhta,
Datanglah Inggeris hebat yang nyata,
Dengan persembahan dibawanya serta.

Mengadap Sultan yang terala,
Mengangkatkan chepiau senget kepala,
Bermacam jenis dibawanya pula,
Dagangan di bawa dari Benggala.

Akan titah baginda Sultan,
Menghendaki meriam kepada Kapitan,
Mana yang elok bangsa buatan,
Harganya berapa yang dipatutkan.

Kapitan menyembah mengangkat jari,
“Esoklah patik bawa kemari,
Sepasang meriam sedang gahari,
Harganya timah mohon diberi.”

Seketika duduk berkata-kata,
Baginda pun suka di dalam cita,

Went down to the boat, his manner
eloquent,
Escorted by sailors, not even one
protest.

Entering Sungai Kuala Dinding,
Seeing boats many competing,
With gunshields completely installed,
Their greatness cannot be compared.

Seeing the looks and manners of the
fleet,
The heart within worried in fear,
Ordered to paddle by the Kapitan,
In haste heading to the vessel of the
Sultan.

After arriving at the vessel,
Ordered by His Highness to halt,
And go astern a little to harbor,
While the place was being made.

All the viziers of the divine crown,
Present paying homage beneath the
throne,
Came the English, his greatness clear,
Bearing gifts brought together.

Paying homage to the most exalted
Sultan,
Tipping the hat, tilting head,
Various kinds brought with him,
Of merchandise coming from Bengal.

Orders by His Highness the Sultan,
Desiring cannons from the Kapitan,
Whichever of good make and origin,
For a suitable price that was fixed.

The Kapitan made obeisance, finger
lifted,
“Tomorrow I will bring here,
A pair of cannons, fairly superb,
For the price of tin, to be paid.”

For a moment sat down to converse,
His Highness delighted in his heart,

Dikurniai oleh duli mahkota,
Makanan dari negeri kita.

Kapitan suka bukan kepalang,
Segenap musim hendak berulang,
Teguh janji bulan dibilang,
Ia pun menyembah bermohon pulang.

Telah sudah keesokan harinya,
Sampailah konon bagai janjinya,
Menurunkan meriam dari kechinya,
Didayungkan oleh segala kelasinya.

Meriam dua sama sebangsa,
Dihantarkan oleh jurubahasa,
Titah baginda disuruh periksa,
Jikalau ada cacat binasa.

Adinda baginda dititahkan,
Harganya timah disuruh timbangkan,
Tidaklah kisah dipanjangkan,
Sekaliannya ada mengerjakan.

Meriam dibeli dua setanding,
Pelurunya bagai nyiur gading,
Eloknya tidak lagi terbanding,
Digelar baginda Seri Dinding.

Sepucuk digelar Seri Pangkor,
Keduanya sama panjang diukur,
Cacatnya tidak boleh ditegur,
Anaknya bagai buah gelugur.

Habislah kisah konon disitu,
Segala bicara habislah tentu,
Bongkarlah pula kenaikan ratu,
Belayar melalui Cucuran Hantu.

Dengan daulat duli baginda,
Laut yang keras menjadi reda,
Seperti khabar orang berida,

Blessed by the divine crown,
Delicacies from our state.

The Kapitan delighted beyond compare,
Each season wanting to come back,
Kept his word, counting the months,
Then he asked permission to return home.

When the day after came,
Arrived as he had promised,
Alighted cannonees from his ketch,
By his many sailors paddled.

Two cannons of the same origin,
Delivered by the interpreter,
Ordered by His Highness to be inspected,
If there were any flaws or dents.

Younger brother of His Highness so ordered,
To weigh out their price in tin,
Without prolonging the story,
All those who were present got to work.

Cannons bought, both alike,
Their bullets like yellow coconuts²⁴⁰,
Their magnificence unmatched,
Named by His Highness Seri Dinding.

Another named Seri Pangkor,
Both equal in length when measured,
Their flaws cannot be pointed,
Their bullets like *buah gelugur*²⁴¹

Apparently the story ended there,
All conversation surely ended,
Departed then the king's vessel,
Sailing through Cucuran Hantu.

With *daulat* of His Royal Highness,
The arduous sea became calm,
Like accounts of experienced men,

²⁴⁰ a small palm with pale-yellow coconuts, , formerly grown only in the royal gardens.

²⁴¹ Yellow-orange fluted fruit of the *Garcinia atroviridis*, used as a seasoning with curries and for cleaning creeses.

Harus gembira haram tiada.

With no happiness to be seen.

Antara laut Pantai Remis,
Pasirnya bagai santan diramas,
Gelombang dan bakat habislah kemas,
Sebuah pun tidak mara dan cemas.

Between seas Pantai Remis,
Its sand like crushed coconut shavings,
Waves and rainclouds completely gone,
Not even one endangered and in peril.

Turunlah angin alang-kepalang,
Kakap penjajab silang-bersilang,
Tidaklah kisah dapat terbilang,
Baginda pun sampai ke Pulau Talang.

Descended the slight wind,
Ships and boats criss-crossing,
Before any story could be recounted,
Arrived His Highness at Pulau Talang.

Belayar itu sambil bercura,
Berlabuhlah pula di Teluk Sera,
Segala rakyat bala tentera,
Riuh rendah bunyi suara.

While sailing also jesting around,
Harbored then in Teluk Sera,
All the people and army troops,
Their voices sounding in a noisy
hullabaloo.

Naik ke pantai pasirnya putih,
Bersenangkan penat tubuh yang letih,
Mana yang panas peluh meretih,
Turun mandi ke Sungai Ratih.

Coming ashore on the white sandy
beach,
Easing the fatigue of tired bodies,
Those who felt hot perspiring, sweating,
Went down to Sungai Ratih to bathe.

Tempatnya indah terlalu elok,
Sungainya banyak didalam teluk,
Gunung beratur batu berkalok,
Aneka rupa sampan dan balok.

The place was beautiful, too
magnificent,
With many rivers in the bay,
Ranges of mountains, jagged rocks,
With various shaped vessels and small
boats.

Sebuah sungai di atas batu,
Diperbuat pula pancuran satu,
Raja Muda hadir di situ,
Membuatkan tempat persiraman ratu.

In a river on the rocks,
Where a fountain was made,
Raja Muda arrived there,
Constructing a royal bathing place.

Setelah hari sudahlah malam,
Tidaklah fakir panjangkan kalam,
Segala hamba Duli Shah Alam,
Berbagailah laku sinar dan silam.

After day became night,
Without the *fakir* lengthening the
writing,
All servants of Duli Shah Alam,
Behaviors varying, crepuscular and
bright.

Hari pun siang terbitlah fajar,
Tiang penjajab bagai dijajar,
Perahu diatur sekalian berbanjar,
Bongkarlah sauh dayung diajar.

The day broke, rose the sun,
Shipmasts as if arranged in a row,
Boats lined all in range,
Anchors lifted oars brought out.

Dibongkar sauh dari Teluk Sera,
Sebuah perahu beroleh cedera,
Berkat daulat yang sejahtera,
Ditolongi Allah juga terpelihara.

Gunung-gunung angin pancaroba,
Tiang pun patah, layar tegerba,
Orang di dalam terkam cheraba,
Timbul tenggelam dihempas ombak.

Perahu melenggang timbang-menimbang,
Duduk di dalam terlalu bimbang,
Istimewa pula dihempas gelombang,
Rasanya bagai akan terbang.

Berkat daulat batin dan lahir,
Lepaslah bahaya daripada air,
Sekalian penjajab habis belayar,
Tinggal sebuah juga tergobar.

Kelakuan segala handai dan taulan,
Berbagailah ragam sepanjang jalan,
Tuanku sampai ke Sungai Pangkalan,
Patik sebuah juga ketinggalan.

Berhentilah patik di Teluk Sera,
Menggantikan tiang sudah cedera,
Miskin tidak bersaudara,
Tinggal sebuah dengan sengsara.

Daripada tidak membuat bakti,
Satu pun tidak mahu menanti,
Baik pun ada teman yang herti,
Mengambil kayu, tiang diganti.

Teluk Sera Sungai Beruas,
Rambang kuala pasirnya luas,
Patiklah mahba sertanya tewas,
Maksud tak sampai, hati tak puas.

Sampailah waktu tengah hari rembang,

Anchor raised from Teluk Sera,
A boat was damage,
Peaceful blessings of the *daulat*,
It was helped and protected by Allah's help.

Troubled winds in the mountains,
Mast broke, sail hung lopsided,
People onboard frantically grasping,
Battered by waves, sinking, surfacing.

The drifting boat bobbing up and down,
Ones on it too worried,
Especially while battered by waves,
It felt like flying on air.

Blessings of the *daulat*, hidden and seen,
The danger passed from the ocean,
All the ships sailed to their destinations,
With only left behind in the gloom.

Behaviors of all friends and companions,
With various manners along the way,
His Highness arrived at Sungai Pangkalan,
Leaving behind poor old me.

I halted in Teluk Sera,
Replacing a broken post,
Broke, without relatives,
Left alone with misery.

Rather than not performing duty,
Not even one wanted to wait,
Despite having a friend who emphasized,
Taking wood, replacing post.

Teluk Sera Sungai Beruas,
Around the estuary, wide sandy shores,
I was enchanted, and lost,
Meaning undelivered, heart unsatisfied.

Arrived the looming noontime,

Tiang pun sudah berganti tupang,
Bongkarlah sauh, layar ditambah,
Hingga sebuah juga terambang.

Setelah hari sudahlah petang,
Mengucap selawat tangan dibentang,
Sebuah perahu tidak ditentang,
Suatu pun tidak aral melintang.

Belayar sebuah derang-derong,
Berlabuhlah di Sungai Kuala Terung,
Tiada ketahuan sungai dan lorong,
Hari pun gelap bulan terkurung.

Telah hari hampirkan siang,
Tampaklah sinar berbayang-bayang,
Ditarik layar setengah tiang,
Ditiup angin bagai digoyang.

Berbagailah laku segenap jalan,
Dengan segala handai dan taulan,
Sehari semalam bertinggalan,
Maka sampai ke Sungai Pangkalan.

Kenaikan Sultan di Kuala Jebong,
Kakap penjajab diubong-ubong,
Baharulah hati patik melambung,
Mengiringkan tuanku bersambung-sambung.

Berdatang sembah Orang Kaya Laksamana,
Dengan Penghulu Tok Mudasana,
Tuanku Sultan Raja yang Ghana,
Dipersilakan naik semayam ke sana.

“Daulat tuanku yang amat tinggi,
Berangkatlah mudik serantau lagi,
Ke teratak tuanku yang amat tinggi,
Tempatnya elok, medannya sunyi.”

Titah baginda duli Sultani,
“Baiklah kita berhenti di sini,
Orang pun banyak sekaliannya ini,
Segala teman ditinggalkan fani.”

Post already replaced with a new one.,
Anchor lifted, sail tethered,
Until it was afloat.

When day became evening,
Incantations recited, hands spread out,
Not a boat opposing,
Not even a single obstacle athwart.

Sailing with a clatter of sounds,
Harbored in Sungai Kuala Terung,
River and passage unknown,
Day was dark, shadowed was the moon.

Already day was nearing afternoon,
Became visible the light with its
reflections,
Sail pulled half-mast,
Blown by the wind, it swayed.

Various demeanors the entire way,
With all friends and companions,
A day, a night left behind,
Then they arrived at Sungai Pangkalan.

Vessel of the Sultan in Kuala Jebong,
Ships and boats interconnected,
Only then my heart soared,
Escorting Your Highness continuously.

Came paying obeisance Orang Kaya
Laksamana,
With Penghulu Tok Mudasana,
His Highness Sultan the rich king,
Invited to come up there and reside.

“*Daulat tuanku*, praises most high,
Departing upstream to another coast,
To the abode of Your Lordship most
high,
A beautiful place, with quiet gardens.

Spoke His Royal Highness the Sultan,
“It is best if we stop here,
Where there are many people gathered,
All companions left briefly.”

Berdatang sembah Amar Pahlawan,
Serta manis barang kelakuan,
“Patik nan hamba baharu ketahuan,
Hendak mengadap laki-laki perempuan.”

Came paying obeisance Amar
Pahlawan,
With sweetness in his manners,
“I, your servant, was just made to be
known,
Of a desire to face the ladies and
gentlemen.”

Akan raja Setia Lela,
Berdatang sembah menundukkan kepala,
“Patik nan hamba umpama gembala,
Tuanku hendak melihat desa.”

To the king Setia Lela,
Came paying obeisance, head bowed,
“I, your servant, like a guide,
Should Your Highness desire to see the
countryside.”

*Titah baginda, “Jika demikian,
Baiklah mudik penjajab sekalian,
Di mana tempat sudah dilayan,
Mudiklah penjajab dahulu kemudian.”

Spoke His Highness, “If then,
It is best that all the ships go upriver,
Where a place is already prepared,
Go ahead upriver the ships then.”

Bongkarlah kenaikan Sultan yang ghana,
Berlabuh di jambatan Orang Kaya
Laksamana,
Tempatnya indah amat sempurna,
Padangnya luas anta saujana.

Departed the vessel of the rich Sultan,
Harbored at the bridge Orang Kaya
Laksamana,
Beautiful place most perfect,
Meadows as wide as eyes could see.

Berhimpunlah rakyat Jebong Permatang,
Mari mengadap pagi dan petang,
Serta dipersembahkan sekalian ditatang,
Pisang dan tebu berpuluh batang.

Gathered people of Jebong Permatang,
Coming to pay obeisance morning and
evening,
Then presented, on palm fronds,
Bananas and sugarcanes, tens of them.

Laksamana orang johari,
Tambahan bondanya orang bahari,
Persembah persantapan setiap hari,
Barang yang kurang baginda beri.

Laksamana a wise man,
Moreover his mother a fair lady,
Presenting royal meals everyday,
Whatever lacking provided by His
Highness.

Seekor kerbau disembelihnya,
Sekaliannya habis diperjamunya,
Segala raja-raja orang besar-besarnya,
Dipersilakan naik ke rumahnya.

A buffalo he slaughtered,
All of them he entertained with a feast,
All the kings and royal officials,
Invited to come up to his house.

Diperjamu santap sekalian belaka,
Sambil bergurau berjenaka,

Treated with meals all of them,
While jesting and joking around,

Sampailah ia hamba yang saka,
Sezarah tak mahu memalingkan muka.

Segala penghulu Rawa Minangkabau,
Sekaliannya mengadap persembahkan
kerbau,
Kampit dan nyiur pun banyak terlampau,
Negeri pun kecil umpama pulau.

Ada antara beberapa hari,
Berbagai perbuatan laku dan peri,
Ada yang ke laut pergi mencari,
Setengah menjala sehari-hari.

Mana yang diam duduk bersenang,
Sabung dan judi alah dan menang,
Setengahnya pergi ke Pulau Pinang,
Ada yang mengembara mencari tunang.

Akan Panglima Wayang Jiwa,
Pergi ke laut menchangok jua,
Ada sebuah perahu bersewa,
Dilanggarnya dapat lalu dibawa.

Orangnya lari naik ke darat,
Takutkan mati kena kerat,
Masuk ke hutan berjalan larat,
Tiada ketahuan sesat barat.

Larinya dengan gopoh dan gapah,
Semak dan samun habis dirapah,
Dengan daulat duli khalifah,
Menurun pula ke Tanjung Kepah.

Tinggallah perahu porak peranda,
Oleh panglima lalu ditunda,
Dipersembahkan ke bawah duli baginda,
Serta muatan barang yang ada.

Until it was certain he was a loyal
servant,
Not wanting to turn his face the other
way.

All the headmen, Rawa, Minangkabau,
All of them paying obeisance,
presenting buffalos,
Sacks of rice and coconuts in
abundance,
The state became small, like an island.

A few days afterwards,
With various conducts, behaviors and
manners,
Some went to sea, going hunting,
Half of them fishing everyday.

The silent ones sat leisurely,
Cock-fighting and gambling, losing and
winning,
Half of them left to Pulau Pinang,
Some journeying to find a match.

As for Panglima Wayang Jiwa,
Going to sea, paddling,
In a commissioned boat,
Which he attacked, then brought back.

Its passengers ran away to shore,
Afraid of being cut up to pieces,
Going into the jungle, barely walking,
Almost lost, without knowing
directions.

Running with much haste, rushing,
Bushes and scrubs in the way trampled,
With sovereignty of the crown of the
caliph,
Descended then to Tanjung Kepah.

The boat was left in tatters,
By the captain then it was towed,
And presented beneath *duli* His
Highness,
All the loaded cargo found.

Ada seorang temannya dapat,
Mengadap baginda tiada sempat,
Dibunuh oleh kawan berempat,
Lalu dicampakkan ke dalam perupat.

Adalah kadar barang sebulan,
Baginda semayam di Sungai Pangkalan,
Segala yang mengadap datang berjalan,
Membawa persembahan dengan perbekalan.

Sekalian penghulu petang dan pagi,
Membawa persembahan berbagai-bagai,
Kampit dan nyiur berpuluh rangkai,
Sirih dan pinang beratus tangkai.

Setelah habis semuanya rata,
Mengadap hadhrat duli mahkota,
Oleh baginda dipandang nyata,
Setengah dilawan berkata-kata.

Tuanku Sultan yang terutama,
Adinda baginda bersama-sama,
Sungai Pengkalan diubahkan nama,
Negeri susunan pula isma.

Diletakkan orang berjual beli,
Dengan modalnya dikurnia sekali,
Baginda pun hendak berangkat sekali,
Sekaliannya sudah ditinggali.

Ada seorang Bugis yang pota,
Ialah dijadikan mata-mata.
Kira berniaga jangan dikata,
Sahaja biasa sudah berharta.

Sedang dahulu modal berbaharu,
Bergelar Seri Lela Indera,
Sudahlah ia huru hara,
Badan pun sudah merasai mara.

Begotten by one of his companions,
Without a chance of facing His
Highness,
Killed by the gang of four,
Then thrown into the crossway.

Within about a month,
His Highness resided in Sungai
Pangkalan,
All paying obeisance came walking,
Bringing gifts and supplies.

All the headmen evening and morning,
Bringing gifts of various kinds,
Sacks of rice and coconuts, tens of
fronds,
Betel-vine and areca nut, hundreds of
stalks.

After all completely even,
Having an audience with the crowned
duli,
By His Highness clearly accepted,
Some exchanged words in conversation.

Your Highness most eminent Sultan,
His younger brother escorting together,
Name of Sungai Pengkalan changed,
*Susunan*²⁴² country now was its name.

Given by the people trading,
With capital bestowed together,
His Highness desired to depart at once,
Everyone else already left behind.

There was a peerless Bugis man,
He was made into a policeman,
Not to mention his intuition in trading,
Used to having properties.

While it was then renewed capital,
Named Seri Lela Indera,
It was completely chaotic,
Danger already felt in the body.

²⁴² *susunan/susuhunan*: a title of the emperor of Mataram and now of the ruler of Solo in Java.

Sekarang pula disuruh baginda,
Diberi modal barang yang ada,
Jikalau datang barang nakhoda,
Ialah membeli sekaliannya benda.

Baginda pun hendak berangkat pulang,
Berhimpunlah datang sekalian hulubalang,
Serta rakyat tiada terbilang,
Dari Bukit Gantang sampai ke Talang.

Setelah sudah sekalian berkampung,
Hilirlah kenaikan ke Kuala Jebong,
Segala penjajab hubung-berhubung,
Tinggallah tuan tempat menyabung.

Kadar semalam baginda disana,
Berhimpunlah segala yang mengerna,
Berangkat Sultan raja yang ghana,
Lantas ke laut anta saujana.

Setelah siang keesokan hari,
Berbunyilah gendang dengan nafiri,
Sekaliannya bongkar dari negeri,
Masing-masing belayar berperi-peri.

Belayar itu bersuka-suka,
Sambil bermain gurau jenaka,
Angin pun naik rembang ketika,
Sedikit pun tidak menaruh sangka.

Melintas perahu dari utara,
Belayarlal dari atas muara,
Dihambat sahaja berpura-pura,
Larinya sampai ke tengah segara.

Belayar itu sampailah malam,
Terlangsunglah dahulu wazirul-alam,
Tidaklah kisah dipanjangkan kalam,
Berlabuh kenaikan Duli Shah Alam.

Hari pun siang fajar pun merekah,
Di Teluk Serta baginda pun singgah,
Bermain di pantai, pasirnya megah,

Now he was ordered by His Highness,
To give whatever capital in possession,
If any captain were to arrive,
All the goods he would buy.

His Highness desiring to depart home,
Gathered, arrived all the chiefs,
With all the people, too many to be
counted,
From Bukit Gantang all the way to
Talang.

After everyone gathered in the village,
Vessel headed downriver to Kuala
Jebong,
All the ships readily interconnected,
Left behind the cock-fighting ring.

About a night His Highness spent there,
Gathered all beloved ones,
Departed Sultan, the rich king,
Directly to the sea, with clear horizons.

Afternoon the next day,
Sounded the drums and trumpets,
All of them departed from the state,
Each sailing in various fashions,

Sailing joyfully in delight,
While playing with jests and jokes,
The wind rose, the moment looming,
Not even a little bit expected.

Crossed the boat from north,
Sailing from the estuary,
Battered leisurely, gently,
Ran until the midst of the ocean.

Sailing until nightfall,
First, forthwith *wazirul-alam*,
The story not lengthfully written,
Harbored the vessel of *Duli Shah Alam*.

Daybreak at the crack of dawn,
In Teluk Serta His Highness visited,
Playing at the shore, with its great

Berbagailah ragam laku dan tingkah.

Segala sampan segenap kuala,
Ada yang memukat ada yang menjala,
Ada setengah mengail pula,
Yu dan pari tiada terbela.

Mana yang pergi ke Sungai Bunting,
Turun ke pantai lumpur berlanting,
Menggagau kerang raga ditating,
Diperbuatkan kenas dengan kerinting.

Dua malam di teluk itu,
Suka bermain segenap batu,
Berbagai jenis bukannya satu,
Belayar menempuh Cucuran Hantu.

Telah sinar bertukar silam,
Di Labuhan Bilik pula bermalam,
Segala hamba Duli Shah Alam,
Setengah menjala ke Teluk Dalam.

Hari pun siang seumpama dian,
Bongkarlah pula penjajab sekalian,
Semuanya berdayung dahulu kemudian,
Ada yang singgah berhenti-hentian.

Tidaklah fakir panjangkan kata,
Banyak sedap di dalam cita,
Singgah di Pangkor duli mahkota,
Sekaliannya berlabuh semuanya rata.

Dua malam pula berhenti,
Baginda bermain bersuka hati,
Sekalian dayang mendera sakti,
Bermain di pantai berganti-ganti.

Bermain di pasir mengambil remis,
Diperbuatkan rendang serta ditumis,

sands,

Various manners, conducts and attitudes.

All the boats the entire estuary,
Some were fishing, some were casting nets,
Half of them were angling,
Sharks and rays not reared.

Those who went to Sungai Bunting,
Descended to the muddy beach rafting,
Groping cockles, lifting basketfuls,
Pickles were made by salting.

Two nights in the bay,
With delight playing in the rocks,
Many kinds not one,
Sailing traversing Cucuran Hantu.

When light changed to darkness,
In Labuhan Bilik then the night spent,
All servants of *Duli Shah Alam*,
Half of them casting nets in Teluk Dalam.

Day became bright like a candle,
Departed all the ships,
All rowing forth and aft,
There some stopping here and there.

Fakir not lengthening the word,
Withn the heart with much ecstasy,
Stopping at Pangkor the divine crown,
All of them harbored fairly.

Two nights then stopped,
His Highness played with delight,
All the charming magical maidens,
Playing ashore in succession.

Playing in the sand collecting shellfish,
Made into *rendang*, some fried,

Ada yang setengah gulai manis,
Mana yang gemar penchok dan pais.

Setelah sampai bermain rata,
Aneka rupa pemandangan mata,
Fakir tak mahu banyak kata,
Akhirnya kelak menjadi lata.

Hari pun siang pagi-pagi,
Berhimpunlah datang mana yang pergi,
Daulat tuanku yang amat tinggi,
Tidaklah kisah bermain lagi.

Sudahlah konon segala perbuatan,
Bongkarlah sauh kenaikan Sultan,
Turunlah angin sorong buritan,
Habishlah belayar segala angkatan.

Baginda Sultan yang terala,
Daulatnya terang amat bernyala,
Sehari itu masuk ke kuala,
Selamat sempurna tiada bercela.

Setelah masuk Kuala Perak,
Digulung layar dayung diorak,
Riuhlah bunyi tempik dan sorak,
Dipasang meriam jadi pengarak.

Kebesaran daulat yang amat limpah,
Usahkan kurang makin bertambah,
Segala hamba duli khalifah,
Mendapat orang di Tanjung Kepah.

Aceh konon dirundung malang,
Dua belas orang banyak dibilang,
Dibawa oleh Raja Alang,

There were some made into sweet curry,
And favorites like *penchok*²⁴³ and
*pais*²⁴⁴.

After all arrived from playing,
A variety of appearances for the eyes to
see,
Not wanting to say too much,
In the end the word may become
wretched.

Daybreak early in the morning,
Gathered those who were leaving,
Daulat tuanku most high,
No more stories of the journey.

After all actions were apparently
completed,
Anchor of the vessel of the Sultan was
lifted,
Descended the wind pushing astern,
Entire fleet completely set sail.

His Highness Sultan most high,
His *daulat* shining with great brightness,
On that day entering into the estuary,
Perfectly safe without any harm.

After entering Kuala Perak,
Sail rolled, oars withdrew,
Hubbub, sounds of shouts and cheers,
Cannons installed as heralds.

Greatness of the *daulat* overflowing,
Decreasing not, ever increasing,
All servants of the *duli* caliph,
Begetting friends in Tanjung Kepah.

Apparently Aceh was struck by grief,
Twelve people many, counted,
Brought by Raja Alang,

²⁴³ *penchok*, *pinchok*: a fruit or vegetable cooked with sugar and fishpaste; *p. nanas*, *p. timun*. a way of preparing sour fruits or vegetables for consumption; slicing and boiling them in syrup 2. *meminchok (hati)*: decoy or mislead. (Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 276)

²⁴⁴ *pais*: fish spiced and baked in banana leaf; fish with onion and ginger cooked in a wrapper of leaf. Winstedt, *Dictionary*, 252)

Mengadap baginda sambil pulang.

Paying homage to His Highness upon return.

Telah diperiksa wazirul-alam,
Perahu Aceh itu yang kelam,
Diamuk perompak di Tanjung Dalam,
Disembahkan kepada Duli Shah Alam.

After inspection *wazirul-alam*,
Acehnese boat was sinking,
Attacked by robbers in Tanjung Dalam,
Presented to *Duli Shah Alam*.

Tidaklah banyak kisah dibilang,
Baginda pun sampai ke Terusan Dulang,
Segala wazir dan hulubalang,
Sukanya bukan lagi kepalang.

The story is not excessively told,
His Highness arrived at Terusan
Dulang,
All the viziers and chiefs,
Delighted beyond belief.

Telah siang keesokan hari,
Datanglah wazir Orang Kaya Menteri,
Menyambut baginda masuk ke negeri,
Sukanya hati tiada terperi.

Afternoon the next day,
Came the vizier Orang Kaya Menteri,
Greeting His Highness entering the
state,
Heart delighted beyond description.

Tidaklah panjang kisah dijalan,
Habishlah sekalian perbekalan,
Sekalian perahu yang berapilan,
Sebuah pun tidak beringgalan.

Not lengthened the story on the road,
All supplies were diminished,
All the boats with gunshields,
Not even one left behind.

Setelah sampai ke dalam kota,
Dipasang meriam gegak gempita,
Berhimpunlah segala alim pendeta,
Mengadap hadhrat duli mahkota.

After arriving inside the fort,
Cannons installed loud and thunderous,
Gathered all the learned sages,
Having an audience in the presence of
the crowned *duli*.

Persembahan doa yang sejahtera,
Selamat tuanku tiada bermara,
Segala rakyat bala tentera,
Datang mengadap dengan segera.

Presentations of peaceful prayers,
Your Highness secure without danger,
All the people, fleets of army,
Came to pay homage immediately.

Sekalian datang tua dan muda,
Mengadap cerpu duli baginda,
Laki-laki perempuan enum berida,
Membawa persembahan barang yang ada.

All came, old and young,
Facing the soles of His Highness,
Women and men, young and aged,
Bringing presents whatever they had.

Kapitan Belanda datang mengadap,
Dekat kenaikan sampan terendap,
Hatinya gundah baharulah sedap,
Laksana sakit lepas berhidap.

The Dutch captain came paying
obeisance,
Vessel close to the sunken boat,
His sad heart now calmed,
As if a sickness has been cured.

Tuanku Sultan duli mahkota,
Berangkat naik melihat kota,
Sekaliannya habis mengiringkan serta,
Lalu mengatur segala senjata.

Kota pun sudah ketiganya,
Tidak berubah bagai jangkanya,
Diatur segala senjatanya,
Diletakkan dengan panglimanya.

Dititahkan oleh duli mahkota,
Paduka Seri Rama panglima kota,
Kapitnya Raja Lela Mahkota,
Rakyat pun banyak diberi serta.

Setelah sudah sekaliannya lengkap,
Kota pun teguh terlalu tegap,
Senjata pun banyak berpuluh rangkap,
Dipandang cantik bertambah sikap.

Baginda pun lama tiada berhenti,
Kembalilah ke Pulau Indera Sakti,
Dihadap tentera beribu keti,
Menjunjung hadhrat berganti-ganti.

Setelah sampai kedalam istana,
Semayam di atas peterana,
Berhimpunlah rakyat hina dina,
Membawa persembahan berbagai warna.

Segala yang sampai ke dalam mahligai,
Membawa persembahan bunga rampai,
Masuk mengadap tetampan di sampai,
Menjunjong kadam duli dicapai.

Baginda Sultan yang berida,
Menaburi rahmat paduka anakanda,
Sangat sukacita di dalam dada,
Durja pun manis amat bershahada.

Akan seri paduka anakanda,
Menjunjung duli paduka bonda,
Serta persembahkan barang yang ada,
Berbagai jenis harta benda.

Your Highness the divine crown,
Onboard, they departed to see the fort,
Accompanying were all the escorts,
Then arranging all the weapons.

Seeing all three forts,
Not differing from expectations,
Arranged all the weapons,
Placed with the commanders.

Ordered by the divine crown,
Paduka Seri Rama commander of the
fort,
His assistant Raja Lela Mahkota,
Many people were also given.

After all completely armed,
Fort standing strong and tough,
Weapons many tens of sets,
Magnificent to look at, full of character.

His Highness did not stop for long,
Returning to Pulau Indera Sakti,
Faced by armies in the thousands,
In servitude, all paying obeisance.

Upon arriving in the palace,
Residing upon the dais,
Gathered all the humble people,
Bearing presents in many colors.

All who arrived inside the court,
Bearing presents, medleys of flowers,
Entering to have an audience, regalia in
hand,
In servitude, reaching for the royal
soles.

His Highness the experienced Sultan,
Spreading his mercy to his kins,
Extremely delighted in his chest,
Countenance sweet, most truthful.

The sons of His Highness,
In servitude of the mother of the *duli*,
Then presenting whatever they had,
Various kinds of material possessions.

Datang mengadap pula adinda,
Bersama dengan paduka anakanda,
Sekalian saudara yang muda-muda,
Sekaliannya menjunjung duli baginda.

Then, came to pay homage the younger
brother,
Together with his sons,
All the younger relatives,
All of them in servitude of His
Highness.

Berhimpunlah datang dari mana-mana,
Penuh sesak di dalam istana,
Menjunjung hadhrat raja yang ghana,
Persembahkan bertih beras diwarna.

Came to gather from everywhere,
Fully crowded inside the palace,
In servitude of the presence of the rich
king,
Presented with colored toasted rice.

Tiadalah berhenti sehari-hari,
Datang mengadap tiada terperi,
Baginda raja yang johari,
Sekaliannya rakyat dikurnia beri.

Without stopping, the entire day,
Inconceivable, those coming paying
obeisance,
His Highness the wise king,
All people bestowed with his blessings.

Setelah sudah mengadap rata,
Baginda pun karal diatas takhta,
Duduk di dalam sukacita,
Seorang pun tidak menaruh cinta.

After all paid obeisance,
His Highness rich upon the throne,
Resided in delight,
Not betroubled by anyone.

Tamatlah kisah baharu dikarang,
Baginda Sultan zaman sekarang,
Daulatnya bukan sebarang-barang,
Makin bertambah cahayanya terang.

This is the end of the story composed,
Of His Highness in current times,
His *daulat* not to be derided,
Ever increasing his bright light.

Tuanku Sultan duli mahkota,
Daulatnya limpah diatas takhta,
Patik nan hamba yang hina leta,
Persembahkan syair akan cerita.

Your Highness Sultan the divine crown,
His *daulat* overflowing upon the throne,
I am a mere humble, wretched servant,
Presenting a *syair* to tell this story.

Tuanku ampuni hamba Allah,
Aturannya janggal banyak yang salah,
Mengarang di dalam hati yang lelah,
Tambahan hidup bagi kafilah.

Your Highness I beg your pardon,
Lines strange, errors many,
Composing within a heavy heart,
And living like a vagabond.

Memohonkan ampun hamba yang hina,
Sendirinya tidak berapa bahana,
Hati didalam gundah gulana,
Sajaknya janggal banyak tak kena.

Praying for forgiveness, a humble
servant,
Myself not very present,
Inside the heart beguiled with sadness,
Poem strange with much
inappropriateness.

Tuanku titahkan, Patik mengarang,
Diperbuat juga sebarang-barang,
Sajaknya janggal manisnya kurang,
Haram tak sedap didengar orang.

Sudahlah kisah duli khalifah,
Kebesaran daulat makin bertambah,
Patik nan hamba berdatang sembah,
Mohonkan tempat hendak berubah.

Tuanku arif bijaksana,
Sembah patik hamba yang hina,
Jika tuanku ada berguna,
Mohonkan titah barang ke mana.

Hidup sekarang sangatlah seksa,
Mohonkan tempat yang biasa,
Kepada niat senantiasa,
Ke bawah duli hendak berjasa.

Pancaran Melayu hamba yang kurang,
Tewaslah dari sekaliannya orang,
Satu pun tidak guna sekarang,
Hingga sekadar disuruh mengarang.

Barang ke mana tuanku titahkan,
Di mana tempat patik kerjakan,
Hendak mencari ayap-ayapan,
Barang yang dapat patik sembahkan.

Patiklah hamba tiada beruntung,
Hidup laksana seekor patung,
Ke bawah duli juga bergantung,
Hilir mudik terkatung-katung.

Sedang dahulu patik merasa,
Di bawah duli suka termasa,
Barang ke mana sentiasa,
Sekarang sudah berlainan masa.

Kehendak Allah sudah sekian,
Terkuranglah dari hamba sekalian,
Dari dahulu sampai kemudian,
Baharulah rasa yang demikian.

Ordered by Your Highness, I composed,
Compelled to create something,
Poem strange, lacking sweetness,
Not pleasing for anyone listening.

Completed the story of the *duli* caliph,
Greatness of the *daulat* ever increasing,
I a mere servant came paying homage,
Praying for a place to change.

Your Highness clever and wise,
Please forgive me a humble servant,
If Your Highness ever has any use for,
Pray tell wherefore I should go

Living now in severe misery,
Praying for a place that is ordinary,
Realizing the ever present intention,
Wanting to serve beneath the *duli*.

Pancaran Melayu a lacking servant,
Losing from all the people,
Now without a single use,
Until merely ordered to compose.

Ordered by Your Highness wherever
gone,
In the place where I worked,
Desiring to look for provisions,
Anything begotten I presented.

I am a servant without any fortune,
Living like a statue,
Beneath the *duli* I depended upon,
Downriver, upriver, bobbing up and
down.

While then I felt,
Beneath the *duli*, sightseeing in delight,
Wherever gone, always accompanied,
Now the times are different.

Such was the will of Allah,
Deficiencies coming from all His
servants,
From then until the hereafter,
Only now they are felt.

Mohonlah ampun janganlah murka,
Sembah sekadar berjenaka,
Ini satu pantun seloka,
Persembahkan patik akan penyuka.

Pray forgive me, do not be angered,
Merely jesting with anything presented,
This is but a verse in good humor,
Presented by myself in desire to be liked.

Mercu Alam bergelar istana,
Rembatnya lagi berkeliling,
Tuanku semayam di singgahsana,
Hebatnya lagi tidak terbanding.

Mercu Alam the palace was named,
Fenced with gates all around,
Your Highness residing on the throne,
His magnificent cannot be compared.

Rembatnya lagi berkeliling,
Merah murup berastakona,
Hebatnya tidak lagi terbanding,
Seperti zamrud permata warna.

Fenced with gates all around,
Brilliant red, shaped in an octagon,
Its magnificence cannot be compared,
Like a radiantly colored emerald.

Beremas murup berastakona,
Bertulis awan mega berarak,
Seperti zamrud permata warna,
Tuanku di desa negeri Perak.

Golden, fiery, shaped in an octagon,
Etched with floating clouds in the sky,
Like a radiantly colored emerald,
Your Highness in Perak state's countryside.

Bertulis awan mega berarak,
Ditatah dengan cermin China,
Tuanku di desa negeri Perak,
Mengerjakan titah sehina-dina.

Etched with floating clouds in the sky,
Studded with Chinese mirrors,
Your Highness in Perak state's countryside.
Humbly performing all the orders.

Ditatah dengan cermin China,
Berkambi lagi bersengkuap,
Mengerjakan titah sehina-dina,
Seisi negeri menerima sawab.

Studded with Chinese mirrors,
With plank walls and canopies,
Humbly performing all the orders.
The entire state receiving the truth.

Berkambi lagi bersengkuap,
Berkisi-kisi lagi berlarik,
Seisi negeri menerima sawab,
Sehari-hari persembahan naik.

With plank walls and canopies,
With trellises and polished ivories,
The entire state receiving the truth,
Presentations coming in everyday.

Berkisi-kisi lagi berlarik,
Ukiran kaluk berbunga tanjung,
Sehari-hari persembahan naik,
Sekaliannya takluk semua menjunjung.

With trellises and polished ivories,
Curved carvings with *tanjung* flowers,
Presentations coming in everyday.
Peoples of the entire land paying tributes.

Ukiran dan kaluk berbunga tanjung,
Istana di Pulau Indera Sakti,
Sekaliannya takluk habis menjunjung,
Senantiasa tiada berhenti..

Curved carvings with *tanjung* flowers,
Palace in Pulau Indera Sakti,
Peoples of the entire land paying
tributes,
Infinitely without halt.

Tamatlah ikatan syair baginda berangkat ke
laut.

This is the end of the *syair* composition
of His Highness journeying at sea.

Conclusion

*Sorong papan tarik papan
Buah keranji dalam perahu,
Suruh makan dia makan,
Suruh mengaji dia tak tahu.*

Board pushed, board pulled,
Keranji fruits in a boat,
If asked to eat, he eats,
If asked to read, he is unable to.

Such is the fate of the carefree illiterate, enjoying the delicacies of nature instead of being ill at ease in making sense of words on paper. If we were to imagine such a person learning how to *mengaji* (from root word *kaji*, also means ‘to learn’, ‘to study’ and ‘to recite’), would at once evoke a scene of a creation of an inherent sense-making ability to perceive and to understand what is written, something that was not there initially and something that requires willful acts of the mind. Yet, neither the opened doors of literary comprehension nor the barely beginning to spin wheels of reading would prepare the person for the possible encounter with the immense corpuses of available texts in all their forms and permutations on any topic whatsoever. Upon such an encounter, there would be a few plausible choices for the person. One of them would be to tread along the literary path with side-blinders on and concentrate on certain key words, key phrases, tropes on the topic that one wishes to study, eschewing other pieces of texts as insignificant and irrelevant. Another would be to widen the scope to include every text, in the hopes that relevant and significant things would be found. I have chosen both, and then some. In coming up with an applicable, necessary and enlightening hermeneutics, that will lead to a deep and balanced understanding of the read, the written and the thought (and their phantasmic reflections the unread, the unwritten and the unthought) of Malay

narratives, one must be focused on certain meaning strands, be open to knowledge from unexpected sources. And all of this has to be done with a propensity to critical examination and inquiry of both the focus and the openness, in regards to the limiting inavoidabilities of language, of text, of reading, and more, to the cacophonous noises of print that have silenced the oral/aural.

Lest one might drown, instead of navigating gracefully, one has to play along with the currents in the rivers of white and hop tactfully between vessels of meaning of a Malay worldview in the 18th century. *Misa Melayu*, a *hikayat* on the Malay state of Perak, as one of these vessels, provides opportunities for playful meanderings beyond the sediment-ridden banks of historicism and literariness. Keeping this in mind, in the first chapter, I have juxtaposed divergent literary artifacts from European and Malay sources, produced by British and Malay readers and writers on Perak. The first chapter is about charting methodological channels that detours the reading mind saturated with decisive figures of a uniformed statecraft determined by geopolitics, history, and literature, away into the impossibly beckoning curls of the waves of the Malay poetics, and along with the enigmatic flow of Malay consciousness. Blithely, one's imagined *perahu* might drift along these channels, exploring the views of the banks from a mobile, dynamic, aquatic vantage point.

Lest one might drown into the unfathomable depths of the rivers of white where the figures of the explorers, officials, merchants, scientists, cartographers, historians, readers and writers, truth-seekers, and truth-makers lay hidden in silence. In the second chapter, I have indulged in a sort of archaeology of the writings of the readers of Perak, and some theoretical matters on British and Malay historical agents and subjects. Reading pieces of languaging in/of subjects inscribed and constructed in

imagined and physical spaces, and the reflectional liminalities create abstract meaning within these spaces. I have attempted to draw an experiential picture of this abstract, elusive, spontaneous, coincidental nature of reading, between sites - Riverside, California and the Perak rivers. Representations of subjects in the form of memorials, names printed, carved, etched on concrete surfaces, as well as pages of books lend to the imaginability of spaces. These representations, located between common functionality and silenced myth, stand prone to the fluctuations of the waves of languaging, constantly washing over, recreating anew, active and salient tropes of a space. I have also presented in this chapter a paradigm, one of many viable ones, of reading Perak beyond historical, factual meanings, as a 'poetic' state, as networks of rivers and riverines, of water and of words.

Further navigating into a world of reading and recital practices in the past, of *Misa Melayu* and literary artifacts in contemporaneous circulation. A *syair*, as a recited text demands to be voiced, sung, melodiously and rhythmically articulated with specific sonic patterns. The mediation of the text from silence to articulation goes through the reciter's body, a physical process as well as a metaphysical one of imbuing language on the world, the body, the heart, the soul, and the journey through various elements they are composed of. The recited text, from the beginning to the end, immediately emotes the senses of both the audience and the reciter, and in the process brings life and meaning to the world it describes and its contents. The poet, the human subjects, the world, the poem, the maps could then be thought of as being intertwined in metaphorical relations with each other.

We live in a world full of texts, that could teach us things about the world, and about ourselves, as human beings, and ourselves in the world, and our diverse

perspectives and imaginaires of the world and of ourselves. The rapidly flowing streams of our lives prevent completeness and evade penetration of a will to understand the multitude of perspectives. How could one ultimately decide between truthful readings and erroneous ones? Certainly, a sensitive and wishful one would be more valuable than either of those, perhaps one that does not exclude the possibilities of the inclusion of both perspectives yet gives in to neither. Instead of thinking about exclusive categories, we might be better off thinking of the shades of the in-betweens. And from thinking about ‘what is...?’ we might be better off putting the question of ‘how is...?’ or ‘how should we...?’ or ‘how do we...?’ –read, translate, understand, imagine, remember, interpret, inform, be informed of.

More than anything else, I intended to provide a methodological compass for a sensitive, sensible and emotive reading of Perak that will give certain directions for a more sensitive reading of the texts. And plenty of texts there were – interesting, boring, fact-filled, story-filled, factual, fictive, encyclopedic, magazines, traditional, classical, modern, postmodern, philosophical, cartographical, geographical, paperbacks, hardcovers, thin, fat, serious, fun. Indeed to name all the genres and characteristics of the individual parts of the corpus of literary artifacts on and around the state would be not only impossible but rather confining. Especially so when a text is deemed foreign, unknown and unfamiliar. Moreover, ‘world-politics’, ‘thoughtworld politics’ and ‘imagination-politics’ and ‘sense-making politics’ make for a difficult time in trying to free oneself from a boundedness to a predetermined and shaped kind of thinking and imagining. Stepping away from this seriousness is a choice that one has to make, by doubting heartily the primacies and stabilities that we, for so long, have agreed upon, obscuring our hidden powers of reading intuition. The

contrastive divide between reason-based, scientific, geometrical world-making, and the myth-based, fantastic, fictional one seems unbridgeable.

How does one read Malay narratives about Malay spaces and places – physical, poetic and imagined? There are many possible answers, one could be found in the question itself, the Malay word for ‘how’ is *bagaimana*, that could be literally translated to a non-existent, perhaps nonsensical, English portmanteau ‘like-where’. There is no better word to completely summarize the reality of reading metaphors of a place, and simultaneously learning about the place of reading, the place that is read about and one’s place in the world, and mediating between these spaces . Knowing how to read, among other things, means knowing one’s physical, metaphysical, spiritual place in the cosmos, and more, embracing the impossibility of knowing everything about these places, yet being bold enough to play with such an impossibility by integrating all the known pieces of knowledge into the acts of knowing and reading. And other acts that follow – interpreting and imagining. A *hikayat*, essentially, is a performative act of traveling through time and space, concurrent, interwoven flows of meanings and/of characters, scenes, motifs. And most importantly and most forgotten, emotions and feelings of the *sahib al-hikayat* ‘friend of the story’, and those who have been delicately, mythically, fantastically immortalized in the story and touched by the narrative act.

And so, the little *perahu* sails on.

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