

- Forth, G., 1981, *Rindi: An Ethnographic Study of a Traditional Domain in Eastern Sumba*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff. [Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde No. 93.]
- , n.d., 'The rice scattering ritual in central Flores'. [In preparation.]
- Hicks, D.R., 1976, *Tetum Ghosts and Kin: Fieldwork in an Indonesian Community*, Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Skeat, W.W., 1900, *Malay Magic: An Introduction to the Folklore and Popular Religion of the Malay Peninsular* (sic), London: MacMillan.
- Verheijen, J.A.J., 1951, *Het Hoogste Wezen bij de Manggaraïers*, Wien-Mödling: Missiehuis St. Gabriel. [Studia Instituti Anthropos Vol. 4.]
- Wilken, G.A., 1912, *Het Animisme bij de Volken van den Indischen Archipel*, in: *De Verspreide Geschriften* (Deel III), verzameld door F.D.E. van Ossenbruggen, Semarang, Soerabaja, 's-Gravenhage: van Dorp. [Originally published in *De Indische Gids*, 1884-85.]

---

A. TEEUW

#### A RECENTLY PUBLISHED MALAY COURT POEM

The *syair* as a Malay literary genre has long been neglected as a serious object of research, whether literary, socio-cultural, or historical. The only *syair* which until recently had received scholarly attention were the Sufi poems by Hamzah Pansuri and his successors. Cyril Skinner's excellent edition and translation of the *Sya'ir Perang Mengkasar* (1963) was the first major breakthrough. After that year the study of *syair* became more and more fashionable among Malayologists. Recently Donald J. Goudie has made a valuable contribution in this field with his publication of the *Syair Perang Siak*.\*

The text as edited by Goudie is exclusively based on one Leiden manuscript, *Cod. Or. Klinkert 154*. Two other manuscripts of the same text mentioned by Goudie (p. 17) were disregarded for this edition, apparently because he considered them to be copies of *Klinkert 154*. Although this is probably correct, it is strange that Goudie does not discuss the relation between the three manuscripts. Moreover, a check of some of his readings with *Klinkert 153* would have suggested plausible alternatives (see below).

In general Goudie has done a commendable job. In his introduction he has put full emphasis on the function of the text as a court poem: he has shown beyond doubt that the text functioned as a kind of charter, 'a myth to authenticate and sustain the Sultan's authority and the court dependent on that authority' (p. 70). This function was especially important when the sultans or pretenders to the throne of Siak were in exile, as was often the

\* *Syair Perang Siak: A court poem presenting the state policy of a Minangkabau Malay royal family in exile*, edited and translated by Donald J. Goudie, with essays on the text by Philip L. Thomas and Tenas Effendy, Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Monograph No. 17, 1989. 280 pp.

case in the history of the sultanate. It used to be read, or rather, ceremonially performed, at the court at special occasions in the presence of the Sultan – a tradition which was continued by the royal family of Siak until recent times. This becomes quite clear from the interesting comments by Tenas Effendy, which are presented in an appendix, and which are based on extensive information gathered from a large number of informants in the Siak region.

Goudie deals extensively with the state of Siak, its royal family and its history in the period covered by the *syair*. He has taken much trouble to lay bare the intricate 'who is who' of the text, by using Dutch and other sources, and to explain the complicated historical events and the dynastic vicissitudes to which the text refers. But he also rightly emphasizes that the *syair* is not a work of history in the same sense as, for example, the *Tuhfat an-Nafis* or the so-called *Siak Chronicle*. Goudie's main effort is directed to making his readers understand how the text, containing the story of the royal dynasty of the sultanate of Siak, functioned and was understood by the people directly concerned. In this respect he also underlines the oral character of the text and its functioning in oral presentation. The postscript by Dr. Thomas expands further on the orality of the text; however, I think his definition of the text as an 'oral composition' is confusing. Thomas mixes up two things. He is doubtless right in assuming that the text, like practically all *syair*, displays typically oral traits in its composition, style and wording. But it is certainly not a text which was composed orally, that is, during its performance; the *syair* is typically a written text (as Goudie quite clearly points out) which was orally performed from the manuscript. It is an *aural* text, written but meant to be read aloud to an audience.

It is impossible within the scope of this brief comment to go into all the socio-historical aspects of the text as discussed by Goudie. What I want to do is to settle a debt of honour to the author, be it unduly late. Long ago I promised him to check his transliteration of the manuscript (which was only available to him in the form of a photocopy) with the original, but unfortunately I could find no time to do so before the publication of his book. Therefore I would like to conclude my remarks here with a number of comments on the edited text and its translation. The length of the list should not give the false impression that Dr. Goudie has not done his job properly. The writing of the ms. poses all kinds of puzzles to the reader, and the terse style, which is so typical of *syair*, combined with the usual lexical *cruces* and with many uncertainties with respect to the context, makes the translation often doubtful. Therefore the list below by no means pretends to offer a solution for all the problems, but hopefully the alternatives suggested there are worthy of consideration. The references are to the numbers of the stanzas, the lines (a, b, c, d) and the words in the line (1-5). Sometimes ms. Klinkert 153 is quoted for the sake of comparison: it is referred to as B.

- 1d a better translation would be 'all his names are an assembly of His being'.  
 2c/d 'thanks to the grace of Muhammad, Lord of the prophets, may we not have a futile name'.
- 5b3 ms. *orang yang*.  
 6c 'its beauty was not just one'.  
 9c 'The Minangkabau agreed with them all'.  
 13b 'his breast (heart) was full of bursting (splitting)', cf. 520c.  
 21b 'and he was no longer troubled in his mind'.  
 28d for the expression '*tidaklah sempat membakar kapas*' cf. the proverb '*seperti kapas dibakar api*': so the meaning must be something like: 'it went faster than the burning of cotton'.
- 33d 'as if encoiled by a sea serpent'.  
 36b 'he gave orders to mobilize all his companions'.  
 39b *tidak terperi*, 'beyond description' (passim).  
 41d5 the proper reading probably is *gentur* (or *kentur*), in view of the rhyme, cf. 499c5, although the word is not found in any of the dictionaries.  
 42b *menggila*, 'resounded like mad'.  
 45d *dengan isyarat*, 'even without an identifying mark'.  
 46 'Those who stayed behind were uncertain, separated from their children and in-laws: shattered, their spirits were low, like . . .'
- 52d3 *berbanyak*.  
 54a3 *penuh*.  
 59b *tiang salah-salah*, cf. Klinkert p. 537, *salah-salahan*, 'een brik, welks achterste mast zonder ra's is'.
- 61d 'its news being famous until today'.  
 63c/d 'as the number of ordinary [?] street vendors was incalculable'.  
 67a/b the text and translation look suspicious! Perhaps a5 is simply *ada*, which is also found in B; and could a1 (k-m-p-r) be a proper name or toponym: 'Kampar was the only one who was not there?'  
 'our'??
- 70a ms. and B: *kurang*, yet *terang* seems an attractive emendation.  
 72d5 'Fate', not 'Their fate'.  
 76a reading not clear, probably *sekali*, cf. 93d2.  
 82c2 'that such fateful calamities would happen'.  
 82d 'womenfolk' as a translation for *adinda dan kakanda* is improbable, see also 88b.  
 84b ms. not clear; *panjangkan* is probably a better transliteration ('protract, prolong').  
 85c2 the ms. clearly reads *khabarkan*, 'inform'.  
 91d1 'better to die than face this shame'.  
 94d ms. unclear, probably *setengah*.  
 98d2 both here and in 510b3 the ms. clearly reads *sendi*.  
 103d3 'Thanks to the sanctity of all the saints/ we hope to receive the aid of God eternal'.  
 106cd *akal hayar*: 'the wits of a lifetime'? 'Common sense'? Dutch *mangkir* ('mankeren') is highly improbable in an 18th-century Malay text; *mungkir* is more probable, although a meaning such as 'failed him' is unusual.  
 114b *beri cayakan*: reading and translation implausible; *bercintakan*??
- 116d 'Its fame spread beyond conception; it could be estimated like Malacca' (?).  
 127cd *dondangan*, 'as if rocked (cradled?) by the Lord of the Winds'.  
 134d2/3 *berhingga*.  
 137a4 the emendation *juaka* (note) seems unnecessary.  
 137b4 'as one looked at his countenance, its lustre was fading'.  
 139d *terungkap*.  
 141c4 *mengiring*.  
 142b4 *jamjam muka* is often polite for *air muka*: here and in 147d it seems to mean 'perspiration', or even *air mata*, 'tears'; in d *berhenti* is a plausible emendation: see also 213b.  
 144d 'some he took (ate), others were rubbed in'.  
 147b *alamin Tuhan* is strange; it reminds one of *rabbu(l) alamin*, 'Lord of the Worlds'.  
 148b the ms. probably reads *mahamulia*.  
 149a2/3 a probable emendation is *panggilkan* (= B).  
 149b1 the page of the ms. is damaged but the reading *taksir* is clear; the meaning is not

- clear; perhaps it is: 'they tried in vain to excuse themselves for mistakes with respect to the [treatment of the] cough'; cf. *berlepas taksir*: 'membebaskan diri dari kesalahan orang' (*Kamus Dewan*); this would fit in well with the sultan's reaction in the next stanza.
- 152a1 the ms. reads *tinggallah*.
- 156d 'do not count your gains or losses (in such agreements).'
- 158c4 *gusti*: *andeka gusti*, 'honourable gentlemen'.
- 160c2 perhaps one should read *jinjang*, cf. Wilkinson: *jinjangan raja*, 'prince's medicine man', and Klinkert: 'geestenbezweerder'.
- 165c1 before *kesakitan* the ms. has alif-b-sy-alif: is *isak-isakan* an alternative transliteration?
- 165c2 and passim *mustaib*.
- 168c3 *gusti bestari*.
- 177b 'your country I. stays behind'.
- 179c1 ms. reading *sahib*?
- 179d2 *sedia* (sic? = B).
- 185c/d 'it never could have been imagined/ that His Majesty would disappear from his lofty position'.
- 187c4 *merdu*.
- 193c/d these lines should not be read as part of the passage of direct speech.
- 195d5 *samperi* is unknown, but the reading is clear, also in B; should we read *sempurna*? Or simply *sampai*?
- 200d or 'like a looking glass without eyes'?
- 209d1/2 reading dubious: d.p.w.k.n.c.d.ng. *dipukulkan gendang*? (*dipukulkan rebana* B).
- 211c/d 'It was amazing [or: they were amazed] to watch the diamond dust becoming chaff at that moment'.
- 212d 'his mercy increased, by the radiance of the sun'.
- 213b 'it seemed as if their tears were poured out', or, less probably, if *jamjam durja* here again is a polite expression for *air muka*, it might be taken as referring to the deceased: 'as if the lustre of his face were poured out': see 144d.
- 220b4 *syukurkan*, 'be grateful for', cf. 506b4.
- 221a/b 'Rather than on our unfortunate body, we should rely upon God and the Prophet'.
- 223c2 ms. reading *tuk*; B has the attractive emendation *datuk* (haplography).
- 224a1/2 *dari padanan* - sic? B has a lectio faciliior, *daripadi badan*; is this again an emendation by the copyist?
- 224c 'remembering the late sultan, I feel like fainting; I may have been poor, but I used to live in abundance' (compared to the misery after his death); cf. 523d.
- 225 If the reading is correct, a better translation would be: 'And so what remedy could there have been? Sitting engulfed in gloom and remembering my fate was useless. It should be written down in the form of poetry.' But a probably reads: *dengan demikian betapalah sudah*; the h before *betapa* is dubious.
- 226b2 *setawarikh* is improbable, both linguistically and graphically. Perhaps *seorang* is a better reading (the letters seem to be s-w/hamzah/-r-kh); B has an altogether different text: *disuratkan juga pengiring hina*, in which *pengiring* is a clear misreading of *pakir yang*.
- 228c1/2 *amat teruna* (also in B) is probably the correct reading; A often has a superfluous or dubious d.
- 229c1/2 instead of *dari amat*, the correct reading seems to be *derman*: 'fortunate' (Klinkert).
- 229c/d meaning uncertain; 'if one paid careful attention to his face, one observed a transpience like the veil of ...?' For *dipenting-penting* cf. 254c.
- 241a 'what is the use of our being coddled'; *ditimbang* = *ditimang*.
- 241d 'our bodies should fall, our spirits fly off', cf. 292d.
- 244a *Tuanku pinak* is a verbal construct, see Klinkert s.v. *empinak*: 'What use is it that you cherished us?'
- 244c *ternak* here literally means 'we have become live-stock' (from being *diperjinak*, 'tamed').
- 249c 'When one looked at him closely, it would seem ...'
- 251b2 *tunjuk* is strange here; does the ms. read *ta'ajub*?
- 257d4 *gerang*?
- 259b *hatinya*, 'its spirit'? There are a number of cases in this text where the ordinary

- meaning of *hati* does not seem to fit.  
 266c4 a better reading is *burja* (rhyme!) = 276c4 etc.  
 280d 'I should not . . .'  
 283d 'they deployed the cannon as if they were threaded (were made into a string)'.  
 290b *kata* - sic? Rhyme? Read *letah* = *letih*, indefatigable? B has g-t-h.  
 290c 'if he went out, he quarrelled and bickered'.  
 297d1 'it was reported'.  
 301d *adulah* is an imperative: 'match them against, let them fight with'.  
 302a/b 'The complete meeting submitted to His Majesty'.  
 303 this stanza continues the direct speech by the Council!  
 304 the text, having three times *dendam* as rhyming word, is dubious: my suggestion is to read *diandam* in a and *bani adam* in c, instead of *ni damdam* (see A.C.). The translation of a would then be: 'If one observed the fleet, the ships were all arranged in a straight line (as if trimmed)': c: 'it was the determined intention of the men' (children of Adam - a nice example of poetic necessity!).  
 333a 'Like a poet stirred by emotion'? The word *sya'ir* with a long *i* and a short *a* in Arabic means 'poet'; however, the ms. has a long *i* and a short *a*.  
 337a3/4 In 271 *khabarnya Tuan* is translated as 'so men say', which seems more appropriate than 'my authority relates'. Or could *tuan* refer to the reader: 'it is said, Sir'?  
 337b3 ms. *berkemalu-maluan*.  
 340b2 *menyongsong* simply means 'to meet them'.  
 344b4 *perkata* is implausible; it should probably be *pergata*, 'frigate' (Wilkinson: *pergat*, cf. Klinkert: *perkanta*; *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*: *pergata*).  
 354a6 the ms. indeed reads h(a)-r-w; but *haru* does not fit the rhyme. Is something like *hawur* or *awor* meant? 'Confused'?  
 355d2 (me)mandang is a better reading; or is perhaps *mendengar* meant? (B *memandang*).  
 356b1 ms. *merakit*.  
 358a4 *berketewasan* is an editor's emendation, see A.C.; B has *berketahuan*.  
 359b4 *kecoh* is an impossible reading, in view of the rhyme; probably *goga* is meant; cf. 335 note.  
 370b4 *keletah* is an editor's emendation; the mss. have *kata(h)*.  
 374c 'if something happens to the floating fortress', cf. 377c.  
 376d4 *dia*, 'we shall perish together with her'.  
 384d2 both mss. clearly read *dikarang*, 'ordered, arranged'.  
 391b2 *tunggul*, 'banners', is preferable.  
 393d 'the vessels came forward, all of them fierce'.  
 404d Goudie's translation is not very convincing. Perhaps it should be '(Even) the most eloquent discourse was silenced' (in the heat of the battle)?  
 408a1 perhaps the ms. reads *hanyutlah*.  
 411c/d perhaps this means: 'If the enemies had been Javanese or Tamils, they would have fled long ago'.  
 417c3/4 the ms. reads *wayang parwa* (or *purwa*) = the Javanese shadow theatre.  
 419b1 the ms. reads *sunting*; according to Klinkert this is a small cannon.  
 422c *di mata kuala* is certainly preferable (see the note).  
 425c4 ms. *teriti-titi*.  
 429c1 *ganggu* is an improbable reading; B reads *gagah*, which certainly fits better; is *tagah Allah* the name of a charm? (an alternative transliteration would be *teguh*).  
 430d1 *lalilah* is an uncertain reading; perhaps the ms. reads *lainlah*; B has *lenyaplah*.  
 437d3 ms. *tidakkan*.  
 443b4 ms. *gempana*, which fits the rhyme and is also found in B.  
 443d better: 'all were wavering in their effort to resist'.  
 444a1 ms. *berperang*.  
 452c4 ms. (di)didik, 'instructed, trained', cf. 284c4.  
 453c *dijangka*, 'measured' rather than 'surveyed'.  
 458d3 or *kepada*?  
 461b2 *pulih*, 'recovered, restored'.  
 463d *bagai di hati* - translation?  
 464a3 perhaps the ms. reads *dibuat hambanya* (h-b-ny: B id.).  
 469d the translation given is impossible; the words mean 'like birds dying in a flock'; perhaps it should be 'willing to die in a flock'?  
 472d 'he had not counted on such strong resistance'; perhaps this could also be read

- as *gagahnya*, which is found in B.  
 476c *jikalau beku*, preferably; 'if they get stuck'.  
 481a4 *mereka* here is not a personal pronoun but a verbal form of *reka*, 'to compose'.  
 484a 'In this way, what will be the end?'  
 488a/b 'They could not remember to wait for what was due to them?'  
 489a4/5 *di Puasa* is a dubious transliteration and an unidiomatic expression; the ms. probably has *di paksa*: *paksa*, 'opportune, favourable', fits well here, but the combination with *di* is strange.  
 489d3 ms. *melum*; a variant (error) for *belum* (B)?  
 490c5 *sengalan*, 'chopping board', is preferable.  
 493b3/4 'those who died or were lost'.  
 499c5 cf. 41d5.  
 500d I do not understand the translation; the line simply means 'it looked as if the river Siak was lifted'.  
 501a *kapitan*, 'our supporters'??  
 501c *daripada*, 'rather than suffer a miserable fate, they were determined not to return'.  
 506b4 *syukurkan*, cf. 220b; also 527d.  
 510c 'Do not remember us'.  
 511c *hayat dan jiwa*, 'life and soul'.  
 514d1 'of' read as 'like'.  
 518a4 ms. *Mempura?* (rhyme!).  
 520c1/2 see 13b.  
 526c1 *kalam* is an editor's emendation for the incomprehensible word h-t-n, also found in B.  
 528a ms. *Allah Allah malikulrahman*.  
 528c4 *matikan* is an uncertain reading, see note; B m-n-ngg-lk-n.  
 528d 'many of the creatures have not come to their senses'.  
 532a1 perhaps *tinggal* is a better transliteration, yielding 'having left for P'.  
 535c/d line c should be connected to b, yielding the translation '... sat in concern, as he was thinking of His Majesty'.  
 538c as elsewhere, this line should be translated as 'if anything happens to My Lord' (cf. 374c, 377c, etc.).  
 540a/b in b the ms. reads *bersembah akan*. The text looks suspicious; when one compares this stanza with 544, it seems as though the final words of b and c have been interchanged; *Berdatang sembah tidaklah dua! Wazir bertuan akan kecewa* would make for a much better text!  
 541c In this context *bercakap* means 'boast', 'vow'; there seems to be a contradiction between this line (*bercakap sedikit*) and 542b (*cakapnya besar*). The suggestion that in 542 *Ia* 'relates forward' to the subject in the next stanza is improbable; should one connect *sedikit* with *menampar dada*?  
 543b 'he had no power (was not capable of) to vow great things'; *niat* means 'intention', 'determination', rather than 'hope'.  
 548d *diberi beda* seems a better transliteration (note).  
 549d1 'you will not' rather than 'do not'.  
 550a/b seems to be a continuation of the passage of direct speech. The expression *nama yang leta dipohonkan kepada Allah* is strange (also in 530c). Could it possibly mean 'may we pray to Allah to be excused from having a bad name'? Cf. 564b, *masakan patik beroleh leta*, followed in d by *dipohonkan juga nama yang leta*; cf. *mohon (diri)* 'to ask to be excused'; cf. also 2d.  
 554a3 does *perintah* here mean 'arrangement'?  
 556c3 both mss. have the Minangkabauism *mehentikan*.  
 556d2 ms. p-l-q; B *pulaq*.  
 572a2 ms. *niat?* B id.