

The History of the Peninsula in Folk-Tales.

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I am no historian either by taste or training ; but as a " picker-up " of those " unconsidered trifles " Malay folk-tales may I venture to adduce a historical as well as a literary reason for their preservation and suggest a study of them will give additional weight to Mr. Blagden's contention in the pages of this journal that " evidently in the middle of the XIVth century there were a number of settlements scattered along the coast-line of the Peninsula " at a date before the founding of Malacca. Mr. Blagden cites from the Javanese " Nagarakretagama " (composed, he tells us, in 1365 A. D.) a passage containing apparently indisputable mention of Pahang, Langkasuka, Kelantan, Trengganu, Tumasik (Singapore), Kelang Kedah, Muar a doubtful allusion to Sungai Ujong and no word at all of Malacca. This passage he considers sufficient to disprove Mr. Wilkinson's view " that while the southern portions of the peninsula were often visited, they were never really occupied by a civilized race till the Malays came in A.D. 1400 " though it is rather hard to see what proof a list of names of doubtful etymology constitutes. Some further proof of early Malay settlements is needed, and I fancy that the folk-tales of the peninsula may supply it.

Now folk-tales, it must be admitted, require very careful sifting. They may be partly based on actual fact ; they certainly abound in fiction. They may obviously deal with a pre-Muhammadan age and yet they always contain many anachronisms. They will tell the same story of several places: Malim Dewa is prince of Pasai in the Achinese version of the tale ; prince of Bandar Muar in the peninsula version. The places and persons they refer to may be historical but are generally obscure and forgotten. We can only make deductions on very broad lines. Rhapsodists will always declare how

their tales have historical sequence, though they will add they have lost the links or forgotten how the sequence should run. It is hopeless probably ever to connect the threads. Can the disconnected tangled threads lead us anywhere?

In the first place, it is hardly likely to be questioned that Malay folk-tales recount the adventures of Malay heroes; they may appear under names more like those of Batak folk of the present day; a princess will be 'Bunga Sa-Kuntum,' a prince 'Helang Laut,' a warrior 'Awang Selampit' from his short skirt or 'Trong Pipit' from his diminutive size; that, of course, is what we shall look in pre-Muhammadan tales.

The heroes may intermarry with 'Batins' and aboriginal tribes. That is what we know actually to have happened. Still, the tales will undoubtedly paint the adventures of Malay chiefs the leaders of Malay settlers. Again the age of the tales is indisputable. They ante-date Muhammadan influence; at bottom though accretions from the Hindu cosmogony and late historical incident have often crept in, they are early Malayan full of primitive custom. They find a parallel in the *pawang* sayings, which they resemble in metrical form and sometimes in actual phrase; those sayings of which Mr. Skeat has given us so fine a collection. The early history of Malacca is recorded in Annals tinged with Persian literary influence; the story of its great hero Hang Tuah in historical prose. The story of the old-world kingdom of Bruas, (though it still survives also as a rhapsodist's tale), commanded sufficient interest in historical times to be written down centuries ago in conventional Hindu *hikayat* form under the grandiloquent name "Shamsu'l-barain". So, too the history of Kedah. It is easy to see that stories which have escaped such treatment must have dealt with settlements very early very insignificant perhaps and certainly long since decayed.

Have we evidence, that any of the tales really deal with places in the peninsula? There would seem to be little ground for doubt. In his chapter or "Early Civilization" in the peninsula, Mr. Wilkinson alludes to the remains near Pangkalan Kempas on the Linggi river, remains so fragmentary that they

give no conclusive evidence of the civilization they represent. Was it Malay? The story of *Raja Ambong* printed by Sir William Maxwell in Number 19 of this Journal records how that chief ruled at Tanjong Bima and his cousin Che Alang in Linggi at Kuala Limau Purut. The story of Raja Donan printed in Number 18 is the story of a chief who lived at Mandi Angin; and there is a place of that name close to Linggi too. The mention of 'Raja Pertokal' in it may well be an anachronism. The tales of Malim Deman and Malim Dewa may be considered more doubtful, seeing that they have been transplanted apparently from a Sumatran setting. But surely that picture of the little settlement at the mouth of the Muar must have had origin in fact, even if it were originally a description of some Sumatran port.

*Medan-nya indah bukan kēpalang,
Rantan-nya luas bagai di-bentang;
Tēbing-nya tinggi bagai di-raut;
Pasir-nya serong bēntok taji
Batu-nya ada bēsar dan kēchil,
Yang kēchil pēlotar balar
Jika untong kēna ka-balam,
Jikalau tidak kēna ka-tanah,
Mēndēru sēlawat ibu ayam,
Hēlang di sambar pınai tanah.*

And again

*Sēlup wangkang bērgēndingan,
Bērjēnis-jēnis gada-gada-nya;
Ada yang merah gada-gada-nya,
Muatan sutēra dan mastoli;
Ada yang putih gada-gada-nya
Muatan lilin dēngan gētah;
Ada yang ijar gada-gada-nya
Muatan kēsumba dēngan malaru;
Ada Yang kuning gada-gada-nya;
Muatan mas dēngan perak;*

In *Malim Dewa*, mention is made of places I have been unable to identify, if they are actually historical, Medan Baik

whose chief was Laksamana, Nyiur Chondong said by the rhapsodist to be in Malacca. These two tales of Muar, I was told by the rhapsodists, deal with events comparatively recent as compared with those of other peninsula tales.

Mr. Wilkinson finds more conclusive evidence of "powerful Buddhist states like that of Langkasuka" in the North than of any permanent colonies in the South. The folk-tales perhaps bear out this theory. There are far more of them in the north than elsewhere, a number as yet uncollected. The hero in *Awang Sulong* is by origin from Pati Talak Trengganu, whatever that may mean.

The "Tatap" and "Prang Selampit" are indisputably Kedah tales: and the tradition that "Lindungan Bulan" is an old name for Kedah has never been questioned by any rhapsodist I have met, though it must be confessed that it is sometimes the name of a princess also. I may add, that I have collected from Patani a tale "Raja Lotong" which like Sir William Maxwell "Sri Rama" owes its source to the Ramayana, whose cycle provides the plots of that *wa'yang Kulit* peculiar to the North.

The boundary of the new Perak territory has brought into prominence a name of old-world fame, the river Langkasuka: it is to be hoped that the entrance of European officers into the states now taken over may throw fresh light on the forgotten history of primitive settlements in the peninsula. Meanwhile, I would urge, that the collection of simple folk-tales is not quite such an idle employment as it many at first sight appear.

I append a brief analysis of various tales, giving the names of all the places to which allusion is made in them. Perhaps others may be able to identify places unknown to me. It is interesting to note how Bengkalis just across the Malacca Straits comes into several of the tales, northern and southern.

Raja Ambong reigned ever Tanjong Bima. His cousin, a man of Linggi, lived at Kuala Limau Purut, seven days' sail away but to be reached also overland by crossing a *laut tawar*.

Raja Ambong voyaged to Champa, Chala, Tanjong Jambu Lipa, Teluk Jambu Ayer, Dong Sip, Tanjong Chamara Bunga, Pulan Mayang Manggi. His skill in fencing came from "Si Raja Nandong who inherited it from Sang Barma Dewa in the land of Menangkabau."

Raja Donan born in a land called Mandi Angin. After a year's wandering at sea he meets the fleet of Raja Chamar Laut of Mundam Batu. Raja Chamar Laut was fleeing from Raja Pertokal (?Portugal), who however had run aground at Lubok Goa Batu. Raja Donan visits and conquers the land of Gedong Batu ruled by Bendahara Mangkubumi and also the land of Biram Biru ruled over by Raja Piakas.

Awang Sulong: (the 'Hale' version, collected in *Negri Sembilan*) born at Kuala Sungai Batu, where up-river lived Dato Alam. Embarks in his magic boat at Teluk Buaya and goes down river passing Pulau Pisang, Pulau Belachan, Pulau Jelutong to Sungai Parun where Nakhoda Tua is overlord. He sails to Gunong Bērapi, where Raja Mukhdum Sakti rules.

Awang Sulong: (*Pawang Ana's version*): Awang Sulong's father and mother were rajas of Pati Talak Trengganu but before his birth had sailed away to Bandar Mengkaleh (or? Bēngkalis) where the Batins had given them a kingdom. He is born there after his mother returns from a picnic at Tanjong Jati. She dies and Batin Alam (who had married his aunt) brings him up. One day he sets off down river past Pulau Pisang, Pulau Belachan and Pulau Jelutong and sees a 'galleon' belonging to Nakhoda Tua the father of princess Sri Jawa; the mate is a man of Tiku-priaman, the steersman from Pulau Lant. Awang Sulong visits Pati Talak Trengganu, Pasir Panjang and eventually Semarang in Java.

Malim Deman. Prince of Bandar Muar.

Malim Dewa. Prince of Bandar Muar. Mention is made of the land of Medan Baik, ruled over by Laksamana; of Kuala Ayer Batu, ruled over by prince Jong Karang; of Teluk Sina Tanjong Papan ruled over by Raja Pertokal; of the land of Goa Baru Blang ruled over by Raja Sianggrai a relative of

Raja Pertokal ; of Nyiur Chondong, said by the rhapsodist to be Malacca.

Trong Pipit. Raja Tebuan Tanah, ruler of the land of Lindongan Bulan (said to be Kedah) sails away to Bandar Mengkaleh—which had just been worsted by Awang Selampit Tebuan Tanah and Awang Sélampit encounter in the sea called Bulan Trang, for Awang Selampit is on his way to the land of Lindongan Bulan: Tebuan Tanah is killed: his wife bears him a posthumous son Duli Baginda, who on growing up sails off with Trong Pipit, Jerun and Glam to avenge his father's death. They visit Bandar Mengkaleh (and capture Awang Selampit: and sailing in the sea called Bulan Trang descry Teluk Gunong Emas' pulau ketiga, where Duli Baginda marries a princess and becomes Sultan but eventually returns thence to Kuala Kedah:

Tatap. The Raja of the land of Nibong Hangus

Gëdong sa-ribu

Bëma sa-laksa

Attacks the land of Payong Pa' Ali Gunong sa-janjar a Raja of Pasai aids him. But the princess Sa-Payong Panji defeats him, attacks in turn and takes the land of Nibong Hangus, and then the land of Rotan Glong, ruled over by Johor Alam; and finally conquers *nëgëri Maghrib*.

Raja Lotong. The hero's father reigns at Tanah Rendah Kebun Bunga. The hero visits a Sungai Jelujuk ruled over by Raja Tikam Batu.