

THE
ASIATIC JOURNAL

AND

MONTHLY REGISTER

FOR

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VOL. XV.

JANUARY TO JUNE, 1823.



LONDON :

**PRINTED FOR KINGSBURY, PARBURY, & ALLEN,
BOOKSELLERS TO THE HONOURABLE EAST-INDIA COMPANY,
LEADENHALL STREET.**

1823.

and management of the flowing scarf are not the least graceful part of the performance.

The singing of pantuns in alternate contest is an amusement which seems to be peculiar to the Sumatrans, and of which they are very fond. It may either be formally commenced by two parties, who seat themselves opposite to each other, after having danced together, or it may be begun by one of the ladies from the place where she happens to sit. She begins a series of pantuns in a kind of recitative or irregular song; a bujang, or young man, answers her in the same manner, and the contest is kept up indefinitely, or until one of the parties is unable to give the proper answer. The girls and young men relieve each other occasionally, as one or other happens to get tired.

The Malay pantuns, strictly so called, are quatrains, of which the first two lines contain a figure or image, and the latter give its point or moral. Sometimes the figure or comparison is accurately suited to the subject, and then the application may be omitted in recitation, the more to try the ingenuity of the respondent; sometimes the whole is couched under one or more figures; while in many the beginning seems only intended as a rhyme, or at least has not obvious connection with the subject. Among the Rejang and Sawai people a greater latitude is allowed to the seramba or pantun, the figure is pursued to greater length, and a kind of measured prose is often employed in place of confining themselves to the trammels of verse. The pantun is frequently framed into a kind of riddle, whose meaning it requires some ingenuity to discover, and a blundering answer to which excites much mirth. These pantuns frequently contain words derived from the language of Sunda, which has been partially introduced into the poetry of all the tribes to the southward of Katsun, while to the northward the Menangkabau dialect prevails. The origin of this distinction is referred to the period of the wars between Imbang Jaya, a Javanese prince, and Tuanko Orang Muda of Menangkabau, the traces of the Sunda dialect marking the limit of the possessions of the former.

In these contests the pantuns are supposed to be extemporaneous effusions, and

perhaps sometimes are so in reality, but in general their memories are so stored with established verses, that they are not often put to the task of invention. Of their force and meaning it is extremely difficult to convey a just idea by any translation: whoever has attempted to transfuse the spirit of an oriental composition into a European language must have felt the difficulty of doing so satisfactorily, where the whole structure of the language is so different, and the whole current of ideas seems to flow in another channel. This is particularly the case with the pantun, whose chief merit consists in conciseness and point, and in conveying a deeper meaning than is contained in the literal words and expressions. The figures and allusions are often quaint, but occasionally evince a considerable degree of poetic feeling and force of imagination.

It is not only on these set occasions that pantuns are employed; they enter largely into their more common intercourse, and are essential accomplishments to all who aspire to a character of gallantry, or who hope to woo and win their lady's love. Skill and readiness in this kind of poetry is with them a passport to female favour, much in the same way that a readiness at compliment and flattery in conversation, and the art of saying soft nothings serves the European candidate for the smiles of the fair: much of this kind of flirtation goes on independently of the open and public display of skill, and is often accompanied with the interchange of flowers and other mute symbols, which have all a mystic meaning, intelligible to those who have been initiated into this secret mode of communication. Making due allowance for difference of customs, of wealth, and of progress in civilization, there seems to be much in the conduct of these entertainments, and in the general deportment of the Sumatrans towards women, to indicate that they possess somewhat of that character of romantic gallantry which marked our own earlier ancestors; and there might be found as much delicacy of feeling, and perhaps more of the poetry of the passion in their courtships, than in the over-refinement of modern English society. It must also be remembered that no people can be more jealous of female honour than the Sumatrans, and that all

this is conducted with a strictness of decorum far greater than is observed in the free intercourse permitted by European custom.

A few examples of the different kinds of pantuns may not be unamusing, though it would be as difficult to convey an idea of the effect with which they are applied at the moment and on particular occasions, as to record the sallies and evanescent sparkles of wit that sometimes enliven our own tables, and which like the champagne that inspires them, would seem clear and dull if repeated next morning. Of the Malay pantun of four lines, several examples have been already given by Mr. Marsden; the strictness of their form and limits perhaps render them better suited to translation, but they are considered by the people of the interior as too stiff and prosaic, and as deficient in that boldness of allegory and recondite allusion which they consider the perfection of their own longer ones. The following are specimens of the Malay pantun, applicable to different occasions, such as the opening of a courtship, complaints of inconstancy, coyness, &c.; expressions of compliment, of affection, of doubt, of ridicule or displeasure, and others which the reader may much better imagine to himself than they can be explained by words. In some the connection of the figure and the sentiment will readily be perceived, in others it is obscure, particularly where the allusions are idiomatic, or have reference to popular fables or belief, and in others there is none at all.

Memuti umbak di rantau kataun
Patang dan pagi tida berkala
Memuti bunga de dalam kabun
Sa tangkei saja iang menggila.

"The waves are white on the shore of Kataun, night and day they do not cease to roll; many are the white flowers of the garden, but one alone hath made me distracted with love."

Guruh ber buni sayup sayup
Orang di bumi samoa bembang;
Jika ada angin ber tiup
Ada kah bunga mau kambang.

"The thunder rolls loud and deep, and the inhabitants of the earth are dismayed; if the zephyr should now breathe upon it, will the flower expand its blossoms?"

Ayer dalam ber tambah dalam,
Ujan di ulu buhum lagi tedoh;
Hati dendam ber tambah dendam,
Dendam daulu buhum lagi sumboh.

"The deep waters have increased in depth, and the rain hath not ceased on the hills; the longing desire of my heart hath increased, and its former hopes have not yet been accomplished."

Parang bumban di sahrang.
Pohon di hela tiada karsun;
Bulan pernama niatalah bindrang,
Sayang nia lagi di sapur awan.

"The reed is cut down on the other bank, it is now at the mercy of the stream, draw it towards you; the moon is at the full and shining, a cloud as yet intercepts her light (literally affection").

Ulak ber ulak batu mandi.
Kian ber ulak tenang jua;
Hindak ber tunah tunah ati,
Dewa membawa bembang jua.

"The stream becomes still behind the sunken rocks, and the waters are smooth and calm amid the eddies; I try to quiet the uneasiness of my heart, but there is a fairy that still disturbs its peace."

Permata jatu di rumput,
Jatu di rumput ber gelang gelang;
Kasih umpama ambun di ujung rumput,
Datang matahari nischava ilang.

"The jewel fallen on the ground, though fallen among the grass, is glittering still, but thy love is like the dew on the flower, quickly disappearing when the sun comes forth."

Telah lama tiada ka rimbo,
Bumban ber bua garangan kini;
Telah larha tiada ber suo,
Dendam berubah garangan kini.

"It is long since we have been to the forest, perhaps the bumban (a species of flowering reed) is now gone to fruit; it is long since we have met, perhaps thy affections are now estranged."

Jeka sungguh bulan pernama,
Mengapa tiada di pagar bintang;
Jeka sungguh tuan bijaksana,
Mengapa tiada dapat di tintang.

"If indeed the moon is at the full, why does she not appear in the midst of her stars? if indeed thou art true and faithful, why is it denied me to behold thee?"

Unggas bukan, chintayu bukan,
Kira-nia daun selara tubbu;
Aches bukan, Malayu bukan,
Pandai nia amat ber main semu.

" 'Twas not a bird, neither was it the *Chintaya*,* 'twas only a withered leaf of the sugar-cane; she is not of Achinese, neither of Malayan race, yet is she deeply skilled in the arts of deceit."

Bagimana menangkap landak,

Di basop pinto nia dengan api ;

Bagimana mula ber kahindak,

Deri mata turun ka hati.

" How is the porcupine to be caught ? smoke his hole with fire ; how is desire first kindled ? from the eyes it descends to the heart."

A few specimens of the longer and more irregular Seramba of the people of the interior will be sufficient, and the Serawi dialect is selected as differing least from the Malay. The following may be supposed the opening of the contest.

Pandak panjang rantau di Musi,

Maso memamo rantau Tenang,

Rantau Aman pandak sakali ;

Hendak Anggan wong ku puji

Mimpin bulan sanak bintang

Anak penakan mata hari.

" Long and short are the reaches of the Musi (river), think you they are the same with the reaches of the Tenang, the shortest of all the reaches of the Aman ? willing or unwilling, I will address my opponent ; I will take the moon by the hand, though she is of the family of the stars, and a daughter of the sun."

It may be answered as follows :

Burong terbang mengulindang

Sangkan terbang pagi pagi,

Hindakkan bunga jeruju ;

Amun wong sintano bulan,

Rinchang sintano matahari

Timbang betating ber ternaju.

" The bird flies swift and straight, it flies early in the morning in search of the Jeruju flower ; if a person resembles the moon, and is also compared to the sun, take them up and try them in scales."

Titiran pikat nibang hari, Ingunan si Jiwo Jiwo, Jadi kampong burung tiong, jadi koun punei siulan, Bringin di mana garangan masak, merangei meruntuh daun, sanalah dio maridawan, Amun sakali kali lagi, Taulah aku di idar'o, Hindak nia bong ayam tangkap, Hindak ber judi kandong pitis, Hindak siri rai peliman, Hundak bunga, karang ko tuboh,

kundang wong di rindu jangan, amun asso rindu kan dio, tangisi kian dalam hati.

" The turtle dove kept by Si Jiwo Jiwo calls day by day, the minas are collected together and the tribes of pigeons ; where the warringin-tree is with ripe fruit, bare and stript of leaves, there they are all chattering ; since once more it has come to my turn, if you wish to fight cocks, take up your bird ; if you wish to game, bring money in your purse ; if you wish to eat siri, draw the siri-box towards you ; if you wish for flowers, string thyself (*i.e.* thou art thyself a flower) ; if you desire a lover, do not pine for him ; if you do feel a longing towards him, conceal your feelings within your breast."

As an example of the puzzling questions or figures with which they sometimes try each others ingenuity, the following may be taken :

Ada kayu indan sabatang, Tumbuh di padang maha leber, Beringin bukan Beringin, Kruya bukan Kruya, Bodahan ganio ampat dahan, bedaun ganio ampat daun, sadahan chondong ka langit, niat ka mana bulan bintang, sa dahan chondong ka laut, niat ka mana raja ikan, sa dahan chondong ka gunung, niat ka mama gaja indan, sa dahan chondong ka bumi niat ka mana anak Adam, Amun teritti sili warang, wong ku angkan dio guru, Amun de teritti sili-warang, wong ku angkan anak murid.

" There is a great tree, growing on an extensive plain ; it is not a beringin, neither is it a kruya ; of branches it has only four, of leaves too it has only four ; one branch points to heaven, what will become of the moon and stars ? one branch points to the sea, what will become of the king of the fishes ? one branch points to the mountains, what will become of the great elephant ? and one branch points to the ground, what will become of the children of Adam ? If you understand my riddle, I will take you for my instructor ; if you do not understand my riddle, I will take you for my disciple."

In these examples, several words occur which are foreign to the Malay language ; some of these, as wong (orang) indan, siah, &c. belong to the Sunda dialect, and others, as amun (if), peliman, asso, angkan, &c. are Serawi.

To conclude this paper, the following

*The *Chintaya* is a fabulous bird said to delight particularly in rain.