

# Indonesia and the Malay World

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## ARTICLES

RUSSELL JONES: Nigel Phillips and *Indonesia and the Malay World*

HELEN CORDELL: Publications of Nigel Phillips

AMIN SWEENEY: Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munsyi:  
a man of bananas and thorns

E. ULRICH KRATZ: Like a fish gasping for water: the letters of a  
temporary spouse from Bengkulu

VLADIMIR BRAGINSKY: Meaning of the sound, magic and Shintô mysticism  
in the phonic structure of the Malay charm and chant

SURYADI: Vernacular intelligence: colonial pedagogy and the language  
question in Minangkabau

JAN VAN DER PUTTEN: Of missed opportunities, colonial law and Islam

HENRI CHAMBERT-LOIR: Malay colophons

TITIK PUDIASTUTI: Looking at Palembang through its manuscripts

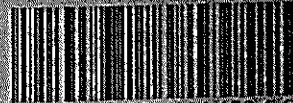
MUHAMMAD HAJI SALLEH: A Malay knight speaks the white man's tongue:  
notes on translating the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*

ANNABEL TEH GALLOP: One seal good, two seals better, three seals best:  
Multiple impressions of Malay seals

Notes on contributors

Cover illustration: Seal of the former Sultan Abdul Jalil Saifuddin of Siam,  
Sumatra, dated 1225 (AD 1810/11). 28 × 28 mm.  
British Library, MSS. Eur. D 742/1, f. 112.

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## Muhammad Haji Salleh

### A MALAY KNIGHT SPEAKS THE WHITE MAN'S TONGUE: NOTES ON TRANSLATING THE *HIKAYAT HANG TUAH*

*A translator proposing to translate the Hikayat Hang Tuah is faced with several questions that he must answer and solve. Among these are: how should he render the semi-oral quality of the work? What type of English shall be used – classical or modern? To what extent should the traditional formulaic qualities be retained in the translated work? And finally, should the translator aim for a loyal rendering that is close to the original, or a freer one that allows it to live and be enjoyed in the 21st century?*

It is well known that literary translation is a complex sub-branch of the endeavour to render works in one language into another, and brings along with it special, if not insurmountable, problems for the translator. Translating a classical text from Malay for a contemporary English-speaking audience confirms this predicament while adding other specific problems arising from the special nature and genre of the work.

From the 19th century onwards, some British scholars and colonial officers tried their hands at translating works of classical Malay and Indonesian literature. Among the earliest endeavours was John Leyden's translation of *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals, 1821), while R.O. Winstedt worked on folk stories and histories throughout most of the first half of the 20th century. They were followed by C.C. Brown who rendered the *Sejarah Melayu* into English (1953), Cyril Skinner who translated Ahmad Rijaluddin's *Hikayat Perintah Negeri Bengkulu* (1982), Russell Jones and the *Hikayat Sultan Ibrahim Ibn Adham* (1985), and Amin Sweeney's translation of Mohamed Salleh bin Perang's autobiography (1980). Nigel Phillip's *Sijobang: sung narrative poetry of West Sumatra* (1981) is a valuable addition to this list. Though not all of these scholars have explained the path taken in their translations, preferring to let their efforts speak for themselves, it is certainly not a straight road or a well-trodden one, even though quite a few have passed along the way.

The translator of Malay works into English not only has the benefit of these earlier works as examples, but he or she may also gain insight from numerous other translations from Greek and Latin, and from Chinese and Japanese. In fact even translations from Middle or Old English into modern English such as Nevill

Coghill's *Canterbury Tales* (1989) and Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf* (1999) may offer useful strategies, for they too face an equally compelling need for ways to communicate efficiently, and with a certain sense of style and elegance, with their modern audience.

This, then, is a sketch of the background against which translations from Malay into English are enacted.

### Hikayat Hang Tuah

Of all the great Malay literary works perhaps *Sulalat al-Salatin / Sejarah Melayu* (Crown of Sultans / History of the Malays) best traces the history of the Malays of the peninsula, while *Hikayat Hang Tuah* defines their feudal values. It is therefore not surprising that Malaysians tend to consider this *hikayat* a central work, which, besides being one of the longest and most imaginative in the language, also collates their achievements and provides a focus on their culture hero, in the context of the kingdom of Melaka in the 15th century. Into these descriptions is etched the exemplary conduct of a legendary knight, and within this conduct itself is indirectly also sketched the code of loyalty and bravery and the concept of a *hulubalang* (warrior or knight).

Kassim Ahmad, the editor of the Dewan Bahasa edition of the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, suggests that as the work narrates certain historically dateable events it must have been written after 1641 but before 1736, when Werndly mentioned it in his register of Malay works (Kassim 1997: xiv). According to Kassim, the earliest manuscript must have been written before 1726. So far, the earliest known manuscript of the *hikayat* is Cod.Or.1762 in Leiden University Library, which was copied in 1758.

The most accessible edition of this work – and that on which the present translation is based – is by Kassim Ahmad, originally published in 1964 (Kassim 1964) and most recently republished in the *Karya Agung* series in 1997 (Kassim 1997). It is based on the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka manuscript (MS 28a) once owned by Tengku Ibrahim of Kelantan. However, the date of the copying of the manuscript itself is unclear.

Though an undisputed original epic of the Malay-speaking peoples, apart from summaries and a short modern recreation for schoolchildren by Mubin Sheppard (1964), no translation in English of the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* seemed to be forthcoming, so about 15 years ago I reluctantly put my translator's pen to paper. The progress was slow, erratic and unspirited until, in the last three years – with the spectre of age catching up with me – the bulk of the first draft was completed.

Much has been written on theories of translation, a field of studies that is now claimed by Comparative Literature. However, in this short essay I would like not to discuss the theories but rather to return to the text and sketch some problems that have confronted me when rendering *Hikayat Hang Tuah* into English. I am aware of, and have referred to, two earlier translations: Hans Overbeck's German translation *Die Geschichte von Hang Tuah* (1922) and Boris Parnickel's rendering into Russian *Povest' o Hang Tuah* (1984). My attempt at translating the *Hikayat* treads the same ground as those who came before me, and perhaps also those who will come after me. However, a text as big and as original as *Hikayat Hang Tuah*,

while presenting universal problems, certainly also lunges towards the translator with its own special problems. They are interlinked and quite inseparable. Each translator must face all the main questions that his predecessors have faced, but he also has his own set of problems to solve.

First and foremost are the very natures of Malay and English that a translator cannot ignore and must reflect in his translation. Secondly, there is the semi-oral quality of the *Hikayat* itself, which was written to be read aloud or rather 'performed', therefore involving certain strategies of narration. Thirdly, as might be expected, there are no clear equivalents in English for many Malay terms in areas such as architecture and rituals and beliefs, especially in their magical connotations and relationships to nature. Fourthly, the traditional Melakan administrative system and hierarchy were very different from the medieval English, for example. While actions and values may be translated with difficulty, traditional ranks and titles of court officials – including some in Javanese – present really daunting obstacles. Fifthly, the Dewan Bahasa text edited by Kassim Ahmad (1997) has parts that have not been transcribed due to problems in the manuscript itself, and these sections have to be researched by the translator in order that they do not remain unintelligible in the English rendering.

Furthermore, although the Malay *hikayat* is a narrative genre, love scenes may be interspersed with the four-line popular poetic quatrains, the *pantun*. As the *pantun* is a very well-known form a translation must not only follow the *a-b-a-b* rhyme scheme, but also the clear division between the first two 'foreshadower' lines and the second two 'meaning' lines. Moreover, the various allusions, and the intricacies of word- and sound-play, presuppose that the translator will abide by the 8-12 syllable count for each line to give the verse the real ring of authenticity. This is not an easy task, and sometimes requires a poetic talent. Most translators might just translate the meaning, but a full and poetic rendering should really be delivered.

Not only must a translator of classical texts have some talent as a poet, he or she also needs to be a literary critic. He must evaluate the many episodes and passages of the work and through that evaluation define its tone, nuances and meaning. While it is true that critical ability is a secondary quality for the translator, as his or her basic task is to render the work into English, nonetheless, translating a difficult piece or chapter demands this critical ability.

### The linguistic differences between Malay and English

The speaker of Malay who knows some English cannot fail to be struck by radical differences between the two languages. Firstly, the Malay of *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is a literary language, possibly from the Riau-Johor dialect used in Melaka and its territories in the southern part of the Malay Peninsula. Though the manuscript used for the source edition (Kassim 1997) was owned by a member of the royal family in Kelantan, it shows no traces of the Kelantan dialect, as far as I am able to detect.

This literary language seems to be an amorphous one found in many Malay texts, and is close to the semi-oral language of narration in a standard and familiar classical style. This style follows strict conventions of syntactical structure, with the use of familiar metaphors, stock phrases and descriptions, which were in turn repeated when certain descriptive situations recurred. The language of the Malay text is

arranged for dramatic oral performance, and is therefore full of linguistic narrative strategies that have been proven successful over time. Comparisons, allusions, the descriptions of the beauty of princesses and the bravery of princes, and exotic descriptions of gardens, palaces and magical weapons are among the tools of its craft. It is not essentially or structurally poetic, but makes use of many poetic tools that eventually enable it to make powerful oral and aural impressions on the audience.

The Malay language itself is essentially a bi-syllabic language. Basic words are made up of two syllables and therefore offer easy possibilities of symmetry and syllabic measurement suitable for a reading voice. To these basic root words are added prefixes and suffixes. As in most Austronesian languages, Malay is heavily filled with vowel sounds which consequently produce lower, gentler and more musical tones. Listen, for example, to these lines introducing the young hero, Hang Tuah:

*Dalam lima itu, seorang Hang Tuah namanya, saya lihat bukan barang-barang lakunya dan sikapnya, dan perkataannya hulubalang juga yang keluar daripada mulutnya dengan manisnya berkata-kata . . .*

(Kassim 1997: 30)

Among the five, the one named Hang Tuah, I notice, is of exceptional bearing and manners, and words that emitted from his mouth were words of a warrior, yet he was full of decorum . . .

This highly vowelised language has had to be translated into a generally more consonantal English, for that is the nature of the latter language compared to the former. I have to accept this as a reality of translation, that not all of the characteristic tones of a language can be transferred. There seems to be little that can be done about this, except for the translator to work harder at giving his renderings a more vowelised flavour.

Works like the *Hikayat Hang Tuah* were most probably written down by scribes only after an initially oral composition had been completed and tried out. And for many centuries, even up to the early 20th century, *hikayat* were recited in a distinctive semi-dramatic and musical style and performed orally to those who could not read, or who even if they could would not be able to transform the text as well as the oral narrator. Likewise, the Malay audience further demanded a language that provided entertainment that was both musical and poetic. A good story was usually composed and then related in a language that was *indah-indah*, sensitive to the musical sounds of the language. In the oral narration itself the text is transformed into a work that should be pleasing not only to the intellect but also to the ear.

Like most oral works *hikayat* are highly formulaic, especially in introducing an episode or describing scenes like the ceremonial presentation of a dignitary to the king, the king holding court, the start or end of a journey, a banquet, and descriptions of costumes and festivals. The following excerpt gives a formulaic description of a banquet honouring a renowned merchant from Kelang:

*Maka saudagar itu pun makanlah tiga sehidangan. Maka segala menteri pun makanlah masing-masing pada hidangannya. Setelah sudah makan maka diangkat orang pula*

*hidangan nikmat pelabagi makanan dan buah-buahan. Setelah sudah makan nikmat itu maka datang makan sirih pada jorong emas dan bau-bauan. Setelah makan sirih dan memakai bau-bauan maka datanglah anugerah akan saudagar itu bertimbun-timbun . . .*

(Kassim 1997: 96)

So the merchant partook in the meal, sharing dishes with the Bendahara and the Temenggung. When they had finished the main course refreshments were then served, after which betel and fragrances were brought forward. Soon gifts were heaped in great stacks before him . . .

In this second excerpt the merchant was entertained by the Bendahara and the Temenggung at another feast, described in almost the same terms as the earlier one:

*Maka pada ketika itu hidangan pun diangkat oranglah. Maka saudagar itu pun makanlah tiga orang dengan bendahara dan temenggung sehidangan. Setelah sudah makan, diangkat orang pula hidangan nikmat. Setelah sudah makan nikmat, maka makan sirih dan memakai bau-bauan. Maka saudagar itu pun bermohonlah kembali ke kapalnya.*

(Kassim 1997:89)

Soon after that food was served. The merchant dined together with the Bendahara and the Temenggung sharing the dishes. When they had finished, sweetmeats were brought before them. When they had partaken in the betel and applied themselves with fragrances, the merchant sought leave and departed for his vessel.

Formulaic too is the syntactical structure of the sentences. As can be seen in the excerpts above, not only are certain words and phrases repeated, but familiar sentence structures in the description or narration are likewise used throughout the work. However, I must hurry to add that as in semi-oral repetitions the formula is not always identical for there are usually some differences. Nonetheless, to all intents and purposes most of the elements of description recur, if not in the same lines or in exactly the same arrangement.

The next characteristic stylistic element that must be mentioned is the frequent use of the word *maka*. A random check on one page — Kassim 1997: 287, for example — shows that the word is used 19 times. Thus in different contexts and positions in a sentence, *maka* encompasses a range of meanings including: then, after that, afterwards, following that, because, subsequently, consequently, in that case, as a result, etc. First and foremost though, it is used as a time marker, to denote the passage of time. This is indeed its most frequent function — too frequent perhaps for the modern reader. Often, too, sentences are begun with this word, especially in an essentially oral culture where pauses and stops were not marked by symbols in the written text or with any whatsoever in the oral form.

*Maka* tersebutlah perkataan seorang raja terlalu besarnya kerajaannya. *Maka* isteri baginda itu pun hamil. Setelah genaplah bulannya *maka* permaisuri pun beranaklah

*seorang perempuan. Maka dinamai oleh ayahanda baginda Tuan Puteri Kemala Ratna Pelinggam.*

(Kassim 1997: 4)

The pages of the *hikayat* now turn to another palace, where another divine raja reigned. His majesty's wife was with child and after a proper term she gave birth to a daughter who shone with particular grace and great beauty. Her father named her Princess Kemala Ratna Pelinggam, and her name evoked the image of a magic jewel of a glowing white, veined with deep blue.

Other words like *hatta* and *sebermula* are also often used interchangeably with *maka* as words that describe the passage of time.

As has been mentioned earlier, it is the nature of formulaic texts that repetition is the ruling principle and is therefore abundant – as words tend to be forgotten sooner when they are heard than when they are read. As I translate a classical text for the modern audience who read (with their eyes) the text in their own private space, so the dilemma arises: how much should I preserve of the nature of the orality?

#### The translation of culture

At this juncture the translator also needs to confront scores of strategic issues arising from the problems of the translation of culture. Though one thinks that one has tried hard, yet after the last word is rendered there is a certain sense of incompleteness, that a territory of meaning or nuances has not been reached and therefore has not been brought as fully to the reader as it should have been. This includes veritable continents of cultural terms and concepts which do not have satisfactory equivalents in English.

One of the main problem areas facing the translator is the court, and in particular the titles and ranks of palace officials. Though some of these offices do overlap with the functions and duties of their western or English counterparts, others are quite unique and are defined only within their own cultures. One can perhaps translate titles like *Perdana Menteri*, but *Temenggung*, *Sriwak Raja* and *Mangkubumi* are posts with different concepts and functions. So it is perhaps wiser and strategically better to retain the titles in their original forms and explain them in a glossary, and perhaps at the beginning also include information on some of their tasks as an integral part of the introduction to the characters.

The *raja* in *Hikayat Hang Tuah* of course may be translated as 'king', but what is left unsaid, and must be gained from the context and cultural subtext, is that he is a *devaraja*, descended from the gods in the *kayangan*, and further given the stamp of legitimacy by the blood of Alexander the Great, and finally by the religion of Islam. He was thus not only divinely, but also religiously, chosen. Besides, he was above and beyond any human law, and in this story the raja acted accordingly. In such a context a person who rebelled against him was going against the godly king. His crime was not only punishable by death, but was considered the highest form of sacrilege, and therefore his

family members too had to be executed along with him, and his house uprooted and cast into the sea.

The next-highest official in rank in the land after the raja was the Bendahara. Many have translated his title as 'Prime Minister'. While this is not wrong, there seem to be other elements missing when the English term is used to replace the Malay. The Malay title Bendahara, as found in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, acquires an aura and certain highly admirable qualities which are lacking in the neutral English term. The Bendahara here is highly revered, his name often prefixed with the title *mamak* or 'respected uncle', and he also exhibits an uncommon wisdom born of an elderly and experienced official known for his compassion and fairness. He was both worldly and spiritual. He served the state beyond everything else, and was more level-headed in all his decisions than the raja, who by comparison followed his heart and his desires. Perhaps his title is better rendered as 'Grand Vizier', which brings together many of the connotations mentioned here. However, in this story the Bendahara was more often than not defined by the context, the progress of the tale and also by his personality and unfolding services. Wilkinson (1985: 122) documented the word's Sanskrit origins, with the meaning 'First Lord of the Treasury'. In other situations the Bendahara was also known as the *Mangkubumi*, here too with other connotations than those associated with the term 'Prime Minister'.

The next most important official of state was the *Temenggung*, and he is even more difficult to find an equivalent for in an English court. Wilkinson (1985: 185) only defines him as 'an exalted Malay official' or a high minister of state, ranking (usually) next to the Bendahara. And thus the translator has to progress along the line of court officials and their titles, right down to the pages, servants and slaves.

Next the translator has to deal with central terms that deal with weapons and the architectural structure of the palace of Melaka. Amongst weapons the *keris* appears in great abundance. This is a type of Malay dagger which – even though this is not mentioned explicitly – is usually imbued with magical powers; this is especially so for *keris* that belong to warriors. Translating *keris* as 'dagger' merely touches tangentially on its physical shape but gives no hint of its magical qualities, which would come at once to the mind of the Malay reader. The *parang* (machete) is also culturally specific, as it is used in the forest to cut a path in the undergrowth, or to work in the garden or a field, but at times may also be used as a rough weapon. Other weapons like *tombak* (spear), *pedang* (sword), *seligi* (javelin) *panah* (arrow) and *meriam* (cannon), however, seem to be more universal.

The Malay palace complex was composed of a group of buildings, pre-eminent of which was the *balai penghadapan* or *balairung* – the great audience hall or court. The Malay court consisted of a long chamber at the end of which was the throne on a raised platform. Along the sides of this chamber were raised galleries to the left and right of the king, up to which one had to climb to take one's seat in a cross-legged fashion. The audience hall was connected to his majesty's private chambers. At times the *raja* had more than one wife, and therefore maintained more than one set of chambers (*istana*). Visitors and subjects entered the great audience hall from the opposite side to the throne and were presented by the Bendahara to the raja. The *Balai Gendang*, Hall of Drums, was on a lesser level of formality and was, as it were, the office of the Bendahara, from where he would instruct his officers to

fulfill certain tasks, such as building a palace, or preparing letters and gifts to be taken to foreign lands such as Majapahit or Keling.

The next important concept that needs some explanation is *menyembah*, paying obeisance. A subject, or an official or diplomat, who entered the hall would sometimes prostrate before the king to demonstrate his gratitude or great love for the king, as did the young Hang Tuah when he received a present of a keris from the sultan. After this, he then stood up to perform his obeisance by raising both his hands to his forehead and bringing them together between his eyes, after which he bowed a little. This excerpt mentions both forms of the salutation:

*Maka keris itu pun disambut oleh Hang Tuah, lalu dijunjung serta sujud meniarap di hadapan baginda itu. Setelah sudah sujud, maka Hang Tuah pun berbangkit lalu berdiri menyembah serta dipegangnya keris itu; lalu turun ke tanah, di hunus keris itu, maka ia menyembah pula.*

(Kassim 1997:44)

A blade was received by Hang Tuah, who with reverence passed it over his forehead, and then prostrated before his majesty. After he had completed this ritual he stood up to pay obeisance while holding the keris. He then descended into the courtyard, unsheathed the weapon, and again paid obeisance.

But *menyembah* may also be performed while sitting down when an official is seated in the gallery, which means he does not have to stand up to do so. To complicate matters further *sembah* may also mean to speak, with or without the gestures of obeisance, as in this excerpt:

*Maka sembah nakhoda itu, 'Daulat tuanku, patik . . . . (Kassim 1997:15)*

The captain said, 'Daulat, my lord, your servant . . . .

We are further enlightened as to the various meanings of *sembah* in the following lines:

*Apabila baginda mendengar sembah nakhoda itu . . . . (Kassim 1997: 16)*

When his majesty heard the captain's words . . . .

Decorum of any court is difficult to translate. Malay court manners are refined, repetitive and rooted in the language of ritual gestures and formulaic phrases of praises and greetings. When a servant or official raises his hands to his forehead in obeisance he says, *Daulat, tuanku, duli yang maha mulia*. *Daulat* is the 'divine clement in kingship', a king's aura, and as the king is divine the servant may not address his person, only the dust, *duli*, beneath his feet.

Next we should consider other words which do not seem to have close equivalents in the target language. These words occur in categories such as the royal regalia, with its *payung iram-iram biru, kuning* (yellow or blue fringed umbrellas), *kapal diraja* (royal barges) and *manjungan* (long canoes); mythical spaces such as

*kayangan* (a space where the gods dwell, which is not exactly the heavens), and their inhabitants such as the *garuda* (the mythical bird) and *ular cintamani* (magical snake); and instruments of magic such as *pustaka* (divination books) and *gemala hikmat* (magical bezoar stones). A different problem of translation concerns obsolete instruments such as *merangu* and *madali* which can no longer be identified precisely, so in their place I have no choice but to describe them generally as percussion or wind instruments.

Most problematic are cultural practices such as *makan sirih*, consuming a quid of *sirih* together as a mark of greetings during a visit, and linked concepts like *kesetiaan* (loyalty) and the status of the raja as a divine king. Although the Knights of the Round Table had a code of bravery and loyalty, the Malay warrior's code would be closer to that of the Japanese warrior, whose code of Bushido overlaps better with what Hang Tuah was demonstrating and delineating in his many acts of bravery and service. For the modern reader, this would be regarded as service without limits or boundaries. Yet as the king was a *devaraja* and all-powerful, his servant cannot be less than a total servant or slave. Only when we understand the king thus can we also understand the servant's uncommon sacrifices for his master. In fact, in connection with the whole idea of the feudal knight and hero, there is a need for the translator to insert explanatory information where appropriate, to enhance the understanding of Hang Tuah as the legendary hero, the Betara Majapahit as the great emperor, and the Mangkubumi as the Grand Vizier.

In other cases additional information on the geography of the archipelago is necessary to help the reader understand place names – for example, by mentioning the direction of Palembang to the southwest, the location of Tuban on the north coast of Java and Bentan to the south of Singapura. So the translator needs to be given certain liberties and to take them, as he or she needs to make his or her rendering geographically and culturally more legible.

#### Javanese, Thai and Arabic-Persian words

Like the author of *Sulalat al-Salatin*, the author of *Hikayat Hang Tuah* was also elegantly ostentatious about his knowledge of Javanese, Thai and Arabic/Persian words. For example he has, among others, included Javanese words, mostly of the courtly kind, including *adika*, *pekulun* (your majesty), *kula* (I), *ulun*, *rama aji* (my father), *Rangga* (a rank of a court official), *patik aji* (your majesty's servant), *ngeran* (angry), *Kiai* (an honorific term for the nobility or a religious leader), *ajar-ajar* (hermits), *penjurit* (rogue warriors), *Adipati* (governor / raja) and *kebiri* (eunuchs). Some Thai titles are retained, such as *Amum*, *Aprak*, *Oban* (honorific terms for a noble), *Okun* (a term of honour for a person of rank) and *Oya* (the highest ministerial rank).

Arabic and Persian words have been assimilated into the Malay language since the 15th century, and among the loanwords found in the Dewan Bahasa manuscript, copied in the 19th century, are *fidzhat* (silver), *firasat* (telling one's fortune), *ghurab* (a type of ship), *helat* (strategy), *lasykar* (army), *madzulkan* (dethroned/banished), *muddat* (an open space), *muhtasyam* (noble looking) and *musyahadatun* (the view). No doubt the author believed that his rather ostentatious use of these words would lend a realistic and also an exotic flavour to his description, and they seem to have been used as a

strategy to impress the local readers and listeners. In these cases I have retained these words, and qualify them with explanations in English.

#### The tone of the *Hikayat*

The tone of the *Hikayat* is quite formal, even though it was intended for the speaking voice. It is not a folk tale told in the dialect or the informal language of the village, but in an amorphous literary Malay style whose elements are also found in *Hikayat Raja Pasai* and *Sulat al-Salatin*. It moves at a slower pace, allowing repetitions to help the reader remember past episodes and aforementioned characters. Therefore the English version should not hurtle along, but neither should it be over-repetitious, for fear of allowing boredom to set in for the modern reader. I have kept close to the text, following its lines of development, only here and there telescoping the lines when the repetitions are a little too frequent – especially with the names of the king and dignitaries, which have at times been replaced with pronouns. This turns up the tone just a decibel and makes the lines run just a miniscule bit faster.

#### To give notes or not to give notes

This is a classical narrative, to be read and enjoyed as a literary text. To my mind it should not be otherwise; it should not be a scholarly transcription devoid of elements of creative imagination and with notes all over the pages. Yet this is not an easy text for the English-speaking reader whose knowledge of 15th century Melakan governance and culture is limited, and thus some end-notes to explain the meaning of words or their contexts would be in order. As I see it, it is better to weave explanations into the text whenever possible, in the hope that these words will eventually become part of the language and fabric of the translated version. Where this is not possible then clarifications should be given in a glossary at the end of the work.

There is an additional problem that confronts the translator of the Kassim Ahmad edition of *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. Some parts of the texts have been left blank or just spelt out in the original Malay Jawi letters by the editor, such as in the phrases *belah baling b.t.n.d.w.n* (Kassim 1997: 182) and *c.y.k banyak makan di jalan* (Kassim 1997: 183). Though these are not central concepts and words, the reader's experience is disturbed or is suspended without a solution. In such cases I have resorted to comparison with other published editions, such as the Gunung Agung edition (Abbas 1960), Shellabear (1908) and the Balai Pustaka edition (*Hikajat* 1924). Thus the translator is dragged into problems of philology, a field as problematical as that of translation itself. It is not forgivable, I think, to give a translation which includes many dots or letters in Jawi representing unrecognisable words or phrases. The translator needs to try to help the reader, even if the edition he uses is imperfect, by supplying reasonable or logical alternatives from other texts in cases where the base text is incomplete. In special cases, if possible he or she should also refer to other unedited manuscripts, wherever these are to be found, whether in Jakarta, London or Leiden.

These, then, are some of the problems of translating the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*. Formidable as they are, now I must return to my draft of the translation and see it through to the end of the *Hikayat*.

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