

# THE SEJARAH MELAYU REVISITED

A COLLECTION OF SIX ESSAYS



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AHMAT ADAM

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# The *Sejarah Melayu* Revisited

A Collection of Six Essays

**Ahmat Adam**

PUSTAKA PERDANA



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To my fellow Melakans



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# Preface

The essays published in this book were written primarily between 2010 and 2019. The essay entitled “Mystic Letters and Their Influence in the Malay World” is based on a lecture given to the Southeast Asian postgraduate students at the University of Oxford, during my tenure as a senior Visiting Fellow at the Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies in 2011. The research for this essay was carried out in Oxford itself.

The papers on the *Sejarah Melayu*, or the *Malay Annals*, are the fruits of several years of research carried out in Malaysia, Leiden and London. During my sojourn as a visiting Senior Research Fellow at the History Department of the University of Malaya in 2010, and from 2012 until 2015, I had the opportunity of meeting Associate Professor Dr Victor A. Pogadaev, who was then teaching Russian at the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics. Dr Pogadaev was kind enough to mention the existence of a facsimile of a manuscript of the *Sejarah Melayu* that once belonged to Adam Johann von Krusenstern, which was in a book available at the faculty’s library. I began working on the Krusenstern manuscript, which finally resulted in the recension of the *Sulalat u’s-Salatin*, published by Yayasan Karyawan in 2016.

While in Leiden I also took the opportunity to continue my research on the *Sejarah Melayu*, which I had begun during my sabbatical from Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

# Abbreviations

AH/H	<i>Anno Hegira/Hegira</i>
Ar.	Arabic
BKI	<i>Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde</i> (The Hague: Leiden)
CE/BCE	Christian Era/Before Christian Era
JMBRAS	Journal of the Malayan (Malaysian) Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
MBRAS	Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society
MS/MSS	Manuscript/manuscripts
Pers.	Persian
Port.	Portuguese
r.	Reign
Sansk.	Sanskrit

# Acknowledgments

The writing of these essays would not have been made possible without the assistance and collaboration of several people and institutions. I am especially indebted to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Malaysia, then under Tan Sri Dr Rais Yatim, for the financial assistance given in 2011. It was through the ministry's generosity that I was able to conduct my research at the University of Leiden, the British Library in London and of course at the Bodleian library at Oxford University.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the librarians of several libraries, namely those of the University of Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, the National Library of Singapore, the libraries of the University of Leiden, the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), the Bodleian Library and its branches at Oxford, and the British Library in London.

To my friends and fellow academicians who gave their support by inviting me to present seminar papers on several occasions I wish to say thank you. I am also grateful to Datin Saidah Rastam and Mr Bert Tan of "Melaka In Fact", for having invited me to speak on the history of Melaka in their seminars. I would also like to thank Dr Siti Zunairah bti Jaafar, another "Malaccan" who shows keenness in the history of Melaka even though she is from the medical profession, and has strongly supported my effort to write a fresh interpretation of Melaka's history.

Lastly, thanks are due to my family members, especially to my wife, Datin Aysha binti Datuk Khalid, and our children, who have given their full support to my research and writing all along.

# Orthography

The transliteration of Jawi (Malay Arabic script) to Romanised letters (Rumi) is based on the Library of Congress system. For example, the phoneme / 'ayn / [ ع ] in Jawi is transcribed with the use of / ' / . Other Jawi letters transcribed into Rumi are as follows:

ا	a
ب	b
ت	t
ج	j
ح	h
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sy
ص	ṣ
ع	'
ط	ṭ
ف	f/p
ق	q/k
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w
ي	y
ة	t

# Glossary

<i>adiraja</i> (Kawi/Sansk.)	the first among all the rulers, the supreme ruler
abjad hawaz (or <i>hawiz</i> ) (Ar.)	the seven Arabic letters chosen to determine the eight-year cycle
<i>agra</i> (Sansk.)	the supreme, highest
<i>amar</i> (Port.)	to love, to like very much
Bendahara (Malay)	prime minister
<i>bandalheira</i> (Port.)	low behaviour
<i>bandara</i> (Port.)	loafer, idler, sluggard
<i>bhagya</i> (Sansk.)	fortune, luck
<i>darma</i> (Sansk. <i>dharma</i> )	virtue, morality
<i>fusta</i> (Port.)	pinnaces
<i>hikayat</i> (Pers.)	story, history, romance, fable, narrative, tradition
<i>huruf</i> (Ar.)	letters of the Arabic script
<i>ilmu huruf</i> (Ar.)	science of letters regarding the mysticism of the Qur'anic letters
of	the Qur'anic letters
interpolation	addition
<i>janela</i> (Port.)	window
<i>Jawi</i>	Arabic script adapted for Malay
Kawi	Old Javanese language ( <i>Jawa Kuno</i> )
<i>kaid</i> (Pers.)	king
<i>Laksamana</i>	admiral
<i>lancão</i> (Port.)	large sailing ship
<i>meayarkan</i> (Kawi)	to unfold; spread out
<i>mestiço</i> (Port.)	mixed race
<i>petuturan/pituturan</i> (Kawi)	history, remembrance, memorial, genealogy
<i>purna lango</i> (Kawi)	overwhelming feeling of love, lovelorn
recension	review, re-examination, revision
Rumi	Roman or Latin script

s.a.w. (Ar.)	short for “ <i>Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam</i> ”, or “peace be upon him”
<i>sakai</i>	tribesmen
Sri Tri Buana (Sansk.)	ruler of the three worlds
Suprab(h)a (Kawi, from Sansk.)	radiant, glorious light
<i>tuha</i> (Kawi)	old, skilful leader, leader of a group

# A Note on the Text

The *Sejarah Melayu*, as it is popularly known, is not its original title. It is actually the *Sulalat u's-Salatin yakni pituturan segala raja-raja*. In these essays, the original title, sometime shortened to *Sulalat u's-Salatin*, and its other names such as the *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Melayu* and the (inaccurate) *Malay Annals* will be used interchangeably when referring to this classical Malay work.

Certain terms, for example Old Javanese or Kawi, will be used interchangeably. The same goes with certain spellings, such as sura/surah. Archaic spellings in various languages (e.g. “Valentijn” instead of “Valentyn”) may occasionally appear.

The names of several important copies of the *Sejarah Melayu* will be shortened for simplicity in-text. These are the:

- Raffles MS No. 18, henceforth known as the Raffles 18;
- Krusenstern manuscript, henceforth the Krusenstern MS; and
- Farquhar Malay MS No. 5, henceforth the Farquhar 5.

# Questions on the authorship and origins of the *Sejarah Melayu*<sup>1</sup>

## The *Malay Annals* and its variants

The *Sejarah Melayu*, known in the ancient Malay courts as the *Hikayat Melayu* – or more correctly, *Sulalat u's-Salatin yakni pituturan*<sup>2</sup> *segala raja-raja* (genealogy-cum-memorial of rajas) – is the only surviving text of the earliest Malay literary work to have been written about the Malays outside Sumatra. Erroneously translated into English as the *Malay Annals*, it has been regarded as the finest and most famous of all the Malay classics. Over four centuries since it was written in the sixteenth century, there have been several editions, interpolations and revisions at different periods of time by alleged authors, copyists or court writers, thus resulting in a literary corpus of no less than 32 variants, kept at several libraries worldwide (Roolvink 1967: 301).<sup>3</sup> The principal theme that runs through the narratives is identical – there is little doubt that the author(s) intended to narrate, through their work, the fortunes and misfortunes that befell the Malay rajas of the Melaka line.

It was written with the purpose of providing a memorial (Kawi or Old Javanese: *pituturan*) for the Malay rajas to remind them of their duties, and to provide the succeeding Malay generations with a history of the genealogy of the Melaka sultans and their successors, together with a chronicle of the Malay royal ceremonials. Underlying all these were subtle warnings about the folly of departing from the ancient covenant made between Demang Lebar Daun, the mythical ancestor of the Malay people, and Raja Sri Tri Buana,<sup>4</sup> in which both pledged that subjects and rulers had to be cognisant of their

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to record my appreciation and thanks to the Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture of Malaysia, for giving me a grant to conduct research at the University of Leiden on the subject in 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The usage of this word and its several different meanings will be discussed below.

<sup>3</sup> According to Raimy Che-Ross (*MBRAS* 2002 (75) 2: 30), there are 44 manuscripts altogether (both complete and incomplete) in various libraries in Europe, New Zealand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

<sup>4</sup> Sri Tri Buana (lord of the three worlds) is also known as Bichitram, Sang Supraba, or Sang Nila Utama.

respective responsibilities. In their “contract”, the former had vowed that his descendants “shall be the subjects of your Majesty’s [Sri Tri Buana’s] throne, but they must be well treated by your descendants” (Brown 1983: 16). Conversely, Sri Tri Buana made Demang Lebar Daun give an undertaking in return that his descendants would be obedient and would never “for the rest of time be disloyal to my [Sri Tri Buana’s] descendants, even if my descendants oppress them and behave evilly” (ibid.).

## Authorship

Several generations since its first narration, the *Malay Annals* has undergone changes when subsequent so-called authors or copyists of later years weaved their own interpolations into the original narrative, thus resulting in several recensions. For the purposes of this study, this writer has undertaken a study of the contents, in particular the prefaces of some of the well-known versions of the *Malay Annals*, namely the Raffles 18 (or the Raja Bongsu manuscript),<sup>5</sup> which was first edited by Sir Richard Winstedt (or R.O. Winstedt) (*JMBRAS* 1938 (16) 3: 1-155); the Blagden manuscript (Blagden 1925: 10-52), which was the nucleus of the Raffles and according to Winstedt, narrated events prior to 1536; the Leiden Cod. Or. 12026 that belonged to Sultan Abdul Rahman Syah of Lingga (r. 1811–32); the Abdullah and Shellabear redactions and the English translation made by John Leyden between 1810 and 1812 (published in 1821, with an introduction by Raffles); the Farquhar Malay MS No. 5 (1827);<sup>6</sup> and lastly the Krusenstern manuscript (1798).<sup>7</sup>

An exhaustive study of the Krusenstern MS has yet to be carried out in the English language, although a no less important edition was published in Russian by Dr E. V. Revunenкова (2008). It is believed that the Krusenstern MS is the second oldest copy of the text in existence, after Raffles 18. It was copied in 1798 by at least three copyists, whose names were: Haji Muhammad Tahir al-Jawi, Muhammad Zakat Long and Ibrahim Jamrut (see the transliteration of the facsimile in Ahmat Adam (2016: 191).<sup>8</sup> This version of the *Sejarah Melayu* may

<sup>5</sup> The Raffles MS No. 18 which henceforth will be shortened to Raffles 18, was also translated into English and edited by C.C. Brown. The manuscript was later edited and transliterated into Rumi by Abdul Rahman Ismail, who published it in 1995. Two years after that, the Raffles 18 was edited by Muhammad Haji Salleh.

<sup>6</sup> Henceforth Farquhar 5.

<sup>7</sup> Henceforth Krusenstern MS.

<sup>8</sup> A more complete discussion of the Krusenstern MS can be found in Chapter 3.

have been one of a kind (though probably copied from an older text) and was eventually published by a mission press in Singapore in 1840/41, introduced by Abdullah Munsyi. Either this text, or a similar one, was copied by Raffles's clerk, Ibrahim Kandu, and translated into English by John Leyden (1810–12). It is for this reason that this writer thinks that to do justice to the discussion on the origins and authorship of the *Malay Annals*, several variants of the text would need to be studied. While the Shellabear redaction has been the most widely read text, since it was first published in 1896 it is nonetheless merely a hybrid text, for the “reviser” had relied on several sources for his recension (Linehan 1947: 105). William Shellabear used Leyden's translation, a copy of the *Annals* from the Logan library in Singapore, Maxwell's MS No. 26 (1850), another copy (not earlier than 1856) that was owned by Munsyi Mohamad Ally, and the uncompleted revised French edition (1849) by M. Edouard Dulaurier (Linehan 1947b: 105), among others.

Roolvink has categorised the texts of the *Malay Annals* into two prototypes: the short (standard) and long (extended) versions. Examples of the short version include the Farquhar 5 and the manuscript from Palembang (Roolvink 1967: 308-9). The short version, in which the last narrative is about a request by Tun Ali Hati to Sultan Mahmud that he be put to death, actually forms part of the narrative of the invasion of Melaka by Afonso Dalboquerque (or Afonso de Albuquerque). It had been used as the concluding narrative or chapter of the Krusenstern MS as well as many other recensions, many of which had relied on the Abdullah Munsyi redaction. The said chapter is also found in both the Raffles 18 and the Shellabear redaction. In the long versions, such as the Shellabear redaction, the Leiden Cod. Or. 12026 and texts of its kind, other episodes have been included after the killing of Tun Ali Hati: the text ends with the ascension of Raja Ali<sup>9</sup> to the throne of Johor as Sultan 'Ala'uddin Ri'ayat Syah, who set up court at Pasar<sup>10</sup> Raja (or Pasir Raja) in Johor Lama, and the chapter concludes with the statement about Johor being attacked by Jambi, which occurred in 1673 CE (1083 AH) (Ismail Hussein 1979: 191).

The question that Roolvink raised *viz.* whether the short versions had formed the basis of the Raffles 18 is an interesting one. In the Palembang

<sup>9</sup> According to the Raffles 18 he was named Raja 'Ala'uddin Syah after he was born (Brown 1970: 165).

<sup>10</sup> *Pasar* is an Old Javanese word meaning cemetery or graveyard. In the context of the above sentence *pasar* does not mean market. See Zoetmulder (2000 (2): 788).

version, the last chapter narrates the conquest of Melaka by the Portuguese, which is what the Krusenstern MS also does. The original manuscript, written after the Malays' loss of Melaka, must have ended with the death of Tun Ali Hati and not the Portuguese attack on Johor Lama in 1535/36 as claimed by Winstedt. We think that the narratives in the Krusenstern MS (which should certainly be considered as one of the short/standard versions of the *Sejarah Melayu*), were later adopted by redactors or copyists as the basis for their texts, which were then interpolated with other episodes.

Until now, the issues of determining the authorship of the manuscript and the date of its original composition are still being debated by scholars of Malay history, particularly in Malaysia. Many have drawn a conclusion that the author was none other than Tun Seri Lanang, the *Bendahara* (Prime Minister) of Johor. Some strong proponents of this view are Abdul Samad Ahmad and Muhammad Haji Salleh, Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, and Teuku Iskandar, who share the belief that the *Malay Annals* were written in 1612 and became known as Raffles 18. While it may be true that the *Bendahara Paduka Raja* (Jelani 2009: 60, 158) was mentioned as the “author” of the *Malay Annals* by Nuruddin ar-Raniri in his work, *Bustanus-Salatin* (which the latter began to write in 1638), there is, however, no clear evidence that Tun Seri Lanang was the author of the 1612 recension. We believe that Tun Seri Lanang was a pseudonym: “*Lanang*” is a Kawi word meaning “man”. It is also difficult to ascertain whether the *Bendahara Paduka Raja* referred to was indeed “Tun Seri Lanang”, and whether Raniri even met the said Tun Seri Lanang during a hunting trip to Pasai (ibid.: 158)<sup>11</sup> Despite the inclusion of his name in all later revisions of the *Malay Annals* (which we think were written after 1612), other copyists had nevertheless retained the part of the preface of the Raffles 18 which stated that it was Seri Nara Wangsa (also named Tun Bambang) who “came bearing on the head a command from the Ruler in the Lower Reaches”, to “make a chronicle of the genealogy of the Malay Rajas” (Raffles 18: preface).

<sup>11</sup> A similar claim was also made by F. W. Douglas, in which ar-Raniri met Tun Seri Lanang in Aceh (Douglas 1949: 33). But we think that such claims are rather far-fetched since there is no written evidence that Tun Seri Lanang was really the *Bendahara Paduka Raja* referred to. Furthermore, Tun Seri Lanang was no longer around when Raniri was in Aceh in 1637. The *Adat Aceh* recorded the presence of chiefs with titles like *Paduka Raja*, *Paduka Tuan*, *Tuan [Tun] Seberang*, which did not necessarily refer to Tun Seri Lanang. (E.U.L.MSS. 459). One should not forget that there was more than one *Bendahara Paduka Raja* of Johor. The *Sejarah Melayu* itself stated that the son of Tun Seri Lanang, Tun Jenal, was also nicknamed *Bendahara Paduka Raja* and called Datuk Sekudai. See Ahmat Adam (2016: 275-276).

Regardless of the real meaning of the words, however, the *fakir* (servant) mentioned as the executor of the command was only a compiler, who by his own admission had assembled “all the stories of the men of bygone days” (Brown 1983: 2). It was quite obvious that his work was later recopied by others who also made further interpolations. Whether or not the preface of the Krusenstern MS was based on the original text is difficult to determine. The word “*Bendahara*”, which was used in the preface of the manuscript and others that were copied in the nineteenth century (namely the Leyden, Abdullah Munsyi and Shellabear), is not found in the Raffles 18 (1612). The Raffles 18 only mentioned the phrase “*pada hari petuturan* [sic, pituturan, Jawi: **فنتران**]” which translated literally into English means “on the day of remembrance”. Thus, the “author-editor” of post-1612 *Sejarah Melayu* had replaced the word “*hari*” with “*bendahara*”. Even Winstedt himself thought that the word “*hari*” was inadvertently written instead of *Bendahara*.<sup>12</sup> A discussion on the authorship of the *Malay Annals*, however, will not be satisfactory without perusing the relevant portion of its preface. Let us first look at the relevant portion of the preface in Raffles 18:

... Now in the year 1021 H, in an early *Dal* year on the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month of *Rabi'ul-awal*, on Sunday, at the time of the forenoon prayer, in the reign of Sultan 'Ala'uddin Ri'ayat Syah, shadow of God upon earth, while he had a settlement at Pasar [or Pasir] Raja – at that time there came Sri Narawangsa, whose name was Tun Bambang, son of Sri Agra<sup>13</sup> Raja [ **اگر راج** ] of Patani, with a command from the Ruler in the Lower Reaches ... and the behest of his Highness was thus: “It is my wish that a chronicle be made of the genealogy of the Malay Rajas and the ceremonial of their courts, for the information of my descendants who come after me, that they may be conversant with the history and derive profit therefrom.”

When your humble servant ... heard the word of his Highness, he took the command upon his head and his limbs were bowed beneath the weight of it. Then he braced himself to be held up to ridicule in carrying it out diligently while at the same time beseeching help from God, the Creator of the Universe, and from His Prophet, the chiefest of mankind ...<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See below for further elaboration.

<sup>13</sup> *Agra* in Kawi means “the supreme”, “most important”, or “the most significant”, “premier”; but the word *agraja* means “the eldest”, “first-born” (Zoetmulder 2000 (1): 13, 14).

<sup>14</sup> Translation based on Brown (1983: 1-2).

There are several pertinent points in the above preface:

1. Many Sunni Muslims believe that 12 *Rabi'ul-awal* is the date that the Prophet Muhammad was born.
2. The sentence “[n]ow in the year 1021, in the year of *awal al-awal* [*sic.*], on the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month of *Rabi'ul-awal*, on Sunday, at the hour of the early forenoon prayer,<sup>15</sup> in the reign of Sultan ‘Ala’uddin Ri’ayat Syah, shadow of God upon earth, while he had a settlement at Pasir (or Pasar) Raja ...” could be ambiguous, since there is no mention of Sultan ‘Ala’uddin being dead. It also implies that the *Malay Annals* could indeed have been revised by someone during the reign of one of two possible Sultan ‘Ala’uddins: the (earlier) son of Sultan Mahmud and Tun Fatimah, who was the first sultan of Johor (r.1528/29–64), or the (later) son of Sultan Ali Jalla Abdul Jalil Syah, who was the fifth sultan (r. 1597–1613).<sup>16</sup> They are not to be confused with their predecessor, Sultan ‘Ala’uddin of Melaka, son of Sultan Mansur Syah (r. 1477–81).
3. There is no mention of an assembly of chiefs. The word Bendahara is not used; neither could we find the name of Tun Seri Lanang in the Raffles 18.
4. The command was given directly by the *Yang Dipertuan Di Hilir* (Ruler in the Lower Reaches) to Tun Bambang.
5. The name of the chronicle was given as *Sulalat u’s-Salatin yakni Petuturan [sic Pituturan] Segala Raja-Raja*.

Now compare the preface of the Raffles 18 above with the Krusenstern MS, which shares close resemblance to all other texts listing Tun Seri Lanang as the author-editor:

... Subsequent to that, the humble writer ... had on one occasion sat in the company of much superior dignitaries, spending lighter moments in conversation; among them there was a far superior chief who said to me: “I heard that there is a chronicle brought from Goa by the nobleman of Sogoh [*sic* Sageo]<sup>17</sup>; perhaps we could improve on it including its ceremonials, in order that it shall be known by our descendants of heretofore and that they

<sup>15</sup> The non-compulsory *Duha* prayers which some Muslims perform in the late morning, *viz.* between 8.00 and 10.00 o’clock.

<sup>16</sup> This will be discussed below.

<sup>17</sup> From the Acehnese word *sageo* which is pronounced /sagi/ (Malay: *segi*) meaning the “end”, “extreme point”, “district”, “village” by Aboe Bakar *et al.* (2001: 832-833).

will all remember it and reap benefits from it.” After hearing such command, heavy were my limbs, a humble man named Tun Mahmud [ محمد ],<sup>18</sup> more tenderly known by the name, Tun Seri Lanang, designated as Bendahara Paduka Raja, grandson of the grandson of the Orang Kaya Paduka Raja, grandson of Bendahara Seri Maharaja, son of the Seri Nara Diraja, Tun Ali, son of Mani Purindan; he found God through the mystic way, and Malay being his race from Bukit Siguntang Maha Miru, the upper part of Malakat [ ولو ملاكت ] is his country, Batu Sawar abode of peace.

These were his words: In the *Hegira* year of the Prophet may peace be upon him, one thousand and twenty one in the year of the early *Dal* on the twelfth of *Rabi’ul-awal*, on Thursday at the hour of early forenoon prayers, during the reign of the late raja who died in Aceh, Seri Sultan ‘Ala’uddin Ri’ayat Syah, son of Sultan Mahmud, grandson of Sultan ‘Ala’uddin, great grandson of Sultan Mansur Syah, grandson of the grandson of Sultan Muzaffar Syah, son of Sultan Muhammad Syah, during the time when he was ruler in the country of Pase [p-a-s-y; sic, Pasir] Raja, **at that moment there came to me Seri Nara Wangsa named Tun Bambang, son of Seri Agra Raja of Patani bearing the command of the Yang Dipertuan, Sultan Abdullah Mughayat [sic Ma’ayat] Syah, ibni Sultan Ali Jalla Abdul Jalil Syah [emphasis added]...**

... Such was the command of His Highness: “Verily we request the *Bendahara* that a history of the Malays be made together with its ceremonial so that it shall be known by our descendants who come after us, that they shall remember so that they shall reap benefits from it. After this humble self has composed himself I then braced myself to be held to ridicule<sup>19</sup> towards working with assiduity on it; and pray for God’s guidance and ask for signs from the prophet, while also asking for holy sanction from the four companions of reverence. And so I compose this chronicle and I name it the Chronicle of Kings, that is the genealogy-*cum*-memorial of Kings ...<sup>20</sup>

There are several significant points in the Krusenstern MS which should be noted:

1. The date 12 *Rabi’ul-awal* 1021 H, year of the early *Dal* (13 June 1612), is correct except that it was given as a Thursday instead of Sunday, which

<sup>18</sup> /m/h/m/d/ may also be pronounced “Muhammad”.

<sup>19</sup> Malay: *perkurjakhlah* (also *pergonjaklah*). (Wilkinson 1959 (2): 626).

<sup>20</sup> See preface in Ahmat Adam (2016: 3-7).

“In a period where no native scholars of equal repute existed, where no one possessed similar levels of extensiveness and depth in terms of understanding Malay culture and literature, it must be admitted that the Orientalist stand taken by scholars like Winstedt was unavoidable. As a matter of fact, even today one can still find Malay scholars echoing his and other European Orientalists’ opinions...”

**Ahmat Adam**

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The *Sejarah Melayu* has been known by many names, and its text has changed too. Interpolations, recensions and revisions over the centuries have resulted in dozens of variants, which brings up many questions. Was Tun Seri Lanang the author of the text? Can the manuscript be regarded as an authoritative historical source? How entrenched are Orientalist views in contemporary scholarship of the *Sejarah Melayu*? The answers, as well as digressions into mystic letters and Portuguese loan words, can be found in this new collection of essays.

\*

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