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Never-Neverland Revisited: Malay Adventure Stories

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Introduction

The extant manuscripts that contain the *SBS* yield a picture not of a nineteenth-century Malay manuscript tradition, but of a Western, early twentieth-century philological practice. The story is preserved in seven manuscripts that are kept in the Special Collections of Leiden University Library in the Netherlands: Cod. Or. 3317, 6058, 6071, 6081, 5968, 5977a and 5977b. The first three originate in North Sumatra; two of these are dated 1853, while we can assume that the third was produced in the 1880s. The other four are copies of the Sumatran manuscripts and were written in Leiden around 1912 by Charles Adriaan van Ophuijsen, professor of Malay language and literature at Leiden University from 1904 until his death in 1917 (for more on the manuscripts, see Chapter 6).

Van Ophuijsen brought two copies of the *SBS* with him from Sumatra: Cod. Or. 6058 and 6071. Of the two, only the first can safely be assumed to have an indigenous history of use. Stains on the pages – perhaps soot from an oil lamp or *sirih* spittle – and fingerprints bear witness to the many times readers have turned the pages of this book. In Leiden, Van Ophuijsen had access to a third copy: Van der Tuuk's copy in the University Library, Cod. Or. 3317 (Figures 3 and 5). This manuscript was written in Sorkam in 1853 by an indigenous copyist called *Haji* Abdul Wahid. It is the manuscript that is used for the current edition. From the time of its creation, it was condemned to a life on a dusty bookshelf; first in Van der Tuuk's house in Barus and later in the University Library in Leiden. The manuscript fits in with a larger group of manuscripts containing various sorts of Malay texts that were acquired by or copied for Van der Tuuk in Barus and Sorkam in the period 1851–1857, the years he was active in that region (see Part I, Chapter 1 and Appendix A).

In the Preface to his *Maleisch leesboek* (1912), Van Ophuijsen mentions that he is preparing a text edition of the *SBS*. With only three extant manuscripts to work with, a

search for an archetypal text was impossible. Thus, he aimed for a text free of corrupted readings, scribal errors and unclear passages instead. To this end, he meticulously compared the three Sumatran manuscripts with each other. He wrote a complete transliteration of one of his own copies, resulting in Cod. Or. 6081. Next, he transliterated one third of the text as found in Van der Tuuk's copy (Cod. Or. 3317); this resulted in Cod. Or. 5968. He also tried his hand at writing *jawi*; two thin exercise books contain the initial part of the story in *jawi*-script (Cod. Or. 5977a and b). The four study copies are marked by countless cross references to the three source manuscripts from Sumatra. Page numbers in the margins and underlining in different colours, brackets and variant readings all bear witness to many hours of philological labour. With this in mind, it is unfortunate that Van Ophuijsen did not manage to finalize his project. A lithograph edition of the *SBS* by his hand is not found in any of the libraries and archives.

The Copyist *Haji* Abdul Wahid and Cod. Or. 3317

In his reports to his employer, Van der Tuuk creates the impression that he failed to find able Malay copyists in his temporary home town (Groeneboer 2002, 287, 292, 317, 334, 336); but evidence from the manuscripts proves different. At least three different persons copied Malay texts for Van der Tuuk in Barus and Sorkam around the middle of the nineteenth century: a certain *si* Liek (perhaps short for Malik?), alias *Marah* Nujum, who worked in Barus, *Haji* Abdul Wahid in Sorkam, and one or two anonymous copyists residing in Pasar Batu Gerigis, the market area of Barus.¹

The colophon of Cod. Or. 3317 does not mention the name of its copyist. However, a comparison of the formal features of Cod. Or. 3317 with those of Cod. Or. 3289 and 3338 makes it possible to ascribe Cod. Or. 3317 to a certain *Haji* Abdul Wahid. This name is found in both Cod. Or. 3289 and 3338 as the copyist. Who was this man and how did Van der Tuuk become acquainted with him?² Firstly, his title of *haji* indicates that he was a Muslim, and a pious one to boot. He had made the hazardous journey overseas as a pilgrim to Arabia before the introduction of the steam engine, and at a time when the number of pilgrims from the Archipelago was still low. His status as *haji* earned him respect and some religious authority back in the Malay World. Perhaps, he also distin-

¹ The identification of several Malay copyists who were active in a single area is rather unique. Only a relative large number of manuscripts stemming from the same area, with manuscripts that mention the copyist's name, make a comparative study of the manuscripts' formal features possible. Among these are size, watermark, handwriting, blind lining, the format of the colophon, the type of book binding, the use of line fillers, and so on. Then, patterns can be discerned and manuscripts can be attributed to certain copyists.

² Considering the male dominated nature of Sumatra's west coast merchants' community and the Islamic (supra) community, the copyists are assumed to have been men.

guished himself from his fellow Muslims as a *haji* by sporting a beard and wearing a long white robe and white turban, like many returned pilgrims.

Haji Abdul Wahid did not live and work in Barus, like his patron Van der Tuuk, but in nearby Sorkam. He worked there as a clerk for members of the local elite. Among them was the ruler of Sorkam, *Raja* Parang Tua Tanjung.³ But passing traders or other visitors to Sorkam made use of his services as well. A *khatib* from Sibolga, for instance, asked him to write a letter on financial matters to a Khalidiyya *syaikh* in Natal. An indication that perhaps even the local colonial government was one of his patrons is the wove paper he used for the letter that was requested by the *khatib*.⁴ The same type of paper, with the same crowned letters BATH imprinted in the upper left corner, was used by the colonial government in Barus for a letter to Van der Tuuk.⁵

In the months of August and September of the year 1853, *Haji* Abdul Wahid copied a series of four Malay texts in Sorkam for Van der Tuuk. The first text was the *Poem on Mecca and Medina* (Syair Makah dan Medinah) (Cod. Or. 3338). The second was *Mawlid an-Nabi*; it was finished on 2 September 1853 (Cod. Or. 3289). Just over two weeks later he wrote the last words of the *Story of Ahmad and Muhammad* (Hikayat Ahmad Muhammad) (Cod. Or. 3314); within another ten days, on 26 September, he had copied the complete text of the *Story of Bahram Syah* (Cod. Or. 3317). It is unfortunate that Van der Tuuk has not written about his contacts with Malay copyists in Barus and Sorkam. But, a snippet of paper found in between the pages of one of Van der Tuuk's Malay manuscripts attests to the existence of these contacts.⁶ In a few lines, *Haji* Abdul Wahid conveys his greetings and warmest feelings of friendship to, presumably, Van der Tuuk (see Figure 6). It is not difficult to imagine the note having been placed by Abdul Wahid in between the pages of a newly written copy that was to be delivered to Van der Tuuk's house in Barus.

Cod. Or. 3317 is a bound manuscript that consists of eighty-four folios of European laid paper. It measures 12.5 cm by 17.0 cm by 1.5 cm. Page numbers 33 and 66 are skipped. The last page number is 86. The paper has a Pro Patria or Maid-of-Holland watermark, with a countermark that consists of three letters that could not be deciphered. The manuscript has no indigenous leather binding. Such bindings were expensive, and the nearest bookbinder lived as far away as Padang (Groeneboer 2002, 343). Instead, it has a simple binding that consists of thin paperboard boards that are covered with brown paper. On the first flyleaf "No 52" is written in brown ink. The manuscript is dated in the

³ *Raja* Parang Tua Tanjung used the title *Datuk* Amat II. The ruler of Sorkam was one of the three lenders mentioned in a pawn letter that can be attributed to *Haji* Abdul Wahid. The letter is inserted in Cod. Or. 3234.

⁴ Inserted letter in Cod. Or. 3260 f.

⁵ This letter, written in Dutch, conveyed the request to translate a letter on the extradition of the convicted murderer *si* Timbul into Batak (Cod. Or. 3344, 26; see Wieringa 2007, 304).

⁶ Cod. Or. 3286.

colophon “hari Selasa pada 22 hari bulan Dulhijah sanat 1269”: Monday 26 September 1853 CE.⁷ The manuscript contains the complete text of the *SBS*; the text is written in *jawi* in black ink. Latin numerals written in pencil in the left- and right-hand margins of pages 2 till 26 correspond with page numbers of Cod. Or. 5968. Catalogue entries for Cod. Or. 3317 are Juynboll 1899, 176–178 under CLI; Wan Mamat 1985, 36; Iskandar 1995, 160 and Wieringa 2007, 236–241.

The Malay language used in Cod. Or. 3317 is similar to the language in *hikayat* that originate in other regions of the Malay World. It does, however, betray Minangkabau influence. This feature reflects the text’s west coast origin; the Minangkabau language spread along Sumatra’s west coast with the Minangkabau diaspora. There, in the trade ports where traders and seafarers of different ethnic background met, the language came into contact with the Malay language that was used as a lingua franca in commerce. The result was a variant of Malay with distinct Minangkabau features.

Writing is a poor substitute for the spoken language, and this holds even more for a text like the *SBS* that was written more than 160 years ago. It is impossible to ascertain how the words were actually pronounced. First, the *jawi* script does not systematically represent vowels. In addition, the text is marked by spelling practices that are commonly referred to as ‘Malayization’ or *pemelayuan*. *Pemelayuan* is the practice of writing Minangkabau words that have a Malay counterpart as Malay words.⁸ It is impossible to ascertain which word is represented by, for instance, the spelling b-r-*alif*-s. The word means ‘uncooked rice’ and can be found several times in the *SBS*. But, the spelling represents three different pronunciations: the ‘standard’ Malay *beras*, an assumed local Malay variant *baras* and the Minangkabau *barèh*. These two spelling characteristics of Cod. Or. 3317, together with the inconsistent spelling that this manuscript has in common with other Malay manuscripts, have determined the choices that relate to the principles of the text edition.

The text edition aims to give a broader public, unfamiliar with the *jawi* script, access to the *SBS*. For the sake of readability, a choice has been made for a uniform spelling: the standard spelling of modern Indonesian, as found in *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (1989 and 1991). Punctuation and capitalization is in accordance with the rules set out in the standard grammar of modern Indonesian (*Tata Bahasa Baku Bahasa Indonesia*, 1988) Minangkabau words follow the spelling that is used by Gérard Moussay for his Minangkabau, Indonesian–French dictionary (1995).

The text has been edited according to the following principles:

⁷ The copyist erroneously noted down Tuesday as the day he finished copying the *SBS*; 22 Dulhijah was, in fact, a Monday.

⁸ These spelling practices are discussed in Chapter 2, together with the Minangkabau influence on the Malay language that is used in the *SBS*.

1. Older Malay words that are not listed in the *KBBI* have been replaced with their Indonesian equivalents as found in the *KBBI*. The original forms have been retained in footnotes that also contain references to the dictionaries that list these forms.
2. Minangkabau words, or words of which the spelling is influenced by Minangkabau, have been replaced by their Indonesian equivalents as listed in the *KBBI*. The original forms have been retained in footnotes; references to the dictionaries that list these words have been added.
3. Minangkabau words that have no equivalent in modern Indonesian have been retained in the text. Footnotes have been added to refer to the Minangkabau dictionaries that list these words.
4. In cases of spelling inconsistencies the preferred *KBBI* form has been chosen.