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The *Sair Kin Tambuhan*

A Banjarese versified version of a well-known Panji story

EDWIN P. WIERINGA AND TITIK PUDJIASTUTI

ABSTRACT

The *Syair Ken Tambuhan* ("Poem of Lady Tambuhan") is a traditional Malay Panji tale in verse which is known in three redactions (short, middle, and long), all seeming to have a Sumatran origin, although an alternative hypothesis suggests that it might have originated from Borneo, in the Banjarmasin area. This article describes the hitherto unstudied Banjarese manuscript *Sair Kin Tambuhan* from Kalimantan which represents the long redaction, running parallel to Klinkert's 1886 edition which is based on a Riau manuscript. Probably copied in the twentieth century, since the mid-1980s it has been kept under call number N 4228 in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat in the town of Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. Discussing a few variant readings, based upon comparisons with the text editions by Klinkert (1886) and Teeuw (1966), it is made clear that *variae lectiones* causing "philological alarm" are never "without value", because problematic passages necessitate a close reading allowing analysts to delve deeper into the text.

KEYWORDS

Traditional Malay literature; Kalimantan; Borneo; Banjarmasin; *syair*; Panji; Java; Javanese literature; textual instability; variant readings.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Syair Ken Tambuhan* ('Poem of Lady¹ Tambuhan') has become a Malay classic – at least in the sense that its title is routinely invoked as part of the canon of traditional Malay literature as it is taught in insular Southeast Asia. For example, in 2018 the Indonesian version of the website *Brainly*, which provides questions and answers for young learners as a tool for help with school subjects, included a question for pupils, asking them to mention three typically Malay *syairs*. Two answers were given: one person, described as 'ambitious' (*ambisius*), mentioned four (!) *syairs* ascribed to Hamzah Fansuri (also Ḥamza Faṅṣūrī, a Sumatran Sufi poet who might have died in 1527, see Guillot and Kalus 2000), whereas a self-styled 'beginner' (*pemula*) listed "syair perahu, bidasari, tambunan [sic]".² The latter title is, of course, the *Syair (Ken) Tambuhan* and it hardly needs commenting that the misspelling of the heroine's name is most telling.

The *Syair Ken Tambuhan* belongs to the genre of traditional Malay narrative poems inspired by Javanese literature with a plot borrowed from Panji romances. Set in pre-Islamic Java before the end of the Majapahit period (late fifteenth century), Hindu deities rather than almighty Allah shape the course of events but, although this might be viewed as a severe attack on Islam's central tenet of monotheism, the Hindu-Javanese inspiration did not present a hindrance to Panji stories gaining popularity among Malay-language Muslim audiences in the archipelago. As often remarked, "the group of stories which are dubbed 'Panji stories' are not historical, but rather epic and romantic in character" (Robson 1996: 39). The popular adventures of two blue-blooded lovers, Panji and his betrothed princess who are destined for each other, could easily win the hearts of many readers and listeners, providing both entertainment and useful lessons (however defined).

The Panji story referred to as the *Syair Ken Tambuhan* is also known in prose, namely as *Hikayat Andaken* (or *Undakan*) *Penurat* (Robson 1969) or alternatively *Hikayat Cerita Raden Menteri* (Sweeney 1971: 95). This romance was also adapted for performance in the shadow-play of Kelantan, Malaysia (Sweeney 1971: 95). Rather uncommonly for Malay literature, the *Syair Ken Tambuhan* was not only attractive to Malay audiences, but has also won acclaim among Western students of Malay literature, ranking among the best-studied texts in Malay literary history for almost two centuries. Furthermore, there are several editions and translations. For example, in 1838 Roorda van Eysinga already made a Dutch poetical translation and more than 150 years later, Koster and Maier (1991) chose the text edition of Teeuw (1966) for their Dutch translation in the series *De Oosterse Bibliotheek* (The Oriental Library). Hence, the (professional) modern-day interpreter of this poem is (potentially)

¹ As Wilkinson (1959: 554) explains, Ken is a "titular prefix to the names of maidens of Malayo-Javanese romance; for example: K. Tambohan or K. Tabohan (heroine of the poem named after her)".

² Retrieved from <https://brainly.co.id/tugas/14147036>; accessed on 26-05-2019.

better informed about it than Malay readers/listeners in former times who as a rule knew the text only through one manuscript source.

However, what is “the” *Syair Ken Tambuhan*? Whereas Winstedt (1958: 127) opined that it could have originated from the golden era of Malacca in the fifteenth century, Teeuw (1966: xxxiii) assumes that it was composed not earlier than 1650, but more probably in the eighteenth century, in Palembang. The poem has developed over the course of time, as is shown by the three redactions which are now extant, ranging from short, middle to long.

A POEM FROM BANJARMASIN

One could easily get the impression that the *Syair Ken Tambuhan* was somehow a very Sumatran affair, because Palembang, Riau, and also Bangka seem to have been the locations in which the different versions were first developed (Teeuw 1966: xxv; Braginsky 2004: 590 note 22). However, Ras (1968: 152) has proposed a different hypothesis. He has suggested that the romance could have been the fruit of the pen of a Banjarese writer, because “the story is obviously not set in Java but in Southeast Borneo”, pointing out that Ken Tambuhan was born in the *kraton* (palace-complex) of Daha, also called Tanjung Pura (or Tanjungpuri) or Banjar Kulon.³ The toponym Tanjung Pura has been identified by many scholars with the Island of Borneo (Maxwell 1983: 91). Ras (1968: 191) interprets the “Tanjung Pura”, which is mentioned in the *Sulalat al-Salatin* (also popularly known as *Sejarah Melayu* or Malay Annals) as having been the oldest Banjarese *kraton* in southeast Borneo. Picking up on Ras’s hypothesis, Maxwell (1983) has suggested that the word *kedayan* (‘retainer, follower’), which frequently occurs in the *Syair Ken Tambuhan*, could perhaps be connected to the word Kadayan “the name of the Malay-speaking ethnic group living along the northwest coast of Borneo centered on Brunei” (Maxwell 1983: 91). Drawing attention to the *Carita Wayang Kinudang*, which is a poetic Panji romance from Banjar, Maxwell (1983:94 note 7) even boldly “wonders whether the classical Malay Shair Ken Tambuhan and the Banjarese Malay *sha’ir*, *Carita Wayang Kinudang*, might represent different versions of a single Ur-text which may or may not have ever existed in written form”.

The jury in the Sumatra versus Borneo origin debate is still out and the matter would be greatly facilitated if more witnesses were to come to light, especially from Borneo. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Dutch school inspector C. den Hamer (1890: 533) mentions the “*Ki [sic] Tambuhan*” as one of the sixty-three titles of poems (*sair*) known to him in Banjar, but without providing any further information. This article will be concerned with one extant example of a Banjarese manuscript of the *Syair Ken Tambuhan*, which unfortunately can be of little help in determining the geographical origin of

³ Not all scholars are convinced that Ras’s idea of a Borneo setting is a decisive clue. For example, in his history of traditional Malay literature, Fang (2013: 451) follows Teeuw (1966: xxx) by merely contending that “the *Syair Ken Tambuhan* is not very consistent in its description of Ken Tambuhan’s origins” and that “Tanjungpuri” is “confused” with “Banjarkulon and Daha”.

“the” *Syair Ken Tambuhan*. This particular witness belongs to the so-called long redaction which seems to represent a later development of the story.

A MANUSCRIPT FROM BANJARMASIN

The manuscript is incomplete, but still in a good condition, kept under call number N 4228 in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat in the town of Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. In the following pages, this manuscript will be referred to as B. The text, which has 1,323 quatrains, consists of 148 pages (20.7 x 17.8 cm) with (generally) 18 lines to the page, written in *Jawi* (that is, a form of Arabic script used for writing Malay texts) on European paper without watermark, probably dating from the twentieth century. The ink is black and there are no illustrations or illuminations. The manuscript has been provided with a cardboard cover with a synthetic dark green front, on which the title (*Syair Kin Tambuan*) is printed on a label in red ink (Figure 1). Although written in literary Malay, the language is the Banjarese variety (see Ras 1968: 7-12 for a succinct description of the language used in manuscripts written in Southeast Borneo). The manuscript was bought in 1984 from someone living in the Central Hulu Sungai Regency (its capital Barabai is some 165 km away from Banjarmasin), but there is no information about former ownership or any other contextual details.

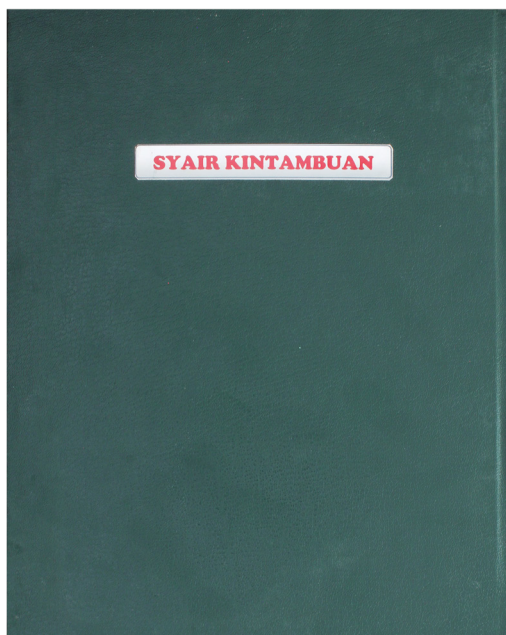


Figure 1. Front cover of manuscript Sair Kin Tambuan N 4228 in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat. (Courtesy of Museum Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarbaru).

The name of the female protagonist first appears in the text of the manuscript at the top of page 4, namely in Stanza 64: *Ampat balas tahun umurnya*

tuan / dinamakan ratu Kin Tambuan ('When the princess was fourteen years old, the king gave her the name Lady Tambuan') (Figure 2). Possibly her name was underlined by a later reader for identification purposes.

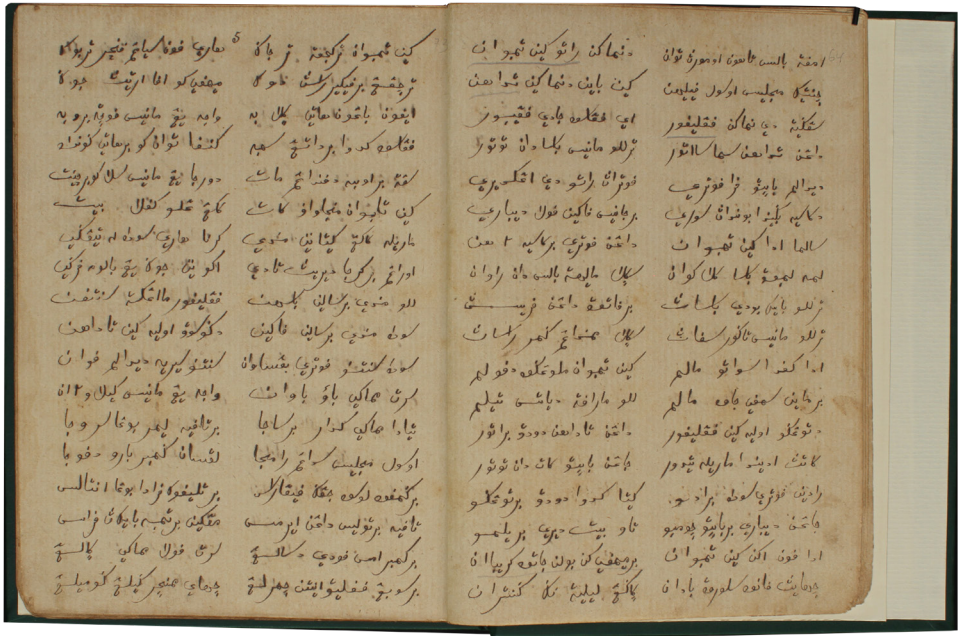


Figure 2. The name of the poem's eponymous heroine first appears in the manuscript on page 4 (top line) and is underlined in pencil. Manuscript Sair Kin Tambuan N 4228 in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat. (Courtesy of Museum Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarbaru).

The orthography is not always in accordance with "Standard Malay" conventions: for example, Standard Malay *permaisuri* ('queen; the chief wife of a king') appears as *pramaisuri* (p-r-a-m-y-s-w-r-y) (Figure 3) and Standard Malay *paras* ('good looks') is written as *paris* (p-r-y-s) (Figure 4). Sometimes, as in the latter example, a correct interpretation of the text is additionally hampered as the paper is so thin it allows the script to shine through from the other side of the leaf.

B belongs to the so-called long redaction, running parallel to Klinkert's 1886 edition (henceforward referred to as K), which is based upon manuscript Kl. ("Klinkert") 149, kept in Leiden University Libraries (Van Ronkel 1921: 61; Iskandar 1999: 735).⁴ It is incomplete, ending abruptly at a point similar to K 138, line 17, whereas K still continues up to K 151, line 18.⁵ Another textual gap occurs in B 39, where the text misses the parallel parts of K 73-77; the text begins to run parallel again with Stanza 697 (B 39) which corresponds to K 78 (line 6).

⁴ Manuscript Kl. 149 is presently accessible in the form of digital images on the website of Leiden University Libraries with the persistent URL <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:2018977>.

⁵ The final quatrain of B reads: *Hilang kasaktian garuda pahlawan / ia pun tarbang ka atas awan / bulan pun tarang kilau-kilauan / salaku manyuruh Raden Bangsawan //*.

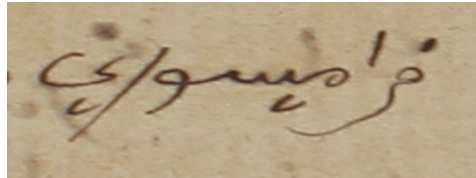
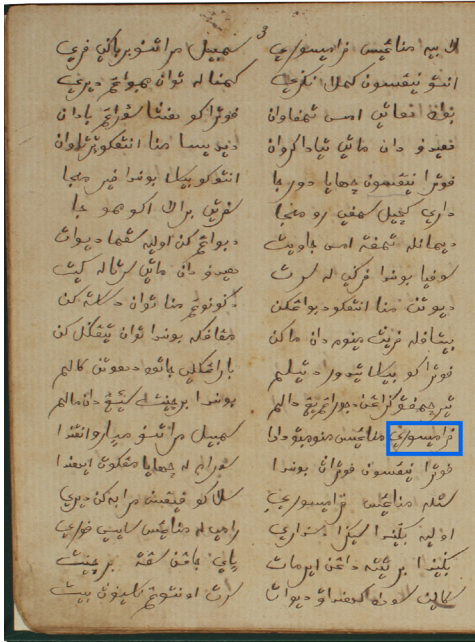


Figure 3. Standard Malay *permaisuri* written as *pramaisuri* (p-r-a-m-y-s-w-r-y). Manuscript Sair Kin Tambuan N 4228 in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat. (Courtesy of Museum Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarbaru).

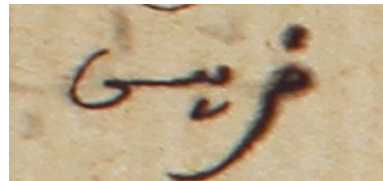
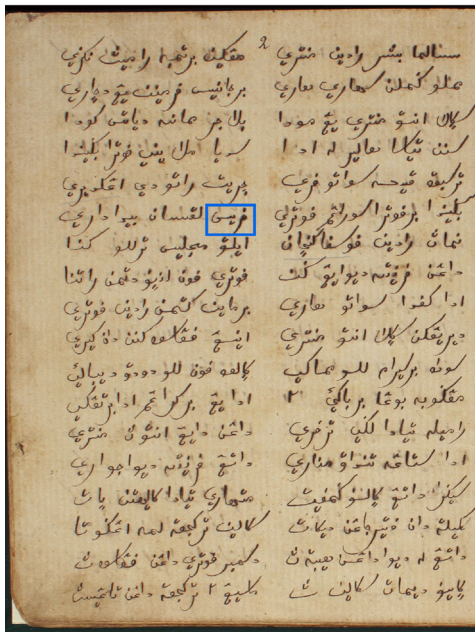


Figure 4. Standard Malay *paras* written as *paris* (p-r-y-s); the script from the other side of the leaf shines through. Manuscript Sair Kin Tambuan N 4228 in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat. (Courtesy of Museum Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarbaru).

VARIANT READINGS AND TEXTUAL INSTABILITY

B begins with the line ‘Listen, dear people, to how our story begins’ (*Dengarkan tuan kisah barmula*), which is identical to Klinkert’s edition (Klinkert 1886: 1) (Figure 5). However, K continues with ‘the tale of the ruler of Jenggala’ (*ceriteranya Ratu di Jenggala*), whereas B seems to read: ‘the tale of the pre-eminent ruler of Bengal’ (*carita ratu adi Banggala*).⁶ Readers and listeners who are familiar with traditional Malay literature will know that Panji is the son of the king of Kuripan (also known as Koripan; a shortened form of Kahuripan, see Robson 1996: 40), which is also called Keling or Jenggala/Janggala (Faizah 2007: 195). Hence, B’s rendition is puzzling: the setting in Panji-stories is normally Java, so why this reference to a non-Javanese kingdom overseas in India?

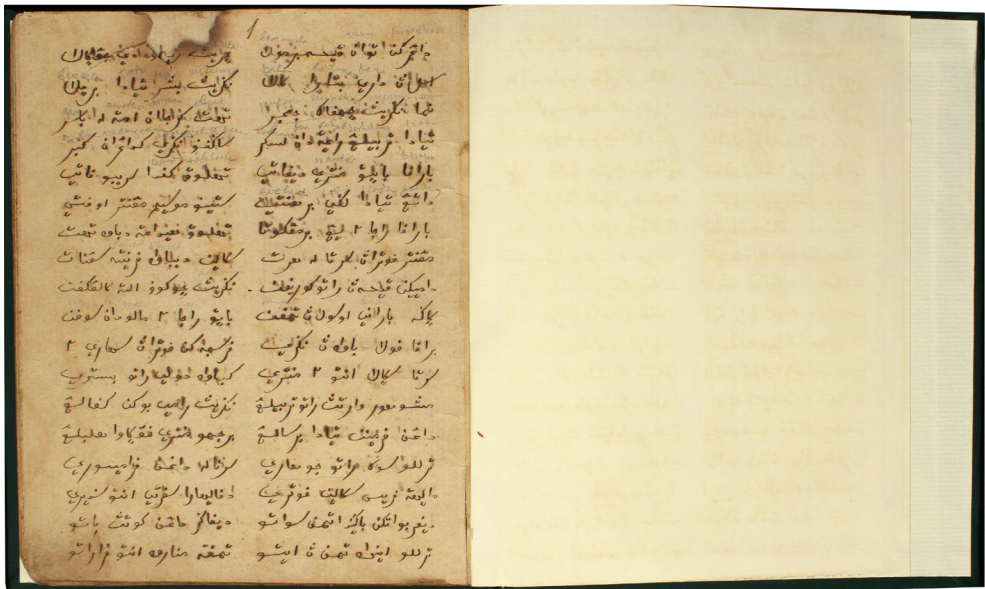


Figure 5. The beginning of the text on page 1 with minor text loss at the top; some interlineal attempts at Romanization in pencil. Manuscript Sair Kin Tambuan N 4228 in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat. (Courtesy of Museum Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarbaru).

Here we are directly confronted with the issue of variant readings and textual instability. As we know, poetry did change as it was copied over and again and also because it was recited during performances. Furthermore, not only copyists and reciters changed the texts which were inscribed on paper, even academic readers, that is, professional philologists, might (sometimes)

⁶ Standard Malay: *Benggala*. In another manuscript, namely W 247, kept in the National Library of Indonesia in Jakarta, we find the same opening: *Dengarkan tuan kisah bermula / cetranya [sic] ratu di Jenggala*, see <http://opac.perpusnas.go.id/DetailOpac.aspx?id=610341> (accessed on 31-05-2019).

make alterations, simply by mistakenly reading what is not there. The Romanization of B proved to be a relatively laborious process: the script is rather difficult to read and it was quite frustrating (if not to say embarrassing) to have to correct our own reading mistakes during several revision stages.

The word following upon *ratu* in B is clearly written as *a-d-y* (that is, *adi* or ‘prominent, pre-eminent’). Our initial impression was that the next letters are *b-ng-a-g-l-a* and, it was only after comparison with K – in which the expression *di Jenggala* (‘in Jenggala’) is written as *d-j-ng-g-a-l* – that we reconsidered our previous Romanization and concluded that *j-ng-a-g-l-a* might also be possible (Figure 6).

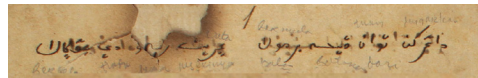
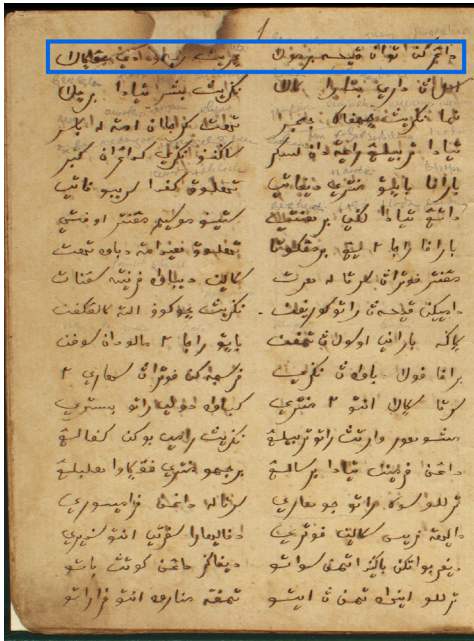


Figure 6. The problematic geographical name Jenggala or Benggala at the end of the second line. There are interlinear Romanizations in pencil. Manuscript Sair Kin Tambuan N 4228 in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat. (Courtesy of Museum Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarbaru).

Of course, *ratu di Jenggala* makes most sense here, but in this article we are not so much interested in the question of which reading is “correct” and which is “wrong”, but that we wish to draw attention to variant text traditions and the complex phenomenon of textual instability. We feel that the complex textual situations on the micro-level warrant greater attention in literary analysis. For example, deciphering the letters in manuscript B is challenging because of the technical problem of correctly distinguishing the letters: it makes quite a difference whether the name of the kingdom begins with “b” (Benggala) or “j” (Jenggala), but in the *Jawi* script only the single dot below the initial letter is sufficiently clear for us to decipher. As said, our first impression was

to opt for the place name of Benggala and, only after having been faced with variance, did we begin to re-read the manuscript. However, how would a Malay copyist or reciter have gone about solving this problem? Would such a “mistake” as Benggala have been possible without a few eyebrows having been raised among the intended readers/listeners? In a way, Benggala is not completely out of place: Panji originally comes from Kuripan, also known as Jenggala, but another alternative name is Keling, which is not only the name of a Javanese kingdom, but also denotes “South India” (Wilkinson 1959: 542; Zoetmulder 1982: 843). Could it perhaps really evoke far-away Benggala, that is, Bengal in India – notwithstanding the fact that its location in the eastern part of the Indian Subcontinent?

In 2017 manuscripts of Panji tales were successfully nominated for UNESCO’s Memory of the World register, but in fact “Panji tales’ manuscripts” is an umbrella expression which includes a wealth of different texts. Moreover, as Roger Tol (2019: 35) rightly points out in this connection, “each manuscript has its own story”. Unfortunately, we have no information about what B’s “life” was like before it finally ended up in a museum. Had it once been popular and had it been recited on certain occasions or was it only rarely touched? Its relatively good physical condition and recent date perhaps indicate that B was a final link in a chain in a dying tradition. More support for this supposition might be found in the circumstance that on some pages attempts at Romanization have been made, mostly incorrectly and in the modern-day ‘perfected spelling’ (*Ejaan yang disempurnakan*).

Apart from differences in dialect, the text of B is very close to K. For this reason, B would normally appear only in the *apparatus criticus* of the philologist. However, B has “its own story”, since it has several variations on the micro-level from K and on the meso-level with T which tell a similar yet different story. For reasons of limited space, we shall single out only three cases of textual variance: (1) a Malay normalization of an originally Javanese expression, which probably already occurred at an earlier stage of the story’s historical development; (2) a stylistic elaboration; and finally (3) the elaboration of a standard scene which is typical of the long redaction (represented by K and B, but missing in T). Being a relatively young and flawed witness to a text which is already available in a “good text” edition, B is nevertheless still worthy of study for comparative purposes, as *variae lectiones* causing “philological alarm” are never “without value”, because problematic passages necessitate a close reading allowing analysts to delve deeper into the text.

LIKE A STUPEFIED GRASSHOPPER

According to the Dutch philologist Anton Duinhoven (1994: 195), philology is only lightly encumbered with theory: interpreting old texts basically involves, firstly, reading carefully and, secondly, not believing everything at face value. The problems facing the philologist boil down to the following: (1) what exactly does the text say and (2) did the text really say that? (Duinhoven 1994: 195). However, this critical and time-consuming scholarly approach is

far removed from the reading habits of the original Malay audiences of Panji tales who normally did not invest much time in lingering over details. Panji stories were to be enjoyed, not problematized. The difference in perspective between reading a text in an everyday Indonesian context and studying it in an academic context paying great attention to detail with the help of an array of reference tools is clearly illustrated in an example of a metaphor which only seems to occur in the *Syair Ken Tambuhan* and apparently not in other traditional Malay poems since it is not to be found in the dictionaries nor in Ian Proudfoot's marvellous Malay Concordance Project, which contains 165 Malay texts.⁷ This is cause for "philological alarm", because traditional Malay poetry is known for its strongly formulaic style: metaphorical descriptions are always conventional and never intended to be "original", using a "new" expression.

As Duinhoven (1994: 195-196) points out, peculiarities causing surprise immediately catch the philologist's attention, because they raise questions about the text's reliability. In this case such an unusual phrase as "like a stupefied grasshopper" in Stanza 31 runs counter to the philologist's set of expectations: what does this odd expression invoke (Figure 7)? Does the text perhaps not say what it says? Has the text perhaps been corrupted? After rather intensive study, the professional philologist might detect a transformation of a Javanese archaic-poetic simile, but Malay audiences most probably did not perceive the "stupefied grasshopper" as problematic at all, because it can be brought into accordance with convention and therefore the expression seems to make perfectly sense.

The phrase occurs in Stanza 31, when (in line c) we read that 'the entire court was sad and worried' (*saisi istana gundah galabah*), which is described in the next line with a rather uncommon metaphor, namely *salaku bilalang tarkana tubah*, which could be translated as 'like a poisoned/stupefied grasshopper' (Figure 7). However, the last word poses a problem here: it is written t-w-b-h, for which the dictionaries suggest *tubuh* ('body') (Von de Wall 1877, I: 416; Klinkert 1930: 312) and also *tobah** (only in Klinkert 1930: 312 where it is explained as "to pull up plants by the roots"). In this context, only the reading *tubah*, perhaps *metri causa* to be regarded as a variant of *tuba*, would make sense; normally this word is not spelled with a final -h (compare, for example, B 14, Stanza 256c *mabuk kakang bagai dituba*; also, in K 25). Yet *tuba* denotes a special kind of poison, namely "fish-poison; vegetable matter for stupefying fish and causing them to rise to the surface where they are easily caught" (Wilkinson 1959: 1239).⁸ The term *bilalang* (Standard Malay *belalang*) is normally "a generic name for grasshoppers, stick-insects, leaf-insects, mantises, etc" (Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings 2004: 111), but it is also possible to argue that a specific

⁷ About this wonderful tool created by Ian Proudfoot (1946-2011), see the tribute by Gallop (2013).

⁸ See Gimlette (1991: 236-250) for a more extensive discussion of *tuba*; although he mentions varied uses of the word *tuba* (for example, *tuba tikus* for poisoning rats and even *tuba gajah* which is believed to poison elephants), the word *tuba* is used "generically" "for several poisonous plants which are chiefly used ... for catching fish" (Gimlette 1991: 236).

fish species could be meant, namely the *ikan belalang* or ‘flying fish’.⁹ Another figure of speech, namely *bagai (seperti) ikan kena tuba*, which Brown (1951: 216) translates as “like a fish stupefied with derris-root poison”, belongs to a group of sayings which Brown (1951: 216-217) categorizes as “up a tree; up against it” or also “adrift, helpless”.¹⁰ Hence, the idea could be that the entire court felt helpless, unable to do anything. However, the ever-sceptical philologist might still be puzzled as to why of all fishes in the world, the flying fish should be singled out here.

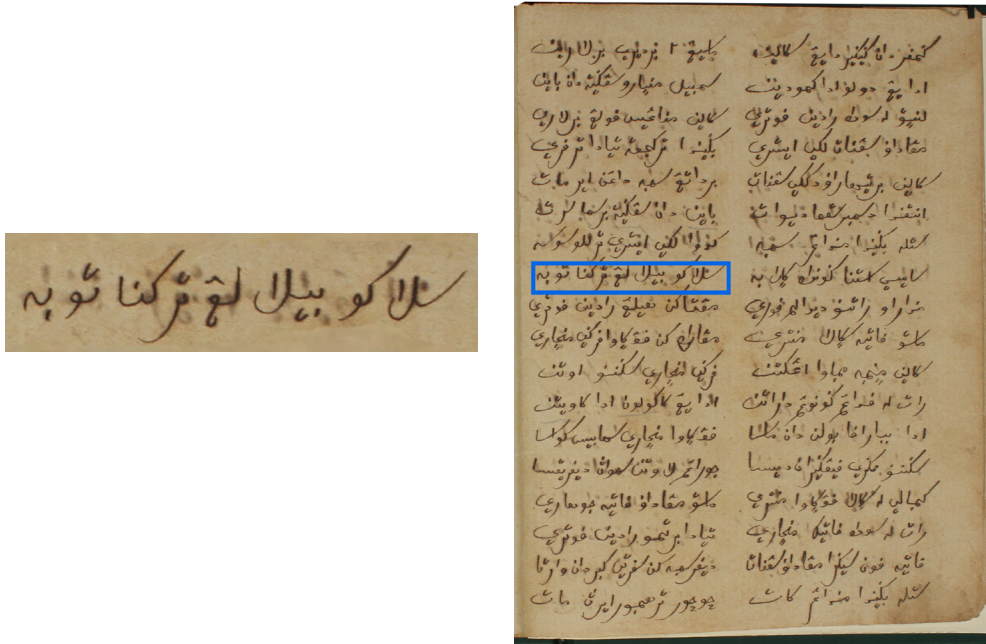


Figure 7. The grasshopper phrase *salaku bilalang tarkana t-w-b-h*. Manuscript Sair Kin Tambuan N 4228 in the Museum Lambung Mangkurat. (Courtesy of Museum Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarbaru).

Turning to Klinkert’s text edition, we see that Indonesian readers have come up with the Romanization *seisi istana gundah gelabah / selaku belalang yang kena tubah*.¹¹ The crucial word, however, is written as t-b-h, which is Romanized in the dictionaries as *tebah* (Von de Wall 1877: 342; Klinkert 1930: 254), that is, ‘like a grasshopper that is hit’. Although Klinkert’s text edition is not annotated, he did make many pencil notes in his lead manuscript (Kl. 149)

⁹ Compare Van der Tuuk (1901, III: 593) who explains *wewalang* as the name of a “kleinere vliegende visch (het is wel op te vatten als sprinkhaan, zooals blijkt uit ‘t sas. balang en ‘t mal. ikan belalang, men. bilalang)”.

¹⁰ This is a well-known saying, listed as number 1021 (*bagai ikan kena tuba*) in the well-known collection of Pamuntjak, Iskandar, and Madjoindo (1949: 148).

¹¹ An Internet search with the words *selaku belalang* provided seven hits, all citing the same Romanization.

and, apparently, the word t-b-h must have intrigued him as he has underlined it, writing the romanization *tēbah* in the margin (Figure 8). This is now free for all to see thanks to the digitization of the manuscript (persistent URL <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:2018977>).

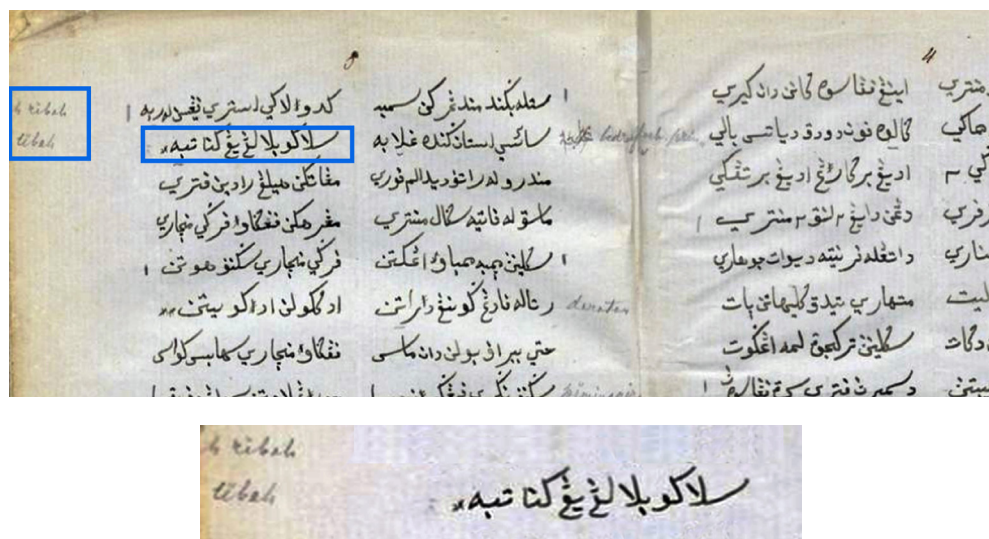


Figure 8. The grasshopper phrase *selaku belalang yang kena t-b-h* in Klinkert's lead manuscript with Klinkert's pencil annotations. Leiden University Libraries Kl. 149, p. 5 (second line from above). (Courtesy of Leiden University Libraries).

This grasshopper metaphor does not seem to be current in the Malay language, but it is not unknown in Javanese literature, despite the fact that it is not included in the dictionaries. For example, the expression *kaya walang tinebah* is used (twice) to denote a fearful situation in a Javano-Balinese narrative poem called *Babad Ksatria Tamanbali* (see Bagus 1989: 55; 69). It also occurs in the Javano-Balinese narrative poem *Kidung (Geguritan) Bhuwanawinasa* (Creese, Darma Putra, and Schulte Nordholt 2006: 144) to describe a fleeing army, namely, 'Roaring like the waves of the ocean / was the thunder of the fleeing feet, / like a hit grasshopper, / many were dead on the road' (*Gumuruh pwaya lwir alun ikang sagara / gedebeg ning wong angisis / lwir walang tinebah / akweh pejah ana ring dalam / ...*).¹² A Banyuwangi version of the Javanese narrative poem *Sri Tanjung* (Aminoedin et al. 1986: 196) uses it in order to describe the actions of Indra's army (in the verse form *durma*): 'It attacked blindly like a fierce tiger / like the waves of the sea / like a hit grasshopper' (*pengamuké macan galak / lir ombaking jeladri / lir walang tinebah / ...*). We can also find it in *wayang*: for example, the *dalang* (puppeteer) Suwadi uses it as follows in the play *Narasoma krama* (The Marriage of Narasoma), which was recorded in 1990:

¹² However, Creese, Darma Putra, and Schulte Nordholt (2006: 144) propose a different translation of the grasshopper metaphor, namely 'bagaikan suara belalang diusir' (like the sound of a grasshopper that is chased away).

Polahé wong cilik kaya ancak tinebah, ancak walang tinebah gantar, polahé wong cilik kaya walang tinebah watang, ana kang penculat pating semburat pindha séla blakithi. Séla watu blakithi semut, kaya semut muntap mudal saka sela-salané watu, blidir barisané wong cilik. (Aji 2018: 48-49).¹³

A possible translation would be:

The common people moved about like *ancak tinebah*: *ancak*¹⁴ is a grasshopper hit with a bamboo pole; the common people moved about like a grasshopper hit by a long pole; some among them leapt, tinged with red like *séla blakithi*. *Séla* is stone, *blakithi* is ant; like ants which pop in and out from between the small interstices between stones; the ranks of the common people were in disarray.¹⁵

Summing up, the uncommon expression *salaku bilalang takana, t-b-h* can be “normalized” and fitted into the horizon of expectations if the problematic last word is read as *tuba(h)*. However, the persistent philologist might detect that this covers up the original text, namely *tabah* (Standard Malay *tebah*), which is unusual in Malay literature, but is derived from Javanese literature. Small though it is, this little detail could support the hypothesis that the long redaction probably originally developed in a Javanised environment, which Braginsky (2004: 590 note 22) identifies with Palembang, but in fact Banjarmasin was no less under the spell of Javanese culture.

STYLE

Another example of a remarkable turn of phrase causing philological alarm can be found in the episode which happens in “Chapter III” of Teeuw’s text edition describing the meeting of Raden Inu (that is, Panji) and Ken Tambuhan, in which there is a gatekeeper called Wiradandani, whereas in B (and also in other manuscripts, see Teeuw 1966: 310) his name is simply Wiradani. In T we read (Teeuw 1966: 22):

¹³ Aji (2018: 49) provides the following Indonesian translation: “Tingkah para rakyat seperti ancak tinebah, ancak belalang yang tertimpa kayu, tingkah para rakyat seperti belalang tertindih kayu, ada yang meloncat seperti selablakithi. Sela berarti batu blakithi semut, seperti semut yang keluar dari sela-selanya baut, tidak karuan barisan para rakyat”.

¹⁴ As Robson and Wibisono (2002: 39) explain, *ancak* is a “woven bamboo mat on which offerings to the spirits are placed”. Gericke and Roorda (1901, I: 11) basically also offer this explanation, although with more details.

¹⁵ The word *blakithi* (‘ant’) is poetic vocabulary and can be found in the dictionaries under *brakithi* or *blekithi* (see Robson and Wibisono 2002: 112). Gericke and Roorda (1901, II: 720 under *blekithi*) mention the expression “(achter elkaar in menigte loopen), ‘gelijk mieren over een steen’”. Intriguingly, Ben Arps (1992: 136) reports that, during a reading session of the *Babad Mangir* in Yogyakarta in 1982, the readers/listeners stumbled upon the phrase “There are so many soldiers that they look like ants on a rock (*lir pendah sela blēkithi*)”, which prompted a question about this expression. A lecturer at the teacher-training college explained that it was “a common phrase in wayang theatre” (Arps 1992: 136).

<i>Penunggu pintu terlalu takut</i>	The gatekeeper was very afraid.
<i>ubuh gemetar tulang gemelugut</i>	His body was shaking, his bones shivering.
<i>epatah pun tidak berani menyahut</i>	He didn't dare to utter a single word,
<i>kancing pintu segera dipaut</i>	immediately turning the key of the door.

However, in B (10; Stanza 172) the scene is slightly different:

<i>Panunggu taman sangatlah takut</i>	The guardian of the garden was very afraid.
<i>tubuh gamatar¹⁶ kamaluannya kajut¹⁷</i>	His body was shaking, his genitals stiffening with fear.
<i>rasanya datang ajal dan maut</i>	He felt as if death had come to collect him.
<i>kunci pintu sagara¹⁸ dipaut</i>	Immediately he turned the key of the door.

Intriguingly, B almost has the same wording as K (17), but with a remarkable difference in the second line, thereby lending a rather bawdy twist to the situation.¹⁹ As Wilkinson (1959: 529) explains, *kejut* means 'stiffening with fear; terrified', but the primary meaning of "stiffening" is 'now almost lost in that of being startled frightened or even awakened from sleep'.²⁰ The expression *kamaluannya kajut* (Standard Malay *kemaluannya kejut*) is not common and this "oddity" raises the suspicion of the philologist that something is not in order here. Although the original reading has been corrupted, the intended Banjarese audience must probably have been unaware of this problem and might just have been amused by the reaction of the frightened gatekeeper with his sudden erection.

ELABORATION

Traditional Malay literature likes to employ certain "standard scenes" on the meso-level (compare Teeuw 1966: 15), in which we encounter stereotypes "in the depiction of battles, marching armies, of cities, of the hysteria provoked by passing heroes, or of the sadness felt by courtiers at the deathbed of an

¹⁶ Standard Malay *gemetar*.

¹⁷ The Banjarese Malay variant of Standard Malay *kejut*, see Ras (1968: 554).

¹⁸ Standard Malay *segera*.

¹⁹ The text of K (17) reads: *Penunggu taman sangatlah takut / tubuhnya gemetar gemelugut / rasanya akan datang ajal dan maut / kunci pintu segera dipaut //*

²⁰ The official monolingual dictionary of Indonesia also explains *kejut* first as 'to become stiff (of muscles, body parts) because of surprise and so on' ('menjadi kaku (ttg urat, anggota badan) krn terperanjat dsb'), see Sugono (2008: 649). The Malaysian *Kamus Dewan* also explains *kejut* as "stiff (parts, muscles) caused by surprise or fear" ('kaku (anggota, urat) disebabkan terperanjat atau ketakutan'), see Baharom et al. (1994: 603).

agonizing king” (Chambert-Loir 2005: 141). Elaboration is typical of the long redaction of the *Syair Ken Tambuhan* and so we find, for example, that at the beginning of the story (that is, Chapter II of Teeuw’s edition) when Raden Inu/Panji is wandering off to the royal garden together with his entourage, this standard scene is more detailed than the depiction in T (Teeuw 1966: 15-17; Stanzas 39-48).²¹ Whereas the enthusiastic comments by the (female) public about the hero are of a more general nature in T (attributed to “some” and “others”), B (which runs parallel to K) adds more humour by focusing on a quarrel between two women who are friends but completely lose their senses upon seeing the handsome prince. One of them compares him to a “cooling drink” (B 7, stanza 133c *tuanku laksana sarbat minuman*; *sarbat* or Standard Malay *serbat* is ‘sorbet’) and wants him to come to her house. Her friend has this to say (B 7-8; quatrains 134-140):

*Dijawab tamannya pula barkata
daripada diri labihnya²² beta
jikalau pangeran mamandang nyata²³
tantu²⁴ diambil²⁵ beta di tahta*

Her friend reacted:
“I am better than you:
if the prince looks carefully,
he would certainly put me on the throne.”

*Dari rupamu labihnya aku²⁶
lagi pula²⁷ baik tingkah dan laku
kalau²⁸ pangeran jadi suamiku
tiada kulapas dari²⁹ pangku [page 8]*

My looks are better than yours
and so is my behaviour.
Should the prince become my husband,
I would not let him leave from my lap.

*Pangeranningsun amas tampawan
silakan tuanku dalam³⁰ paraduan
ribalah patik dalam pangkuan
patik menurut barang³¹ kalakuan*

My golden prince!
let us go to the royal bedchamber,
take me on your lap,
I’ll do whatever you wish.

²¹ For a more elaborate discussion of the standard scene of hysterical female fans, see Wieringa (2015: 240-266).

²² K (14) *lebihlah*.

²³ K (14) *mata*.

²⁴ K (14) *tentulah*.

²⁵ K (14) *diambilnya*.

²⁶ K (14) *lebih rupaku*.

²⁷ K (14) *lagi pun*.

²⁸ K (14) *jikalau*.

²⁹ K (14) *tidaklah lepas dari dalam*.

³⁰ K (14) *ke dalam*.

³¹ K (14) *sebarang*.

*Aduh tuanku batu kapala
paras laksana anak³² barhala
obati tuanku patik³³ yang gila
supaya padam api barnyala³⁴*

Oh, my beloved,
who is handsome like a young idol,
cure me, sir, of my madness,
so that this burning fire will be put out“.

*Tamannya³⁵ marah rasanya cita
ditamparnya muka sarta³⁶ dinista³⁷
angkau ini³⁸ sombong barkata
mangatakan labih daripada beta*

Her friend got angry,
hitting her in the face and insulting her:
“You brag about yourself,
calling yourself better than me!”

The two women even resort to fisticuffs and the handsome hero attracts a huge audience because everyone is crazy about him.

It could be argued that this example of elaboration does not really affect the plot of the protagonists. However, what about the episode happening in “Chapter VII” of Teeuw’s edition, in which the murder of Ken Tambuhan is foretold by all kinds of unusual natural phenomena which function as supernatural ominous “signs/portents” (*alamat*; used here in its traditional meaning, derived from Arabic *‘alāma* or “sign, indication”). This “chapter” opens with the lines (Teeuw 1966: 115): “There were all kinds of signs on that day / many things, not only one” (*Berbagai-bagai alamat pada hari itu / banyak perkara bukan suatu*), which is nearly identical in the Banjarese version (in which the first word is not reduplicated). Whereas the text of Teeuw’s edition uses four stanzas to describe the upheavals in nature, the Banjarese version (B 34) devotes no fewer than nine stanzas to it. Yet the difference is not such that we should necessarily interpret this as a greater emphasis on the importance of divine mastery over this world. Although each manuscript tells its own story, it is perhaps still possible to talk in a general way about “the” *Syair Ken Tambuhan*.

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³² K (14) *anakan*.

³³ K (14) *tuanku pandanglah patik*.

³⁴ K (14) *yang nyala*.

³⁵ K (14) *temannya pun*.

³⁶ K (14) *seraya*.

³⁷ K (14) *berkata*.

³⁸ K (14) *si candal*.

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