Under the shadow of philology; Some notes on translating *Hikayat Seri Rama* for a modern non-academic audience

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Abstract
This article describes some of the issues that arose during the author's experience of translating the Malay *Hikayat Seri Rama* into English, as a literary rather than a philological text. These include the choice of a source text, the nature of the language used in the translation, and the treatment of the most distinctive features of the text, including its focus on Rawana, its setting in a Muslim narrative frame, and its use of the worldview of a medieval Malay court. Linguistic issues are discussed through reference to the concept of "units of translation". This practice can also be utilized in an expanded sense to refer to larger textual units such as sentences, paragraphs, chapters, and parts of the whole text. Finally, a few recurring stylistic issues are noted, such as the use of a repetitive vocabulary, the use of kinship terms for non-kin, and a small number of places where there are no adequate English equivalents for particular words. The article concludes by suggesting that the approaches of the philologist and the literary translator are sometimes antagonistic but can be mutually beneficial.
Keywords
Hikayat Seri Rama; philology; Prophet Adam; Rama; Rawana; units of translation.

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Introduction[1]

Translations are made on a regular basis by scholars of both Classical and Modern Indonesian literatures. Some examples, chosen more or less at random, are Sutjipto Wirjosuparto's Indonesian version of the Javanese *Kakawin Bharata-Yuddha* (1968); the English translation of *Siwaratrikalpa* (1969) by A. Teeuw, Th.P. Galestin, S.O. Robson, P.J. Worsley, and P.J. Zoetmulder; as well as Henk Maier's rendering into Dutch of Pramoedya's *Jejak langkah* (*Voetsporen, 's-Hertogenbosch: De Geus*, 1999) and Shahnon Ahmad's *Kalau ibu sampai takah tiga* (*Als moeder naar de derde trede gaat, 's-Hertogenbosch: De Geus,* 2015). In late 2018, I became interested in exploring how translations of classical Indonesian literature by philologists differed from those produced by contemporary literary scholars. I decided to test this by translating the *Hikayat Seri Rama* (henceforth HSR) into English, working as a literary translator and placing my emphasis on producing a finished, fluent text that would be immediately available to a range of contemporary readers. This paper deals with some of the things I discovered by undertaking that unusual experiment.

Producing a translation: the two tasks of the philologist

Stuart Robson (2015) argues that the two major tasks of the philological scholar are to construct a text and to translate it. The first task requires either the reconstruction of a critical text, a prototype ("as close to the author's original as possible", says Helen Creese (1998: 9)), or the utilisation of a stand-alone "diplomatic text", based on only one text, from a particular time and place, with no variants, and errors limited to mistakes in writing. In both cases, the purpose of textual editing is:

> To present the data contained in the available manuscripts in such a way as to reveal it for study in a form that approximates as closely as possible to the one it had when the original author laid down his pen. (S.O. Robsoon 2015: 13).

The task does not end there. Translation is the second aspect of philology, hence Robson's paradoxical statement: "The text is the necessary foundation of the translation and is clarified by the translation; the two complement each other […]" (Robson 2015: vii). Once the text has been defined, the editor takes on this new role: "one is then ready to make a translation, recording our ideas of what it means, at the same time adding an introduction and some explanatory notes" (Robson 2015: 13). The translator has the advantage of knowing the text extremely well but the corresponding disadvantage that it is hard to see the text removed from its first language (Robson 2001: 41). Robson's concern is that the scholar should see the work as a whole, in order to progress more deeply than "a literal or word-for-word explanation" (Robson 2015: 14).

The translator must "restore, reconstruct, rephrase it, in [his/her] own brand of English" (Robson 2001: 44) for a new audience, who are not necessarily Old Javanese experts. Nothing may be left out – whether it seems to be out of place, boring, or "a bit erotic". Identifying the cultural and social setting of the work will further help the scholar to appreciate the "how" and "why" of the work. He provides a few examples of cultural and social settings, such as:

> The idea of social classes, the Ksatriya and Brahmana, their duties and mutual dependence; or the idea of the incarnation of gods and human beings (kings) in the visible world; the idea of the power of the divine; the ability of the gods to put in an appearance on earth; and even the subsequent theme of conflict with demons. (Robson 2015: 14).

These pre-existing cultural themes of state rule and religion, and civic obedience to the sacred ruler, belong to everyday Javanese life. They are not part of academic culture. For the scholar, they must be rationally discerned, mapped, and described in detail, in the preface and in footnotes, as the rules of a different world.

In his Introduction to the *Old Javanese Rāmāyaṇa* (henceforth OJR), Robson continues with the topic of translation and how it can best be achieved. "The aim of the translation", he informs his readers, "is to clarify the meaning of the Old Javanese and make it accessible by paying attention to the individual words and the way in which they are combined into lines of poetry and grammatical sentences". Because the OJR is poetry, "our English should try to match its elegant style, or at least not offend against it" (Robson 2015: 31). The associated notes allow for alternative readings, indicate places where the translation is tentative, and sometimes provide more information to help the reader know more clearly what is happening (Robson 2015: 32).

Helen Creese too has spelled out her view of translation as a philologist. In the first chapter of her lengthy preface to the eighteenth-century Balinese text, the *Parthayana,* she states that her aim is "produce a translation that captures the aesthetic of the original, but which still reads well in English" (Creese 1998: 19). Robson requires the translator to have "a deep knowledge and feeling for the original language, and [be] at the same time a more-than-competent writer of English, capable of using all its forces effectively" (Robson 2001: 45). Creese is, perhaps, less confident than Robson. She continues by suggesting that any translation can never be more than "an approximation". A text written in a classical literary idiom of a culture that differs from that of the translator "must be even more of an approximation". The problem is still further compounded by "[t]he paratactic nature of the *kakawin* language, the polysemic nature of the lexical items, the almost bottomless well of synonymous words and phrases" (Creese 1998: 19).

Like Robson, Creese's translation "preserves, at least partially, the structure of the original work, and endeavours to look like a work of poetry, even a work of epic poetry, by the use of the four-line stanza" (Creese 1998: 19). She has, she tells us, abandoned the metrical system, but the original thought

and word order have been retained as far as possible. The individual lines of the source text and translation are roughly parallel. There has been some reduction of terms for "the beauties of nature or princesses". Otherwise the reader is referred to the Notes (Creese 1998: 19).

A literary translation; The choice of a text

The first set of assumptions I explored related to the problem of "what" to translate for the modern non-specialist reader. The Indian epic known as *The Ramayana* presents a challenge. It exists on a grand scale. "Just a list of languages in which the Rama story is found makes one gasp", wrote A.K. Ramanujan in his famous and strangely controversial essay on three hundred *Ramayana*s. These languages include "Annamese, Balinese, Bengali, Cambodian, Chinese, Gujarati, Javanese, Kannada, Kashmiri, Khotanese, Laotian, Malaysian, Marathi, Oriya, Prakrit, Sanskrit, Santali, Sinhalese, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tibetan" (Ramanujan 1991: 24). There are translations into English of many of these different versions of the *Ramayana,* including some from Southeast Asia – Thailand (R.A. Olsson 1968), Laos (Sachidanand Sahai 1996), Burma (Ohno Tory 2000), and Java (Robson 2015). But there is no translation of the Malay *Hikayat Seri Rama*.

It is easy to say what the Malay *Hikayat Seri Rama* is not. It is not a direct, or even an indirect, translation of Valmiki's *Ramayana* – or of any other any of the other major Indian texts either. Rather, after comparing the various Malay texts, Alexander Zieseniss concluded that the *Hikayat Seri Rama* "represents a popular form of the Rama saga which, seen from the point of view of time and content, is in every way, post-epic, was carried by word of mouth to Indonesia between the 13th and 17th centuries, partly from Western and partly from Eastern India, [and] exists there in several versions, which […] show an increasing degree of Indonesian leveling and alteration of the original sagas postulated" (Zieseniss 1963: 187-188).

The use of the term "*the* Malay HSR" is a convenient but misleading reification, which assumes that there is one absolute Malay recounting of the epic instead of a variety of versions. There are perhaps fifty manuscripts of the *Hikayat Seri Rama,* mainly dating from the nineteenth century. Achadiati Ikram has mapped the relationship between some of them in Chapter Six of her dissertation (Ikram 1980: 68-91). Of these we may discern three majors, somewhat different, published versions. One was edited by the Dutch scholar, P.P. Roorda van Eysinga (1843), who described it as "a history of Seri Rama, an Indies heroic poem, originally by Valmiki and translated into Malay". Van Eysinga's text forms the basis of the edition later published by Balai Pustaka, the Indonesian government publisher (Third edition, 1953). It is not Valmiki's epic directly "translated into Malay", as van Eysinga's critics were quick to point out, but "a distinct work, though dealing with the same characters and following for the most part the narrative of the great epic" (W.G. Shellabear 1917).

The second, and potentially older, version is held at the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford. It was presented to the University of Oxford in 1633 and edited much later by the Reverend W.G. Shellabear for publication in the *Journal of the Straits Branch of Royal Asiatic Society* 70 (1917).

A further scholarly and annotated romanized edition was prepared by Achadiati Ikram of Universitas Indonesia and published in 1980. She drew heavily on the Shellabear edition and that of William Marsden (which is substantially the same) but also consulted a wide range of the more recent manuscripts of the *Hikayat Seri Rama*. Her aim was to produce an edited text, with a study of its message and structure. Because the manuscript is in Malay and Dr Ikram's thesis in Indonesian, the text forms its own (intralingual) translation.

The philologist commonly deals with multiple old texts in the desire to translate "the original but possibly hypothetical version". The literary translator almost never has to choose. Modern literary texts are printed and are therefore commonly fixed; they rarely vary. When they do, the "original" text is not the only choice. The text selected for translation may be the first published version, the most recent version, the most interesting, and so on. The literary translator renders "a translation of a specific, existing text". While working, comparisons can certainly be made with other source texts and translations, but the literary translator should not be led to far away from the chosen, concrete and real, source.

In purely practical terms, I owned one version of the *Hikayat Seri Rama*: the one I bought in Penang when I was teaching there in the 1970s and have kept on my bookshelves for almost fifty years. This is the Romanized version of the Shellabear text established by Mr Wahi bin Long for the Department of Education, Singapore, and published by the Malaysia Publishing House, Singapore, in 1964. Dr Achadiati Ikram provides some reassurance that this is a worthwhile version, despite its imperfections. I decided to accept this one text and make that the basis of the translation. This is "my translation of the Shellabear text" and identified as such.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF A LITERARY TRANSLATION

The second set of assumptions related to "how" to translate. As Raffel argues, the philologist aims to produce a translation for the scholars and their students, who require a literal or "formal" translation that will take them back to the original piece of iterature – or as close to it as possible. Formal translations are pedantic, being concerned with "fidelity" and "exactness". Because they aim to show the social, philosophical, and historical dimensions of the original work, they are often "wooden" as a result. Content matters and not literary quality (Burton Raffel 1981: 28). On the other hand, an "interpretive translation" focuses on the literary qualities of the text and seeks to bring them into close relationship with the target culture and its literary expectations. The hope is "to re-create something roughly equivalent in the new language, something

that is itself good [literature] and that at the same time carries a reasonable measure of the force and flavor of the original" (Raffel 1981: 21).

My aim was to produce a finished, fluent text, that would be available to a range of contemporary readers without too much difficulty. I did not want to document the scholarly linguistic complexities of seventeenth century Malay and sought to avoid a heavily academic apparatus, including footnotes, as far as possible. An earlier example that appealed to me was P. Lal's "transcreation" of Valmiki's *Ramayana* in which he preferred: "concrete detail to generalized abstraction, humanist nuance to theological jargon, and moral anecdote to didactic poetry" (Sumit Mitra 2014: n.p.).

The construction of a fluent and very accessible literary translation is the regular practice in the English-speaking world, and elsewhere. In *The translator's invisibility,* Lawrence Venuti (1995) has pointed out (although he does not approve of it) that:

> A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention, the essential meaning of the foreign text […]. (Venuti 1995: 1).

"The illusion of transparency" is an effect of "adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning" (Venuti 1995: 1). There is no place for the provision of alternative readings, indications of the tentative nature of certain word choices, or the provision of more information in a footnote to help the reader know more clearly what is happening. Getting the meaning of single words right is good to do but more important is overall consistency and knowing what is important, what needs to be glossed and explained, what is unimportant and can be quickly passed over – these are crucial factors in the creation of a natural text.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXT: UNITS OF TRANSLATION

The preference in literary translation for a contemporary, comprehensible, fluent, and interesting style is not easy to fulfill. The literary scholar is often less informed about the obscure reaches of specific words. The language of the HSR belongs to its time, seventeenth century Malay. Given its position in England, there was no longer the possibility of revising the manuscript in any later copying, unlike many other Classical Malay texts that went on being copied and their language updated into the nineteenth century. The final copyist appears, at times, to have been rather careless. Perhaps, as a Muslim, he was somewhat suspicious of the text anyway. Although he always gives names to absolutely everything, for example, his counting is poor, and the logic of some events is unclear. As Achadiati Ikram has written:

In general, the plot of HSR is neatly integrated and supports the messages being conveyed. But, even though this is the case in general, some parts have their own life, which gives the impression that the stories are sometimes very complicated. This is because the style likes repetition, a large number of characters, and a variety of events. (Ikram 1980: 21-22)

The sheer consistency of the HSR is hard for the modern reader to assimilate. The original manuscript is written as one continuous whole. As a preliminary step, the translator needs to mentally structure the flow of language. The translation scholars Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet insist that single words are seldom the basis for successful translation. Instead of blindly following the trail of successive words, they point to the crucial role of "the unit of translation", which they define as "the smallest segment of the utterance whose signs are linked in such a way that they should not be translated individually" (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995: 352). They give examples which may indeed be single words ("he", "but"), but they may also be grammatically linked groups ("the watch", "to look"), fixed expressions ("from time to time"), and semantically linked groups ("to glance away").

To read the text depends on deciding the segmentation of the various units of translation, small and large. As we begin to search for patterns, we can divide the passage up into smaller units and then larger blocks of text. It begins as follows:

> *Ini/ hikayat yang terlalu indah/ termasyur// diperkatakan orang diatas angin dan dibawah angin// nyata pada segala sastera// perkataan maharaja rawana/ yang sapuluh kepalanya dan dua puluh tangannya// raja itu terlalu besar/ ia beroleh kerajaannya empat tempat negeri// dianugerahkan allah ta'ala/ suatu kerajaan dalam dunia/ kedua kerajaan kepada keinderan pada udara/ ketiga tempat kerajaan di dalam bumi/ keempat kerajaan didalam laut//*

A first literal translation, without punctuation, might read:

> This /[is] the chronicle/ which is very beautiful/ very famous// spoken by men from "above the wind" and "below the wind"//outstanding among all works of knowledge/ it speaks about Maharaja Rawana/ who had ten heads and twenty arms/ he was a great king// he had his kingdoms in four places/ granted to him by Almighty God/ the first kingdom in the world/the second kingdom in heaven up in the sky/ the third kingdom inside the earth/ fourth a kingdom in the ocean//

There are immediate problems with this first draft. There are failures of linguistic meaning, some exacerbated by shifts in the language and the presence of "false friends", words we think we know but we do not. Does *diperkatakan orang* mean 'spoken, recited by people' or 'discussed'? (The beginning of the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* suggests the former as a common meaning.) This spills over into how one interprets *perkataan*: is it a 'recitation, description'? How is the text *nyata*, 'clear'? Does it 'shine, glow'? Does *sastera* mean 'literature'

or 'sacred text'? We think we know the language, Indonesian/Malay, and we do not. A natural translation is not produced by proceeding word for word. But strict adherence to one unit of translation after another often does not work either. The translator may need to twist, rearrange, add, and reduce, if a truly literary text is to be produced.

Once one has solved these linguistic and cultural problems, one can go to the next level, writing an appropriate English:

> This is a very beautiful and most famous chronicle. It has been recited by men from above the equator and those from below the equator, because it is outstanding among all works of learning. It speaks about Maharaja Rawana, who had ten heads and twenty hands. He was a great king. He ruled over kingdoms in four places which Almighty God had granted to him: firstly, a kingdom in the world; a second kingdom in heaven up in the sky; the third kingdom inside the earth; and the fourth kingdom in the ocean.

And so, one continues, advancing by reading ahead, pausing while revising what has already been written. A dificult signpost for the smallest structural shifts is the word *mak*a, which is used liberally throughout the text, especially but not always at the beginning of sentences. It is an interesting exercise to mark *maka* in some way in the translation (perhaps with an asterisk). The impression of the text as being composed of self-contained "prose lines" is then quite striking. The text was almost certainly sung in small sections. This emphasis on immediate content is in contrast to the English need for a logical connection between sentences. R.J. Wilkinson's *Unabridged Malay-English dictionary* definition of *maka* suggests: 'And; then; after a short space of time. The original meaning is <a moment of time> […]. It is a copula to bridge the interval between two statements […]. It is a link between sentences'. More directly, R.O. Winstedt's *Unabridged Malay-English dictionary* suggests: 'then; next – an untranslatable word that fulfils the function of a full-stop or comma in Malay-Arabic script'. The "narrative presupposition" assumes that "sentences which follow each other in a sequence also follow each other in chronological sequence" (compare S. Errington 1979: 28). Without *maka* to slow down the reading, we can often produce a rapid succession of short sentences, which change the rhythm of the narration. Style looks for ways to slow the reading: "then", "and", and "next" will have to do. In fact, the precise measurement of time and the logical sequencing of events are not important in the recording of events. Things happen – or don't happen. That is sufficient. The most crucial events happen because of the Divine will, not because of any clock or calendar.

Beyond sentences one also needs to structure what modern readers might also consider a necessary way of organizing the translation: paragraphs, chapters, and parts of the whole. There are small signpost words to mark shifts in the narrative: *alkisah* (this is the story), *setelah sudah* (after that happened), and *tatkala* (while). Larger signposts can indicate whole chapters, for example:

> *Al-kisah datanglah kapada Hikayat Maharaja Rawana mendamaikan Menteri Shaksha dengan Maharaja Balikasha,* 'The story, we come to the chronicle of how Rawana made peace between Mentri Shaksha and Maharja Balikasha' (p. 38).

> *Maka tersebutlah perkataan Raja Berma Di-Raja sa-telah sudah mati di-bunoh Seri Rama,* 'Now I will tell the story of Raja Berma Di-Raja after his death when he was killed by Rama' (p. 85).

> *Datanglah kapada hikayat Dasarata Maharaja akan hilang,* 'We come to the story of Maharaja Dasarata's approaching death' (p. 110).

The unit of translation – those things that should be translated together as a single unit – can be larger than a phrase.

Some specific problems for modern readers

The formulaic language of the oral Malay text is a subsequent challenge to modern English readers, trained to appreciate continuing linguistic newness and not to use the same word twice. In the HSR there is constant repetition of a limited vocabulary for the description of the various characters. The heroes are always extraordinarily handsome and brave. The women are wonderfully beautiful (as golden as the full moon on a clear night, et cetera). *Raksasa*s are, of course, ugly, extremely violent – and cunning. Armies are beyond numbers and when they march, they are so noisy that they have the potential to drown out the loudest thunder. Kings are so generous they give away endless amounts of jewels, gold, and other metals – and then, when asked, their wife. These are familiar features of epic narratives throughout the world. Such repetition may be tedious to some readers, but it is an inescapable feature of the genre. Hopefully it can carry its own poetry through repetition. If not, the omission of overworked phrases may be necessary to reduce tedium.

Further to this, some repeated words too only offer limited choices of translation and call for variation. In English literature, characters "speak" to each other in various ways: they "say", "reply", "state", and they generally do this on somewhat equal linguistic terms, regardless of their relationship (he said, she said, the King said, the Prime Minister said et cetera). In the *Hikayat Seri Rama,* they almost always "say" (*kata*), and seldom "reply", "ask" or "insist". These alternatives make for a more varied text. They also require recognition of the fact that this continual "saying" is socially structured: kings most commonly sit on their thrones and "command" or "order" (*titah*); subjects are expected to always squat, raise their hands in front of their face, and agree with what the king has said, "say with a bow" (*sembah*).

Intimate relationships are not always clear. In Malay they are expressed in the use of kinship terms for persons who are not kin. A man the age of one's father may be called *ayahanda,* 'respected father', one the age of one's grandfather is *nenda*, 'respected grandfather', and so on. The senior member of the dyad would, of course, classify the younger member as a son or grandson. Many kinship terms are used in that honorific way in HSR; their use does

not necessarily indicate any biological relationships. At the preparations to begin the process of reconciliation between two warring states, for example, an unnamed maharishi (possibly Maharishi Bagawana Ramasa, mentioned on the next page) says to Rawana:

> *Ya tuanku, pada bichara sinda baik juga Yang Dipertuan perdamaikan karena Maharaja Balikasha pun bukan orang lain kapada Yang Dipertuan, supaya ada berat pada mata ayahanda Menteri Shaksha dan pada mata mamanda Maharaja Balikasha.*

> 'Yes my lord, in my opinion, it would be good for Your Majesty to broker the peace because Maharaja Balikasha is your kinsman and it would carry weight in the eyes of your father Menteri Shaksha and your uncle Maharaja Balikasha' (p. 39).

The maharishi may not be related to either of these kings, but the assumed relationship of father and uncle carries significant respect (and possibly affection). A few pages later (page 41), Raja Shaksha refers to *ayahanda Chitrabaha*, *ayahanda Badanul, ayahanda Jama Mentri,* and *ayahanda Narana.* The first may be his father, the rest are brothers, and could be considered uncles, but they cannot all be his biological father. It is not really clear who his father is; Shaksha just suddenly appears on page 9 as a junior successor to those other figures. The men are possibly no clear relation to him at all! It is not always possible to duplicate this culturally patterned respect for different generations precisely in English but if they are retained, they need to be elaborated and defined ("honorary grandfather" is possible, as is "venerable" and "senior").

Special contextual features of the Malay HSR

There are some specific factors which call for careful writing across the whole translation so as to create a consistent background. The basic plot of the *Ramayana* is not difficult and is, in fact, reasonably well known. Sita, the wife of Prince Rama is kidnapped by Rawana and he fights to have her back again. Lal's transcreation of the Valmiki *Ramayana* "relentlessly focuses on the poetry of the Ramayana, its study of man-woman relationship and its exquisite nature-descriptions" (Mitra 2014: n.p.). None of these characteristics matter in the Malay version. Beyond the quest, the rest of the book may be considered to be a series of parallel background frameworks for this narrative. The broad factors that are distinctive of the Malay HSR need to be handled in such a way as to provide an accessible context for the contemporary reader.

Firstly, because it is potentially so anti-paradigmatic that the HSR is dedicated at the outset to Rawana, not Rama, the translator should strive to make this visible throughout the whole text. The opening sentences state that the *hikayat* (narrative) is about "Maharaja Rawana who had ten heads and twenty hands" (*Maharaja Rawana yang sapuluh kepalanya dan dua puluh tangannya*). While practising harsh asceticism, Rawana is granted four realms by God on the assurance that he will rule wisely and justly. After a long story of conflict between two kingdoms, in which Rawana plays the role of a peacemaker, the main story then follows and deals with Rawana's war

against Rama. To reflect this, I have divided the book into two parts: Part 1, Rawana: God's Servant and Part 2, Rawana: Rama's Enemy. Taken together, the two parts create a distinctively syncretic tale, in which a basically moral Rawana fails to fulfil his vow to God because of his desire for Dewi Sita. This favouring of Rawana, and even his partial or complete exoneration, does occur in some South Indian texts, such as the *Ramopakhyana* in the *Mahabharata,* as well as Buddhist and Jain versions (Malini Saran and Vinod C. Khanna 2004: 4-8). Perhaps, like the English poet John Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Satan is more interesting than God because, as the old cliché has it "there are a thousand ways to be evil but only one way to be good".

Secondly, the Muslim nature of the text should also be made clear. Although the Rama story would have been part of the early Malay-Indian heritage that can be dated from the early fifth century CE and began to fade after 1300, the Bodleian manuscript of the *Hikayat Seri Rama* was finalized at a time when Islam was well established in the courts of Malaysia and Indonesia. As Sir Richard Winstedt has written: "It would appear as if the Bodleian text was written down for a Muslim court, like that of Malacca, which was still conservative enough to like the old tales of the Hindu period, provided they were presented in a form which Muslim pundits could condone" (1961: 37).

Amin Sweeney describes the work as: "the product of a Muslim [author], aimed at a Muslim audience, concerning the breaking of a contract mediated by the Prophet Adam between a Muslim king and a Muslim god" (Sweeney 1987: 26). Although exiled from Paradise, Adam is honoured as a Prophet in the *Hikayat Seri Rama* and God's blessing is continually asked upon him (*Nabi Adam 'Alaihi's-salam,* p. 2 and passim). He acts as an intercessory, carrying Rawana's wishes for four kingdoms to God and this is immediately granted (p. 3). Rawana fails to rule justly, unlike Dasarata, "the son of the Prophet Adam" (pp. 139 and 197), whom he resembles when he sits in audience. Laksmana is described as "a true descendant from Adam" (p. 280) and is Dasarata's son. The central place in the story is "the hill of the Prophet Adam, peace be upon him" in Sri Langka, Adam's Peak as it is still known today. Hanuman takes off from here to go to Langkapuri; the ill-fated picnic with Rama's son and the son's wife takes place here as well (pp. 191, 255, and 295).

The Muslim presence can be highlighted by maintaining the use of Arabic narrative and religious phrases, which will stand out from the English setting. The term *hikayat* itself is Arabic and describes various forms of narrative texts, ranging from the highly imaginative to the historical. Many of the events are introduced by *al-kisah*, 'the story'. Significantly, the phrase *Dewata Mulia Raya* (which I have boldly translated as 'God, All-Glorious and All-Mighty') is used throughout as a form both of *Dewata Mulya Raya* and *Allah Subhanah-wata'ala.*

That there are aspects of the Malay versions of the Rama Saga that differ from "the Valmiki *Ramayana*" is not unusual. Among others in the "three hundred *Ramayanas*", for example, the Thai and Lao versions carry strong Buddhist overtones, which can be traced back as far as the Jataka tales of the Buddha's previous lives. There are also non-violent Jain versions in

which Laksmana, not Rama, kills Rawana, and both Laksmana and Rawana subsequently go to hell. Nevertheless, it is sobering to realize that although the presence of Adam is uncontroversial in Indonesia and Malaysia, in India it would present a major challenge to the fundamentalist Hindu understanding of the story, a clash that indeed has led to widespread rioting in India in recent years. We need only recall the 1992 violence at Ayodhya, where a mosque had been erected over the alleged birthplace of Rama. Equally threatening was the protest around the banning of Ramanujan's essay at the University of Delhi. The literary translator is aware of the public nature of his/her work in a way that the philologist need not fear.

A royal worldview

A third distinctive background layer of the Malay HSR which needs to be clear to the contemporary reader is the world of the Hindu-Malay court. The king (*maharaja*) is at the centre of the state (*negeri*). The state extends as far as his authority allows. His queens may have smaller palaces nearby; they are attended by their serving maids (*dayang-dayang*) and seem to have a largely decorative role. Lesser kings, who are often a potential threat to the central maharaja, may be sent to rule distant parts of the kingdom. The king conducts his daily business seated on his throne, facing his officials. Ultimately his rule is despotic and the greatest crime is disobedience to his commands. In the audience hall, he is accompanied by prime ministers (*mentri besar*), ministers (*mentri*), and military officers. There are at least two types of military personnel: professional soldiers, "generals" (*hulubalang*) and conscripted citizens (*rakyat*). Musicians play both at court and in battles. Heralds (*bentara*) carry the king's messages to those around him and, on occasion to distant kings and their courts. Outside the court, ascetics, entitled "Maharishi" or "Bagavan", represent professional religious practitioners and are still recognizably Hindu in outlook and practice. Merchants (*biaperi*) exist at the edge of this introverted world. Beyond this visible material world are the seven layers of the heavens, inhabited by demi-gods (*dewa*) and apsaras (*bidadari*); the seven subterranean layers, inhabited by *jin*, demons (*syaitan*); and seven layers in the ocean, inhabited by powerful fish, *raksasa*s, and various other creatures.

This is a man's world, in which masculinity must be constantly asserted and valiantly proven – for the sake of a good name (*nama yang baik*). There is a constant emphasis throughout the text on living and dying with "a good name", a good reputation, and the avoidance of dying with a "bad name" for all eternity. Women may occasionally influence their men but on the whole, they are beautiful objects that can be easily replaced or given away. They provoke displays of possessive manliness – by Rama and his son Tabalawi, in particular – but the men also know that they are "only women" and that there are more important things in the world to be concerned with, that is to say, politics and warfare. Many of the variations to the plot from the Valmiki *Ramayana* would seem to have been introduced to enhance the dignity of kings and minimize their irrationality as found in some other texts. For example,

Dasarata gives the kingdom to the son of his second wife not because she is jealous and spiteful but because she serves him exceptionally well and his first wife, Mandu-dari, recognizes this. Rama does abandon Sita because of a misunderstanding, but they are eventually reconciled, as Maharishi Kali knew would naturally happen, and thereafter continue to live long and contented lives together. The last few pages are a moving description of the possible pleasures of old age, honoured for what one has achieved and surrounded by one's children and grandchildren.

A FINAL COMMENT

It is clear that the scholar-translator, the philologist, does not do what the original author did. In a reflective article on translating the *Arjunawiwaha*, Robson humorously asks what the Balinese heirs to Old Javanese did with their texts. There is no argument about what they did not do. "Obviously", he says, "they did not sit down and produce doctoral dissertations out of critical text editions, get them printed by Drukkerij Smits, and then push them onto a bookshelf" (2001: 38). On the other hand, the philologist does aim to do some of the things that the literary translator does: produce a text that reads well in English, goes beyond word-for-word translation and capture the aesthetic of the original, or at leas approximates to it. But literary translators do not do all that the philologist does either. Their work is closer to that of the classical authors themselves, who rewrote stories based on characters drawn from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata,* without alternative readings, indications of when the translation was uncertain, or explanations framed by extensive footnotes.

Recently, the philological method itself has been severely criticised. Peter Worsley (2007) makes two final remarks on Teeuw and Robson's translation of the *Kuñjarakarṇa Dharmakathana* (1981). The first is that they do not provide a systematic discussion of the principles on which their translation is based. Worsley (2007: 108) writes:

> Translation has long been regarded in this field as a strategy intended to explicate the meaning of works and then to make these accessible to scholars who do not have a knowledge of the language in which the texts are written. For far too long now, however, this practice has been used without any adequate attempt to explain precisely how translation is able to perform these two functions.

The other fault of the philologists is their failure to deal with the growing body of literature on the text critical process, which rejects the ideal of one final text with one final meaning. These two faults "can only further encourage the mystification of classical literatures of this region and further encourage the long-standing isolation in which the scholarly study of these literatures has been conducted". A.H. Johns (1965: 540) also laments the obsession with the single word, "its derivation and etymology, its occurrences in other texts, its brothers, sisters, and cousins, several times removed, in a whole range of

Indonesian languages". The philologist is now placed in the position of having to learn from the literary translator about new theories of literature and new ways of writing translations.

The literary translator still relies on the philologist to produce texts that are worth translating for the ordinary reader. On one level, I was doing the same thing as the philologists were doing: we were all "translating". I have ended with the sense that we are translating in very different ways: choosing texts differently, treating words as single items or as related to the style of the overall translation, dealing with everything in the text or bringing implicit meanings and worldviews to greater prominence. These are aspects of my trade and I still hope that a plain translation of "the Malay Ramayana" will be of interest to non-specialists.

I am also aware that the work of the literary translator is less valued in the academy than that of the philologist. Philology relates to obscure and dead languages. It is commonly perceived to be "devilishly difficult" because of the vast knowledge it requires and the limited range of resources available to answer questions of language, literature, and culture (Robson 2001: 42). The translation of modern literature is based on well-known languages, which "everyone" knows, and is perceived to be an art and not a scholarly pursuit. It is, therefore, difficult in the Australian and Indonesian academies to have contemporary translation recognised as a form of research (see Aveling 2013/2014).

The *Hikayat Seri Rama* is not an easy text to read or translate. I have struggled with it to the best of my ability. Philology provides the texts and linguistic support which can be of benefit to the literary translator, the literary translator can show how translations can be written on a broader scale of focus. Their work is mutually beneficial. I also feel it appropriate to remind future readers and myself of the final sentences to the HSR: "When you read this *hikayat,* I ask you not to be too harsh. Mankind is full of mistakes and prone to forgetfulness. There is only One who never makes any mistakes". As the author also comments at one point: *Wallahu 'Alam*, Only God knows (p. 149). Obviously, the author wasn't always sure of everything either.

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