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**ACCENTUATING STYLISTIC FEATURES IN THE
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE OF *HIKAYAT GUL BAKAWALI***

(Penyerlahan Fitur Stilistik dalam Teknik Naratif Hikayat Gul Bakawali)

Dustin Carrell Cowell

Department of African Cultural Studies,
University of Wisconsin-Madison, United States

dccowell@wisc.edu

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ABSTRACT

This article describes stylistic features found in *Hikayat Gul Bakawali*, an ancient love tale of Indian origin translated into Classical Malay in 1875 from an Urdu prose version composed by Nihal Chand Lahori entitled, “*Mazhab-e ‘Ishq, urf Gul-e Bakawali*,” (*The Religion of Love, or the Rose of Bakawali*), published in Calcutta in 1804. Although the original tale stems from within the Hindu world view, the Urdu version of 1804 firmly situates the tale within an Islamic framework. Under study is the first known Malay translation by Munsyi Syaikh Muhammad Ali bin Ghulam Husain al-Hindi, a literary scholar of Indian origin living perhaps in one of the cultural centres of the Malay peninsula, who acquired a fine mastery of Classical Malay literature and translated several religious and linguistic texts directly from Arabic as well. The thrust of the discussion is upon the translation and analysis of specific passages, presented successively with emphasis on certain themes or rhetorical strategies. The power of binary

oppositions is emphasized on all levels, from that of the description of the characters, to oppositions on the semantic level in many passages. Of interest is the character development of the hero, a human prince in love with the Fairy Princess Puteri Bakawali. Analysed are the hero's use of language in describing himself to attract the empathy and assistance of his addressees, as well as the narrator's description of the hero's bravery and persistence as a faithful lover never to give up on in his quests.

Keywords: Hikayat Gul Bakawali, Nihal Chand, Munsyi Syaikh Muhammad Ali, narrative technique, stylistics.

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini menjelaskan ciri-ciri stilistik yang terkandung dalam Hikayat Gul Bakawali, sebuah kisah cinta kuno yang berasal dari India dan diterjemahkan dalam bahasa Melayu Klasik pada tahun 1875 dari prosa Urdu yang disusun oleh Nihal Chand Lahori bertajuk "Mazhab-e 'Ishq, urf Gul-e Bakawali" (Agama Cinta, atau Bunga Bakawali), yang diterbitkan di Calcutta pada tahun 1804. Walaupun kisah asal berakar dari perspektif Hindu, penerbitan versi Urdu tahun 1804 telah diubah suai dalam kerangka Islam. Kajian ini memfokuskan karya terjemahan Melayu pertama yang diketahui oleh Munsyi Syaikh Muhammad Ali bin Ghulam Husain al-Hindi, seorang sarjana sastra keturunan India yang menguasai sastra Melayu Klasik dengan baik dan menterjemahkan beberapa teks agama dan linguistik secara langsung dari bahasa Arab di salah sebuah pusat kebudayaan di Semenanjung Melayu. Perbincangan yang dikemukakan melibatkan terjemahan dan analisis petikan secara berurutan dengan menekankan aspek tema atau strategi retorik. Tumpuan perbandingan secara binari turut ditekankan pada pelbagai peringkat, dari deskripsi watak, hingga ke peringkat semantik dalam data kajian. Antara yang paling menonjol ialah perkembangan watak adiwira hikayat, seorang putera manusia yang jatuh cinta dengan Puteri Bidadari Puteri Bakawali. Antara lainnya, penggunaan bahasa sang adiwira semasa memerihalkan dirinya dinilai bertujuan untuk menarik empati dan bantuan daripada pendengar. Turut diamati ialah aspek pemerian teknik naratif mengenai keberanian dan ketekunannya sebagai seorang kekasih yang setia dan tidak pernah berputus asa dalam perjalanan hidup.

Kata kunci: Hikayat Gul Bakawali, Nihal Chand, Munsyi Syaikh Muhammad Ali, teknik naratif, stilistik.

INTRODUCTION

The titles of many prose works of Classical Malay literature begin with the word *Hikayat*, a word from Arabic bearing the meaning of a story or narrative. Scholars of Malay literature have classified these narratives into groups in accordance with shared features as detailed, for example, by Salleh (2016, p. ix) in her introduction to her edited edition of *Hikayat Gul Bakawali*, which represents the text under study in this article. Leaving aside works which present histories of actual historical persons, the purely fictional narratives can be categorized by the relative proportion of Hindu and Islamic framing, in distinction from those works situated entirely within an Islamic frame of reference. This work, translated as it is from an Urdu retelling of an ancient Indian tale, even though it includes many elements from Hindu imaginative literature, is nevertheless framed within an Islamic view of the world, with a number of concepts shared with Arabic popular tales such as are to be found in the *Thousand and One Nights*, known in Arabic as *Alf Laylah wa-Laylah* (Mohd Haniff Mohammad Yusoff, 2023). Some of these tales were translated into Malay in the nineteenth century with the title, *Hikayat Seribu Satu Malam*, as noted by the well-known scholar of Malay literature Zain al-‘Abidin bin Ahmad, commonly known as Za’ba (Za’ba, 1940, p. 146).

Although essential elements of this tale may have proceeded from an oral tradition, Braginsky and Suvorova (2008, p. 119) report that this tale was presented as a piece of written literature for the first time “in an anonymous *mathnawī* in Dakhni (southern Urdu) in 1625.” These scholars further explain that this poem was expounded in a Persian *mathnawī* by Izzatullah Bangali in 1710 and that this version was the source of a (prose) *dāstān* in Urdu by Nihal Chand Lahori with the title “*Mazhab-e ‘Ishq, urf Gul-e Bakawali*,” (*The Religion of Love, or the Rose of Bakawali*), published at Fort William College in Calcutta in 1804. We note that within the Urdu literary traditions, a *mathnawī* usually refers to a narrative poem of indeterminate length composed with attention to particular rhyming schemes, whereas the term *dāstān* is a general term for “story, fable, tale,” normally in prose.¹ Braginsky and Suvorova (2008, p. 119-120, note 13) observe that this *dāstān* by Nihal Chand was later translated into several Indian languages,

¹ See the online Rekhta *Urdu Dictionary* at: <https://rekhtadictionary.com> for more precise information about these two terms.

including Bengali, Punjabi, Gujrati, and that it is the source of the translation by Munsyi Syaikh Muhammad Ali bin Ghulam Husain al-Hindi into Malay published originally at an unknown location in 1875, followed by several lithographic editions published in both Singapore and Penang up until 1905. Salleh (2016, pp. xii-xiii) states that Haji Muhammad Amin bin Haji Abdulla, head of a publishing house in Singapore by the name of Al-Matba'a al-Aminiyah situated on Jalan Baghdad, after having bought the rights to publish the translation, published it in 1922. This 1922 edition (or a later printing perhaps of that edition in 1927) is the source of her edition, which she first published in 1986 (reprinted in 2016), which edition forms the basis of this study.

In her preface to her study Salleh (2016) provides a lengthy discussion of various aspects of the text, including its sources and her editorial decisions, orthographical peculiarities, linguistic and rhetorical features, broad narrative structures and themes, Hindu and Islamic elements, moral teachings, and descriptions of narratives embedded within the major narrative. Inasmuch as this narrative is like the folktales studied by Vladimir Propp in his study translated as *"The Morphology of a Folktale,"* she lists examples of how characters in the story carry out actions conforming to many of the narrative functions described by Propp.

Although the various versions of this story vary about details, what unites them is how passionate love expressed by the Malay terms *"cinta berahi"* and *"mazhab asyik"* bring together the two opposing worlds, that of the Earth (*bumi*) and the Fairy World (*kayangan*) through the passionate love between the hero and heroine. Their love and perseverance is so strong that the taboos forbidding a love union between these two worlds are overcome.

THE PLOT

This narrative begins in the Kingdom of Syarqastan, which is ruled by a just king by the name of Zainu'l-Muluk. After having been blessed by four sons, a fifth son is born, a son named Taju'l-Muluk whose birth is likened to the descent of the full moon into the palace. Astrologers are called, and they report quite timidly that although this young prince is destined to become a great ruler, at the age of

twelve, if the king by chance were to lay eyes upon his son, he will instantly be smitten by blindness. When the young prince at the age of twelve goes out hunting, by chance, his father, while on a hunting expedition in the same forest, happens to view his son and instantly loses his vision. At this point, Taju'l-Muluk is expelled from the kingdom. Meanwhile, a learned scholar informs the king that the only cure for his eyes is the exceedingly rare Bakawali flower. The four elder brothers, go out in search of this rare flower in complete royal attire accompanied by a large contingent of horsemen. In contrast, Taju'l-Muluk exchanges his royal clothes for those of a pauper and sets out into the dangerous forest by himself. In disguise he meets up by chance with one of the officers of the battalion led by the four brothers, who explains that they are in a quest for the Bakawali flower. Shortly thereafter the four brothers arrive at another kingdom where a wily princess trick them and imprisons them. Taju'l-Muluk can secure the freedom of his brothers. From that time on Taju'l-Muluk pursues his own quest for the Bakawali flower. With the help of giants and agents from the Fairy world, he can reach the fairy palace where the unique flower is only to be found, namely the Palace of Princess Bakawali. There when he finds the sleeping princess, he falls in love with her. While still asleep he exchanges the ring he is wearing with her ring. He then finds the Bakawali flower in a pool close by and leaves undetected. Upon waking up, the Princess discovers that her ring has been exchanged for another and that the Bakawali flower has been stolen. She instantly falls in love with the unseen intruder, so brave as to approach her and steal the said flower.

Now rather than a quest for the flower, the plot revolves around the attempt for the two lovers to meet and finally marry, despite the taboo prohibiting marriage between denizens of the two opposing worlds. Innumerable obstacles confront the lovers, along with much suffering. Embedded within this central narrative are shorter independent narratives and stories.

LINGUISTIC PATTERNING

In this text we observe linguistic patterns at many levels. The narrative is divided into 22 chapters, many elements of which provide examples of linguistic patterning, as if there were a template with positions for substitutions for variable elements (Zhiyu Liu & Kesumawati

A. Bakar, 2024). Let us look at the initial sentences of Chapters 2 through 6 begin.

Chapter 2: *ALKISAH peri mengatakan Taju'l-Muluk **bermain** catur dengan Puteri Jenuh Hati dan peri ia **menebus** keempat-empat saudara(nya) itu*

Chapter 3: *ALKISAH peri mengatakan Taju'l-Muluk **sampai** ke sempadan negeri Bakawali*

Chapter 4: *ALKISAH peri mengatakan Taju'l-Muluk **sampai** ke Taman Bakawali dan **mengambil** bunga bakawali*

Chapter 5: *ALKISAH peri mengatakan Taju'l-Muluk dan Puteri Mahmudah keduanya **bermohon** diri kepada Dewi Hamalah dan **pergi mendapatkan** Puteri Jenuh Hati dan peri Taju'l-Muluk **merdehekakan** sekalian saudara-saudaranya itu.*

Chapter 6: *ALKISAH peri mengatakan Taju'l-Muluk **bertemu** saudara-saudaranya di tengah jalan dan peri **dirampas** mereka itu akan bunga bakawali itu daripadanya.*

The template for the initial clauses of these sentences may be represented as follows:

ALKISAH peri mengatakan [subject] [verb introducing a verbal phrase]

Sometimes a second clause follows. Whether or not the word *peri* precedes the second clause seems to be optional. *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat* (n.d.) does not appear to suggest any usages of the word “*peri*” that would correspond to its use in these sentences.

INSERTION OF POPULAR FOLK NARRATIVES

We observe in this narrative several embedded stories within the framing story, a narrative technique common among folk narrative traditions and a prominent feature in the *Thousand and One Nights*. One such example is the story of the captive Brahman who is released from a tiger upon the clever intervention of a mousedeer (*kancil*) who persuades the tiger to enter a trap after releasing the Brahman (pp. 19-22)². This is a well-known story with many variants, which is retold here by Taju'l-Muluk to illustrate how everything is possible with the

² Page numbers referring to passages within the text under study refer to the edition by Salleh (2016).

assistance of God Almighty, no matter how difficult it may seem. In relation to his own quest for the Bakawali flower, Tajul-Muluk uses this story to gather up courage for his own quest. If the mousedeer can tie up a tiger, then why should not he be able to achieve his own goal? In this version of the story two inanimate objects are consulted regarding human behaviour, namely a tree and a public road. What might be interpreted as humankind's mistreatment of the environment, the tree complains about how after providing shade for the passer-by, the passer-by's response to this good deed is the tearing off its leaves. Whereas the public road makes travel easy for travellers, these very same travellers in turn do not hesitate to throw garbage upon it. This parallels the ungratefulness of the tiger who rather than thank the Brahman who released him from a trap, entraps the Brahman.

PASSAGES SELECTED FOR STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

Let us now turn our attention to the analysis of specific passages, starting from the very first four paragraphs of Chapter 1. In this study each individual passage is assigned a letter, followed by either by one numeral or a numeral followed by a letter. Whereas the numeral refers to a textual segment within the passage such as a paragraph, the letter refers to smaller sections within these segments. Within square brackets the page number is indicated.

A.1.a [p. 1]	<i>ALKISAH bahawa hikayat ini digelar oleh Hindi akan dia mazhab asyik yakin kaum berahi yang amat indah-indah ceriteranya peri menyatakan cinta berahi seorang akan seorang.</i>	This tale, an exceedingly beautiful story, was composed by an Indian about the Path of Passionate Lovers, that passionate love of one person for another.
A.1.b	<i>Bahawasanya dapatlah hikayat ini dinamakan Taman Penglibur Lara³ bagi sekalian mereka yang berdendam berahi dan menjadi haluan pedoman bagi sekalian asyik yang belayar di lautan mahabbah bahkan menjadi timbang ruanganlah bagi lancang yang dipalu oleh aluan gelombang cinta berahi itu adanya.</i>	This tale, of the type called “ <i>Taman Penglihbur Lara</i> ,” is for all of those who are immersed in passionate love and is a guide for all lovers who sail in the sea of love, even becoming (a refuge???) for a boat being beaten by the waves of passionate love.

³ Specific words chosen for discussion in the analysis are printed in boldface.

A.2.a	<i>Kata sahibulhikayat maka adalah sebuah negeri Syarqastan di sebelah utara terlalu besar kerajaannya.</i>	The teller of this tale relates that there is an exceeding large kingdom in the north called Syarqastan,
A.2.b	<i>Baginda itu bernama Zainu 'l-Muluk disebut orang.</i>	ruled by a king known as Zainu'l-Muluk,
A.2.c	<i>Maka, parasnya pun sangatlah elok mejelis.</i>	who is stunningly handsome in appearance.
A.2.d	<i>Maka, tiadalah tolok bandingnya pada zaman itu serta pula dengan adil insafnya kepada sekalian dagang senteri.</i>	Indeed, his appearance had no match whatsoever at that time, just as was his justice toward all coming from afar – adventurers and religious teachers alike.
A.2.e	<i>Maka, sajaat dan sakhawatnya pun tiadalah dapat diperikan.</i>	His truthfulness [courage?] and generosity are beyond description.
A.3	<i>Syahadan maka baginda itu ada mempunyai empat orang puteranya yang amat gagah perkasa dan bijak bestari pula dengan elok parasnya berlebih-lebihan seorang daripada yang lain.</i>	This king had four sons, exceedingly brave and valient, ever so skillful and clever; and through their stunning appearances they each rivaled one another.
A.4.a	<i>Maka, dengan kudrat Allah Taala melakukan iradat-Nya ke atas hamba-Nya dapatlah pula baginda seorang putera laki-laki yang terlebih elok daripada sekaliannya;</i>	Through the power of Almighty God in carrying out his will upon His servants, this king was blessed with a male child even more wonderful to behold than all his brothers.
A.4.b	<i>seperti anak-anakan kencana rupanya, laksana (purnama) empat belas hari bulan gilang-gemilang wajah parasnya.</i>	Like a stature of gold, like the full moon of the fourteenth day – ever so brilliant was his countenance,
A.4.c	<i>Maka, terang-benderang di dalam mahligai baginda dan bersukarialah biti-biti, perwara dan inang pengasuhnya sekalian seolah kejatuhan bulan purnama rasanya di dalam mahligai seperti kata syair di bawah ini:</i>	Shining in the king's palace. So happy were all the maid servants, handmaidens, and nannies with the falling of the full moon into the palace, as the poem below describes:

In the introduction to this tale the term “*mazhab asyik*” recalls the term “*Mazhab-e ‘Ishq*” in Persian and Urdu literature, and more specifically the title of the Urdu work of which the present narrative is a translation, i.e., *Mazhab-e ‘Ishq, urf Gul-e Bakawali*, as noted above. The difference here is that in the Malay version “*asyik*” is

closer to the Arabic term “ashiq”/عاشق / (lover), whereas the term in the original work is the Arabic word “*ishq*”/عشق / (love). In the Persian and Urdu traditions “*ishq*” can be understood to be either on the human level (passionate human love) or divine love in the Sufi tradition, in which the “lover” seeks unification with the Almighty in a spiritual sense. This story in this Malay version seems to be confined to the human level, or at least between the human and fairy worlds. Braginsky and Suvurova (2008, p. 124), upon comparing this translation to the Urdu, state that it “omits all the Sufi deliberations” of the Sufi allegory of the original *dāstān*.

The term “*taman*”/ (garden) can refer to a very beautiful space with flowers in which a visitor may feel refreshed and free from everyday problems. In this context we can consider it to be a place of refuge. This is the “garden” of “*penglipur lara*,” “*penglipur*” defined as “*orang yang menghiburkan*” / (someone who consoles), and “*lara*” defined as “*perasaan susah atau pilu atau sakit percintaan*” / (unpleasant feeling or sadness or love sickness).⁴ According to this understanding, the storyteller is one who consoles those in pain. The storyteller inhabits a garden in which spirits find consolation. In general, imaginative literature diverts attention from one’s everyday concerns and lets one’s imagination inhabit other spaces. In his study entitled, *Puitika Sastra Melayu*, Muhammad Haji Salleh (Salleh, 2006, pp. 50-51) speaks to this function of the storyteller or “*penglipur lara*.” We note in Chapter 16 that this garden of storytellers is once described as being a physical place inhabited by characters of the narrative, for Puteri Ruh Afza “*pergi ke taman Penglipur Lara mendapatkan Permaisuri Jamilah Khatun*” / (goes to *Taman Penglipur Lara* to find Permaisuri Jamilah Khatun) (p. 88).

This first paragraph seems to be a good example of the convoluted style certain passages of this work exhibit, as mentioned by Siti Hawa Haji Salleh. The interpretation here offered for these first two sentences is tentative in the sense that certain terms and constructions are not entirely understood, such as the word “*yakin*” in the initial sentence (A.1.a). The phrase “*menjadi haluan pedoman*” is perhaps an example of two closely related words conveying one concept, that being “a guide.” Particularly difficult to interpret is the phrase

⁴ Definitions in Malay are quoted from *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat*, followed sometimes by my own translation into English within parentheses. Definitions of Arabic terms are quoted from Wehr (1976).

“*menjadi timbang ruanganlah.*” From the context one might suspect that a term that would fit in with the overall meaning is “a refuge.” Indeed, “*ruangan*” can refer to a space, but how is the word “*timbang*” used? In interpreting this passage, “*aluan*” has been taken to mean “*alu*,” a tool for beating padi.

The second paragraph situates the story in the Kingdom of Syarqastan ruled by an extraordinary king. The third paragraph describes this just king’s first four sons as being quite extraordinary, whereas the fourth paragraph introduces the hero, the king’s fifth son, the birth of whom is presented in the most hyperbolic terms.

To emphasize certain qualities or concepts, two adjectives or nouns of similar meaning are juxtaposed without an intervening word. For example, in describing the appearance of Zainu’l-Muluk, the storyteller states: “*parasnya pun sangatlah elok mejelis*” / (He is stunningly handsome) (A.2.c). Both “*elok*” and “*mejelis*” are adjectives describing something attractive or beautiful. In this instance the intensifying adverb “*sangat*” to which is affixed the particle “*lah*” provides further emphasis.

Further reinforcement of the king’s stunning appearance is the following statement: “*Maka, tiadalah tolok bandingnya pada zaman itu serta pula dengan adil insafnya kepada sekalian dagang senter.*” / (Indeed, it [his appearance] had no match whatsoever at that time, just as was his justice toward all coming from afar – adventurers and religious teachers alike) (A.2.d). In this context we may understand *insaf* to be a noun meaning “*rasa keadilan*”/ “feeling for justice.” This corresponds to the meaning of this very word in Arabic “*inṣāf* إِنْصَاف” meaning “justice, equity, fairness.” Although one would not normally expect a noun in Malay to be described by an adjective preceding it, in this case the adjective “*adil*”/ “just” seems to be emphasizing the very concept embodied in the word “*insaf*.”

In this passage we also note how the juxtaposition of two nouns which both refer to those who travel afar: *dagang* and *senter*. The word “*dagang*” is defined as “*pengembara yang datang dari luar negeri*” / (adventurer coming from afar), whereas “*senter*” is defined as “*orang yg belajar agama Islam dengan pergi berguru ke tempat yang jauh-jauh*” / (a person who studies Islam by traveling far in search of teachers). Here is emphasized the extent of justice extended to

travelers from other kingdoms, those often not experiencing the same kind of justice extended to local citizens.

Another way to indicate that something or someone is matchless, the storyteller describes something as being beyond description (indescribable):

“*sajaat dan sakhawatnya pun tiadalah dapat diperikan*” / his truthfulness [courage?] and generosity are beyond description (A.2.e).

Whereas in her short glossary Salleh (2016, p. 140) indicates that “*sajaat*” means “kebenaran” / “truth,” I wonder whether it may perhaps be related to the Arabic word “*shajāʿa* شجاعة” which would normally be transcribed in Malay as “*syajaat*,” a form not found in *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat* (n.d.) and which bears the meaning of “courage, bravery, valour” in Arabic.

In the short third paragraph describing the king’s first four sons, we find another two examples of the juxtaposition of two adjectives of similar meaning to intensify the meaning. Both “*gagah*” and “*perkasa*,” further highlighted by the adverb “*amat*” carry the meaning of bravery, whereas “*bijak*” and “*bestari*” refer to skill and cleverness.

One theme central to this narrative is the difference between the king’s first four sons and Taju’l-Muluk, the hero. Even though the first four sons are described as being very brave and clever in the very short paragraph three, they act as a foil throughout the narrative to the exceedingly superior attributes of their youngest brother. We note that the four elder brothers remain nameless throughout the narrative, with no one standing out in any way. In stark contrast, the descriptions of Taju’l-Muluk are hyperbolic in nature.

The beginning of the fourth paragraph affords an example of Islamic framing. The first introductory sentence exhibits the use of Arabic vocabulary in the description of the hero’s birth by stating that by the power of God Almighty and through His Will, Zainu’l-Muluk was blessed with a fifth son more stunning in appearance than those preceding him. The hyperbolic language continues. Not only is he likened to a statue of gold, but his brightness is that of the full moon at its peak on the fourteenth night of the lunar month. His shining face lights up the entire palace, with the women within sensing that the full

moon itself had alighted within the palace. The adjective “*gemilang*” appears in its most intensive form of “*gilang-gemilang*,” which not only refers to brightness, but to a splendid kind of brightness. Likewise, the adjective “*terang*” appears in its most intensive form of “*terang-benderang*.” We note that *benderang* by itself bears the meaning of “*sangat terang*” / (very bright), the compound form here further heightening the intensity. The women of the palace as a collectivity are referred to as “*biti-biti, perwara dan inang pengasuhnya*” / maid servants, handmaidens, and nannies, which comprises a string of nouns referring to this group with an emphasis upon its diversity and perhaps a hint of its size.

To further enhance the coming of Taju’l-Muluk into the world, the narrative includes the following poem in which the birth is described in cosmic terms, the child as the incarnation of a “*dewa*” (celestial spirit). Quoted below are the first five lines of this ten-line poem:

A.5.a [p. 2]	<i>Akan paras putera sukma Laksana dewa turun menjelma</i>	As for the appearance of the boy-child, tis a soul, A celestial spirit descending incarnate.
A.5.b	<i>Malu ditentang bulan pernama Lari ke mega duduk bercengkerama</i>	The full moon, shy upon being viewed, Flies behind a cloud to sit and chat,
A.5.c	<i>Dibuat silam rupanya leta Terlebih elok putera sang nata</i>	And becomes dark and obscure -- The royal boy-child so stunning.
A.5.d	<i>Haram tak dapat digambar peta Lama ditentang lenyap di mata</i>	Indeed, the moon can no longer be described, So long hidden from the eye’s view.

In accordance with the interpretation here presented, the boy-child’s soul is likened to a spirit (*dewa*) incarnate descending into the palace. In front of this spirit incarnate even the full moon feels embarrassed and goes to take refuge behind a cloud to chat. Behind the cloud the full moon completely drops out of view, completely outdone by the brightness of the gleaming boy-child.

If this interpretation is to be accepted, it is interesting to note that whereas the arrival of the new-born is initially compared to the descent of the full moon into the palace, in the poem immediately following, the full moon itself is no match for the boy-child’s brilliance.

After the birth of the hero, the king calls for the prophecy of the astrologers. The way in which the prophecy is told represents a

dramatic moment in the text through the very words of the astrologers speaking in unison in one voice:

B.1 [p. 2]	<i>Daulat tuanku, barang-barang bertambah kiranya daulat syah alam.</i>	May the reign of my majesty forever grow as does that of the king of the universe!
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The word “*daulat*” is a borrowing of the Arabic word “*daula* دولة,” which can convey the meaning here intended, that is “*kuasa politik yang berdaulat*” / (a political power which reigns supreme). However, the context confers upon this expression an additional meaning, that of an optitive such as “long live the reign of my sovereign.” In this construction it is not only the wish that the king’s reign last long, but that it extends throughout the world. At the beginning of the prophecy the astrologers suggest that the prince be named “Taju’l-Muluk,” for eventually he will “*menaklukkan empat penjuru alam dan sekalian dewa mambang peri*” / (bring under his control the four corners of the earth and all *dewa, mambang, and peri*). Here again, just as in the closely related terms of *biti-biti, pewara, and inang pengasuh*, the spirits of the fairy world known as *dewa, mambang, and peri* represent a collectivity of similar components. Following this positive declaration is the word, “*akan tetapi*” / (however), which introduces a contrary element and therefore an element of suspense:

C.1 [p. 2]	<i>Akan tetapi, ampun tuanku beribu ampun,</i>	However, mercy, my lord, mercy a thousand-fold!
C.2	<i>dicencang patik putus dibunuh patik mati, digantung patik tinggi, dibuang patik jauh harap jua diperbaiki</i>	May your servant be cut up in pieces! May your servant be killed left to die! May your servant be hung from ahigh! May your servant be cast away ever so far! [With] the hope that [this prophecy] be corrected!

The asking of mercy a thousand-fold, “*ampun tuanku beribu ampun*” raises the sense of suspence. One wonders what is so terrible that mercy must be sought. This very linguistic structure recalls an Arabic structure known as “*maf’ūl muṭlaq*,” or “cognate accusative,” in which a verbal element is intensified by a noun in the accusative, such as in the phrase “*Ashkuruka alf shukr*” / (I thank you a thousand times). This seeking of mercy is followed by four clauses of parallel structure, which in this context can be understood as a curse upon oneself. The first two clauses are also like the “*maf’ūl muṭlaq*” construction, with

an intensifying element. In Arabic, as in the expressions “*qatalahu qatlan*”/ (he killed him (a killing) or “*qaṭaʿahu qaṭʿan*” / (he cut it up into pieces), the intensifying noun is of the same root. In the Malay expressions, the intensifying word is an adjective with a meaning similar to the preceding verb, but not of the same verbal stem or root. We note that the verbs *mencencang* and *memutus* (to which *putus* is related) both convey the idea of “cutting.” Similarly, both the verb “*membunuh*” and the adjective “*mati*” are closely related in meaning. The intensifying adjective does not add new meaning other than to intensify the preceding verb. The next two clauses are also parallel in structure, with adjectives extending the meaning of the original verb. This series of self-inflicted curses are tempered by the hope that the forecoming prophecy may be reversed, with the word “*jua*” providing emphasis to the preceding word.

We note that the four parallel clauses are all the following structure:

“*di* + verbal stem+ *patik* + intensifying adjective

Following this sequence is another request of mercy:

C.3 [p. 3]	<i>Ampun kurnia ke bawah duli telapakan tuanku.</i>	(a) Mercy out of my lord’s kindness to us your servants. (b) Mercy out of my lord’s kindness flowing from thy palm.
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The word “*kurnia*” has been defined as “*pemberian daripada raja sebagai tanda kasih kepada seseorang*” / (a gift from a king as a sign of affection for someone). Perhaps the phrase “*ampun kurnia*” is meant to convey a type of mercy bestowed out of affection for the recipient. As for the word “*telapakan*,” it may be interpreted to mean “*tapak kaki, tapak tangan*”/ (sole of the foot, palm of the hand). The expression “*di bawah telapakan (orang)*” has been interpreted to convey the meaning of “*diperbudak-budakkan orang*”/ (to be enslaved by someone). Perhaps this whole expression may convey the hope that the compassionate mercy from from the king be extended to his servants as suggested by interpretation (a) above. One may also wonder if in an alternative interpretation (b) the image here evoked may be related to the idea of generosity flowing from palm of the sovereign, a common image in Arabic poetry. This solicitation of mercy precedes the statement of the dreadful curse:

C.4	<i>Adapun akan paduka anakanda itu adalah sedikit malangnya iaitu apabila sampai umur paduka anakanda itu dua belas tahun kelak apabila dilihat oleh Yang Dipertuan, nescaya luputlah penglihatan Yang Dipertuan.</i>	As for your majesty's child, there is a little bad news, that is say that when he reaches the age of twelve and when you happen to see him, you will most definitely lose your vision.
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The word “*nescaya*” can be defined as “*tidak boleh tidak*” / (must necessarily). This brings into view the Islamic concept of “*takdir*” / (fate or destiny), a concept of central importance within this narrative.

What is fated to happen necessarily comes to pass:

D.1 [p. 3]	<i>...setelah genap dua belas tahun umurnya Tajū'l-Muluk ... maka dengan kuasa Tuhan melakukan kehendak-Nya ke atas hamba-Nya, maka Tajū'l-Muluk pun meminta hukum kepada bondanya seraya pergi berburu ke dalam hutan ...</i>	Exactly upon reaching the age of twelve, Tajū'l-Muluk, all the while God carries out His will about His servant, Tajū'l-Muluk asks of his mother permission to go hunting in the forest...
D.2.a	<i>Hatta dengan takdir Ilahi pada hari itu juga Baginda Zainu'l-Muluk pun telah keluar berburu dalam hutan itu jua.</i>	By reason of divine fate on the very same day Zainu'l-Muluk goes out on a hunt into the same very forest.
D.2.b	<i>Maka, sesungguhnya benarlah bagai kata arif barang yang tersurat itu masakan dapat dimungkir lagi sabit dengan gurindam di bawah ini:</i>	Indeed, true to the words of the seer, whatever is fated cannot possibly be denied, is unalterable, just as the wise one has stated in the following <i>gurindam</i> :
D.3.a	<i>Jangan banyak fikir-memikir, Takdir tidak dapat dimungkir</i>	Don't spend a lot of time pondering! Fate cannot be denied!
D.3.b	<i>Jangan banyak menaruh khuatir, Miskin itu tentulah fakir.</i>	Don't spend a long time in thought! A poor man is indeed destitute!
D.3.c	<i>Jangan banyak lata-melata, Takdir nan tidak dapat dipeta</i>	Don't spend a lot of time running hither and thither! The constellations of Fate cannot be redrawn!

A poem in Malay termed “*gurindam*” is a poem of successive couplets with each of the two hemistich's rhyming (aa, bb, cc). In this example, the first hemistich of each couplet involves a command to not do something, each of the pattern:

Jangan banyak + verbal clause

The verbs of the first hemistich's of both the first and third couplets are of the following pattern:

Verbal stem + *me*+verbal stem: *fikir-memikir*; *lata-melata*.

This structure with the stem preceding the “*me*” prefix is perhaps indicative of a high linguistic register since it appears to deviate from normal verbal patterns. *Kamus Dewan Edisi Keempat* (n.d.) does not document *lata-melata*, though *melata* is defined as “*menjalar atau merayap (binatang atau tumbuh-tumbuhan seperti ular, kacang, labu, dll)*” / to crawl or creep (animals or plants such as snakes, beans, squash, etc.). In applying this meaning to an animal or human, perhaps the idea of going “hither and thither” in a constantly random change of direction is suggested. Here the prefixing of “*lata*” to “*melata*” is another example of poetic intensification lying without normal verbal structures.

As for the term “*peta*,” one of its definitions is “*lukisan (gambar) yg menunjukkan kedudukan bintang ... di langit*” / (drawing (picture) that shows the positions of stars ... in the sky). The verb *memeta* carries the meaning of “*mebuat peta; melukis peta*” / (make a map; draw a map). One possible interpretation of the last hemistich is that humans cannot make their own star maps reflecting the fates inscribed by the stars.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

One way to make characters come alive is to present their emotions and inner thoughts (Mohamed Nazreen Shahul Hamid et al., 2022). The most fully developed character is Tajū'l-Muluk. There are many scenes that depict his various emotional states, from utter desperation and feeling of loss to moments when he gives himself messages of self-encouragement. We also observe his inner thoughts in his interactions with other characters and the stratagems he devises for influencing others to advance his own objectives.

He demonstrates an uncanny ability to ingratiate himself with others. At the point in the narrative in which Tajū'l-Muluk is wandering in

the forest in rags after his expulsion from Syarqastan and meets up with a *hulubalang* (commanding officer) named Said, he presents himself in the following way:

E.1 [p. 6]	“Adapun nama hamba ini pengembara hutan, fakir miskin, tiada mengetahui siapa ayah bonda hamba dan tiada siapa pula hendak menamai hamba seperti kata gurindam orang tua,	“I have no name. I am just an adventurer in the forest. I am as poor and destitute as can be. I do not even know who my parents are. There is no one to bestow upon me a name, and my life story is just as poets have recounted:
E.2	‘Besar hamba di dalam hutan belantara bergetakan banir kayu.	‘I have grown up in the forest thickets, taking as my bed, roots of the weeping fig tree rising above --
E.3	Bukan banir sebarang banir,	Not just any kind of roots, mind you --
E.4	bahananya sampai ke angkasa dan pada malam berkandilkan bulan nyedar lelap beradu diulitkan oleh siang disuluhkan oleh syamsun, hidup dengan taruk kayu berebut-rebutan dengan kera beruk lotong’	Roots that reach into the heavens! In the evening a moon shines from above while I contently sleep as a king ever so soundly, lullibied by the <i>dewa</i> of the high morning brightened up by a <i>dewa</i> as bright as the sun. I live off the shoots sprouting from the bark of the majestic roots, over which I fight with monkeys galore -- long-tailed, clever-climbing, black-crested alike.’
E.5	Senyampang bertemu tuan, maka dapatlah hamba mengenali orang....”	Now at last upon meeting up with you, my lord, I can get acquainted with my own humankind.

The interpretation of this passage does present several challenges. My interpretation here presented, a personal retelling in English as it were, is far from literal and takes the liberty to try to express in English what might have been the broad intended meaning of the author of these lines. In the first section mention is made of a *gurindam*, whereas no such poem is here presented. Perhaps the word *gurindam* in this passage simply implies the use of poetic language to convey a complex sequence of images stacked one upon the other.

As we know, Tajul-Muluk is a very special individual. Even though he may be dressed in rags, his true extraordinary nature exhibits itself, nonetheless. His upbringing is no common upbringing. It is one worthy to be sung by poets in the most exquisite of imagery. We can imagine the youngster having no comforts, having to take aerial roots such as surround the magnificent fig willow trees known as

“*beringan*” as his bed. In fantastic hyperbolic imagery the roots rising above the earth extend into the heavens. This very image invokes a cosmic element, albeit one hard to physically visualize. At night-time, the moon sheds its gentle light while the youngster sleeps soundly in security, under the care of the cosmic elements.

Here it is as if the very cosmos is nurturing this child. The verb “*beradu*” is a word meaning to sleep in the case of royalty. Though a pauper in appearance, he sleeps as a king. In the care of the cosmic elements the young child can sleep soundly in security. The spirit of the high morning sings lullabies to the child under the rays of a “*syamsun*.” The Arabic word “*shamsun*” with the meaning of a single sun (in distinction to *al-shamsu*, meaning “the sun”), appearing as it is with the indefinite marker “*un*” attached, could refer to an intimate kind of luminary body, perhaps a celestial spirit inhabiting the cosmos.

A series of three consecutive nouns without a coordinating conjunction presents an image of monkeys of several kinds in their abundance and diversity, here distinguished in this translation by the descriptors long-tailed, clever-climbing, and black-crested. All said, this self-description by the hero so moves *hulubalang* Said that he takes him into his care and dresses him up in handsome clothes.

Early in the narrative a wily princess in a kingdom neighboring Sharqastan by the name of Puteri Jenuh Hati ensnares Tajul-Muluk’s elder brothers through guile by beating them successively at rigged chess games and subsequently imprisoning all of them. Wishing to free his brothers, Tajul-Muluk takes the initiative to train himself to be proficient in chess and then tries to find out how Puteri Jenuh Hati is always able to beat her opponents. To learn of her secrets, he then befriends an elderly woman, a *penghulu* who acts as a kind of doorkeeper and confidante of Puteri Jenuh Hati. He ingratiates himself with this grandmotherly *penghulu* at the palace. Though she offers him all her wealth, what he really wants is to find out Puteri Jenuh Hati’s mischievous ruses. He knows how to manipulate the granny’s feelings so that she willingly tells him of Puteri Jenuh Hati’s secret stratagems. With that knowledge he is later able to beat Puteri Jenuh Hati at chess games and to free his brothers.

In this scene (p. 15) Tajul-Muluk simply asks this granny how Puteri Jenuh Hati can win all the chess games she plays. The old woman

refrains from replying until Tajul-Muluk repeats his question. She is unable to further resist (*tidak terdaya lagi*) and asks Tajul-Muluk why he asks. Tajul-Muluk replies that it is just out of curiosity (*Sekadar hamba hendak mengetahui sahaja*). She replies that in divulging that secret that she would be ruined (*dan kita pun binasalah*). To this Tajul-Muluk exclaims, “*Astaghfirullah nenekku! Gilakah hamba hendak membinasakan diri hamba sendiri.*” / (I seek God’s forgiveness, dear granny. So crazy I am, [rather] I would destroy myself!) With this, the granny “*pun tiada berdaya lagi*” / (can no longer hold out) and then divulges Puteri Jenuh Hati’s ruse. At this point in the story, the granny completely falls out of view. The same goes for the preceding characters who help out Tajul-Muluk in his successive quests. These flat characters are only “stepping stones” used by Tajul-Muluk in his quests.

At many points in the narrative Tajul-Muluk, in positive self talk, urges himself to continue his struggle, as we see in Chapter 3. However, after advancing into the forest with his feet injured by thorns, he sits down and says this poem:

F.1 [p. 23]	<i>Ayuhai nasib permintaan badan Sudahlah kecil tiada berdandan Azab di rimba tiada berpadan Laksana beranak tiada berbidan</i>	O for the lot of the body’s needs! So meagre it is with no embellishment! Suffering in the jungle has no match! It is as if giving birth without a midwife!
F.2 [p. 24]	<i>Celaka malangmu sudahlah nyata Singga ayah diri buta Hanyutlah engkau di hutan merata Rasa pilu hutan dewata</i>	The gravity of your misfortune is so real, To the point that you own father has gone blind! Now you are wandering in a vast forest, Full of sorrow in a forest of the <i>jinn</i> .
F.3	<i>Mati engkau seorang diri Haram tak sampai ke tanah peri Mati terkapan onak dan duri Ayahmu di sana betapalah peri</i>	You are dying all alone, Not ever reaching the Fairy Kingdom Your eyes laid bare to the barbs and thorns Your father there, alas for his condition!

This is a poem of three stanzas, each stanza comprising two rhymed couplets unified by a single rhyme within each stanza. The hero begins bewailing the meagreness of the lot apportioned to his physical wellbeing. He compares his suffering to a woman at childbirth with no one to accompany and assist her.

The idea of being alone while suffering is further developed in the second stanza, with the image of wandering in a vast forest inhabited

by spirits, assailed by sadness with no human company. The physical suffering also extends to sorrow felt for his father’s blindness, emotional sadness for the hero and physical suffering for the father.

The idea of loneliness and inability to accomplish his quest, that is, to reach the land of the Fairies, where the cure for his father’s blindness must be found, stands at the beginning of the third stanza. Suffering concretely expressed by the barbs and thorns to which his eyes are laid bare, parallel the suffering of the father enduring the pain of blindness. Of note is the use of the word “*peri*” in two distinct unrelated meanings. Whereas in the first instance, it carries the meaning of “fairy” in the expression “*tanah peri*” / (land of the fairies), in the second perhaps the meaning of condition or state, in reference to the father’s condition or predicament. In a sense, the two uses of “*peri*” allude to a binary opposition, with the land of the fairies the site of the cure in opposition to the suffering with no cure in sight.

After this bout of sadness and hopelessness, Tajū’l-Muluk once again rebounds, addressing himself with these words of self-encouragement:

G.1 [p. 24]	“ <i>Hai Tajū’l-Muluk yang malang. Apakah kesudahannya engkau duduk di sini (dengan) kemalanganmu itu.</i> ”	“O, Tajū’l-Muluk so unfortunate. What is going to happen to you while sitting here with your misfortune?”
G.2	<i>Bangkitlah engkau berjalan sebeberapa kuasamu.”</i>	Rise up and start walking as best as you can!”

With these words of self-encouragement Tajū’l-Muluk crawls (“*merangkak*”) amongst the thorns. His clothes become stained by his body’s blood. He finally emerges from that forest amidst the sun’s light. But just after coming out of that forest, he is welcomed (*disambuti*) by a thicket (*belukar*) inhabited by huge snakes, their mouths gaping wide, their mouths like the door to Hell (*pintu jahanam*), glowing with fire.

At this juncture it is the power of the Lord of the Worlds (*Rabbulalamin*) along with his own efforts (*daya upayanya*) he is freed (*terlepas*) from all those tribulations (*bala bencana*). We note that whereas it ultimately the power of God who releases him, he himself expends the effort.

Freed from these tribulations there seems to appear before him a pitch-black mountain, which upon closer view is none other than a giant

standing tall. This hungry giant pictures Tajul-Muluk as a delicious meal. Yet, Tajul-Muluk’s clever way of presenting himself endears himself to this giant, tapping into his own caring sentiments.

Gathering his courage, Tajul-Muluk first appears to address himself:

H.1 [p. 24]	<i>“Wah, wah sampailah bagai kehendakmu yang jemu daripada hidup ini.</i>	Indeed, [your] time has come, just like your aspirations weary of this life!
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Then Tajul-Muluk directly addresses the giant:

H.2	<i>Hai raksasa, segeralah tuan telan hamba ini kerana kuasa hamba menanggung azab sengsara di dalam dunia yang fana ini.</i>	O giant, gulp me down right now, [lost is] my power to bear the torture and sufferings of this impermanent world
H.3	<i>Ketahuilah kiranya tuan hamba oleh kerana tiada terdaya badan yang kecil ini menanggung percintaan dan hasrat hamba itu, maka datanglah hamba mendapatkan tuan supaya tiadalah sia-sia mati hamba, lamun kenyang perut tuan hamba.</i>	Let it be known, my lord, since my little body cannot bear any longer my love and desire and that I have come to you with the hope that I not die in vain and that my your belly be satisfied!

By exposing his weakness and inviting the giant to take him as a meal, Tajul-Muluk ingratiates himself and moves the heart of the giant to care for him and to take him to his dwelling, like the way he overcomes the granny’s reluctance to divulge Puteri Jenuh Hati’s secret by pretending to wish for his own demise rather than for her to be harmed.

CONCLUSION

We have seen in this narrative how, through the effective use of language, characters are not only able to express their inner emotions but to manipulate the feelings of others. Vivid imagery enhances many of the extraordinary descriptions. The use of binary oppositions on the thematic level reinforces distinctions between characters and on the semantic level lay at the core of many poems. This text demonstrates the translator’s command of Classical Malay literary forms and his ability to compose verse consistent with Malay poetical forms. In

his discussion of this translation, Za'ba (1940, p. 144) commented that since the form of the story was like old classical romances it became a classic in turn, much admired by the Malay reading public. Furthermore, he characterized the style as "natural and spontaneous" and the poetry inserted "charming and rich in poetic imagery," several examples of which have been discussed in this article.

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