

THE SYAIR TABUT OF ENCIK ALI

A Malay account of Muharram at Singapore, 1864

Transcribed and translated by

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ABSTRACT

This is an annotated transcription and translation of the *Syair Tabut* (Poem of the Tomb Effigies) of Encik Ali, a Malay-language, Jawi-script *syair* account of the Muharram commemorations of 1864 at Singapore. The only known part lithograph and part manuscript of this text, on which this edition is based, is held in the library of Leiden University, shelfmark Kl. 191. For a full discussion of this *Syair*, see the accompanying article Lunn and Byl (2017).

KEYWORDS

Malay; Muharram; Singapore; *Syair Tabut*

A note on our translation and transcription

We have opted to leave several terms untranslated throughout the *Syair*. These are:

- *tabut* (طابوٰ/طابوٰ/طابوٰ/طابوٰ) *tabut* (طابوٰ/طابوٰ/طابوٰ/طابوٰ) ‘Arab. The Ark of the Covenant; (Penang only) a Hindu image or processional emblem, = (Singapore) *kudu*’ (Wilkinson 1903: 146). Specifically, it refers to the effigies constructed to represent the tombs of the imams Hasan and Hussein which are paraded during Muharram, known in Sumatra as *tabuik*, in South Asia as *ta‘ziah* (تَعْزِيَةً) (though the use of *tabut* in South Asia is also attested [De Tassy 1995: 53; Sharif 1975: 164], as well as the well known denunciation of Hindu involvement in *tabut* processions by Bal Gangadhar Tilak in the context of the 1894 Ganpati processions [see Cashman 1975: 78, 83–4, citing Bombay Judicial Proceedings]), and in the West Indies as *tadjah*;

- *kudu* (کودو/*kūdū*) ‘II. (Singapore.) A Kling idol’ (Wilkinson 1903: 546). See *tabut* above. Ali uses this apparently specifically Singaporean term interchangeably with *tabut* to refer to the *ta‘ziah*. Wilkinson provides no etymology for the term, and nothing is immediately obvious, though the Tamil உரு (*uru* as image or idol (Winslow 1862: 65) seems a possibility. Further hints of phonetic imprecision come from Hamilton (1922: 95), who stated some two decades later that while *tabut* was used in ‘Penang Malay’, the Singapore equivalent was ‘*rudu*’, again for ‘Kling idol’; this said, at times (e.g. q. 129a), it may refer to the bearers of the effigy;
- *fakir* (فقیر/*faqīr*) a mendicant, or Muslim religious ascetic; it is used by Ali almost exclusively to refer to himself, which is a standard Malay literary trope (the only exceptions are in q. 17d and q. 22b, when he refers to other fakirs; see the note to q. 18b for Ja’far Sharif’s description of Muharram fakirs in South India). Encik Ali also refers to himself as *darwish*/‘dervish’ at several points, in a similarly standard move;
- *bibadal* (بیبادل/*bībādal*) this Persian/Urdu term means ‘without equal/compare; peerless’: see Platts (1884: 201) *bebadal*, s.v. ‘be’; Steingass (1963: 214) s.v. *bī-badal*. In Ali’s *syair*, it seems to refer to a specific individual, or peerless one, connected with the *tabut* party from Kampung Bengkulu; that said, and in a similar way to *kudu*, it can seem perhaps to refer to the effigy itself (e.g. q. 89a). Having encountered no other occurrences of this term in other contemporary Malay texts, and being somewhat unsure of Ali’s specific usage, we find the ambiguity of its untranslatability useful as well as humbling;
- *ringin* (رینگین/*rīngīn*) We are deeply unsure as to the meaning of this word in the context of the *syair*. The closest meaning is *ringin* as a variant of *beringin*, or banyan tree, which has long associations with authority and leadership. That said, while at points the word could refer to an individual or leader, at others it suggests a group or body of men. See the fuller discussion in our accompanying article (Lunn and Byl 2017: XXX).

For a discussion of the terms *gīrūh* (گیروھ) and *jūgī* (جوکی) which, while translated here as ‘squadron’ and ‘battalion’, somewhat interchangeably, have specific Indian/South Asian

etymologies and transmissions, as well as particular importance for this *syair*, see also Lunn and Byl (2017: XXX–XXX).

While we were aiming for a more or less literal translation, at times we have certainly taken some liberties with the original text to give a readable sense for the non-Malay reader; no doubt, this opens up room for other interpretations. Where we have felt that elements of a quatrain or aspects of our translation merit some comment or clarification, or when we have left terms other than those listed above untranslated, the quatrain number is marked with an asterisk, and our notes are at the end of the text.

For transcribing the Jawi text, we have not opted for a precise, diacritic-laden transliteration from the Jawi: if a word is present in current standard Malay, we give its standard roman form (hence: *fakir* rather than *faqīr*, *kisah* rather than *qīṣah*, etc.); if not, we give a standardised transcription in the main text, using diacritics in our endnotes, along with Jawi, where pertinent. We have also chosen to spell out fully duplications denoted by the scribe with ‘ၢ’ rather than use ‘2’. Where we have conjectured possible readings of unclear text, this is enclosed by <>; where the text is particularly indecipherable, an ellipsis or any attempted reading of the script is enclosed by ><. We use the same marking in our translation where it is particularly tenuous or incomplete.¹

1	<i>Dengarkan tuan suatu kisah Bulan Muharram empunya termasa Syair dikarang melempar jasa Dengarkan juga dewa angkasa</i>	Hear, sir, a story about A festival of the month of Muharram A poem written as a service – God of the sky, listen as well
2	<i>Fakir nan bebal bukannya ahli Fakir bernama Enchik Ali Bantuan Sheikh Muhammad Ali Putera oleh anak Benggali</i>	From an ignorant <i>fakir</i> , not an expert A <i>fakir</i> named Mister Ali Assistant to Sheikh Muhammad Ali Son of one of Bengali descent
3	<i>Fakir Ali anak Bangkahulu Mengarang syair ceritera kudu Rencananya janggal banyak terlalu Pinta dibaiki tuan selalu</i>	Ali the <i>fakir</i> is a son of Bengkulu Writing into a poem a story of <i>kudu</i> His narrative is exceedingly awkward He hopes the listener will improve it as it goes
4*	<i>Enchik Muhammad Hassan pendita jauhari</i>	Mister Muhammad Hassan is a religious scholar

¹ Readers may consult a facsimile of the *Syair*, available as an online resource on *Indonesia and the Malay World*'s webpage at <xxxx>

- 1 *Kertas dihampar seraya dimustari
Membentang nasihah dengan gemari
Menurunkan syair suatu peri*
- 5 *Al-kisah tuan dengarkan
Rencananya tabut kami uraikan
Barang dilihat kami wartakan
Sekadar peringatan kami pohonkan*
- 6 *Kami nan bodoh tambahan muda
Mengarang syair penglipur gundah
Bukannya ahli bijak pun tiada
Kiasan rencana fakir bermadah*
- 7* *Demi terbit bulan Muharram
Masyawaratlah sekalian anak Baharam
Kudu perbuat rebana berderam
Bunyinya laksana harimau menderam*
- 8 *Ada yang menyerikan juginya
Ada pula melengkapkan giruhnya
Masing-masing perbuat permainannya
Riuhan rendah bunyi bahananya*
- 9 *Akan juga giruh maktabar
Merekalah dahulu yang keluar
Sepanjang jalan berbanjar-banjar
Ada yang menuju ke rumah saudagar*
- 10* *Demikianlah hal sekalian permainan
Kiasnya juga kami khabarkan
Jika ghalat tuan mengapakan
Aturan yang janggal tuan sajukkan*
- 11* *Malam kesepuluh demi kelihatan
Habis dihias labu dan pekan
Tunggul panji-panji pun didirikan
Pangkat nan kudu pun dikenakan*
- 12* *Cahaya masal teranglah amat
Tasa dipalu teramat sangat
Salli Allah ali Muhammad
Habis berkampung sekaliannya umat*
- 13* *Meriam berbunyi pukul delapan
Kudu borak pun kelihatan
Enchik Miskin orangnya sopan
Membuat kudu sangatlah tampan*
- 14* *Di rumah rajab ia terhenti
Tabut kedua ia ternanti
Rajab itu <benak/nek> >b-kh-t-i?/m-n-h-t-i?<
Kudunya pun sudahlah pasti*
- 15 *Sekonyong-konyong tampak kelihatan*
- The paper was spread and the auspicious time fixed
He loves preaching, spreading advice
Setting down a story in poetry
- Sir, do hear the tale
And we will recount the narrative of the *tabut*
All that we witnessed, we will report
Wishing it to serve as an example
- We, not only ignorant but young as well,
Compose a poem to ease sadness
Not expert – not even wise –
The *fakir* recites the tale as parable
- At the rising of the moon of Muharram
All the people of Baharam gathered together
They built the *kudu* and beat the frame drum
With its sound like the roar of a tiger
- There were those making their squadron radiant
And those putting the final touches on their regiment
Everyone made their own entertainments:
Uproar, the noise of the din.
- The exalted squads and battalions
They would be the ones who issued forth first
All along the road the people stood in lines
Some going towards the merchant's house
- Such was the case in all the performances
We will also report the lessons learnt
If there are mistakes, sir, do something about them
If the rhymes are awkward, sir, improve them
- On the tenth night it was seen at once
That bay and market were awash in decoration
The poles and flags were raised
And the order of the *kudu* determined
- The light of the multitude shone so brightly
The drum was beaten with utmost force
Bless Allah and the household of Muhammad!
The believers all gathered together in a crowd
- The cannon sounded just at eight o'clock
And the *kudu* of the *buraq* became visible
Mister Miskin of the polite manners
Fashioned the very fine *kudu*
- It stopped at the house of honour
To wait for the second *tabut*
>Honour ... mind<
The *kudu* was all in readiness
- All of a sudden there was clearly seen

- Terang benderang sebelah selatan
Bendera merah kibaran bukan buatan
Tempik dan sorak bersahut-sahutan
- A brilliant light in the south
The red flags were waving wildly
Shouts and cheers were exchanged
- 16* *Itulah dia bendera merah*
Orang Dubi sangat gembira
Mereka berseru tiada terkira
Memenat lawannya dengan amarah
- There it is! The red flag!
The Dhobies were very glad
Without a doubt, they were really shouting
Tiring their opponents with angry passion
- 17* *Adalah pula suatu pasukan*
Panji-panji putih ia dirikan
Bahasa Benggali giruh dinamakan
Merekalah fakir Halaq al-Manan
- A battalion was there as well
They hoisted their white flags
It was called a *giruh* in Bengali
And they were the *fakirs* of Halqah al-Mannan
- 18* *Gagahnya mereka tiada terperi*
Singgahlah durinya Malik al-Bahri
Di tengah jalan mereka berdiri
Menantikan ringin kelak hampiri
- Their toughness was beyond all telling
And Malik al-Bahri forgot his troubles
They stood in the middle of the road
Waiting for the *ringin* to approach
- 19* *Demi merinyu melihat lakunya*
Mereka tiada membilang lawannya
Disuruh berjalan dengan segeranya
Dihadapan ringin nan angkatannya
- At that time the inspector was watching their actions
They didn't even count their opponents
They were told to move immediately
As they were now face to face with the the *ringin*
- 20* *Ringin melihat sangatlah marah*
Seraya berseru bibadal barua
Disahut bibadal dengan segera
Kamu nan Dubi daku Tok Betara
- The *ringin* looked very angry
And [they] shouted, 'the *bibidal* is a pimp!'
The *bibadal* responded immediately:
'You are a Dhoby; I am the *Tok Betara*'
- 21 *Nabi Muhammad empunya syafa'at*
Tabut kedua nan terangkat
Bunyi-bunyian dipalu teramat sangat
Keluar pintu dengannya bangat
- Through the blessed help of the Prophet Muhammad
The second *tabut* was lifted up
The music was played with terrible force
And burst out of the door
- 22 *Dengar tuan fakir khabarkan*
Kudu nan buyung fakir saingkan
Kisah nan itu fakir ringkaskan
Barang maklum tuan dengarkan
- Hear, oh sir, this *fakir* narrate
And stage for you the match of the youths' *kudus*
This *fakir* will summarise the story
Whatever I tell you, sir, listen to it
- 23 *Pasukan budak tiada terkira*
Berjalan dahulu dengan gembira
Sambil berseru ringin barua
Tersemput-semput dengan amarah
- Teams of countless youths
Happily moved along at the front
They kept shouting 'the *ringin* is a pimp!'
With anger bursting through
- 24* *Adalah pula suatu pahlawan*
Gagah berani tiada terlawan
Jika bagai Indra bangsawan
Sukar menentang panglima artawan
- And there was a warrior
Strong, brave and unbeatable
Even an Indra Bangsawan
Would find it hard to fight the wealthy commander
- 25 *Pasukan kedua dengarkan tuan*
Ikatan perangnya bernama sampan
Tiga buah pilang diperbuatkan
Tembur biola ia palukan
- The second team, listen, sir,
Was a battle group named 'boat'
They had made three wooden poles
And they played the drum and violin
- 26 *Suku Pulau Pinang sampan pertama*
- The people from Penang were in the first boat

- 15 *Mereka menari sangat utama
Biola digesek orang Burma
Ia nan juga jadi panglima*
And they danced with the finest skill
The violin was played by a Burmese
He too had become a general
- 27 *Lancang kedua kumpulan Kling
Hitam berkilat bagai japarling
Cerdik mereka bagaikan maling
Menang Musa tiada berpaling*
The second boat was the Kling team
Shining black like starling birds
They were cunning like thieves
Musa won without looking back
- 28* *Dengarkan pula suatu peri
Lancang yang akhir sangat bahari
Gendang serunai rebab nafiri
Dipalu mereka tiada terperi*
Now hear the story of
The last boat, very seaworthy
Drum, shawm, bowed lute and trumpet
How they played them all is beyond telling
- 29 *Itulah pasukan anak Bangkahulu
Elok majelis sangat terlalu
Biola digesek tambur dipalu
Seraya berseloka berbagai lagu*
That troop was the sons of Bengkulu
They were astoundingly handsome
The violin was bowed and the drum beaten
Followed by sung poetry to a variety of tunes
- 30 *Seorang gagah lagi sakti
Tubuhnya hitam sangatlah pati
Ialah menjadi panglima Ranti
Barang melihat dihentak hati*
A brave and spiritually powerful person
His body was the essence of black
He became the general of Ranti
The heart of anyone who saw him was struck
- 31 *Suaranya besar teramat sangat
Sekalian menang memberi dahsyat
Ayuh ya tuan dengarkan sejabat
Kisahnya kudu fakir beriwayat*
His voice was incredibly loud
Even as he won he inspired terror and awe
Come on sir, hear as well
The story of the *kudu* which this *fakir* narrates
- 32* *Angkatan ketiga jugi nan itu
Budak berdua menarilah tentu
Biduanda beryanyi sangatlah mutu
Merdunya bagai buluh di perindu*
As for the third squadron, in that group
Two young boys danced
And a court singer sang exceedingly well
With the melodiousness of wind over bamboo
- 33 *Seorang Siam menggesek biola
Terlalulah elok Subhanallah
Paras nan bagai intan kemala
Sayang sedikit sudah tercelah*
A Siamese played the violin
Glorious is God! it was too beautiful
His visage was like a shining diamond
A pity, a small part of it had a flaw
- 34* *Seorang Kling konon ketuanya
Peranakkkan Melayu serjuginya
Warna nan kawi akan pakaiannya
Saf sakhlat posyak penarinya*
The leader was said to be a Kling
And all in the squadron were mixed-Malay
They were clothed in red-brown colour
The dancers were clothed in white and scarlet cloth
- 35* *Subhanallah ajaib sekali
Anak malah menjamah Benggali
Lagu Jawi mereka tinggali
Bahasa Benggali mereka wakili*
Praise be to God! Amazing!
The children actually touched the Bengalis
They left out the Jawi song
Exhibiting the Bengali language
- 36* *Hairan tercengang rasa ku tuan
Menang suara sekalian biduan
Berbaik gerindam sangat siluan
Tukang biola mabuk cendawan*
Sir, I was struck with awe
All the singers were peerless
The rhyming of the couplets was very demure
The violin player was intoxicated by mushrooms

- 37 *Tuan nan jangan syak di hati*
Fakir berdua telah amati
Seorang gemuk cenderawati
Darvish nan za'if sangat apiti
- 38* *Giruh nan itu pasukan keempat*
Membuang matagi terlompat-lompat
Pakaian putih mereka nan sifat
Seorang Kling memwaripi tempat
- 39 *Giruh nan itu suatu permainan*
Rajin bermain bukan buatan
Ke kiri digoyang bersahut-sahutan
Bertempik bagai pungguk di hutan
- 40* <*Olahan/Olehnya*> *seorang bersuara*
Membilang adalat tidak terkira
Tengking herdik bagaikan marah
Memberi sekalian hati gembira
- 41* *Berdua pula bermain mataki*
Elok majelis tidak terperi
Bagai merak mengigil diri
Seketika ke kanan sebentar ke kiri
- 42* *Berdua konon khalifahnya*
Seorang peranakan menjadi ketuanya
Ke sana sini derma dipohonnya
Demikianlah hal konon permainannya
- 43* *Ama ba'adu kemudian direndanya*
Tabut ketiga sama eloknya
Kudu nan borak sama tengahnya
Kudu kedua akan pengiringnya
- 44 *Ketua masing-masing kudu nan itu*
Terlari-lari tiada bertentu
Jika terjumpa kereta di situ
Seraya dipukul melempar batu
- 45 *Adapun akan tabut nan ringin*
Laksana ayam beroleh dingin
Misal nan gula ditutup angin
Haram sekali tiada ku ingin
- 46 *Akan jugi dan giruhnya*
Ke Singapura didapatkannya
Oleh yang demikian sunyi kudunya
Tambahan minyak kekurangan padanya
- 47 *Permainan di sana itulah tuan*
Budak-budak bertempik bagai haiwan
Minta bibadal dia bangsawan
Sumbah seranah tiada ketahuan
- Sir, let there be no doubt in your heart
The *fakir* has observed both
A plump and fair lady
Completely crushed this frail dervish
- That squad was the fourth
Tossing the effigy around
Their white clothes showed their quality
A Kling enlivened the place
- That squad was a game
that they played like serious business
They swayed altogether to the left
Calling back and forth like owls in the forest
- And there was person making a speech
<Considering justice without number>
Scolding and shouting as if in anger
Making everyone glad
- Two of them were performing with the effigy
It was beautiful and charming beyond telling
Like a peacock ruffling itself
A moment to the right, then a while to the left
- They both acted as *khalifahs*
A man of mixed parentage became the leader
He asked for donations here and there
That's the way it's said to have happened
- As for what comes next, let's detail the rest
The third *tabut* was equally lovely
The *kudu* of the Buraq was in the middle
The second *kudu* accompanied it
- Each of the leaders of the *kudus*
Ran around without any direction
If they came across the cart there
It would be beaten and pelted with stones
- And then there was the *tabut* of the *ringin*
Like a chicken in the cold
Imagine sugar blown by the wind
It's totally forbidden; I have no desire for it
- The squadron and the battalion
Were heading towards Singapore
That is why their *kudu* were so quiet
Although they were short of oil
- That was how it was over there, sir:
Boys were shouting like animals
Asking the *bibadal* to be noble [?]
Swearing and cursing, out of their minds

- 48 *Dastar mereka kain nan merah
Ia bertempik tiada berkira
Tabak kecuali Dubi angkara
Gemar sekali membuat pura*
Their headcloths were made of red cloth
They were shouting without care
With the exception of the brutal Dhoby *tabut* party
They really like to put on airs
- 49 *Masing-masing mereka memegang kayu
Hendak memukul anak Melayu
Tengking herdik mendayu-dayu
Laksana pohon dipuput bayu*
Each of them held a wooden stick
And wanted to beat the Malay boys
Carrying on upbraiding and shouting
Like a tree blown down by the wind
- 50 *Angkatan kedua ikan diperbuatkan
Itulah mereka permainkan
Dalam rangkanya dian dipasangkan
Gilang gemilang warnanya ikan*
The second group made a fish
That was the subject of their masquerade
Inside its frame a lantern was lit
The fish's colours dazzled and sparkled
- 51* *Setelah itu baharulah kudu
Elok majelis sangat terlalu
Seri ba[ha]ri tabut Bangkahulu
Gagah berani tiada mendahulu*
And after that came the *kudu*
Its beauty was very fine
Shining with nobility, the *tabut* of Bengkulu
Brave and tough without precedent
- 52 *Itupun tiada boleh dikata
Sudah adat dengan perintah
Bibadal dahulu warta
Kompeni Inggeris empunya titah*
Indeed, they were not allowed to speak
This was long the custom backed by law
The *bibadal* said first
'By order of the English Company'
- 53* *Jika kedua hendak berkuasa
Sama juga keduanya rias[a]
Kompeni juga yang sangat terasa
Dipuput ribut masakan merasa*
If both want to be in charge
Both must be equally adorned'
The Company's presence was very much felt
Even a strong wind would not make them anxious
- 54 *Tapi jika Kampung Bangkahulu
Dubi jua beroleh malu
Di mana bertemu beroleh palu
Makar dibuat anak Melayu*
But if it were to be Kampung Bengkulu
The Dhobies would begin to feel shame
Wherever they met they'd get punched
The Malays would play tricks
- 55 *Shahadan dengarkan tuan
Akan ceritera perarakar
Di tepi laut dikelilingkan
Bunga api pun dipasangkan*
Then sir, do hear,
The story of the procession
At the seaside they would carry it around
The fireworks were then set off
- 56 *Apabila di Kampung Gelam sampai nan kudu
Mereka menta sangat terlalu
Shar Khan hendak dipalu
Kerana ketuanya diam di situ*
When the *kudu* reached Kampung Gelam
Their excitement was beyond bounds
Shar Khan was sure to be beaten
Because his leader lived there
- 57 *Ayuh ya encik-encik dengarkan tuan
Akan hal sekalian perempuan
Hilang malu lupanya nan sopan
Lenyaplah budi akal pengetahuan*
Now come on, sirs, and listen
To something about the women
Modesty was lost, courtesy forgotten
Mind, thought and knowledge disappeared
- 58 *Di antara laki-laki ia menyamar
Selendang pelangi terkibar-kibar
Tempuh menempuh tiada gentar
Nyiur gading dipegang tiada nan gusar*
They were disguised amongst the men
With rainbow scarves set flying
Fearlessly moving amidst the crush
Their white coconuts grasped, and they didn't mind

- 59 *Sahabat fakir ia langgari*
Aduh tuan ia berperi
Tiada sengaja gerangan diri
Janganlah murka dia bestari
- 60 *Perempuan rakyat banyak tiada terperi*
Sepanjang jalan terdiri
Ke tepi pantai sampan dicari
Berteriak bagai dewa dan pari
- 61 *Pakaian berbagai-bagai dengarkan tuan*
Rupa sama tiada ketahuan
Bau nan harum bagai cendawan
Demikianlah halnya wahai bangsawan
- 62 *Kain atlas akan bajunya*
Terendak akan tudungnya
Penyapu lantai ikatan kainnya
Panca logam akan jalannya
- 63 *Hai tuan dengarkan*
Perarakan siang fakir tamatkan
Qasad nan siang darwish khabarkan
Kepada tuan pinta dicamkan
- 64 *Bintang nan pun belum padam cahayanya*
Margasatwa pun belum mencari mangsanya
Tunggul panji-panji pun didirikannya
Laksana berperang pula rupanya
- 65* *Tasa nan berbunyi berderam*
Barang menang naiklah geram
Sekalian nona anak Baharam
Memasak tiada bergaram
- 66* *Oleh hati tiada ketahuan*
Tambahan kurnia tiada kelihatan
Puwada nan di dalam silu-siluan
Kelam kabutlah barang perbuatan
- 67* *Permainan banyak sangat terlalu*
Sepanjang jalan bertalu-talu
Dengar tuan bulang nan ulu
Akan sekalian perawan yang malu
- 68 *Dinding nan habis dikoreknya*
Akan permainan hendak dilihatnya
Bondanya datang lalu dipukulnya
Karena nasi hangus rupanya
- 69* *Lauk hangus nasi nan mentah*
Oleh mendengar bunyinya konta
Hati nan gundah tiada terkata
Sayangnya mereka di dalam perintah
- This *fakir*'s friend was knocked over
'Oh sir,' she said
'I did not do it on purpose
Don't get angry'; she was polite
- I won't talk about the ordinary women
Standing all along the road
Up to the beach to spy out the boats
Shouting like gods and spirits
- Hear sir, about their different types of clothing
No two of them alike in appearance
So sweet smelling like mushrooms
This was how it was, oh noble ones
- Their dresses was made of satin cloth
Sun hats covered their heads
They tied their lengths of cloth in a broom fold
Processing along in a riot of colour
- Oh sirs, listen
The *fakir* tells of the day's processions
The dervish will tell of the purpose of the day
It is for you, sir, to please rectify
- The star had yet to dim its light
When the bird began to search for its prey
The poles and flags were erected
And now it looked like war
- The drum began to beat loudly
Whoever won increased in anger
All the young girls of the people of Baharam
Cooking without salt
- For a heart that does not know its mind
Even a new gift goes unnoticed
The ceremonial floor cloth was coyly hiding inside
Whatever they did was in a dark haze
- There were so many performances
Making a lot of noise along the length of the road
Hear, sirs, about the dear ones
About the shy maidens
- The wall was utterly filled with holes
Because they wanted to see the games
Their mothers came and beat them
Because their rice had burnt
- The dishes burned while the rice was left raw
Just from hearing the sound of the gossip
Their hearts became unbearably excited
A pity they were bound to duty

- 70 *Jugi dan giruh sepanjang jalan
Bermainlah ia ayuhai tuan
Seluruh rumah mereka berkenalan
Teranglah alam disinar bulan*
The squads and the battalion along the road
Please play [for us], sirs
They became acquainted with all of the households
The earth brightens illuminated by the moon
- 71 *Luput riwayat terbit cerita
Kisahnya tabut fakir berkata
Ayuh ya tuan dengar berita
Perarakan siang empunya warta*
One story ends and another begins
The *fakir* tells the tale of the *tabut*
Come then, sir, and hear the news
The report on the midday procession
- 72 *Adapun akan nona bayaperi
Akan keretanya disuruh cari
Demi kenaikan telah terperi
Baharu hati rasa gemari*
And then there was a female merchant
Told to go look for her cart
As soon as the vehicle < ... >
Only then was her heart happy
- 73 *Selipar dipakai syal dicapai
Naik kereta duduk mengintai
Ada yang separuh ke tepi pantai
Nantikan kuda kelak nan sampai*
She wore sandals and clasped a shawl
And got into the cart, then sat there peeping
Half of them went to the shore
Waiting for the horse that would soon arrive
- 74 *Pukul dua belas meriam ditembakkan
Kudunya mereka di siapkan
Sekalian kuli dikampungkan
Tabutnya ringin dahulu diangkatkan*
At twelve o'clock the cannon was fired
And they made the *kudus* ready
All the workers were gathered together
The *ringin*'s *tabut* was the first to be raised aloft
- 75 *Kudunya ringin telah kelihatan
Elok majelis bukan buatan
Akan orangnya sangat berpatutan
Melihat bibadal sangat ketakutan*
The *ringin*'s *kudu* was visible
Its beauty and elegance were unmistakable
And the people were very comely
In throes of awe they watched the *bibadal*
- 76 *Ringin berjalan di Kampung Bangkahulu
Sekalian yang gagah berjalan dahulu
Pusta bibadal sangat terlalu
Orang melihat pun bertalu-talu*
The *ringin* walked in Kampung Bengkulu
And all the strong men walked in front
The *bibadal*'s boat was something to behold
There were endless people watching
- 77 *Kepada merinyu bibadal dapatkan
Kudu ketiga disuruh angkatkan
Perintahnya itu mereka turutkan
Tabut ketiga mereka arakkan*
The *bibadal* approached the inspector
He ordered them to hoist the third *kudu*
They followed his orders
And carried the third *tabut*
- 78 *Bendera putih orang mulia
Berjalan dahulu suka ria
Panji-panji yang merah tiada berdaya
Hendak dahulu tiada upaya*
The white flag of the splendid people
Was moving ahead joyously
The red flags were exhausted
Incapable of being in front
- 79 *Ajaib fakir tiada terperi
Habislah berhimpun isi negeri
Rumah tangga anak isteri
Tiada diendahkan dia bahari*
Miraculous! beyond the *fakir*'s telling
The gathering emptied out the entire district
Households, children and wives
Were ignored, O nobles
- 80 *Khalayak berjalan tiada terkira
Bertempik melompat dengan gembira
Habislah labu naik ke udara
Dengarkan tuan fakir bersuara*
Countless people walking
Shouting and jumping in joy
The entire bay went up into the sky
Listen sir, to the *fakir*'s voice

- 81 *Perarakan siang sebagai silam*
Tiada fakir berpanjang kalam
Ayuh ya Tuhan Khaliq al-Alam
Mumin berperang dengan Islam
- 82 *Suatu lagi dengarkan tuan*
Akan hal perempuan berjalan
Di bawah kudu berhimpun artawan
Itulah pula orang bangsawan
- 83 *Demikianlah hal perarakan silam*
Mencari terang cuaca yang kelam
Pukul dua belas tengah malam
Suramlah rupa cahaya nilam
- 84 *Setelah kudu dimasukkannya*
Mereka sekalian pulang ke rumahnya
Masing-masing pasukan pertempatnya
Baharu terkenang anak isterinya
- 85 *Al-kisah dengarkan tuan*
Hal Singapura fakir khabarkan
Huru hara tiada ketahuan
Sebagai orang mabuk cendawan
- 86 *Fakir nan tiada ke Singapura*
Takutlah fakir mem[b]uat pura
Oleh menang mereka bercura
Entah pun benar entah angkara
- 87 *Pada malam sepuluh nan hari*
Kudu ringin dikeluari
Elok majelis tiada terperi
Bibadal jua menyesal diri
- 88* *Di jalan bibadal diarakkan*
Kampung Susu fakir namakan
Tabut bibadal ia tanggalkan
Berjalan dahulu ia niatkan
- 89 *Demi bibadal sudahlah lepas*
Ringin nan itu datang merampas
Masyur Khan mereka habis dipapas
Laksana jerat sudahlah bingkas
- 90 *Duit andil pelita tembaga*
Pajoh emas serbanika
Sekalian itu disamun belaka
Tiada sekali menakut mereka
- 91 *Ayuhai tuan lihat termasa*
Shar Khan bibadal telah binasa
Merinyu seorang empunya jasa
Kepada ringin diberi sentosa
- The procession made the day seem like night
The *fakir* will not write much longer
Come then God, Creator of the World
The Believers are fighting for Islam
- Sir, hear another one
About the ways that women walk
Below the *kudu* the wealthy congregate
Those are the people of noble birth
- This is the story of the evening's procession
Looking for light in gloomy weather
Twelve o'clock at night
The light of the diamond was dimmed
- After the *kudu* was brought inside
Everybody went home to their houses
Each troop in their proper place
Only then did they remember their wives and children
- Sir, hear the story
The *fakir* is telling about Singapore
There was untold chaos
As when a person is intoxicated with mushrooms
- This *fakir* didn't go to Singapore
and so is afraid of telling a lie
After winning they made jokes
Who knows if they are true or false
- On the night of the tenth day
The *ringin*'s *kudu* was taken out
It was beautiful beyond telling
The *bibadal* also felt repentant
- The *bibadal* paraded on the street
That the *fakir* calls Kampung Susu
The *bibadal*'s *tabut* was detached
He wished to move it first
- As soon as the *bibadal* was released
The *ringin* came and took it
Their own Masyur Khan was utterly robbed
Like an empty trap that has been sprung
- The charity money and brass lamps
Guzzling up all sorts of gold
All of it was robbed in its entirety
But it did not faze them
- Come on, sir, and see what happened
The *bibadal* of Shar Khan was utterly destroyed
One of the inspectors was responsible
While he left the *ringin* in peace

- 92 *Gagahnya ringin bukan buatan
Mengharu bibadal bagai Syaitan
Fakir pula barulah ketakutan
Rasa nan hendak lari ke hutan*
The strength of the *ringin* was beyond question
He fought the *bibadal* like the Devil
It was then that this *fakir* was afraid
And felt like running into the jungle
- 93 *Halnya bibadal tuan dengarkan
Dari atas rumah batu dilemparkan
Merinyu seorang mereka tujuhan
Kena di bahunya lalu direjamkan*
Sir, listen to what happened with the *bibadal*
Stones were thrown from top of the houses
They were aiming at the single inspector
And hit his shoulder, and carried on stoning him
- 94 *Sebuah batu kena padanya
Pedang dipegang dihunuskannya
Kepada ringin lalu dititahnya
Memukul bibadal yang disuruhnya*
One stone hit him
And he grabbed and unsheathed his sword
He then commanded the *ringin*
To hit the *bibadal* was what he ordered
- 95 *Merinyu itu sangatlah garang
Ke rumah bibadal disuruhnya serang
Oleh malam terang benderang
Kehilatanlah bagai orang berperang*
The inspector was very fierce
He ordered the attack of the *bibadal*'s house
By the bright night
It looked as if people were at war
- 96 *Ajaib sekali subhanallah
Laksana berperang sabilillah
Merinyu seorang empunya olah
Maka mereka hendak beralah*
Praise to God! it was a wonder
As if in battle in the way of Allah
It was all the doing of the inspector
So that they willingly surrendered
- 97* *Beberapa orang dipukulnya
Kemudian pula lalu ditangkapnya
Kepada mata-mata diserahkannya
Kira-kira seratus perbilangananya*
He beat up a few people
In the end they were all arrested
He turned them over to the policemen
In total, around a hundred
- 98 *Sekalian itu bibadal belaka
Merinyu seorang empunya jenaka
Haram sekali tiada disangka
Suap diambil berhati suka*
Every single one of them was of the *bibadal*'s party
The inspector alone was having fun
The situation unexpectedly took an illegal turn
Bribes were taken with delight
- 99 *Tua dan tempang sekaliannya itu
Orang melihat permainan kudu
Mereka sekalian ditangkapnya tentu
Ajaib pula fakir di situ*
Both the old and the disabled
The people who watched the play of the *kudu*
All of them were surely arrested
The *fakir* felt astonished
- 100 *Demikianlah zalim diperbuatnya
Di pasiban agong ditutupnya
Perarakan kudu pun ditahannya
Ringin Jawa yang dikejarnya*
What he did was really cruel
He held them at the main station
He halted the *kudu* procession
And chased the Javanese *ringin*
- 101 *Setelah selesai pergaduhan
Mereka itu bersunguh bagai tabuhan
Ya Allah ayuhai Tuhan
Orang menganiyaya tiada tertahan*
After the brawl ended
They were buzzing like hornets
Oh Allah, woe is me, oh God!
No one could stand their tyranny
- 102 *Halnya bibadal tuan dengarkan
Shar Khan ringin pula dipecahan
Kisah nan itu fakir ringkaskan
Entah pun ia entah pun bukan*
Hear sir the condition of the *bibadal*
Both Shar Khan and the *ringin* were broken
The *fakir* summarises the story
Unsure if it's true or false

- 103 *Qudrat Tuhan Khaliq al-Alam*
Tamatlah ceritera perarakaran silam
Pukul nan dua tengah malam
Tabut nan sudah masuk ke dalam
- 104 *Setelah itu dengarkan warta*
Kelam kabut larinya kereta
Kuda nan penat saisan berbantah
Tuan yang naik keras perintah
- 105 *Sebermula tuan dengarkan*
Rencana yang lain fakir uraikan
Khabaran orang fakir wartakan
Entah ia entah pun bukan
- 106 *Singapura empunya kisah*
Di Teluk Ayer sangat termasa
Berebut kudu penglempar jasa
Mereka berkelahi sangat kuasa
- 107 *Setelah berbunyi pukul dua*
Datanglah merinyu mencari ketua
Tabut kedua disuruhnya bawa
Engganlah bibadal takut kecawa
- 108 *Ketua berkata ayuhai tuan*
Tabut yang satu belum ketahuan
Jika ia keluar kami berkawan
Pinta dititahkan dia bangsawan
- 109 *Kembalilah merinyu dengan bangat*
Kudu yang satu dikerahnya sangat
Akan mereka tiada sabahat
Takut dipalu ringin yang jahat
- 110 *Marahlah merinyu bukan buatan*
Kudu ringin disuruh angkatkan
Perintahnya itu mereka kabulkan
Ke Kampung Susu kudu diarakkan
- 111 *Demi sampai kudu di situ*
Akan bibadal direjamnya batu
Kain minyak bernyalalah tentu
Seraya dilempar ke kudu nan itu
- 112 *Api nan itu mereka padamkan*
Kepada merinyu mereka sampaikan
Gusarnya merinyu tiada terperikan
Memukul bibadal ia titahkan
- 113 *Ajaib fakir Subhanallah*
Mumin dengan Islam bersabilillah
Kepada maksiat mereka beralah
Gemarlah pula perbuat olah
- Power of God Creator of the World
Here ends the story of the evening's processions
Two o'clock at night
The *tabut* had moved inside
- Listen to what happened after that
The cart moved chaotically
The horses were tired and the driver cross
The gentleman riding on top giving harsh orders
- Hear sir, thus it began
The *fakir* describes the other narrative
I am now reporting hearsay
Unsure whether it is true or not
- Now for a tale of Singapore
What happened at Telok Ayer was really something
Jostling the *kudu* to gain position
They began quarrelling fiercely
- After two o'clock sounded
The inspector arrived looking for the leader
He ordered the second *tabut* to be carried
The *bibadal* refused, afraid of being hurt
- The leader said, 'Come on sir,
Nobody knows where the first *tabut* is
If the *kudu* comes out, we would be friendly
I'm begging you to do as ordered by this noble man'
- The inspector quickly returned
The first *kudu* was asked to move
Between them there was no conspiracy
They were afraid of being beaten by the bad *ringin*
- The inspector was really very angry
The *kudu* of the *ringin* was ordered to be carried away
They followed his orders
and paraded the *kudu* towards Kampung Susu
- Just as the *kudu* reached the place
They threw rocks at the *bibadal*
An oiled cloth was lit on fire
And then they threw it at the *kudu*
- They put out the fire
And sent word to the inspector
The inspector was angered beyond telling
He ordered the beating of the *bibadal*
- Dear God! the *fakir* was in awe
The Believers fought for Islam in the cause of Allah
They gave in to wickedness
And did whatever they pleased

- 114* *Berkelahi nan itu laksana perang
Sebagai ayam naik gembirang
Pulang ke rumah baharulah girang
Baharulah sesal mereka menyerang*
The skirmishing was like a war
Fired up like cocks eager to fight
Only when returning home, happy,
Did they regret their attacks
- 115 *Kisah nan itu fakir ringkaskan
Barang maklum tuan bacakan
Sekadar kias darvish rencanakan
Akan peringatan gharib pohonkan*
The *fakir* summarises the story
For you to comprehend and read
The dervish recounts it as but a tale of instruction,
This *gharib* begs you to take it as a memorial
- 116* *Takutlah fakir berbuat pura
Kerana tidak ke Singapura
Sekadar menang orang bercura
Mohonlah fakir membuat angkara*
The *fakir* is afraid of fabrication
As he did not go to Singapore
Even as they won, people were jesting
Asking me to commit a wrongdoing
- 117 *Ajaib fakir bukan buatan
Mereka berkelahi sebagai Syaitan
Merinyu seorang empunya hasutan
Maka demikian jadi perbuatan*
The *fakir* was truly amazed
They were quarrelling like the Devil
The inspector himself provoked them
And that is why it turned into a scene
- 118 *Kedua pihak sama beraninya
Kompeni Inggeris tiada diendahnya
Palu memalu sama keduanya
Ditangkap Kompeni seraya ditutupnya*
Both sides were equally brave
They ignored the English Company
Both were beating each other
And were caught by the Company and arrested
- 119 *Tabut Bangkahulu empunya kisah
Mengarak kudu dengan termasa
Kudu ringin putuslah asa
Hendak mendahului tiada kuasa*
The story of the Bengkulu *tabut*
Is of a *kudu* paraded with joy
But the *ringin*'s *kudu* party was without hope
Without energy left to lead
- 120 *Akan permainan jangan dikata
Sebagai <sehari?> malam empunya warta
Ramainya khalayak tiada terderita
Melihat perarak usungan dewata*
The game was beyond words
Like the story of the night
The crush of people was unbearable
Watching the carrying of the vehicle of the gods
- 121* *Akan sekalian muda teruna
Memakai pakaian sangat sempurna
Parasnya bagai Ratu Ranjuna
Perawan melihat gundah gulana*
All the young people
Wearing really dashing clothes
Looking like Prince Arjuna
The maidens watching anxiously
- 122* *Orang Boyan elok terlalu
Bersifat bagai Raden Kalu
Ya(i)tu salah pula anak Bangkahulu
Cacat sedikit orang nan hulu*
The people of Bawean were so good looking
Looking like Raden Kalu
The one from Bengkulu was a little off
The person from the interior had a flaw
- 123* *Susunan Belacan dastarnya
Muncung Melayang ikatan kainnya
Pencawarna akan salurnya
Payung Sitin akan naungannya*
His headgear was called 'Shrimp Paste Arrangement'
His knot was called 'Floating Snout'
Multicoloured were his trousers
'Satin Umbrella' was his shade
- 124 *Setelah itu dengarkan tuan
Pukul nan empat sudahkah tuan
Mereka berjalan silu-siluan
Terkenang syahidun yang bangsawan*
After that, listen sir,
It was already four o'clock
Everyone was walking with reserve
In remembrance of the noble Martyrs

- 125 *Ke tepi sungai sampailah tabut
Berlari kereta kelam nan kabut
Laksana turun taufan dan ribut
Fakir melihat berasa takut*
The *tabut* reached the river bank
Moving in a chaotic manner
A wind whipped up and a storm came down
The *fakir* looked on anxiously
- 126* *Ke tepi sungai kudu diletakkan
Akan yang syahid Fatihah dibacakan
Demi tamat kudu ditolakkan
Demikianlah hal riyal dihabiskan*
The *kudu* was placed on the river bank
The *Fatiha* was read for the Martyrs
As soon as it finished, the *kudu* was pushed out
And this was the way the money was spent
- 127 *Kudu nan ringin demikian juga
Ke dalam sungai dibuang belaka
Akan giruh jugi jenaka
Mereka nan mandi menolak celaka*
The *kudu* of the *ringin* and everything with it
was simply tossed into the river
The squadron joked with the battalion
They bathed to avoid any misfortune
- 128* *Setelah selesailah sekaliannya
Pulanglah melayang-layang ke tempatnya
Akan sungai-sungai rupanya
Hanya sekalian banyak lautannya*
After it was finished, everyone
Returned, floating, to their places
In the end all rivers
Only come together in many oceans
- 129 *Kudu ketika tuan dengarkan
Kepada yang membaca fakir mema'lumkan
Juwita bulan mereka perbuatkan
Cerita hati mereka sampaikan*
Hear, sirs, about the *kudu* at that moment
The *fakir* explains to those who read
They made the month precious
They told stories of the heart
- 130 *Kalian dengarkan cura
Kisah nan tabut di Singapura
Setelah selesai huru nan hara
Diarak keluar orang segera*
You must hear of a jest
The story of the *tabut* in Singapore
After the riots and chaos ended
Everyone were swiftly paraded out
- 131 *Ceriteranya itu telah mazkur
Dibunyi berbangkit kelam kabur
Tunduk fakir seraya terpekur
Itu karangan di sebelah timur*
The story has already been told
At its sounding a state of confusion arose
The humble *fakir* was plunged deep in thought
The composition is from the East
- 132* *Darvish tercengang sangat heran
Bibadal jua sangat sukarann
Kudu mahu setelah ia tahankan
Ke arah ketuanya telah ditutupkan*
The dervish was deeply astonished
The *bibadal* too was in real difficulty
The *kudu* will be put away
In the area of the leader
- 133 *Tabarakallah sangatlah cengang
Habis berhimpun sekalian bujang
Dilaksana orang akan bersombong
Ke kudu ringin orang yang bajang*
Blessed is Allah! Awestruck,
All of the single men gathered
Like people acting arrogantly
The *ringin* of men like evil spirits went towards the *kudu*
- 134 *Kira-kira seribu nona bilangannya
Kling Melayu kesemuanya
Masing-masing memegang kayu di tangannya
Laksana berperang pula rupanya*
It was about a thousand young women in total
They were a mixture of Klings and Malays
Everyone held a piece of wood in their hand
It looked as if they were going to war
- 135 *Dengar juga dia nurani
Ramailah ringin tahan-tahani
Lima orang merinyu Kompeni
Dengan perang mereka layani*
Hear this, too, about the radiant ones
Many of the *ringin* were able to withstand them
Five inspectors of the Company
They acted with aggression

- 136 *Ke tepi sungai berhentilah kudu*
Fatihah dibaca dengan merdu
Sekalian mereka lakan sedu
Rupanya bagai perempuan yang rindu
- The *kudu* stopped by the river bank
The *Fatiha* was read melodiously
All of them sobbing
Like a woman full of longing
- 137 *Ayuhhai dayang dia awang*
Kudu pusing tiada buang
Banyak sudah habis nan wang
Ke Singapura mereka nan pulang
- Come on you ladies and youths
The *kudu* was carried around, nothing was tossed
A lot of money had been spent
They returned to Singapore
- 138* *Hati tuan dengarkan*
Di Kampung Bangkahulu mereka perbuatkan
Akan ringin yang ketinggalan
Habis dipalu dia taulan
- Let your heart listen, sir,
This all happened in Kampung Bengkulu
The *ringin* that was left behind
Was beaten up by their comrades
- 139* *Garangnya mereka tiada terkira*
Jangan orang berdastar merah
Memukul mereka dengan gembira
Merampas sarban dengan segera
- They were so unspeakably fierce
What's more, the people with red head-cloths!
Deal them blows with gusto
Confiscate their turbans immediately
- 140 *Engganlah ringin jalan ke situ*
Pengikat kaki diutas tentu
Empunya akan serinya itu
Takut dipalu mereka itu
- The *ringin* refused to go there
His leg laces were securely fastened
The one who was radiant
Was afraid of being beaten by them
- 141 *Banyaklah ringin berawal palu*
Daripada anak Bangkahulu
Lamun sahaja nan lalu
Dapat tiada beroleh malu
- The *ringins* were the ones who started beating
Rather than the people of Bengkulu
If anyone were to have passed
They would surely be ashamed
- 142 *Setelah selesai sekaliannya*
Lalulah pulang masing-masing ke rumahnya
Sekalian kota mengantar tuannya
Pukul enam akan waktunya
- After everything had finished
Then each of them went home
The whole town escorted their leader
The time was six o'clock
- 143 *Akan seorang ditutupkan*
Sekalian habis hakim lepaskan
Ringin berdua ini belenggukan
Dikurungnya <disitu/disana?> ia masukkan
- As soon as a person was locked up
Without exception all were released by the judge
These two *ringins* were put in fetters
He imprisoned them there
- 144 *Syair kudu tamatlah sudah*
Mengarang dia sangatlah gundah
Jika janggal tua dan muda[h]
Memohonkan maaf di dalam dada
- The poem of the *kudu* is now finished
It was composed with great turmoil
If it is awkward, old and young,
I apologise from the heart
- 145 *Hijrah Nabi sudahlah mutu*
Seribu dua ratus lapan puluh satu
Malam tentu >...< >...<
Syair ditamatkan dagang piatu
- Since the blessed hijrah of the Prophet
One thousand two hundred eighty-one
<The evening surely>
The poem is ended by a desolate stranger
- 146 *Tamatlah syair dengan sempurna*
Kalam ditekan <dijuang?> pun <lena?>
Kertas nan putih cakar >p-u-h< nana
<Meskilah?> kudrat Tuhan yang ghana
- The poem ends perfectly
The pen is pressed >...<
The white paper is scratched >...<
Although a cheap and lowly effort

Notes to the quatrains

- 4 b The verb *mustari*, a divinatory action, draws on the Malay word for the planet Jupiter, *Mushtari*, which in turn comes from the Arabic المشتري. When auspiciousness is noted in Malay poetry it usually occurs in the introductory stanzas, together with information about the date of composition and the identities of the author and scribe. Although such attention to astrology has deep roots in both the Hindu-Buddhist ritual cultures of the Malay world and in Islamicate literature, the convention was also strong in 19th-century Malay print culture: Jan van der Putten (1997: 721, 732) refers to the printing of a ‘chart with astrological calculations, the *Saat Musytari* (Auspicious Times),’ by a Riau lithograph press in 1856, and again in the mid 1890s as a foldout in a mosque almanac. It is fitting, then, that a religious scholar like Hassan Muhammad is the custodian of this specialised knowledge.
- 7 b We read the opening of this line as *masyawaratlah*, suggesting ‘taking counsel; a conference’ (Wilkinson 1903: 648). *Anaq bahāram*, here and in q. 65c, perhaps refers to Baharampur, a cantonment in Bengal, north of Calcutta. As Rosie Llewellyn-Jones (2007: 30) notes, it was established by the East India Company as a military station in 1763, and was the headquarters of the 19th Bengal Native Infantry, among the first regiments to mutiny in 1857. See Rajesh Rai (2004) for the centrality of the Bengal Native Infantry to early and enduring patterns of migration of north Indians to Singapore and the Straits prior to their 1827 replacement by detachments from Madras, and the locus of ‘Hindustani’ settlers in and around Bencoolen Street, Dhoby Ghaut, and Bras Basah.
- 10 d Here *sajakkan* urges the listener/reader to, literally, make the rhymes rhyme.
- 11 b The ‘tenth night’, or *Ashura*, refers to the culmination of the Muharram commemorations. In this case, 10 Muharram 1281 AH equates to 15 June 1864 AD (for the dating of the event and the *Syair*, see q. 145b).
- 12 b The *tasa* (or *tassa*) here is a small single-headed earthenware drum played with a pair of wooden sticks; see Kartomi (1986: 147–8; 2012: 79–80). Both the drum and the word are of Indian origin (see Kartomi idem.; also Sharif 1975: figure 6). Although Sharif does not explicitly associate the drum with Muharram, its use in south Indian versions of the processions is recorded in paintings, e.g. the Muharram scroll c.1840 (Butler-Wheelhouse 2016: cat. 38); see too the detailed study by Richard Wolf (2015) of the *tasa*’s use in transnational Muharram rituals dating back to the colonial era. Its use is attested in the *tabuik* festivals of Pariaman and Bengkulu (Kartomi, ibid; Mason 2016: 77). Interestingly, Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings (2010: 1002, s.v. ‘*tasa*’) list the word in their Indonesian dictionary as being Minangkabau, which likely indicates its entry into Indonesia and the Malay world via Sumatra, as well as that of the *tabut* commemorations. See also q. 65a.
- c This seems to be a shortened (or corrupted?) version of the Shi'a *Salawat* or blessings on the Prophet Muhammad. The full or correct version would read ‘*Allahumma ṣalli 'ala Muhammad wa ali Muhammad*’ (O Allah, bless Muhammad and the household of Muhammad).

- 13 b The reference to *kudu borak* describes the effigies of the creature that carried Muhammad to heaven, representations of which feature in Muharram processions in India (Sharif 1975:156–7, 166), Sumatra (Feener 2015: 192), and here in Singapore. Wilkinson (1903: 127–8) provides pertinent observations, s.v. *borak*: ‘II. [Ar. بَرَاقْ: the animal upon which Muhammad made his journey to heaven] A mysterious flying animal endowed with supernatural powers. ... The animal *al-burāk* proper, of Muhammadan tradition, is believed by Malays to have had the face of a man, the body of a horse, and the tail and wings of a bird, while the Muhammadan confession of faith was marked in the colouring on its side.’ We may note that this configuration applies to Indian understandings of the *burāq* (see Sharif, *ibid.*). See also q. 43c.
- 14 a In an admittedly tenuous fashion, we read *rumah rajab* as ‘house of honour’. Rajab is the seventh month of the Islamic calendar, connected etymologically to the verb ‘to honour’ or ‘to respect’. Sharif (1975: 157, and figure 2) makes reference to an alternative kind of effigy which he calls the *shāhnishīn* or *dādmahal*. Garcin de Tassy (1995: 150) translates this former term, somewhat curiously, as ‘room of honour’ (this is not a mistranslation on the part of Waseem: the original French reads ‘*salle d'honneur*’). There may also be a connection to the term ‘Symbol House’, which appears several times in the testimony of the ‘Police Conspiracy Case’ and refers to the building in which an effigy was constructed or stored (see Lunn and Byl 2017: XXX).
- 16 b We leave Ali’s *orang dubi*, and other occurrences of the term, untranslated: that is, it could indeed refer directly to people as ‘dhobies’, or washermen; it could also mean the people of Dhoby Ghaut/Kampung Dhobi, which, as Savage and Yeoh (2013: 102–3) note, was an area populated by Indians, ‘Bengali and Madrasi’, and that ‘the whole area was associated with laundry activities’. Whether occupational or geographical, the terms are thus linked. See our longer discussion of the geography of the *Syair* in Lunn and Byl 2017: XXX.
- 17 c ‘Bengali’, as Rajesh Rai (2004: 1, 3–4) demonstrates, was an ambiguous term, not necessarily referring to the people or language of Bengal, but also used for upper India generally. Here, we might read it as equivalent to the linguistic term ‘Hindustani’. See also q. 35.
- d *Halqah al-mannan* (المنان حلق), lit. ‘the assembly of the bestower’. *Al-mannan* is one of the names of Allah; this presumably references a Muslim group of some description, though we have been unable to trace reliable references to what it might have been.
- 18 b Sharif (1975: 168–9, 174) makes reference to a figure who may be cognate with this ‘*Maliq al-Bahārī*’: ‘During the [Muharram] festival many persons adopt the garb and mode of life of Faqīrs ... [and] form a band ... The Baglā or Bagulā represent paddy birds. Ten or twelve men, all of the same height, smear their bodies all over with cowdung ashes, wear white paper caps on their heads, and loin cloths ... One of them calls himself Bhīrī or Bahrī Shāh, “King hawk”, and dashes at the paddy-birds, who escape and hide in the crowd ...’. His (Sharif 1975: 183, 185) observations on the end of the Ashura commemorations are also apposite: ‘Those who have acted as Faqīrs during the festival now lay aside the garb of mendicants and wash themselves and their ornaments. The members of every band ... offer the Fātiha over sweetmeats, give some to their leaders, and eat the rest themselves. ... The rites observed in southern India, of

- which the above is mainly an account, differ greatly from the distinctive mourning observances in the north, where no buffoonery such as that of the Muharram Faqīrs takes place.’. However, this masquerading was not in fact restricted to the south.
- 19 a We translate *merinyu* as ‘inspector’ although any kind of police officer might suffice, and Wilkinson (1903: 646) gives it specifically as ‘[Port. *marinho*] A forest ranger of the Land Office; = (in Penang) *dato’ kayu*’, evidence from other contemporary accounts leads us to believe officers of at least that rank were involved in the dispute (see Lunn and Byl 2017: XXX).
- 20 b *Barua* has entered modern Malay as a term of abuse, and Indonesian as ‘pimp, madam’ (Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings 2010: s.v. *barua*). The word’s origins are Indian, though it has a wide semantic range in Hindi/Urdu: بُرُوا, भड़आ *baru’ā* भड़वा *bharwā*, ‘One who lives on the earnings of a prostitute; pimp, procurer, panderer; attendant on a dancing girl (who beats the *mridang*, and assists her in the chorus when she is singing); blackguard; fool, blockhead’ (Platts 1884: s.v. *baru’ā*). In the testimony of the ‘Police Conspiracy Case’ (see Lunn and Byl 2017: XXX), a witness named ‘Raw Jannie’ [sic], a ‘Ghaut Sarang’ (fighting man?) or member of the White Flag society, was accused under cross-examination of keeping a ‘house of ill fame’ (*Singapore Free Press*, 10 May 1866, p. 5); while he denied this (‘I kept a beer house in a house where prostitutes were kept’), we may note the insult here is being made by Red Flag members against the *bibadal* of the White Flag. The term is explicitly linked to music, used for instrumental accompanists who acted as managers and were the *mridangam* players for troupes of Hindustani courtesans as early as the 1820s; additionally, north Indian courtesans or *nautch* girls and male musicians are documented in the Straits Settlements from the 1830s, see Schofield (unpublished) on James Skinner’s *Tashrīh al-aqwām*.
- d Tok Betara Guru is the Malay name for the Hindu god Shiva, the supremely potent deity of much of island Southeast Asia. Beyond his theological attributes, preserved in the *hikayat* literature, the god is widely considered to be the founder of good magic and mythological lineages, and is found in Sumatran Batak religious ceremonies, the Javanese *wayang* theatre, the Bugis epic *Il Galigo*, and in early colonial accounts of the Philippines. As such, his significance, though rooted in Indic traditions, is connected to local power, as attested by his persistent presence here, even within an Islamic festival. Philologist and colonial administrator W.W. Skeat quotes Malay magicians who consider Betara Guru ‘a spirit so powerful that he could restore the dead back to life; and to him all prayers are addressed.’ (Skeat 1965: 86–7). See also Wilkinson (1903: 91, s.v. *bētara*).
- 28 c We might also compare this *nobat*-like ensemble with that in Ahmad Rijaluddin’s brief but rich description of Muharram at Calcutta in 1810, incorporating ‘*gendang serunai nobat nafiri sulung bangsi sangatlah ...*’ (Skinner 1982: 72–3).
- 32 d More specifically, according to Wilkinson (1903: 134, s.v. *buloh*), ‘*Buloh périndu*: the Malay Æolian harp, an instrument made of a tube of bamboo open throughout but with a string drawn across one end of it ... a simile for a sweet plaintive voice’. Kartomi (2012: 60) notes the relationship between this specific form of bamboo and shamanistic love magic in the Minangkabau south coast region of west Sumatra.

- 34 c-d In his study of Javanese Islamisation, M.C. Ricklefs (2012: 16–17) draws attention to the mid 19th-century emergence of a distinction between *putihan* (the ‘white ones’) and *abangan*, ‘the red (or brown) ones’, along lines of devout and nominal or non-observant Muslims. See our discussion of Red/White divisions in Lunn and Byl (2017: XXX–XXX).
- We take *posyak* to be derived from the Persian for cloth/raiment/attire (Steingass 1963: 260, s.v. *pośāk*, *poś*). *Sakhlat* as ‘broadcloth’ is well attested in the *Hikayat Abdullah* (see Wilkinson 1903: s.v. ‘*sakhlat*’, 373 and ‘*sakalāt*’, 391); a much more recent Indonesian dictionary gives *sekelat* as a Persian derivation for specifically scarlet cloth (Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings 2010: 891). For the possible use of such cloths, see Lunn and Byl (2017), particularly figure 2, and note to q. 66c.
- 35 b/d On ‘Benggali’, see note to q. 17c. In a similar vein, ‘Jawi’ here could refer to either Malay or Jawi Peranakan (i.e. mixed-race) communities.
- 36 c See Wilkinson (1903: 566) on the Tamil/Sanskrit origins of *gerindam*: ‘I. [Tamil *kirandam*; Skr. *grantha*.] A smart saying or apposite quotation; a tag of proverbial poetry; a clever but not original remark’.
- d ‘Intoxicated by mushrooms’ as a metaphor for being in love. See also q. 85d. Taken together with *silu-siluan* of the previous half line (‘coy/demure’), we get an enhanced sense of romantic sentiment.
- 37 d The Jawi reads *za ’if* / ‘*dha ’if* (ضعيف); modern Malay/Indonesian *daif*.
- 38 b For *matagī* (متکی), we rely in part on the *Kamus Bahasa Melayu Nusantara* (2003), s.v. *matakao*: ‘*matakao gambar binatang yg digantungkan dan diletakkan di tengah-tengah tanaman tertentu sbg tanda penolak secara ghaib thd haiwan-haiwan yg sebenarnya (kebiasaan di Pulau Mentawai, sebelah barat Sumatera)*’. ‘Scarecrow’ could thus also be a close approximation in terms of function, but the use here in the Muharram procession suggests a more generic (animal) ‘effigy’. Note the Sumatran origin of the term, and Ali’s own Sumatran descent (q. 3a). For figures of animals in Muharram processions in Sumatra, see Feener 1999: 96 (on fish and birds) and n. 44 (on elephants and tigers), or Feener 2015: 193. See q. 50 here for a fish preceding one of the *kudu*. We might also note the Arabic-derived Persian and Urdu term *mattaki*, in the sense of ‘propped, supported’, found in Steingass (1963) and Platts (1884) respectively.
- d See Wilkinson (1903: 677, s.v. وارف warip), ‘Alive = *urip*’. Ali’s construction of *memwaripi*, if we read it correctly, appears to be unusual.
- 40 b We are unsure of this translation. Another possibility could treat the *adalat* as a rather different kind of noun: e.g. ‘The *adalat* was unable to count them’. Ja’far Sharif (1975: 170) makes reference to a figure in the bands of fakirs in the *tabut* processions whom he terms ‘the ‘Adālat Shāh’, the ‘lawgiver’, who is the director of movements or quarter-master’, who serves under the *sarguroh* (see Lunn and Byl 2017, n. 18) alongside a ‘Khalīfa, who is second in command, like a Wazīr to a King, ... Bhandārī Shāh, ... Iznī Shāh, ... Kotwāl, ... Dost, ... Al-hukm-i-lillāh, ... Amr-i-lillāh, [and] ... Naqību-l-fuqarā’.
- 41 c See Wilkinson (1903: 69, s.v. ایکل igal): ‘Spreading the tail – of a peacock ... *Mērak mēngigal*: the peacock spreading its tail’.
- 42 a See note to q. 40b.

- 43 c See note to q. 13b.
- 53 d The line is ambiguous. Our translation relies on reading (ربیوه) *rībūh* as *rībūt*, while there is some ambiguity around *māras* as ‘fear’ or (as in Wilkinson 1903) ‘anger’.
- 65 a See note to q. 12b.
- 66 c *Puwada* (فُوادا) here seems to be equivalent to what Wilkinson (1903: 476) gives as the Tamil-derived *puwadai*: ‘[Tam. *pāwādei*] Cloth laid down at a burial or wedding for the procession or guests to pass over’. See Lunn and Byl (2017: figure 2) in for a near contemporary image of a *tabut* procession walking on an apparently ceremonial cloth, painted by E. Schlitter at Singapore in 1858.
- 67 c Wilkinson (1903: 132, s.v. *bulung*) notes that *bulung ulu* is ‘the head-cloth of a *raja*, often used as a term of endearment’. Perhaps it might also be a term of respect.
- 69 b Wilkinson (1903: 537) gives the following for *konta* (s.v. كَنْت): ‘I. [Port. *conta*.] A reckoning, an account. II. (Singapore.) A tale-bearer, a scandal-monger.’ The Portuguese origins and specifically Singaporean sense of the term seem noteworthy.
- 85 d See note to q. 36d.
- 88 b ‘*Kampung Susu*’ refers to Cross Street; as Savage and Yeoh (2013: 95) remind us, the area was dominated by Indian communities at least until the 1920s.
- 97 c See Wilkinson (1903: 632), s.v. *mata*. He distinguishes between the meaning of the term in Malay states (‘a minor official’) and English territories (‘a policeman’).
- 114 b The final *ng* of *gembirang* appears purely for the sake of the rhyme.
- 116 d What we give as *membuat* appears to be written ممبايت /M-M-B-A-Y-T in the manuscript.
- 121 c ‘*Ratu Ranjuna*’ has a particularly Javanese association, according to Wilkinson (1903: 311, s.v. *ratu*): ‘Jav. A title given in Java to persons of either sex when of direct royal descent. The title is not used colloquially by Malays when speaking of their own princes, but it occurs in literature, and is sometimes applied to foreign rulers.’ Its use here, for the mythological Hindu prince Arjuna of the Mahabharata, thus seems appropriate.
- 122 a That is, people from Pulau Bawean, an island north of Java. See *Kampung Boyan*, former name for the area south of *Kampung Kapor*, on the Rochor river between Jalan Besar and Syed Alwi road (Savage and Yeoh 2013: 198). There is also reference in the testimony of the ‘Police Conspiracy Case’ (see Lunn and Byl 2017: XXX) to *boyans* carrying (or letting down) a *tabut* (*Singapore Free Press*, 10 May 1866, Supplement, p. 5).
- 123 In traditional Malay dressing, names are given to types of knotting of headgears (*dastar* or *tengkolok*) and the accompanying *samping* or skirt-like sarong worn by men. The last line’s ‘satin umbrella’ endows the quatrain with a royal tone, as elements of kingly regalia are also given proper names; however, the first couplet provides a farcical inversion of this custom in its reference to ‘shrimp paste arrangement,’ a distinctly homely reference. Notably, the Malay troupe from Bengkulu enables this playful yet learned subversion of customs: see too the almost regal description of that group and their *nobat* ensemble, in quatrains 28–9. And yet the ensemble’s use to play for this

masquerade of commoners again subverts the normal kingly prerogative of the reference. Finally, we note that a possible reason for the Malay references being a bit ‘off’ is provided in quatrain 122c-d: the upland origins of the troupe might explain the bungled execution of Malay expectation. Since the troupe likely hails from the urban Kampung Bengkulu, however, this too can be taken as a self-deprecatory conceit that only enhances the wit of the poet and the fun of the listener.

- 126 b The Fatiha is the first chapter of the Qur'an, read in the daily prayers and also in honour of the dead.
- 128 NB. from this point on, the final section of the *Syair* is handwritten in an exceedingly poor hand, distinct from the foregoing lithographed text. For a discussion of the physical copy see Lunn and Byl (2017: XXX–XXX).
- 132 a *Darvish* is our reading of possibly defective Jawi, which appears to read ‘دورش/dūrīsh?/D-W-R-SH’.
- 138 d Note the Tamil derivation of *taulan*: ‘A friend; a comrade’ (Wilkinson 1903: 203), citing the *Hikayat Abdullah*.
- 139 c We read *memukul* here for what appears to be *mepukul* in the Jawi.

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