

Old Names for New Things

Two items of Malay royal regalia as invented tradition

Mulaika Hijjas

To cite this article: Mulaika Hijjas (13 Feb 2024): Old Names for New Things, Indonesia and the Malay World, DOI: [10.1080/13639811.2024.2307733](https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2024.2307733)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2024.2307733>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 13 Feb 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)




View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

OLD NAMES FOR NEW THINGS

Two items of Malay royal regalia as invented tradition

Mulaika Hijjas 

ABSTRACT

This article examines two objects of Malay royal regalia: the Perak betel-box known as the *puan naga taru* and the Riau emblem known as the *cogan*. Drawing on Hobsbawm and Ranger's articulation of 'invented tradition', and on Amoroso's of 'traditionalism' with reference to Malay kingship, detailed comparison of the textual and material records is adduced to argue that the physical objects themselves are likely to be much younger than the traditions underlying them. Colonial officials who documented regalia objects and collected information about them were also implicated in the traditionalising process. Nineteenth-century beliefs and practices about the potency of royal regalia are contrasted with those current in the present day, where the regalia objects are more desacralised than ever before.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji dua alat kebesaran diraja Melayu: sebuah bekas sirih negeri Perak yang dikenali sebagai *puan naga taru* dan sejenis lambang negeri Riau yang dikenali sebagai *cogan*. Berdasarkan penjelasan Hobsbawm dan Ranger tentang 'tradisi ciptaan' ('invented tradition'), dan pada konsep 'tradisionalisme' ('traditionalism') yang dianjurkan oleh Amoroso berkenaan kerajaan Melayu, perbandingan terperinci rekod-rekod teks dan kebendaan dikemukakan untuk berhujah bahawa objek-objek fizikal ini mungkin jauh lebih muda daripada tradisi yang mendasari mereka. Pegawai-pegawai kolonial yang mendokumentasikan alat-alat kebesaran dan mengumpul maklumat mengenainya turut terlibat dalam proses tradisionalisation ini. Kepercayaan dan amalan abad kesembilan belas tentang kuasa alat-alat kebesaran diraja dibandingkan dengan yang ada pada masa kini, di mana alat-alat kebesaran ini semakin dianggap sebagai tidak sakral lagi.


KEYWORDS

Malay sultanates; material culture; regalia; tradition

KATA KUNCI

Tradisi; alat kebesaran diraja; kesultanan Melayu; kebudayaan kebendaan

Sultan [Abdullah] sent word to Ismail urging him not to give up the regalia for 'on that day of a truth, the country of Perak will be given over to the English' (Statement made by To' Nara to the Secretary of the Maharaja of Johore, March 1876, in Burns and Cowan 1975: 25)

CONTACT Mulaika Hijjas  mh86@soas.ac.uk

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

[The Yang Dipertuan Muda Raja Jafar and his court] discussed the ways of making His Majesty Sultan Abd al-Rahman's kingdom secure, his installation by beat of drum, and the necessity of obtaining the Johor state regalia, which was in Engku Puteri's keeping. It was time-honoured custom that if the Johor regalia was not present, the naming of the King of Johor was not legal and public

(Raja Ali Haji, *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, in Matheson and Andaya 1982: 231–232)

Nineteenth-century histories of the Malay sultanates, European and Malay alike, are replete with accounts of royal regalia – eclectic assemblages of musical instruments, weaponry, flags, betel sets, seals, jewellery, and sundry other objects – pursued upriver and down, falling overboard, snatched from the hands of rightful owners, bestowed on upstart claimants to the throne, even passed hurriedly from one reluctant party to another. The epigraphs above suggest how local potentates wrestled over the regalia, at times making common cause with colonial agents, and at others opposing them. In the Malay sultanates it was established practice – tradition – that possession of the regalia legitimated the sovereign, rather than the converse. The objects were held to quite literally have a life of their own, being imbued with autonomous and capricious forces that conveyed royal power, *daulat*. This power could only be safely wielded by a rightful king, so anyone who possessed them was, *ipso facto*, a legitimate ruler. The possession of the regalia was also connected to claims of antiquity and precedence. As the then reigning Sultan of Perak wrote to the British Governor of Penang in 1816: ‘I am the king of an ancient race. I am he who holds the Dragon Betel Stand and the shellfish which came out of the sea, which came down from Bukit Si Guntang. . . . I am the oldest of all the kings in these parts, such as the kings of Siak, Selangor, Riau, Kedah and Terengganu’ (Andaya 1979: 21). With such concerns in mind, Dutch and British colonial forces in the region made it an article of policy to secure royal regalia for their chosen candidates in the succession struggles in which they intervened and through which they established their presence. In the two cases examined here, Riau-Lingga and Perak, colonial capture of Malay regalia was an important aspect of gaining control of the state. In both cases, European powers went further, displaying the captured regalia in the entirely new context of museum exhibition, serving to neutralise the power of the objects while also clearly signalling colonial dominance.

Two specific items of Malay royal regalia – the Perak betel box now known as the *puan naga taru*, and the Riau emblem or *cogan* – are eloquent examples of dynamic and evolving tradition, deeply implicated in the workings of power. These two cases provide an instructive contrast to one another in their modern manifestations, as the Riau Sultanate was abolished by the Dutch in 1911, while Perak installed its most recent sultan in 2015, complete with prominent use of the royal regalia. These cases illuminate contemporary concerns regarding regional autonomy in Indonesia and reformist Islam in Malaysia on the meaning and usage of the regalia. This article takes as its starting point the idea of invented tradition (Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger 1983: 1) – ‘a set of practices. . . which automatically implies continuity with the past,’ but which are often of much more recent vintage. Both the objects discussed here are framed as ancient, and as conveying political legitimacy through their origin in a revered past, but, as will be shown, both may be of relatively recent production. Ranger (1983: 220) postulated that invented traditions could be ‘a way of managing and accommodating change’. Rapid change, and in particular colonial encroachment

on pre-existing elites, was a fact of the Malay world during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The changes were perhaps most pressing in matters of establishing political authority and legitimacy, and the articulation of new forms of collective identity – all of which have, at various times, been embodied in and expressed through royal regalia. Donna Amoroso's study of the Malay aristocracy in colonial Malaya makes use of the concept of traditionalism, defined

neither as the persistence in old ideas and idioms by an elite resisting change nor as the imposition of a fabricated tradition by a colonial power. Instead, traditionalism in Malay society represented the dynamic interaction of British power and priorities, including the urge to preserve, with the effort of the Malay ruling class to survive in the new order.

(Amoroso 2014: 11)

While Amoroso's work focuses on the 20th century, her idea of traditionalism can equally be applied to the 19th century when the Riau emblem and the Perak betel box come into historical view. The intention in this article is not to 'debunk' the regalia but rather to move beyond discourse of authentic vs fake to understand the dynamic and evolving processes through which old names come to be attached to relatively new objects, within a traditionalising process.

Considerable research has been done on the politics of colonial collections of regalia and on the restitution of these objects in the postcolonial era (ter Keurs 2007; Stevens 2015), but there has been little recent work on the regalia as objects in the independent present. In contrast, colonial-era scholars took regalia seriously as objects of research, in line with the strategic priorities of their governments. L.W.C. van den Berg's 1901 article remains a useful compendium of information about regalia in the Netherlands Indies, while W.W. Skeat's 1900 book provides similar data for British Malaya. R.O. Winstedt and R.J. Wilkinson's 1934 history of Perak relays much detail about the regalia of that sultanate. The perils of relying on colonial scholarship are obvious, but in these cases the danger is not so much that they deride local beliefs but that they are at times rather enchanted by an imagined Malay past. Writing about colonial Africa, Ranger (1983: 247) points to the way in which European admiration for African 'tradition' was inherently misguided:

Europeans belonging to one or other of the neo-traditions believed themselves to have a respect for the customary. They liked the idea of age-old prescriptive rights and they liked to compare the sort of title which an African chief possessed with the title to gentlemanliness which they laid claim to themselves. A profound misunderstanding was at work here. . . [African] societies had certainly valued custom and continuity but custom was loosely defined and infinitely flexible. Custom helped to maintain a sense of identity but it also allowed for an adaptation so spontaneous and natural that it was often unperceived.

So, too, in the Malay world, where customs to do with the regalia – and the actual regalia objects themselves – were certainly changing in response to shifting circumstances, whether or not either European or local actors were consciously aware of it. Much of the information in Winstedt and Wilkinson (1934: 166) came from Perak interlocutors, such as Raja Haji Yahya bin Raja Muhammad Ali of Cenderiang, given as the source for the description of the annual feasting of the regalia. These accounts now form much of what is known about the history of the Perak regalia, but they also reify an image of Malay royal practice as changing only in one possible direction – declining from a once glorious past. Colonial scholars were also often better ethnographers than

historians. They reported (reasonably accurately, it seems) on current beliefs and practices, many of which made historical claims (which appear to be less reliable).

This article also draws extensively on Malay texts and on analysis of the objects' biographies, making it necessary to underscore the very material nature of this evidence, or lack thereof. Philologists of Malay have long lamented the fact that most surviving manuscripts date from the 19th century, with the result that, as Ian Proudfoot (2003: 2) wrote, 'our view of the whole Malay tradition tends to be filtered through nineteenth-century lenses' and that thus 'our vision of Malay history is remarkably foreshortened'. A relatively young manuscript can, of course, transmit a very old text, or fragments of it – the difficulty is identifying the possible 'pre-existing fragments' within the conglomerate text, to use the metaphor for Southeast Asian manuscript sources developed by Wayan Jarrah Sastrawan (2020: 3–4). The same conditions of fragility and paucity apply to other material objects from the Malay world. The environmental and social reasons – humidity, insects, fire, social and religious change – that militate against the survival of pre-19th-century manuscripts also mean that there are few extant objects of Malay court culture from before the colonial era. Museums in Europe and Southeast Asia alike are full of court texts, textiles, weapons, jewellery, wood carvings and so on, but predominantly from the 19th century and later. Take the example of gold objects, which have better chances of survival than paper or cloth as far as the climate is concerned, but which were always at risk of being melted down and made into something else. A recent book on gold artifacts of the National Museum of Indonesia is divided into two sections: one on archaeological finds dating to the 8th and 9th centuries, and another on artifacts from various regional kingdoms, almost all the result of colonial collecting in the 19th century (Brinkgreve et al. 2010). That there is almost a millenium-long gap in the extant evidence raises obvious and profound impediments to establishing when and where an object was produced. The temptation is always to extrapolate backwards, and hypothesise that what is known from the 19th century also applied earlier, but in fact this ought not be assumed – particularly as the 19th century was a period of profound upheaval, in terms of both material and political culture. The assumption that the Perak betel box and the Riau emblem are archaic objects is precisely what requires proof. Unfortunately, despite assertions that Malay metalwork has stylistic characteristics that may make it possible to establish time and place of manufacture (Wray 1908: 152; Choo 1984: 55), there is so far no guide for using stylistic evidence to locate the time or place of manufacture of a given object. At the same time, like the manuscripts, the regalia objects obviously do not emerge from nowhere, even if the specific objects are relatively new. They embody and transmit something older – that is, the names that they bear, which are attested in earlier periods, and, more profoundly, a widespread belief in the potency of royal *pusaka* that has only recently come to be challenged.

The *pusaka* objects of the state

Regalia are part of the larger category of *pusaka*, sacred heirlooms believed to be imbued with supernatural force due to their association with a powerful ancestor. As the *pusaka* objects of the state, regalia gain their potency from their association with potent figures in the dynastic lineage. State *pusaka* are attested across insular Southeast Asia, but by the late 20th century were perhaps most visible to outside observers in locations where

Islamic reformism had yet to take complete hold, such as south Sulawesi and Java (Brus 1984: 67–75; Brawn 1994: 85–86; Cummings 2003: 535–537; Gibson 2005: 169–189; Pedersen 2008: 214–237; Rodemeier 2014: 133–153). In the words of van den Berg (in Wiener 2007: 50), writing at the turn of the 20th century about the sultanates of the Netherlands Indies: ‘[t]he regalia are not insignia, like, for example, the crown or scepter with us, which in some countries have a certain moral significance as historical objects, but which nonetheless any newly acting Prince could have made if need be. . . [t]he Regalia are fetishes, which control the possession of the throne and the lot of the Realm’. While Margaret Wiener rightly critiques the use of the word ‘fetish’ in van den Berg’s account, it nevertheless preserves the sense that the regalia were alive and powerful. They required feeding, lustration, and reverence. In the Javanese case their personhood is clear from the human honorifics they were accorded, such as *Kyai*, *Nyai*, *Pun* and *Si* (van den Berg 1901: 73). In early 20th-century Perak, the regalia were believed to be the dwelling place of the thousand guardian spirits of the state, the *jin kerajaan*. The Perak regalia were taken in boat procession on the annual royal household outing to collect turtles’ eggs on the river sandbanks, and were also ritually feasted once a year, during which the musical instruments of the state orchestra (*nobat*) were said to imbibe the food and drink presented to them (Swettenham 1895: 214–216; Wilkinson and Winstedt 1934: 160). The regalia could be highly intolerant of being handled wrongly or by an improper person, who would be struck dead by their power. Indeed, Skeat (1900) relates, on the authority of Sultan Abdul Samad, that the Selangor state kris named Beruk Berayun was responsible for the deaths of 99 men. Skeat himself was almost added to the tally of regalia victims, after the Sultan of Selangor allowed him to handle the *nafiri*, which led, Skeat (1900: 40) maintained, to a ‘sharp attack of malarial influenza’.¹ Skeat also failed to persuade any craftsman to make copies of the Selangor regalia – a stark contrast with the copying of the Perak regalia discussed below, and perhaps a reflection of the relative autonomy of the Selangor sultan at the time.

Discussing *pusaka* in his classic exegesis of power in Java, Benedict Anderson (1990: 27) writes that

it was an old tradition in Java that the ruler should concentrate around him any objects or persons held to have or contain unusual Power. His palace would be filled not only with the traditional array of *pusaka* (heirlooms), such as krisses, spears, sacred musical instruments, carriages, and the like, but also various types of human beings, such as albinos, clowns, dwarves, and fortune-tellers. Being in the palace, their Power was absorbed by, and further added to, the ruler’s own. Their loss, by whatever means, was seen as an actual diminution of the king’s Power and often as a sign of the impending collapse of the dynasty.

To Anderson’s description should be added that this is not of course an exclusively Javanese phenomenon. It is widespread among a range of ethnic groups in insular Southeast Asia, and is an ‘old tradition’ in Hobsbawm and Ranger’s sense of something that claims to be (but may not actually be) old. That is, while the belief in *pusaka* is certainly long established, the *pusaka* items themselves may be relatively new objects. An example,

¹I learnt this from H.H. the late Sultan himself, and here record it, because it has sometimes been asserted that H.H. the Sultan claimed to have slain these ninety-nine men with his own hand, which H.H. assured me was not the case’ Skeat (1900: 40–42).

among the carriages Anderson alludes to is one named Kanjeng Nyai Jimat, gifted by the VOC to Sultan Hamengkubuwono I in the late 18th century – which derive their potency from association with the rather recent past, while operating within a flexible and dynamic system that responds to present exigencies. The carriage is powerful because of its association with a charismatic ancestor, Sultan Hamengkubuwono I, who, ironically enough, is revered for the recognition accorded to him by Europeans and his ability to command the status markers of European modernity.² Another telling image of colonially mediated modernity interacting with pre-existing *pusaka* practices is the portrait of ‘The Sultan of Kutai with his regalia’, c.1910 (see [Figure 1](#)). Dressed in European-style clothes, including a fur-trimmed cape, the Sultan is flanked by attendants bearing the Kutai regalia – kris, umbrella, betel sets, and the like. While this may appear incongruous, Malay kingship was always open to new forms of prestige and status display. Collections of royal regalia include imported objects from well before the colonial era, such as the *nobat* musical instruments that originated in Mughal India but were ‘well integrated into Malay court culture by the 15th century’ (Raja Iskandar 2018: 171).

As we will see in the cases of both Riau and Perak, colonial governments were prepared to spend blood and treasure on securing errant regalia items in order to install their chosen candidates. As van den Berg (1901: 77) wrote:

It speaks for itself that, at the subjugation of a native king, the Government’s way remains to insist on the extradition of the regalia, and that, with the abolition of self-government in each state, the regalia of each state are taken away, and thereby become Government property. Thus are the regalia of the former kings of Bantam, Banjarmasin, Bangkalan, Gorontalo and Aceh in the Museum of the Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences. Except for in Aceh, the great force of the resistance of the population was broken by the Government’s possession of the regalia.

Yet, in the same way that a challenger to the throne could always be found, possession of particular items of regalia may not have been as definitive as the European powers hoped. Collections of Malay regalia were always in flux – the list of items shifts from source to source, as do their names, and the same name may have been applied to different objects over time. Sounding their rather characteristic note of the Malay states’ decline from a quasi chivalric past, Winstedt and Wilkinson (1934: 167) noted that the 1876 Perak war resulted in the loss of several items of court regalia: ‘the swords of state (*baur*) of Sultan Abdullah, the Mantri, the Laksamana and the Shahbandar were confiscated and have been lost. The sword of the Bendahara is also said to have been lost’. Wilkinson (1908–11: 118) similarly noted that the end of the Perak war ‘removed from the country all the leading figures of the preceding years.... Malay history proper ends with them’. At the same time, one 19th-century Malay account, after enumerating the items of the Perak regalia (drums, pipes, flutes, betel box, two swords, sceptre, and so on), explains that there is no crown because it fell overboard when the first Raja looked into the water during

²As noted on the official palace website: ‘The Yogyakarta sultanate’s collection of carriages shows that the Yogyakarta Sultanate was engaged in global relations, following trends that were developing in Europe at that time’ (*Koleksi kereta kasultanan Yogyakarta menunjukkan bahwa Kasultanan Yogyakarta terlibat dalam pergaulan global, mengikuti tren yang berkembang di Eropah pada masanya*). <<https://www.kratonjogja.id/kagungan-dalem/5-kereta-kereta-pusaka-keraton-yogyakarta/>>



Figure 1. Sultan Aji Muhammad Sulaiman of Kutai, Kalimantan, pictured with his regalia and attendants, 1910. Image in the public domain, Leiden University Library Digital Collections: <<http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:922096>>

his journey upriver (Maxwell 1882: 91–92). This Malay court text points to the always changing, always already waning from a mythic past, nature of royal regalia. The regalia of a particular sultanate was most likely not a set and stable collection of objects, but a diffuse and diverse assemblage that could be supplemented or replaced or lost, as political exigencies demanded.

Accordingly, and again in spite of the assertion of van den Berg cited above, the colonial government's seizure of the regalia was not like taking the king in a game of chess, signaling checkmate for the indigenous powers. Rather, Malay royal houses proved adept at adapting to changing circumstances (Milner 2012; Amoroso 2014). In both Riau and Perak, the lines installed by the colonial government managed to prosper, at least initially. Riau's Sultan Abdul Rahman and his successors invested in novel ways of articulating Malay kingship, in new styles of dress and buildings, and also likely commissioned the *cogan* as a new item of regalia. Perak's then Regent, Raja Yusuf, loaned the hard-won regalia to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, held in London in 1886, and in 1902 his successor, Sultan Idris, attended the coronation of Edward VII at Westminster Abbey, as a fellow monarch.³ Perhaps the more fundamental challenge to the meaning of the regalia in the past century was posed not by colonial rule but by reformist Islam. Van den Berg (1901: 72) characterised the regalia of the polities of Islamic Southeast Asia as 'an absolutely

³ See photograph of Sultan Idris, Raja Chulan, and Hugh Clifford, outside Westminster Abbey, on the occasion of King Edward VII's coronation. V&A Museum Collection. <<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O53206/national-photographic-record-and-survey-photograph-stone-benjamin-sir/>>

anti-Muhammadan institution’, and, as we will see, this became a widespread view, leading to the further reinventions of tradition. Ironically, it is these changes – the removal of reference to resident jinn and the like – that have now made of Malay royal regalia something much more like van den Berg’s European royal insignia, mere objects. This is the case in public-facing discourse emanating from the courts, but it may well be that custodians and court officials privately retain the beliefs and practices of old.⁴

The Perak *puan naga taru* and the Riau *cogan*: material culture, textual evidence

The Perak betel box is a large octagonal metalwork receptacle for betel-chewing equipment, decorated with floral and foliate designs. Its first documented appearance is when it, along with other metal items from the Perak royal regalia seized during British military campaign of 1875, was sent to London and displayed at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in 1886. Electrotypes of some twenty of these objects, including the betel box, were then produced by Messrs. Elkington & Co. (see Figure 2). The originals were returned to the Perak royal family, in whose possession they remain to this day,⁵ while one set of copies remained in the United Kingdom and another went to the Raffles Museum in Singapore.⁶ In 1897, the box appeared, at the Kuala Kangsar durbar (see below, and Figure 3). However, in their history of Perak, Wilkinson and Winstedt (1934: 6, 163) appear to identify it as the *puan bujur* (oval betel box, though here they puzzlingly translate *bujur* as ‘oblong’ rather than the more usual ‘ovoid’, perhaps to make it fit the octagonal shape). By the 1930s, when Wilkinson and Winstedt were compiling their history of Perak, there appears to have been some confusion about which betel box was the *puan naga taru*, and why. Wilkinson (1932: 540) resolved this by identifying *naga taru* as a pattern:

Puan naga taru: ‘the calling dragons’; a name given to one of the gold sireh-bowls that form part of the Perak regalia. *Naga t.* is a pattern: lines turning aside (to call) when about to converge (in battle).

This is why, according to Wilkinson, Winstedt, and probably their interlocutors at the Perak court, the box is called *naga taru* despite the fact that no *naga* or dragons appear on it. Attention to the history of the term itself suggests that the identification of a pattern known as *naga taru* may be an example of folk etymology on the part of Perak informants and/or circular reasoning on the part of Wilkinson and Winstedt.⁷ Wilkinson and

⁴This is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article. However, I am grateful to IMW’s anonymous reviewer for the very pertinent observation that perhaps the only set of regalia that can be claimed to be fully desacralised is that created for the very recent tradition of the office of Yang Dipertuan Agong, established by the Constitution of 1957.

⁵<<http://sultan.perak.gov.my/index.php/informasi-kesultanan/alat-alat-kebesaran-negeri-perak>>

⁶One set of the electrotypes are now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. <<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O470914/betel-box-elkington--co/>> After some items were burgled from the Raffles Museum, new reproductions were produced by Elkington & Co.

⁷As Gallop (2013a: 145) notes with respect to the name of the Perak seal, ‘there is a worrying circularity to their [Wilkinson and Winstedt’s] treatment of the name of the sacred piece of wood . . . all the variant names of the seal encountered in the different recensions of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* were probably simply different scribal corruptions of the original Mingkabau *kamat/gamat*, until a consensus emerged around the name *kempa*, which already conveyed the meaning of a pressing or sealing implement. But as can be seen from the accounts by Wilkinson and Winstedt above, the terms *kamat*, *gamat*, *kampit* and *gempita* are used almost interchangeably, and thus we find in his dictionary that Winstedt (1959: 90) explains *gamat* with *kamat*, *kampit*, *gempita*, and under *kempa* he equates *cap Kempa* with *cap Gempita* (Winstedt 1959: 152). In his great Jawi dictionary of 1903, Wilkinson (rather hopefully) derives *kempa* from the Persian for ‘a seal of state’ (Wilkinson 1985: 534), but this word is in fact unknown in Persian’.



Figure 2. Electrotype replica of Perak *puan naga taru*, Victoria & Albert Museum (REPRO. 1887-72). Image copyright and used with the permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum. <<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O470914/betel-box-elkington-co/>>



Figure 3. First durbar of the Federated Malay States, Kuala Kangsar, Perak, 1897. Image in the public domain. Leiden University Library Digital Collections: <<http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:788037>>

Winstedt (1934: 163) also assert that the *puan naga taru* dated from the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Shah, which is to say the beginning of the 16th century. Both Perak aristocrats and British officials may have been invested in asserting the ancient origins of Malay

material culture. Winstedt (1991: 132), in particular, was of the opinion that the greatest products of Malay culture could be traced to the Melaka sultanate. Writing of a silver pedestral tray in the Perak regalia, Winstedt and Wilkinson (1934: 164) argue that it ‘probably dates from the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century AD and may have been made in old Malacca where Malay, Javanese and Chinese influences met and intermingled. The presence of plants and animals in the decoration suggests a period when Islam was a recent and weak influence’. Winstedt’s method for establishing the date of Malay texts has been criticised by Braginsky (2004: 8–10) for being based on an assumption of ‘simple, static borrowing’ rather than ‘dynamic processes of selective appropriation and subsequent adaptation, re-shaping and transfiguration’. It is clear that Winstedt applied the same method to other material objects, with similarly problematic results.

There are abundant references in Malay textual sources to a *puan naga taru* – and a great diversity of possibilities as to what the thing so named actually is. It seems likely that while the name, and its inclusion among enumerations of essential Malay royal regalia, is very old indeed, the identification of the octagonal Perak betel box as the *puan naga taru* may likely be relatively recent and rather circumstantial. In her study of 17th-century Minangkabau *surat cap* – letters of authorisation from the rulers in Pagarruyung, Jane Drakard (1999) provides evidence of an accoutrement of kingship that went by this name. These letters opened with formulae listing the powerful *kebesaran* or regalia possessed by the Minangkabau rajas. A letter from Inderma Syah of Minangkabau in 1724, for instance, claims that he is ‘the Sultan who possesses the tree Punagan Tarun which grows on its own which is a gift from God’ (Drakard 1999: 171). Here one must bear in mind the linguistic slippages involved in these letters, which Drakard has translated into English from the 18th-century Dutch renderings from the original Malay (the Malay originals are now lost, and only the Dutch translations survive in the VOC archives). As Drakard notes, the VOC recipients were unsure whether to understand the term as *puan* (betel box) or *pohon* (tree). It may be, as Drakard (1999: 243) argues, that the ultimate referent is the ‘tree down which a naga descends’, which was ‘a potent image in Buddhist and Hindu mythology’. Remarkably, as Drakard (1999: 244) observes, a tree with the power of granting wishes is listed as one of the attributes of the 14th-century west Sumatran ruler Adityawarman, a foundational figure for the Minangkabau royal lineage.

The attachment of the appellation *puan naga taru* to the betel box is, as Drakard (1999: 244) suggests, ‘a means of giving contemporary material substance to an ancient name’. Like the monarch himself, it is but the current bearer of an ancient title that can be traced back to the font of Malay kingship at Bukit Seguntang in Palembang. Although by this stage it had lost any conscious association with Hindu-Buddhist wish-granting trees, the idea that a Malay ruler ought to have an object by this name remained. The same may be true of other items of the Perak regalia. In her meticulous study of another Perak regalia item, the *cap halilintar* or ‘lightning seal’ of Perak, Gallop (2013a: 141–142) has shown how the object mentioned in different manuscript copies of the ultimate Malay dynastic annal *Sejarah Melayu/Sulalat al-Salatin* as appearing at the origin point of Malay kingship is in actuality of considerably later provenance:

the presence of the seal among the royal insignia of the princes on Bukit Seguntang, found in some recensions of the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, was introduced into the narrative at the court of Perak, where a seal of state (*cap halilintar*) bestowed by Aceh had become an important part of the royal regalia around the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century. For in the Malay world it is only in Aceh that the royal seal has long functioned as a symbol of sovereignty; in other Malay states this association seems to have come at a later date, in no small part perhaps due to the seal's iconic role in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*.

Thus, there is precedence for the regalia object and its name to come from multiple sources of legitimation, including specifically from a textual source to a material object, rather than vice versa.⁸ Instead of historical practice informing the textual record, it is more likely that what we find in the case of the Perak and other regalia, is a co-evolution of text and object.

Unlike the Perak betel box, whose use and form at least are thoroughly familiar in the Malay world, the Riau-Lingga *cogan* appears to be one of a kind (see Figure 4). It is a trowel- or inverted heart-shaped metal object, with a decorated handle studded with precious stones. One of the *cogan*'s unusual aspects, its shape, is variously identified as a betel leaf or as the *gunungan* or sacred mountain more familiar from *wayang* puppetry (Jessup 1990: 244; *Ancestors* 2017: 47). No similar object is known from other Malay world royal courts.⁹ The Riau-Lingga *cogan* has long been on public display (first at the Weltevreden Museum in colonial Batavia, at present at the Museum Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta), and has been extensively exhibited elsewhere in modern times (Jessup 1990: 212, 244; Bennett 2005: 19, 266; Marwoto-Johan 2005: 148–150; Brinkgreve et al. 2010: 127; *Ancestors* 2017: 47; Murphy et al. 2019: 299). For over a century, it has been the property of the overarching state that subsumed the Riau sultanate – first the colonial government and then the Republic of Indonesia – and has long been designated as an art object rather than a living vessel of sovereignty.

In spite of the dearth of other examples of similar objects, *cogan* are repeatedly mentioned in Malay texts describing royal ceremonies. The earliest of these textual traces date to the 17th century, but it is by no means clear what a *cogan* in fact is. At times it appears to be a sort of metal trident, at others a flag or a banner.¹⁰ These texts are notable for displaying significant Persian influence, and it is in Mughal representations of royal processions that a similarly shaped standard can be seen.¹¹ The next cluster of references in Malay texts comes from the late 18th century and into the early 20th century, and are

⁸ Something similar is suggested in the case of the Balinese kris studied by Lene Pedersen (2008: 214–237), which is alleged to be Majapahit and is mentioned in Balinese historical sources, but where there is no way of establishing the correlation between the name and the object.

⁹ The Pahang *cogan* appears to have been made in the 20th century, and to be derived from the Riau one.

¹⁰ In *Hikayat Iskandar Dhu'l Qarnayn*, it seems to be a metal weapon: 'Maka ujar rakannya itu, "Berapakah ada senjata yang hendak kau tikamkan akan Raja Iskandar itu." Maka dikeluarkannya suatu cogan, tiga penjuru matanya tajam,' 312:21). In the *Bustan al-Salatin*, parts of which are from 17th-century Aceh, the *cogan* again appears to be a metal object ('daripada cogan emas yang beralam keemasan, dan beberapa daripada cogan suasana yang beralamkan zarzari dan makhmal,' BS.R 2/13:241). In *Hikayat Seri Rama*, it may be a sort of flag or banner, since it is listed after pennants made from gold-embossed silk ('beberapa-beberapa panji-panji daripada sutera dewangga yang keemasan dan beberapa cogan', 673:11). All the references in this note are derived from the Malay Concordance Project (MCP, <<https://mcp.anu.edu.au>>), and use the referencing system described for each text on that website.

¹¹ See for example Emperor Akbar II's procession pictured in the British Library, BL Add Or 888. <<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/addorimss/a/019addor0005475u00059ve0.html>> For a brief overview of Persian influences in insular Southeast Asia see R. Michael Feener and Chiara Formichi (2015: 6–8).



Figure 4. Riau *cogan*, Museum Nasional Indonesia, E.13. Photograph by Annabel Teh Gallop, 2019.

almost all from the Johor-Riau-Lingga area.¹² By this time, it seems no longer to have been obvious to readers what a *cogan* is. For example, the 1779 manuscript of *Adat Raja-Raja Melayu* glosses *cogan* as a large flag.¹³ Overall, the textual evidence suggests that *cogan* were known in 17th-century Aceh, perhaps as a result of the well established Persianate influence on courtly style there. Mentions of *cogan* then reappear almost exclusively in Johor-Riau texts in the 19th century and later. It therefore appears that the *cogan* may be a Riau revival of Acehnese tradition – a reinvention perhaps intended to make a connection between a polity struggling against increasing European hegemony and the pre-eminent Malay sultanate of an earlier age.

¹² For example: *Salasilah Melayu dan Bugis* (Riau, 1865), *Syair Raja Damsyik* (Riau, 1864), *Hikayat Johor serta Pahang* (Johor, 1917). A large number of uses come from *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, which is very widespread but has obvious affiliations with the Johor-Riau-Melaka region. See *cogan* on <mcp.anu.edu.au>

¹³ 'terdirilah *cogan* alam, alamat raja-raja berangkat berarak yakninya *cogan* itu bendera besar', 54:1, MCP.

The earliest documented attestation of the actual Riau-Lingga *cogan* is in fact only in 1913, when the Riau regalia items were inventoried in the proceedings of their new keepers, the Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences (*Notulen 1913*: 112–125). While art historical or stylistic analysis would be required to establish the likely date of manufacture of the *cogan*, it is prudent to follow the most recent catalogues in dating it only to ‘before 1913’ (*Ancestors 2017*: 47; Murphy et al. 2019: 299). The importance of this conservative stance is that it is now widely assumed (in media reports and also by local historians¹⁴) that the *cogan* was part of the regalia seized from Engku Puteri by the Dutch in 1822. In contrast, no specific items of Riau regalia are named in the textual sources of that event currently available.¹⁵ Begbie, who may have heard it from Engku Puteri herself when he met her in Melaka, notes that Sultan Mahmud Syah of Lingga presented his chosen successor Tunku Hussain with a flag and a seal,¹⁶ but makes no mention of a *cogan*. This is in marked contrast to the emphasis placed on the *cogan* in more recent histories of Riau, where it has come to exemplify the Sultanate itself (Syahri and Raja Murad 2006), to say nothing of its prominence in public representations of the past in present-day Riau province, such as the giant replica in front of the Museum Raja Ali Haji in Batam.

In the absence of art historical methods, one way of establishing a date for the *cogan* is by examining its extensive Jawi inscription. While Gallop (2013b) has studied ownership inscriptions on Malay silverware, there are no known comparable examples of Malay ceremonial metal objects with extensive text. Certain aspects of the inscription are thoroughly characteristic of articulations of Malay kingship, such as the claimed descent from the lineage of Bukit Seguntang and from Iskandar Dhū'l-Qarnayn (several examples of which have occurred in the discussion of the Perak betel box above). However, it is somewhat unusual that the object does not name any particular sultan, as would have been normal practice, and in fact does not even name Riau, Lingga, or Johor. Instead, the inscription invokes ‘all the polities that are within the region of the Malay lands’.¹⁷ The use of the ethnonym ‘*tanah Melayu*’, while common by the early 20th century, is not found in Malay royal letters or seals before the mid 19th century. Instead, the usual practice was to refer to authority over places. A 1719 letter from Sultan Abdul Jalil, for instance, proclaims him as ‘*Sultan Johor dan Pahang*’ (Kratz 1979: 55), and a letter from Sultan Mahmud Syah almost a century later uses the same toponyms in the formulation ‘he who holds the throne in the state of Johor and Pahang and their tributaries’.¹⁸ As Virginia Matheson (1986: 5) notes, the ‘name of the sultanate changed according to the current royal capital. In the seventeenth century it was known as the kingdom of Johor, in the eighteenth century as Riau-Lingga (with the sultan’s residence at various sites on the island of Riau/Bintan) and after

¹⁴ For example, ‘*Ada cogan Engku Puteri Raja Hamidah di Museum Linggam Cahaya*,’ *Batam Pos*, 7 July 2018 and Aswandi Syahri and Raja Murad (2006). I thank Jan van der Putten for providing me with a copy of the latter publication.

¹⁵ It is not mentioned, for example, in the description of the seizure of the regalia in Raja Ali Haji’s *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (Matheson and 1982: 328).

¹⁶ ‘... as a proof of his [Sultan Mahmud’s] attachment and intention that Tuankoo Houssain should succeed to the crown, the Sulthaun caused him to hoist the royal standard, he himself displaying the white flag which is emblematical of a retirement from the cares and anxieties of empire. He further invested him with the grand seal of the empire, termed in Malay, “Chap de Rajah” which seal Tuankoo Houssain uses to this day’, P.J. Begbie (1834: 73).

¹⁷ ‘*segala negeri yang di dalam daerah tanah Melayu*,’ see Appendix for full text and translation.

¹⁸ ‘*yang mempunyai tahta kerajaan negeri Johor dan Pahang serta daerah takluknya*,’ British Library MSS Eur.F.148/4, f. 105.

ca. 1790 when a sultan moved to Lingga, the kingdom was officially known as Lingga-Riau. Between 1903–1911 when the last sultan, Abdul Rahman returned to Penyengat, the kingdom was again Riau-Lingga’.

Nor is ‘*tanah Melayu*’ in widespread use in historical texts of the pre-colonial period. The 17th-century dynastic chronicle now known, due to European philological intervention, as *Sejarah Melayu*, does not in fact deploy the term ‘Melayu’ often, but rather referring to the toponym ‘Melaka’. The use of the term ‘Melayu’ as an ethnoym, and indeed the very idea of ethnic identity, as opposed to allegiance to a particular place or ruler – seems to occur especially or even exclusively in the work of Malay writers in contact with Europeans, as Chambert-Loir (2017: 122) notes. This makes sense in the terms of the obsession, on the part of British scholar-officials like Raffles and Leyden, with identifying and delineating a Malay race (Müller 2014: 170–196). Yet even Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir, who worked closely with colonial scholars, uses ‘*tanah Melayu*’ only twice in his *Hikayat Abdullah*. Indeed, one of these instances is a mention of Abdullah’s contribution to Begbie’s account of ‘matters to do with the origins of the Malays and the Malay lands’¹⁹ – that is, it is used with reference to a European epistemological framing. Raja Ali Haji, the pre-eminent historiographer of the Riau-Johor Sultanate, uses ‘*tanah Melayu*’ just once in his *Tuhfat al-Nafis*. Significantly, it is in reference to the division of Johor-Riau territory: ‘the English and Dutch governments had agreed to divide the lands below the winds between Sultan Husain and Sultan Abd al-Rahman, with each having his own boundaries. The land of the Malays, the dark-skinned people, which lay to the starboard of Indiamen bound for China was the legal allocation of the Dutch government, while that on the port side was allocated to the English government’.²⁰ This is a striking description, Raja Ali Haji presenting Malay readers quite literally with the view from ‘the deck of the [European] ship’ (van Leur 1955: 261). It is as if the category ‘*tanah Melayu*’, the land of the Malays, can only occur in this Eurocentric perspective, and in the context of the dissolution of local rulers’ hold on territory. While the textual instances adduced here are obviously only one kind of evidence, it suggests the likelihood that the *cogan* was created in the mid to late 19th century. It was not part of the regalia held by Engku Puteri, but more likely was commissioned by one of the sultans who ruled following the Anglo-Dutch division of the region, precisely in order to forge a link to a validating past and to articulate a future based on ethnicity rather than land.

Riau *cogan* and Perak betel box in colonial times

Though regalia objects ought not be considered the kings on the chessboard, they were certainly powerful pieces, fought over in the complex machinations between European and local actors during colonial times. In both Riau and Perak, colonial incursions were occasioned by succession crises within the Malay polity, and here the regalia of

¹⁹ ‘*dari hal hal asal usul Melayu dan tanah-tanah Melayu*’, 364:10, via MCP. Anthony Reid (2001: 304) similarly notes that ‘*tanah Melayu*’ may be influenced by English usage.

²⁰ ‘*gebermen Belanda sudah muafakat perbahagian tanah di bawah angin antara Sultan Husain dengan Sultan Abd al-Rahman, iaitu masing-masing ada perbatasannya, iaitu mana-mana pihak tanah Melayu orang-orang kulit hitam di kanan kapal anjiman pergi ke negeri Cina, iaitu hak bahagian gebermen Belanda dan mana-mana yang sebelah kirinya hak bahagian gebermen*’ via MCP.

course had a crucial role. The British officers Birch and Swettenham harried Sultan Ismail of Perak with demands to hand over the regalia (Barlow 1995: 66–71). According to the account in Swettenham's diaries, Ismail first demanded that his rival and the British candidate for sultan, Abdullah, proceed upriver himself to receive the regalia, then said that he would only give it up with the agreement of the assembled Perak chiefs, and then reneged entirely (Burns and Cowan 1975: 20). To thicken the plot even further, Sultan Abdullah 'evidently gave out that he did not want the regalia and one witness to these events, an advisor to Ismail, recorded later that the Sultan [Abdullah] sent word to [his rival] Ismail urging him not to give up the regalia' – as quoted in the epigraph to this article (Burns and Cowan 1975: 25). Once Sultan Ismail had been cornered in Upper Perak, he at last agreed to give the regalia into the hands of the Sultan of Kedah – at least another legitimate Malay ruler – as intermediary. In the meantime, Sultan Abdullah was implicated in the assassination of the British Resident, Birch, and subsequently exiled to the Seychelles, rendering the capture of the regalia rather moot. Sultan Abdullah's son succeeded him, but as Regent rather than ruler, and was only installed as Sultan Yusuf in 1887, shortly before his death, suggesting that the colonial government kept the regalia safely out of proceedings for some time.

In the year before Sultan Yusuf's installation, the Perak regalia travelled further than any Malay royal regalia before, being sent to London and exhibited in the Straits Courts display at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886. This was an extravaganza of trophies from Victoria's empire, including a Mughal throne, a Maori tomb, and the captured regalia of King Thibaw of Mandalay, as well as displays of the economic products of the colonies and indeed of colonial subjects themselves. One record of the exhibition singled out a bowl from the Perak regalia for its 'considerable artistic merit', and relayed a 'history' of the regalia, telling how it originated from Bukit Seguntang and Raja Chulan's sojourn under the sea, 'as translated by Mr Swettenham from the original by H.H. Rajah Dris' (Cundall 1886: 41). The relationship between Swettenham, then Executive Commissioner of the Straits Settlements, and Raja Idris, viewed by the British as a potential enlightened reformer along the lines of Johor's Sultan Abu Bakar (Khoo 1986: 16), was clearly key to the public exhibition of the regalia, and to the communication of colourful native tales about its origin to the Victorian public. No mention is made, in contrast, of the bloody events of the Perak War. *The Colonial and Indian Exhibition 1886: Supplement to the Art Journal* (1886: 27) blandly observes that 'the objects in the Perak Regalia . . . came into our possession from the reigning Sultan at the time of our assuming the protectorate, and have been carefully cleaned and repaired by a London silversmith' – the colonial government as the restorer of Malay aristocratic tradition. But even as the Perak regalia items appeared for the first time as art objects, rather than vessels of *daulat*, apparently stripped of political significance, their very presence in the exhibition spoke volumes about the transfer of power that had taken place from Malay sovereigns to British bureaucrats. The electrotype copying of the regalia, carried out in London by Elkington & Sons, and the eventual transfer of the copies to what would become the Victoria and Albert Museum was another violation of Malay prohibition, another move from powerful living object to antiquarian curio.

The next unusual ceremonial display of the Perak regalia was at an event which Swettenham accurately described as 'absolutely unprecedented in Malay history' (quoted in Amoroso 2014: 49), the *darbar* of the Federated Malay States (FMS) in 1897. The

darbar may be considered one of the foremost examples of invented tradition, as Cohn's chapter (1983: 165–209) on the darbar in British India in Hobsbawm and Ranger (1883) indicates. It was just as novel in British Malaya, where, before the colonial era yoked them together in the entirely new political arrangement of the Federated Malay States, reigning sultans would never normally have met in person. As Amoroso (2014: 78) observes, the darbar was 'a ritual conceived in direct compensation, as it were, for the loss of state power which came with the centralisation of the Federated Malay States'. The *puan naga taru* appears literally front and centre in the group photograph from this event, cradled on the lap of a royal attendant (see Figure 3). Alongside it appear other attendants and other Perak regalia items, and behind it are seated the four rulers of the FMS and the highest colonial officials. As Amoroso (2014: 79–81) has documented, the choice of Perak as the host involved a great deal of delicate diplomatic manoeuvring, and may have been used by Sultan Idris I of Perak as a way of cementing his position as first among equals. Certainly, the appearance of the Perak regalia surrounding the assembled sultans was surely intended to convey the dominance of the host. If the British wished to inculcate a sense of horizontal alignment, with the Malay rulers and the British colonial officers literally lined up next to each other, the encirclement of the assembled dignitaries by Perak regalia and attendants suggests a symbolic reassertion of the older mandalas of power.

The history of the Riau *cogan* in colonial times is similarly one of attempts to reinvent Malay kingship in the face of loss of political authority. A succession dispute followed the death of Sultan Mahmud II in 1812, with the British favouring Tungku Hussain and the Dutch, Tungku Abdul Rahman, and each side having the backing of particular court factions. In this case, the interregnum dragged on for ten years, until the Dutch seized the regalia from the keeping of Sultan Mahmud II's widow, Engku Puteri. The Dutch were then able to install their chosen candidate as Sultan Abdul Rahman in Riau, while the British installed Sultan Hussain as Sultan of Johor. The old kingdom of Johor-Riau was thus sundered, and the division of the entire region between the Dutch and the British ratified in the 1824 Treaty of London. At this time, courtly circles across the Malay world were interested in and engaging with colonially mediated modernity. Tim Barnard (1994: 17–46) has shown this with respect to the Bugis-Malay court at Penyengat in the late 19th century, and it can also be seen in the new styles of consumption and display by Sultan Mahmud IV of Riau-Lingga (1835–57), who built himself a 'Dutch-style' palace using craftsmen brought from Singapore.²¹ While little has been published to date about the last Riau-Lingga sultan, Abdul Rahman II (1883–1911), surviving photographs of him (see Figure 5) suggest again an active refashioning of royal authority, drawing on both European and Malay models. A manuscript copied in Riau in 1864 mentions a *cogan* with a jewel-studded handle,²² which might suggest an 1850s or 1860s origin. Thus, it seems probable that the *cogan* may have been made for Abdul Rahman II, or his predecessors Sultan Mahmud IV or Sultan Sulaiman II as part of a new articulation of Malay royal authority, one based on ethnicity rather than on territory.

²¹ *istana kuning cara Olanda*, LUB Klinkert 138, ff. 100, 11.

²² *Cogan alamat ada terdiri / Batang bertatah intan baiduri* (Syair Raja Damsyik, 1390c). See MCP. It should be noted that the text is a fictional work about the Raja of Damascus, and that practically everything in such texts is jewel-encrusted.



Figure 5. Sultan Abdul Rahman II of Riau-Lingga, 1904. Image in the public domain, Leiden University Library Digital Collections: <<http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:782175>>

When the Riau sultanate was formally dissolved by the Netherlands Indies government in 1911, because of what were perceived to be the anti-colonial activities of Sultan Abdul Rahman II, the royal family and their attendants departed en masse for Singapore and Johor, leaving the regalia behind.²³ It had apparently not been in their possession, but in the keeping of the Dutch Resident. In 1913, the regalia, now certainly including the *cogan*, was accessioned into the collection of the Batavian Society for Arts and Sciences. Matheson's (1986: 17) study of *Keringkasan Sejarah Melayu*, an historical work published in 1930, which puts forth the viewpoint of the Lingga royal line, notes that its author, Tengku Mohd Saleh, was inspired to write the work by seeing the *cogan* on display in the museum in colonial Batavia. The *cogan*'s inscription is reproduced on the first page of Tengku Mohd Saleh's book (Matheson 1986: 17). In

²³They did manage to bring the *nobat* instruments, a set manufactured during the period of Dutch control, to Singapore. This then passed to the Terengganu court in 1917. See Raja Iskandar (2022: 49).

this case, the *cogan*, once imbued with supernatural force and now objectified in a museum cabinet, is quite literally the starting point for the narrative, which spans the mythic and the mundane; the narrative moves from Sang Nila Utama, alleged to be a descendant of Iskandar Dhū'l-Qarnayn, and encompasses Sultan Abdul Rahman II, 'fired by the Dutch'.²⁴ As Tengku Mohd Saleh was no doubt aware, the circumstances by which the *cogan* came to be in a display case in Batavia were one and the same as those which led to a sacrally annointed king being reduced to a functionary, whose position could be and indeed was summarily terminated by the colonial state.

Riau *cogan* and Perak betel box in the age of mechanical reproduction

In the modern age, the desacralisation of regalia has proceeded apace because of two intertwined aspects of modernity: the ascendancy of colonial power and of reform-minded, rationalised Islam. If in the 19th century Malay regalia were widely believed to be alive, to hold power in themselves, such a claim is no longer publicly defensible. This change in the valence of the regalia can best be seen in the question of reproduction of regalia items, the copying of which was once expressly forbidden. The desacralisation of Malay kingship may also be seen in the discourse around another item of the Perak regalia, an object known as the *mestika* or *geliga embun*, which is either a 'talisman of petrified dew' given by the woman ruler of Upper Perak to the 16th-century Sultan Mudzaffar Shah, or merely a glass ball (Winstedt and Wilkinson 1934: 163). A counter to this demystifying claim is the assertion, apparently by a member of the Perak royal family, that the original was taken by the British and replaced with a replica.²⁵ In one sense, this is self-evident – the reshaping of Perak into a constitutional monarchy, beginning with colonial rule and continuing into independent Malaysia, has involved the marginalisation of beliefs and practices connected to the regalia as living objects inhabited by the state jinns. The official website of the Sultan of Perak's office includes documentation and description of the regalia items, but no mention of annual rituals to feed the resident jinn.²⁶ It is possible that these rituals still take place, but they are certainly not part of the public presentation of the sultanate, which has become ever more visible, with ceremonies reported in the press, broadcast on television, and videos posted on YouTube. The 2015 installation of the current Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Shah, for instance, was televised by the Malaysian station Astro Awani and may be viewed online.²⁷ Featuring prominent use of regalia items, the ceremony was described by the television commentators as the 'Istiadat Tabal Pusaka' (Regalia Installation Ceremony), and included a procession bearing a Qur'an, led by the officially appointed Islamic minister to the court, the Orang Kaya Imam Paduka Tuan. This post is held by Dr Afifi al-Akiti, who is also a Fellow of the Centre for Islamic Studies at Oxford University, an indication of the rationalised, modern, and internationally legible form of Islam to which the Perak court is now affiliated. That such demonstration is necessary is suggested by reformist Islamic criticisms of Malay court practices. A recent book, whose title may be

²⁴ '*dipetjat Belanda*', quoted in Matheson (1986: 37–38).

²⁵ Perak regalia <<http://sembangkuala.wordpress.com/2009/06/25/the-perak-regalia-2/>> Comment by Raja Zarith, 16 December 2009.

²⁶ <<http://sultan.perak.gov.my/index.php/informasi-kesultanan-tepi/alat-kebesaran-negeri-perak>>

²⁷ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lq3PtaiaYak>>

translated as ‘Magical specialists and associating with jinns from the Islamic perspective’, decries the great influence of such specialists ‘among Malays generally, and in the palace particularly’ (Jahid 2004: 24). In Selangor, according to one palace official’s account, the regalia were destroyed during the reign of Sultan Muhammad (1826–57) by one Tuan Syekh Abdul Ghani, who ‘forbade the keeping of such objects’ (Wan Mohd. Amin 1966: 89). More recently, even in the generally more ‘syncretic’ courts of Java, reformist Islamic disapproval has been gaining ground (Rodemeier 2014: 145–146).

The adaptation of tradition to assert an articulation of Malay kingship acceptable in modern times is also apparent in the wearing of the dragon armlets by the Sultan and Sultanah over their sleeves.²⁸ The bare arms for which the armlets were originally made are no longer acceptable. Another example of evolving tradition is the reception of the sword by the Sultan, in which he picks it up and kisses the blade, a gesture that can probably be directly traced to European court ceremonial. The spatial arrangement of the 2015 ceremony is also revealing. Rather than sitting in state with the regalia arrayed before him, as Sultan Idris I did in 1899 (Gullick 1987: 33–34), the regalia are brought to the throne and then removed – with the exception of the Qur’an, which was placed on a stand at Sultan Nazrin’s right. The regalia are relegated to the status of the Sultan’s ‘accessories’, as one commenter on the Youtube video of the installation put it,²⁹ rather than being the legitimators of his reign. In sum, the Perak coronation deploys the inherited royal regalia in a way that seeks to be both acceptable to contemporary Islamic mores and recognisable beyond the Malay world. While the peers over whom Sultan Idris sought to elevate himself at the 1897 *durbar* were the heads of the other Federated Malay States, those of Sultan Nazrin Shah are not just the other Malay rulers, but also the ruling elites of the wider region (notably Brunei), Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. The assimilation of royal ceremonial to international norms would appear to serve this end.

The contrast with the situation in Riau is instructive.³⁰ Here, the *cogan* has accrued greater public recognition and significance than any item of the Perak regalia, and it has done so in the absence of the monarchy to which it was once attached. The emergence of independent Indonesia did not of course bring about a revival of the sultanates (with the well known exception of Yogyakarta). For much of the era from 1949 to the fall of Suharto, the relationship between Jakarta and Riau had aspects in common with that that between Batavia and Riau in the colonial period, at least in so far as regional aspirations for autonomy were concerned. Following independence, like the rest of the holdings of the *Wetvevreden* Museum, the Riau regalia items became the property of the National Museum in Jakarta. Jakarta did not permit the return of royal objects to Riau, even on a temporary basis – allegedly ‘for reasons of security’ (Brinkgreve et al. 2007: 177). The central government did, in contrast, allow the return of objects from Badung and Tabanan to Bali in 2006 for a commemoration of the centennial of the *puputan* (the mass suicide of the royal court triggered by colonial attack), and to Kutai in 2001 for the enthronement of Sultan Aji Mohammed Salehuddin II (Brinkgreve

²⁸ See for instance <<https://www.astroawani.com/foto-malaysia/pertabalan-dyimm-paduka-seri-sultan-perak-xxxv-2371/berkenan-berangkat-4-26318>>

²⁹ ‘Banyak aksesori sultan perak ni’ Din Dang30, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lq3PtaiaYak>>

³⁰ For wider analysis of the neo-sultanate movement in Riau, see Alan Darmawan [2024, article in this issue], and his doctoral dissertation (Darmawan 2021).

et al. 2007: 177). This is likely due to specific dynamics between particular provinces and individual Presidents, but the similarity between the colonial and postcolonial central state is evident: both use the regalia to bestow or withhold legitimacy from potentially restive provincial polities.

Jakarta did, however, acquiesce to the Riau provincial government's request for a copy of the *cogan* (Brinkgreve et al. 2007: 177). Replicas of the *cogan* now proliferate in Riau. As has been argued by Sarah Moser and Alyssa Shamsa Wilbur (2017), Riau royal symbols are now no longer associated with a sultanate but rather with Malay identity itself – a process that, as argued above, can be seen in the articulation of ‘*tanah Melayu*’ in the Riau *cogan* itself. It is then possible – and inevitable, perhaps, in a context where expression of ethnic identity is gaining increasing importance – for the *cogan* to be replicable. The ‘official’ replica is on display in the Museum Kota Tanjung Pinang, but unofficial copies abound. At a local wedding, guests were able to pose for photographs with a replica of the *cogan*.³¹ Admittedly, this was the wedding of a descendant of the Riau royal family, but such light-hearted use of a regalia object would be unthinkable where there is a royal family wielding real power, as in Perak. Nor can one purchase, in Malaysia, replicas of regalia items as tourist souvenirs, whereas in Indonesia one can order job lots of the *cogan*.³² Once exclusive to the royal family, the *cogan* has become a symbol of Malayness, and a commodity marketable to any who so identify.

Conclusion

Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983: 6) write of ‘the use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes’. This examination of the Perak *puan naga taru* and the Riau *cogan* has suggested how names and terminology attested in 17th- and 18-century sources were applied to objects that are most likely of 19th century production, and has traced the significance of these objects to Malay kingship and identity in the colonial and the contemporary periods. In the case of Riau, the *cogan* was, probably in its conception in the 19th century and certainly in its current context, used to assert Malay ethnic identity, increasingly uncoupled from allegiance to a particular dynastic lineage or *kerajaan*. In Perak, the betel box is part of a regalia that has moved from being imbued with supernatural force towards a material manifestation of royal pomp, within a modernised and rationalised Islamic constitutional monarchy. While the belief in *pusaka* is of long standing in insular Southeast Asia, the particular objects discussed here are likely of more recent manufacture, made to meet contemporary exigencies. Yet, in both cases, the conscious and dynamic invocation of tradition – which for Amoroso (2014: 9), is what constitutes ‘traditionalism’ – remains essential to understanding the significance of these regalia objects.

However unmoored from historical fact, and however different from earlier conceptions of them, today Malay regalia remain potent objects for making claims to power and legitimacy. One of the most apt examples may be the Muzium Alat Kebesaran Diraja, or Royal Regalia Museum, in Brunei, the Malay sultanate that today wields the

³¹ Pers. comm., Alan Darmawan, 19 September 2019.

³² <<https://1souvenir.indonetwork.co.id/product/souvenir-miniatur-cogan-cinderamata-cogan-kepri-plakat-cogan-cendermata-daerah-souvenir-cogan-4295574>>

most autocratic power, and also projects the most syariah-minded agenda. This museum was set up in 1992 in a building constructed by the current Sultan's father as a memorial to Winston Churchill. The building itself is said to be designed to express the Brunei national 'concept', '*Melayu Islam Beraja*' (Malay, Muslim and be-kinged), and contains an array of regalia items of apparently recent manufacture, such as a huge wooden palanquin used to transport the sultan on ceremonial occasions.³³ In this Brunei museum – a form of display we have seen first introduced in the Perak and Riau cases by colonial intervention, hand in hand with the diminution of Malay royal power – the colonial past is swept away (no more reverence for Churchill), along with any suggestion of practices now considered un-Islamic (no more reverence for guardian spirits). Here, perhaps more conclusively than in other Malay sultanates today, ethnic identity, religion, and the paramountcy of the Sultan are embodied in the regalia.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Note on contributor

Mulaika Hijjas is Senior Lecturer in South East Asian Studies at SOAS University of London. She is the principal investigator for the Leverhulme Research Leadership Award 'Mapping Sumatra's Manuscript Cultures', which is investigating manuscript libraries in Palembang, Aceh and Minangkabau. Email: mh86@soas.ac.uk.

ORCID

Mulaika Hijjas  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8490-0724>

References

Archives

British Library MSS Eur.F.148/4
Leiden University Library Klinkert 138

Publications

- Amoroso, Donna. 2014. *Traditionalism and the ascendancy of the Malay ruling class in colonial Malaya*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Ancestors and rituals*. 2017. Catalogue. Brussels: Europalia Arts Festival and Snoeck.
- Andaya, Barbara Watson. 1979. *Perak: the abode of grace*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1990. *Language and power: exploring political cultures in Indonesia*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press.
- Barlow, Henry. 1995. *Swettenham*. Kuala Lumpur: Southdene.

³³Muzium Alat Kebesaran Diraja <<http://www.museums.gov.bn/Bangunan%20dan%20Galeri/Muzium%20Alat%20Kebesaran%20Diraja.aspx>>

- Barnard, Timothy P. 1994. *Taman penghiburan: entertainment and the Riau elite in the late 19th century*. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 67: 17–46.
- Batam Pos. 2018. Ada cogan Engku Puteri Raja Hamidah di Museum Linggam Cahaya [There is a cogan of Engku Puteri Raja Hamidah in the Museum Lingga Cahaya], 7 July. <<https://batampos.co.id/2018/07/07/ada-cogan-engku-puteri-raja-hamidah-di-museum-linggam-cahaya/>> Accessed 9 January 2024.
- Begbie, P.J. 1834. *The Malayan peninsula*. Madras: Vepery Mission Press.
- Bennett, James (ed.). 2005. *Crescent moon: Islamic art and civilisation in Southeast Asia*. Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia.
- Berg, L.W.C. van den. 1901. De Mohammedaansche vorsten in Nederlandsch-Indie [The Muslim kings in the Netherlands Indies]. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 53 (1): 1–80.
- Braginsky, Vladimir. 2004. *The heritage of traditional Malay literature*. Leiden: KITLV Press.
- Brawn, David M. 1994. Immanent domains: cultural worth in Bone, south Sulawesi. *Social Analysis* 35: 84–101.
- Brinkgreve, F., Scheurleer, P.L. and Stuart-Fox, D. (eds). 2010. *Kemegahan emas di Museum Nasional Indonesia* [The grandeur of gold in the Museum Nasional Indonesia]. Jakarta: Museum Nasional Indonesia.
- Brinkgreve, F., Stuart-Fox, D.J. and Ernawati, Wahyu. 2007. Collections after colonial conflict: Badung and Tabanan 1906–2006. In Pieter ter Keurs (ed.), *Colonial collections revisited*. Leiden: CNWS, pp. 145–185.
- Brus, René. 1984. Sacred heirlooms: the regalia of Yogyakarta and Paku Alam. *Arts of Asia* 14: 67–75.
- Burns, P.L. and Cowan, C.D. 1975. *Sir Frank Swettenham's Malayan journals, 1874–1876*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Chambert-Loir, Henri. 2017. The history of a history: the variant versions of the *Sulalatus Salatin*. *Indonesia* 104: 121–177.
- Choo, Alexandra. 1984. *Silver*. Singapore: National Museum.
- Cohn, Bernard S. 1983. Representing authority in Victorian India. In Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 165–209.
- The colonial and Indian exhibition 1886: supplement to the Art Journal*. 1886. London: George Virtue.
- Cummings, William. 2003. Rethinking the imbrication of orality and literacy: historical discourse in early modern Makassar. *Journal of Asian Studies* 62 (2): 531–551.
- Cundall, Frank (ed.). 1886. *Reminiscences of the colonial and Indian exhibition*. London: William Clowes & Sons.
- Darmawan, Alan. 2021. A country of words: the revival of mak yong theatrical performance and Malay identity formation in Indonesia's Riau islands. PhD thesis, University of Hamburg.
- Darmawan, Alan. 2024. Erecting the submerged tree trunk: Mak Yong theatre and practices of traditionalisation in the Riau Islands. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 52 (152) [article in this issue]. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2024.2294612>>
- Drakard, Jane. 1999. *A kingdom of words: language and power in Sumatra*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Feener, R. Michael and Formichi, Chiara. 2015. Debating Shi'ism in history. In C. Formichi and M.R. Feener (eds), *Shi'ism in Southeast Asia: 'Alid piety and sectarian constructions*. London: Hurst & Company, pp. 3–16.
- Gallop, Annabel Teh. 2013a. Seals as symbols of sovereignty in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*. In Ben Murtagh and Jelani Harun (eds), *Mengharungi laut sastera Melayu: Crossing the sea of Malay literature*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, pp. 121–158.
- Gallop, Annabel. 2013b. Malay silverware with Jawi inscriptions. Paper presented at the V&A Museum Study Day on Malay Silver, 1 November.
- Gibson, Thomas. 2005. *And the sun pursued the moon: symbolic knowledge and traditional authority among the Makassar*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

- Gullick, J.M. 1987. *Malay society in the nineteenth century: the beginnings of change*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence. 1983. *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jahid Sidek. 2004. *Berpawang dan bersahabat dengan jin daripada perspektif Islam [Magical specialists and associating with jinns from the Islamic perspective]*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications.
- Jessup, Helen Ibbotson. 1990. *Court arts of Indonesia*. New York: Asia Society Galleries.
- Keurs, Pieter (ed). 2007. *Colonial collections revisited*. Leiden: CNWS.
- Khoo, Kay Kim. 1986. The Perak sultanate: ancient and modern. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 59: 1–26.
- Kratz, E.U. 1979. A Malay letter to Louis XV, King of France. *Archipel* 17: 49–61.
- Leur, J.C. van. 1955. *Indonesian trade and society: essays in Asian social and economic history*. The Hague: W. van Hoeve.
- Marwoto-Johan, Irmawati. 2005. Ritual heirlooms in the Islamic kingdoms of Indonesia. In James Bennet (ed.), *Crescent moon: Islamic art and civilisation in Southeast Asia*. Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, pp. 144–157.
- Massignon, L. 2012. Huwa Huwa. In P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition*. <http://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0306> First published online 2012. Accessed 5 January 2024.
- Matheson, Virginia and Andaya, Barbara Watson (eds and trans). 1982. *Raja Ali Haji's Tuhfat al-Nafis*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Matheson, Virginia. 1986. Strategies of survival: the Malay royal line of Riau-Lingga. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 17: 5–38.
- Maxwell, W.E. 1882. The history of Perak from native sources. *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 9: 305–321.
- Milner, Anthony. 2012. 'Identity monarchy': interrogating heritage for a divided Malaysia. *Southeast Asian Studies* 1 (2): 191–212.
- Moser, Sarah and Wilbur, Alyssa Shamsa. 2017. Constructing heritage through state architecture in Indonesia's Riau islands *ABE (Architecture Beyond Europe) Journal* 11 <<https://doi.org/10.4000/abe.3643>>
- Müller, Martin. 2014. Manufacturing Malayness: British debates on the Malay nation, civilisation, race and language in the early nineteenth century. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 42: 170–196.
- Murphy, S.A., Wang, N., and Green, A. (eds). 2019. *Raffles in Southeast Asia: revisiting the scholar and statesman*. Singapore: Asian Civilisations Museum.
- Notulen. 1913. Rijkssieraden van Riouw-Lingga [State regalia from Riau-Lingga]. *Notulen van de Algemeene en Directievergaderingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 51: 112–125.
- Pedersen, Lene. 2008. An ancestral keris, Balinese kingship, and a modern presidency. In Jan Mrázek and Morgan Pitelka (eds), *What's the use of art? Asian visual and material culture in context*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 214–237.
- Proudfoot, Ian. 2003. An expedition into the politics of Malay philology. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 76 (1): 1–76.
- Raja Iskandar bin Raja Halid. 2018. The *nobat* in early Malay literature: a look into the *Hikayat Patani*. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46 (135): 168–197.
- Raja Iskandar bin Raja Halid. 2022. *The Malay nobat: a history of power, acculturation, and sovereignty*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Ranger, Terence. 1983. The invention of tradition in colonial Africa. In Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 211–262.
- Reid, Anthony. 2001. Understanding *Melayu* (Malay) as a source of diverse modern identities. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32 (3): 295–313.

- Rodemeier, Susanne. 2014. *Mubeng beteng: a contested ritual of circumambulation in Java*. In Volker Gottowik (ed.), *Dynamics of religion in Southeast Asia: magic and modernity*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 133–154.
- Sastrawan, Wayan Jarrah. 2020. How to read a chronicle: the *pararaton* as a conglomerate text. *Indonesia and the Malay World* 48 (140): 2–23.
- Skeat, Walter William. 1900. *Malay magic: being an introduction to the folklore and popular religion of the Malay Peninsula*. Reprinted 2005. Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS.
- Stevens, Harm. 2015. *Bitter spice: Indonesia and the Netherlands from 1600*. Amsterdam: Vantilt.
- Swettenham, Frank Athelstane. 1895. *Malay sketches*. London: John Lane.
- Syahri, Aswandi and Raja Murad. 2006. *Cogan: regalia kerajaan Johor-Riau-Lingga dan Pahang*. Riau: Dinas Pariwisata, Seni dan Budaya.
- Wan Mohd. Amin bin Wan Mohd. Said. 1966. *Pesaka Selangor*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Wiener, Margaret J. 2007. The magical life of things. In Pieter ter Keurs (ed.), *Colonial collections revisited*. Leiden: CNWS, pp. 45–70.
- Wilkinson, R.J. 1985. *Kamus Jawi Melayu-Inggeris [Jawi Malay-English dictionary]*. [Facsimile reprint of 1903 dictionary.] Alai, Melaka: Baharudinjoa.
- Wilkinson, R.J. 1908–11. *Papers on Malayan subjects: history*. Kuala Lumpur: FMS Government Press.
- Wilkinson, R.J. 1932. *A Malay-English dictionary (Romanised)*, Part II. Mytilene: Salavopoulos and Kinderlis.
- Winstedt, R.O. and Wilkinson, R.J. 1934. A history of Perak. *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 12 (1): 1–180.
- Winstedt, R.O. 1959. *An abridged Malay-English dictionary*. Singapore: Marican.
- Winstedt, R.O. 1991. *A history of classical Malay literature*. Revised by Yusof A. Talib. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. First published 1939.
- Wray, Leonard. 1908. Native arts and handicrafts. In Arnold Wright (ed.), *Twentieth century impressions of British Malaya: its history, people, commerce, industries, and resources*. London: Lloyd's Greater Britain Publishing Company, pp. 141–153.

Websites

- Astro Awani < <https://www.astroawani.com/foto-malaysia/pertabalan-dymm-paduka-seri-sultan-perak-xxxv-2371/berkenan-berangkat-4-26318> > Accessed 5 January 2024.
- British Library < <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/addorimss/a/019addor0005475u00059ve0.html> > Accessed 25 March 2021.
- Karya Media < <https://1souvenir.indonetwork.co.id/product/souvenir-miniatur-cogan-cindera-mata-cogan-kepri-plakat-cogan-cendermata-daerah-souvenir-cogan-4295574> > Accessed 5 January 2024.
- Kraton Yogyakarta < <https://www.kratonjogja.id/kagungan-dalem/5-kereta-kereta-pusaka-keraton-yogyakarta/> > Accessed 8 January 2024.
- Leiden University Library < <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:806047> > Accessed 5 January 2024.
- Malay Concordance Project < mcp.anu.edu.au > Accessed 5 January 2024.
- Muzium Alat Kebesaran Diraja < <http://www.museums.gov.bn/Bangunan%20dan%20Galeri/Muzium%20Alat%20Kebesaran%20Diraja.aspx> > Accessed 5 January 2024.
- Perak regalia < <http://sembangkuala.wordpress.com/2009/06/25/the-perak-regalia-2/> > Comment by Raja Zarith, 16 December 2009. Accessed 5 January 2024.
- Sultan of Perak Office < <http://sultan.perak.gov.my/index.php/informasi-kesultanan/alat-alat-kebesaran-negeri-perak> > Accessed 5 January 2024.
- Victoria and Albert Museum < <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O53206/national-photographic-record-and-survey-photograph-stone-benjamin-sir/> > Accessed 5 January 2024. < <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O470914/betel-box-elkington-co/> > Accessed 5 January 2024.
- YouTube – installation of the current Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Shah, 2015 < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iq3PtaiaYak> > Accessed 5 January 2024.

Appendix: Text and translation of Riau *cogan*.³⁴

huwa huwa
 bismillāh
 al-rahmān al-rahīm
 bahawa inilah raja yang keturunan
 dari Bukit Seguntang asalnya daripada baginda
 Seri Sultan Iskandar Dhū'l-Qarnayn dan ialah
 raja yang adil lagi berdaulat yang mempunyai tahta
 kerajaan serta kebesaran dan kemuliaan kepada segala negeri yang di dalam
 daerah tanah Melayu dengan kurnia Tuhan Rabb al-'arsh al-'azīm
 atasnya dan dikekalkan Allāh Subhānahu wa Ta'ālā di atas tahta kerajaannya
 ditambahi Allāh pangkatnya yang kebesaran serta darjatnya yang kemuliaan di dalam
*dawlat sa'ādati*³⁵ *'ala al-dawām khallada Allāh mulkahu wa sultānahu wa abbada*
'adlahu wa ihsānahu najāh al-nabī sayyid al-mursalin wa 'alā ālihi wa ṣahbihi
ajma 'in āmīn āmīn Allāhumma āmīn tamat

He is He.³⁶ In the name of Allah, the Merciful and Compassionate. For this is the raja whose descent is from Bukit Seguntang. His origin is from his royal highness Sultan Iskandar Dhū'l-Qarnayn, and he is a raja who is just and sovereign, great and noble with respect to all the countries that are in the region of the Malay lands, by the grace of God, Possessor of the Exalted Throne, upon him, and is maintained by Allah the Sublime and Most High, upon his throne. Allah increases his great rank and his noble repute in *blessed sovereignty in perpetuity, and Allah makes eternal his dominion and rule, and perpetuates his justice and beneficence. Salvation of the Prophet, the Master of the Messengers, and upon all his kin and his companions, āmīn āmīn O Allah āmīn. End.*

³⁴ With thanks to Jessica Rahardjo for invaluable assistance with deciphering and translating the Arabic. Arabic text and translation are italicised in the transcription.

³⁵ Redundant *yā* in the inscription.

³⁶ See L. Massignon (2012).