

Newbold's Malay Manuscripts in India

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Abstrak: *Thomas John Newbold (1807–1850) bertugas sebagai seorang pegawai dalam Rejimen ke-23, Madras Light Infantry, di Melaka di antara 1832–1835. Semasa di Melaka, beliau mengumpulkan beberapa buah manuskrip Melayu. Sekembalinya ke Madras, beliau menghadiahkan koleksinya kepada Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society. Koleksi manuskrip ini meliputi naskhah-naskhah Sejarah Melayu, Adat Aceh, Hikayat Patani, Tajus-Salatin, Hikayat Isma Yatim, Hikayat Hang Tuah dan beberapa buah naskhah lain yang amat menarik dan berharga.*

T.J. Newbold, the author of *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca* (London: J. Murray, 1839), has made some lengthy observations on Malay language and literature. On writing materials, he observed that, 'They use the sharp black splinters of the Ijo for writing, and write in a stiff Arabic character on paper, and when they cannot procure this, on the leaves of certain trees'.¹ This is an interesting observation. For the first time we read of the use of Ijo (*Borassus gomutus*) as a writing implement in Peninsular Malaysia. Whilst the use of paper and the Arabic script (Jawi) is well-known; the use of 'leaves of certain trees' is a novel observation considering that there are no extant Malay manuscripts in the Jawi script on leaves (i.e. palm-leaves) and certainly not from the beginning of the nineteenth century when European paper was available.

The purpose of this article is to shed some light on yet another mystery in our search for Malay manuscripts from documented sources. Thomas John Newbold (1807–1850) served as an officer in the 23rd Regiment, Madras Light Infantry, and was on duty in Melaka for three years from 1832, leaving for Madras, India in August 1835. Whilst in the Straits, he collected some Malay manuscripts which he presented to the 'Royal Asiatic Society of Madras' and published his gift in an article entitled 'Note on Malayan MSS. and Books presented to the Society' in

The Madras Journal of Literature and Science, vol. 7 (1838): 78–88. The reference that this gift was presented to the 'Royal Asiatic Society of Madras' is provided by C.M. Turnbull in her introduction to the reprint edition of Newbold's book published by Oxford University Press in 1971. E.U. Kratz has noted Newbold's article in his *Peringatan Sejarah Negeri Johor: Eine malaiische Quelle zur Geschichte Johors im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973).² Ismail Hussein says that 'there are rumours of some Malay manuscripts in India'.³ Chambert-Loir does not have this reference in his 'Catalogue of catalogues of Malay manuscripts'.⁴

Newbold must have had access to many Malay manuscripts. In his book, he has a chapter on 'Laws, Language and Literature, of the Malays' in which he provides us with the titles of several works; with translations, synopses, and comments on the legal codes, histories, *hikayats*, ethical and religious works; and a detailed account on the art of letter writing (*terasul*) with samples of letters. He translated a manuscript on 'Krisis, and process of Damasking' and the 'Code of Malacca' (*Undang-undang Melaka*). His manuscript collection also included works on 'charms, spells, lucky and unlucky moments, magic and judicial astrology'.⁵

What were the manuscripts which Newbold presented to the 'Society'? Considering that this reference is in an old periodical and quite out of the reach of many, a summary of its contents will not be out of place here. I have retained the author's orthography and descriptions.

The gift is listed under ten numbers.

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No. 1 is a copy of the *Sejara Maláyu*. Newbold states that the manuscript was transcribed from an old and highly valued copy at Melaka.

No. 2 is the *Addat Achi* divided into four parts: *Parentah Segála Rája Rája*, *Silsilah Rája Rája di Bandar Achi*, *Adat Mejlis Rája Rája*, and the last 'embraces a variety of regulations for Port duties, and customs, with rules to be observed by the minor officers of government'.

No. 3 is composed of seven texts. 'The first consists of fragments relating to the march of Alexander the Great towards the sun — i.e. to the East'. Newbold provides a synopsis of this manuscript.

The second text is 'a copy of the Malay land code'.

The third text is 'the genealogy of the Rajas of Samenap, from the Javan year 1284 to 1743 of the same era'. Newbold's manuscript was a copy of the manuscript 'late in the possession of the king of *Samenap*, *Sri Padúka Sultan Pakko Natto Ningrad*', furnished to him by Count Von Ranzow. Text no. 4 is 'the code of Johore'.

Text no. 5 is 'a copy of some instructions given by the Dutch government of Malacca, to its Malay agent Abdul Kadir, who proceeded on a mission in April 1821, to the Malayan states, for the collection of Malayan MSS.; an account of which is written by *Abdul Kadir* himself. The places he visited were *Tringáun*, *Rio*, and *Lingga*. At *Tringáun*, the chiefs informed him that in consequence of the "*Guru*", *Tuan Haji Abdul Kadir* having interdicted the perusal of the histories (*hikàyet*) of kings of former times, many MSS. of this nature had been burnt, and others carried off to different countries. He, however, contrived to collect the following at *Tringánu*.

The Hong Tuah	}	bound in one large volume.
" Kissa Raja Maláyu.		
" Sri Ráma,		in one vol. large.
" Kobat Léla Indra,		2 vols.
" Putra Gungga Sacti,		2 vols.
" Chayya Langkári,		2 vols.
" Charangga Lina,		1 vol.

Two other MSS. names not mentioned.

AT LINGGA

The Peráil Hukum
 " Pusáka Besar
 " Hikayat Pelandok Jináka
 " Ilon Falek

Seventeen other MSS. were procured, of which *Abdul Kadir* does not give the names'.

Part 6 — 'Comprises the history of *Rio* and *Johore*, from the conquest of that empire by the chief of

Jambi in 1674 A.D. to the attack of *sultan Ibrahim of Salangore on Perak*, towards the close of the 18th century'. Newbold provides a summary of the contents. This is 'a copy of a MS. in the possession of the Count Von Ranzow, late resident at Rio, which he informed me, was presented him by a prominent actor in the latter part of this history, Rajah Jaffer, Viceroy of Rio'.

Part 7 — 'Contains copies and translations of inscriptions engraved on the seals of the princes of the following Malayan States, taken from their letters:-

Johore	}	Malay Peninsula.
Quedah		
Salangore		
Pahang		
Tringanu		
Kalantan		
Rumbowe		
Srimenanti		
Muar		
Sungei ujong		
Lingie	}	Sumatra.
Siac		
Bukit Battn		
Menangeabowe, and		
Assahon		

No. 4 'Contains — 1st. The genealogy of the kings of Malacca and Johore, down to the last sovereign Mahomed Hussain Shah, who died at Malacca in 1836.

2d. The genealogy of the chiefs of Muar.

3d. A copy of Part 5, MS. No. 3.

4th. The genealogy of the Capitan Malayu of Malacca.

6th. A Malay Kutika. Table to ascertain the year of the Hejira — the month of the year, and the day of the month.

7th. A collection of maxims and proverbs.

8th. A terassul, or forms for letter writing'.

No. 5 'Contains — 1st. The maritime code of Johore, to which are appended some regulations affecting occupiers of the land, and others touching Port customs.

2d. A terassul, or Malayan forms for epistolary correspondence. The etiquette to be observed by a sovereign in addressing his commands to the different officers of state. In addressing a sovereign. Equals writing to equals — superiors to inferiors — inferiors to superiors. Also rules shewing the proper places for affixing the seal conformably to the relative ranks of the addresser and addressed'.

No. 6 *Hikayet Patani*. Newbold provides a summary of the contents.

No. 7 'De Kron Aller Koningen, Van Bocharie, Van Djohare. This is a translation, with the Malay version annexed, of the celebrated ethnic composition called *Tajus-Salatin*, the crown of princes, by Roorda Van Eysinga'.

No. 8 'The Levensschets Van Sulthan Ibrahim, is the history of a monarch of *Irak*, borrowed from the Arabic, translated into Dutch with the Malays annexed as above, by the same author . . .'

No. 9 *Hikayet Isma Yatim*.

No. 10 *The Hong Tuah*.

A casual glance at this list of items, though numbering ten volumes only but consisting of 27 texts, shows what a rich collection of manuscripts Newbold amassed. Apart from the uniqueness of each one of the text, we have in manuscript 3, text 5 an account of the acquisition trip performed by Munshi Abdullah's father, Abdul Kadir, who was commissioned by the Dutch government at Jakarta (Batavia) to collect manuscripts for the Department of Native Affairs which was established in 1820.⁶ Also of interest are the copies of the inscriptions on the seals of royalties from the states mentioned in manuscript 3, text 7. In volume two of his book, Newbold published illustrations of: 1. 'Seal of the present Sultan of Johore or Singapoor'; 2. 'Present Eang de per Tuan Muda of Rumbowe'; 3. 'Present Rája dhi Rája of Sungie Oojong'; and 4. 'Present Eang de per Tuan Besar of Rumbowe'.

To which 'Society' did Newbold present his collection of manuscripts? He tells us that he was a member of the Asiatic Societies of Bengal and Madras and that he was a corresponding member of the Madras Hindoo Literary Society.⁷ We know that the Asiatic Society was founded by Sir William Jones at Calcutta, Bengal in 1784.⁸ Henry Thomas Colebrooke founded the Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland at London in March 1823, and in June of the same year it was granted the title "Royal".⁹ There was no independent 'Asiatic Society' in Madras. Sir John Newbolt and Benjamin Guy Babington founded the Madras Literary Society in 1812.¹⁰ It was learnt in January 1829 that an Auxiliary Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society had been established in Madras. This was a distinct organisation. In May 1830 these two Societies in Madras united with each other and with the Royal Asiatic Society in London.¹¹ In the Rules and Regulations of the Royal Asiatic Society published in the first volume of *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1834), Article XIV

states that, 'The United Literary Societies of Madras are from henceforward to be considered an integral part of the Royal Asiatic Society, under the appellation of the Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society'; Article XV — 'The Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society shall be considered quite independent of the Royal Asiatic Society as far as regards its local administration and the control of its funds'.

However, some confusion has been caused by several references to the Madras Literary Society. It has been referred to as the "United Literary Societies of Madras", "United Literary Society of Madras",¹² and on one occasion as "The Madras Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society".¹³ But in most cases, it has been called the Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Another confusing matter is the Madras Hindoo Literary Society. Was this the same as the Madras Literary Society? Apparently it was not since we have a reference in which the President of the "Hindú Literary Society, Madras", became a corresponding member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1839.¹⁴

That Newbold was a Non-Resident member of the Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1843 is confirmed.¹⁵

Newbold's title of his article 'Note on Malayan MSS. and Books presented to the Society' suggests strongly that it was 'the Society' which published *The Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, and this was the Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society. This Society was actively involved in literary and scientific activities in the fields of linguistics and preservation of antiquities. Its *Journal* appeared in four series: Series 1, volumes 1–17 (1833–1851); Series 2, volumes 1–6 (1856–1861); Series 3, volumes 1–2 (1864–1866); and Series 4 (1878–1889/94). The Society still exists in Madras.¹⁶

In view of the uniqueness of the collection of Malay manuscripts presented to the Society by Newbold, it would be worth pursuing the matter in order to obtain copies of them for study and research.¹⁷

NOTES

¹Newbold, T.J. *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca*. London: J. Murray, 1839. vol. 2, pp. 194 and 339.

²I am grateful to Dr. E.U. Kratz of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for a photocopy of Newbold's article.

³Ismail Hussein. *The Study of Traditional Malay Literature with A Selected Bibliography*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1974. p. 11.

⁴Chambert-Loir, H. 'Catalogue des catalogues de manuscrits malais'. *Archipel*, 20 (1980): 45-69.

⁵Newbold, T.J. *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 193.

⁶Voorhoeve, P. 'A Malay Scriptorium', in *Malayan and Indonesian Studies: Essays presented to Sir Richard Winstedt on his Eighty-fifth Birthday*, ed. by John Bastin and R. Roolvink. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964. p. 258.

⁷Newbold, T.J. *op. cit.*, title page.

⁸Pargiter, F.E. *Centenary Volume of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland 1823-1923*. London: The Society, 1923. p. vii.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. viii-ix.

¹⁰*Transactions of the Literary Society of Madras*. Part 1. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1827. p. v.

¹¹Beckingham, C.F. 'A history of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1823-1973', in *The Royal Asiatic Society: Its History and Treasures*, ed. by S. Simmonds and S. Digby. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979. p. 16.

¹²Pargiter, F.E. *op. cit.*, p. xii.

¹³*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (JRAS)* vol. 6 (1841).

¹⁴*JRAS*, vol. 5 (1839).

¹⁵*JRAS*, vol. 7 (1843).

¹⁶Madras Literary Society and Auxiliary of the Royal Asiatic Society, College Road, Madras 600006, INDIA.

(Source: *The World of Learning, 1984-85*. p. 585). I am grateful to Mr. Michael O'Keefe of the India Office Library and Records, London, for this reference.

¹⁷I have not been successful in my correspondence with the Society.