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**“MIRRORS REFLECTING TRUTH”
CONCEPT OF TRUTH AND RELIABILITY IN THE MALAY MUSLIM
MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE 13TH TO 19TH CENTURIES.**

Abstract

One of the most important genres of Malay Muslim writings is the writing of history, that is, historiography. Among its main characteristics are: it is scientific (based on proper data and methodology of research); it is humanistic (the main subjects are human and human society); it is rational (based on logic and proper systems of reasoning); it is reflective and didactic (contains elements of didactic, moral guidance and instructions, addressing itself to new generations and future readers).

The textual analysis shows that Malays indeed have their own distinctive concept of history, which is based on the Islamic tradition and contains various philosophical elements such as the concept of God and tauhid, the concept of man and the universe, concepts of time, space and motion, concepts of adab and education, etc. This concept also defines the basic parameters of the periodization of history, the main criteria used for the data selection, the common methods for the assessment of the reliability of the sources and references, as well as the didactic elements of the text.

Viewing history as a divine plan, Malay medieval historiographers strongly emphasized a common outline of events (tawhid) and their didactic interrelation with both the moral and religious condition of society and the personal qualities of the ruler (keadilan/pembalasan, kerajaan). A just ruler has a prosperous state; people are happy and pious, laws are respected, and religious duties are fulfilled. And vice versa - the injustice and sinfulness of the ruler leads to a decline in public morality, disrespect for laws, weakening of religion, economic decline, and, ultimately, the collapse of the state. This is how the medieval chronicler builds a coordinate system in which he conducts his narration and according to which he evaluates events and their participants. This system is an important element of the concept of truth.

The analysis of Malay historical texts helps to identify the criteria of reliability, which the author uses to verify the information and to convince the reader of the veracity of the reports included therein. Among them: (1) Definitions and terms of historical source research. (2) Criticisms regarding historical sources mentioned in the text. (3) The author's guidance on the aims and methods of historical writing etc. Several textual elements are utilized (a) as a sign of truthfulness (of the information given in the text), and (b) to strengthen (the text's) own scholarly standing (in the eyes of its readers). This is achieved by the author's deliberate inclusion of certain information from older texts, using them as

a source of history, and then utilizing terms and descriptions that show his own opinions on its veracity. These special elements demonstrate the characteristics of objectivity, intellectuality, and historical integrity of Malay Muslim chronicles, and from the viewpoint of the masses, these are signs and proofs of truth.

Keywords: *Malay Muslim Historiography, concept of history, concept of truth, criteria of truthfulness (reliability).*

Introduction

The tradition of manuscript writing in the Malay world dates back a thousand years¹ and numbers thousands of classical works in various forms and genres. Among these genres are:

- Books (kitab) on religion
- Works on science –
 - books on traditional medicine
 - books on seafaring
 - books on historiography
 - books on laws (*Laws of Melaka, Maritime Laws, Court Ceremonials*)
 - books on statecraft (*Bustan as-Salatin: The Garden of Kings, Taj as-Salatin: The Crown of Kings*)
 - books related to handwork (house construction, tool-making for weapons, decorations, musical instruments, etc.)
- Literary and cultural texts in various forms – folklore, epic, legend, poem, etc.

The writing of manuscripts ended after the printing machine spread widely in the Malay world. About ten thousand Malay manuscripts have been found were written around the 10th century. The actual works contained in the manuscripts number more than ten thousand, as normally several works are contained in one manuscript. The real number of manuscripts produced in the Malay world is uncountable. Unquestionably the total number is far more than the number of manuscripts found till now. Many manuscripts were destroyed and/or lost in the past. Among the reasons are objective reasons (weather, fire, flood, etc.) and also for subjective reasons (unsuitable conditions of storage, destruction of

¹ For more details on the tradition of Malay manuscript writing please refer to various books, including: S.M.N. al-Attas. *The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: A 16th Century Malay Translation of the 'Aqā'id of Al-Nasafī*. Kuala Lumpur: Department of Publications, University of Malaya, 1988; R.O. Winstedt. *A History of the Classical Malay Literature*. MBRAS Reprint n. 12., Kuala Lumpur, 1996, (first edition – London, 1939); M.C. Ricklefs, P. Voorhoeve, Annabel Teh Gallop. *Indonesian Manuscripts in Great Britain. A Catalogue of Manuscripts in Indonesian Languages in British Public Collections*. École française d'Extrême-Orient, Jakarta: Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2014; *Katalog Manuskrip Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Koleksi Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia PNM, 2001; Ding Choo Ming. *Kajian Manuskrip Melayu: Masalah, Kritikan dan Cadangan*. Selangor: Utusan Publication & Distributors, 2003.

manuscripts resulting from political (or religious) vendetta, and humanitarian factors. Due to all these reasons, what is saved is around 5% only from the total produced in this period².

The written tradition is the basis of Islamic civilization. Classical Malay language and literature surfaced and developed inside the context of Islam and were influenced by the Muslim intellectual tradition from around the world. According to Prof. S.M.N. al-Attas:

*After the advent of Islam, the Malay language underwent extensive change, a revolution Apart from enriching its vocabulary with Arabic and Persian terms, the Malay language also became the main language of the Islamisation in the entire Malay-Indonesian archipelago, until the 16th century when the Malay language eventually succeeded in achieving a noble literary and religious language status and undermined the supremacy of the Javanese language in this field. And due to the widespread use of the Malay language among Muslims, it became the official language of more than 100 million people in Southeast Asia. Thus, the Malay language became the language of Islam and may be the second most widely used language in the Muslim world. Malay literature blossomed in the Muslim era. Generally speaking and with sufficient proof, it can be said that Malay literature, just like Persian literature, originates from the Muslim era.*³

The tradition of Malay history writing

One of the most important genres of Malay Muslim writings is the writing of history, that is, historiography. Among the main characteristics of historiography in general (but including Malay historical texts) that should be mentioned is that it is *scientific* (based on proper data and methodology of research); it is *humanistic* (the main subjects are human and human society); it is *rational* (based on logic and proper systems of reasoning); it is *reflective and didactic* (contains elements of didactic, moral guidance and instructions, addressing itself to new generations and future readers). References to future generations show that the historiographers are aware of the main function of historical writing, which is to tell the *truth* (truth-telling) and its aim to convey this truth to readers in the future.

Malay Muslim historiographical texts are considered as very important historical sources in the study of the history of Malay society from the 13th to 19th centuries. Such

² For further information, please refer, amongst others, to: Wan Ali Hj. Wan Mamat. *Pemuliharaan Buku dan Manuskrip*. Kuala Lumpur: DBP, 1988.

³S.M.N. al-Attas. *Islam dalam Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Melayu*. UKM: Bangi, 2012 (first edition 1972) pp. 41-43.

chronicles (*Hikayat Raja Pasai: The Pasai Chronicle*⁴, *Sejarah Melayu: The Malay Annals*⁵, *Misa Melayu: The History of Perak State*⁶, *Hikayat Aceh: The Story of Aceh*⁷, *Peringatan*

⁴ *Hikayat Raja Pasai* (HRP) is a text on the history of Pasai and it reflects the earliest period in the historiography of the Malay Muslim society. HRP date has not been determined yet. Although there is no date recorded, we can guess that this story covers a period of about 1280 to 1400 AD or about from 680 to 800 AH. The final version is probably completed by the end of the 14th century. The complete copy appeared in Java in 1797. There were three copies, used in 6 editions of the text *Hikayat Raja Pasai*: 1/ Edouard Dulaurier. *Collection des Principales Chroniques Malaises. premier fascicule La chronique du Royaume de Pasey*. Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1849; The Jawi edition is of high quality, and may even be better than the later published editions. 2/ J.P. Mead. "A Romanised version of The Hikayat Raja-raja Pasai. in: *Journal of the Straits Branch Royal Asiatic Society (JSBRAS)*, 66 Singapore. 1914 p. 1-55; 3/ Dr.A.H. Hill "Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai, a revised romanised version with an English translation, an introduction and notes" in: *Journal Malaian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JMBRAS)* 33, Sec. 2, 1960. The most completed edition 4/ Teuku Ibrahim Alfiah "*Kronika Pasai. Sebuah Tinjauan Sejarah*. Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press. 1973 5/ Russel Jones. *Hikayat Raja Pasai*. KL: Fajar Bakti, 1987; 6/ *Hikayat Raja Pasai. Dikaji dan diperkenalkan oleh Russel Jones*. KL: Yayasan karyawan&penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1999.

⁵ *Sejarah Melayu* is the most well-known chronicle. In it there is a story about the history of Melaka from 15-16th centuries. The date of *Sejarah Melayu* has not been determined yet. The name of the author is also not clear yet. According to some scientists, the work was written by the Treasurer of Melaka Tun Seri Lanang. There are 29 copies and three versions of the *Sejarah Melayu*: 1. The first most famous is the cluster originally published by Abdullah Munshi in Singapore (1831) - the cluster "sawar" (Johor). Date of emergence was around 1612. This is the version that is widely spread in Malaysia, Indonesia and even around the world. The cluster consists of dozens of copies (St. Petersburg, London, Manchester, Leiden, DBP); 2. There is another cluster that is not yet widely known. The text has not been published in book form. There are only two manuscripts. (oldest version - about 1536): The version has 8 chapters not found in the first version. Author's name was not written. There is a date for this work written in 1612. 3. Sand King Version. The date has not been determined. There are various editions of SM. The most famous of them: Dulaurier E. (ed) *Collection des principales chroniques malaises*. t.1-2, Paris: Impr. National. 1849; Shellabier W.G. (ed) *Sejarah Melayu*. Petaling Jaya: Published: Fajar Bakti. 1967; Situmorang D.T., Teeuw (ed) *Sejarah Melayu menurut terbitan Abdullah*. Djakarta: Djambatan, 1958; Winstedt R.O. (ed) "The Malay Annals or *Sejarah Melayu*". in: *JMBRAS*, 1938, vol. 16 p.3; Brown C.C. *Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals. A translation of Raffles Ms. 18*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford Univ.Press; 1968; Blagden C.O. An Unpublished variant version of Malay Annals. in: *JMBRAS*, vol.III, p.1 (1925); Iskandar T. *Tun Seri Lanang pengarang Sejarah Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa, 1964, jil.8 bill.11; Roolvink R. The Versions of the Malay Annals. In: *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land en Volkenkunde (BTVL)*, 1967, deel 123, afl 3. 's-Gravenhage, Martinus Nijhoff. We use in this study the last edition namely: *Sulalat al-Salatin, ya'ni Perteturan segala Raja-Raja (Sejarah Melayu)*. Karangan Tun Seri Lanang. Reviewed and introduced by Muhammad Haji Salleh. KL: Yayasan karyawan&DBP, 1997.

⁶ Currently there are 4 manuscripts of *Misa Melayu*. The two best manuscripts were used in the publication of *Salasilah Katai* prepared by a Dutch scholar C.A. Mees in 1935 at Santpoort. (Mees, C.A.*De Kroniek van Koetai*. Santpoort: Mees, 1935). The manuscripts are kept in the Berlin State Library (Schoemann V 2.). The other two manuscripts are copies of one of the manuscripts used by C.A. Mees. stored in the Central Museum of Jakarta (Collectie Br. 513). On *Salasilah Kutai*, see: Drs. Liau Yock Fang. *Sejarah Kesusasteraan Melayu Klassik*. Singapura: Pustaka Nasional Pte. Ltd., 1975, pg.261-264; V.I. Braginsky. *Yang indah, berfaedah dan kamal. Sejarah sastra Melayu dalam abad 7-19*. Jakarta: INIS (Indonesian Netherlands Corporation in Islamic Studies) 1998. h. 339-342.

⁷ The *Hikayat Aceh* deals with the history of the Acehese Sultanate, in particular with its famous sultan, Sultan Iskandar Muda. Its date of appearance has not been determined but according to specialists it must have been composed around 1606-1636 during the governance of Sultan Iskandar Muda. The *Hikayat Aceh* was in fact written to praise the Sultan, i.e. as a *panegiric*. There are several manuscripts of

*Sejarah Negeri Johor: The Memorials of the History of Johor State*⁸, *Hikayat Siak: The Story of Siak*⁹, and *Tuhfat al-Nafis: The Precious Gift*¹⁰, etc.) represent various traditions in Malay Muslim historiography found in different periods and kingdoms, and also contain much information about the lifestyle of Malay society, the actual situation in the economic field; intellectual, political and religious life, customs and such like.

The study of Malay Muslim historical texts shows that there are many records related to various aspects of Malay social life, including the views of the Malays themselves on their origins, history and cultural characteristics.

Malay Muslim historiography could be considered as a *mirror* that reflects the Malay civilization for hundreds of years. This is the reason why these texts became a very important source of information for all those who are interested in understanding the Malays, including the Malays themselves who wish to know their origin and their actual place in the world history.

The study of sources of Malay historiography (13th to 19th centuries) indicates that Malay culture is based on Muslim tradition and is a part of Islamic civilization that cannot be dismissed. Islamisation is considered as the basis of the Malay national self-consciousness and patriotism. The study of sources of Malay historiography (13th to 19th centuries) indicates and confirms this opinion.

Hikayat Aceh, of which the most complete one was published by T. Iskandar. Teuku Iskandar, ed., *Hikayat Aceh. Dikaji dan diperkenalkan oleh Teuku Iskandar* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan, 2001)

⁸ *Peringatan Sejarah Negeri Johor*, 'Memorials of the History of the State of Johor', represents the historiographical tradition of the Johor Malays. The book was produced during the mid-18th century and its author is unknown. It was written in the form of several documents and stories presenting the activities and biography of Sultan Suleiman Badr al-Alam Shah (1699-1760). At present there are two copies of this text. Both these copies were used in the first edition that was completed by E. U. Kratz in 1973. E. Ulrich Kratz, *Peringatan Sejarah Negeri Johor. Eine malaische Quelle zur Geschichte Johors im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973).

⁹ The *Hikayat Siak* represents the historiography of Minangkabau-Siak people of Johore in the mid-19th century. According to the writing in one of its copies, *Hikayat Siak* was composed by Tengku Said in 1272 AH/1855 CE. The entire narrative of the *Hikayat Siak* covers an extremely long period of history, beginning with the time before the era of the Melaka Sultanate in the 15th century, and reaching up until the middle of the 19th century. At present there are four copies of the *Hikayat Siak*. All copies were used in a text edition completed by Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *Hikayat Siak: Dirawikan oleh Tengku Said*. [The Siak Tales: Narrated by Tengku Said] Diselenggarakan oleh Muhammad Yusoff Hashim. (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992).

¹⁰ *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, 'The Precious Gift', was composed in the mid-19th century in Pulau Penyengat (Riau-Lingga Archipelago). The text represents the tradition of historical writing of Bugis people of Johor. *Tuhfat al-Nafis* contains records of events from the 13th to 19th centuries that occurred in Johor and several other Malay states. There are two works with the title *Tuhfat al-Nafis* (i.e. a shorter, and a longer version). One is shorter – containing 88,000 words, and the other is longer with 126,000 words. The shorter text was composed by Raja Ahmad Bin Raja Haji (1779-1879) and the longer was by his son, Raja Ali Haji Bin Raja Ahmad (1809-1872). The short version of the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* text can be found at the Library of the Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal, Land- en Volkenkunde in Leiden. This is the copy made at Penyengat in 1896. As for the longer *Tuhfat al-Nafis* it exists in five copies. There are few editions of the text, among them: Virginia Matheson Hooker, ed., *Tuhfat al-Nafis. Karangan Raja Ali Haji. Dikaji dan diperkenalkan oleh Virginia Matheson Hooker* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan dan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1998)

Malay Muslim historiographical works contain several defining characteristics. Among them are:

- They were written upon the order of a patron (sultan, king, or persons of authority) with a practical aim to clarify to readers the point of view of the patron, and to influence the views of the people;
- They are scientific in nature, i.e. the author collected and included in his narrative only *truthful* accounts (according to his opinion), and he represented his arguments based on reason and logic;
- They answer certain questions and follow common criteria of writing, such as:
 - * What facts should be recorded in historical texts;
 - * Should these facts be evaluated as positive, negative, or neutral (objective);
 - * Who played the main role in influencing historical developments;
- They are comprised of a specific method of periodization;
- They contain elements of critique based on specific criteria of internal and external criticism; and
- They are narrated to deliver a point of view that is considered *true* regarding actual historical events, made perceptible for future generations.

The importance of Malay Muslim historical works is mentioned by Hussain Othman:

*The characteristics of Malay historiography are obviously different from that of other historical writings, especially modern Western historical writings. Apart from being distinctively different, they are also unique in their own nature. By referring to "the nature of Malay history", we mean that Malays already inherited a vast majority of great ideas of the world, especially from India, China, and the Middle East. The ideas were then redeveloped and transformed into their own perspectives and worldview. At this juncture, the ideas were naturally Malay in form and spirit. The uniqueness of the characteristics of Malay history also significantly shows that Malays indeed possess a distinctive concept of history.*¹¹

The scientific nature of these works was also confirmed by J.S. Bottoms:

*Malay History postulates not only scientific methods but also a degree of intellectual development in the society and an ability to understand the passing phenomena.*¹²

Malay history's unique characteristics also significantly underscores that Malays indeed have their own distinctive concept of history, which is based on the Islamic tradition and contains various philosophical elements such as: the concept of God and tauhid, the concept of man and the universe, concepts of time, space and motion, concepts of adab and education, etc.

¹¹ Hussain Othman. *The Characteristics of Malay Historiography*. SEASREP 10th Anniversary Conference. Southeast Asia, A Global Crossroads. Batu Pahat: UTHM, 2005, p. 15.

¹² J.C. Bottoms. "Some Malay Historical Sources: A Bibliographical Note" in: Soetdjatmoko. *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965, p. 156–193.

Malay concept of history

Essays from Malay Muslim historiography contain information on rulers and their origin, the elite and those in the upper crust of society, their families, and information on all those who resided at court. There is much to glean from such sources of knowledge, specifically with regard to politics, intellectual life, trade and economy, customs and ceremonies, and the very fabric and design of Malay society, to name a few. Scholars have correctly assumed such works to be veritable encyclopedias of Malay life.

Malay Muslim Historiography reflects the indigenous concept of history based on the global Islamic worldview, as well as on local intellectual traditions. This concept defines the basic parameters of the periodization of history, the main criteria used for the data selection, the common methods for the assessment of the reliability of the sources and references, and the didactic elements of the text. The analysis shows that the Malay Muslim Historiography follows the common worldview in understanding and in interpreting history as it reflects global Islamic tradition with some indigenous cultural elements.

From the historical point of view, according to the Islamic tradition, the Holy Qur'an is the first and most authentic available source in the history of Islam. It covers various events in the lives of the prophets of Allah like Adam, Nuh, Ibrahim, Yusuf, Musa, Isa, and Prophet Muhammad. It also covers accounts of the battles fought by the Prophet and the circumstances under which certain Commandments of Allah were revealed unto the Prophet. According to the Qur'an, history is a '*peripheral tussle between forces of good and evil*'. The Qur'an repeatedly refers to the rise and destruction of nations as a phenomenon to be studied for guidance. It urges men to sojourn through the world and see for themselves the fate of those who were once powerful and proud but rebelled against Allah and were eventually destroyed for their wickedness¹³.

The Qur'anic way of referring to ancient peoples and their civilizations and exhorting the faithful to learn lessons from their history clearly shows that Islam is essentially a history-conscious religion. According to classical Arabic historiographers, history is "*knowledge pertaining to a country, customs, and manners of a people, remains of the people of yore, as well as an account of the actions of those alive.*"

Some prominent Muslim scholars and historians defined the history as follows:

1. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (9-10th c.): *History is a part of the Qur'anic science. Universal history refers to history as evidence of God's plan.*
2. Al-Ya'qubi (9th c.): "*The adaptation of man to their time*". *Everybody follows the precedent set by the ruling caliph for political, social and cultural behavior.*
3. Ibn Khaldun (14th c.): *History refers to events that are peculiar to a particular age or race.*
4. Al-Sahawi (15th c.): *The object of history is man and time. The problems with which history is concerned with are the circumstances of man and time broken down to details*

¹³ For example, *Ta ha*, 20:128 and *al-Hajj*, 22:45-46.

within the general framework of the accidental circumstances that exist for man and in time¹⁴.

History begins with Creation. At the centre of Creation is God and His Will manifested in the Word. This postulate is similar in all three Revealed religions, which are based on the afflatus from the Word of the Lord and His creative power¹⁵.

According to al-Attas, one of the basic elements of the Islamic concept of history is the declaration of its divine nature on one side and its humanistic orientation on the other. *Man is the centre of the divine universe, the midst of everything, a special and a new creation intended by God to be His vicegerent on earth*¹⁶.

Malay Muslim historiography follows the same worldview. Among the main concepts reflected in Malay texts should be mentioned:

- concept of monotheism (*tauhid*)
- concept of justice (*keadilan* - a system of views on the definition of "justice" which means, among other things, putting everything in its proper place)
- concept of governance (*kerajaan* - the system of views in Islam regarding the governance, kingship, government etc.)
- concept of punishment/retribution (*pembalasan* - the system of views regarding the just punishment and appropriate retribution from Allah SWT for all sins and evil deeds)
- concept of the origin of the king (*asal-usul raja* - a system of views on the origin of just kings who have the right to rule in ideal Islamic kingdom).

Viewing history as a divine plan, Malay medieval historiographers strongly emphasized a common outline of events (*tawhid*) and their didactic interrelation with both the moral and religious condition of society and the personal qualities of the ruler (*keadilan/pembalasan, kerajaan*)¹⁷. This is why the concepts of justice, divine retribution and state power are so important for the understanding of the Malay concept of history. A just ruler has a prosperous state, people are happy and pious, laws are respected, religious duties are fulfilled. And vice versa - the injustice and sinfulness of the ruler leads to a decline in public morality, disrespect for laws, weakening of religion, economic decline and, ultimately, the collapse of the state.

Malay historical texts formulated a complete concept of justice. The definition of *raja adil* (just king) contains references to obligatory personal qualities (good looks/*rupa yang*

¹⁴ For further details, see Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 3-200.

¹⁵ More in details see: T.A. Denisova. *Marginalia. On Malay Muslim Historiography*. Al-ASRAR (Museum Pahang) & RZS-CASIS UTM, Kuantan, 2022, pp. 41- 48.

¹⁶ S.M.N. Al-Attas, *On Justice and the Nature of Man: A Commentary on Sūrah al-Nisā' (4):58 and Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23):12-14* (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2015), 28-29.

¹⁷ More in details see: T.A. Denisova. Konsep keadilan dalam historiografi Melayu Islam (kurun ke-13 sehingga ke-19) [Concept of justice in Malay Islamic Historiography from 13 to 19th cc.] in: *Afkar*. Kuala Lumpur: UM PRESS, 2008, issue. 7, pp. 221–258.

baik, great voice/*suara yang hebat*, nice behaviour/ *budi dan adab*, sincere and polite language/*bahasa yang ikhlas*, braveness/*keberanian* , patience/*kesabaran*, generosity/*pemurahan*, wisdom/*kebijaksanaan*, etc.), knowledge and appropriate skills (in the fields of theology/*usuluddin*, jurisprudence/*fikah*, state government/*pemerintahan negara*, warfare/*peperangan*, trade/*perdagangan*, negotiations/*perundingan* etc.), duties and obligations (obeying to God and Prophet/*taat kepada Allah SWT dan Nabi Muhammad SAW*, spreading and strengthening Islam/*menyebarkan dan mengukuh Islam*, rule justly/*merajakan secara adil*, judge fairly/*menghukumkan secara adil*, uphold and enforce the law/*menuntut undang-undang*, protecting the country and the people/*melindungi negara dan rakyat*, enlivening trade/*meramaikan perdagangan*, support knowledge and morality/*menuntut ilmu dan akhlak* etc). The textual analysis shows that concept of justice and the interpretation of the definition of a just ruler (*sultan, raja agung, yang dipertuan besar*) in the Malay world is in accordance with the Islamic tradition.

The chronicles also listed those actions and intentions which are considered as sins. Among them are mentioned: polytheism/*syirik*, claiming to be God Almighty/ *mengaku diri sebagai Allah*, disobedience/*derhaka*, apostasy/*murtad*, violation the oath of allegiance/*melanggar sumpah setia*, murder of the king/*pembunuhan raja*, murder out of court's judgement or without the king's permission/*pembunuhan di luar mahkamah atau tanpa izin raja*, arrogance/*sombong*, greediness/*tamak*, slander/*fitnah*, deception/*penipuan*, anger/*marah*, impatience/*tidak sabar*, follow the lust of the devil/*ikut hawa nafsu syaitan*, hate (envy)/*dengki*, revenge/*dendam*, gambling/*perjudian*, adultery/*zina*, lewdness between men and women/*perbuatan keji di antara lelaki dan perempuan*, sing-songs with sarcastic poems/*nyanyian syair sindiran* etc.

This is how the medieval chronicler builds a coordinate system in which he conducts his narration and according to which he evaluates events and their participants. This system is an important element of the concept of truth. After all, he writes for his contemporaries and compatriots who share the same values with him. And if you agree with the author in his assessment of events and people, then you can trust him.

Stephen Humphreys truly emphasized that:

*We are not dealing with raw documents but with consciously shaped literary tradition and this tradition has constructed its body of historical "facts" according to its own aims and criteria, not ours. We might like to know about social stratification, urban demography, and the like, but the early Muslim historians were concerned with other things— political legitimacy, the nature of right government, whether the redemptive promise of Muhammad's mission had been fulfilled or betrayed by the course of events. The names, actions, statements, and dates which would constitute the facts of Islamic history were determined within this framework, and we are compelled to make do with these*¹⁸

¹⁸ R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry (Revised Edition)* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 91.

Criteria of truth

Malay historical chronicles from the 16th to the 19th centuries have been considered by their readers and society to be scientific works containing *true* information given the presence of special elements that affirm the truthfulness of their information. One of the most important criteria in scientific text criticism (textology) is the assessment of the reliability of information recorded in historical texts. Criticism is a very important tool of scientific methodology which evaluates sources based on external or non-textological elements, such as the physical condition of the book; as well as its internal or textological elements, such as a detailed analysis of language, content, facts, etc. The basis of this scientific approach comprises the main body of contemporary historical work.

The analysis of Malay historical texts helps to identify the criteria of reliability which the author uses to verify the information and to convince the reader of the veracity of the reports included therein. The textual analysis also shows that Malay historiography from the 13th to the 19th centuries already contained elements of historical criticism and historical sources research.

These criteria may be divided into the following subjects:

- Definitions and terms of historical source research.
- Criticisms regarding historical sources mentioned in the text.
- The author's guidance on the aims and methods of historical writing.

Even though old Malay texts were typically written at the behest of the sultan or patron, readers would tend to assume that official publications resent only true and dependable reports. One of the functions of Malay historiographical works is to illustrate an event from the perspective of the patron or sultan. The author must typically employ certain textual elements to achieve that objective – special elements that proves the authenticity and truth contained in the text, as well as increasing intellectual interest.

Among those elements are terminology and textual elements that reflect the opinion of the author along with his analysis/judgment about the information he presents, or other texts that the author or narrator depends on as a historical source. Malay Muslim historiography has established its own tradition associated with the analysis of historical sources or historical criticism

Textual analyses have shown the employment of different critical elements with different aims:

1. First aim: To minimize the readers' trust in the veracity of the information presented therein.
2. Second aim: To increase the trust of the reader in the veracity of the information presented in the text.

For example, the terms *konon*, *katanya*, *kata orang*, *menurut khabar*, *agaknya* (*begitu*), *rasanya* (*begitu*), *barangkali* (*begitu*), *bukankah*" (reputedly, they said, it seems, people say etc.) have been employed in order to highlight skepticism. These terms were used in *Tuhfat al-Nafis* in relation to *Hikayat Siak*, which is a text that represents the thought and privileges of the Siak royal family. The Bugis family is their rival in their struggle for the throne of Johor. The term *konon* is also used to influence the opinion of the reader

in regard to the historiography of MinangkabauSiak, whose authenticity was being doubted.

To strengthen the skepticism towards the matter raised in the text, a certain phrase is employed, namely *Wa Allahu alam* meaning: Allah is most Aware or Most Knowledgeable, or it could mean 'its authenticity is suspect' in several variations:

Entahkan sah entahkan tidak. (TN 22 (25)) (I don't know is it true or not)

Entahkan yang mana-mana terlebih sah. (TN 45 (48)) (I don't know what is more true)

Entahkan/apa entah/ bagaimana hikmatnya. (TN 137 (145)) (I don't know what is the truth)

Entahkan mana-mana yang benarnya tiadalah aku ketahui. (TN 215 (231))

(What is real, I don't know)

Entahkan apa hartinya. (TN 245 (266)) (I don't know what does it mean)

Entahkan sungguh, entahkan tidak. (TN 250 (271)) (I don't know if this really happened or no)

In the Malay historical works, there are several definitions that are related to historiographical analyses such as compositions, manuscripts, books and various other forms of manuscripts¹⁹.

The definition of 'truth' that is, what is true and what is not true, depends on the opinion of the author influenced by the Sultan's or the patron's way of thinking. Nevertheless, in Malay Muslim historiography dated from the 13th to the 19th centuries, there was a system of *criteria for truthfulness*, which consists of a few methods used by authors to prove to the society that the information in their writings was true and trustworthy. The methods which served to increase readers' belief and trust in the historical texts are such as follows:

1. The mentioning of Allah's attributes.
2. References to the Qur'an and the teachings of Muhammad ﷺ.
3. The mentioning of the author and the copyist's names.
4. Information on dates.
5. References to renowned Muslim scholars and their writing.
6. References to various historical sources used by the author.

- **Mentioning the name of Allah, Most High,**

is used as a starting point of a story, and also to emphasize that the information is important and true.

"Beginning in the name of Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala' who is All Knowing, is the story of . . ." (Hikayat Aceh 15(8))²⁰

¹⁹ For further information about it see: T.A. Denisova. *Marginalia. On Malay Muslim Historiography*. Al-ASRAR (Museum Pahang) & RZS-CASIS UTM, Kuantan, 2022, pp. 91 - 92.

²⁰ Original text: Bermula Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala yang Amat Mengetahui lagi yang Amat Tahu menceriterakan suatu ceritera. (HA 15 (8), 21 (11), 29 (15), 42 (20), 56 (25), 68 (30), 71 (31), 74 (33), 223

It is also used as an introduction to a narration about a king, or a Sultan:

"When Allah wishes to manifest His greatness to the world, He appoints a servant whom He will choose to be King in this precise country/land..."²¹.

"Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim. Wabihi nasta'inu bi'llahi 'alal-kisah. And this is the story then from the period of as-Sultan Iskandar Syah Khalifatur-Rahman Johan berdaulat zillullahi fi'l-alami. And the origin of the king was told." ²²

It is also used to stress the importance of an event or information

"And when Allah wants to make clear His Knowledge, and wants to enforce His eternal Authority and Power to the world, He will cause certain events to happen" ... "Only Allah The Almighty knows of him." ²³.

- **References to the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.**

According to the tradition of Islamic historical writing, the main source of true information regarding the history of mankind is the Qur'an and Sunnah. Therefore, reference to these sources increases the reliability and trustworthiness of the writing; which is why Malay medieval writers deliberately used references to the Qur'an and Sunnah when they aimed to convince their readership of the truthfulness of their writing. There are many Qur'anic excerpts in the texts. The Qur'anic texts usually cited in Arabic and sometimes followed by the Malay translation, translated by the author himself. For example: Chapter 1 "Al-Fatihah", Chapter 3 "Ali 'Imran" verse 26, Chapter 3 "Ali 'Imran" verse 169, Chapter "Ya Sin" verse 83, Chapter 76 "Al-Insan" verse 20 and others.

Reference to the Qur'an and the name of the Prophet Muhammad can often be seen in the formal part of the text, such as the colophon; which itself is already a means of documenting the veracity of the text. Therefore, additional references to the elements of the Qur'an and Hadith serve as an added verification of the veracity of the text and its contents.

(91), 242 (99)). See: : *Hikayat Aceh*. Studied and introduced by Teuku Iskandar. Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan, 2001.

²¹ Original text: Apakala Allah Subhanahu wa Taala hendak menyatakan azamat-Nya kibria-Nya kepada segala isi alam dunia ini maka dijadikan-Nya seorang hamba-Nya yang pilihan-Nya akan raja dalam sebuah negeri. (HA 22 (11-12), 29 (15), 43 (20), 56 (25), 68 (30), 71(31), 75(33)). See: : *Hikayat Aceh*. Studied and introduced by Teuku Iskandar. Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan, 2001.

²² (*Misa Melayu* 21: 2)), *Misa Melayu*. Written in the 18th century and comprises historical stories from Perak of the same period. Three copies have been found that were used in three publications. My reference is to edition: Raja Chulan bin Hamid. *Misa Melayu*, ed. R.O. Winstedt, Kuala Lumpur: Pustaka Antara, 1962.

²³ Original text: Dan apakala Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala hendak menyatakan kenyataan ilmu-Nya dan kekerasan idarat-Nya dan kudrat-Nya yang kadim itu kebada segala isi alam dunia ini ... (HA 75 (33), 69(31)). See: *Hikayat Aceh*. Studied and introduced by Teuku Iskandar. Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan, 2001.

The Hikayat Raja Pasai ended. Safe are those who read it, listened to it, and especially the one who wrote it, may they be in Allah the Exalted's protection from the world to the hereafter, with the intercession (shafaat) of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Completed on Monday, 21st of Muharram, year of Zai, 1230 Hijri²⁴.

- **Mentioning the author and/or copyist and owner/patron.**

A special characteristic of Islamic historiography is the scientific practice of including personal names. In the Malay-Islamic tradition, the author and/or the copyist's name are mentioned in the text as well as the colophon as a means of establishing identifying features of the text. For this reason, anonymous works can cause doubt, though this contradicts the fact that, in many cases, the name of the author is unknown. Another aspect of the problem is that sometimes names disappear because the first and last page of the manuscript can be missing due to mechanical damage or the pages getting lost. Other times, the author does not want himself to be known by name, especially if he is an ascetic. In any case, reference to the author or copyist elevates the level of credibility of the text and its contents.

"The narrator of Sejarah Melayu was Tengku Said; on the instructions of Master Fandarwola Esti; Resident Commissioner in Sikudana, on the 23rd of Safar, 1272. The writing began on Sunday and completed on the 8th of Rabiulakhir, 133 Monday. The copyist of this particular article is Muhammad Nuruddin Acheh, on the 11th of Zulhijjah, Saturday, and completed in year 1380 in Betawi²⁵.

- **Mentioning the dates**

In Islam, timing is very important as human life is limited, and everyone has a precise schedule by which they live their lives. This is why Muslim authors paid proper attention to timing and emphasized this for their readership. The Islamic texts provide a solid system of timing/dating of events/texts, but local traditions have various detailed systems of

²⁴ Original text: Tamat Hikayat Raja Pasai. Selamat sempurna yang membaca dia dan segala yang menengarkan dia, istimewa yang menyuratkan dia, dipelihara Allah apalah kiranya dari dunia datang ke akhirat, berkat syafaat Nabi Mohammad Mustafa, Tamat hari Isnin, kepada hari dua puluh sa, kepada bulan Muharam, sanat zai, Hijratul Nabi 1230. (HRP 140 (70)). See: *Hikayat Raja Pasai. Dikaji dan diperkenalkan oleh Russel Jones*. KL: Yayasan karyawan&penerbit Fajar Bakti, , 1999.

²⁵ Original text: Dan yang menyurat Sejarah Melayu ini Tengku Said; disuruh tuan Fandarwola, Esti residen Komisi di dalam Sikudana, kepada tarikh 1272, kepada dua puluh tiga dari bulan safar, hari Ahad, bermula menyuratnya adanya. Dan sudahnya kepada delapan haribulan Rabiulakhir hari isnin, tamatnya. Yang menyalin ini Muhammad Nuruddin Acheh, pada sebelas bulan Zulhijjah kepada hari sabtu. Tamat pada Sanat 1380, Betawi. (HS 647 (274)). See: Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *Hikayat Siak: Dirawikan oleh Tengku Said. [The Siak Tales: Narrated by Tengku Said]* Diselenggarakan oleh Muhammad Yusoff Hashim. (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992)

calendars and timing.²⁶ The dates in Malay Muslim historiography can be found throughout the text in the introduction, colophon, and text body. For example:

*"Completed on Monday, on the 21st day of Muharram 1230 Hijri"*²⁷.

*"At Duha time, Sunday, 12th of Rabi'ul-Awwal, 1021 years after the Hijrah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), in the reign of the kingdom of Sultan 'Alauddin Ri'ayat Syah salli Allah alaihi fil-alam."*²⁸

*"On the 30th year of His Highness 'rule of Melaka. When Melaka was defeated. He went from Muar he went to Pahang for a year, settled in Bentan or twelve years; in Kampar for five years, which would make his total duration of ruling 48 years"*²⁹.

The timing in Malay works, when included is very precise; not only by the day, month, and year but also the time of the day, which follows the schedule of the five daily prayers. For example:

*"During the Zohor time on Sunday, 30th of Jamadi'lakhir in the year 1158 Hijri, Alif Tun Abdul Rahman the son of Datu' Temenggung Tun Mutahir has passed away in Linggi, returning to the Mercy of Allah Ta'ala leaving the fana state (annihilation of the self) to the everlasting state"*³⁰.

- **References to renowned Muslim scholars and their writing.**

The author often refers to the authorities of Muslim intellectuals specific to the subject matter and time period of the work. Not only does this underscore how well-known these figures were in the Muslim world, but the common reference to influential authorities also highlights the high intellectual caliber of the Muslim societies in the Malay world. One of the aims of those references is to increase the truthfulness of the text. All the mentioned

²⁶ Regarding Muslim Calendars in Southeast Asia see: Ian Proudfoot, "Old Muslim Calendars of Southeast Asia," in *Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section 3 (Southeast Asia)*, vol. 17, ed., V. Lieberman and M. C. Ricklefs (Leiden: Brill, 2011)

²⁷ Original text: *Tamat hari Isnin, kepada hari dua puluh satu, kepada bulan Muharam, sanat zai, Hijratul Nabi 1230.* (Hikayat Raja Pasai 140). p.70.

²⁸ Original text: *Tatkala pada hijrat Nabi seribu dua puluh sa-tahun (1021) pada tahun Du al-Awal pada dua belas haribulan Rabiul-Awal, pada hari Ahad pada waktu doha pada zaman kerajaan paduka seri Sultan 'Alauddin Ri'ayat Syah salli Allah alaihi fi -l'alam.* (SM 1(3)). See: *Sulalat al-Salatin*, ya'ni *Perteturun Segala Raja-Raja (Sejarah Melayu)* by Tun Seri Lanang. Studied and introduced by Muhammad Haji Salleh. Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan & DBP, 1997.

²⁹ Original text: *Adapun umur baginda kerajaan di Melaka tiga puluh tahun, maka Melaka pun alah, dari Muar lalu ke Pahang setahun, di Bentan baginda dua belas tahun, di Kampar lima tahun maka menjadi semuanya umur baginda di atas kerajaan empat puluh delapan tahun.* (SM 192(247)). See: *Ibid.*

³⁰ Original text: *Kemudian dari itu kembali ke rahmat Allah Taala meninggalkan negeri yang fana ke negeri yang baka pada tengah tiga puluh hari bulan Jamadi'l-akhir pada hari Ahad waktu lohor dan kepada hijrat seribu seratus lima puluh delapan tahun dan kepada tahun Alif Tun Abdul Rahman anak Datu 'Temenggung Tun Mutahir hilang di Linggi kembali ke rahmat Allah Taala.* (PSNJ 44.1). See: E.U. Kratz "Peringatan Sejarah Negeri Johor - Eine malaische Quelle zur Geschichte Johors im 18. Jahrhundert". Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973.]

names were the names of key figures in Islam. Religious figures in Malay-Islamic texts were regarded as people of intellectual activity. All these scholars were of high prestige and rank in Malay Muslim society³¹.

- **References to other historical sources used by writer. Textological criticism.**

As illustrated in the aforementioned categories, source materials have a high status in the Islamic tradition of historical writing; and therefore, if an author seeks the trust of his readership, it is imperative for him to clearly identify his source materials, including various reviews regarding the level of authenticity of facts recorded in the texts (elements of objectivity). Among them: *Hikayat Siak*, *Silsilah Melayu dan Bugis*, *Sejarah Melayu*, *Undang-Undang Melayu*, *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiya* and many others³².

Old Malay Muslim texts contain elements of precise textological criticism, which emphasize very contemporary scientific methodological approaches used in modern codicology. The authors of these works are attentive to the origin of the texts, the physical condition of the manuscripts, and the reliability of the dates and names. As well there is also a reference to different sources with conflicting opinions— even ones that the author holds as incorrect; which underscores the comprehensiveness and unbiased nature of the work that provides the opportunity to view history from various perspectives.

For example:

*“Since the beginning until the end, never have I come across any date, month or days recorded in the history of Siak, the write up was not well written and not a very good read which, in my opinion, is maybe due to the many versions written by writers who did less research in producing it.h.”*³³

The excuses and proofs which Raja Ali Haji offered his readers validated his opinion and perspective on *Hikayat Siak*, and he did so by employing the methods of textology, palaeography, textual criticism and other historiographical analyses. This shows that such method of manuscript analysis was already prevalent in Johor, and in fact, their conclusions were positively received by the readers of that time.

³¹ For the detailed information about it see: Denisova Tatiana. Muslims from Middle east in Malay chronicles XIV – XIX cc. (Мусульмане Ближнего Востока в малайских хрониках XIV – XIX вв). (*Вестник Московского университета. Серия 13. Востоковедение*. 2003) стр. 110 – 132; T.A. Denisova. *Marginalia. On Malay Muslim Historiography*. Al-ASRAR (Museum Pahang) & RZS-CASIS UTM, Kuantan, 2022, pp. 102 - 112.

³² See: “The Tuhfat al-Nafis: Structure and Sources,” in *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land en Volkenkunde (BTLV)* 127, no. 3 (1971); Virginia Matheson Hooker, *Tuhfat al-Nafis: Sejarah Melayu Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1991), 63-88; T.A. Denisova. *Marginalia. On Malay Muslim Historiography*. Al-ASRAR (Museum Pahang) & RZS-CASIS UTM, Kuantan, 2022. pp. 112 - 114.

³³ Original text: Sejarah Siak itu daripada awal hingga akhirnya tiada sekali-kali tawarikh apa lagi bulannya dan harinya tiada sekali-kali aku bertemu, dan suratan pun terlalu kopinya karangannya pun banyak kurang sedap dibaca sebab sudah banyak berpindah-pindah agaknya daripada tangan seorang serta yang menyuratnya pun kurang selidik pada penghasilkannya bagi sah demikian sangkaku. (TN 126 (132-133)). See : Matheson Hooker, V. *Tuhfat al-Nafis*. Essay by Raja Ali Haji. Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan & DBP, 1998.

*"There are a few stories, essays written by people earlier than me with some of the books written by hand while others are printed"*³⁴.

*"There is one in the history of Riau, Terengganu and Siak which I mentioned. The three of those I will mention below in all of its actions insya-Allah Ta'ala"*³⁵.

Malay historiographer Raja Ali Haji, mentioned the existence of different types of sources, including examples of contemporary scientific analysis of history, the aim of which is essentially to prove the truthfulness of the texts and their contents. Four different textual elements can be observed in just a few passages above. Internal textual criticism is evident in the author's negative criticism of the lack of reference to a date, which highlights confusion regarding the origin of the text. This is particularly significant as it reflects a highly contemporary scientific criteria for historical criticism.

Next, the author follows this by an opinionated expression of blatant criticism and disagreement with the poor quality of the written text, coupled with acknowledgment of positive elements, thereby making his approach balanced and unbiased.

Thirdly, this passage contains external textual criticism expressed with reference to the text not being a 'good read,' which addresses the poor physical features of the text's hard copy, such as possible wear and tear.

Finally, there is criticism with regards to internal critical elements, such as the reliability of facts; representing the highest caliber of historiography, which essentially emphasizes truthfulness and reliability.

Conclusion

The special features mentioned above outline the objectives, knowledge, and history of the essences of the chronicles of Malay-Islamic society, which, according to the public, are the signs or proofs of truth or reliability. This portrays the importance of historical writings in the intellectual life of Malay-Islamic society, which often used them as educational books.

Definitions related to *truth* are available in all historical writings between the 13th and 19th centuries. The usage of various forms of words are mainly used as elements of textology as a way to structure the composition of the text. Based on the opinion of the author or copier of Malay-Islamic writings, the religious and historical terms used as elements of textology describe their thoughts and discipline of knowledge in the historical texts. This has captured the readers' trust and belief in the information contained in the texts.

³⁴ Original text: cetera yang panjang sudah ada beberapa, beberapa banyak karangankarangan orang yang dahulu-dahulu daripada aku dengan kitab ada yang disurat dengan tangan, ada yang dicetak dengan suratan taba. (TN 2 (4)). See: Virginia Matheson Hooker, ed., *Tuhfat al-Nafis. Karangan Raja Ali Haji. Dikaji dan diperkenalkan oleh Virginia Matheson Hooker* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan dan Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1998).

³⁵ Original text: Aku dapat tersebut di dalam sejarah dan siarah pihak Riau satu, dan pihak Terengganu satu dan pihak Siak satu. Ketiga itu masingmasing perjalanannya akan lagi aku nyatakan di bawah ini jalan segala kelakuannya dan perbuatannya insya-Allah Taala. (TN 125 (131)). See: Ibid.

In the 13th to the 19th centuries Malay historical writing, several textual elements were utilized (a) as a sign of truthfulness (of the information given in the text) and (b) to strengthen (the text's) own scholarly standing (in the eyes of its readers). This is achieved by the author's deliberate inclusion of certain information from older texts, using them as a source of history, and then utilizing terms and descriptions that show his own opinions on its veracity.

These special elements demonstrate the characteristics of objectivity, intellectuality, and historical integrity of Malay Muslim chronicles, and from the viewpoint of the masses, these are signs and proofs of *truth*. They also reflect the importance of historical writing as an intellectual activity for the Malay Muslim society, which can be considered beneficial in the way that textbooks might be. Evidently, these books can be considered as reliable historical sources.