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# THE *SULALAT AL-SALATIN* AS A POLITICAL MYTH

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## The State of the Art

The *Sulalat al-Salatin* is unanimously regarded as one of the most, if not the most, important texts of Malay literature. It has been studied for almost two centuries; the most famous scholars in the field have commented upon it; books and articles about it are innumerable; editions are numerous. The result of this exceptional academic celebration, however, is rather disappointing.

First of all from a philological point of view. Our reading of the text is evidently based on the editions published so far. There are four recensions of the text<sup>1</sup>: those of

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<sup>1</sup> These four recensions are the following:

a) Abdullah's recension, also called the "short version" (first printed in 1841 and again in 1884, both in Jawi) is known today through Situmorang and Teeuw's transcription of the 1884 edition. See Abdullah b. Abdul Kadir, ed., *Sejarah Melayu* (Singapore: Thomas MacMicking, 1841); Abdullah b. Abdul Kadir, ed., *Sadjarah Malajoe of de Maleische Kronieken naar de uitgave van Abdoellah bin Abdel-kader Moensji*, ed. H. C. Klinkert (Leiden: Brill, 1884); T. D. Situmorang & A. Teeuw, eds., *Sedjarah Melayu Menurut Terbitan Abdullah (ibn Abdulkadir Munsji)* (Jakarta: Djambatan, 1952).

b) Shellabear's recension (first published in Jawi in 1896 and then in Rumi in 1898) is the second one printed in time but it is actually a blending of the first and the fourth recensions; it has been reprinted many times. See W. G. Shellabear, ed., *Sejarah Melayu* (Singapura, 1896); W. G. Shellabear, ed., *Sejarah Melayu* (Singapore: Methodist Publishing House, 1898; reprint 1909, 1924; new edition, Singapore: Malayan Publishing House, 1961; reprints, Singapore: OUP, 1967; Kuala Lumpur: Fajar Bakti, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1982).

c) The recension held in the manuscript "Raffles 18" has been edited three times, respectively by R. O. Winstedt, Muhammad Haji Salleh, and Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail. See R. O. Winstedt, "The Malay Annals or *Sejarah Melayu*: The Earliest Recension from MS. 18 of the Raffles Collection," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 16,3 (1938): 1-226; "Corrigenda," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18,2 (1940): 154-155; Muhammad Haji Salleh, *Sulalat al-Salatin, ya'ni Perteturan Segala Raja-Raja Karangan Tun Seri Lanang* (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Karyawan & Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1997); Abdul Rahman Haji Ismail, in *Sejarah Melayu: The Malay Annals*, ed. Cheah Boon Kheng (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 1998; reprint No. 17).

Abdullah and W. G. Shellabear are the very valuable work of editors, the sources and mode of composition of which, however, have never been seriously taken into account. The fundamental text contained in the manuscript "Raffles 18" has not been properly edited yet, in spite of three meritorious attempts, so that paradoxically the best philological achievement regarding that recension is its English translation by C. C. Brown. As for the so-called "long version," we only have the unsatisfactory transcription of two manuscripts. In a stimulating essay, R. Roolvink<sup>2</sup> has endeavored to trace back the genesis of the *Sulalat al-Salatin*. But O. W. Wolters<sup>3</sup> has cast a doubt on his hypothetical reconstruction of the text's evolution, and V. I. Braginsky<sup>4</sup> has convincingly argued that his main conclusion is groundless.

From a linguistic point of view, things have not progressed in any significant way since the text has been rated as a paragon of "good Malay."<sup>5</sup> What do we actually know, syntactically and stylistically, of sixteenth-century literary Malay? Nobody ever attempted to compare the *Sulalat al-Salatin* with the few texts known to be more or less contemporaneous, while the linguistic studies of the text have the obvious handicap of being based on faulty editions.<sup>6</sup>

From a literary point of view, students have more successfully analyzed the liveliness of style, the humor, the art of the portrait, the composition of the narrative, the many stories borrowed from other narratives, notably Panji stories,<sup>7</sup> and the apology for Malay values embodied in emblematic heroes. V. I. Braginsky, for instance, in his *Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature*, gives a remarkable literary analysis of the reign of Sultan Mahmud Syah and the rivalry between the latter and Bendahara Sri Maharaja. However, little has been done to elucidate the structure of the text. All commentators have even accepted the idea that it is divided into numbered chapters, whereas this division is the result of later editors' fancy.

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d) a "long version," two manuscripts of which have been transcribed by A. Samad Ahmad and Putri Minerva Mutiara. See A. Samad Ahmad, *Sulalatus Salatin (Sejarah Melayu)* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1979; reprint, 2000); Putri Minerva Mutiara, *Sejarah Melayu* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa, 1993, Proyek Pembinaan Buku Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah).

Recensions (a) and (c) have been translated into English, by John Leyden and C. C. Brown respectively. See John Leyden, *Malay Annals: Translated from the Malay language by the late Dr. John Leyden with an introduction by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles* (London: Longman etc., 1821; reprint, Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 2001); C. C. Brown, "Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals: A translation of Raffles M. 18 (in the Library of R.A.S. London)," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25,2-3 (1952): 1-276; a new edition of Brown's translation was published by: Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970; reprint, 1976. There are actually other, minor, editions and translations. I wish to thank heartily Annabel T. Gallop, Claude Guillot, Pascal Lederer, and Jorge M. dos Santos Alves for their invaluable comments on a draft of this article. I am also grateful to Vladimir Braginsky for giving me to read the relevant parts of his monumental *Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature* published by the KITLV, Leiden.

<sup>2</sup> R. Roolvink, "The Variant Versions of the Malay Annals," *Bijdragen van het Koninklijk Instituut (BKI)* 123,3 (1967): 301-24. Reprint in Brown, *Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals*.

<sup>3</sup> O. W. Wolters, *The Fall of Sriwijaya in Malay History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> V. I. Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature: A Historical Survey of Genres, Writings and Literary Views* (Leiden: KITLV, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Among others, by Abdullah bin Abdulkadir, "The Teacher," in the preface to his 1841 edition of the text: "because it is a good and elegant language" (Situmorang et al., *Sedjarah Melayu*, p. xxi).

<sup>6</sup> Arockiamary A. P. Savarimuthu's analysis is based on a comparatively good edition but on a recension (that of Shellabear) made of composite materials spreading over two centuries. See Arockiamary A. P. Savarimuthu, *Ayat Majmuk dalam Sejarah Melayu* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> On this topic see especially Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature*.

Lastly, from a historical point of view, the approach most often adopted has consisted in selecting in the text what could be authenticated by external sources and considering everything else as mistakes or literary embellishments. It is striking that most authors keep referring to the text under two misleading titles, namely those of "Malay Annals" and "*Sejarah Melayu*," given to it by Leyden in 1821 and Abdullah in 1841, respectively, while the original title is unambiguously different ("And he [the author] gave to it the name of *Sulalatu's Salatina*, that is to say, the genealogy of kings," p. 2).<sup>8</sup>

There is, however, an outstanding exception to this disappointing picture, and that is O. W. Wolters's study of *The Fall of Srivijaya*. Wolters's demonstration is uneasy to follow and not always convincing. Nevertheless, it shows without any doubt that the author of the first part of the text (the first six "chapters") was working as a historian with a deliberate purpose in mind: demonstrating the uninterrupted sovereignty exercised by the Malay (i.e. Palembang) royal family.

His assertions should not be regarded as entertaining fairytales but as statements of grave political relevance in Malay history. (...) History might be distorted, but a systematic distortion of truth rather than an irresponsible improvisation would be more convincing. (...) What seems significant in his treatment of the past is not the extent to which he was prepared to reject what we would regard as truth but the deliberate and consistently executed manner in which he made use of the truth.<sup>9</sup>

It is even amazing that Wolters's detailed and intricate analysis of the text has not radically changed the common vision of the *Sulalat al-Salatin*. I wish to turn back here to consider the historical signification of the text. Wolters's analysis only regards the beginning of it, up to the conversion of the king, and Wolters himself did not claim that his conclusions could be valid for the following chapters. Some traits however are permanent. It is striking, for instance, that the fall of Melaka, just like its foundation, does not create a break in the narrative, while these two events represent major facts in the modern history of Asia, facts that focused the attention of all historians who wrote about this period. The *Sulalat al-Salatin*, on the contrary, and up to the end, is only preoccupied with dynastic continuity. The Malay kings had left Palembang, Bentan, and Singapore before founding Melaka; later on they left Melaka and settled successively in Bentan and Johor, so that the legal sovereignty of the royal line, from Iskandar Zulkarnain up to the last king (Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah of Johor) is demonstrated in the text.

Wolters has shown that a number of anecdotes should not be discarded as untrue but instead recognized as having a historical signification different from what they seem to say. Using a different method, that is, by analyzing the structure of the text, I want to show that many other anecdotes in this text have to be interpreted as political myths.

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<sup>8</sup> The page numbers of the quotations (even the English ones) are those of the manuscript "Raffles 18." The English translations are those of Brown, *Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals* (I have used the 1970 edition).

<sup>9</sup> Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*, p. 82.

## Matters of Contents

The purpose of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* is explicitly formulated in its introduction: it is to compile the genealogy of Malay kings and their customs (*pertuturan segala raja-raja Melayu dengan istiadatnya*) for the benefit or the edification (*faedah*) of their offspring (“*anak cucu kita*,” p. 2). One passage of the text is famous: it is that which relates how Melaka courtiers on the eve of the 1511 Portuguese attack listened together to the reading of the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiah*. We have to imagine the *Sulalat al-Salatin* read in the same way, that is, read aloud to be listened to by an assembly in order to take benefit from it. We know<sup>10</sup> that in the middle of the nineteenth century a manuscript of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* was part of the Riau Malay court’s regalia. On the occasion of certain ceremonies it was exhibited, wrapped in yellow silk, and was read aloud in public. The beginning and the end of this reading were marked by cannon fire. Other historical texts were used in the same way. A copy of the *Syair Perang Siak* was brought from Siak to Pelalawan by Sultan Hasyim I of Pelalawan in 1828 and from that time on, throughout approximately one century, that manuscript was kept at the sultan’s palace and read out before the court on every first Muharam.<sup>11</sup> These ritual readings did not exclude humor or triviality; the benefit (*faedah*) did not have to be of a rational nature; it could be magical, since the acts of reading and listening themselves were considered beneficial acts.

It is stated in the *Sulalat al-Salatin* itself that the narrative is based on collective memory. Its primary source, mentioned in the introduction and a few times afterwards, is the memory of old people (*kamâ sami’tu min jaddî wa abî*, “from his father and his forebears,” p. 2). Allusions to this source are found repeatedly in the text itself (e.g. *diceriterakan orang dahulu kala*, “tradition has it,” p. 106). Three times (pp. 27, 55, 128) the narrator states that he is making a long story short, implying that he has heard a longer story,<sup>12</sup> and twice he quotes two variant versions of the same episode, introducing the second with the phrase “according to one tradition” (pp. 22, 35).<sup>13</sup>

But the sources of the text, in fact, are not limited to these cumulative or contradictory recollections. Several students, starting with R. O. Winstedt, have noted passages borrowed from other texts, both Malay and foreign. To give only a few examples, the story of Badang (describing the rivalry between two champions, one of whom cannot lift the other’s legs) is borrowed from the *Hikayat Amir Hamzah* and is also found in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*.<sup>14</sup> This “History of Pasai Kings” (or the stories which are at the base of it) is probably the source of other passages and details. Sultan Haru’s exclamation—“*jikalau Jawa se-Jawanya, jikalau Cina se-Cinanya, jikalau Feringgi*

<sup>10</sup> From Klinkert in *Notulen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap*, 1866, quoted by Ian Proudfoot, “From recital to sight-reading: The silencing of texts in Malaysia,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 30,87 (July 2002): 135.

<sup>11</sup> Tenas Effendy, in Donald J. Goudie, *Syair Perang Siak* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 1989), p. 259. See also the statement by T. J. Newbold, *Political and Statistical Account of the British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca*, 1839, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, reprint 1971), p. 193: “The articles of Malay regalia usually consist of a Salasila, or book of genealogical descent, a Code of laws, a vest or baju, and a few weapons, generally a kris, kleywang, or spear.”

<sup>12</sup> E.g., “And there is much more that could be told; but to go into every detail would be bewildering to the listener.” “Raffles 18,” p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> Wolters considers that such sentences may have been added by a later compiler. See Wolters, *The Fall of Sriwijaya*, p. 168, n. 70.

<sup>14</sup> See Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature*.

[...]" (p. 183)—duplicates that of Sultan Ahmad in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*: "jika Jawa se-Jawanya, jika Cina se-Cinanya, jika Keling se-Kelingnya tiada mau melawan Si Beraim Bapa."<sup>15</sup> The episode of Sultan Mansur's stay in Majapahit has borrowed many names and anecdotes from a Panji story similar to the *Hikayat Cekel Waneng Pati*,<sup>16</sup> while introducing new elements and new meanings into it, in particular the fact that the lineage of Majapahit kings stems from Iskandar Zulkarnain in both paternal and maternal lines, and that a Malay prince (from Tanjung Pura) becomes king of Majapahit. Part of the "Indian" genealogy in the beginning of the text is in fact Persian and is borrowed (probably through an intermediary text) from the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi.<sup>17</sup> Another Persian reminiscence introduced into the *Sulalat al-Salatin* is that of Nizam al-Mulk, the famous Persian minister of two eleventh-century Seljukid kings, found in the story of Mani Purindam.<sup>18</sup>

The fact that an anecdote is found in two different texts is a clear sign that some kind of borrowing has taken place, but it may have occurred in a written or oral form, and in a conscious or unconscious way, and it is also possible that both texts have drawn the same material from a more general intertext. Anecdotes from the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, so it seems, are in turn adopted in other texts. One example is that of the crown lost in water: in the *Sulalat al-Salatin* (p. 24), the king of Palembang, while navigating towards Temasik before the foundation of Singapura, has to throw his crown into the water in order to keep himself from drowning. In the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*,<sup>19</sup> the king of Melaka, while sailing about Singapura shortly before the fall of Melaka, bends overboard so that his crown falls in the water. In this case, as in several others, the matter may not involve an exchange of stories between these two texts, but rather the adoption of material from a common folklore. Whatever the case, it is interesting that the same anecdote can be used twice in totally different circumstances but with apparently an identical significance: that of a bad omen.

The text of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* has developed over the course of time, as is shown by the four recensions mentioned above. The "Raffles 18" recension is deemed older than the others based on a linguistic analysis, and since one focus of this article is the fall of Melaka in 1511, it would be interesting to know when that version was written, and whether the author was writing immediately after the facts or one century later.

<sup>15</sup> Russell Jones, *Hikayat Raja Pasai* (Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti, 1987), p. 67. The two sentences can be rendered as: "Even the Javanese of all Java, even the Chinese of all China, even The Franks...," and "Even the Javanese of all Java, even the Chinese of all China, even the Indians of all India would not dare to fight Beraim Bapa," but the phrasing is quite peculiar and Brown (p. 179) found necessary to resort to the intricate following translation: "if I fought Java, the whole of Java (would be no match for me): if I fought China, the whole of China (would be no match for me): if I fought the Franks on the mainland (they would be no match for me)!"

<sup>16</sup> Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature*, offers a very detailed comparison between the two texts.

<sup>17</sup> See Claude Guillot, "La Perse et le Monde malais: Echanges commerciaux et intellectuels," *Archipel* 68 (2004): 183.

<sup>18</sup> See G. E. Marrison, "Persian Influences in Malay Life," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28,1 (1955): 52-69.

<sup>19</sup> *Hikayat Hang Tuah* [Transcription of a manuscript from the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka by Kassim Ahmad] (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 3rd ed., 1971, first ed. 1964), p. 426; *Hikayat Hang Tuah* [Transcription of a manuscript from the National Library in Jakarta, deliciously signed "oleh: Bot Genoot Schap"], vol. II (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Proyek Penerbitan Buku Bacaan Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah, 1978), p. 193.

The debate about the time of redaction of this recension is still open. The text of the manuscript is obviously incomplete. It ends with a sort of short colophon, appended by a scribe, but it certainly lacks a concluding sentence, and most probably a more or less important part of the original narrative. For that reason it seems preposterous to evaluate the date of its redaction on the basis of the date (1535) of the last event mentioned, as did R. O. Winstedt,<sup>20</sup> who held the preamble containing a date of redaction (1612) to have been added at a later date. By comparison, Abdullah's text ends even earlier (with the death of Tun Ali Hati, in 1512 or 1513), but no one ever thought of suggesting that it was written in 1513. The most simple logic leads us to accept the date given by the text of "Raffles 18" as well, and to consider that the events which occurred between 1536 and 1612 are missing from the unique manuscript we have. Other arguments in favor of an earlier date, which refer to the vividness of anecdotes about Sultan Mahmud or the mastering of foreign languages (Tamil and Javanese) evident in the narrative, are not more convincing, as the 1612 author probably had earlier written materials at his disposal, and some of these anecdotes are false anyway. The debate over this matter of date has been ongoing ever since Winstedt set forth his interpretation: among others, Josselin de Jong, Teeuw, Wolters, Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, and Braginsky agree on the date 1536, while Roolvink, Samad Ahmad, and Iskandar hold "Raffles 18" to date from 1612.<sup>21</sup>

Even the text of "Raffles 18" is certainly the result of successive additions and remodelings. Scholars have suggested that preliminary stages of the text may have been composed at the time of Sultan Muhammad (ca. 1436), Sultan Muzaffar (ca. 1450), and Sultan Mansur (ca. 1484).<sup>22</sup> Moreover it seems to me that there is a break in style shortly after that portion of the text describing events of 1511, that is during the reign of Sultan Alauddin. Maybe a scrutiny of the vocabulary would allow to prove this and to specify where the break is, as J. J. Ras did for the *Hikayat Banjar*.<sup>23</sup> In the last part of the text, the narration is more dense and detailed; the *bendahara* (prime minister) has no more than the ordinary role of a first counselor; the story is limited to the small sphere of the Straits, without any more mention of foreign countries; the anecdotes may not be more authentic, but they are factual in style and devoid of clearly mythical elements.

Even if the text was written in stages, it is probable that the author<sup>24</sup> of "Raffles 18" has reworked these previous stages. Therefore we cannot expect to find a structure that would have been preconceived and followed for the entire text, but perhaps a structure

<sup>20</sup> R. O. Winstedt, "The Date, Author and Identity of the Original Draft of the Malay Annals," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 16,3 (1938): 30-34.

<sup>21</sup> See P. E. de Josselin de Jong, "Who's Who in the Malay Annals," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 34,2 (1961): 1-89; A. Teeuw, "Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai and Sejarah Melayu," in *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, ed. J. Bastin and R. Roolvink (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 222-234; Wolters, *The Fall of Sriwijaya*; Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, *Kesultanan Melayu Melaka: Kajian beberapa aspek tentang Melaka pada abad ke-15 dan abad ke-16 dalam sejarah Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1990); Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature*; Roolvink, "The Variant Versions" and "Sejarah Melayu: Masalah versi-versi yang lain," in *Sejarah Melayu*, ed. Cheah Boon Kheng, pp. 21-35; Samad Ahmad, *Sulalatus Salatin*; Teuku Iskandar, *Kesusasteraan Klasik Melayu Sepanjang Abad* (Brunei: Universiti Brunei Darussalam, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> See Teeuw, "Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai and Sejarah Melayu"; Wolters, *The Fall of Sriwijaya*; Iskandar, *Kesusasteraan Klasik Melayu Sepanjang Abad*; and Braginsky, *The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature*.

<sup>23</sup> See J. J. Ras, *Hikayat Banjar: A study in Malay historiography* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968), pp. 158-69.

<sup>24</sup> I will not dwell upon the question of the possibility of multiple authors: whether there ever was one author or several of them does not affect the present discussion.

that would have been built up empirically. Some episodes are probably present in the text simply because the “author” was aware of them and deemed them worth a mention. However, there are at least three categories of choices made by the author that lie at the base of the text: first, regarding the selection of events and anecdotes to be related, or even of the themes to be dealt with; second, regarding the composition, that is the arrangement of these facts and stories; and third, regarding their presentation (a tone, a style, and an implicit conclusion had to be decided upon). Conscious or not, these choices are constantly at work and are partially recognizable. Regarding the first of them, i.e., the selection of events, it may seem *a priori* limited: as the purpose was to relate the story of Malay kings, the raw material consisted of everything that was remembered, or, more precisely, everything the author had been able to collect, so that the task was merely to select the most significant of them. But such is certainly not the case. First of all, major facts of Melaka life are not even mentioned (there is virtually nothing true about relations with India, Siam, and China, or about the communities of foreigners in the harbor; nothing about commerce, in that emporium which owed its fortune to it; no ceremony of enthronement or funerals, in a text so preoccupied with protocol). Moreover, some episodes are very remote from reality (Singapore did not fall at the hands of the Javanese, but the Siamese; one Sayid kills the prince of Siam from hundreds of miles away), or even created from nothing (the story of the king’s conversion; the visit of Sultan Mansur to Majapahit; the episode of Gunung Ledang). Therefore, there is not only a distortion, deliberate or not and unavoidable in any historical work, of the reality of the past, but the intentional creation of a new reality.

### Narrative Units

It is necessary to explore the structure of the text, that is its constitutive elements and the way they relate to each other, because that structure is intimately related to its interpretation. And first of all we have to pay attention to the division of the narrative into chapters, which I believe is a fake structure, in order to identify the actual narrative units.

The text of “Raffles 18” is divided into thirty-one chapters which are numbered in the three editions and the translation. There are no such numbers in the manuscript (and there seem to be numbers in the short, long, and Shellabear’s versions only because they were also added by editors). These so-called chapters are marked in “Raffles 18” by a formula at the beginning of each one (*Alkisah maka tersebutlah perkataan* [“here now is the story of”], that Abdullah and Shellabear have replaced with: *Alkisah cetera yang ke[sekian]. Kata sahibul hikayat, maka tersebutlah perkataan* [“Story number (so and so). According to the storyteller, here is the story of”]) and most of the time by another formula at the end (of the type *Wa’llahu a’lam bi al-sawab* [“God knoweth the truth”]). However, there are four different versions of the formulaic ending used throughout: either the complete formula (*Wa’llahu a’lam bi al-sawab wa ilayhi al-marji’u wa al-ma’ab* [“God knoweth the truth, to Him do we return”], eight occurrences), the shortened one (*Wa’llahu a’lam bi al-sawab*, [“God knoweth the truth”], seventeen occurrences), the minimal one (*Wa’llahu a’lam* [“God knoweth”], one occurrence only), or no formula at all (five occurrences, and this is the most important figure). These chapters are most diverse in length and nature: some contain a unique

and coherent narrative, while others comprise a series of unlinked anecdotes. Moreover, they are of very variable length, between one and twenty-three manuscript pages (chapters VI to XII for instance have the following number of pages: 20, 6, 8, 23, 1, 3, 7). If we also notice that, on the one hand, the chapters do not follow any chronological or thematic pattern (for example, some end with the death of a sultan, but most do not), and on the other hand, with a single exception (which, as we will see, may be significant), the beginning of all of them regard a foreign country, we are led to conclude that the author has favored the formula *Alkisah maka tersebutlah perkataan*, most of the time preceded by a formula of the type *Wa'llahu a'lam bi al-sawab*, when introducing a foreign country.

There are actually many other breaks in the narrative, which are introduced by the usual "punctuation words" *hatta, maka, adapun, maka tersebutlah, sebermula, syahdan, arakian*, or by longer phrases like *hatta sekali persetua, hatta maka tersebutlah perkataan, kata sahibul hikayat, setelah ada beberapa lama antaramya*, or *adapun diceriterakan oleh orang yang empunya ceritera ini*.<sup>25</sup> It seems that in the course of scribal transmission of the text, one copyist has distinguished the formula *alkisah maka tersebutlah perkataan*<sup>26</sup> as special. In the manuscript "Raffles 18," the last line of the preceding section is written in such a way as to fill up the line, then the word *alkisah* is inscribed in red in the middle of the following line, and the remaining formula is written on the next line. The editors, starting with Winstedt, were then justified to consider these sections of the text as chapters; they simply reinforced this structuring of the text by giving numbers to these "chapters." As the text of "Raffles 18" is kept in one single manuscript, we cannot know when and by whom this division of the text was introduced, but it is certainly as artificial as it is misleading. Three facts should be conclusive enough to prove this point. First, one occurrence of the complete formula *Wa'llahu a'lam* in the middle of "Chapter I" (p. 6) has been overlooked (perhaps because the following sentence does not introduce a foreign country). Second, some so-called chapters do not end with any formula at all. Third, a superficial comparison between the three main recensions (Shellabear mainly follows Abdullah in this respect and should not be considered as an autonomous recension) shows that, on the one hand, some chapters do start at the same point and with the same sentence in the three recensions, which tends to prove that the first elements of chapterization belong to a common ancestor of these versions, but, on the other hand, the divisions of chapters differ in the various recensions,<sup>27</sup> so that we are led to conclude that editors and translators over time have tended to parcel the text into chapters as they saw fit. Incidentally, Abdullah is the first editor who introduced the numbering of these chapters, before Winstedt, A. Samad Ahmad, and others.

<sup>25</sup> The "punctuation words" all mean something like "then, subsequently, furthermore, moreover, thus" and are used to indicate new grammatical units in (Jawi) texts without any punctuation. The longer phrases have the same function, but usually introduce new stories; their respective meaning is "once upon a time; and now we come to the story; says the storyteller; after a while; and this is what the owner of the story says."

<sup>26</sup> Which Brown systematically translates as "Here now is the story of."

<sup>27</sup> Examples are very numerous. Let us consider one chapter only in "Raffles 18," i.e. chapter 6. Its beginning corresponds with the beginning of chapter 7 in Abdullah, but falls in the midst of chapter 3 in the "long version." Subsequently, Abdullah starts four new chapters (numbered 8, 9, 10, and 11), while the "long version" starts one new chapter (numbered 4), but at a different point, in the midst of the section that "Raffles 18" identifies as chapter 6. Then "Raffles 18" starts a new chapter (7) where Abdullah has a new one too (12), but the "long version" has none.

Modern readers are used to this division into chapters. They are usually numbered and marked by a page break. They point instantly at some sort of architecture of the text, that is, at an apparent structure. Each chapter is a narrative unit (of time, place, or action, like the scenes of a play), and the whole of these units constitutes the text, which in this way seems sliced up and balanced, ready for consumption. This slicing up conditions our apprehension of the text: we generally read one or several entire chapters, stopping at the end of one; we judge the progression of the narrative, and we refer to it according to the chapters. Editors have artificially introduced this pseudo-structure into the *Sulalat al-Salatin* with great success, and it has never been questioned since. G. E. Marrison<sup>28</sup> even saw a Persian influence in the chapterization, while for Wolters it provided "the clearest evidence of the Moslem framework of the genealogy."<sup>29</sup> All other students without exception quoted the text according to its chapters.

Therefore our attention should not be drawn to the chapters, but to the multitude of stories and anecdotes. The hundreds of anecdotes which make up the text often seem insignificant, and the red thread leading through them is obscure. There is no rhythm, and there seems to be no logic except the chronology. The text reveals no strategy on the behalf of the sultans, and the narrative itself seems to have no strategy: it is difficult to guess which criteria such and such episodes fulfill. We will see that this disorder is only apparent.

Many anecdotes in the work are independent of each other, but some series of them make up longer and coherent stories. For instance, in about 1510, the trial of Raja Mudeliar leads to a story of corruption and slander which leads to the execution of the *bendahara* and the portrait of his replacement (pp. 160-64). However, these narrative units are not actually defined by some formal device, but by their contents, and a string of apparently loose anecdotes can be recognized as a larger narrative if we understand the symbolic meaning that links one to the other.

The first part of the text (the first two "chapters" and part of the third) stands apart. It contains two stories external to the Malay world and one related with Bukit Seguntang, these three stories representing the dynastic myth. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else in the text, the division into chapters is misleading; first because it gives the impression that there are two different genealogies (recorded separately in chapters one and two as the dynasties of Hindi and Nagapatam), while there is in fact only one, linking Iskandar Zulkarnain to the Malay kings; second, because it would be logical to carve out a new chapter in the midst of "chapter three" with Sri Tri Buana's departure from Palembang, but this is not done.

Myth, as history, is a story of the past, but a past imaginary, idealized, constructed as a means of providing the ruling dynasty with the sacral basis of its power. Therefore it is a story whose constituents or symbolic meaning can be forgotten or distorted as soon as the logic of the myth is no longer understood. We can still recognize in the Bukit Seguntang story fragments of the Nusantara myth of origin as found in such

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<sup>28</sup> Marrison, "Persian influences in Malay life," pp. 63-64.

<sup>29</sup> Wolters, *The Fall of Sriwijaya*, p. 164.

texts as *Salasilah Kutai* or *Hikayat Banjar*.<sup>30</sup> The three princes who miraculously land on the mountain are the sons whom Raja Culan begot in the underwater realm. Thus they originate both from the underworld (the ocean) and the upperworld (they descend from heaven). Moreover, it is from the foam spewed by a white cow that “came forth a human being called Bath” (p. 19) who performs the consecration of the first Malay king and gives him his name, Sri Tri Buana. It is therefore probable that a first nucleus of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* started with a version of the Nusantara myth, which, in the course of history, was superseded by the Islamic one, situated in the front of it<sup>31</sup> in the form of two episodes of the history of India, which set up a long and uninterrupted genealogy (part of which is actually borrowed from the history of Persia) and introduce the figure of Iskandar Zulkarnain. These are the sources of power: Iskandar Zulkarnain, India, and Persia. Moreover, the choice of Bukit Seguntang as the place where the three princes appear creates an implicit link with Srivijaya.

With the narrative section describing Sri Tri Buana’s departure from Palembang and the foundation of Singapore, we step into history proper. From then on the organization of the text is fundamentally chronological. The reigns of the successive kings and sultans create a fragmentation of history. The length of each reign is systematically noted (with one exception which, as we shall see, is eminently significant); these mentions are, in fact, the sole figures of the text that identify time: let us recall that this historical text contains no year but one, that of its redaction.<sup>32</sup> But the numbers of anecdotes related to the various reigns is very uneven; there is no common ratio governing the relationship between the length of the reigns and the number of pages devoted to them. Actually even the chronology needs to be questioned. The natural assumption of today’s readers is that the events occurring in each sultan’s reign are organized chronologically, but we cannot be certain about this. Some stories may just have been organized thematically as well. For instance, the anecdote about Sultan Alauddin himself chasing and punishing a few thieves illustrates his active effort to impose justice and security in Melaka and, supposing it is true, it may have been inserted in the narrative without any concern for chronology.

### The Relativity of Reality

Any work of history is both a narrative and a demonstration: a narrative of the events of the past and a demonstration of the relations between causes and consequences. Both are linked to the conventions, beliefs, and values of the relevant society. For modern Westerners, the basic principle is logic, the keyword is “thus,” the demonstration is synonymous with intelligence, and the narrative is conceived as objective: its aim is to reveal the “reality.” For seventeenth-century Malays, on the

<sup>30</sup> See Ras, *Hikayat Banjar*, esp. chapters IV and VI. In addition to the elements mentioned below, the “short” recension has a story about a girl emerging from a mass of foam floating down the Palembang River. This Putri Tunjung Buih is adopted by the new king (see Situmorang et al., *Sedjarah Melayu*, pp. 28-30).

<sup>31</sup> A clear example of the addition of one myth to another, as an indication of a change in the source of legitimacy, is to be found in the *Ceritera Asal Bangsa Jin* from Bima; see H. Chambert-Loir, *Kerajaan Bima dalam Sastra dan Sejarah* (Jakarta: EFEO-Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2004), esp. pp. 57-72.

<sup>32</sup> Exceptionally the age of one sultan is mentioned: it is that of Sultan Mansur when he is enthroned (p. 69).

contrary, the principle concerned the adequate representation and adaptation of norms and models in a broad cultural frame where borrowing and imitation had more value than originality. The first model in the text is the myth of origin. In the “historical” period, the most striking one relates the conversion of the king: it is a model both mythical (the ideal converting by the Prophet himself) and literary (a borrowing from the Pasai story). The *wasiat*, or ultimate messages that the kings formulate on their deathbeds, are also based on models: they sum up some conventional moral values, which may have nothing to do with what the narrative says about the characters who utter them. These two models (conversion and *wasiat*) stem from an Islamic inspiration, but this type of inspiration is surprisingly limited: there is mention in the text neither of the beautiful mosque built by Mansur Syah (according to Pires), nor of the plans of Mansur Syah and Alauddin to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, nor (and this is more surprising) of the numerous conversions to Islam operated by Muzaffar Syah.

These mythical and historical models can be characterized as ideological. The story of Demang Lebar Daun, king of Palembang—who abdicated, put Sang Utama on the throne, and later concluded a pact of mutual respect with him—has been abundantly analyzed from an anthropological point of view,<sup>33</sup> but it should also be considered as a political assessment. Students of the text have insisted on the duties imposed on both the king and the people by this contract (see the numerous elaborations on the concept of *derhaka*). However, the essence of the contract might lie somewhere else, that is, in the relationship between two genealogical lines. From this point on in the narrative, the family of the king and that of the prime minister, tied by a pledge of mutual fidelity, share the power—an arrangement that is found not only in Melaka, but also in other kingdoms like Pasai, Bima, and Riau. Regarding Melaka, it is possible this political situation corresponds with the agreement between the founder of Melaka and thirty Celates of Buginese descent noted by Tomé Pires.<sup>34</sup>

Other models are literary in nature: these are the stereotypes frequently encountered in the depiction of battles, of marching armies, of cities, of the hysteria provoked by passing heroes, or of the sadness felt by courtiers at the deathbed of an agonizing king. Other literary models are reflected in the text at the point where *bendahara* adopts Sequeira as a son (it is a motif found several times in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*), in the episode describing Mansur Syah’s stay in Majapahit (largely inspired by the *Hikayat Cekel Waneng Pati*), and in the above-mentioned story of the champion Badang.

Comments upon the characters’ personalities are remarkably few. It is striking that a text supposed to be written by a *bendahara* limits itself to describing past sultans curtly as “handsome,” “strong,” or “just.” The characters are depicted through

<sup>33</sup> See P. E. de Josselin de Jong, “The Character of the Malay Annals,” in *Malayan and Indonesian Studies*, ed. J. Bastin and R. Roolvink (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 235-41; P. E. de Josselin de Jong, “Textual anthropology and history: The sick king,” in *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation*, ed. C. D. Grijns and S. O. Robson (Dordrecht-Cinnaminson: Foris, 1986), pp. 218-32; R. E. Jordaan and P. E. de Josselin de Jong, “Sickness as metaphor in Indonesian political myths,” *Bijdragen van het Koninklijk Instituut (BKI)* 141 (1985): 253-74.

<sup>34</sup> According to Pires, Parameswara (the equivalent of Iskandar Syah in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*) made those Celates “mandarins—which means nobles—both them and their sons and wives for ever,” and later on his son married “the principal daughter of the mandarin lords who had formerly been Celates”; see Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental* [1515], ed. A. Cortesao, vol. 2 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944), pp. 235-36.

anecdotes (e.g. Bendahara Lubuk Tanah, Hang Tuah) and through their deeds during some important enterprise, such as a war or an embassy visit (e.g. Hang Nadim). But all these anecdotes stem from a culture so different from the contemporary one that it is extremely difficult to interpret them: does Sultan Mahmud's love for Tun Fatimah ("and he was deeply enamoured of her," p. 164; "Sultan Mahmud Shah was deeply attached to Tun Fatimah," p. 165) deserve praise, sympathy, compassion, or contempt? Is Hang Tuah's dive into a cesspool (p. 80) intended to be glorious or ridiculous? Are the facetious liberalities of Bendahara Sri Maharaja (p. 158) a sign of grandeur or senility? What is the purpose of the three stories about Sadar Jahan (twice insulted and once depicted as a coward, pp. 151-52, 159)? Is Sultan Mahmud's humility vis-à-vis the mad Kadi Yusuf (p. 130) an act of piety or stupidity? What means the insistence of the text in presenting Sultan Mahmud as the pious student of religious teachers? When Sultan Mahmud allows his mother to choose the *bendahara* (p. 132), the earlier audience's interpretation of the anecdote was probably the same as the contemporary reader's, that is, all understand the text as a condemnation of weakness, but the intended moral of the story may be something else (e.g., that Mahmud is not responsible for the choice). All these examples regard Sultan Mahmud's reign on the eve of the Portuguese attack, and it is difficult to say whether the *Sulalat al-Salatin* means to describe Melaka's decadence during this period, as one would be inclined to interpret it according to modern criteria,<sup>35</sup> or whether, on the contrary, the text keeps drawing a flattering portrait of the high dignitaries. It is striking to observe that, facing this difficulty of interpretation, today Malay students analyze the text with the help of the same concepts as their Western colleagues.<sup>36</sup>

There are various indications that many of the anecdotes included in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, authentic or not, are not simple recordings of the past but are used to make a point, to demonstrate something which again may be authentic or not. Wolters (*The Fall of Sriwijaya*) has shown how, in the beginning of the text, history is "made to serve genealogical purposes." The history presented in the whole Singapore chapter is a construction made to replace the three-century period from the end of the eleventh century (when Palembang lost suzerainty over Srivijaya) until the end of the fourteenth century (the founding of Melaka). In Wolters's words, "It is an alternative rendering of a period of history obviously unacceptable from a Palembang point of view."<sup>37</sup> This chapter is thus fictitious, but it is at the same time partly authentic, as this history of Singapore has been modeled on the actual history of the first three Melaka reigns.

<sup>35</sup> And as is done in various degrees by authors like R. W. McRoberts ("An Examination of the Fall of Malacca in 1511," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 57,1 [1984]: 26-39), Muhammad Yusoff Hashim (*Kesultanan Melayu Melaka*), and Cheah Boon Kheng ("The rise and fall of the great Melakan empire: Moral judgment in Tun Bambang's *Sejarah Melayu*," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 71,2 [1998]: 104-21).

<sup>36</sup> There is a modern trend in Malaysia to consider the work of Westerners on the *Sulalat al-Salatin* to be biased as an effect of either ignorance or malice. In 1979, for instance, talking about mistakes made in previous editions of the text, the director of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka wrote: "This may have been caused by the fact that the Western editors did not have a good command of Malay or because they were prompted by colonial political reasons." See also Umar Junus, *Sejarah Melayu: Menemukan diri kembali* (Petaling Jaya: Fajar Bakti, 1984), p. vi; and Muhammad Haji Salleh, *Sulalat al-Salatin*, p. xx.

<sup>37</sup> Wolters, *The Fall of Sriwijaya*, p. 94.

The comparison of the various versions of the text<sup>38</sup> shows that some anecdotes can move freely from one reign to another. In "Raffles 18" (p. 109), Sultan Alauddin falls ill soon after having ascended the throne: he has a very severe stomach disease and he is obviously the victim of an attempted poisoning by his own grandmother; he is saved thanks to the dedication of the *bendahara* and the *laksamana* (admiral). In the short and long versions alike,<sup>39</sup> this happens too, but to Alauddin's son, Sultan Mahmud Syah. In "Raffles 18" (p. 101), Sultan Mansur Syah asks for the hand of the legendary Princess of Mount Ledang. In the short and long versions,<sup>40</sup> this request is tendered by his grandson, Sultan Mahmud Syah. In "Raffles 18" (p. 67), Sultan Muzaffar Syah initiates a peace agreement with the king of Siam. In the short and long versions,<sup>41</sup> this is done by his son, Sultan Mansur Syah. In "Raffles 18" (p. 75) as well as the short version,<sup>42</sup> Hang Jebat and Hang Kasturi enter a forbidden pavilion inside the palace of the king of Majapahit. In the long version,<sup>43</sup> this is done by Hang Tuah and his four companions. These variations do not have the same importance and may respond to different intentions. Some scholars have tried to interpret this manipulation of some stories. For instance, Winstedt<sup>44</sup> has argued that the editor of the short version altered the Princess of Mount Ledang episode in order to enhance Sultan Mahmud's glory by crediting him with an accomplishment that could be balanced against the adventures of Sultan Mansur. A. Samad Ahmad,<sup>45</sup> on the contrary, focuses on the episode as it is narrated in the "Raffles 18" version and sees in it an attempt to diminish the fame of Sultan Mansur. In other words, the same episode can be seen as either positive or negative. Cheah Boon Kheng<sup>46</sup> goes further and "treat[s] the *Sejarah Melayu* as a romance, a work of fiction as well as a form of moral discourse." But if he reaches the conclusion that some anecdotes are untrue, he does not try to understand them, because they "have been narrated simply to drive home a purpose that is only known to God."<sup>47</sup> It is interesting to note that the author of the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, when retelling fragments of Melaka's history, interpreted anecdotes of the *Sulalat-al-Salatin* as the demonstration of a supernatural law. The fall of Melaka, for instance, is seen as a consequence of the assassination of the *bendahara*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>38</sup> This comparison has never been done systematically. In the few examples below, I will only mention the "short" and the "long" recensions compared to the text of manuscript "Raffles 18," because Shellabear's recension is only a combination of the first two.

<sup>39</sup> Respectively Situmorang et al., *Sedjarah Melayu*, p. 205, and Samad Ahmah, *Sulalatus Salatin*, p. 175.

<sup>40</sup> Respectively Situmorang et al., *Sedjarah Melayu*, p. 233, and Samad Ahmah, *Sulalatus Salatin*, p. 199. In both versions, Sultan Mahmud wishes to marry this princess because he is "heavily affected" (*sangat bercinta*) by the recent death of the queen, Raja Ahmad's mother. If we believe that, as Tomé Pires has it, the Sultan himself had actually killed his wife because he was intoxicated with opium (see below), the manipulation of history is even more striking.

<sup>41</sup> Respectively Situmorang et al., *Sedjarah Melayu*, p. 115, and Samad Ahmah, *Sulalatus Salatin*, p. 101.

<sup>42</sup> Situmorang et al., *Sedjarah Melayu*, p. 129.

<sup>43</sup> Samad Ahmah, *Sulalatus Salatin*, p. 115.

<sup>44</sup> "The date, author, and identity," p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>46</sup> Cheah Boon Kheng, "The rise and fall of the great Melakan empire," p. 110.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>48</sup> "According to the story, when His Majesty Sultan Mahmud killed Bendahara Seri Maharaja without just cause, by the decree of Allah Almighty the Portuguese came and attacked Malacca." See Virginia Matheson and Barbara Watson Andaya, *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 17.

## Echoes and Clues

We already have a number of reasons to think that some episodes of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* are not the recording of events as they happened, but are instead their literary transposition. We also have a clearer idea of the structure of the text. The division between a mythical and an historical period, on the one hand, and the chronological ordination of events, on the other hand, are sufficient to define a structure, but a rather loose one, which does not account for the selection, the placement, or the function of the various anecdotes. We have to pay attention to other clues: echoes, predictions, correspondences, and genealogies.

By “echoes” I mean distant episodes which present factual similarities; knowledge of the first allows one to infer the consequence of the second. These echoes contribute to the structuring of the text: two “echoing” episodes distant in time, in space, and in the course of the narrative point to the coherence of the text and of the historical vision which lies behind it: the same cause has a comparable effect. I have noted down more than twenty examples of such echoes, but there are certainly more. I will mention all of them briefly in order to show that what we are dealing with is not stylistic figures, but historical meaning.

– The king of China sends two boats loaded with needles, in the first case in order to lure an Indian king into believing that China is out of reach (p. 13), in the second case to convince a Malay king of the considerable number of the Chinese king’s subjects (p. 86). The Indian king is deceived; the Malay king answers with a similar trick and is accepted as son-in-law.

– There are two mentions of the same skin disease (*kedal*): that of Sri Tri Buana’s wives before the signature of the “social contract”<sup>49</sup> (p. 19; the vassal-suzerain relationship is not properly established yet) and that of the Chinese king when he accepts the humble greetings (*sembah*) of the Melaka king (p. 93; the relationship is wrongly established).

– There are several similarities between Sri Tri Buana’s and Iskandar Syah’s reigns: both found a city (pp. 25, 49); they do so after a hunting party (pp. 23, 49); both found a corps of noble youths (pp. 19, 49). Wolters<sup>50</sup> has shown the meaning of these echoes: Sri Tri Buana is the “divine substitute” of Iskandar Syah, “his divine shadow.”<sup>51</sup>

– The tale of the Melaka king’s conversion to Islam (p. 50) is not only constructed on the same model as that of Pasai in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, but it is also an echo of the tale of the conversion of the Pasai king in the text itself (p. 37). Thus there are in the *Sulalat al-Salatin* two virtually identical conversion tales, as well as two equally similar theological questions—an intriguing fact that would require an explanation.

<sup>49</sup> By “social contract” I mean the agreement reached between Sri Tri Buana and Demang Lebar Daun at the very beginning of the Malay dynasty, by which the king binds himself to never humiliate his subjects while the prime minister, in the name of the people, binds himself to never betray the king. P. E. Josselin de Jong (e.g., “Textual anthropology and history: The sick king,” p. 220) calls this agreement “the sacred compact” and C. Hooykaas calls it the “Magna Charta.” See C. Hooykaas, *Over Maleise literatuur* (Leiden: Brill, 1947), p. 217.

<sup>50</sup> Wolters, *The Fall of Sriwijaya*, esp. pp. 119-20.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165, 152.

– The king of Pasai asks for the hand of the royal princess of Perlak and gets a concubine's daughter instead (p. 38). Maulana Jalaluddin asks for the princess of Rekan and gets a lady-in-waiting instead (p. 60).

– Kuci's victory over Champa, which takes place because the treasurer, having been bribed, opens the city's gate (p. 108) is an echo of Majapahit's victory over Singapore because the *bendahara*, having been humiliated, opened the city gate (p. 48). The echo seems even more obvious if we pay attention to the fact that there were virtually no gates to open in the actual kingdoms, as Malay fortifications of the time were almost non-existent.

– The fall of Champa, caused by the king's refusal to give his daughter's hand to the king of Kuci (p. 108) also has an echo in the fall of Melaka, ultimately caused by the refusal of the *bendahara* to give his daughter's hand to his own sultan (p. 157). This echo and the preceding one might be the very reasons why the story of Champa has been included into the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, though it seems unnecessary.

– The Melaka kings' line unfolds without any discontinuity (by opposition with the *bendahara's* line): each king is the son of his predecessor, and a son only succeeds his father at the latter's death. However, there are a few conflicts between brothers. The first is that which leads to the revolution of Kasim (Muzaffar Syah); it is caused by Muhammad's weakness vis-à-vis the queen (p. 57). The second regards Mansur's sons (p. 96); the third, Alauddin's sons (p. 111); and the fourth Mahmud's sons (pp. 169-170). This means that the problem confronted by Muhammad, which led to the two following reigns (those of Abu Syahid and Muzaffar) and to a palace revolution, is also confronted by the three following kings (Mansur, Alauddin, Mahmud). Muhammad himself, in fact, was already a second born, not an eldest, son. The problems raised by the decision of Mansur, Alauddin, and Mahmud to enthrone their junior sons are solved in various ways. In the case of Mansur, it is the *bendahara* who, following an accident (the eldest son of the sultan has killed the *bendahara's* son) states that he will not make him king; the sultan has no choice but to make his son king of Pahang; but afterwards Mansur's mother (Raja Tua) tries to kill the new sultan, Alauddin (p. 109). In the case of Alauddin electing Mahmud, the only dignitary (the treasurer) who questions the latter's legitimacy is killed (pp. 121-123), and Mahmud also eliminates his own brother, Zainal Abidin (because of his promiscuity, says the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, but Pires states that it is done out of Mahmud's fear that his brother might usurp his power). In the case of Mahmud, his disinherited son, Raja Muzaffar Syah, is driven away by the *bendahara* (p. 192) and becomes king of Perak. In other words, in every case the ruling party eliminates, drives away, or tries to kill the disinherited brother. In each case, the memory of Kasim's revolution must be present in people's minds.

– Two anecdotes about Siak and Pahang follow each other (pp. 94-96): First, Siak is attacked and defeated because the king does not want to pay allegiance; his son is made king and married to a daughter of Sultan Mansur. Second, a son of Mansur, Raja Muhammad, is made king of Pahang. Not long afterwards (pp. 114-16), Sultan Mansur sends the *laksamana* to punish successively Pahang and Siak for their insubordination (both kings have killed one of their subjects without asking Melaka's permission). The first two anecdotes establish the vassalage of Siak and Pahang; the last two confirm it on the occasion of identical acts of misbehavior.

- The king of Pahang, captive in Melaka, makes possible the capture of Sultan Mansur's elephant (p. 91). During the reign of Mahmud, the Melaka *bendahara*, when in Pahang, makes impossible the capture of an elephant (p. 142). The Melaka *laksamana* steals the elephant of the sultan of Pahang, who subsequently decides to abdicate (p. 149). There is a symbolism of elephants in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*. In the three stories above, elephants seem to incarnate royal power. In the first story, the sultan of Pahang, Maharaja Sura, is kept in a cage; he is freed so that he can permit the elephant to be captured, and the text suggests a parallel between the freedom of one and the other: "When Maharaja Sura had been released, the elephant was recovered" (p. 91). The fact that the three stories relate to Pahang makes it clear that the echo is not a coincidence.
- The two theological questions sent by Melaka to Pasai (pp. 98, 153) clearly constitute an echo, but an enigmatic one. Pasai (with Aru) is the Malay state that boasts about its seniority over Melaka and on which Melaka cannot impose its suzerainty. The *Sulalat al-Salatin* devotes many an anecdote to Pasai (and much fewer to Aru). One of them shows that the Pasai sultan refused to pay allegiance to the sultan of Melaka even after having received military help from him (p. 104); another one (relating the decision not to send a written letter when asking the second theological question, p. 152) shows Melaka's will to treat Pasai as an equal and not as a suzerain. The sole authority that Melaka (implicitly) recognizes in Pasai is religious, and this is illustrated through three anecdotes: that concerning the book *Durr Manzum* (p. 98) and those concerning the two theological questions (pp. 98, 153); these last two are almost identical; perhaps the author of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* felt the need to reassess in the reign of Mahmud what had been said during that of Mansur.
- Two courtiers (Sri Bija Aldiraja and Bendahara Sri Maharaja) show disrespect towards Sultan Mahmud; they will both soon be killed (we will return to this later).
- The Pahang *bendahara* is willing to give away his daughter in marriage to his sultan; the girl is kidnapped by Sultan Mahmud; the sultan abdicates (pp. 140 ff). The Melaka *bendahara* refuses to give away his daughter to his sultan (p. 157); Sultan Mahmud kills him and marries the daughter, but she is inconsolable; the sultan abdicates.
- The most remarkable echo is that linking the abdications of Sultan Malik al-Zahir of Pasai and Sultan Mahmud; we will dwell upon it later.
- The murder of Sultan Ahmad by his father, Sultan Mahmud (p. 168), echoes the murder of Raja Zainal Abidin by the same Mahmud, his brother (p. 131).
- The fall of Melaka, implicitly caused by the execution of the *bendahara* (Sri Maharaja, p. 162), is an echo of the fall of Singapura, explicitly caused by the execution of the daughter of the *bendahara* (Sang Rajuna Tapa, pp. 47-48).
- Sultan Muhammad decides to enthrone his junior son Ibrahim out of weakness in front of his wife, the Putri Rekan ("such was the deference that he paid to the queen's wishes that he was helpless," p. 58). Sultan Mahmud decides to enthrone his junior son Alauddin out of love for his wife, Tun Fatimah (p. 170).
- The Portuguese attack and conquer Melaka after a first, fictitious, vain attempt (p. 156), just as the Javanese had vanquished Singapore after a first, most probably fictitious, vain attempt (p. 27).

- There may be an echo in the role of foreigners in the killings of two prominent characters: Kasim raises forces against his brother, the sultan (who is ultimately killed), at the instigation of the enigmatic Maulana Jalaluddin, who has arrived from the West (*dari atas angin*, p. 58). Sultan Mahmud kills Bendahara Sri Maharaja as a result of a slander issued by the Indian merchant Raja Mudeliar (p. 160).
- Two foreigners are insulted by Malays because of their ignorance of local customs: at the royal palace, Maulana Sadar Jahan is told that he must have come to Melaka out of greed only (p. 151), and on another day, at his own residence, he is mocked because he cannot pronounce Malay words correctly (p. 152); Raja Mudeliar is insulted by the *bendahara* himself because he allegedly misbehaves in the palace (p. 159).
- Sultan Mahmud's love for the only child who survives the massacre of the *bendahara*'s and the treasurer's families (p. 162)<sup>52</sup> has a parallel in his love for Tun Fatimah's first daughter, Raja Putih (p. 166). The text is insistent in portraying Mahmud's sentimentality; the whole end of his reign is indeed governed by his love for Tun Fatimah. Is it too far-fetched to regard Mahmud's love for the two children as a token of redemption? In the first case, his love for the rescued boy in a way absolves him for having killed the father. In the second case, Mahmud has promised Tun Fatimah that her son would be king, whereas he already had a son from another wife; the fact that Fatimah gives birth to a girl may be a relief, and Mahmud's love for her may redeem him from having promised to disinherit the crown prince (something he will eventually do).

There are also other kinds of similarities between episodes that help structure the text, in some cases involving predictions and various correspondences. Predictions are relatively few, and they are always true, indicating that they must have been invented in order to foretell a known future.<sup>53</sup>

- Before leaving Temasek, Raja Culan buries a treasure and declares: "There shall come a day when a prince of my line shall possess this treasure, and it is that prince who shall make all lands below the wind subject to him." (p. 16) This happens when Sri Tri Buana settles in Temasek and his offspring create the Melaka empire.
- When Sri Maharaja, as *tumenggung* (a sort of minister of home affairs), has a man killed because he has committed an offense against Mahmud, who is still a child, Bendahara Paduka Raja exclaims: "Look at the Sri Maharaja, he's teaching a tiger cub to eat flesh. One of these days he himself will be caught by the tiger!" (p. 113). Sri Maharaja, as *bendahara*, will indeed be killed by Mahmud (p. 162).
- On his deathbed, Bendahara Paduka Raja predicts to Sri Maharaja that he will be greater than himself (p. 116). This is confirmed when the latter is made *bendahara* with the name of Sri Maharaja and the text says: "Bendahara Sri Maharaja was the grandest of all the *bendaharas*" (p. 133).
- Paduka Raja also tells Sri Maharaja: "But think not to play the part of uncle of the Raja. If such a thought comes into your mind, you will be killed." (p. 116) It is not clear

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<sup>52</sup> The child, named Tun Hamzah, is the son of the treasurer Sri Nara Aldiraja Tun Ali who had been *bendahara*, had become the brother-in-law of the new *bendahara*, and was still in charge when Sri Maharaja was made *bendahara*.

<sup>53</sup> Braginsky (*The Heritage of Traditional Malay Literature*) quotes some of these predictions or "prophecies."

what he means by “to play the part of uncle,” but Sri Maharaja is indeed eventually killed (p. 162).

– To Tun Isak, Paduka Raja advises: “Isak, seek not your livelihood in the Raja’s audience-hall!” (p. 117). Later Tun Isak, also known as Tun Biyajit, will kill a man in order to please Mahmud, and will be killed in return (p. 124).

– In the same circumstances, Bendahara Paduka Raja gives two pieces of advice to Sultan Alauddin (p. 117): he must not listen to slander or succumb to lust. These will actually be the two causes of Melaka’s fall, but under the following sultan.

– Sultan Alauddin himself, on his deathbed, enjoins his son, Sultan Mahmud, never to execute his subjects unjustly: “If you put them to death when they have done no wrong, your kingdom will be brought to naught.” (p. 122). This is indeed what will happen to Melaka after Sultan Mahmud has killed the *bendahara*.

– A Portuguese predicts that Melaka will not be taken as long as the *bendahara* is alive (p. 156). This forecast is confirmed, as the *bendahara* is killed by Sultan Mahmud before the fall of the city.

As for correspondences, they only differ from echoes in the sense that one episode is a sequel or consequence of another.

– The story of swordfish attacking a city (Singapura in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, Indrapura in the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*) is widespread in Malay folklore.<sup>54</sup> It is clearly used in the *Sulalat al-Salatin* in order to induce a conclusion, namely that the city will face a disaster. Instead of rewarding the boy who has saved the city from the fish’s attack, the king has him killed out of fear that his cleverness might become dangerous. “But when this boy was executed, the guilt of his blood was laid on Singapura.” (p. 47) The story may actually be regarded as a prediction as well.

– The story of the conflict between Pasai and Aru (a Pasai courtier keeps reading obeisance [*sembah*] where Aru’s letter has greetings [*salam*], pp. 117-18) seems out of place, as it has nothing to do with Melaka. Its function is to explain why later in the narrative Sultan Mahmud is unwilling to write a letter to Pasai when he wants to ask a theological question (p. 153).

– Hang Tuah’s son, Tun Biyajit, stays for a while in Indragiri after the Bentan army has been driven back by the Portuguese in Kampar. He bets on cockfighting and beats the cock, believed to be invincible, of the local king, Nara Singa (p. 172). Cockfights always have a symbolic meaning in Indonesian literatures, but this one is enigmatic. Nara Singa is the grandson of Sultan Mansur, and he is about to become Sultan Mahmud’s son-in-law (with the name of Abdul Jalil). Perhaps Tun Biyajit’s victory is meant as a retaliation, by proxy, so to speak, for the insult inflicted upon him by Sultan Mahmud when the latter had an affair with Tun Biyajit’s wife (p. 126).

– There are probably some correspondences in the various anecdotes about the rivalry between *bendahara* and *laksamana*.

– Other correspondences are the several references made to the “social contract” through the notion of betrayal (*derhaka*).

<sup>54</sup> See Josselin de Jong, “The Character of the Malay Annals.”

Genealogies. The first evidence to be noted is that genealogies are very numerous. They are to be found all over the text; they regard the kings' and the *bendaharas'* families, but also those of less important figures. There are many men and women who have no role in the narrative and appear in genealogies only.

These genealogies are difficult to sum up because dignitaries can be referred to in three different ways—by their name, their title, or their function—and because several persons bear the same title or occupy the same function (e.g., Sri Nara Aldiraja). Moreover, some genealogies are inconsistent;<sup>55</sup> they are not identical in the different recensions, which shows that some of them must be faulty. Thus genealogies may not be more authentic than the events related, but they constitute the very backbone of the text by including practically all characters into an extremely dense and complex net of alliances. This is most important: genealogies do not have the sole (and evident) function of relating the present to the past in a continuous line; they also create a stable and unalterable net of characters independently of the anecdotes about them.

Genealogies are patrilineal. They gather in the same lines people distant in time and space. They operate laterally, by alliance, and vertically, by descent. First, laterally. In clanic societies, bride givers are superior to bride receivers (thereby creating a relationship where reciprocity is impossible). One example among many is that of the king of Be Hali, the highest king of East Timor, who in ancient times used to give away women as brides to all the other local kings. This has a parallel in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*: Melaka kings marry princesses of China and Java as an acknowledgment of vassalage; they give away women to other kings as a claim of suzerainty; and they marry daughters of their *bendahara* as a sign of a certain dependency since Demang Lebar Daun's time.<sup>56</sup> These relationships are as simple as they are essential. China and Java constitute exceptions; even the king of Keling comes to Melaka to look for a spouse. The Melaka kings inscribe in blood their suzerainty network. When Bendahara Sri Maharaja refuses to give his daughter, Tun Fatimah, to Sultan Mahmud, he commits a very serious act which must have grave consequences; first, he will be killed; second, the sultan will eventually marry Tun Fatimah, who will drive him to make several injudicious decisions (to abdicate and then to disinherit his eldest son).

The sultans' genealogical continuity, that is the transmission of power in a direct patrilineal line, is indispensable so that each king inherits the power issued from the myth of origin. This is several times confirmed in the text through recollections of Iskandar Zulkarnain's ascendancy; some of these references are still to be found in the narrative after the islamization (e.g., "And from below the wind to above the wind Melaka became famous as a very great city, the Raja of which was sprung from the line of Sultan Iskandar Zulkarnain," p. 56; Mani Purindan, when he decides to go into exile, chooses Melaka "for the Raja of Melaka is the great Raja in these days and it is right

<sup>55</sup> See C. H. Wake, "Melaka in the fifteenth century: Malay historical traditions and the politics of Islamization," in *Melaka: The transformation of a Malay capital c. 1400-1980*, ed. Kernial Sing Sandhu and Paul Wheatley (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1983), vol. I, among others, on pp. 147-48.

<sup>56</sup> In P. E. Josselin de Jong's terms ("Textual anthropology and history: The sick king," p. 221): "the Bendahara, as the highest representative of the subjects, is bride-giver and hence, in this quality, superior to the ruler, who, by marrying his chief minister's daughter, i.e. one of his subjects, is wedded to his realm."

that I should own him as my lord, for he is sprung from the line of Raja Iskandar Zulkarnain," p. 56).

The continuity of the sultans' genealogy is underlined by the way it contrasts with the discontinuity of all other genealogies, that of the *bendahara* in particular. Positions at the Melaka court were largely hereditary, but exceptions are numerous. However, when Sultan Mahmud orders the massacre of the *bendahara's* family, he enjoins his followers to make sure that one man should be left alive so that the line should not be interrupted ("the Ruler commands that the family be not utterly wiped out but that some be left to carry on the line," p. 162).

The importance of the royal genealogy is also underlined, in a literary way this time, by the presentation of its links in the form of a leitmotiv: the king falls ill (the duration of his reign is mentioned and the phrase *maka datanglah peredaran dunia*, "in the process of time," is used); he delivers orally his spiritual and political will (*wasiat*) and designates one of his sons as his successor; and then he dies. Only one *wasiat* is issued by a non-king: it is that of Bendahara Paduka Raja (pp. 116-17). The royal *wasiat* itself is extremely conventional as regards its content (simple religious precepts on the vanity of the world). The role of the *wasiat* is also one of transmission: When the king dies, he transmits the power as well as the morals of power. The only two kings who do not die a natural death are Sultan Abu Syahid (p. 60) and Sultan Ahmad (p. 168). They are both replaced by their killers, who are legitimate successors, since they are each king's brother and father, respectively. Very often, when a king ascends the throne, his successor is immediately designated. For instance, a few lines after the enthronement of Sultan Muzaffar (p. 61) his son, Raja Abdul, is mentioned.

There is one exception to the whole pattern of this literary procedure of kingly succession. The sole high personage (and he is no less than a sultan!) who has no heirs is Sultan Ahmad, whom his father puts on the throne after 1509 and then kills shortly after 1511. We will see what conclusions should be drawn from this anomaly.

### **Sultan Ahmad**

So far, three points have been established that may help in interpreting the text. First, the anecdotes should not be taken at face value; many of them are the literary transposition of an historical fact and can only be understood by deciphering their symbolical value. Second, these anecdotes are linked by an overall play of echoes and correspondences. Third, genealogies have a fundamental role. Let us see how these considerations help provide meaning to the episodes related with Sultan Ahmad's reign.

We first have to summarize the facts, and this from a starting event further back in time. When Mahmud has been on the throne for more than twenty years (in September 1509), a Portuguese fleet (commanded by Diogo Lopes de Sequeira) visits Melaka with the simple objective of establishing commercial links. The *Sulalat al-Salatin* tells of the surprise of the Malays and of their benevolent attitude: the *bendahara* goes so far as to adopt Sequeira as his son. Everything happens smoothly, and the Portuguese go back home content. We know that the reality was quite different: after intricate disputes among the various political factions, Mahmud ordered his forces to attack and

slaughter the Portuguese, but actually only managed to kill part of them and to take nineteen prisoners; Sequeira fled back to Goa with the rest of his men. The *Sulalat-al-Salatin* version gives all the pride to the Malays: they behave in the most civilized way and the Portuguese's greed alone explains the fact that they soon return and launch a vain (and fictitious) attack on Melaka. Such is the context. Then Bendahara Sri Maharaja (in spite of the advice of an uncle of the sultan) refuses to give his daughter, Tun Fatimah, as a bride to the sultan; he marries her off instead to one Tun Ali and invites the sultan to the wedding. Sultan Mahmud sees Tun Fatimah; he conceives "a great desire for her" (p. 158), and feels he has been deceived; from then on he will bear a grudge (*dendam*) towards the *bendahara*. This motif of a sultan's desire for a woman is often met in the *Sulalat al-Salatin* and deserves to be studied systematically; it is probably always the literary translation of a political motif.

The next episode tells about a wealthy Tamil merchant and *syahbandar* (harbor master), Raja Mudeliar, and of the fanciful liberalities of the *bendahara*, Sri Maharaja, father of Tun Fatimah. This *bendahara* arbitrates a judicial contest between two Tamils: Nina Sura Dewana<sup>57</sup> and Raja Mudeliar. The first bribes the *bendahara*; the second bribes the *laksamana* and accuses the *bendahara* of conspiracy; the *laksamana* informs the sultan, who has the *bendahara* executed. (The latter accepts his sentence; the sultan orders one child of the family to be spared.) Later on the sultan feels remorse and has the actors responsible for the slander punished; he names Paduka Tuan as the new *bendahara*; this event is followed in the narrative by stories about his family. The sultan has eventually married Tun Fatimah (!). Seeing that she is inconsolable since the death of her father, Sultan Mahmud abdicates in favor of his son, Ahmad, and withdraws to the interior. Ahmad shows disrespect for the old courtiers and only associates with a dozen young favorites. Tun Fatimah has aborted a few times because her son would not be a sultan; Mahmud promises that if she has a son he will be sultan; she gets pregnant again, but gives birth to two daughters successively.

Albuquerque attacks Melaka (in July 1511). Ahmad visits the front riding an elephant, together with the *ulema* Sadar Jahan, who behaves in a cowardly manner. At night the courtiers listen to the reading of the *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyah*. The Portuguese are victorious. Ahmad and Mahmud flee. Chased and attacked again, they flee further to Pahang and later on to Bentan.

Ahmad keeps showing disrespect to the old courtiers and mixing only with his young favorites. His father disapproves of this behavior ("*tiada berkenan pada baginda*," p. 168), has him killed, and reclaims the throne. Ahmad's friends pay him allegiance, except Tun Ali Hati, who is therefore killed. Epilogue: Mahmud names his son Muzaffar as his successor, but Tun Fatimah finally gives birth to a son, Alauddin, whom Mahmud immediately names as his new successor.

The story of Mahmud's abdication goes back in time to the marriage of Tun Fatimah, so that the defeat at the hand of the Portuguese is symbolically linked with the murder of Bendahara Sri Maharaja. The defeat occurs in one sultan's reign, and it is retold in terms that designate military inferiority as a determining factor, but the

<sup>57</sup> According to Jorge M. dos Santos Alves ("*Naniyar Kuniyappan: Un Tamoul, syahbandar de Samudera-Pasai au début du XVIe siècle*," *Archipel* 62 [2001]: 138, n. 45), he was a *chetti* and his real name was Nayinar Suriyadevan.

fundamental reason for the defeat is the disruption of social order. Thus the fall of Melaka is an echo of the fall of Singapura, which was caused by the humiliation of the *bendahara's* daughter (p. 48). This echo is underlined in two ways: first, the actions of both kings (Sultan Iskandar of Singapura towards Bendahara Sang Rajuna Tapa and Sultan Mahmud towards Bendahara Sri Maharaja) are unjust and caused by slander; second, both episodes implicitly refer to the "social contract": the *bendahara* of Singapura reproached the king with having humiliated his daughter ("*diberi malu*," p. 47; the "social contract" had "*difadihatkan dan dinista*," p. 20). As for Bendahara Sri Maharaja, when condemned to death because he is suspected of *derhaka* (Raja Mudeliar says to the *laksamana*: "Bendahara Sri Maharaja intends treason [*derhaka*] and is ready to seize the royal throne," p. 161),<sup>58</sup> he accepts this sentence and forbids his men to defend him as they would thereby commit *derhaka* ("it is the custom of Malays that they shall never be disloyal [*derhaka*] to their Raja," p. 161).

Sultan Mahmud actually listens to the slander uttered about Bendahara Sri Maharaja because he already bears a grudge against him. His resentment (*berdendam*) is also an echo to a previous episode, as it recalls Mahmud's resentment (*berdendam*) towards Sri Bija Aldiraja. In that sequence, Mahmud has just been enthroned, and Sri Bija Aldiraja asserts that he has not heard the preceding sultan's wish ("I did not hear his dying wish," p. 123) and in so doing, he effectively questions the new sultan's legitimacy. Mahmud, overhearing his words, is angry at him and soon has him killed. When, much later, Bendahara Sri Maharaja refuses to give his daughter to Mahmud, in spite of the advice of the sultan's uncle (Raja di Baroh), he displays a lack of respect for the sultan and he goes against a long tradition according to which the *bendahara* give away their daughters to be sultans' wives. The text suggests that Mahmud's resentment is caused solely by the beauty of Tun Fatimah ("when he saw Tun Fatimah he was astounded by her beauty and conceived a great desire for her," p. 158) but Raja di Baroh's advice and the echo with the anecdote related to the murder of Sri Bija Aldiraja are indications that the *bendahara's* crime is much more serious: he is guilty of disrespect and disloyalty, and a capital punishment is to be expected.

The slander factor is the result of a rather long episode about the trial of Raja Mudeliar; the resentment factor is caused by Mahmud's anger when seeing Tun Fatimah for the first time. Therefore, from a literary point of view, Ahmad's enthronement and murder are inseparable from a long narrative starting with Tun Fatimah's wedding (pp. 157-168),<sup>59</sup> which is related to many previous episodes by way of various echoes.

<sup>58</sup> I deviate here from Brown's translation (p. 157), which relies on Winstedt's reading of one Jawi word (*berbuat*), while Muhammad Haji Salleh's transcription of the word as *berebut* ("*sedia berebut takhta kerajaan*") obviously makes more sense.

<sup>59</sup> It happens that the "chapter" which starts with that wedding is the only one introduced by "Alkisah maka tersebutlah perkataan" that is not related to a foreign country.

NARRATIVE	ECHOES
In spite of Raja di Baroh's advice the <i>bendahara</i> does not want to give his daughter to the sultan, 157.	– Raja Campa refuses to give his daughter to Raja Kuci, 108. – Devised marriage of Sultan Pahang, 140.
Tun Fatimah is married to Tun Ali. S. Mahmud is resentful, 158.	– Malik al-Zahir's resentment against his brother, 43. – Bendahara Paduka Raja's advice about lust, 117. – Mahmud's resentment towards Sri Bija Aldiraja, 123.
Raja Mudeliar's wealth. The <i>bendahara</i> 's foolish liberalities.	
The <i>bendahara</i> insults Raja Mudeliar, 159.	Maulana Sadar Jahan twice insulted, 151-52.
Trial of Nina Sura Dewana and Raja Mudeliar. The first one bribes the <i>bendahara</i> . The second, informed of it, bribes the <i>laksamana</i> , 160.	
He accuses the <i>bendahara</i> of <i>derhaka</i> , 161.	Prohibition of <i>derhaka</i> in the "social contract," 20.
The <i>laksamana</i> slanders the <i>bendahara</i> to the sultan.	Paduka Raja's advice about slander, 117.
The <i>bendahara</i> , condemned to death, refuses to commit <i>derhaka</i> .	Prohibition of <i>derhaka</i> in the "social contract," 20.
The <i>bendahara</i> and his family are executed, 162.	– S. Malik al-Zahir's brother dies in exile, 45. – Two predictions of Paduka Raja, 113, 116. – A Portuguese's prediction, 156.
One son is saved and is cherished by S. Mahmud.	
The sultan feels remorse.	Remorse of Sultan Malik al-Zahir, 45.
Paduka Tuan is named <i>bendahara</i> ; his elder son is simple-minded, 163; his other offspring, 164. Casual statement that S. Mahmud has eventually married Tun Fatimah.	
S. Mahmud abdicates in favor of his son Ahmad and withdraws to the hinterland.	– S. Malik al-Zahir of Pasai abdicates in favor of his son Ahmad, 45. – S. Abdul Jamal of Pahang, humiliated by S. Mahmud of Melaka, abdicates in favor of his son and withdraws to the hinterland, 149.
S. Ahmad only mixes with a few favorites, 165.	This misbehavior is expected to be sanctioned.
S. Mahmud promises to Tun Fatimah that her son will become sultan; she begets two daughters, the eldest of which is cherished by S. Mahmud, 166.	S. Mahmud's love for the treasurer's only surviving son, 162.
Albuquerque attacks Melaka; S. Ahmad visits the front line riding an elephant; Sadar Jahan proves to be a coward. Courtiers read the <i>Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyah</i> , 167.	
The Portuguese are victorious.	– [Victory of the Javanese over Pasai.] – Victory of the Javanese over Singapore, 48.
S. Ahmad and S. Mahmud flee; the Portuguese attack Pagoh; Ahmad and his father flee to Pahang and then Bentan.	
S. Ahmad's misbehavior with his friends.	Second mention of an act of misbehavior that has to be sanctioned.
S. Mahmud has him killed and gets back on the throne, 169.	– Murder of Abu Syahid, 60. – Murder of Raja Zainal Abidin, 131.
He obtains the allegiance of Ahmad's friends, except Tun Ali Hati, who is killed. S. Mahmud	

organizes the court. He designates his son Muzaffar as his successor, 170; Tun Fatimah gives birth to a son, Alauddin.	
Out of love for his wife, S. Mahmud names Alauddin as his successor.	– Conflict Kasim-Ibrahim, 57. – Out of weakness before his wife, S. Muhammad names his second son as his successor, 58.

If we put in parallel the page numbers of the main narrative and those of echoes and correspondences, we see that this episode is linked to twenty others that are spread over a large part of the text.

157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170
108	43	151		20	45		45		162	48		60	57
140	117			117	113		149					131	58
	123				116								
					156								

The most remarkable of all echoes is still to be told. It leads to an unexpected interpretation of the story summarized above. Twice in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, and separated by more than a hundred pages, a *conflict* about a *woman* opposes a *sultan* to the highest *dignitary*; the *sultan* kills the latter, but later on, driven by *remorse*, he *abdicates* in favor of his *son*, named *Hasan*, who is then *responsible* for the *loss* of the city. It is hardly imaginable that the narration of two series of events so clearly identical could have happened fortuitously. In the first case, Sultan Malik al-Zahir of Pasai exiles his own brother, who has carried away one of his concubines, and eventually causes his death; later on, driven by remorse, he abdicates in favor of his son, Ahmad (p. 40), who (according to the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*) has to flee before Majapahit's army. In the second case (p. 162), Sultan Mahmud of Melaka bears a grudge against the *bendahara* because the latter has refused to give him his daughter; then, listening to slander, he has the *bendahara* killed; later on, driven by remorse, he abdicates in favor of his son, Ahmad, who has to flee before the Portuguese army. The "echo" here is remarkable, even though it could have been one degree stronger as, in the *Hikayat Raja Pasai*, the sultan of Pasai is named Malik al-Mahmud. This echo is explicit for the nine elements: conflict-woman-sultan-dignitary-murder-remorse-abdication-son-Ahmad; it is implicit (but all the same clear for the author of the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, who must have known the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* stories by heart<sup>60</sup>) for the fall of the city.

This similitude of the two schemata must have been intended by the author of the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, which means that he has constructed the second on the model of the first. Sultan Mahmud's abdication has two more echoes. The initial cause of this abdication, through various vicissitudes, is the refusal of the *bendahara* to surrender his daughter to the sultan. This is an echo, first, to the episode describing the fall of

<sup>60</sup> A. Teeuw ("Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai and Sejarah Melayu") has argued that nothing proves that the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* already existed before 1536 and could have influenced the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, and that it is rather probable that both texts have drawn from common sources. See also on that matter Amin P. L. Sweeney, "The Connection between the Hikayat Raja2 Pasai and the Sejarah Melayu," *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 40,2 (1967): 94-105. That the author of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* was aware of the *Hikayat Raja Pasai* or of its sources makes no difference here.

Champa, which is caused by the refusal of the Cham king to surrender his daughter to the king of Kuci (p. 108), and second, to the abdication of Sultan Abdul Jalil of Pahang in favor of his son because his own *bendahara* was willing to give him his daughter, but the latter then was kidnapped by Sultan Mahmud (pp. 140 ff).

After the marriage of Tun Fatimah (the coveted woman), many events happen, including the seizure of Melaka by the Portuguese. Then Mahmud has his son, Ahmad, killed, and no reason is given or comment made to explain the action except that he was discontented with Ahmad's conduct ("he was displeased," p. 168). There is another echo here: Mahmud had already killed his own brother, Raja Zainal Abidin, because he was a libertine ("and great was the debauchery in Melaka in those days," p. 131). Would Sultan Ahmad be a libertine too? The two allusions, almost identical (pp. 165, 168) to this sultan's (young male) favorites and to his misbehavior towards the courtiers, and more importantly the fact (unique among all kings and sultans) that he has neither wife nor children, lead us to conclude that he is a homosexual. It is somewhat worrying that this interpretation is nowhere to be found in the enormous literature about the *Sulalat al-Salatin* published during the last few decades in Malaysia. Today Malays obviously do not interpret the text in this way, for the reason that they tend to read it as some sort of chronicle. The *Sulalat al-Salatin* has to be deciphered, interpreted, "translated," and I believe that seventeenth-century Malays used to read between the lines. The point in this case is not whether Ahmad was or was not a homosexual, but that the text insinuates he was, in order to give Mahmud a pretext to eliminate him, just as Zainal Abidin's alleged promiscuity was a pretext to get rid of a political rival. Homosexuality and debauchery were probably looked upon with indulgence in Melaka in those days, but they were condemnable sorts of behavior in the text of the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, where they are regarded as contrary to the formally recognized moral code.

Sultan Ahmad's murder is also an echo, albeit weaker, of the murder of Sultan Abu Syahid, who is killed and replaced by his own brother (p. 60). We also observe that the length of Ahmad's reign is not mentioned. This too is a unique exception in the text: from the first king, Sri Tri Buana, to the last deceased one (Mahmud), including the murdered king, Abu Syahid, the duration of each reign is systematically given in years and even sometimes in months. Only the story of Ahmad deviates from the rule; the duration of his reign is absorbed into that of his father (p. 192)<sup>61</sup>. We have to conclude that Ahmad's reign is fictitious: Ahmad has never reigned and Mahmud has never abdicated. Ahmad is said to be a sultan during a critical period, with the sole purpose of exonerating Mahmud of the responsibility and the shame of losing Melaka.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> The text specifically states (p. 192) that Mahmud reigned during one year in Pahang before settling in Bentan, whereas, in Pahang, Ahmad was supposedly still reigning. There is actually another contradiction inside the text, namely that Mahmud promises Tun Fatimah that her son will be a sultan (p. 166) at a time when he no longer has the authority to make such promises, since Ahmad is supposedly on the throne. These two internal inconsistencies might be clues that in a first version of the text Mahmud was reigning as sultan in 1511 and that the episode of Ahmad's reign is a later invention.

<sup>62</sup> When the first draft of this article was finished, I discovered that a historian had come to the same conclusion on the basis of external considerations, even though he unfortunately gave no justification for his opinion. See McRoberts ("An Examination of the Fall of Malacca in 1511," p. 26): "In keeping with traditional historiography, the author of the "Sejarah Melayu," to exculpate the blot on the Melakan dignity caused by this conquest of the city, invented a Sultan Ahmad mentioned nowhere else, thereby demonstrating how incredible this event was to the Malay mind." This statement is briefly commented

It is striking that in the only other Malay text dealing with the history of Melaka,<sup>63</sup> namely the *Hikayat Hang Tuah*, the reigning sultan is exculpated in a similar way from having lost the city. The *Hikayat Hang Tuah* is an epic centered on the historical character of the “admiral” Hang Tuah. There the city of Melaka is said to be ruled by one Raja Melaka, whose reign appears to stretch over the course of a century, but who may in fact be a composite figure made up of a few successive sovereigns. However, after a first attack by the Portuguese, this Raja Melaka steps down and is replaced on the throne by a totally fictitious character named Putri Gunung Ledang.<sup>64</sup> Thus, even in the case of a text which pays no attention to the person of the sultan, the latter has to be saved from the shame of losing Melaka. (Putri Gunung Ledang is the Raja’s daughter by the princess of Majapahit. She flees when the Portuguese seize Melaka and subsequently becomes queen of the Batak people.)

Is it conceivable to falsify a contemporary event? Readers (listeners) of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* must have known this period well enough to realize that the text’s depiction of Sultan Ahmad’s reign (lasting approximately two years) was false, but it is in fact perfectly possible that they did accept this subterfuge because it was somehow logical (it was deemed necessary in order to exculpate Sultan Mahmud) and, more simply, because it emanated from the ruler’s authority. We have a comparable example in a Javanese text of the early nineteenth century entitled the “Short Sajahar Banten,” and it is even more interesting because it regards the conflict between a sultan and his son at a time of armed rivalry with a European force. As a result of a long feud, in 1680, Sultan Ageng of Banten declared war on the VOC, but his own son, Sultan Haji, rebelled against him and joined the Dutch forces, a decision that resulted in the defeat of his father and the loss of Banten’s independence. The “Short Sajahar Banten” candidly endeavors to disguise this sad episode by pretending that the rebel prince was not the sultan’s son, but an imposter.<sup>65</sup> A second example is found in a Malay text, and it has to do this time with disposing of the embarrassing matter of homosexuality. The text is the *Tuhfat al-Nafis*, composed around 1865; it tells the story of Sultan Mahmud II of Johor (died 1699), of whom we know from a foreign source that he was homosexual and would not have intercourse with a woman.<sup>66</sup> The text unravels this difficulty by explaining that the sultan had a fairy as a wife and actually begot a child from a concubine in a quite unordinary way: According to one account, he had intercourse with her once after he was already dead, while according to another he

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upon by G. L. Koster, *Roaming through Seductive Gardens: Readings in Malay Narrative* (Keiden: KITLV, 1997, VKI 167), p. 34.

<sup>63</sup> Not to mention a few other historical traditions which are directly inspired by the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, like the *Tuhfat al-Nafis* already mentioned or a short text edited, translated, and brilliantly analyzed by Luis Filipe F. R. Thomaz. See Luis Filipe F. R. Thomaz, “La prise de Malacca par les Portugais vue par les Malais, d’après le manuscrit Raffles 32 de la Royal Asiatic Society,” in *Cultural Contact and Textual Interpretation*, ed. C. D. Grijns and S. O. Robson, pp. 158-177.

<sup>64</sup> Later on Sultan Mahmud appears out of the blue and founds Johor. This event takes place at least in the versions of Shellabear, Balai Pustaka, and A. B. Madjoindo. But it happens that Kassim Ahmad (*Hikayat Hang Tuah*, p. 478) names him Sultan Ahmad. I am convinced that one scribe of Kassim Ahmad’s text, or probably Kassim Ahmad himself, has corrected Mahmud by replacing him with Ahmad precisely because he was aware of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* version, and this is a good example of the way a textual tradition can be suddenly modified under the influence of the opinions of one editor.

<sup>65</sup> See G. W. J. Drewes, “Short notice on the story of Haji Mangsur of Banten,” *Archipel* 50 (1995): 119-122.

<sup>66</sup> Timothy J. Moy, “The ‘Sejarah Melayu’ Tradition of Power and Political Structure: An Assessment of Relevant Sections of the ‘Tuhfat al-Nafis,’” *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 48,2 (1975): fn. 75.

made her swallow his semen after he lusted for his fairy wife.<sup>67</sup> Much closer to us, examples of political myths recently spread in Indonesia prove abundantly that a ruler's subjects can accept a falsification of a known reality under certain circumstances. Let us mention two examples only: that of Soeharto's role in the attack of Yogya in March 1949<sup>68</sup> and the official version of the so-called PKI's attempt at a *coup d'état* in 1965.<sup>69</sup> Perhaps a majority of the Indonesian population believed in these stories, but educated people were suspicious, to say the least. In the case of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* too, the people aware that this political myth was largely fiction belonged to the elite spheres of society.

### Disposing of Evidence

There is, however, one unfortunate piece of evidence that contradicts this conclusion. It is the existence of two coins in the name of "Ahmad ibn Mahmud Syah, al-Sultan al-Adil" and "Sultan Ahmad, ibn Mahmud Syah," respectively. These coins, four specimens of which seem to exist, were found in 1900 in the mouth of the Melaka River among some 150 coins of the Sultanate period and a large quantity from the Portuguese and Dutch periods.<sup>70</sup> There seems to be no doubt that this Ahmad is indeed the son of Sultan Mahmud of Melaka, and the question therefore is whether these coins prove that Ahmad ever was a sultan. It is possible that he was not. Due to the very existence of these coins, I have to explore the various circumstances that may explain how coins could be minted in Ahmad's name while he was actually not a sultan. This unexpected exercise is in fact interesting because it is directly related to the nature of royalty in the Malay world.

I will first borrow arguments from Annabel Teh Gallop's thesis on Malay seals.<sup>71</sup> First of all, in Ottoman Turkey as well as in the Mughal empire, the title "sultan" was used for princes.<sup>72</sup> Second, and more pertinent to our present discussion, in certain states of the Malay Peninsula and Java where a dualistic system of government once

<sup>67</sup> See Virginia Matheson and Barbara Watson Andaya, *The Precious Gift (Tuhfat al-Nafis)*, pp. 22, 42.

<sup>68</sup> See M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Palgrave, 2001), p. 283: "In addition to their many smaller victories against the Dutch, Republican forces under Lieutenant-Colonel Soeharto struck a psychological blow when they infiltrated and then attacked Yogyakarta on 1 March 1949. In later years, after Soeharto became Indonesia's second President, this assault was elevated into a myth of Soeharto as a major national hero retaking Yogyakarta from the Dutch and holding it for six hours, which was, at best, a considerable exaggeration."

<sup>69</sup> These two myths have been publicized in many ways. The government has commissioned the making of a film on both: "*Serangan Fajar*" and "*Pengkhianatan G-30-S PKI*" (both directed by Arifin C. Noer, in 1981 and 1982).

<sup>70</sup> See R. Hanitsch, "On a collection of coins from Malacca," *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 39 (1903): 183-202, 2 plates. More coins were found five years later; see R. Hanitsch, "On a second collection of coins from Malacca," *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 44 (1905): 213-16, 1 plate. Ahmad's coins are illustrated in the first of these articles, in C. H. Dakers, "The Malay Coins of Malacca," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 17,1 (1939): 1-12, 2 plates; and more completely in Saran Singh, *The Encyclopaedia of the Coins of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei 1400-1967* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysia Numismatic Society, 1986, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1996), p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Annabel Teh Gallop, "Malay Seals Inscriptions: A Study in Islamic Epigraphy from Southeast Asia," (PhD dissertation, University of London, SOAS, 2002).

<sup>72</sup> Gallop, "Malay Seals Inscriptions," p. 73. In "Raffles 18" (p. 111) there is mention of two sons of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah who are named Sultan Ahmad and Sultan Abdul Jamal even though they never became sultans.

existed, “both senior and junior rulers might hold the title *sultan*.”<sup>73</sup> A. Gallop gives examples of such a situation in Banten in the 1630s to 1670s, in Johor in the 1720s, and in Kelantan in the 1770s. There is indeed a possibility that Ahmad had acquired some responsibilities by the time of Albuquerque’s attack and had coins minted with his name as some sort of Sultan Muda. In Pires’s account, Parameswara’s son, Xaquem Darxa, founded his own settlement in Melaka proper, while his father had his court in Bertam, and he “endeavoured with his father to populate Malacca as much as he could.”<sup>74</sup> This has been interpreted by Wolters<sup>75</sup> as an indication that “towards the end of his life, when he was an old man, he [Iskandar Syah] seems to have entrusted his heir with some responsibilities,” even though there is no mention of the like in the *Sulalat al-Salatin*. Something similar may have happened around 1510, or in other words, it is possible that Mahmud gave his son Ahmad some responsibilities, which would have justified the minting of coins impressed with his name.

We have to pay attention to other considerations as well. There are two intriguing peculiarities about Ahmad’s name. First, he is styled “Sultan Ahmad” when still a child and long before being (or not being) enthroned, while other heirs to the throne are all styled “Raja.” Heirs are usually mentioned just after the enthronement of their father. Starting with Iskandar Syah, the founder of Melaka, they are Raja Kecil Besar (p. 47, who later became Sultan Makota), Raja Tengah (p. 49, who later became Sultan Muhammad Syah), Raja Ibrahim (p. 57, who later became Sultan Abu Syahid), Raja Kasim (p. 57, who later became Sultan Muzaffar Syah), Raja Abdul (p. 60, who later became Sultan Mansur Syah), Raja Raden (who later became Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah), and Raja Mahmud (p. 108, who later became Sultan Mahmud Syah). On the other hand, two sons of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah are named Sultan Ahmad and Sultan Abdul Jamal (p. 109), though they never acceded to the throne. Thus we would have three princes named “Sultan” as children who never became sultans, while heirs to the throne were all named “Raja.” It is remarkable that Ahmad, when still a child, should be called “Sultan Ahmad” in the *Sulalat al-Salatin* and “king Amet” by Pires.<sup>76</sup> Second, starting with the first Muslim ruler of Melaka and with the sole exception of Sultan Abu Syahid, who was murdered after a reign lasting “a year and five months” (p. 60), all sultans bear the title “Syah” in their name, viz. Muhammad Syah, Muzaffar Syah, Mansur Syah, Alauddin Riayat Syah, and Mahmud Syah, so that it is surprising that Sultan Ahmad should never be called Ahmad Syah.

Whatever the case, it is difficult to accept the *Sulalat al-Salatin*’s version of the political situation in 1511 because it contradicts entirely the evidence found in Portuguese contemporary sources, mainly the letters of Albuquerque himself, the “Commentaries” of his son, as well as Pires’s and Barros’s accounts. When the Portuguese appeared in Melaka, they expressed “as their sole aim the release of their compatriots captured in Melaka in 1509.”<sup>77</sup> This was certainly an understatement, but the Portuguese did offer peace, and they negotiated an arrangement with the sultan

<sup>73</sup> Gallop, “Malay Seals Inscriptions,” p. 75.

<sup>74</sup> Pires, *The Suma Oriental*, pp. 236-38.

<sup>75</sup> Wolters, *The Fall of Srivijaya*, p. 142.

<sup>76</sup> Pires, *The Suma Oriental*, p. 254; see the quotation below.

<sup>77</sup> McRoberts, “An Examination of the Fall of Malacca in 1511,” p. 33.

during no less than six weeks;<sup>78</sup> during those six weeks they had good contacts with numerous people in town, including influential merchants like the Javanese Utama 'Diraja'<sup>79</sup> and the Indian Naina Chatu, as well as several Chinese.<sup>80</sup> Is it conceivable in these conditions that they would have been ignorant of the sultan's name?

Ahmad is mentioned in both the *Sulalat al-Salatin* and Portuguese sources.<sup>81</sup> In the Malay text, he is mentioned as soon as his father accedes to the throne—and with the predicate "sultan," as we have just seen. The text reads: "Sultan Mahmud Shah begat three children: the son was called Sultan Ahmad and it was he who was to succeed his father on the throne: the other two were daughters" (p. 123). There is no further mention of him until he replaces his father on the throne (p. 164). As for Pires, he mentions Ahmad twice. First, he relates the murder of Ahmad's mother by the sultan, his father ("With a kris he also killed Raja Jalim's sister who was his wife, mother of king Amet his son, for no reason, but just because the fancy came to him when he was intoxicated with opium."<sup>82</sup>). Second, Pires recounts events during the time of Albuquerque's attack, when Mahmud ignores the advice of the *bendahara* and the *laksamana* to make peace with the Portuguese and instead follows his own will "and that of his son, whom he afterwards killed"<sup>83</sup> and ultimately loses the city. This second quotation indicates that Ahmad might have had some political role at that time. João de Barros actually gives more information confirming this hypothesis. According to him, Mahmud was indeed the sultan at the time of Albuquerque's attack, but he reluctantly listened to some advisers, including his son Ahmad, and left the city to their command during the battle. Later on he quarreled with them, as he blamed them for the loss of the city.<sup>84</sup> Pires draws the portrait of an amazingly brutal tyrant in the

<sup>78</sup> Albuquerque arrived on July 1 and launched his second and decisive attack on August 14; see McRoberts, "An Examination of the Fall of Malacca in 1511," p. 30.

<sup>79</sup> Pires names him Utemuta Raja or Utamutarraja (*The Suma Oriental*, pp. 255, 257), but J. M. dos Santos Alves has found in more reliable Portuguese sources the spelling "Utamatiraja," which should probably be restituted as Utama 'Diraja. See J. M. dos Santos Alves, "Três Sultanatos Malaios do Estreito de Malaca nos séculos XV e XVI (Samudera-Pasai, Aceh e Malaca/Johor): Estudo Comparativo de História Social e Política," (thèse inédite, Lisbonne, 1991).

<sup>80</sup> McRoberts, "An Examination of the Fall of Malacca in 1511," p. 34.

<sup>81</sup> McRoberts's statement ("An Examination of the Fall of Malacca in 1511," p. 26) that he is "mentioned nowhere else" than in the *Sulalat al-Salatin's* account of the 1511 events is surprisingly erroneous.

<sup>82</sup> Pires, *The Suma Oriental*, p. 254.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>84</sup> Jorge M. dos Santos Alves has been kind enough to locate and translate for me the relevant passages as follows:

"King Mahmud, unwilling to show his weakness, although his soul was troubled, telling him about the forthcoming destruction [of Malacca] (...), decided to defend the city; then, when the tide was to turn, he would accept the demands of Afonso de Albuquerque. However, as a retaliation against those two sons of his (Barros refers to one of his sons called Prince Alauddin and to his son-in-law, the sultan of Pahang), he told them that he would leave the city to their command and let them defend it, so they said they would do so, because he had no more strength than that of his advice. [...] And since they thought that war was the best solution, they could now prepare the troops, and everything that was under their command, so God helped them. But, since he [Sultan Mahmud] thought that he could not be left aside from all these things, he made his point on how should be the city's defence." (década II, livro VI, chap. III).

"... Albuquerque was not satisfied only with taking the city, and so he decided to chase the King [Sultan Mahmud] in the woods where he had taken refuge: and specially, because of the quarrels between father and son, due to the fact that the King thought that the Prince was to be blamed for his unfortunate situation ..." (década II, livro VI, chap. VI).

person of Mahmud. According to him, Mahmud was luxurious, addicted to opium, vicious, arrogant, presumptuous, unreasonable, unjust, versatile, and diabolically cruel, to the point of being feared and hated by everyone. Pires had his own reasons to enhance the greatness of Melaka and to demonize Mahmud, in order to justify in front of the king of Portugal the conquest of the city by Albuquerque. Still his portrait and most of the stories he relates are corroborated by other sources, including the *Sulalat al-Salatin*, so that his text is highly reliable, albeit exaggerated. Whatever the case may be, it leaves no doubt that Pires, writing in 1515, knew perfectly well who was the sultan four years earlier.

Jorge M. dos Santos Alves, who has conducted the most thorough study about the sultanates of Pasai and Melaka in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, has come to the conclusion that

... this dialectic relationship between Mahmud and Ahmad has to be seen as a case of political antagonism between two parties in Melaka court, city, and society. As soon as the beginning of the sixteenth century, Mahmud's power was threatened by various influential groups. He was living secluded inside his fortified palace. His main political adversaries were the *bendahara* Tun Mutahir and the two Javanese magnates, Utama 'Diraja and Tuan Kelaskar. The last two had no less than six to ten thousand people each living in their "houses" out of a population of sixty to sixty-five thousand people at the most (and not the 120 or even 200,000 often quoted by historians). Ahmad was obviously their ally, and more especially of Utama 'Diraja's family, and was perhaps their candidate to the throne.<sup>85</sup>

Given that perspective, blaming Ahmad for the loss of the city can also be seen as an act of revenge for Mahmud's party.

In conclusion, we can sum up the structure of the *Sulalat al-Salatin* by following four lines: first, a division between a relatively short mythical preamble (pp. 3-21) and the bulk of the text, which is more or less historical. Second, a seemingly chronological order punctuated by the successive reigns of the Malay kings. Third, a series of genealogical fragments which include all the characters of the narrative into a net of relationships. Fourth, a system of echoes, predictions, and other clues that link each anecdote to a number of others. These anecdotes are often more than mere recordings of facts of the past. They should be regarded as political myths in the sense that they are deliberately used in order to give a certain vision of history.

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"He [Sultan Mahmud] attributed his destruction to his son [Ahmad] and to his son-in-law, because they did not allow him to make peace with Afonso de Albuquerque, when he arrived in Malacca." (década II, livro IX, chap. VI).

<sup>85</sup> J. M. dos Santos Alves, personal communication, January 2005.